

FREEDOM IN OUR TIME.

BY JANET JAGAN.

Copyright © Nadira Jagan-Brancier 2009

229
August 1st is the day Guianese celebrate as Emancipation Day. Over a hundred years ago the slaves received their freedom from bondage on that day. It is fitting at the moment that we reflect on the measure of freedom we have today. Are we yet free from economic slavery? Have we yet been able to break the tight chains of British imperialism? Are we yet the masters in our own land? The answer is clearly "no"! Therefore, as Emancipation Day comes around again, it is time for us to fully understand our present position in a true and frank light.

The class struggle in British Guiana has developed strongly under the militant leadership of the People's Progressive Party and the trade union movement. Workers and farmers have awakened from a long slumber and are today on the march to win their rights. Imperialism, our deadliest foe, received a severe blow when the people's party gained a resounding victory on April 27th. Yet it is important for the workers to realize that the victory of April 27th was merely a victory of the first round of the battle.

THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER.

There is a tendency among some people to feel that the battle has been won and that the fight is over. Nothing could be further from the truth. Some, who have recently jumped on to the Party's bandwagon and were far away from the movement in the early stages of the bitter struggle for freedom would like the movement to lose its militancy. They would like to benefit personally and turn the people's party into a machine for

ours and personal benefits. Others who looked suspiciously at the people's struggle during the long years would now like to temper the movement with their own views of conservatism and fear. They are working to turn the great force of the People's Progressive Party into a reform movement which would doctor-up the surface ills of our community, leaving the root troubles of capitalism and imperialism untouched. Some feel that the fight for national liberation, socialism and peace should no longer be considered. These persons must either be re-educated to appreciate fully the need for such a programme or be ferreted out of the Party they are seeking to reduce into a mockery like the parties in power in Jamaica and Barbados.

Our masters, and they are still our masters for they hold the whip of REBAL power, would seek to destroy this Party which has so shaken the roots of their colonial system. Fully aware of the measure of power we have won they make every effort to weaken our movement by clever stratagems. They will send their stooges and spies to destroy our Party by splinter movements. They will push their stork pigeons into high positions to weaken our policy and divert our struggle.

FREEDOM OUR GOAL.

Therefore we must at all times be vigilant. We must never forget our goal which is freedom—freedom from imperialist domination.

Our protests must continue, our people must not cease demonstrating, striking for better conditions and union rights. The struggle, in fact, must intensify.

has gained a majority in the House.

Our constitutional battle is just begun. We must wage a vigorous war against the ill-conceived and reactionary constitution. We must insist that the State Council of nominated members be abolished. We must wrest from the hands of colonial officials the tremendous powers they hold in the three important ministerial portfolios. The Governor is not yet the "figurehead" he would like us to think he is. We are seeing British diplomacy at its best in British Guiana, as the officials pretend to recognise a "people's Government" which does not exist there. The myth of a "people's government" must be destroyed until the time comes when we have a REBAL people's government, fully representative and with full powers to reflect and implement the will of the population.

IN OUR TIME.

Emancipation Day, over a hundred years ago tore the chains from the slaves. We must now set the target for the second and most important Emancipation Day when all Guianese will be truly free from imperialist domination and free to assert themselves as an independent people. We have to fight, for and take from our masters our national independence. But we must no longer use the old cliché "that we are fighting for freedom and a better life for our children and our children's children." Let us look back and see what we have achieved in our own time and continue to fight for freedom and a better life while we are still alive on this earth. Our slogan must