

AUG 1965

Guiana's Struggle against Reaction and Racism, for Democracy and Independence

CHEDDI JAGAN

THE question has been posed—how and why has the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which won three successive elections in 1953, 1957 and 1961, been removed from the government? The answer is that the British and U.S. imperialists, having failed to destroy the PPP in spite of a Tory-engineered split in the party in 1955 and gerrymandering of constituencies in 1957 and 1961, and seeing no prospects of defeating it at free and fair elections in the future, resorted to force and fraud.

They did not want another progressive independent state in the Western hemisphere. Alarmed and hysterical about developments in socialist Cuba, the U.S., after our victory in 1961 when we were poised for independence, stepped up their propaganda that an independent Guiana under the PPP would become a second Cuba and a gateway for international communism into South America. The reactionaries' slogan at home and abroad was, "No independence under Jagan".

Consequently, counter-revolutionary disturbances were engineered in 1962 and 1963 and a blockade imposed in 1963 with the aim of forcibly removing my government from office and giving the British Government the excuse for withholding independence and suspending or manipulating our constitution. The opportunistic, collaborationist political and trade union leaders, aided and abetted by reactionary local big business, a corrupt, big-business-controlled press and foreign imperialist elements combined, to use the words of the Commonwealth Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances of February 16, 1962, to "form a veritable torrent of abuse, recrimination and vicious hostility directed against Dr. Jagan and his government".

U.S. Imperialism-Inspired Counter-Revolution

The excuse for the 1962 disturbances was the budget, which was largely influenced by the Cambridge economist, Mr. Nicholas Kaldor. It was described and attacked as "anti-working class" and . . . "communistic".

At the same time unbiased economists took a favourable view of the budget. For instance, Peter Newman, Professor of Economics at Michigan University, pointed out that it was the first serious attempt at self-help.

"It is ironic," he wrote, "that the grave riots in February of this year were sparked by the first serious attempt to make the Guianese responsible for their own economic development."

The real cause, declared the Commission mentioned above, of the disturbances was political rivalry and fear that the government might enact measures injurious to the proprietary rights of the upper classes and businessmen.

In 1963, the excuse for the disturbances, lockout and blockade was the Labour Relations Bill.

This bill was patterned after the National Labour Relations (Wagner) Act of the New Deal Roosevelt administration. Its motivation, as that of its 1953 predecessor of the first PPP Government, was the elimination of company unions, the ending of jurisdictional disputes and the establishment of democracy in the trade union movement. Because of this, it was opposed by local and foreign big business, the ICFTU, the two opposition parties and the imperialist-controlled press.

The fact is that the superstructure of the Trades Union Council (TUC) of Guiana is a bastion of reaction.

But the TUC was not always a reactionary body. Prior to 1953, it pursued a militant policy and supported the PPP. Its affiliates, catering particularly for workers in the sugar plantations, waterfront, saw-mills, wood-plants and quarries, were constantly engaged in militant struggles for recognition, increased wages and improved working conditions.

But this militant TUC also became a casualty of the Cold War. Through the influence and pressure of the ICFTU, the TUC was unconstitutionally disbanded soon after the October 1953 forcible removal of the PPP from office. Six reactionary unions controlled by the Opposition, headed by the MCPA (the company-dominated sugar workers' union), formed a new TUC. And after he split the PPP in 1955, Burnham strengthened the new TUC with his British Guiana Labour Union and confused and split the Negro working class with pseudo-Socialist demagoguery and racism.

The Trades Union Council, as presently constituted, is dominated by the MCPA and unions catering for civil servants, teachers and other government employees in postal, airline, telephone and transport services. The leadership of this group comes mainly from opportunists, labour aristocrats and the middle class which to a large extent has been pampered by colonialism and imperialism. Many of these "labour" leaders have been taken on scholarships to Washington D.C., USA, for pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist indoctrination. Several have been put on the CIA monthly payroll. They fight to maintain the *status quo* and to preserve entrenched positions.

This is the explanation for the TUC's opposition in 1963 to the Labour Relations Bill which it supported a decade earlier in 1953. The enactment into law of the Bill would have achieved two things; firstly, in a secret ballot of workers the MCPA would have been replaced by the Guiana Agricultural Workers' Union (GAWU) and the British sugar planters would have been forced to bargain with a militant union; and secondly, the GAWU, with the nearly 30 per cent of the delegates at the TUC annual congress (who now represent the MCPA) would have had the opportunity of changing the reactionary TUC superstructure now headed by President Richard Ishmael.

U.S. involvement in our domestic affairs has been evident for some time. In early 1963, Mr. William Tyler, Under-Secretary of State, giving evidence before a Congressional Appropriations Sub-Committee, spoke disparagingly of my government and categorically stated that the United States government would be happy to see us out of office.

In late 1963, U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was reported to have put pressure on the British Government to delay independence and to change the electoral system. An unprecedented number of U.S. trade unionists and CIA agents entered the country to stir up opposition to the government. During the whole period of the 1963 disturbances, a United States trade unionist was instigating the political opposition and the Trades Union Council to continue the strike while the British trade union adviser, Mr. Walter Hood, was urging a settlement. With the help of other United States trade unionists, the ICFTU and

Continued