

THE COMMUNIST THREAT IN BRITISH GUIANA

Despatch of British troops from Jamaica to British Guiana highlights the Communist threat in that area. A "victory" for the Communists in British Guiana would establish a foothold for Communism in South America comparable to -- or possibly even more dangerous than -- that in Guatemala in Central America.

A. Importance of British Guiana

(population about 435,000)

1. British Guiana produces nearly a fifth (about 2,000,000 tons) of the free world's supply of bauxite.
2. Nine-tenths of British Guiana's bauxite goes to Canada, chief source of US aluminum imports.

B. Rise of Communist strength

1. Communist agitation among large East Indian population there has

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 NO CHANGE IN CLASS. []
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 CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S
 NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1-22-80
 AUTH: HR 70
 DATE: 1-22-80
 REVIEWER:

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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been going on for several years.

2. Dominant force in such activity has been American-born Communist Janet Jagan, and her husband, Cheddi Jagan, member of the House of Assembly since 1947. He visited Moscow in 1952 and she as recently as early this summer.

3. Last April the colony held its first election under the new Constitution which instituted universal suffrage and considerably broadened the House of Assembly's authority in domestic affairs.

4. The People's Progressive Party led by the Jagans captured 18 out of 24 elected seats in the Assembly.

5. Party leaders then assumed six important ministerial posts

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including labor, agriculture,
education and local government.

C. The present crisis

1. Party members have nevertheless kept on advocating overthrow of British colonial administration and this week demanded curtailment of the governor's reserved powers to administer the defense, foreign and internal security police. They also demanded an end to the governor's right to veto the Assembly's laws.

2. In early September the party led a strike in the sugar industry and also several sympathy strikes.

3. On 24 September these strikes were officially called off and the next day the 18 Party members of the House of Assembly walked out on a point of order.

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4. No rioting has yet been reported, however.

D. British action

1. According to press report from both London and Jamaica, the new Constitution has been suspended and the Governor granted full powers.

2. As early as 1 October the Governor had been contemplating using his more limited discretionary powers under the new constitution.

E. British strength in the area

1. Total British Guiana police force numbers about 1,100; its political reliability is uncertain.

2. British military forces are centered on Jamaica where there are two battalions. Some 650 of these 1,600 troops are colonials.

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3. Some 500 Welsh Fusiliers are now en route from Jamaica to British Guiana.

4. A British frigate was dispatched from nearby Trinidad with 100 troops.

5. The British Admiralty has also announced the transfer of the cruiser Sheffield from Scotland to the West Indies, calling it "a normal station move."

F. The immediate outlook

1. Troops and emergency powers are probably sufficient to maintain order, though some bloodshed could ensue if British troops land.

2. International Communism will probably exploit British emergency measures in propaganda and in attacks in the UN.

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3. If the Communist threat in British Guiana is not promptly reduced, the Jagans and other Communist leaders will have a better opportunity in the other British colonies in the area, including strategic Trinidad and Jamaica, and this threat could also spread into neighboring Surinam, a Dutch colony which supplies the US with about one-half of its bauxite.

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