

# Obituary - Cheddi Jagan

by Fenton Ramsahoye

There will be many obituaries following the death of President Jagan who was Guyana's first properly elected President and who demitted office even before the end of his first term. I would wish to add to what will be written at this sad time for the bereaved Guyanese nation. I had worked with him as the first elected Attorney General when he was in command of the country under internal self-government in the period 1961 to 1964 and I remain one of the few still living who served in his Cabinet throughout his time as Premier. Soon after he took office Guyana was plagued by internal strife which was inspired and motivated by relentless and remorseless opponents of his from both within and without Guyana. It could be said that from February 1962 he carried on as Premier but was denied the peace which is essential to successful government.

Through his time as Premier he cared for the well-being of his people in ways which bore no mark of hesitation. He selected Ministers who worked with him and who together with him ensured that the public administration would be honourable and that no profit of any kind would be made out of the condition of Guyana's peoples by politicians who held public office. During the darkest days of the country's history when the people were being manipulated to revolt and when it became clear that the imperial Government in Britain and the Government of the United States of America wished to put an end to his government, he and his Ministers carried on their

duties with scrupulous honesty, integrity and dedication.

Sir Ralph Grey later Lord Grey was one of the Governors while he was Premier. Sir Ralph Grey with whom I had direct telephone contact from the Attorney General's Chambers called me one day during our most troubled times to discuss a matter concerning the government. He intimated displeasure with me as was my impression for using my talents in support of Cheddi Jagan's leftist regime which he no doubt considered too left and with leanings to the Soviet bloc. I must have appeared visibly disturbed and as a result as I was about to leave his office he called me back and said he felt obliged to let me know that it was the first time he had worked with Colonial Ministers who did not steal. So it was indeed Cheddi Jagan and his Ministers did not compromise the nation's money by deals and they carried on the government without thinking that theirs was a form of political investment which had to bear dividends.

As Premier this was his clear example which his Ministers followed. With them he was able to establish for the world to see that public administration could be honourable and accountable. He had total respect for all laws which dealt with the public finances. He will be remembered as having given the best of his life in political and public service but his enduring legacy to the world is the lesson which no Guyanese should ever forget and that is that it is possible to constitute and administer a government wholly devoid of corruption. ✕