

## The Long Struggle

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The Government has insulted the memory of Cheddi Jagan by the manner in which it dealt with the commemorative stamp issued for his birth centennial. The government had no right meddling in what was ostensibly a private matter.

But having poked its nose into a private matter, the government then went ahead with an official launch of the centennial stamp, not the Post Office but at the Ministry of the Presidency. Not a single Minister of the Government was in attendance. What a shame! What a disgrace! What pettiness!

Cheddi Jagan would have been accustomed to such treatment. He was once denied use of the VIP area at the Timehri International Airport even though he was the Leader of the Opposition. The firearm of his bodyguard was taken away after the rigged 1985 elections. He was often treated with disdain and contempt by the PNC Administration.

Cheddi, however was vindicated by history. October 5, 1992, will always be remembered as the day that history vindicated Cheddi Jagan.

It marked his return to power after twenty-eight painstaking years in opposition and of being cheated out of office for 24 of those years. It took remarkable character for Cheddi to have endured for so long and to have waited and to have struggled all those years.

Ironically, it was during those years that he was held out as a failure. Nothing could be more a distortion of the truth.

Cheddi Jagan is far more heroic than most Guyanese, far more because he stood the test of time and never wilted under the pressure to denounce and disavow what he believed in. He stood by his principles and did not sell his soul. For that alone, he deserves the greatest respect. Cheddi was criticized for being naïve. It is said that had Cheddi not antagonized the West, that he would not have lost power.

Those who are making these ill-informed analyses are not suggesting that he should have been more tactful; they are suggesting that he should have become an opportunist and hid his convictions. No man worth his salt is going to deny his convictions, and Cheddi was no opportunist.

Yet another series of criticisms seems to suggest that he should have been more frontal and aggressive with Burnham. Those who make these claims need to go back and study history.

Cheddi Jagan and the PPP were active in the struggle against Burnham but like all Marxists, Cheddi understood the nature of social change and the process of contradictions that ultimately had to reach their climax.

There are others who are suggesting that a great many people broke with Cheddi because they did not agree with his politics and felt he was disillusioned. They were a great many persons like that who lacked the vision and understanding that Cheddi possessed, who lacked the staying power, who did not understand the slow but constant march of history.

There were many people who could not wait with Cheddi; could not afford to wait on the contradictions to reach their climax.

There are many persons who bear a certain shame, which they keep hidden and seek to justify with all manner of pretexts. That shame was their lack of staying power. They gave in, left Cheddi and went with Burnham.

Not all of them went because they were fooled by his sweet tongue. Some of them went because they needed the money. Some of them went because they had families to take care of; they preferred to prostitute themselves rather than have their families starve.

Those persons should not be judged harshly. There were always reasons for them abandoning him, some justifiable and others not.

Cheddi Jagan never gave up the struggle. He never stopped fighting. He was a remarkable human being who took the indignities heaped upon him and never held it against anyone.

He was almost in this respect like a living prophet. It takes a special human being to be able not to hold malice, especially considering what he had to endure.

Cheddi Jagan never gave up the struggle. Neither did he ever give in to the pressures. Mistakes may have been made; this is inevitable. He is being judged, for example, to have been naïve to have allowed the British to choose the electoral system.

Cheddi knew, however, that if he had left that conference without a firm commitment on Independence, then Guyana's freedom would have been delayed. He did the selfless thing because he knew what mattered most was Independence for Guyana.

Cheddi's long fight for freedom will not be forgotten. He is the most heroic figure this country has ever produced.