

Cheddi's Radio Interview with Sita Mohammed
for "20 Years of Independence"

The difficulties I encountered in the struggle for independence were those experienced by all pioneers. Not only the British opposed it; the local conservatives also did. The arguments were based on readiness for independence. One of them was that we were too small. Imagine that : we now see countries with a few thousand people getting independence. For example, for the thinly populated Falklands Islands the British, in the fight against the Argentinian claim, has spoken about the right of self-determination of the people of that territory.

The second hurdle I faced was the attitude of some who wanted independence, but on their terms. In this category were the Americans and the then local opposition politicians. The USA said that there should be no independence with Jagan at the head of the government. They preferred the opposition. To achieve that aim they did two things, first; they pressured the British not to grant independence while I was Premier; second, they financed through the CIA covert actions, strife and strike, so that the British government would have the excuse of delaying independence and calling for new elections under proportional representation (PR).

Now, to the then opposition politicians. They opposed a motion for independence and walked out of the parliament. And thereafter their slogan was: "no independence under the PPP," "no independence under Jagan"

This was the mood of the opposition at the London Constitutional Conference in 1960. Mr. Burnham called for elections before independence and proportional representation. This played into the hands of the British imperialists. They opposed independence, rejected PR and said: fight another elections in 1961, and whichever party won would take the country to independence.

During the election campaign, Mr. Burnham said that if the PPP won the elections, he would be going to London in the same plane with me for independence. However, after losing the 1961 elections, he again put up a call for new elections under PR. And so independence was again delayed.

The last hurdle was at the United Nations. I went there after the British, pressed by the Americans and the opposition, refused to grant independence in accordance with the decision arrived at in London in 1960. The British did not want me to speak. Finally, they agreed but wanted me to address the UN Anti-Colonial Committee from their chair. I refused. I said: how can I as a petitioner against the British government speak from the British chair. And also I wanted to speak as an independent petitioner, so as to open recess to the UN to other liberation fighters. ~~The~~

The Anti-Colonial Committee ~~to~~ agreed to my request to address ~~the~~ its members as a petitioner, and thus new ground ~~for~~ was opened for the liberation struggle.