

CHE AND GUYANA'S EXPERIENCE

INTERVIEW BY CUBAN JOURNALIST ERNESTO NUÑEZ JIMENZ TO THE LATE PRESIDENT CHEDDI JAGAN.

LET US NOW HIGHLIGHT CHE'S RELATIONS WITH GUYANESE LEADER CHEDDI JAGAN. THEY BOTH MAINTAINED VERY GOOD FRATERNAL POLITICAL RELATIONS, IN WHICH CHE'S ANTIDOGMATIC SPIRIT IS OUTSTANDING BECAUSE SINCE THE FIRST CONVERSATIONS HELD IN HAVANA HE SHARED THE APPRAISAL MADE BY JAGAN ABOUT THE SPECIAL SITUATION IN HIS COUNTRY. GUYANA IS A HEAVILY FORESTED LAND WITH LESS THAN ONE MILLION INHABITANTS OF INDIAN, AFRICAN AND AMERINDIAN ORIGIN WHERE IT WAS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO WAGE A LIBERATION WAR, AMONG OTHER REASONS, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS CONDITION AS A COLONY OF TWO POWERFUL EMPIRES: THE BRITISH AND THE AMERICAN, BUT ALSO BECAUSE. GUYANA IS SURROUNDED BY COUNTRIES CLAIMING PARTS OF ITS TERRITORY. THESE COUNTRIES AT THAT TIME WERE ALSO SUPPORTED BY MILITARY SYSTEMS SUCH AS THE CASE OF BRAZIL AND VENEZUELA. IN THIS CONTEXT, ONLY THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY COULD MAKE USE OF DEMOCRATIC OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE SIXTIES. THEREFORE, CHE IS IN AGREEMENT WITH JAGAN AND OFFERS HIMSELF TO EFFICIENTLY COORDINATE ECONOMIC AND OTHER ASSISTANCE BEING PROVIDED BY THE CUBAN REVOLUTION TO GUYANA UNDER FIDEL'S GUIDANCE.

CHE AND JAGAN MET FOR THE FIRST TIME ON APRIL 6, 1960. CHE WAS THEN PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL BANK OF CUBA, AND JAGAN WAS THE PREMIER OF HIS COUNTRY THAT WAS STILL A BRITISH COLONY. THEY MET MANY TIMES UNTIL GUEVARA LEFT FOR THE CONGO.

AT THAT FIRST MEETING, JAGAN IS A YOUNG AND PRESTIGIOUS SOCIALIST LEADER.

AT CHE'S REQUEST JAGAN PROVIDES HIM WITH SOME FUNDAMENTAL DATA ABOUT HIS LIFE: BORN ON MARCH 22, 1918 AT PORT MOURANT, BRITISH GUIANA, HE WAS SON OF INDIAN IMMIGRANTS WHO CAME TO WORK IN THE SUGAR PLANTATIONS AS INDENTURED LABOURERS.

DESPITE CHEDDI'S FAMILY POVERTY, THEY MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO ATTEND QUEEN'S COLLEGE IN GEORGETOWN, CAPITAL OF GUYANA AND YEARS LATER HE GRADUATED AS A DENTIST FROM NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY IN CHICAGO.

IN OCTOBER 1943 HE RETURNED TO HIS HOMETLAND AFTER YEARS OF ABSENCE, WHERE THERE WERE NO POLITICAL PARTIES IN EXISTENCE AS YET.

IN 1947 HE WAS ELECTED TO THE LEGISLATURE AS AN ' INDEPENDENT LABOUR' CANDIDATE. IN THAT SAME YEAR A SHORT-LIVED LABOR PARTY WAS ESTABLISHED, BUT HIS ADMISSION TO THAT PARTY WAS UNWANTED. IN 1946, ALONG WITH HIS WIFE JANET AND TWO TRADE UNIONISTS, HE FOUNDED THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. THIS GROUP OF MARXIST SCHOLARS WAS INFLUENCED TO THE SOCIALIST CAUSE BY THE IMPACT OF THE SOVIET VICTORY AGAINST FASCISM, AND THE ANTI-COLONIAL IMPACT BY SOCIALIST-ORIENTED FORCES WORLDWIDE. THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, WHICH HAD THE GOAL OF FORMING A POLITICAL PARTY, FULFILLED ITS AIMS AND IN 1950 THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY WAS BORN. THIS PARTY SET OUT IN ITS FIRST MAINFESTO THAT IT WOULD LEAD THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE ^{From} ~~FORM~~ GREAT BRITAIN.

IN APRIL 1953, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ALLOWED THE FIRST REAL GENERAL ELECTION IN BRITISH GUIANA UNDER ADULT (UNIVERSAL) SUFFRAGE. AFTER HIS PARTY WON AN OVERWHELMING VICTORY IN THE ELECTION, JAGAN DECLARED THAT HE STOOD FOR INDEPENDENCE WITH

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. HIS SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN ULTIMATELY BROUGHT THE MILITARY OCCUPATION AND THE SUSPENSION OF THE CONSTITUTION BY THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES, ON OCTOBER 9, 1953. JAGAN WAS THE FIRST HEAD OF A GUYANESE GOVERNMENT UNDER A BRITISH CROWN COLONY BUT AFTER 133 DAYS HIS GOVERNMENT WAS DEPOSED.

IN 1954 JAGAN AND HIS WIFE JANET, BOTH ELECTED MEMBERS FOR THE 1953 GOVERNMENT, WERE IN PRISON DUE TO THEIR REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES AGAINST BRITISH DOMINATION. ELECTIONS WERE AGAIN HELD IN 1957 AND THE PPP AGAIN WON AT THE POLLS.

FROM 1957 TO 1961 HE SUCCESSIVELY HELD THE POST OF CHIEF MINISTER AND MINISTER OF ECONOMIC PLANNING UNDER BRITISH DOMINATION. IN 1961 HE AGAIN LED HIS PARTY TO VICTORY AND BECAME PREMIER OF THE COUNTRY. DURING THIS PERIOD, THE CIA INTERVENED IN THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE COUNTRY AND INCITED RIOTS AND TERRORISM TO DESTABILIZE THE JAGAN GOVERNMENT. JAGAN AND THE PPP WERE EFFECTIVELY REMOVED FROM GOVERNMENT IN 1964 AND HE BECAME THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION FROM 1964 TO 1992, WHEN FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS WERE HELD AND HE WON OFFICE AS PRESIDENT.

IN AN EFFORT TO REVIEW RELATIONS BETWEEN JAGAN AND CHE I MADE A TRIP TO SOME OF THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS INTERVIEWING SOME WITNESSES OF THAT FRIENDSHIP AND, ABOVE ALL, I PAID A VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA, CHEDDI JAGAN ON JANUARY 22, 1997 AT STATE HOUSE IN GEORGETOWN.

TOGETHER WITH ME WERE RICARDO GARCIA, AMBASSADOR OF CUBA TO GUYANA AND ULISES BARQUIN, SECRETARY OF THE EMBASSY, WHO HELPED US IN THE TRANSLATION. JAGAN RECEIVED US IN A VERY FRATERNAL MANNER AND HE RECALLED OUR MEETINGS IN HAVANA IN THE 60S. HE WAS

WEARING A SIMPLE SHORT SLEEVE GUAYABERA, VERY SUITABLE FOR THE WARM AND HUMID WEATHER OF GUYANA'S CAPITAL. SITTING IN THE WIDE CORRIDOR OF HIS OFFICIAL RESIDENCE, AND LOOKING AT THE BEAUTIFUL GARDENS OF EXUBERANT TROPICAL VEGETATION OF GUYANESE ORIGIN, HE BEGAN TO TALK TO US ABOUT SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.

RECENTLY, A SERIES OF DECLASSIFIED SECRET DOCUMENTS WERE MADE PUBLIC IN THE UNITED STATES. IN THAT RESPECT, PROFESSOR KINDOM WHO IS STUDYING THE CONGRESS HISTORY OF THAT COUNTRY SAID THAT HE WOULDN'T WRITE IT IF THERE WERE STILL HIDDEN DOCUMENTS.

IN THE FACE OF SUCH STATEMENTS, PRESIDENT CLINTON AUTHORIZED THE PUBLICATION OF SAID DOCUMENTS, EVEN THOUGH SOME ARE YET HIDDEN. THOSE DOCUMENTS HAVE TO DO WITH CUBA AND THE WAY IN WHICH KENNEDY WAS UNABLE TO BLOCKADE CUBA TOTALLY, AND FROM THERE ON HOW THEY BEGAN TO ATTACK GUYANA.

JAGAN SAID THAT THOSE AGGRESSIONS AGAINST CUBA LASTED A LONG TIME.

JAGAN: I REMEMBER MAKING A STATEMENT ABOUT A MEETING I ATTENDED WHEN I VISITED HAVANA IN 1960, AT A TIME WHEN CUBAN WOMEN DECIDE TO UNITE IN A SINGLE ORGANIZATION. FIDEL SPOKE AT THAT MEETING AND THE WOMEN THERE STOOD UP, AND BEGAN TO WAVE THE SMALL FLAGS THEY HAD IN THEIR HANDS. FIDEL WAS BACKED BY ALL THIS PEOPLE.

JAGAN: THAT IS WHY I SAY, BASED ON THAT EXPERIENCE OF POPULAR SUPPORT, THAT ALTHOUGH THESE WOMEN WERE NOT ONLY WORKERS, PEASANTS, BUT ALSO FROM MIDDLE CLASS, THEY SHOWED GREAT UNITY. IF AMERICANS HAD CONSULTED ME, I WOULD HAVE TOLD THEM THAT THEY WERE GOING TO FAIL AT THE TIME OF PLAYA

GIRON (BAY OF PIGS) CONSIDERING WHAT I HAD WITNESSED IN CUBA.

JAGAN: AMERICANS FAILED BECAUSE OF THEIR OWN PROPAGANDA. THEY ALWAYS SAID THAT IN CUBA THERE WAS A DICTATORSHIP SEPARATED FROM THE MASSES, FROM THE PEOPLE WHO WERE SUBMITTED TO ITS OPPRESSION, AND THAT EVERYBODY WAS GOING TO JOIN ANY MILITARY TROOPS THAT MIGHT LAND IN CUBA.

MR. RICARDO GARCIA, CUBA'S AMBASSADOR TO GUYANA TELLS JAGAN:

GARCIA: PERHAPS THEY WOULD HAVE SAID THAT YOU WERE A CUBAN AGENT.

JAGAN: YES, OF COURSE.

GARCIA: I ASKED JAGAN TO RECALL A BIT OF HOW HE MET CHE GUEVARA.

JAGAN: OF COURSE I HAD READ A LOT ABOUT GUEVARA PRIOR TO MY FIRST INTERVIEW WITH HIM AND KNEW ABOUT HIS REVOLUTIONARY RECORD IN GUATEMALA AND OTHER COUNTRIES. OUR GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN OVERTHROWN BY FORCE IN 1953 AND THE YEAR AFTER, THE JACOBO ARBENZ REGIME WAS DEFEATED IN GUATEMALA AND CHE WAS THERE AT THAT TIME. IT WAS AFTER THAT WHEN HE TRAVELLED TO MEXICO AND JOINED FIDEL IN THE GUERILLA STRUGGLE IN THE SIERRA MAESTRA MOUNTAINS. WE KNEW ALL ABOUT CHE'S BACKGROUND.

BUT THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE FOR THE LIBERATION OF A COUNTRY AND WHEN THEY REACH THAT OBJECTIVE THEY STAY THERE; VERY FEW OF THEM LEAVE BEHIND ALL THEY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED AND GO BACK TO RESTART THE STRUGGLE FROM

SCRATCH. THAT IS CHE'S GREATNESS, WHERE HIS INTERNATIONALIST POSITION STANDS OUT. HE RESUMED THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PEOPLE IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

GARCIA: AND WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN CUBA AND GUYANA CHANNELED THROUGH CONTACTS WITH CHE?

WE HAD PROBLEMS WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT BECAUSE THE LEFT US WITH A SMALL 4 YEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (110 MILLION) AND THIS WAS NOT ENOUGH FOR ALL WE WANTED TO DO. AT THE END OF 1960 AFTER A CONFERENCE HELD IN LONDON I VISITED THE WORLD BANK AND I WAS NOT VERY WELL RECEIVED. SIMILARLY, I MET PRESIDENT KENNEDY WHEN HE WON THE 1961 ELECTIONS, BUT WHAT HE PROMISED TO ME NEVER MATERIALIZED AND THAT WAS ALSO MENTIONED IN THE US DOCUMENTS I SPOKE ABOUT, THAT IS THOSE RECENTLY PUBLISHED.

IN GUYANA WE HAD A SUBSIDIARY IN THE ELECTRIC SECTOR, A COMPANY, AND IT WAS A TOTAL FAILURE. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT EVEN AGREED WITH NATIONALIZATION AND ITS ADVISORS RECOMMENDED THAT WE SHOULD BUY THREE PLANTS, WHICH ARE THOSE THAT OPERATE HERE WITH 10 MEGAWATTS EACH, THAT IS, A TOTAL OF 30 MEGAWATTS.

AFTERWARDS, IN 1965 WE PLANNED TO BUILD A HYDROPOWER STATION AT 'TIGER HILL', IN THE DEMERARA RIVER. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, THE CONSORTIA AND THE BANK THAT DID BUSINESS WITH THEM, GAVE MONEY ONLY TO BUY 3 POWER SUBSTATIONS BUT NEVER FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HYDROPOWER PLANT. THEY GAVE THEIR APPROVAL BUT NEVER THE MONEY, ALTHOUGH THE ADVISORS ACCEPTED THAT IN THE NEW PLAN THE HYDROPOWER PLANT WAS INCLUDED, AND THAT THERE WOULD BE

A NET PROFIT OF 20 MILLION DOLLARS IN THE FIRST 10 YEARS AND 40 MILLION DOLLARS IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS. ALTOGETHER 60 MILLION DOLLARS IN 20 YEARS AND WE WERE AUTHORIZED TO CARRY OUT ELECTRIFICATION PLANS. THEY FINALLY DID NOT GIVE THE MONEY REQUIRED TO DEVELOP THESE PLANS. IT WAS THEN WHEN I APPROACHED CHE AND TOLD HIM THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HYDROPOWER WAS THE FUNDAMENTAL THING, THAT IT WOULD COST \$32 MILLION AND HE AGREED. THERE WAS TO BE A THREE-WAY AGREEMENT: WE WERE TO SELL LUMBER AND RICE TO CUBA, CUBA WOULD SELL THEIR SUGAR TO THE SOVIET UNION, THEN THE USSR WOULD SEND US THE GENERATORS AND ACCESSORIES WE REQUIRED FOR THE HYDROPOWER STATION.

THIS WAS VERY SIMILAR TO THE WAY IN WHICH THE BRITISH ADVISORS PROPOSED, BUT THEY DID NOT ACCEPT IT BECAUSE THE AMERICANS GOT HYSTERICAL. THEY SAID: ' WE WILL NOT GIVE THEM THE MONEY NOR WILL WE PERMIT THEM TO BUILD IT'. WE WERE THEN FACED WITH THE DILEMA OF WORLD POLITICS OF THE TIME. I AM EXPLAINING EVERYTHING FOR ONE TO SEE CLEARLY THE SITUATION OF A SMALL COUNTRY LIKE OURS WITH VERY FEW OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO ACT AGAINST COLONIALISM AND CHE UNDERSTOOD ALL THIS DRAMA. AS I WAS SAYING, OUR CONCEPTION WAS GENERALLY A CORRECT ONE, THE BRITISH WERE EVEN IN FAVOUR OF ACCEPTING IT, BUT THE AMERICANS OPPOSED IT, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE PLAYA GIRON FIASCO. THEY SAID THAT AN INDEPENDENT GUYANA, WITH MY GOVERNMENT IN POWER WAS MORE DANGEROUS THAN CUBA, BECAUSE CUBA IS AN ISLAND THAT COULD BE SURROUNDED, BUT GUYANA IS PART OF A CONTINENT WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND OFF THE ATLANTIC. THEY THEN SAID THAT GUYANA WOULD BECOME A MILITARY BASE FOR THE SOVIET UNION AND A SPRINGBOARD FOR THE PENETRATION OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION.

GARCIA: I BRIEFED PRESIDENT JAGAN THAT IN PREVIOUS DAYS I HAD INTERVIEWED OSVALDO CARDENAS IN KINGSTON, JAMAICA, ON JANUARY 16, 1997, A CUBAN LIVING THERE WHO GAVE ME THE FOLLOWING TESTIMONY ABOUT CHEDDI'S RELATIONS WITH CUBA:

' IN 1963, THERE WAS IN GUYANA A BIG STRIKE, SUPPORTED BY THE CIA THROUGH THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND BY RIGHT-WING SECTIONS, TO TRY TO OVERTHROW JAGAN'S GOVERNMENT WHICH STOOD FOR INDEPENDENCE, OF A SOCIALIST CHARACTER, AND WHICH EXPRESSED SOLIDARITY WITH THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. I WAS ONE OF THOSE SELECTED BY COMANDANTE ERNESTO GUEVARA TO BRING THE ASSISTANCE OF CUBA TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA. CHE UNDERLINED TO US THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS COOPERATION AND TOLD US THAT THE CUBAN REVOLUTIONARIES WOULD NEVER FORGET THAT JAGAN WAS THE ONLY LEADER IN AMERICA THAT SUPPORTED CUBA DURING THE PLAYA GIRON INVASION AND THE OCTOBER CRISIS. THE GUYANESE LEADER HAD EVEN OFFERED VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT BESIDE THE CUBANS AND THIS WAS ONE OF THE REASONS WHY AMERICAN IMPERIALISM CARRIED OUT SUCH AN AGGRESSIVE AND DESTABILIZING ACTION AGAINST THEIR GOVERNMENT AND THAT CUBANS COULD NEVER FORGET THAT.

THE ASSISTANCE WAS TAKEN TO GUYANA BY BOAT: FUEL, FOOD, AND FLOUR. FROM THAT MOMENT ON, THE RIGHT-WING SECTIONS HAD TO CHANGE THEIR POSITION AND THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT COULD NO LONGER SURVIVE AT LEAST DURING THAT PERIOD. I MET JAGAN AND CONVEYED CHE'S MESSAGE ABOUT HOW WE COULD CONTINUE TO HELP HIM.' '

WHEN I FINISHED REVEALING OSVALDO CARDENAS TESTIMONY TO JAGAN I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT IN MY INQUIRIES ABOUT HIS RELATIONS WITH CHE

I ALSO INTERVIEWED GUILLERMO BATISTA, PRESENT AMBASSADOR OF CUBA TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO WHO SAID:

BATISTA: ' BECAUSE OF MY WORK IN GUYANA IN THE 80'S I REMEMBER THAT IN DIFFERENT CONVERSATIONS I HELD WITH CHEDDI JAGAN, WHO WAS THEN THE OPPOSITION LEADER IN GUYANA, JAGAN ALWAYS TREATED CHE WITH CONSIDERABLE DEFERENCE, IN KEEPING WITH HIS TRADITIONAL POSITION OF FRIENDSHIP AND ADMIRATION TOWARDS THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND ITS COMMANDER IN CHIEF. FOR JAGAN AND FOR THE GUYANESE IN THE PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY, CHE HAD A VERY SPECIAL MEANING. IN 1961 WHILE IN POWER, AND AT A TIME OF SEVERE CONFRONTATION WITH IMPERIALISM, THE GUYANESE KNEW HOW TO EXPRESS THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA, EVEN MUCH BEFORE, WHEN THE BRITISH INVADED GUYANA AND SENT THERE ADDITIONAL TROOPS AND JAGAN WAS OVERTHROWN, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE WAS A PRIME MINISTER ELECTED THROUGH THE POPULAR VOTE. BUT THE BRITISH CONTROLLED DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY. FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTION VICTORY AND JAGAN'S COMING INTO OFFICE, THE BONDS ESTABLISHED WITH CUBA WERE ARTICULATED THROUGH CHE. WHO WAS THE INTERLOCUTOR WITH OUR GOVERNMENT. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN ' THE MIRROR', PPP NEWSPAPER, REQUIRED SOME MACHINERY TO DO ITS WORK. THESE CAME FROM CUBA. CHE CONTRIBUTED TO BRING THIS ABOUT. ACCORDING TO WHAT CHE HIMSELF TOLD ME, THOSE MACHINERIES HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY USED BY 'EL DIARIO DE LA MARINA', THE MOST REACTIONARY NEWSPAPER IN CUBA. WITH THAT EQUIPMENT THE MIRROR WAS PUBLISHED AS AN EXAMPLE OF CUBA-GUYANA SOLIDARITY.

CHEDI JAGAN SPOKE AGAIN AND SAID:

JAGAN: WHEN I ADDRESSED TO THE UNITED NATIONS DECOLONIZATION COMMISSION THE BRITISH AGREED THAT WHOEVER TRIUMPHED IN THE 1961 ELECTIONS, HE WOULD WIN THE INDEPENDENCE. BUT THE AMERICAN SAID: ' NO, WE DON'T WANT GUYANA TO BECOME A SECOND CUBA BECAUSE IT WOULD BE EVEN MORE DANGEROUS.' AT THE DECOLONIZATION COMMISSION I DECLARED THAT THE US WAS AGAINST THIS AGREEMENT FOR OUR COUNTRY TO BECOME INDEPENDENT. I ALSO APPROACHED THE LATIN GROUP AND I SAID IT WAS FEARED THAT GUYANA WOULD WIN HER INDEPENDENCE WHILE THE YANKEES WERE SAYING THAT THE COUNTRY WAS TO BECOME A MILITARY BASE AND A SPRING BOARD FOR COMMUNISM IN THE REGION. WE HAD EVEN SAID THAT WE WERE WILLING TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT THAT WOULD RESTRAIN OUR SOVEREIGNTY, ANOTHER TREATY SIMILAR TO THAT OF AUSTRIA, AND THAT WE WOULDN'T JOIN NATO OR THE WARSAW PACT.

THE LATIN AMERICAN GROUP DID NOT SAY A WORD IN THE MEETING, AND LATER THE ARGENTINEAN AMBASSADOR IN PRIVATE TOLD ME: ' WHAT YOU SAID IS QUITE LOGICAL AND RATIONAL, BUT YOU ARE INTRODUCING A NEW CONCEPT OF NEUTRALITY IN LATIN AMERICAN. WE HAVE THE RIO PACT AND THE PACT OF MUTUAL SECURITY AND YOU ARE INTRODUCING A NEW CONCEPT'. AFTERWARDS THE ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED AGAINST US.

AFTER ALL THAT I WENT TO SEE CHE AGAIN TO TELL HIM THAT WE NEEDED CUBA TO GIVE US MONEY FOR THE HYDROPOWER PLANT AND CUBA AGREED TO GIVE US APPROXIMATELY 10 MILLION DOLLARS TO BUILD A WOOD PULP FACTORY HERE, AT 2% INTEREST RATE THAT SHOULD BE PAID IN 10 YEARS WITH PULP NOT WITH MONEY. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT CUBA WAS MAKING PAPER AND THERE WAS AN ENGLISH FACTORY THAT MADE BAGASSE PAPER BUT IT WAS TOO THICK AND CUBANS NEEDED A MORE FINE PAPER. THEREFORE, THEY

WANTED TO MIX WOOD PULP WITH BAGASSE PULP TO MAKE A FINER PAPER.

I MADE THIS PROPOSAL TO THE GOVERNOR OF GUYANA WHO WAS QUEEN ELIZABETH'S REPRESENTATIVE. THE GOVERNOR WAS IN GUYANA HEADING THE GOVERNMENT AT THAT TIME, BUT WE HAD PROBLEMS WHEN ACTUALLY SIGNING THE AGREEMENT WITH CUBA BECAUSE MOST OF THE LANDS IN THE SO-CALLED ' BARTICA TRIANGLE' WERE ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF THE LOCAL PRIVATE SECTOR. WHEN I CALLED ON THE COMMISSION OF FOREST RESOURCES TO LOOK AT THE LAND WHERE THE CUBAN-GUYANESE PROJECT WAS TO BE DEVELOPED, MOST OF THE LAND WAS ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF LOCAL LANDOWNERS. I WAS TOLD THAT I SHOULD APPROACH A BRITISH COMPANY WITH LARGE PROPERTIES THAT HAD ABANDONED SOME AREAS WHERE THERE WERE LARGE VARIETIES OF WOOD. THEY GREW ONLY A FEW SPECIES OF TREES FOR CUTTING AND THEY LEFT THERE VERY GOOD WOOD FOR PAPER PRODUCTION. BUT THE BRITISH COMPANY DID NOT ACCEPT IT. THE PROBLEM WAS THAT THEY HAD TO CONSULT THE GOVERNOR WHO IN RETURN HAD TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE COLONIAL OFFICE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND THE LATTER REALLY RECEIVED ORDERS FROM THE UNITED STATES. THEY DIDN'T WANT THE CUBANS COMING INTO GUYANA. THEY THEN TOLD ME THAT IF I WANTED TO CARRY ON THIS PROJECT I HAD TO BUILD A LONG ROAD AROUND ALL THOSE PRIVATE LANDS, BUT THAT ROAD WOULD COST US 10 MILLION DOLLARS, THE MONEY OFFERED BY CUBANS. THE TWO PROJECTS FAILED. I WAS OVERTHROWN FROM GOVERNMENT IN 1964 AND THE PROJECT WAS TO BEGIN IN 1965, BUT THE NEW GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA BROKE ITS RELATIONS WITH CUBA; NAMELY, THE RICE, WOOD AND CEMENT AGREEMENTS, THAT IS, ALL WE HAD AGREED WITH CHE. CUBA HAD A TRADE OFFICE HEADED BY RICARDO CABRISAS; IT HAD TO BE CLOSED AND ITS

REPRESENTATIVE LEFT. THIS IS THE HISTORY OF HOW A THIRD WORLD GOVERNMENT HAD NO POWER VIS-À-VIS THE IMPERIALISTS.

GARCIA: I TOLD JAGAN THAT GUEVARA ALWAYS TOLD US THAT HE FELT A GREAT ESTEEM AND ADMIRATION FOR HIS WORK IN GUYANA AND IN THE WORLD. WE HEARD THAT FROM CHE SEVERAL TIMES.

JAGAN: IN 1961 WHEN CHE VISITED THE UNITED NATIONS HE MADE A GREAT STATEMENT. HE SPOKE ABOUT GUYANA. ALLOW ME TO REITERATE WHAT I PREVIOUSLY SAID: VERY FEW LEADERS IN THE WORLD HAVE DONE WHAT CHE DID, THAT IS, HIS FULL COMMITMENT TO OFFER HIS LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE. I THINK THAT CUBA'S SUCCESS IN BUILDING SOCIALISM, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT IMPERIALISTS DID NOT EXPECT YOUR VICTORY, AND FROM THE CUBAN EXPERIENCE ON, THEY WERE PREPARED TO ALLOW NO REPETITION. THEREFORE, IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.

AS YOU KNOW, IN BOLIVIA THERE WERE DIFFERENCES IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY WHICH DID NOT HAVE A VERY CLEAR VIEW. THERE WAS A TIME WHEN CHE AND HIS GUERILLA GROUP WERE ISOLATED AND ALSO THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT INFILTRATED AND BRIBED THE FARMERS OF THE AREA. BESIDES THERE WAS AMERICAN AID. A GUERILLA MILITARY STRUGGLE HAS TO BE LINKED TO THE WHOLE POLITICAL STRUGGLE. FROM OUR FIRST MEETINGS, CHE HAD SAID THAT WHEREVER THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY FOR A CERTAIN DEMOCRACY, WE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT SITUATION. HERE WE WERE WORKING UNDER A DICTATORSHIP, BUT IT WAS NOT AS BRUTAL AS IN BRAZIL AND THE REST OF THE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES.

I REMEMBER WHEN THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT NATIONALIZED THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AND IT DID NOT WANT TO PAY A SINGLE DOLLAR

FOR COMPENSATION, THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER IMPERIALISTS WERE VERY UPSET BECAUSE THE BAUXITE INDUSTRY HAD EARLIER BEEN NATIONALIZED AND THESE WERE TWO FUNDAMENTAL INDUSTRIES HERE. THEN, IT WAS RUMOURED, THEY WERE GOING TO RESORT TO HAVING THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP PUT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT HERE.

JAGAN: IN 1975 WE PROPOSED WHAT WE CALLED ' CRITICAL SUPPORT', BUT BEFORE ANALYZING WHAT WE WERE GOING TO DO, MR. CHANDISINGH, WHO WAS THEN THE MAIN LEADER OF OUR IDEOLOGICAL SCHOOL, A VERY GOOD COMRADE FROM THE THEORETICAL VIEWPOINT, HAD SAID THAT THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM IN GUYANA WOULD END UP LIKE IN CHILE WITH A PINOCHET COUP-DE-ETAT. IN GUYANA THE END WAS TO BE WITH THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY COMING INTO THE COUNTRY. BUT THAT WAS NOT NECESSARILY SO. FINALLY, HE RENOUNCED OUR PARTY AND JOINED THE PNC TO GIVE IT DECISIVE SUPPORT. WE WERE THEN ATTACKED BY SEVERAL LEADERS, BECAUSE WE PROMOTED CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR THAT GOVERNMENT.

WE CRITICIZED THE PNC FOR ALL THE BAD THINGS THEY DID, AND THE MISTAKES THEY MADE. WE WERE ATTACKED BY SOME LEFT SECTORS WHO DID NOT MAKE A CORRECT ANALYSIS. THEN WE ADOPTED ONE OF CHE'S THESIS: ANYWHERE THERE WERE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEMOCRATIZATION, WE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IT, THAT NOT NECESSARILY DID NOT HAVE TO GO INTO ARMED STRUGGLE. WE WERE CRITICIZED IN THIS RESPECT. I WAS CALLED GHANDI BECAUSE AT THAT TIME I DIDN'T ENGAGE IN ARMED STRUGGLE. MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS ALSO CALLED THAT BY THE BLACK PANTHERS.

WE DECIDED TO CONTINUE OUR STRUGGLE WITH THE MASSES, AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL OF WORKERS, FARMERS, TRADE UNION, WOMEN AND YOUTH. WE LAUNCHED A NEW CAMPAIGN IN ALL FRONTS. IN MY BOOK ' THE WEST ON TRIAL' , WHICH I WROTE IN 1966, I SAID THAT THE STRUGGLE WAS GOING TO BE LONG AND HARD, CALLING FOR MANY SACRIFICIES, BUT TIME AND HISTORY WOULD BE ON OUR SIDE AND THAT WE SHALL WIN. AND IT DID HAPPEN IN THE 1992 ELECTIONS. IT WAS A STRUGGLE THAT WE WAGED BOTH AT INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. WE WON 54% OF THE VOTES. GUYANA, THEREFORE, HAS A LOT OF EXPERIENCE BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY. SO, NOW WE ARE PLAYING A ROLE IN THE NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMAN ORDER.

CAPITALISM TODAY HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS ' ETHICAL CAPITALISM' , BUT AT THE SAME TIME THE RICH BECOME RICHER AND THE POOR, POORER. RECENTLY I WAS TALKING TO AN EDITORIAL WRITER OF A VERY INFLUENTIAL COMMERCIAL MAGAZINE AND I WAS SAYING THAT THE AVERAGE SALARIES OF 300 CORPORATE HEADS WAS 197 TIMES ABOVE THE WAGE OF ORDINARY WORKERS. IN OUR REPORT TO OUR CONGRESS TWO YEARS AGO, GALBRAITH, A WELL KNOWN US PROFESSOR, SAID THAT IN 1982 IT WAS ALREADY 29 TIMES. IN 1990 IT WAS 91 TIMES AND NOW 197 TIMES. PEOPLE IN THE NORTH BEFORE SAID THAT THEY ARE ENEMIES OF SOCIALISM OR COMMUNISM. NOW THEY SAY THAT THEY RECOGNIZE THAT THE POOR ARE POORER AND THE RICH ARE RICHER.

IN A QUITE POPULAR CBS TV PROGRAMM CALLED '60 MINUTES', A LADY WHO IS THE ATT GENERAL DIRECTOR WAS INTERVIEWED. SHE WAS ASKED: DON'T YOU THINK IT IS IMMORAL, AREN'T YOU WORRIED BECAUSE YOUR WAGES AND YOUR PROFITS ARE ABOVE ONE MILLION DOLLARS A YEAR, YET YOUR COMPANY IS GOING TO LAY

OFF 40,000 WORKERS NEXT YEAR? SHE ANSWERED: ' NO, I DON'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT. MY COMPANY HIRED ME BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO DO A GOOD JOB AND I MUST SEE TO IT THAT THE COMPANY MAKES PROFIT, IF NOT I WOULD BE FIRED'. THESE ARE THE ETHICS OF CAPITALISM.

LOOKING BACK I COULD SAY WE MADE MISTAKES WHEN WE WON THE 1953 ELECTIONS. QUEEN ELIZABETH WAS GOING TO VISIT JAMAICA AND I WAS INVITED ON THAT OCCASION, BUT I DID NOT GO. WE WERE YOUNG MILITANTS, BUT NOW I THINK BACK I PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE GONE TO JAMAICA.

AT THE END OF THE INTERVIEW JAGAN WAS KIND ENOUGH TO ESCORT US TO THE DOOR OF THE STATE HOUSE, WHERE WITH A FRATERNAL EMBRACE WE SEALED OUR MEETING.

FORTY-THREE DAYS AFTER, ON MARCH 6, 1997, THE FOUNDER OF THE STATE OF GUYANA PASSED AWAY. SINCE THEN I KEEP HIS PRONOUNCEMENTS MADE IN THIS INTERVIEW AS A RECOGNITION OF COMMANDER ERNESTO CHE QUEVARA'S DIMENSION AND AS PART OF CHEDDI JAGAN'S POLITICAL WILL.