

FOREWORD

It is hoped that the correspondence in this collection of the late President Cheddi Jagan and the photographs will prove to be interesting and informative. These letters were extracted from the thousands of letters, documents and other papers now housed in the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre in Georgetown, Guyana.

The Centre was established in March 22, 2000 for the purpose of documentation of the enormous number of papers and correspondence relating to the historical period of his life. It was feared, that if this were not done, many would be lost or unrecorded, and lost to historians and other researchers.

Professor James Rose, Vice Chancellor of the University of Guyana set out the periods of Dr. Jagan's political life in this manner:- "On careful reflection, it can be said that the political career of Dr. Jagan spanned three distinct periods. Firstly, from the 1940's to 1964 when he was a fearless anti-colonial firebrand, nationalist and liberator. Secondly, the period between 1964 and 1992, when he struggled against a notorious tyranny of the PNC dictatorship, attempting time and time again to mount a truly broad based opposition against the precursor of all forms of democratic manifestations at home. And finally, the all too brief past 1992 period, when, having triumphed over the mindless tyranny of the PNC he began the process of community and healing and national reconstruction."

The papers in this book are to be found in the first period when the struggle for independence began and the necessity of building a strong party for this purpose was manifest. Dr. Jagan emerged from his youthful twenties with the force and energy of a bolt of lightning. He was truly the "firebrand," fighting at every possible place for justice and equality. I remember one incident, when a city landlord had thrown a poor, defenceless old woman out of her house and her possessions onto the street. He fought the case of injustice "tooth and nail" first of all, personally putting all her possessions back into her poor little house.

After we fought for and won an advanced self governing constitution for the 1953 elections with universal adult suffrage for the first time, the PPP, under his leadership won an overwhelming majority in the elections. Only 4½ months after this victory, the British landed marines in the then British Guiana, suspended the constitution and introduced martial law. He was subjected to restrictions on his movement, but under his leadership, the PPP took a decision to resist the authorities. He was the first to do so, breaking his restrictions, being arrested and sent to jail for the offence. Many others followed.

While in jail, he organised prisoners, spoke up for their rights and read and wrote, things he would do all his life. Printed on these pages are some of his writings while in jail, written on toilet paper, as he was never given writing paper.

In the Appendix printed in this volume, referring to matters of the 1960's there is an extract from the 'X 13' plan by the PNC for violence in that period, and researched by the Police. There is a little story which has never been recorded before which I will tell. I was appointed Minister of Home Affairs after the death of our dear and loyal Minister Claude Christian. I had little or no cooperation from the British Commissioner of Police, Peter Owen. Vital and important things were happening all the time and I was generally kept in the dark. So I decided to get information anyway I could. I made contact with a progressive - minded police officer who would meet me secretly and give me information which was being withheld. We met behind Red House, where we lived while Dr. Jagan was Premier from 1961-64. Behind Red House, over two fences and a drain, lived Joycelyn Hubbard, a Minister and one of the founders of the Political Affairs Committee, 1946, the forerunner of the P.P.P. We used to meet there late at night, when I would step through the back yard and the drain and fences and meet the police officer. He gave me the 'X-13' document which Police Commissioner Peter Owen should have given me as the Minister. It is interesting to note that Red House is now the Cheddi Jagan Research Centre!

Dr. Jagan was a man of great intellect, flexible in his thinking, always searching for new ways of dealing with age - old problems. He was a prolific writer and spent long hours at his desk, as these papers will indicate. We hope you find this correspondence useful and interesting.

Janet Jagan