

Over the world is loud with songs of freedom
mankind is breeding heroes every day
On high the scarlet banner flies aloft
below the earth re-echoes liberty!

Martin Carter

DEFIANCE CAMPAIGN OPENS IN GUIANA

By Janet Jagan

Dr. Cheddi Jagan, deposed Prime Minister of British Guiana and leader of the People's Progressive Party led the movement of defiance of the six month old Emergency Laws when he broke his restriction orders on April 3rd. Two days before, he had received the Governor's Orders restricting his movements to Georgetown and requiring him to report to the police twice weekly "with a view to preventing his acting in a manner prejudicial to public safety and order."

Dr. Jagan, who had left his dental practice over a year ago when he began campaigning for the April 1953 general elections, made plans on his return from India in February to open dental clinics in the rural areas so that he could more conveniently continue his profession and keep in close contact with the people. He had established two dental clinics, which were always busy due to the almost total absence of dental services in the country districts, except for quacks. (Out of a total of 36 registered dentists, only 19 are effective practitioners, which gives about one dentist to 24,000 persons. This average is even increased since 14 practise in Georgetown and 4 in New Amsterdam.)

Dr. Jagan, in a letter to the Governor, protested against the restriction on his movements. "This is a flagrant violation of my democratic and civil rights as a citizen of Guiana. I have neither committed nor have been charged for any crime. In addition, this restriction denies me the opportunity of pursuing my professional calling". He applied for permission to visit his dental clinics on April 3rd and added-"I wish to notify you that should this permission be withheld I would be forced to disobey the order restricting my movements. I shall consider any such action justifiable on the ground that the restriction order violates my democratic rights and denies me the opportunity of treating my patients, whom I owe, according to the ethics of my profession, a high duty". This application being refused, he left for Mahaicony.

Dr. Jagan was arrested over 40 miles from Georgetown and brought to Police Headquarters in the city, where he was held for two days and two nights without bail. On the day after his arrest, Police locked up his wife, General Secretary of the P.P.P. Martin Carter, Rory Westmaas (detained at Atkinson Field for 81 days in October) and 6 other Party members who led a demonstration around Police Headquarters protesting his arrest.

Huge crowds assembled around the Magistrates Court on the 5th of April, when the ten were brought to court. The trials were postponed and they were released on bail. The police earlier had arrested 20 persons charging them with disorderly behaviour. Twenty minutes after his release, Dr. Jagan was arrested by police, along with 12 others, charged with holding an illegal procession as the bands followed them down the streets. He and five others were held without bail for 7 days until the hearing on April 12th.

Dr. Jagan, representing himself on the charge of breaking the restriction orders, entered no plea before Magistrate Sharples, who incidentally, is the brother of Dr. Sharples who was defeated by Dr. Jagan in the 1953 elections. "To enter a plea of guilty or not guilty would be to presume the validity or justice of the Emergency Orders." He went on further to state -"I do not recognize the Emergency Orders. It saw birth in the minds of fascists who are prepared to take away the rights of the people willy-nilly... This is a court of law, not a court of justice...I do not expect justice in this or any court. Justice has been dead since the British troops landed in this country. Today the whole country is a vast prison. Whether I am outside or inside doesn't matter very much. Prison holds no terror for me...I am looking for the day when there will be a greater justice in this country.. Lyttleton and his minions have sent troops to our peaceful country. They have deposed our elected government and destroyed our constitution, limited though it was.

Where then was the crisis? They created it. Out of the disorder which

they created, they assume Emergency powers. But let us look at the application of their fascist order. Those who are their paid agents or the sympathizers of imperialism the imperialists are allowed every facility. No restrictions are placed on their movements. The Emergency Orders are relaxed for some members of the puppet government. You have refused me the privilege of calling Governor Savage as a witness. He should be brought here to give evidence as to why he placed a restriction order off. We demand free movement is prejudicial to public safety and order. I will not obey the Emergency Orders. I advise the people not to obey these laws.

Dr. Jagan was immediately sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour. On the second charge of holding an illegal procession he was sentenced to two months imprisonment or \$100 fine. The two months imprisonment will run concurrently with the first sentence. In the week following the arrest of Dr. Jagan, over seventy persons were arrested on various charges including disorderly behaviour, holding illegal processions and meetings, assault, etc. One demonstration involving arrests was a march of women before Government House. The police used tear gas in the Party Headquarters on the 7th, closing down the office and posting armed guards. At the moment of writing, police still guard the office. However, another office was opened in another party of Georgetown on the following day.

The police, in a determined effort to smash the People's Progressive Party had carried out frequent raids on the Party Headquarters, as prior to the closing down, carrying off all Party property. The printery which works for the party was closed down for 24 hours and armed guards posted. There has been some relaxation, in that the printery is now opened, but is still guarded and the print is warned not to work for the P.P.P. This has held back the printing of the party's official organ "Thunder". Party members are treated by security police, *permission is* refused for the release of contacts with the party, and police raids are frequent. British Guiana is a police state at the moment.

Following the arrests and the use of tear gas in the first week of the Emergency, the Governor proclaimed the state of emergency in Georgetown and environs. During the following week, the scene shifted to the country, where several *spontaneous* strikes had already occurred on the sugar estates. At Port Kaituma over 65 workers were arrested and tear gas used as they protested the arrest of Dr. Jagan. As the police carried away only a few of the demonstration leaders, others jumped on the police barricades, demanding to be arrested with their comrades. That area was then proclaimed by the Governor.

Immediately after Dr. Jagan's arrest, Mr. Burnham, Chairman of the P.P.P. was served with a restriction order, halving the total number thus restricted to ten. He refused to comply with the section requiring him to report to the police twice weekly and on April 10th, most of the restricted persons refused to report. Quite suddenly, on Good Friday night, the Governor withdrew that section of the order requiring twice weekly reports to the police.

On the Queen's Birthday, the people were mourning and a sign of protest.

Thus, leading the campaign of defiance of the Emergency Laws which deny the people of Guiana their legitimate rights, Dr. Jagan became the first political leader to take voluntary imprisonment in British Guiana.