

# Cheddi Jagan - The Man

by Janet Jagan

Cheddi Jagan liked to consult a wide range of people on important matters. That was the pattern he established during his long years in the opposition as well as the years he spent heading his PPP Governments.

He faced criticism frequently for taking too long, in some people's opinion, to come to a decision. However, he always sought a wide variety of opinions so that he could sift through them and, as he hoped, come to a realistic, practical and correct decision.

I can recall becoming the victim of this practice. In the PPP's Executive Committee, he would sometimes put forward an idea or proposal, sometimes arising out of a point someone made. This would be debated and sometimes, at the same meeting, a conclusion arrived at.

When the Executive Committee met the next week, he would sometimes – but of course not always – re-discuss the matter and come up with a different point of view.

I was frequently blamed for this change or shift and it would be said, behind the scenes, that I influenced him and succeeded in changing his opinions.

But they did not understand how he operated. Once the idea was conceived, he thought it out carefully and consulted a wide range of people, to hear their views. He was the direct opposite of "rigid." His ideas could flow in all directions until the point at which he felt he had sufficient ventilation of the idea to come to a conclusion.

I used to tell him that I was the official scapegoat and I would be blamed for just about anything that went wrong or did not please whosoever was involved. And he used to laugh and say that I had a persecution complex.

Even now, at the slightest excuse, there is a tendency to blame me for things really impossible for me to have been involved in. But that is its own story.

Cheddi Jagan was very easy to live with. His needs or requirements were small. He ate small amounts of food and never over ate. He loved to garden and plant fruit trees. One of his greatest enjoyments was to eat the fruit from the trees he had planted and cared for. He exercised daily, usually while listening to the news. Every day, at least twice a day, he had to hear the news and his greatest possession was a small radio he could carry about and listen to when he had time.

He used his time carefully and rarely wasted it. He sat at his desk for long hours, in and out of government. The Cheddi Jagan Research Centre which houses his many papers, can testify to his output.

But, at the same time, he always looked forward to going out in the country or walking about Georgetown, meeting people. He told me that he felt "refreshed" when he met people at public meetings, just stopping off when people gathered, at social functions like weddings, or Party fund-raising activities. And, of course, people loved to be with him.

I can recall some of the hard times when stones and rotten eggs were thrown at him and others. When we would go into friendlier areas the women and children would come out and smother him with flowers. He accepted both kinds of treatment as part of the struggle.

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