

**Salvaging Democracy?
The United States and Britain in British Guiana
1961-1964**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Salvaging Democracy? The United States and Britain in British Guiana 1961-1964.

This thesis, based upon recently released British and American government documents, considers Anglo-American intervention in British Guiana in the years 1961-1964, when the American and British governments successfully engineered the removal from office of the democratically elected government of self-confessed marxist and alleged international communist, Cheddi Jagan.

The thesis examines the sources of the Kennedy administration's hostility to the Jagan government, locating its concerns in the demands of American domestic politics and in the perceived need to preserve the international credibility of the United States in the bipolar zero-sum context of the Cold War.

The administration realised its objectives in British Guiana through a multitrack process of intervention in the political, economic and industrial life of the colony and through sustained diplomatic pressure on the British government. The thesis investigates the instruments of intervention employed in Jagan's removal, highlighting particularly the role of the American and international trade union movements as agents of American foreign policy, and the political ramifications of American economic aid or non-aid for developing countries. It also examines the symbiotic relationship between Washington and leaders of British Guiana's political opposition who encouraged and facilitated intervention in the colony.

The thesis is more than a self-contained case study in the means and motives of intervention. It uses intervention in British Guiana as a base from which to approach broader Cold War, alliance and hemispheric issues. Placing events in the colony in the multiple contexts of the Cuban revolution, the globalisation of the American doctrine of 'containment', and the colony's volatile internal political situation, the thesis examines how an ostensibly peripheral country of little demonstrable interest to the United States became drawn into the Cold War. Finally, the thesis analyzes the conflicts over often bureaucratically defined policy preferences both within and between the British and American governments. In particular it demonstrates the distortion of British policy-making which resulted from the priority given to the preservation of the 'Special Relationship' with the United States.

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Extended Abstract

Salvaging Democracy?

The United States and Britain in British Guiana 1961-1964.

The subject of this thesis is Anglo-American intervention in British Guiana, the only British colony on the South American mainland, in the early 1960s. The administration of John F. Kennedy successfully sought the removal from office of the government of the self-confessed marxist and alleged international communist, Cheddi Jagan, and its replacement by a government expected to be more sensitive to the national security needs of the United States. The administration achieved its objectives through a process of intervention in the political, economic, and industrial life of the colony, and through constitutional manipulation resulting from sustained diplomatic pressure on the British government. This study examines the motivations and mechanics of this intervention. Moreover, the experience of British Guiana in the early 1960s is used to investigate broader Cold War, hemispheric and alliance issues; the American encounter with the developing world and anti-colonial nationalism during the Cold War, the operation of the Anglo-American 'special relationship', and the impact of the Cuban revolution on the policy of the Kennedy administration towards Latin America.

The thesis is based primarily upon recently released government documents at the National Archives and John F. Kennedy Library in the United States and at the Public Record Office in London, supplemented with the records of the International Department of the AFL-CIO at the George Meany Memorial Archives in Silver Spring Maryland, and with a series of interviews with a number of those closely connected with the events with which this study is concerned.

The thesis examines the sources of American hostility to the Jagan government and finds that American concerns about British Guiana were rooted not in demonstrable economic or

strategic interests in the colony, but rather in less tangible and interdependent domestic political and international imperatives, articulated in a frequently expressed fear of a 'second Cuba' or a 'second Castro'. It was assumed that the emergence of a second communist state in the western hemisphere, or a regime which could be presented as such, would tarnish the administration's domestic reputation, leaving it vulnerable to Republican charges that it was 'soft' on communism and threatening Kennedy's prospects of securing a second term in 1964. It would undermine the international credibility of the United States as the defender of the 'free world' in the global struggle against communism, leading America's allies to question their faith in the ability of the United States to protect them and emboldening America's enemies to aggression.

By exploring the motivations of American policy, this case study in intervention addresses the question of how ostensibly peripheral areas of little substantive or strategic value to the United States became drawn into the Cold War. It demonstrates also that the impetus for intervention did not come solely from Washington, pointing to a collaborative relationship between the Kennedy administration and the indigenous forces of opposition to Jagan, with their own racial, ideological, and personal stakes in Jagan's removal, who assiduously cultivated and facilitated American intervention. The expansive definition of American national security left the United States vulnerable to manipulation by local elites as the corollary of superpower status and hemispheric hegemony.

American concerns about British Guiana under a Jagan government were derivative and symbolic. They were also, as was recognised in London, at best exaggerated and at worst inaccurate. Indeed, a major theme of this study is the persistent divergence of thinking in London and Washington. The two governments differed in their assessments of Jagan's ideological orientation and of the implications of his convictions for the future of British Guiana and for American national security. These differing assessments were a product of their relative positions in the world order of the early 1960s and their different historical experiences. Where the Americans saw the machinations of international communism and insisted upon Jagan's removal, the British saw anti-colonial nationalism, arguing that Jagan's

militancy would be moderated by the responsibilities of office, and advocating a policy of cooperation with his government in an attempt to tie British Guiana to the West. The thesis explores the process by which Washington persuaded a sceptical ally to acquiesce in its demand for intervention. The eventual submission of the British government to an American agenda at odds with its preferred policy, reveals the distorting effect of the primacy accorded to the 'special relationship' with the United States on British policy making.

Significant debates about the threat posed by Jagan and the best means of meeting that threat took place within as well as between the British and American governments. The thesis highlights how bureaucratically defined interests informed the responses, analyses and policy prescriptions of the interested government departments and agencies, revealed on the British side in the divergent positions of the Foreign Office, Colonial Office and Treasury, and on the American side in the staunchly anti-Jagan position of the Agency for International Development [AID], and in the gulf of perception which separated American officials on the ground in British Guiana from their superiors in Washington.

In examining the mechanics of intervention the thesis also highlights, in particular, the role played by the American and international trade union movements as agents of American foreign policy and CIA sponsored destabilisation, and considers the political implications of American economic aid or non-aid for a developing country and its effectiveness as an instrument of intervention.

The thesis is organised chronologically and divided into seven chapters. Chapter One outlines the background to intervention, placing it in the context of the economic, social and political characteristics of the colony, with particular reference to the development of a racially defined sectionalism which came to pervade all aspects of life. It is important to dispel any assumption that British Guiana provided a tabula rasa on which the American government could write at will. The parameters of intervention in British Guiana in the 1960s were defined by the colony's historical development, and the methods employed in bringing

about Jagan's downfall and their relative effectiveness can only be understood in the context of British Guiana's prevailing political, economic, and social conditions.

This chapter investigates the events surrounding British Guiana's first experiment with universal suffrage and internal self-government in 1953 which brought Jagan to power at the head of an interracial nationalist movement and which ended in the suspension of the constitution after only 133 days with the British government claiming that a communist conspiracy was afoot. It charts political developments in British Guiana in the wake of the constitutional suspension. A split in the independence movement and the ossification of this split along racial lines had important implications for the future, providing an avenue for external intervention. British efforts to curtail Jagan's influence following the suspension of the constitution were superseded, less through choice than necessity, by London's gradual reevaluation of his alleged communist credentials which allowed the PPP to return to office in 1957 and which by 1961 was expressed in a commitment to working with a Jagan government and preparing British Guiana for independence under his leadership.

Chapter Two considers the implications for Jagan of Kennedy's election to the Presidency of the United States in 1960 in the context of the new President's expressed policy preferences in Latin American and the developing world. This chapter charts the development of an Anglo-American policy towards British Guiana between January 1961 and September 1961, highlighting the absence of any Anglo-American consensus. Far from immediately deferring to Washington's requests for Jagan's removal, British officials, convinced that Jagan was "salvageable for democracy", successfully resisted American demands and shaped at least the overt side of the Anglo-American action programme which emerged in September 1961.¹ Despite Anglo-American differences over threat perception and policy prescription, the British government secured American acquiescence in a policy of cooperation with Jagan, predicated particularly on the provision of aid for economic development to his government.

¹ Telegram, DOS to Amembassy Ottawa, No.128, 12 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

It is contended, however, that from the outset Washington's commitment to this cooperative policy was severely limited and largely cosmetic.

Chapter Three charts and considers the rapid demise of the Anglo-American cooperative policy between October 1961 and January 1962 as American policy evolved from a grudging commitment to cooperation with Jagan to non-compliance with the agreed Anglo-American programme and political disengagement from the Jagan government. The chapter focuses on Jagan's visit to Washington in October 1961 and his attempt to secure a commitment from the Kennedy administration to provide aid for economic development to British Guiana. Not only did Jagan fail to secure the level of American assistance he sought, but the administration immediately reneged on the limited promise of assistance it did make. The last months of 1961 were characterised by American stalling on the aid question which violated not only the commitment made to Jagan in Washington but also the agreed Anglo-American agenda. The chapter emphasises the persistence and force of the Cuban analogy in American policy-making circles: despite his best efforts to dispel American concerns, Jagan's visit to Washington confirmed and reinforced American preconceptions of him as an incipient Castro figure. It highlights also the continued politicisation of the American foreign aid programme even in its ostensibly 'non-political' developmental incarnation after 1961, demonstrating the continued importance of the perceived ideological orientation of the governments of potential recipient countries in determining which states would or would not receive economic aid.

Chapter Four explores the shift in American policy from non-cooperation to outright hostility and intervention during 1962. This shift was facilitated by developments within British Guiana itself when the opposition parties, emboldened by the evident lack of American enthusiasm for Jagan, attempted to overthrow the PPP government, resulting in rioting in the colony's capital, Georgetown, in February 1962. With the February disturbances held up by the Kennedy administration as evidence of the fragile legitimacy of Jagan's regime this chapter analyzes the intensification of American efforts to persuade a British government already uncomfortable with the drift of American thinking to concede to its demand for

Jagan's banishment from office, and the grudging and gradual British acquiescence to the American insistence that democracy could only be salvaged in British Guiana by Jagan's removal. The chapter traces also the concomitant search for alternative political leadership in British Guiana, illuminating the role played by the colony's political opposition leaders in encouraging and channelling external intervention in their country.

Chapter Five analyzes the American-backed attempt to bring down the Jagan government through a general strike in British Guiana between April and July of 1963, and the culmination of American diplomatic pressure on the British government in Kennedy's meeting with Macmillan at Birch Grove House in June 1963. Birch Grove witnessed the final acquiescence of the British to American demands for Jagan's downfall. British capitulation was confirmed at the British Guiana Constitutional Conference in November 1963, when Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys announced the introduction of a new system of proportional representation in British Guiana designed to ensure Jagan's removal and his replacement with a coalition of the colony's opposition parties. This chapter illuminates the role of the American and international trade union movements as instruments of American Cold War foreign policy and CIA-sponsored destabilisation, in sustaining if not fomenting a general strike which further weakened Jagan's government and provoked racial violence. It once again demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between Washington and indigenous opposition groups with their own stakes in Jagan's demise. It considers also how the fruits of American-backed destabilisation efforts - escalating racial violence and precarious governmental legitimacy - provided the British with an albeit erroneous rationale for constitutional manipulation in November 1963.

The sixth chapter considers the implementation of the Sandys's decisions from the Constitutional Conference in 1963 until December 1964 when, following an election under the new PR electoral system, Jagan's removal from office was finally realised. It investigates Jagan's fruitless attempts through 1964 to effect a reversal of the Sandys' decisions, and considers in particular the implications for British policy in British Guiana of the

replacement of the Conservative government in October 1964 by a Labour government headed by Harold Wilson.

The conclusion considers some of the long-term consequences for British Guiana of Anglo-American intervention which removed a democratically elected government and replaced it with one dependent on force and fraud to provide any semblance of legitimacy. Between 1961 and 1964 democracy in British Guiana was not salvaged. It was subverted and sacrificed to expansively defined American security interests and to the British determination to preserve what they continued to believe was a 'special relationship' with the United States.

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My greatest debt is to my family and friends who have provided the crucial blend of support and distraction which has sustained me over the past several years. Thanks also go to Jo Charrington and John Davis for their moral support and practical advice, to Matthew Jones

and Paul Gillingham for reading drafts of the thesis, and finally to David Dabydeen, who first introduced me to Guyana.

List of Abbreviations in Text and Footnotes.

AD	Acción Democrática
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organisations
AFSCME	American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees
AID	Agency for International Development
AIFLD	American Institute of Free Labor Development
ALCAN	Aluminium Company of Canada
ASNE	American Society of Newspaper Editors
BG	British Guiana
BGEIA	British Guiana East Indian Association
BGLU	British Guiana Labour Union
CA	Caribbean Area
CCL	Caribbean Congress of Labour
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CCWU	Clerical and Commerical Workers Union
CDF	Central Decimal File
CFPF	Central Foreign Policy File
CGR	Classified General Records
CLC	Caribbean Labour Congress
CPC	Colonial Policy Committee
CO	Colonial Office
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CS	Secretary of State for the Colonies/Colonial Secretary
<i>CSt</i>	<i>Caribbean Studies</i>
COS	Countries Series
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Caribbean Quarterly</i>
<i>DH</i>	<i>Diplomatic History</i>
DLF	Development Loan Fund
DOS	Department of State/State Department
ECLA	Economic Commission for Latin America
FO	Foreign Office
<i>FRUS</i>	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
FS	Foreign Secretary
FUGE	Federated Union of Government Employees
GAWU	Guiana Agricultural Workers Union
GIWU	Guiana Industrial Workers Union
GMMA	George Meany Memorial Archives
GSWU	Guiana Sugar Workers Union

GUMP	Guyana United Muslim Party
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
IAD	International Affairs Department
IADB	Interamerican Development Bank
ICA	International Cooperation Administration
ICFTU	International Conferation of Free Trade Unions
<i>IJ</i>	<i>International Journal</i>
INR	State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research
ITS	International Trade Secretariat
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>
<i>JISWA</i>	<i>Journal of International Studies and World Affairs</i>
JFKL	John F. Kennedy Library
JP	Justice Party
<i>LAP</i>	<i>Latin American Perspectives</i>
LCP	League of Coloured People
<i>LCS</i>	<i>Labour, Capital and Society</i>
LBJL	Lyndon B. Johnson Library
LPA	Archives of the British Labour Party
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
Memcon	Memorandum of Conversation
MPCA	Manpower Citizens Association
MSP	Mutual Security Program
NA	National Archives
NDP	National Democratic Party
NEC	National Executive Committee
NLF	National Labour Front
NY	New York
OAS	Organisation of American States
OPC	Overseas Policy Committee
ORIT	Organizacion Regional Interamericana De Trajabadores
PAC	Political Affairs Committee
PEP	Peace and Equality Party
POS	Port of Spain
PM	Prime Minister
PNC	People's National Congress
PPP	People's Progressive Party
PR	Proportional Representation
PreP	Pre-Presidential Papers
PRO	Public Record Office
PSI	Public Service International

<i>PSQ</i>	<i>Political Science Quarterly</i>
PTTI	Postal, Telephone and Telegraph Workers International
PWU	Postal Workers Union
PYO	Progressive Youth Organisation
RG	Record Group
RMB	Rice Marketing Board
SOS	Secretary of State
<i>SES</i>	<i>Social and Economic Studies</i>
SF	Subjects File
SFRC	Senate Foreign Relations Committee
SNIE	Special National Intelligence Estimate
SPA	Sugar Producers Association
SS	Subject Series
TF	Transition Files
TUC	British Guiana Trades Union Congress [Where reference is made to the
the	British TUC it is noted in the text.]
UDP	United Democratic Party
UF	United Force
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USIS	United States Information Service
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WPA	Working People's Alliance
WPEO	Women's Political and Economic Organisation
YCL	Young Communist League

Introduction

The hostility of President John F. Kennedy and his administration towards Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba is well known and amply documented. In an interview with Aleksei Adzhubei, editor of the Soviet publication *Izvestia*, in November 1961, eight months after the failure of the CIA-planned attempt to topple the Cuban leader at the Bay of Pigs, Kennedy identified, somewhat less than candidly, the source of his administration's objections to Castro's Cuba. Neglecting to mention Castro's anti-Americanism, his ideological proclivities or his Eastern bloc connections, the President declared that it was Castro's 'betrayal' of the Cuban revolution and his questionable commitment to democracy that the United States found so irksome. Despite his earlier promises, Castro had failed to establish the legitimacy of his regime by submitting it to the Cuban people for electoral approval. According to Kennedy, it was this lack of democratic credentials that made Castro so objectionable to Washington.¹

By way of contrast, and as evidence of his administration's infinite ideological tolerance Kennedy pointed to British Guiana [now Guyana], where, he proclaimed, the democratically elected government of self-confessed marxist Dr. Cheddi Jagan and his People's Progressive Party [PPP] had the blessing of the United States. A marxist or communist government was unobjectionable if it was demonstrably the free choice of the electorate. As Kennedy put it: "If the people of any country choose to follow a communist system in a free election after a fair opportunity for a number of views to be presented, the United States would accept that."² Indeed, a month previously, Dr. Jagan had visited Washington, had been entertained at the White House, and had returned home with an, albeit ambiguous, American commitment to furnish aid for his country's future economic development.

However, if Kennedy was economical with the truth about his policy towards Cuba in his conversation with Adzhubei, he flagrantly misrepresented both the spirit and the substance of

¹Transcript of Interview with the President by Aleksei Adzhubei, Editor of *Izvestia*, 25 Nov. 1961, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy 1961* [Washington, 1962], [PPJFK], p.743.

²Ibid.

his administration's policy towards the Jagan government. As an illustration of American tolerance, British Guiana was a peculiarly inappropriate choice. The Kennedy administration's policy towards British Guiana provides an object lesson in the limits of American tolerance in the Western Hemisphere in the wake of the Cuban revolution. The distinction drawn by the President between the Castro and Jagan regimes did not reflect the attitude and policy of his administration. American officials were more apt to play down the objective differences in the political and economic situations in Cuba and British Guiana and between the two leaders, casting Jagan as an embryonic Castro figure. Driven by an obsessive determination to prevent the emergence of a 'second Cuba', far from tolerating Jagan's government, the Kennedy administration successfully sought its removal from office and replacement with a government expected to be more amenable to American interests. This policy was pursued through a strategy of intervention in the political, economic and industrial life of the colony to destabilise Jagan's government, and through sustained diplomatic pressure on the British government in its capacity as the administering imperial power.

This study investigates the motivations and mechanics of this intervention. The fate of democracy in British Guiana at the hands of the American and British governments has received scant attention, dwarfed in the historiography of American intervention in the western hemisphere by the proximate events in Cuba in 1961 and the Dominican Republic in 1965. Intervention in British Guiana may have lacked the drama of not-so covert military operations or the glamour of intervention by the marine corps, but it was no less effective for being low profile. Indeed it could be argued that the reverse was true. In the case of British Guiana, the need for military operations was obviated by economic and political destabilisation and constitutional manipulation. These means of intervention were effectively tailored to the particular circumstances pertaining in the colony.

With British Guiana generally absent from standard accounts of both American foreign policy and British decolonisation policy, the existing literature on the events in British Guiana during the early 1960s is severely limited. It is restricted to Cheddi Jagan's 1966

autobiography *The West on Trial: The Fight for Guyana's Freedom*, and secondary literature which is heavily reliant either upon Jagan's account and interpretation or upon the typically unattributed or uncorroborated accounts of others closely involved in these events.³ British Guiana has long been the academic province not of the diplomatic historian but of the cultural anthropologist for whom Guianese society has provided a classic case study of racially constructed cultural sectionalism. The existing literature which reflects this preoccupation has been of great value for this study insofar as it elucidates the racial dynamic that drove British Guianese politics.⁴

This thesis is based for the most part upon recently released government documents at the National Archives and John F. Kennedy Library in the United States and at the Public Records Office in London, supplemented with the relevant records of the International Affairs Department of the AFL-CIO at the George Meany Memorial Archives in Silver Spring Maryland, and a series of interviews with a number of individuals closely involved with the events with which the thesis is concerned. While there are the inevitable and frustrating gaps in the documentary record, more disappointing has been the absence of publicly available party records for either government or opposition in Guyana. In seeking to illuminate the Guianese corner of the Washington-London-Georgetown triangle, the thesis is by necessity reliant upon contemporary British and American accounts and the existing secondary literature with all its limitations. This evidential gap has inevitably restricted the international dimensions of the thesis. Nevertheless, this study is the first detailed exposition and analysis of Anglo-American intervention in British Guiana based on the available official record from both sides of the Atlantic, and as such, although it may not have satisfied its author's original aspirations to write 'international history', it fills a gap in the historiography of American interventionism in the western hemisphere and in the developing world during the Cold War.

³Cheddi B. Jagan, *The West on Trial: The Fight for Guyana's Freedom*, [London, 1966]; Raymond T. Smith, *British Guiana*, [London, 1962]; Peter Simms, *British Guiana*, [London, 1966]; Philip Reno, *The Ordeal of British Guiana*, [New York, 1964]; Leo Despres, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana*, [Chicago, 1967]; Thomas J. Spinner, *A Political and Social History of Guyana 1945-1983*, [Boulder CO, 1984].

⁴Smith, *Op. Cit.*; Despres, *Op. Cit.*; Roy A. Glasgow, *Guyana: Race and Politics Among Africans and East Indians*, [The Hague, 1970]; Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development*, [Boston MA, 1973]; Ralph R. Premdas, *Ethnic Conflict and Development: The Case of British Guiana*, [Aldershot, 1995].

On the British side the thesis contributes to the literature on the Anglo-American 'special relationship', the preservation of which has been the guiding principle of British foreign policy since the Second World War. Providing a case study of the 'special relationship' in action, the thesis highlights the distorting effect of the primacy accorded to Anglo-American relations on London's definition of its interests and on the policy-making process within the British government.

The central question which this study addresses is why British Guiana, a colony of at most marginal importance in international affairs and of little tangible or strategic interest to the United States, came to occupy the attention of American policy-makers at the highest levels? The thesis identifies the Kennedy administration's concerns about British Guiana and its motives for intervention in the interlocking demands of American domestic politics and the need to preserve American credibility in the perceived zero-sum struggle of the Cold War, particularly in the immediate context of the Cuban revolution.

This case study of intervention demonstrates not only how an ostensibly peripheral developing country became drawn into the Cold War as the American government superimposed its own national security agenda upon that country's domestic affairs, but also that in considering American relations with developing countries the impetus for interference was not simply one-way. The question can be posed: Why, despite its superpower status, did the United States become hostage to the domestic political power struggles of peripheral states during the Cold War? A prominent theme of this study is the role played by Dr. Jagan's opponents within British Guiana in soliciting and facilitating American intervention. This thesis seeks to locate Anglo-American intervention in British Guiana within the context not only of the Cold War and the Cuban revolution, but also within the context of British Guianese domestic politics, and highlights the symbiotic relationship which developed between indigenous and exogenous forces of opposition to Jagan.

Another major theme of the thesis is the persistent divergence of British and American thinking about British Guiana. The two governments differed in their assessments of Jagan and of the threat that he might pose to American national security and in their recommendations for meeting that threat. The thesis examines the process by which the Kennedy administration induced a sceptical British ally to accept its agenda of intervention in British Guiana. It seeks to illuminate the balance of influence within the Anglo-American relationship in the years after Suez.

London and Washington were divided in their perceptions of Jagan and in their preferred policies, but threat perception and policy prescription also differed significantly within both governments. The thesis highlights how bureaucratically defined interests informed the responses, analyses and recommendations of the interested government departments and agencies. This is most clearly revealed on the British side in the variegated positions of the Foreign Office, Colonial Office and the Treasury, and on the American side in the staunchly anti-Jagan position of the Agency for International Development [AID] and particularly in the gulf of perception which separated officials in the ground in British Guiana from their superiors in Washington.

With regard to the mechanics of intervention, the thesis considers not only the relative receptivity of British officials and British Guianese politicians to the American agenda and their roles as executors of the American will. It also points to the role played by the AFL-CIO and the international trade union movement as enthusiastic functionaries of American foreign policy during the Cold War and to the manipulation of economic aid for political purposes. It makes clear the potential political ramifications of economic aid, or in this case non-aid, inherent in the relationship between superpower and developing nation.

The thesis is organised chronologically and divided into seven chapters. In Chapter One, I outline the background to intervention, placing it in the context of the economic, social and political characteristics of the colony, with particular reference to the development of a racially defined sectionalism which came to pervade all aspects of life in British Guiana. It is

important to dispel any assumption that British Guiana provided a tabula rasa on which the American government could write at will. The parameters of intervention in British Guiana in the 1960s were defined by the colony's historical development, and the methods employed in bringing about Jagan's downfall and their relative effectiveness can only be understood in the context of British Guiana's prevailing political, economic, and social conditions.

This chapter investigates the events surrounding British Guiana's first experiment with universal suffrage and internal self-government in 1953 which brought Jagan to power at the head of an interracial nationalist movement and which ended in the suspension of the constitution after only 133 days with the British government claiming that a communist conspiracy was afoot. It charts political developments in British Guiana in the wake of the constitutional suspension. A split in the independence movement and the ossification of this split along racial lines had important implications for the future, providing an avenue for external intervention. British efforts to curtail Jagan's influence following the suspension of the constitution were superseded, less through choice than necessity, by London's gradual reevaluation of his alleged communist credentials which allowed the PPP to return to office in 1957 and which by 1961 was expressed in a commitment to working with a Jagan government and preparing British Guiana for independence under his leadership.

Chapter Two considers the implications for Jagan of Kennedy's election to the Presidency of the United States in 1960 in the context of the new President's expressed policy preferences in Latin American and the developing world. This chapter charts the development of an Anglo-American policy towards British Guiana between January 1961 and September 1961, highlighting the absence of any Anglo-American consensus. Far from immediately deferring to Washington's requests for Jagan's removal, British officials, convinced that Jagan was "salvageable for democracy", successfully resisted American demands and shaped at least the overt side of the Anglo-American action programme which emerged in September 1961.⁵

Despite Anglo-American differences over threat perception and policy prescription, the

⁵Telegram, DOS to Amembassy Ottawa, No.128, 12 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, Countries Series [COS], National Security Files [NSF], Box 14a, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston MA. [JFKL.]

British government secured American acquiescence in a policy of cooperation with Jagan, predicated particularly on the provision of aid for economic development to his government. However, from the outset Washington's commitment to this cooperative policy was severely limited and largely cosmetic.

Chapter Three charts the rapid demise of the Anglo-American cooperative policy between October 1961 and January 1962 as American policy evolved from a grudging commitment to cooperation with Jagan to non-compliance with the agreed Anglo-American programme and political disengagement from the Jagan government. The chapter focuses on Jagan's visit to Washington in October 1961 and his attempt to secure a commitment from the Kennedy administration to provide aid for economic development to British Guiana. Not only did Jagan fail to secure the level of American assistance he sought, but the administration immediately reneged on the limited promise of assistance it did make. The last months of 1961 were characterised by American stalling on the aid question which violated not only the commitment made to Jagan in Washington but also the agreed Anglo-American agenda. The chapter emphasises the persistence and force of the Cuban analogy in American policy-making circles.⁶ Despite his best efforts to dispel American concerns, Jagan's visit to Washington confirmed and reinforced American preconceptions of him as an incipient Castro figure. It highlights also the continued politicisation of the American foreign aid programme even in its ostensibly 'non-political' developmental incarnation after 1961, demonstrating the continued importance of the perceived ideological orientation of the governments of potential recipient countries in determining which states would or would not receive economic aid.

⁶For the role played by analogies and the perceived 'lessons' of history in American foreign policy-making see, Ernest R. May, *Lessons' of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy*, [New York, 1973] and, Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers*, [New York, 1987]. For the Cuban analogy see, Abraham F. Lowenthal, *The Dominican Intervention*, [Cambridge MA, 1972]. The findings of cognitive psychology are employed to explore the psychological dimensions of analogical reasoning in, Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, [Princeton NJ, 1976], and, Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965*, [Princeton NJ, 1992].

Chapter Four explores the shift in American policy from non-cooperation to outright hostility and intervention during 1962. This shift was facilitated by developments within British Guiana itself when the opposition parties, emboldened by the evident lack of American enthusiasm for Jagan, attempted to overthrow the PPP government, resulting in rioting in the colony's capital, Georgetown, in February 1962. With the February disturbances held up by the Kennedy administration as evidence of the fragile legitimacy of Jagan's regime this chapter analyzes the intensification of American efforts to persuade a British government already uncomfortable with the drift of American thinking to concede to its demand for Jagan's banishment from office, and the grudging and gradual British acquiescence to the American insistence that democracy could only be salvaged in British Guiana by Jagan's removal. The chapter traces also the concomitant search for alternative political leadership in British Guiana, illuminating the role played by the colony's political opposition leaders in encouraging and channelling external intervention in their country.

Chapter Five, analyzes the American-backed attempt to bring down the Jagan government through a general strike in British Guiana between April and July of 1963, and the culmination of American diplomatic pressure on the British government in Kennedy's meeting with Macmillan at Birch Grove House in June 1963. Birch Grove witnessed the final acquiescence of the British to American demands for Jagan's downfall. British capitulation was confirmed at the British Guiana Constitutional Conference in November 1963, when Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys announced the introduction of a new system of proportional representation in British Guiana designed to ensure Jagan's removal and his replacement with a coalition of the colony's opposition parties. This chapter illuminates the role of the American and international trade union movements as instruments of American Cold War foreign policy and CIA-sponsored destabilisation, in sustaining if not fomenting a general strike which further weakened Jagan's government and provoked racial violence. It once again demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between Washington and indigenous opposition groups with their own stakes in Jagan's demise. It considers also how the fruits of American-backed destabilisation efforts - escalating racial violence and precarious

governmental legitimacy - provided the British with an albeit erroneous rationale for constitutional manipulation in November 1963.

The sixth chapter considers the implementation of the Sandys's decisions from the Constitutional Conference in 1963 until December 1964 when, following an election under the new electoral system. Jagan's removal from office was finally realised. It investigates Jagan's fruitless attempts through 1964 to effect a reversal of the Sandys' decisions, and considers in particular the implications for British policy in British Guiana of the replacement of the Conservative government in October 1964 by a Labour government headed by Harold Wilson.

The conclusion considers some of the long-term consequences for British Guiana of Anglo-American intervention which removed a democratically elected government and replaced it with one dependent on force and fraud to provide any semblance of legitimacy. Between 1961 and 1964 democracy in British Guiana was not salvaged. It was subverted and sacrificed to expansively defined American security interests and to the British determination to preserve what they continued to believe was a 'special relationship' with the United States.

Chapter 1

Prelude to Intervention: Racialism, Marxism, Anti-colonialism and the Interventionist Precedent. British Guiana to 1961

British Guiana, independent as Guyana since 1966, was the only British colony on the South American mainland. First colonised by the Dutch in the early seventeenth century, the colony came under British control in 1803. Although situated on the northeastern shoulder of Latin America, sharing borders with Venezuela, Dutch Guiana [now Surinam] and Brazil, British Guiana was and remains demographically, economically, culturally and politically more akin to the islands of the anglophone Caribbean than its continental neighbours.

Cheddi Jagan, the leader of the nationalist movement which developed in the colony after the Second World War, wrote in 1954 that "the history of British Guiana can truly be said to be the history of sugar".¹ Plantation agriculture was established in the colony by the Dutch, and was continued and consolidated under British rule. The dominance of the plantation system for two centuries shaped all aspects of economic, political and social development in British Guiana. It bequeathed to the colony a virtually monocrop economy, dependent on the export of a small number of primary products and subject to the fluctuations of the world market. Although in the Dutch period the colony produced sugar, cotton and coffee, the British preferential system left these last two products vulnerable to competition from North America, so by the mid-nineteenth century, the estates of British Guiana, and indeed the entire colony, were run exclusively in the interests of sugar production.² Throughout the nineteenth century, to maximise their profits and ensure their control over the labour market, planters discouraged any diversification of the economy or exploration of the country's mythically mineral rich interior.³ The expansion of peasant rice production and the bauxite industry which accelerated after World War One did begin to erode the sugar monopoly.⁴

¹Cheddi Jagan, *Forbidden Freedom: The Story of British Guiana*, [London, 1954], p.19.

²Raymond T. Smith, *British Guiana*, [London, 1962], pp.11-37.

³Smith, *Op.Cit.*, p.62; Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guianese Working People*, [London, 1981], pp.175-176.

⁴Smith, *Op.Cit.*, pp.63-70.

Despite these developments, however, the economy remained dominated by the primary industries of agricultural production and mineral extraction, reliant upon the export of these goods and the importation of manufactured products. As late as 1959 sugar and sugar related products still accounted for 47.7% of the value of British Guianese exports.⁵

In the twentieth century, a process of consolidation and aggregation brought British Guiana's sugar plantations under the almost exclusive control of one British-owned firm, Bookers Sugar Estates Ltd., an arm of London-based Booker Brothers McConnell & Company Ltd. By 1960, fifteen of the nineteen sugar plantations were operated by Bookers, whose interests in the colony were not restricted exclusively to the production of sugar.⁶ The company came to dominate trade and commerce and expanded into timber and shipping. So pervasive was its influence that it was frequently observed that the acronym BG stood not for British Guiana but for Booker's Guiana.⁷

Plantation agriculture created British Guiana's immigrant society, dictating the importation of immigrant workers to provide the cheap labour essential to estate production. Early Dutch attempts to enslave the native Amerindian population for this purpose failed. Instead, slaves were imported from Africa. After the abolition of slavery in the colonies in 1833, plantation owners, faced with the difficulties of retaining freed slaves on the estates, imported indentured workers: an effort, they claimed, to defray the rising costs of free labour, but which concomitantly restored planter control over the labour supply threatened by emancipation.⁸ Accounts of the conditions on the estates indicate that, legal status aside, the indentureship system is materially not easily differentiated from slavery. Indentured labourers were contracted for a period of up to five years after which time they could return home or remain in the colony by renewing their indentureship or forfeiting their return passage for a plot of land on or adjacent to the estates. Indentureship diversified the racial

⁵Ibid. p.58.

⁶Ibid. pp.59, 82-87; For an account of Bookers involvement in BG see M. Shahabudeen, *From Plantocracy to Nationalisation: A Profile of Sugar in Guyana*, [Georgetown, 1983], pp.92-97.

⁷Jagan, 1954, *Op. Cit.*, p.20.

⁸Smith, *Op. Cit.*, pp.37-51; Rawle Farley, "The Rise of the Peasantry in British Guiana", *SES*, 2:4, 1954; Rodney, *Op. Cit.*, pp.31-43.

mix in the colony. It brought immigrants from China, Madeira, Portugal, Ireland, the UK, Germany and Malta. By far the majority of indentured labourers came from the Indian subcontinent. Between 1838 and the abolition of indentureship in 1917, 238,960 Indians arrived in British Guiana.⁹ East Indians became the largest single ethnic group in the population. By 1953, the racial distribution of the population of 465,470 was:

East Indian	215,260
African	165,090
Mixed	51,200
Amerindian	18,190
Portuguese	8,340
European	4,050
Chinese	3,340 ¹⁰

With a higher East Indian birth rate and the eradication of malaria in rural areas, the East Indian community would soon comprise a majority of the population.¹¹

The slim rewards available to workers and the divide and rule techniques of the sugar planters and their managers combined to throw British Guiana's two largest ethnic groups into economic competition during the nineteenth century. The arrival of predominantly East Indian indentured labourers reduced employment opportunities for free African workers on the sugar estates and drove down wages. The first waves of indentured immigrants effectively served as strikebreakers. Economic competition was accompanied by physical separation and cultural differences between the two ethnic groups. The East Indian population was, initially at least, confined to the estates, while freed slaves lived in village communities. East Indian immigrants brought their own language, religions and traditions. Planter control on the estates could therefore be maintained by manipulating racial divisions, using the two races to police each other.¹²

Racial segmentation was reinforced by the persistence of residential and occupational segregation. Africans gravitated towards the urban centers of Georgetown and New

⁹Quoted in Ralph R. Premdas, *Ethnic Conflict and Development: The Case of Guyana*, [Aldershot, 1995], p.19.

¹⁰Figures quoted in Jagan, 1954, *Op.Cit.*, p.14.

¹¹Thomas J. Spinner Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana 1945-1983*, [Boulder CO, 1984], p.13.

¹²Rodney, *Op.Cit.*, pp.187-188.

Amsterdam, accounting for almost 50% of British Guiana's urban population by 1891.¹³ They found employment in industry, in administrative positions and in the professions, coming to dominate the civil service, the police force and teaching. African workers would also come to dominate the bauxite industry. The majority of East Indians, by contrast, remained on the land after their period of indentureship ended, staying in the sugar industry or moving into peasant agriculture, and coming to dominate the rice industry. Although some did enter the retail trades, and increasingly after World War Two began to compete for positions in the civil service and the teaching professions, the East Indian population remained predominantly rural.¹⁴

As these occupational and residential patterns stabilised in the early twentieth century, communal divisions were reflected in and sustained by the development of ethnically exclusive voluntary organisations, of which the most active and influential were the Negro Progress Convention, later the League of Coloured People [LCP], and the British Guiana East Indian Association [BGEIA]. These groups agitated for reform of the colonial system to advance the political participation and economic interests of their respective cultural sections. Although they claimed to represent all members of their ethnic group, their activities had a strong middle-class bias.¹⁵ Racially exclusive and middle-class oriented, these groups nevertheless, in the absence of political representation for the vast majority of the population, helped to stimulate political consciousness in the colony, laying the foundations for the subsequent organisation of an inter-racial nationalist movement.

Ethnic exclusivity also came to characterise British Guiana's trade union movement, reflecting the occupational segmentation of the major ethnic groups. However, the colony's first trade union, the British Guiana Labour Union [BGLU], born in 1919 of the economic dislocation of the First World War, began as a cross-communal class-based organisation seeking to represent both the largely Afro-Guyanese urban workforce, and the rural and

¹³Premdas, 1995, *Op.Cit.*, p.18.

¹⁴*Ibid.* pp.19-20.

¹⁵Ralph R. Premdas, *Voluntary Associations and Racial Politics in Guyana*, [Georgetown, 1972]; Premdas, 1995, *Op.Cit.*, pp.28-31; Cheddi Jagan, *The West On Trial: The Fight For Guyana's Freedom*, [London, 1966], p.60.

predominantly East Indian sugar workers. The BGLU dominated the trade union field for two decades, but its ineffectiveness in the face of employer intransigence in the sugar industry led to its replacement amongst sugar workers by the Man Power Citizens Association [MPCA] in 1937. The MPCA, founded in 1934, was recognised by the Sugar Producers Association [SPA] as the official bargaining agent in 1939. The MPCA was almost entirely East Indian in its membership, and once displaced from the sugar industry, the BGLU was confined to an urban, African membership base.¹⁶ The attempt to organise a general union encompassing a variety of occupational groups was never repeated. As new unions were registered, trade unionism in British Guiana became characterised by occupational and racial exclusivity.

British Guianese society by the mid-twentieth century had succumbed to an ethnically based sectionalism. Communal divisions had been created by the plantation system and perpetuated by the purposeful divide and rule strategies of planters, residential and occupational segregation and widely held ethnic stereotypes born of this segregation, and were reflected and reinforced in voluntary organisations. Commentators have been divided as to the extent of sectional divisions within British Guiana, particularly over the level of East Indian acculturation.¹⁷ Examples can be found from both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to testify to both racial integration and segmentation, to hostility and to cooperation. In the 1960s the colony would be convulsed by racial violence, regarded by some as the inevitable outcome of British Guiana's cultural pluralism. However, although the grounds for racial hostility may have been laid by a century of racial segmentation and competition, the violence and intensity of the racial conflict of the 1960s were unprecedented in British Guianese history. Moreover, whatever the extent of cultural sectionalism, it was not to prove so pervasive as to prevent the emergence of an inter-racial nationalist movement.

The predominant influence of sugar in the economic and social development of British Guiana was paralleled in the administrative and political life of the colony. A challenge to the

¹⁶Premdas, 1995, *Op.Cit.*, pp.33-35; Ashton Chase, *A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana 1900-1961*, [Georgetown, 1964], pp.42-78, 85-90.

¹⁷Contrast Despres, *Op.Cit.*, and Roy A. Glasgow, *Guyana: Race and Politics Among Africans and East Indians*, [The Hague, 1970], with Smith, *Op.Cit.*, and Rodney, *Op.Cit.*

planters from the growing non-white middle class in the years following an expansion of the franchise in 1891 had been abruptly ended by the introduction of Crown Colony Government in 1928.¹⁸ Representatives of the sugar industry and its shareholders were routinely nominated to serve on the largely nominated Legislative Council, in some cases after their attempt to secure an elected position had failed.¹⁹ For those seats that were elected, a restricted franchise and income and property qualifications for candidates prevented the emergence of a legislature representative of the non-white, working-class majority .

The transformation of British Guianese politics began in the 1930s, with a wave of working-class militancy and disturbances across Britain's West Indian territories, in response to the erosion of living standards during the years of the worldwide depression. The depression exacerbated the structural weaknesses of the plantation economy, and sugar prices, in decline since the late 1920s, collapsed. Indeed, it was this crisis in the Caribbean, following the report of a Royal Commission of Inquiry [Moyne Commission] into the origins of the disturbances, with its exposé of living conditions in the West Indies, that alerted the British government to the threat posed by economic deprivation to the stability of colonial rule, and informed the elaboration of the hitherto unthinkable principle that Britain should provide for the economic and social development of her colonies in the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940.²⁰

The Moyne Commission advocated not only economic and social reform, but also constitutional liberalisation. Its suggestions were echoed, at least in the early years of World War Two, by an American government which held imperialism to be central to Japanese success in Asia, and on which Britain was dependent not only for the defence of its colonies in the Western Hemisphere, but for its own survival.²¹ In British Guiana a move towards democratisation came in 1943. Elected members were to hold a majority on the Legislative

¹⁸Smith, *Op.Cit.*, pp.51-57.

¹⁹Jagan, 1954, *Op.Cit.*, pp.21-22.

²⁰John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Postwar World*, [London, 1988], p.137.

²¹Cary Fraser, *Ambivalent Anticolonialism: The United States and the Genesis of West Indian Independence*, [Westport CT, 1994], pp.55-89.

Council, and property qualifications for candidates and electors were reduced. Because of the war, however, new elections under this revised constitution were not held until 1947.²²

Cheddi Jagan has argued that it was the experiences of depression and war that "led to a profound questioning of the existing order" in British Guiana during and after World War Two. For example, the food shortages resulting from the disruption of shipping in the Atlantic encouraged self-sufficiency and "produced for the first time a national consciousness". The arrival of foreign troops in the colony and service in the British armed forces had brought the Guianese into contact with new cultures and lifestyles. With the ideals of the Atlantic Charter and the struggle for Indian independence as further stimuli, British Guiana became, in the years following the war, "a ferment of ideas".²³

Jagan had returned to the colony in 1943 after studying for seven years in the United States. He was born in 1918, the son of East Indian indentured labourers, on the plantation Port Mourant in the heart of British Guiana's sugar belt. His academic abilities and the aspirations of his father, a sugar estate driver took him to Queen's College in Georgetown, the most prestigious school in the colony. Unable to find employment, Jagan left the colony in 1936 to study dentistry at Howard University and subsequently at Northwestern University. These were, by Jagan's own admission, his "formative years".²⁴ It was in the United States that Jagan received his political education, on both experiential and theoretical levels. He witnessed both racial discrimination and abundant poverty, living and working as a student in the slum areas of the big cities. In Chicago he attended evening classes in history and political science. He has recalled the inspiration of Nehru's biography *Towards Freedom*, and the influence of the work of the American historian Charles Beard, the writings of Matthew Josephson and George Seldes, both sharp critics of industrial capitalism, and of Marx. It must be noted, however, that Jagan also expressed admiration for President Roosevelt and the New

²²Spinner, *Op.Cit.*, p.13.

²³Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.62.

²⁴*Ibid.* p.56.

Deal. To Jagan, Roosevelt was "a fighter for the underdog", who had been prepared to take on American big business.²⁵

In Chicago, Jagan met and married Janet Rosenberg, whose political sympathies were on the radical left. It has been suggested that she was a member of the Young Communist League [YCL] during the 1930s, and it would later become a commonly held assumption of British and American observers, building on racial and gendered stereotypes, that she was the major influence on her husband's political thinking, and indeed that while he was the front-man, she was the mainspring of the political party that they established.²⁶

In 1943, unable to practice dentistry in the United States as he did not meet the citizenship requirements, Jagan was nevertheless eligible to be drafted into the US army. Influenced by the position of the Indian National Congress, Jagan was ambivalent about participating in the war and instead returned to British Guiana in October 1943 to establish a dental practice. Janet joined him in December.²⁷

On their return to British Guiana the Jagans sought political involvement. There were no standing political parties in the colony. The Legislative Council was dominated by Europeans. The only existing route to political influence for non-European British Guianese was through voluntary organisations like the BGEIA and LCP, or through the trade unions. Viewing the BGEIA as too middle-class and restricted in its agenda, Jagan became the Treasurer of the sugar workers union, the MPCA, in 1945. It was a short-lived appointment. Jagan found the MPCA to be a corrupt company union, which failed to represent the workers.²⁸

²⁵Ibid. pp.54-55.

²⁶Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.239, 4 May 1953, 741D.00/5-453, Central Decimal File [CDF] 1950-1954, General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59 [RG59], Box 3542, National Archives, Washington DC [NA].

²⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.55-56.

²⁸Ibid. pp.59-61.

Not all the Jagans' efforts to insert themselves into the political life of British Guiana were abortive, however. They participated in a weekly discussion group at Georgetown's Carnegie Library, which brought them into contact with other radical intellectuals, and their views were frequently publicised through letters to newspapers. The Jagans also began to make contact with radicals in the wider West Indies. It was during this period too that the Jagans first found themselves branded as communists when Janet Jagan's advocacy of birth control drew the wrath of the Catholic Church.²⁹

In 1946, the Jagans, with the assistance of H.J.M. Hubbard, a white marxist and General Secretary of the TUC, and black trade unionist Ashton Chase, organised the Political Affairs Committee [PAC]; its name, according to Jagan, inspired by the Political Action Committee of the American Congress of Industrial Organizations [CIO].³⁰ Its declared aim was "to assist the growth and development of Labour and Progressive Movements of British Guiana to the end of establishing a strong, disciplined and enlightened Party, equipped with the theory of Scientific Socialism."³¹

The PAC sought to capitalise upon the international and intellectual environment transformed by the implications of the Atlantic Charter, the emergence of the Soviet Union, and the Indian struggle for independence, and to channel the disparate agitational energies revealed in British Guiana during the years of depression and war into an coherent anti-imperialist movement. Its task was to be primarily educational. Through its newsletter, the *PAC Bulletin*, explicitly marxist in tone and content, the PAC communicated its analysis of the evils of capitalism and imperialism, and advocated self-government, universal suffrage and the replacement of capitalism with a programme of Scientific Socialism.³² Furthermore, the PAC was organised with the assistance of the British Communist Party, which provided organisational support and political literature.³³ The PAC, however, placed no ideological

²⁹Ibid. pp.62-63.

³⁰Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.64.

³¹Quoted in Ralph R. Premdas, "The Rise of the First Mass-Based Multi-Racial Party in Guyana", *CQ*, 20:3/4, 1974, p.9.

³²Ibid. pp.9-10.

³³Despres, *Op.Cit.*, p.184.

restrictions on its members beyond a commitment to national independence. As it became the main forum for political debate in the colony, it grew into an ideologically diverse collection of Guianese intellectuals. Despite the marxist orientation of its founders, the PAC was a broad church. It fell victim to ideological factionalism only when forced to develop a constitutional and political programme after the announcement in 1949 that a Constitutional Commission would visit the colony.³⁴

The Jagans' political activities were not limited to the PAC. In 1946, Janet Jagan shared in the foundation of the Women's Political and Economic Organisation, and in 1947 the PAC made its first foray into electoral politics. Three of its members, the Jagans and Jocelyn Hubbard, stood as candidates in the first elections in the colony since 1935. The elections were conducted on a restricted franchise, but one that had been significantly liberalised with the granting of a new Constitution in 1943, under which the electorate expanded from 11,000 to 59,000.³⁵ The PAC candidates fought as independents in their respective constituencies. Only Jagan was successful in the predominantly East Indian sugar constituency of Central Demerara, becoming the youngest ever member of the Legislative Council at the age of twenty-nine.

The PAC activists drew a number of important lessons from their experience in the 1947 elections that were reflected in their organisational strategies over the next several years. Jagan's victory in Central Demerara, and the defeat of Janet Jagan and Jocelyn Hubbard in predominantly Afro-Guianese constituencies in Georgetown, testified to the potential importance of racial identification in the imminent era of mass politics. To build an unassailable national independence movement by appealing to both the African and Indian workers who together totalled over 80% of the colony's population, the PAC decided to recruit a charismatic African leader to parallel Jagan's appeal to East Indian voters in the Afro-Guianese community.³⁶

³⁴Ibid. p.185.

³⁵Premdas, 1995, *Op.Cit.*, p.39.

³⁶Ibid. pp.40-41.

The election results had also revealed the absence of and the potential effectiveness of a political party with a standing organisational structure, able to reach its grass roots supporters on a permanent basis.³⁷ Only two parties contested the 1947 elections, an MPCA party and a Labour Party, both of which were hastily organised groupings of ambitious individuals, formed for electoral purposes with no long-term programmes. Neither were effective organisations. The Labour Party did secure five seats, but quickly disintegrated after the elections. The MPCA won only one seat, reflecting the lack of confidence of sugar workers in their union. The remaining eight seats were won by candidates running as independents.

In spite of the weaknesses in party organisation, the election revealed the success of candidates with expressed or proven labour sympathies under the new extended franchise. Any further expansion of the franchise towards universal adult suffrage was likely to accelerate this trend.³⁸ After 1947, in an effort to improve their future electability, members of the PAC stepped up their penetration of British Guiana's trade unions. This was accompanied by an organising drive in the sugar industry. The unpopularity of the MPCA had been clearly demonstrated at the polls in 1947. That same year, Jagan, in association with Dr. Lachhmansingh and Amos Rangella, founded the Guiana Industrial Workers Union [GIWU], to challenge the MPCA for representation in the sugar industry. When a GIWU-led strike ended on 16 June 1948 with the fatal shooting of five sugar workers and the wounding of twelve others at Enmore plantation, the PAC took the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to Guiana's sugar workers. The Jagans and GIWU leader Lachhmansingh headed the funeral procession to Georgetown. In *The West On Trial*, Jagan recalled Enmore as a personal turning point. He wrote:

"At the graveside the emotional outbursts of the widows and relatives of the deceased were intensely distressing and I could not restrain my tears. There was to be no turning back. There and then I made a silent pledge- I would dedicate my entire life to the cause of the Guianese people against bondage and exploitation".³⁹

³⁷Ibid. p.41.

³⁸Ibid. pp.39-40.

³⁹Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.98.

Moreover, the events at Enmore and the response of the PAC and GIWU leaders established Jagan as the spokesman for British Guiana's sugar workers, a national political figure with the solid support of the East Indian rural community, a support base that would never leave him. As Janet Jagan reportedly commented, "Enmore made us".⁴⁰

Jagan's membership of the Legislative Council and his "politics of protest", his activities to expose the failings of what he termed the "sugar coated" government, further raised his profile and enhanced his credentials as a representative of the workers and the likely leader of any future anti-colonial movement.⁴¹

With the lessons of 1947 in mind, with Jagan's reputation growing, and with rumours circulating that a Constitutional Commission would soon visit British Guiana and, in view of constitutional developments elsewhere in the Empire, recommend universal suffrage, the PAC launched the People's Progressive Party [PPP] in January 1950. The party inherited its leadership and its aims from the PAC. Like its predecessor, the PPP was committed to agitation for national independence and the establishment of a socialist state in an independent Guiana. *Thunder*, the official organ of the party and the successor to the *PAC Bulletin*, proclaimed in April 1950:

"The People's Progressive Party, recognising that the final abolition of exploitation and oppression, of economic crises and unemployment and war will be achieved only by the socialist reorganisation of society, pledges itself to the task of winning a free and independent Guiana, of building a just socialist society, in which the industries of the country shall be socially and democratically owned and managed for the common good, a society in which security, plenty, peace and freedom shall be the heritage of all."⁴²

Aware of the potential divisive impact of racialism on mass political mobilisation in the colony and the threat of cultural sectionalism to a unified movement for national independence, the party from the outset was explicitly multi-racial in its pronouncements, leadership, membership and popular appeal, most obviously reflected in a dual leadership

⁴⁰Peter Simms, *Trouble in Guyana*, [London, 1966], p.95.

⁴¹For Jagan's activities as a member of the Legislative Council after 1947 see Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.70-96.

⁴²Quoted in Premdas, 1974, *Op. Cit.*, p.15.

strategy. Jagan's personal following amongst the rural East Indian community was complemented by the recruitment of a charismatic Afro-Guianese figure to appeal to the African community: Forbes Burnham, a young lawyer who had returned to British Guiana in 1949 after completing his studies in England. Thus the PPP could be insulated from attacks by racial organizations in any future election campaign. Janet Jagan has recalled that the racial issue was "one of the reasons we conceived the idea of a dual leadership. Burnham, black, as Chairman, Jagan, Indian, as leader of the legislative group. We did that because the racial thing existed...We were trying to get over that."⁴³

The son of a headteacher, Burnham's background was urban, middle-class and academic. He had won the prestigious Guiana Scholarship in 1942, and studied law at the University of London, where he had established his political credentials as President of the West Indian Students Union and Vice-President of the London branch of the Caribbean Labour Congress [CLC].⁴⁴

Burnham was appointed Chairman of the new party. He was joined on the party's multi-racial Executive Committee by PAC veterans, with Jagan as the party's parliamentary leader and Second Vice-Chairman, Janet Jagan as General Secretary, Sydney King and Rory Westmaas, both Afro-Guianese, as Assistant Secretary and Junior Vice-Chairman respectively, and Clinton Wong, of Chinese descent, as Senior Vice-Chairman. The Executive Committee also included East Indians, Jai Narine Singh, Ram Karran, who served as party Treasurer, and Dr. Lachhmansingh, the GIWU leader.

Within a broad socialist or progressive framework, this group was ideologically as well as racially heterogeneous. The PPP's constitution, ratified at the First Annual Party Congress in April 1951, committed the party only to the broad principle of creating a socialist society within an independent Guiana. Ideologically, the views of party members ranged across the progressive spectrum. Former PPP Executive member Rory Westmaas has placed Burnham

⁴³Interview with Janet Jagan, 20 July 1994, Georgetown, Guyana.

⁴⁴Spinner, *Op. Cit.*, pp.28-29.

on the right, "least progressive" end of this spectrum, Jagan in the middle, as "moderately progressive", and included himself in the leading group of progressive intellectuals on the far left of the party.⁴⁵ A number of its members did have communist connections and travelled and attended conferences behind the Iron Curtain.⁴⁶ Westmaas, for example, had been a member of the British Communist Party. However, the party's primary concern was the end of British rule. Ideological nuances were consciously subordinated to nationalist goals. Prior to 1953, ideological differences amongst the leadership did not hinder the party's electoral success, which was based upon its commitment to the principle of self-determination as the solution to the material deprivations and frustrations endured by the majority of Guianese people.⁴⁷

Nevertheless ideological factionalism made itself felt within the party hierarchy even before the PPP scored their first election victory in 1953. For example, Burnham's appointment to the party Chairmanship had been tactical since he never fully enjoyed the trust of the former PAC members, disturbed by his middle-class background.⁴⁸ Such factionalism, reinforced by no small measure of political ambition, would be of grave consequence not only for the party, but for the future of the colony.

Beyond the leadership level, in its broader organisation, the PPP initiated a dramatic departure in British Guiana's political development. For the first time, the PPP leadership built an organisation which encouraged grass roots participation in the party. The local party group or cell was the basic unit of organisation, enabling the PPP to reach and mobilise the people where the PAC had been unable to. The existence of this local structure should not, however, obscure the fact that the party's organisation was highly centralised. The authority of the Executive Committee within the party was absolute.⁴⁹

⁴⁵Interview with Rory Westmaas, 25 July 1994, Georgetown, Guyana.

⁴⁶For a list of these contacts see Appendix A, 'Contacts Between PPP Leaders and International Communist Front Organisations 1950-53', BG Suspension of the Constitution, Cmd.8980, [London, 1953].

⁴⁷Despres, *Op. Cit.*, pp.191-192.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* p.188.

⁴⁹*Ibid.* p.189; Premdas, 1995, *Op. Cit.*, pp.42, 49, 54.

The PAC *Bulletin* was replaced by a new party organ *Thunder*. Edited by Janet Jagan, *Thunder* reflected the political preoccupations of the PPP's marxist wing. Anti-imperialism was cast not in narrow nationalistic terms, but as part of the international struggle of the subjugated peoples of the world against capitalism. The United States, therefore, was included amongst the imperialist nations, impelled by capitalism to maintain a war economy, in contrast to the "peace economy" of the Soviet Union. The United States was attacked also for its support of the South Korean government and its role in the Korean war. *Thunder* had nothing but praise for the USSR, for Mao's China and for the People's Democracies of Eastern Europe as peace-loving defenders of freedom, and reaffirmed the PPP's commitment to Marxist-Leninist Scientific Socialism as it was practiced in the Soviet Union. Indeed, on his death in 1953, Stalin was hailed as the "leader of the Soviet people, the liberator of free Europe and the acknowledged pathfinder of peace."⁵⁰

Through the activities of the PAC and the PPP, their proclaimed socialist objectives, the marxist phraseology and pro-Soviet analysis of world events that characterised their publications, and their connections with the militant Caribbean labour movement, the Jagans and their colleagues rapidly became controversial figures. In 1949, for example, on the island of St. Vincent, Cheddi Jagan's passport was seized and his wife was declared a prohibited immigrant. By 1952 they had been designated prohibited immigrants by the governments of Trinidad and Grenada. Such bans the Jagans regarded as "badges of honour", evidence of their solidarity with other eminent progressive leaders who faced similar bans.⁵¹

Moves against the PPP were made also in British Guiana's Legislative Council. In 1952, Lionel Luckhoo, President of the MPCA and nominated member of the government, introduced the Undesirable Publications Bill. Aimed directly at the PPP's educational and propaganda activities, the Bill prohibited the importation of any literature or material that was deemed by the Governor to be subversive or contrary to the public interest.⁵²

⁵⁰Appendix 1, 'Extracts from the PPP Periodical *Thunder* and from Speeches and Writings of PPP Leaders', Report of the BG Constitutional Commission, 1954, Cmnd.9274, [London, 1954].

⁵¹Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.103-104.

⁵²Ibid. pp.104-105.

In December 1950 a Constitutional Commission arrived in British Guiana. Appointed by the Attlee government, the Commission was chaired by Sir E.J. Waddington, a former acting Governor to the colony in the 1930s, and included Dr. Rita Hinden, a prominent figure in the Fabian society's colonial bureau. The Commission spent two months in the colony, considering the next constitutional step. It heard testimony from a wide variety of groups and individuals, including the PPP. The Commission's final report, published in 1951, advocated the introduction of universal suffrage, a bicameral legislature composed of a House of Assembly of twenty-four elected members from single member constituencies, and three ex-officio members, the British appointed Governor, Financial Secretary and Attorney General, and a predominantly nominated upper house, the State Council. As in the Legislative Council, the Executive Council provided for an elected majority in its Ministerial posts. The Governor, however, would retain the power of veto over legislation.

Writing several years later, Rita Hinden claimed that the Commission had been fully aware that the PPP was the only organised party in the country, that it was likely to win any future elections held under universal suffrage, and that it was under communist leadership. The Commission's concerns about the PPP, according to Hinden, centered on the question of the party's commitment to democracy. She recalled,

"That their idea of democracy was not ours was made only too plain. We talked of democracy as government by consent, by the consent even of the opposition. We talked of the need for constitutional checks - recognised by almost every democratic government in the world - in order to protect the rights of minorities and the freedom of individuals, and to allow an opposition to operate. They could see no point in all this. If a party wins a majority of seats it has the right in the name of the people to do just what it thinks fit. 'The voice of the people is the voice of God', we were told."⁵³

Nevertheless, the Commission decided that self-government should not be withheld on these grounds. To do so would only strengthen the anti-imperialist arguments of the PPP.

Moreover, the Commission assumed that elected office would have a moderating effect on the PPP leadership:

⁵³Rita Hinden, "The Case of British Guiana", *Encounter*, 2 Jan.1954, p.19.

"..One of the most conclusive answers to Communism in colonial territories as we knew from experience was the grant of self-government and the transfer of responsibility to local leaders...We felt sure that one must go ahead and trust that the exercise of responsibility and the force of common sense would win the day."⁵⁴

The return to office of the Conservatives did not disrupt the plans for British Guiana's new constitution, to be instituted with elections in April 1953. The new Colonial Secretary, Lyttleton, was aware of both the organisational strength and communist connections of the PPP, but considered himself committed to the introduction of the Waddington Constitution by the previous Labour government, and further constrained by the granting of similar constitutions to Jamaica and Trinidad in 1944 and 1950 respectively.⁵⁵

However, despite British concerns, the party's election manifesto in 1953 was remarkably non-controversial.⁵⁶ The party affirmed its commitment to independence as the necessary first step to the establishment of a socialist state. Under the Waddington constitution, which did not provide for independence, there could be no transformation of the Guianese economic or social order, but the party pledged itself to a number of reforms: "patches on the torn and ragged fabric of colonial reality".⁵⁷ Despite the party's hostility to the sugar industry and commitment to its eventual nationalisation, there was no mention of nationalisation in the PPP manifesto. The PPP agenda, as proclaimed in its election brochures, was a reformist one. British officials subsequently admitted that the PPP's programme was merely "mildly socialist" and its "implementation...would have been in general of great value to the territory", although they accused the PPP government of departing from this programme once it took office.⁵⁸ It would be more accurate to observe that, in its election brochure, the PPP did not provide any detailed elaboration of its proposed reforms. Thus, apparently innocuous commitments, for example, to investigate the rental values of rice lands, to provide equal educational opportunities to all, regardless of race, religion or class, or to introduce labour

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Minute, CS to PM, PM[53]5, 5 May 1953, Prime Minister's Office: Correspondence and Papers 1951-64, [PREM11]827, Public Records Office, London [PRO].

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Enclosure to Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.239, 4 May 1953, 741D.00/5-453, CDF1950-1954, RG59, Box 3542, NA.

⁵⁸Enclosure to Telegram, FO to Washington, No.106 Saving, 30 Sept.1953, PREM11/827, PRO.

legislation along the American model would, after the elections, become highly controversial issues.

Three other parties contested the 1953 elections. The National Democratic Party [NDP], effectively the political wing of the LCP, was the PPP's only real rival. However, the PPP faced opposition from several other powerful groups. Ranged against it were the Georgetown press, the business community, the churches, particularly the Roman Catholic church in its conservative pre-liberationist incarnation, Hindu and Muslim religious groups, and the MPCA. The campaigning of these groups was characterised by anti-communism and racialism. It was claimed, for example, that the PPP had financed its campaign with "red gold" from Moscow, a charge which Jagan has consistently denied. East Indian racialists alleged that the PPP was intending to submerge British Guiana's Indians in an African-dominated West Indies Federation, while African racialists charged that Burnham was a token African in an East Indian party.⁵⁹

Despite these opposition tactics, the PPP emerged victorious. The party secured 18 of the 24 elected seats in the legislature and the six Ministerial posts. The NDP won only two seats. Independent candidates took four. The PPP's margin of victory came as a shock even to the party itself.⁶⁰ British and American observers attributed the party's success to the superiority of its organisation, when compared with that of the vocal but fragmented opposition groups.⁶¹

PPP victory at the polls in 1953 represented the high point of British Guiana's racially inclusive nationalist movement. The self-conscious multi-racial nationalism of the PPP triumphed over the racialist appeals of the opposition. Often cited as evidence of the party's cross-racial appeal is the victory of PPP candidate Fred Bowman, an Afro-Guianese running

⁵⁹Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.112-114.

⁶⁰Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.239, 4 May 1953, 741D.00/5-453, CDF1950-1954, RG59, Box 3542, NA.

⁶¹*Ibid.*

in a predominantly East Indian constituency, who defeated J.B. Singh, a prominent East Indian legislator backed by the BGEIA.⁶²

However, Leo Despres has demonstrated that, even in 1953, race was a prominent determinant of voting behaviour. He points to the electoral contest in two predominantly East Indian constituencies. In Western Essequibo, where the PPP candidate Janet Jagan was elected with 2,523 votes, 1,452 votes were cast for a rival East Indian candidate solely, Despres concludes, because Janet Jagan was not Indian. In Demerara-Essequibo, where the PPP's Afro-Guianese candidate Fred Bowman won his celebrated victory with 3,346 votes, his four East Indian opponents between them polled 3,860 votes. Bowman's candidacy was experimental. The PPP did not chance running Indian candidates in the African strongholds of Georgetown or New Amsterdam, or African candidates in East Indian Berbice. Racial and personality considerations, according to Despres, enabled many independent candidates to poll sizable votes against the PPP, despite the party's superior organisation and campaigning. He concluded that, "notwithstanding the appeals of nationalism, Africans and East Indians tended to vote in 1953 as separate national communities".⁶³

Despres' research was conducted in the mid 1960s, and was stimulated by the colony's descent into inter-racial violence between 1962 and 1964. For the British government in 1953, it was not the racial implications of the election, but the possible ideological dimensions of the PPP's victory and the concomitant threat to British interests and authority that was the major cause for concern. British officials were aware of the strength of the PPP and of the communist connections of its leadership. But the extent of the PPP's victory in April 1953 caused both surprise and anxiety in London. However, while regarding the PPP as a "near communist organisation", British officials were also cognisant of ideological factionalism within the party and the possibility of a split. Writing before the elections, the Colonial Office observed that the PPP contained a "moderate wing" which might break away to form a centrist coalition with other parties and independents in the legislature.⁶⁴ The PPP

⁶²Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.114-115.

⁶³Despres, *Op.Cit.*, pp.195-196.

⁶⁴CO Report, 'Forthcoming Elections in BG', undated, PREM11/827, PRO.

might be given a chance to govern in the hope that the Governor might be able to woo the moderates in the party away from the extremists. There were some grounds also for the British to hope that the responsibilities of office would modify the views of the PPP ministers.⁶⁵ The party's election manifesto, for example, had been moderate. Colonial Secretary Lyttleton concluded that the party should be allowed to take office provided that its leaders were kept under close scrutiny, and that the British government should be prepared to "take action without delay if they seek to use their position to further the Communist cause".⁶⁶

The next 133 days were, for Lyttleton, an exercise in self-fulfilling prophecy. On 8 October 1953, British troops landed in the colony, the portfolios of the PPP ministers were removed and the constitution was suspended. Operation Windsor, as the British action was entitled, was far from smooth running. The element of surprise considered essential in London was dissipated by press speculation, a number of leaks, and conspicuous troop movements in the Caribbean, all of which forced the British into making premature press announcements and rescheduling the landing of troops. The British government initially intended also to arrest and detain the PPP Ministers. This action was postponed. In the absence of unrest in the colony, such arrests were considered likely to prove counterproductive and to consolidate public support for the deposed Ministers.⁶⁷

The British announced that the constitution had been suspended in order to "prevent Communist subversion of government and a dangerous crisis both in public order and in economic affairs." The PPP and its Ministers were, the British contended, under the control of a clique of international communists, of which the Jagans, Rory Westmaas and Sydney King were identified as the "ringleaders". They had no intention of working the Constitution, and had abused their Ministerial positions to further their own interests and those of the

⁶⁵Memorandum by CS, C[53]261, 30 Sept.1953, PREM11/827, PRO.

⁶⁶Minute, CS to PM, PM[53]5, 5 May 1953, PREM11/827, PRO.

⁶⁷Telegram, BG[Savage] to CS, Personal No.85, 7 Oct.1953, PREM11/827, PRO.

party. Their goal was "to turn British Guiana into a totalitarian satellite of Moscow and a dangerous platform for extending Communist influence in the Western hemisphere."⁶⁸

The main charges against the PPP were laid out in a White Paper published on 20 October 1953.⁶⁹ The Ministers, it was charged, had shown "no concern for the true welfare of the Colony and threatened its progress as an orderly state", had "seriously damaged the economic life of the colony and had set it on the road to collapse".⁷⁰ The White Paper listed examples of the unacceptable behaviour of Ministers. They were accused of fomenting strike action for political ends and of using their legislative position to secure the removal of the MPCA and its replacement by the GIWU. They had introduced legislation to repeal the Undesirable Publications Ordinance and had flooded the country with communist literature. They had lifted a ban on West Indian communists, had neglected their administrative duties, and sought to undermine the loyalty of the police and to gain control of the public service. They had sought to secularise church schools and rewrite school textbooks. They had abused their rights to appoint members of boards and committees. They had threatened their opponents with violence. These allegations ranged from the accurate to the spurious. However, the White Paper provided no evidence to support the British charge that there was an international communist conspiracy afoot to establish a totalitarian state in British Guiana, subservient to Moscow and a providing a staging post for communist infiltration of the Western hemisphere.

Jagan denied the charges of communist conspiracy. In a defence written in 1954 he portrayed his party's programme as essentially moderate.⁷¹ Jagan's protestations of innocent reformism, however, should not obscure the fact that the PPP was committed to the establishment of Scientific Socialism and to the dismantling of colonialism. A number of the party's policies reflected this radicalism and, more importantly, brought the PPP into direct conflict with the colony's most entrenched interest groups. For example, the PPP majority in the House of

⁶⁸Appendix B, Statement by HMG 9 Oct.1953, Suspension of the Constitution in BG, Cmnd.8980, [London, 1953].

⁶⁹Suspension of the Constitution in BG, Cmnd.8980, [London, 1953].

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Jagan, 1954, *Op.Cit.*, pp.73-77.

Assembly passed an amendment to the Rice Farmers [Security of Tenure] Ordinance of 1945. This measure, according to Jagan, was intended to protect tenant rice farmers by forcing landlords to take responsibility for any upkeep of their lands deemed necessary by a District Commissioner. Should a landlord refuse to undertake this task, the government would do it and recover the cost from the landlord.⁷² What Jagan omitted to mention, however, was the proposed manner for recovering these costs. If necessary the land would be sold by parate execution, a legal remnant of Dutch administration. In theory, a Commissioner could order improvements beyond the value of the land and force the sale of the property to the highest bidder, potentially providing for government control of the rice-lands.⁷³

Similarly, as it had promised in its manifesto, the PPP introduced a Labour Relations Bill requiring employers to negotiate with trade unions and to recognise the majority union in any trade or industry, principles enshrined, as Jagan and others [including the American journal, *The Nation*] pointed out, in American labour legislation.⁷⁴ Designed to allow for the replacement of the company union, the MPCA, by the PPP backed GIWU which enjoyed the confidence of workers in the sugar industry, the Bill not only threatened the planters control over sugar, but it also extended wide powers to the Minister of Labour to decide jurisdictional disputes and to define the scope of any industry or trade. In effect, the Bill gave the Minister of Labour and, in the absence of any other organised political party, the PPP "indirect control" over the whole of British Guiana's trade union movement.⁷⁵

The PPP's programme also brought it into conflict with the Christian churches of British Guiana. The party sought to end the system of dual church/state control of schools, which had allowed the Christian churches to control the education of a predominantly non-Christian population and had restricted the advancement of non-Christian teachers. Instead, all schools would be placed under the control of local education committees. The churches denounced the move as an attempt to communise the education system.

⁷²Ibid. pp.73-74.

⁷³Despres, *Op.Cit.*, p.206.

⁷⁴Jagan, 1954, *Op.Cit.*, pp.76-77.

⁷⁵Despres, *Op.Cit.*, pp.207-208.

The PPP was not a vehicle for Soviet penetration of the Western hemisphere. But there was a crisis in the colony in 1953. The PPP in office continued its agitational role, repeatedly challenging the established colonial order. The PPP Ministers were not prepared to operate the Waddington Constitution as the British government and British officials in Georgetown desired, refusing to accept the principle of a gradual transfer of power under a transitional restrictive constitution and the Colonial Office tutelage that governed the process of British withdrawal in, for example, Jamaica and Barbados. The PPP refused to conform to what has been described as the "unwritten code of behaviour expected of colonial politicians", whereby any early radicalism would be moderated by the realities and responsibilities of office, leading to cooperation with British officials in implementing programmes approved by the Colonial Office. Equally, they would disrupt neither British economic interests in the colony nor the prospects of foreign investment regarded as essential to future economic development.⁷⁶

The PPP had condemned the Waddington Constitution from the outset as "a new formula for the continued subjection of our people".⁷⁷ The party perceived limited self-government as an imperialist tactic to blunt the nationalist movement with minor concessions, and would not settle for anything less than full self-government. Under the Waddington Constitution, although it was one of the most progressive colonial constitutions of its time, ultimate authority remained in London. Once elected, the PPP Ministers continued to regard themselves as an instrument of opposition and set out systematically to expose the fallacy of internal self-government, without outstepping the bounds of constitutionality. Writing in *Thunder* in May 1953, Sydney King, now the Minister for Works, cast the PPP not as the governing party but as "the People's Opposition" occupying "positions of strategic advantage" in the government. It is interesting also that King continued:

"This strategic advantage should be used not as some people believe to hand over the wealth of our dear country to the Soviet Union but in the active interests of the

⁷⁶Smith, *Op.Cit.*, p.173; Fraser, *Op.Cit.*, pp.126-127.

⁷⁷Quoted in Report of the BG Constitutional Commission 1954, Cmnd.9274, [London, 1954], para.91.

Guianese people. For the exposure of departmental rackets, for the efficiency of government departments, for the protection and organisation of the working class..."⁷⁸

Jagan has contended that the British suspended the constitution primarily in response to pressure from the American government.⁷⁹ Indeed, in the wake of the PPP's election victory, Churchill suggested that, "we ought surely to get American support in doing all we can to break the Communist teeth in British Guiana", joking that, "perhaps they would even send Senator McCarthy down there."⁸⁰

Certainly American officials registered concern at the PPP's victory. The response of the US Consul General in Port of Spain, William P. Maddox, to the election result was less circumspect than that of the Colonial Office. Maddox thought it unlikely that the PPP's non-communist elements would break with the party. He argued also that, "it would be foolhardy to assume that...power will have any substantially moderating influence upon the PPP, certainly not in the early flush of triumph."⁸¹

Maddox recognised that the PPP was not a communist party and that the communist label could be applied to no more than a handful of the party's top leaders. However, this did not alleviate his concerns. Attempting to answer the central question which the PPP's election victory posed for the British and American governments, whether the PPP was "communist or simply nationalist and radical left-wing", Maddox wrote:

"...it may be doubtful whether more than one or two of the central group of PPP leaders [some of whom may for all practical purposes, be called communists] are solidly steeped in traditional doctrine. But they parrot Moscow phrases, they receive Moscow [or Vienna] guidance and funds, they maintain Vienna [and perhaps Moscow] contacts, and they profess support for some stated Communist objectives. Thus whether ideologically they are communists or not, some of these PPP leaders act and behave like communists, and this is a hard political fact to be reckoned with."⁸²

⁷⁸Extract from *Thunder*, 4:7, May 1953, West Indies Department: Original Correspondence 1948-65 [CO1031]777, PRO.

⁷⁹Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.138.

⁸⁰Minute, PM to CS, M.130/53, 2 May 1953, PREM11/827, PRO.

⁸¹Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.239, 4 May 1953, 741D.00/5-453, CDF1950-1954, RG59, Box 3542, NA.

⁸²*Ibid.*

The Eisenhower administration quickly endorsed the suspension of the constitution. Certainly the British did not anticipate American disapproval.⁸³ The State Department declared that it had been following events in British Guiana closely and had been kept informed of developments by the British. It stressed that the American government "would be gravely concerned" at the threat to hemispheric security should British Guiana succumb to the "international communist conspiracy", and was "gratified" at the British action.⁸⁴

The State Department, however, denied rumours that the administration pressurised the British to act against the PPP.⁸⁵ Neither does the available record offer anything to support Jagan's contention that the Eisenhower administration directly influenced the British decision to suspend the constitution. In the early stages of British planning for the constitutional suspension the need for secrecy dictated that the Americans "should not be given much notice."⁸⁶ The American government was informed of British intentions only after recurrent leaks and press speculation had already made those intentions an open secret, and after persistent inquiries and offers of assistance from American representatives in London made it absolutely necessary in the cause of Anglo-American relations that they be informed.⁸⁷ Notwithstanding the United States' position as global superpower, hemispheric hegemon, and Britain's primary ally, the British were reluctant to take the Americans into their confidence. Far from instigating the suspension of the constitution and removal of the PPP from office in 1953, the Americans were not fully informed of British intentions until 6 October 1953, only two days before British troops landed.⁸⁸

⁸³Telegram, Washington to FO, No.2070, 30 Sept.1953, A10111/1/G, Foreign Office: General Correspondence [FO371]103119, PRO.

⁸⁴Telegram, Dulles to Amembassy London, No.1878, 9 Oct.1953, 741D.00/10-953, CDF1950-1954, RG59, Box 3542, NA.

⁸⁵Telegram, Smith to Amembassy New Delhi, No.421, 16 Oct.1953, 741D.00/10-1253, CDF1950-1954, RG59, Box 3542, NA.

⁸⁶Garvey Minute, 1 Oct.1953, A10111/2/G, FO371/103119, PRO.

⁸⁷Telegram, Washington to FO, No.2123, 6 Oct.1953, A10111/4/G, FO371/103119, PRO; Dixon Minute, 5 Oct.1953, A10111/8/G, FO371/103119, PRO; Nutting Minute, 6 Oct.1953, A10111/8/G, FO371/103119, PRO; Strang Minute, 6 Oct.1953, A10111/8/G, FO371/103119, PRO; Telegram, FO to Washington, No.3853, 5 Oct.1953, A10111/20/G, FO371/103119, PRO.

⁸⁸Eden Minute, 6 Oct.1953, A10111/9/G, FO371/103119, PRO.

In London, the American Ambassador did communicate the American hope that "the strongest possible action would be taken to restore the situation in British Guiana" and inquired if his government could be of any assistance.⁸⁹ But before this can be cited as evidence of "American pressure", it should be observed that this conversation took place on 6 October 1953, when the decision to suspend the constitution had already been taken and the despatch of British troops was an open secret.⁹⁰ Moreover, despite repeated offers, the British government rebuffed any substantial American assistance. The State Department was required only to issue a statement in support of the British government, and to help to justify the British action in Latin America.⁹¹

However, it cannot be assumed that had the British failed to act against the PPP government in 1953, the Eisenhower administration would have tolerated it. CIA activities in Guatemala leading to the removal of Arbenz in 1954 stand as testimony to the administration's intolerance of any potentially communist state in the Western hemisphere.⁹² Events in British Guiana in 1953 helped to alert American authorities to the vulnerability of their influence in the Western hemisphere, and rejuvenated American interest in the future of Britain's Caribbean territories, which had waned since the end of World War Two.⁹³

Following the suspension of the constitution an Interim Government of wholly nominated members was appointed. It included five non-PPP members of the former Legislative Council, five defeated candidates from the 1953 elections, and others drawn from British Guiana's elite. The National Democratic Party [after 1954 reconstituted as the United Democratic Party UDP], heavily defeated by the PPP at the polls, was well represented.⁹⁴

Through the Interim Government the British authorities launched a multi-track assault on the

⁸⁹Strang Minute, 6 Oct.1953, A10111/8/G, FO371/103119, PRO.

⁹⁰Garvey Minute, 9 Oct.1963, A10111/33, FO371/103120, PRO.

⁹¹Telegram, Washington[Ambassador] to CS, No.25, 14 Oct.1953, CO1031/1189, PRO.

⁹²Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: the Guatemalan Revolution and the United States 1944-54*, [Princeton, 1991]; Stephen C. Schlesinger & Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, [Garden City, NY, 1982]; Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention*, [Austin, 1982]; Richard H. Immerman, "Guatemala as Cold War History", *PSQ*, 95:4, 1982, pp.629-653.

⁹³Fraser, *Op.Cit.*, pp.91-102, 124-131.

⁹⁴Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.147.

PPP. A State of Emergency was declared, under which a number of PPP activists were interned. Others were subjected to orders restricting their freedom of movement. Public assemblies were banned. PPP leaders were subjected to police harassment and surveillance. In May 1954 the police closed down PPP headquarters in Georgetown. Known PPP supporters in the public service claimed to have been the victims of promotional discrimination.⁹⁵

The PPP responded with passive resistance. Its leaders deliberately flouted the restrictions placed upon them. Jagan himself was arrested and sentenced to six months with hard labour for violating an order restricting him to Georgetown.⁹⁶ The PPP refused to pay court fines against its members. A number of those detained went on hunger strike. The ban on public meetings was flouted by the designation of PPP assemblies as religious gatherings. Repressive measures were not the only strategy employed by the Interim Government in its attempts to undermine the PPP after 1953. However, the reputation the Interim Government secured for itself as operating an undemocratic and repressive police state would restrict the effectiveness of its other measures.

The campaign against the PPP took place also in the industrial and economic fields. Prior to the suspension of the constitution, PPP members were active in the unions and had enjoyed a cooperative relationship with British Guiana's TUC. The PPP-sponsored GIWU was a member of the TUC and both were affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions [WFTU], communist dominated since the realignment of the international trade union movement along Cold War lines in 1949. The anti-PPP sugar union, the MPCA, had disaffiliated from the TUC and in 1952 affiliated with the Organizacion Regional Interamericana de Trajabadores [ORIT], the regional expression of the American dominated international labour organisation the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions [ICFTU]. Following the suspension of the constitution, trade unionists out of sympathy with the PPP set about reconstituting the TUC with the MPCA at its centre. The new organisation

⁹⁵Ibid. pp.150-155.

⁹⁶Ibid. pp.155-156.

was registered on 11 December 1953. Its constitution precluded from membership any union associated with, or affiliated to, the WFTU or its regional affiliate, the Caribbean Labour Congress [CLC], or indeed any other organisation deemed undesirable by the TUC executive. The new TUC failed to challenge the imposed political order, actively supporting the Interim Government. Indeed, its General Secretary Rupert Tello was a member of that government. It affiliated with the ICFTU in 1955 and ORIT in 1956. By 1960 ORIT was effectively financially underwriting British Guiana's anti-Jagan trade union movement.⁹⁷

British and American trade unionists seized upon the MPCA as a potential bulwark against the appeal of the PPP and the GIWU amongst workers in the sugar industry. In January 1955 George Woodcock, Assistant General Secretary of the British TUC, announced that British Guiana would be the first colony to receive financial and advisory assistance for the development of "responsible" trade unionism, and that the MPCA would be its "chosen instrument for strengthening and developing the labor movement in the sugar industry".⁹⁸ The MPCA was rescued from financial insolvency by this assistance and, with the help of the Sugar Producers Association [SPA] which introduced a check-off system of membership, it expanded the ranks of its official members and its income from subscriptions.⁹⁹ The British TUC was joined in its attempt to develop "responsible" anti-Jagan trade unionism by the American labour movement, which organised seminars for trade union leaders.¹⁰⁰

In the economic field, the Interim Government attempted to undermine support for the PPP by instituting a programme of economic development. Following the suspension of the constitution the British government appointed a Commission, headed by Sir James Robertson, to consider future constitutional development. The Robertson Commission arrived in the colony in January 1954. In its report the Commission reiterated the British justifications for the constitutional suspension and recommended no return to democratic government until such times as alternative popularly based parties had been established, or

⁹⁷Chase, *Op.Cit.*, pp.177-216.

⁹⁸Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.243, 11 Feb.1955, 841D.062/2-1155, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

⁹⁹Chase, *Op.Cit.*, pp.216-220.

¹⁰⁰Despatch, DOS to POS, No.CA-8333, 27 May 1955, 841.06/5-2755, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

the present extremist leadership of the PPP had been displaced by more moderate elements. Suspending the constitution had removed the immediate threat, but the economic and social conditions from which, the commission argued, the PPP derived its appeal and potency remained. The party's success, it was argued, was attributable not to the ideological or political sophistication of the Guianese people making an informed electoral choice, but to broad dissatisfaction with conditions in the colony. The Commission recommended a period of constitutional "marking time", during which, it hoped, "plans for social and economic development would be energetically pursued and that the gradual improvement of social and economic conditions would help to bring about a change in the political outlook of the electorate."¹⁰¹ In line with these recommendations the Interim Government sought, by ameliorating economic conditions in the colony through economic development, to undercut the PPP's appeal.

The British government provided \$44 million for a crash programme of economic development for 1954-55.¹⁰² The political motivations behind the programme were reflected in the allocation of expenditure. A World Bank Economic Mission which had visited the colony in 1953 had designated productive infrastructural investment as the essential requirement for future development. But the Interim Government's development programme was less an economic than a political measure. Expenditure in its two year programme was weighted heavily towards welfare services and particularly housing. As the American Consul General, Douglas Jenkins Jr., observed, the Interim Government "is pinning its hopes on the economic development of the colony, hoping that they will be able to...bribe the electorate."¹⁰³ In this enterprise the Interim Government received assistance from Washington, which initiated an ICA technical assistance programme in 1954. However, the venture was a conspicuous failure. In economic terms the crash programme did nothing to tackle the structural problems of the British Guianese economy, nor did it deliver the anticipated political dividend.

¹⁰¹Report of the BG Constitutional Commission 1954, Cmnd.9274, [London, 1954].

¹⁰²All figures in BWI \$ unless otherwise indicated. US \$1 = BWI \$1.71.

¹⁰³Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.191, 20 Dec.1955, 741D.00/12-2055, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

The heightened and belated interest of the British and Interim Governments in economic development and welfare as a means of undercutting the PPP's support was paralleled by initiatives in the private sector. The growth of the Guianese nationalist movement, the PPP's persistent attacks on the sugar industry and the abuses of the colonial system, and the party's long-term commitment to the nationalisation of sugar had not gone unnoticed in the boardroom of Bookers. Jock Campbell, a Labour Party member and socialist, had been appointed Chairman in 1951. Campbell presided over the reorientation of Bookers policy in British Guiana. He sought to protect Bookers investments and the interests of its shareholders by improving the company's image and coming to terms with Guianese nationalism. He initiated a process of decolonisation, which accelerated after the crisis of 1953, and which involved, for example, the reorganisation of welfare provision on the estates, with centralised administration in Georgetown replacing the historic paternalistic relationship between individual estate managers and their workers. The highest profile decolonisation initiative was a move towards the Guianisation of Bookers' managerial and administrative operations in the colony. Declaring their commitment to Guianisation in January 1954, Bookers accelerated a cadet scheme for the recruitment and training of Guianese personnel, which had been introduced in 1951, but for which, the company claimed, no suitable candidates had yet been found. The first cadets were selected in December 1955.

Campbell's moves to blunt the nationalist attack within British Guiana were accompanied by moves to diversify Bookers interests in other geographical areas, by building up what Campbell described as "hedges against catastrophe".¹⁰⁴

British hopes for undermining the PPP received a boost in February 1955, when, after several months of inter-party manoeuvring and several years of speculation, the party finally split into two factions, led by Jagan and Burnham. Between 1955 and 1957 there were two PPPs, Burnhamite and Jaganite, both publishing their own edition of *Thunder*. It was not until 1957 that the Burnhamites abandoned the name PPP and reconstituted themselves as the People's

¹⁰⁴Shahabudeen, *Op.Cit.*, pp.96-107.

National Congress [PNC]. It was widely believed at the time that the split was a strategic manoeuvre designed to fool the British, whereby the grant of independence to the moderate wing of the PPP would be followed by the reconstitution of the party.¹⁰⁵ But the split was real, and it heralded the end of the British Guiana's racially inclusive nationalist movement.

The assumption of office in 1953 had not put an end to factionalism in the PPP. Party unity was fragile. The glow of election victory was almost immediately tarnished by a bid by Burnham for the party leadership in what has become known as "crisis week". At the party's Third Annual Congress in March 1953, Burnham had already made one unsuccessful leadership bid by attempting to pack the party's General Council with his supporters. After the April elections he demanded to be "leader or nothing". Although Burnham was again unsuccessful, he did force the Jaganites to compromise over the selection of Ministers. Janet Jagan stood down in favour of Burnham nominee Jai Narine Singh. A similar compromise was reached over the party's nominees to the State Council.¹⁰⁶

Following the suspension of the constitution, Jai Narine Singh informed the Governor that he, Burnham and Ashton Chase had been planning to overthrow the extremists in the party but had been "forestalled" by the British intervention.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Singh and others in the PPP protested their innocence of any communist intrigues and lobbied the Governor to be included in the interim legislature.

Commentators have differed in their assignment of responsibility for the 1955 split. Despres, for example, has attributed the break to the machinations of the Jaganite left wing of the party, determined to be rid of Burnham since crisis week. The Jaganites regarded Burnham as a deviationist and a gradualist, likely to succumb to the opportunism of his class. They therefore, according to Despres, sought to discredit Burnham inside and outside the party with a whispering campaign branding him a racist and a capitalist stooge. They sought to

¹⁰⁵Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.186; Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.45, 5 April 1957, 741D.00/4-557, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

¹⁰⁶Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.118-119.

¹⁰⁷Telegram, BG[Savage] to CS, Personal No.100, 10 Oct.1953, CO1031/1187, PRO.

manoeuvre Burnham into a situation where he would be tempted to make a leadership bid, the failure of which would result in his expulsion.¹⁰⁸ At least one contemporary observer, however, did not share Despres' analysis. As rumours of a possible split began to circulate in February 1955, the US Consul General, Maddox, predicted that the Jagan wing would "undoubtedly...exhaust every resource to ward off any rebellion".¹⁰⁹

Jagan blamed the split on the political ambitions and opportunism of the Burnham faction, aided by the British government.¹¹⁰ It was the Robertson Commission, Jagan alleged, that "sowed the seeds" for the split.¹¹¹ In its report the Robertson Commission noted the ideological divisions amongst the PPP leadership. According to the Commission's Report, the Jagans, Sydney King, Rory Westmaas, Brindley Benn and Martin Carter were convinced marxists who believed that only violence and disruption would induce the British government to surrender its colonial territories to self-government.¹¹² Burnham on the other hand was identified as the leader of the PPP's socialist wing and Jagan's rival for the "moral leadership of the party". These socialists, the Report continued, "were essentially democrats and...left to themselves their preference at all times would have been that the party should pursue its constitutional objectives by straightforward and peaceful means."¹¹³

The Commission held the extremists in the PPP to be responsible for the suspension of the constitution. Any further constitutional advance would be conditional upon their removal: "so long as the present leadership and policies of the People's Progressive Party continue there is no way in which any real measure of self-government can be restored in British Guiana without the certainty that the country will again be subjected to constitutional crisis".¹¹⁴ It hoped that the period of constitutional marking time, in the face of the advance of Britain's other colonies towards independence, would bring home to the British Guianese

¹⁰⁸Despres, *Op.Cit.*, pp.210-215.

¹⁰⁹Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.231, 4 Feb.1955, 741D.00/2-455, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

¹¹⁰Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.161-167.

¹¹¹Ibid. pp.161-162.

¹¹²Report of the BG Constitutional Commission, Cmnd.9274, [London, 1954], paras.99-103.

¹¹³Ibid., para.104.

¹¹⁴Ibid., para.212.

people that "the extremist leaders of the PPP and the policies for which they stand are the sole barriers to constitutional progress."¹¹⁵ The message implicit in the Commission's Report was that a return to representative government would follow when the moderates in the PPP broke with the extremists, or succeeded in taking over the party leadership.

While offering obvious encouragement to PPP moderates, the Robertson Commission did not create the ideological differences within the party. These were long-standing. The British government had been hoping for a PPP split since at least the 1953 election. Following the constitutional suspension, the British authorities sought to exploit these tensions through the differential treatment accorded to members of the moderate and extremist factions in the selective use of imprisonment and restriction orders.¹¹⁶ Moreover, in 1957, defending themselves against American allegations that not enough had been done to counter the PPP, British officials confessed that, "the split in the PPP undoubtedly owed much to the patient work by the Special Branch who deserve the highest praise for this achievement."¹¹⁷

Whoever engineered the split, it is clear, and important to observe in light of future developments, that it arose because of differences within the PPP leadership over ideology and strategy and the irreconcilable political ambitions of Jagan and Burnham, both determined to lead their country into independence and neither prepared to brook criticism of their leadership. The split was not initially a racial one. Burnham took with him two East Indians, Jai Narine Singh and Dr. Lachmansingh of the GIWU, hopeful that the latter would deliver the support of the sugar workers. The Afro-Guianese marxists, King, Westmaas and Carter remained with Jagan.

The 1955 split was not the end of the PPP's internecine troubles. In 1956, Jagan spoke to his Party Congress.¹¹⁸ The statement was laden with Marxist-Leninist phraseology and analysis,

¹¹⁵Ibid., para.214.

¹¹⁶Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.155-160.

¹¹⁷Draft Telegram to Washington , 20 Aug.1957, A1019/4, FO371/126078, PRO.

¹¹⁸Printed in *The Daily Chronicle*, 22 Dec.1956; Copy in Caribbean Area [CA], BG 1962, AFL-CIO International Affairs Department [IAD]1945-1971, Countries File [CF], Box 3, George Meany Memorial Archives, Silver Spring MD [GMMA].

and an undisguised reverence for Stalin and Mao. It was revealing on a number of levels. First, Jagan sought to explain the split with the Burnhamite faction: "To understand the PPP split is to understand the forces supporting and operating behind Burnham", he claimed:

"Burnham's background is essentially middle class...This has resulted in his closer association with professionals, school teachers, civil servants, other sections of the middle class and away from the soil, from direct contact with the toiling masses. It is essentially this middle class which is the prime force behind the Burnham faction. One of the main characteristics of the middle-class is its opportunism, its tack and turn, its vacillation putting itself always in the best position to get the greatest political gains".¹¹⁹

On Jagan's analysis, the middle class, reluctant to surrender the opportunities for advancement within, for example, the civil service, which accompanied constitutional advance towards self-government, had pressed the Burnham faction into a deal with the imperialists. However, Burnham's gamble had failed. Dr. Lachmansingh could not deliver the votes of the sugar workers, so instead, Jagan claimed, the Burnhamites were resorting to an appeal to African racialism to garner support, cleverly disguised by the faction's leftist rhetoric.¹²⁰

It was not only the Burnham faction that came under attack, however. Burnham was guilty of what Stalin had defined as deviationism to the right, of "under-rating the revolutionary possibilities of the liberation movement and...over-rating the idea of a united all-embracing national front in the colonial and dependent countries", a deviation which, "threatens to degrade the revolutionary movement and submerge the communist elements in the general welter of bourgeois nationalists".¹²¹ There were others in the party guilty of swinging too far in the other direction. Adventurist deviationism to the left, "over-rating the revolutionary possibilities of the liberation movement and...under-rating the importance of an alliance between the working class and the revolutionary bourgeoisie against imperialism", Stalin had warned, might "isolate the Communist party from the masses and turn it into a sect."¹²²

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

Jagan, perhaps obliquely signalling to the British authorities his willingness to operate the constitution should there be a return to self-government, admitted that the party, by deviating to the left, must bear some responsibility for the constitutional suspension of 1953: "We allowed our zeal to run away with us; we became swollen-headed, pompous, bombastic... We were attacking everybody at the same time. We tended towards what Mao-Tse Tung called 'all struggle and no unity'". For some in the party marxism was dogma rather than a "guide to action". They had failed to filter British Guiana's unique features into their calculations.¹²³

To the more extreme leftists in the party, the Afro-Guianese intellectuals, their idealism already shaken by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and the suppression of the Hungarian revolution earlier in the year, Jagan's speech was a personal and ideological slight and pure opportunism. Jagan was apparently trying to absolve himself of responsibility for the suspension of the constitution in 1953 and to place the blame on them. Moreover, they were concerned at the racial overtones in Jagan's speech. King, Carter and Westmaas resigned from the PPP, and Carter and Westmaas retired from political life. Their resignations were symbolic of the disintegration of the racially inclusive movement for British Guianese independence.¹²⁴

Whatever the ideological subtleties of the fragmentation of British Guiana's nationalist leadership, its most important consequence was the advent of racialist politics. The potential political appeal of racialism had been recognised by the PPP in the self-conscious adoption of the dual leadership strategy, and had been demonstrated in the campaigning and results in a number of constituencies in the 1953 election. However, it was the dissolution of the PPP and the advent of competitive party politics which made racialism politically functional in the national arena. Over the next several years race became the most powerful determinant of party affiliation and voting behaviour, as Jagan and Burnham, capitalising on sectional divisions, mobilised their respective ethnic communities as the bases of their electoral support. Race replaced independence as the fulcrum of political loyalty. Although both the

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Despres, *Op. Cit.*, pp.217-219.

PPP and PNC would publicly condemn racialism and parade high ranking members of the opposite race in their party Executives and headquarters as evidence of their claims to be racially mixed organisations, the multi-racial claims of both parties after 1955 bore little relation to their organisational strategies and the resulting pattern of voter identification. Both parties manipulated and exacerbated sectionalism by the pursuit of Apanjaat politics.

[Apanjaat is a Hindi term meaning vote for your own kind.] Both the PPP and the PNC sought to mobilise their own ethnic community as a reliable base of support, through the socialisation activities of the parties' youth and women's auxiliaries, through party publications, and through community pressure and intimidation.¹²⁵ Moreover, the advance towards independence raised the political stakes further. In the context of impending independence, racialism translated into fear of racial domination - African by Indian, Indian by African. This was reflected in voting turnout which increased progressively from 55.8% in 1957 to 96.98% in 1964, with the PPP and PNC share of the vote by 1964 mirroring the racial distribution of the population.¹²⁶

However, in the first of these elections, in 1957, the pattern of racialist politics was not yet set. In April 1956 the British government announced that constitutional progress would be resumed in British Guiana. Forever associated with the events of 1953, Sir Alfred Savage had been replaced as Governor in October 1955 by Sir Patrick Renison who revealed himself alert to the limitations of the current British strategy against the PPP, which was failing to dent Jagan's popularity, or to build support for an Interim Government associated in the public mind not with economic progress but with repression. As he prepared to take up his new position, Renison expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of the economic campaign against the PPP and suggested that British efforts would be better concentrated on the political front.¹²⁷ Continued political stagnation while awaiting economic improvements to transform the mood of the electorate was likely to prove counterproductive, and was an

¹²⁵Ralph R. Premdas, "Competitive Party Organisations and Political Integration in a Racially Fragmented State: The Case of Guyana", *CSJ*, 12:3, 1973, pp.17-35.

¹²⁶Ibid. p.27; Ralph R. Premdas, "Elections and Political Campaigns in a Racially Bifurcated State: The Case of Guyana", *JISWA*, Vol.14, 1972, pp.271-296.

¹²⁷Note of Discussion with Sir Patrick Renison on General Policy in BG, R.E.Radford, 19 Sept.1955, CO1031/1355, PRO.

abdication of initiative. The Robertson Commission had recommended that, whenever the decision was taken to return to representative government, the Waddington Constitution could be reintroduced with only a few minor amendments. Beginning in September 1955, however, Renison began to agitate for the introduction of a "half-way stage" in the return to self-government to "see how the parties lined up".¹²⁸ In this half-way stage twelve of the twenty-four seats in the Legislative Assembly would be submitted to the electorate, four would be filled by *ex officio* members, and any number of the eight remaining seats could be filled at the nomination of the Governor. Five of the elected members of the Legislative Council would be elevated to the Executive Council. Again the Governor's power of nomination could be used, if necessary, to deprive the elected members of a majority.

From the British perspective, the reintroduction of an elected element in the British Guianese government was not without its risks, not the least of which was the likelihood that the Jagan faction would win many, if not most of the elected seats. Even in the unlikely event of a Burnhamite victory, no-one could predict if Burnham, despite his non-communist claims, would prove to be any more reliable than Jagan in operating the Constitution. Moreover, although the split in the PPP seemed real, the possibility of a reconciliation remained.¹²⁹

Despite these risks, it was believed in London that the balance of advantage lay in moving ahead with Renison's proposals. Constitutional advance for British Guiana was inevitable and would always carry some degree of risk. It was better to take the initiative sooner rather than later to restore some degree of representative government, in order to pre-empt serious agitation for renewed constitutional advance which might force greater concessions than were desirable. Finally, while neither Jagan nor Burnham were particularly attractive figures to the British, in the new environment of competitive party politics, neither was likely to forsake his political ambitions by boycotting the elections or refusing to work the Constitution. Neither could afford to risk bearing the responsibility for a second constitutional suspension.¹³⁰

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Brief, 'BG Constitution', CP[56]100, undated, CO1031/1355, PRO.

¹³⁰Ibid.

The elections took place in August 1957. Renison's original proposals had been amended to provide for a Legislative Council of fourteen elected members, three *ex officio*, and up to eleven nominated members. The constituencies were those drawn up for the 1947 elections which preceded the introduction of universal adult suffrage. Weighted against the Jaganite PPP, they did not reflect an equitable distribution of the electorate in 1957.¹³¹ Despite Jagan's condemnation of Renison's proposals as a "disguised dictatorship", the Jaganite PPP did participate in the elections.¹³² Four parties contested the elected seats, the two PPP groupings and the political vehicles of the BGEIA and the LCP, the National Labour Front [NLF] and the United Democratic Party [UDP] respectively. British officials had been hopeful that Burnham might be induced to cooperate with other "democratic elements" in opposition to the PPP.¹³³ However, a pre-election attempt to merge the Burnhamite PPP with the UDP foundered on the objections of the East Indian members of the Burnhamite faction, depriving Burnham of the UDP's middle-class African vote.¹³⁴ Racial considerations also militated against cooperation between the UDP and the NLF.¹³⁵ The campaign was characterised not only by anti-communism directed against the Jaganite PPP, but also by the use of racial appeals by all the parties.¹³⁶ Of the fourteen seats available in the Legislative Council, the Jaganite PPP won nine, the Burnhamite PPP won only three, and the NLF and the UDP won one seat each.

Set alongside the elections of 1953, 1961 and 1964, the election of 1957 was notable for its low turnout of 55.8%. Governor Renison suggested two possible explanations for the apathy of the electorate. Firstly, the election had been conducted using old electoral rolls. Secondly, many chose not to vote because they disliked their party's candidates on racial grounds.¹³⁷

¹³¹Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.182-183.

¹³²Despatch, Amcongen Kingston to DOS, No.326, 27 April 1956, 741D.00/4-2756, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

¹³³Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.358, 16 May 1956, 741D.00/5-1656, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box, 3205, NA.

¹³⁴Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown, to DOS, No.78, 26 June 1957, 741D,00/6-2857, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Premdas, 1972, *Op.Cit.*, pp.278-279.

¹³⁷Telegram, BG[Renison] to CS, Personal No.27, 14 Aug.1957, A1019/1, FO371/126078, PRO.

Jagan has suggested that the electorate was disillusioned by the split in the PPP and disappointed that there had been no reconciliation between himself and Burnham.¹³⁸ This view has been confirmed by Ralph Premdas' analysis of the 1957 election results. On the basis of interviews conducted in five villages, Premdas concluded that voters had been demoralised and demotivated by the PPP split and, hoping the party would be reunited, were unwilling to vote for racially oriented parties which might disrupt racial harmony in the colony.¹³⁹ If this was an opportunity again to mobilise support along non-sectional lines, British Guiana's politicians failed to take it. Racialism intensified after 1957. The next elections in 1961 would reveal how deeply rooted was the pattern of racially determined party identification.

The victory of the Jaganite PPP in 1957 came as no surprise in London or Washington. British and American officials were under no illusion about the inroads they had made against Jagan. Since the suspension of the constitution, reporting from British Guiana had emphasised the continued strength of the PPP, and after the 1955 split, the Jaganite PPP.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, Governor Renison, despite the importance he attached to building up opposition forces, expressed a qualified preference for a Jagan victory in 1957, observing that Burnham "seems an unlovable and unreliable creature to me, and I very much hope that if Jagan has not for ever gone too far for you and the USA, and if Janet can be kept out of the future, I may find myself in the absence of better alternatives, working on Jagan rather than Burnham."¹⁴¹

Although warnings had been sounded as to the likelihood of a Jagan victory, the 1957 election results elicited some alarm in Washington. The State Department expressed concern not only at what they regarded as a threat of communist penetration of the Western

¹³⁸Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.186-187.

¹³⁹Premdas, 1972, *Op.Cit.*, pp.279-280.

¹⁴⁰Brief, 'BG Constitution', CP[56]100, undated, CO1031/1355; Memorandum, W.B.Connett, 27 Jan.1954, 741D.00/1-2754, CDF1950-1954, RG59, Box 3543, NA; Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.121, 25 Oct.1955, 741D.00/10-2255, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA; Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.191, 20 Dec.1955, 741D.00/12-2055, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205; Memcon, 'Present Situation in BG', 26 July 1957, 741D.00/7-2657, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA; Letter, Renison to Rogers, 5 Jan.1956, CO1031/1355, PRO.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*

hemisphere should the USSR offer aid to Jagan in return for a foothold in the Caribbean. They also feared embarrassment at home over the contentious issue of foreign aid. The \$1million in aid given to the Interim Government had evidently proved of little political utility in undermining support for the Jaganite PPP. The British, it was felt in Washington, were being "too soft" on Jagan.¹⁴²

The British defended their decision to reintroduce an elected element into British Guiana's government as the only means of developing future political leadership for the colony. They denied that they had been "soft" on Jagan. In the field of economic and social development there was "nothing more that could have been done profitably" to undercut the PPP, and in the political field efforts had been made to bolster opposition elements. Indeed, "every possible encouragement " had been given to the opposition short of compromising the Governor's position in working with the incoming PPP government. They were, they reassured the State Department, alert to the dangers of communist penetration. The Governor, therefore, retained sufficient power through nominations to the Legislative and Executive Councils to rein in the elected representatives if necessary. The firm action of the British government in 1953 and the continued presence of British troops in the colony would act as further deterrents to disruption.¹⁴³ With these checks in place, the Governor did not utilise his powers of nomination to paralyse the PPP in office, allowing the PPP working majorities in the Legislative and Executive Councils.

In London too there was some concern as to the likely outcome of the new, albeit limited, constitutional step. The Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, noted that, "it will be important to keep the Americans in close touch with what is going on: they were quite good when the last troubles occurred and if it should be necessary for the Governor to suspend the constitution again we shall certainly need their help in keeping the other Latin Americans quiet."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴²Telegram, Washington to FO, No.1582, 16 Aug.1957, A1019/2, FO371/126078, PRO.

¹⁴³Draft Telegram to Washington, 20 Aug.1957, A1019/4, FO371/126078, PRO.

¹⁴⁴Minute, PM to CS, M413/57, 14 Aug.1957, A1019/3, FO371/126078, PRO.

American and British apprehension about the new PPP Government was unfounded. Jagan criticised the limitations of the Renison Constitution, arguing that it was so hedged by checks and balances as to put the PPP "in office but not in power". Real power remained in London and the British government was able to obstruct a number of PPP initiatives, particularly in the field of economic development, denying Jagan the socialist-minded planning advisers he sought, and refusing to allow the establishment of economic links between British Guiana and Eastern bloc countries.¹⁴⁵ However, this catalogue of confrontation belies the record of the PPP government after 1957. In contrast to 1953, the working relationship between the PPP Ministers and British representatives was cordial and cooperative.¹⁴⁶ Governor Renison reported that:

"since taking office, whatever their long term aims and whatever their feelings of frustration and confinement, the Ministers have pursued a moderate policy; in spite of their Communist leanings and their administrative inexperience, in the face of considerable financial difficulties and of growing political criticism they are trying very hard to govern the country sensibly and to avoid crises".¹⁴⁷

The moderation demonstrated by the PPP in office was not, however, accompanied by any renunciation of marxism. This was of little concern to Governor Renison, who maintained that what Jagan professed to believe was less significant than what he did in practice. Jagan might remain a convinced theoretical marxist, Renison argued, but the restoration of political life to the colony in 1957, the responsibilities of office, and the need for the cooperation of a public service which was largely Afro-Guianese and Burnhamite in its sympathies, had forced Jagan to swallow a number of unpalatable political realities and to compromise his ideals in practice. Office was wakening Jagan to the impracticality of communism in a country in British Guiana's economic and geographical position.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the PPP was not a communist party. Electorally, Jagan was reliant upon the support of the East Indian community, and financially, upon East Indian businessmen. He was also coming to realise that should he revert to communist policies once the restraint of British authority had been

¹⁴⁵Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.188-195.

¹⁴⁶Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.15, 10 March 1959, CO1031/2213, PRO; Interview with Janet Jagan, 20 July 1994, Georgetown, Guyana.

¹⁴⁷Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.12, 6 Feb.1958, CO1031/2213, PRO.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*; Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.15, 10 March 1959, CO1031/2213, PRO.

removed, which Renison speculated may have been his initial intention, "he would undoubtedly be suppressed by the American states."¹⁴⁹ The essence of Renison's argument was that:

"Dr. Jagan is a devoted Marxist whose whole adult thinking and study, both economic and political have been anti-colonial, anti-British, and pro-Russian. He is not likely to change his beliefs. The battle is not for his beliefs but for his actions as a popular leader in the circumstances in which he finds himself."¹⁵⁰

By 1959 similar sentiments could be found in the American Consulate in Georgetown. Initially sceptical about the 'new' Jagan, American officials had suspected that rather than being tempered by political reality, Jagan was temporising, intending still to take his country down a communist road whenever he was freed from the shackles of British sovereignty. However, by 1959 Consul Woods had adopted Renison's analysis, noting that, in office since 1957, the PPP had shown themselves to be "reasonable" and solicitous of Western capital investment:

"A natural first reaction to this "soft" course is to consider it tactical. In fact, the inner circle of the PPP may themselves regard it as a temporary expedient. However a close look at circumscribing factors raises a question whether it is permanent, not tactical, and whether continuation on a moderate course will be mandatory for political survival of the present leaders of the party".¹⁵¹

Woods identified several factors constraining the PPP from pursuing a communist agenda. Firstly, the PPP was not a communist party. The party's electoral base was racially, not ideologically defined. Communist policies would alienate the party's financial donors from the East Indian business community and small landowners from whom it drew much of its support. The party leadership to be sure included a number of "card carrying Communists", who were unlikely to renounce their convictions, but this in itself did not put the PPP at the forefront of an international Moscow-directed communist conspiracy. There was no evidence that the PPP's leaders maintained any links with, or received any direct or indirect financial support from, Moscow. "On the contrary", Woods observed, "the fact that party leaders are

¹⁴⁹Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.12, 6 Feb.1958, CO1031/2213, PRO.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown, No.142, 24 Feb.1959, 841D.00TA/2-2459, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

turning over a chunk of their salaries to the party treasury would indicate financial strain". Secondly, the forces of opposition to the PPP were building anti-communist sentiment in the colony that might eventually force the PPP leadership to deny its communist sympathies. Finally, British Guiana's location in the Western Hemisphere left the PPP isolated from the international communist movement.¹⁵²

The domestic forces of opposition to Jagan were central to Renison's strategy after 1957. Given the PPP's readiness to cooperate and the conspicuous absence of any alternative government, Renison believed that the British government should reciprocate in kind and give its best advice and support to the PPP. This cooperative spirit, however, had its limits. Renison recommended that the British government should simultaneously encourage the opposition, ensure the development of the trade union movement independent of PPP influence, and educate the electorate on the dangers of communism. A strong and vocal opposition would be required to check the PPP when the British withdrew.¹⁵³

By 1959 Renison believed some headway had been made in this direction. Opposition to Jagan in the urban areas was "open and abusive", while Burnham, although "cynical, superficial, unreliable, prejudiced and irrational", was growing in stature and was "no longer unthinkable as a Chief Minister". The strengthening of the anti-Jagan forces was the "success of the year". However, Renison also recognised that opposition to Jagan was limited to the non-East Indian sections of the population. "The dark edge" to the success in building up opposition forces was that "it has largely been accomplished through racialism".¹⁵⁴

British Guianese political life after 1957 was characterised by the hardening of racial divisions as Jagan and Burnham pursued Apanjaat strategies to mobilise their respective ethnic sections. The PPP government took a number of initiatives to retain and to bolster its support in the East Indian community. For example, in keeping with the strategy delineated in Jagan's 1956 Congress speech, the government sought to enhance the position and secure

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.12, 6 Feb.1958, CO1031/2213, PRO.

¹⁵⁴Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.15, 10 March 1959, CO1031/2213, PRO.

the support of the East Indian business community, through the liberalisation of trade, and the encouragement and political recognition accorded to the East Indian-dominated Junior Chamber of Commerce.¹⁵⁵

Similarly, the reactivation of the contentious dual control issue in 1960 with the introduction of an Educational Amendment Bill was directed at retaining the support of East Indian teachers, the largest group of East Indian professionals, by responding to their long-standing demand for an end to dual control and their threat to defect to a new party, the United Force [UF], should the PPP fail to deliver. The PPP was opposed to the system of dual control on ideological grounds, but dismantling it would also create employment opportunities for East Indian teachers in an African-dominated profession and an opportunity to influence the presently pro-Burnham teaching union. Moreover, passed only three months before the 1961 election, the Bill provided a timely demonstration of the PPP's commitment to the interests of the East Indian community.¹⁵⁶

Most contentious of all were the PPP's economic development policies, of which the PPP's rural East Indian constituency was the major beneficiary. The PPP government diverted an increasingly large proportion of development funding to projects in the agricultural sector, and particularly to the expansion of the rice industry. The allocation of land made available for rice production by high profile and expensive land reclamation schemes was heavily weighted towards East Indians, while nothing was done to alleviate the problem of urban unemployment which afflicted mainly Afro-Guianese.¹⁵⁷ While purely economic justifications can be made for this emphasis on the agricultural sector, the fact remains that, when filtered through the prism of race, the PPP's economic development policies after 1957 represented a massive subsidy to the East Indian population. The PNC wasted no time in exposing and exploiting this to strengthen its own sectional support base.

¹⁵⁵Despres, *Op. Cit.*, pp.230-234.

¹⁵⁶Ibid. pp.234-238.

¹⁵⁷Ibid. pp.245-250. Of 3,300 applications for land on the Black Bush polder reclamation project, only 200 came from African families. Of the first 150 families settled on the polder in February 1961, 147 were East Indian. The three African families were all financial members of the PPP.

It might be argued in defence of the Jagan government that it was simply responding to its constituency, as would any government seeking re-election. However, the PPP was well aware of the dangers as well as the opportunities of racist politics, yet did nothing to bridge the deepening sectional divide. If PPP measures helped galvanise the support of the East Indian population behind the PPP, they had as their corollary the alienation of British Guiana's other ethnic groups.

Burnham had entered the 1957 elections with dangerously misplaced optimism, believing that with the Robertson Commission's exoneration of the PPP moderates of responsibility for the constitutional suspension, East Indian support centered on Dr. Lachmarsingh could be harnessed to his own following in Georgetown and in the Afro-Guianese labour movement to deliver victory to his party.¹⁵⁸ However, the Burnhamite PPP won only three seats, all in Georgetown, and two, including Burnham's, with slender majorities.¹⁵⁹ Over the next year the party was reorganised and reoriented towards mobilising the Afro-Guianese community and then building alliances with the Portuguese and Amerindian communities to provide an aggregated counterweight to Jagan's devoted following in the East Indian and rural areas. In the first stage of this strategy Burnham met with considerable success. In October 1957 the party was re-christened the People's National Congress. The party's newspaper was renamed *New Nation*. Sydney King, who had split with Jagan in 1956 and who was developing a reputation as a black nationalist was elected to the party's Executive Committee. Jai Narine Singh left the party in protest. Just as the PPP split had forced Jagan to move to the right to accommodate the East Indian business community, so too did Burnham move to the right to consolidate African middle-class support for the PNC. The increasingly racial orientation of the PNC was confirmed by its merger with or, more appropriately, takeover of the UDP in 1959. African support for the PNC was mobilised through a strategy of reverse racialism, of making a racial appeal by accusing their opponents of racialism.¹⁶⁰ After 1957, particularly through editorials in *New Nation*, the PNC set about galvanising its Afro-Guianese support

¹⁵⁸Ibid. p.252.

¹⁵⁹Smith, *Op.Cit.*, p.180.

¹⁶⁰Despres, *Op.Cit.*, pp.260-262.

by denouncing the PPP government as a 'Coolie' or 'Rice' government, which was abusing its position in the interests of the East Indian community.

Burnham's attempt to find ground for collaboration with the leaders of the Portuguese community were less successful, however. Discussions took place between Burnham and the Portuguese spokesman, Peter D'Aguiar, during 1959 and 1960, but proved fruitless. The Portuguese community had economic strength well beyond its numbers, and did not prove so pliable as the UDP. D'Aguiar effectively offered to buy the PNC: guaranteed financial support in return for a controlling voice on the PNC's Executive Committee.¹⁶¹ This proposal was unacceptable to Burnham who had not broken with Jagan to subordinate his own political ambitions to the defiantly capitalist Portuguese. Negotiations broke down in October 1960 when D'Aguiar formed his own party the United Force, which became identified as the party of the Portuguese and of big business.

In March 1959 Governor Renison concluded that the time was ripe for constitutional advance. The PPP was likely to win any elections under a liberalised constitution, but Jagan's failure to abandon his marxist philosophy was not necessarily an obstacle to further constitutional progress. He had followed a moderate course and had shown himself capable of working with British officials. The opposition that would be charged with restraining Jagan's marxist idealism once the British had withdrawn had been strengthened. Anti-communism had struck roots in the colony. It would be more dangerous, Renison argued, to err on the side of caution. While it was important to retain ultimate authority in British hands, it was also important not to restrict constitutional advance to the point where Burnham would feel obliged to reunite with Jagan in the struggle against British imperialism. Too little constitutional advance could undo all the effort that had gone into bolstering the opposition forces. "To drive the two leaders into reunion against Great Britain", Renison wrote, "would be to throw away all the work of the last six years."¹⁶²

¹⁶¹Spinner, *Op.Cit.*, pp.77-78

¹⁶²Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.15, 10 March 1959, CO1031/2213, PRO.

A Constitutional Conference assembled at Lancaster House in London in March 1960, under the chairmanship of Colonial Secretary Iain MacLeod. The PPP delegation demanded immediate internal self-government and independence by the end of the present government's term in August 1961.¹⁶³ Playing for time to consolidate their own position in the colony, the PNC delegates for their part advocated independence "by stages and not in one step". In view of future developments it is important to note that, in keeping with the PNC strategy of building an anti-Jagan coalition of minority ethnic sections, Burnham pressed for a change of electoral system from first-past-the-post to proportional representation which would increase the representation of non-East Indian elements in the legislature. The Robertson Commission, in its 1954 deliberations on British Guiana's constitutional future, had dismissed proportional representation as too obviously designed to weaken the PPP, writing; "If some system of proportional representation was now introduced, it could hardly be represented as other than a device to mitigate the present dominance of the People's Progressive Party. To enshrine in the constitution such a device would be wrong."¹⁶⁴ By 1959, however, with the PPP split and the emergence of racist politics, Governor Renison had endorsed the idea of proportional representation. Although he admitted that "I do not think it would be honourable nor to our long term advantage to devise new systems merely to put the PPP at an artificial disadvantage", he argued that introducing PR would not only counter communism in British Guiana but would also combat racialism which was, he believed, "at least as dangerous as Communism". In addition, giving in to Burnham's demand for PR might "keep him on the side of Western democracy" and deter him from reunion with Jagan.¹⁶⁵ By the time of the Constitutional Conference, however, Renison had been transferred to Kenya, and replaced by a new Governor, Sir Ralph Grey.

The British conceded internal self-government, with the Governor retaining responsibility for defence and foreign affairs. They rejected proportional representation, opting instead for a bicameral legislature as a brake on the majority party. Elections under the new constitution

¹⁶³Reynold A. Burrowes, *The Wild Coast: An Account of Politics in Guyana*, [Cambridge MA, 1984], pp.108-109.

¹⁶⁴Quoted in Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.282.

¹⁶⁵Letter, Renison to Lennox-Boyd, Personal No.15, 10 March 1959, CO1031/2213, PRO.

would be held at the end of the present government's term in August 1961. The British also conceded the principle of independence within the Commonwealth. It was envisaged that an Independence Conference would be held not less than a year after the elections under the new constitution, or the achievement of independence by the West Indies Federation, whichever was the sooner.

By 1960, British Guiana's advance towards independence, derailed by the constitutional suspension of 1953, was back on track. The marxist sympathies and agenda of the majority party were no longer regarded as a bar to constitutional progress. The growth of a strong and vocal anti-communist opposition and British faith in the moderating effects of office had rendered the PPP acceptable as a future government for the colony, regardless of the ideological leanings of its leadership. However, less auspiciously, politics in British Guiana during the later part of the 1950s had become dominated by racialism. The potential political potency of racially defined sectional cleavages that were the legacy of the country's colonial history had been unleashed by the break-up of the nationalist movement. In the hands of ambitious politicians, racialism became the mainspring of political mobilisation and a threat to the legitimacy and authority of indigenous government. In the 1960s, the interaction of internal racialism and external anti-communism would have serious and deleterious political, economic and social consequences for British Guiana, and would shape and compromise its future as an independent state.

Chapter 2

Winning Jagan for the West: The Emergence of an Anglo-American Programme.

January 1961 - September 1961

By the beginning of 1961 it appeared that British Guiana was set for a reasonably smooth transition through internal self-government to full independence. The British government had conceded the principle of independence at the Constitutional Conference of 1960, which had provided for the transition to internal self-government following elections to be held in August 1961. Independence would follow, based on the formula that the legislature could apply to the Colonial Secretary no earlier than two years after the August election or whenever the West Indies Federation achieved independence, whichever came first. Independence was envisaged by the end of 1963. Moreover, it appeared that independence would be reached under a Jagan government. British officials, faced with Jagan's apparent political invulnerability and his moderation in office after 1957, were reconciled to his continued preeminence. It was assumed that Jagan would lead his party to a third successive election victory in August, and his country into independence.

However, with independence imminent and to large extent because independence was imminent, internal and particularly external regional and international factors began in 1961 to undermine any optimism in Georgetown and in London that there would be a smooth and peaceful progression to independence. During the course of 1961, geopolitics and ideology catapulted British Guiana from relative international obscurity onto the national security agenda of the United States in its capacity as both regional hegemon and global superpower.

Jagan, publicly committed to the priorities of independence and economic development, might be forgiven if he had seen little threat in John F. Kennedy's inauguration in January 1961. But Kennedy's agenda for the Third World and Latin America, the evolution of his policy towards Cuba, and the international atmosphere of 1961 provided a number of

contexts which would elevate the importance of the soon to be independent British Guiana for American policy-makers, and condition their response to Jagan.

Since 1951, as Congressman, Senator and Presidential candidate, Kennedy's statements on colonialism, nationalism and relations between the developed and underdeveloped world encouraged colonial nationalist politicians to think that, under his leadership, the United States would support anti-colonial measures in the United Nations and encourage its European allies to withdraw from their remaining colonies. Campaigning for Adlai Stevenson in 1956 Kennedy pledged that, under Democratic leadership, the United States would "no longer abstain in the UN from voting on colonial issues...shall no longer trade our vote on other such issues for supposed gains...shall no longer seek to prevent subjugated peoples from being heard."¹ As President, Kennedy did indeed attempt to disassociate the United States at the UN from imperialism and break the pattern of abstention. Early in 1961 the administration made its position clear by voting against its European allies on a UN resolution aimed at Portuguese policy in Angola.²

Throughout the 1950s Kennedy had criticised the Eisenhower administration's position on colonialism in Indochina and Algeria. He chided its confusion of nationalism and communism and emphasised the importance of economic development to the nations of the Third World. The people of Africa were, he argued, "more interested in development than they are doctrine. They are more interested in achieving a decent standard of living than they are in following the standards of either East or West."³ Kennedy supported the extension of American technical assistance and aid to developing countries, arguing that American aid should take the form of loans for economic development rather than short-term military advantage. He sponsored the Kennedy-Cooper Resolution of March 1958 to extend American aid in support of Indian economic development. Once in office he expanded and reorganised the American aid programme with the aim of emphasizing long term economic

¹Quoted in Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa* [New York, 1983], p.187.

²Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, pp.509-512.

³Quoted in Mahoney, *Op.Cit.*, p.29.

development, instituted the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress in Latin America and declared the 1960s a decade of development.

It has been argued that Kennedy, after a revelatory journey to the Middle East and Asia in 1951, was disinclined to superimpose a bipolar Cold War construct on American relations with the Third World, recognising its irrelevance to events in the underdeveloped regions.⁴ By this argument Kennedy understood the dynamics of change in the developing world, the [arguable] irresistibility of the nationalist tide, the role played by indigenous grievances rather than exogenous subversion in the instability of developing regions, and the priority of economic development for Third World nations as they tried to assert their independence from their former imperial masters. Where his administration failed to live up to its rhetoric in practice, this was because of complicating legacies of the Eisenhower years or because it faced a relentless Soviet onslaught in underdeveloped regions.⁵

Anti-communism, however, was at the centre of Kennedy's analysis throughout the 1950s. His criticism of the Eisenhower administration's policy in the Third World was, at bottom, that it had failed to grapple effectively with the Soviet offensive in the Third World, which had followed the death of Stalin in 1953 and accelerated under Khrushchev.⁶ Moreover, the containment of communist expansion was the 'end' of American foreign policy under Kennedy as much as it had been under Truman or Eisenhower. It was the means by which he intended to achieve this end which distinguished Kennedy from his predecessors.

Recognising the strength of Third World nationalism, Kennedy argued that the United States should align itself with the inevitable changes that this movement would bring to developing regions. Failure to do this would be to abandon these areas to communist penetration.

Nationalism might be dynamic but it was not considered strong or intelligent enough to

⁴Walt W. Rostow, *Eisenhower, Kennedy and Foreign Aid* [Austin, 1985], pp.58-60; Mahoney, *Op.Cit.*, pp.12-26.

⁵Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, pp.506-531.

⁶For the Soviet offensive in the Third World and the response of the Eisenhower administration see Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, *The Soviet Union and the Third World: An Economic Bind* [New York, 1983], Robert Cassen[ed.], *Soviet Interests in the Third World* [London, 1985], Marshall D. Shulman[ed.], *East-West Tensions in the Third World* [New York, 1986], Burton I. Kaufman, *Trade and Aid: Eisenhower's Foreign Economic Policy 1953-61* [Baltimore, 1982], Burton I. Kaufman, "The United States Response to the Soviet Economic Offensive of the 1950's", *DH*, 2:2, 1978, pp.153-166.

withstand communist subversion or resist the attractions of the Soviet model of rapid industrialisation as a short-cut to development. The tide of nationalism might be irresistible, but it was the Cold War that made it significant for the United States.

That Kennedy may have had a more sophisticated understanding of and approach to Third World nationalism, or been prepared to offer more economic aid than his predecessors, does not alter the basic reality that the anti-communist imperative underpinned his analysis during the 1950s and his policies as President. Kennedy did develop different means of advancing and protecting American interests. Anti-colonialism and political and economic support for colonial nationalist movements and developing countries were employed to serve the higher geopolitical needs of the United States. Nevertheless, Kennedy's policies must be placed in the context of the anti-communist consensus which had dominated American foreign policy and influenced domestic policy, since the time of Truman.

The same pattern can be discerned in Kennedy's approach to Latin America, a second context crucial to understanding the administration's policy towards British Guiana. Inspired by fear of radical nationalism and revolution across the globe, Kennedy's policies towards the Third World emphasised economic development and self-determination. However, the proximity of Latin America to the United States, and its perceived centrality to American national security, gave his approach to Latin America a greater degree of urgency.

As a Senator and as a Presidential candidate Kennedy criticised the Eisenhower administration for neglecting Latin America, an area vital to American security which was being swept up in an inevitable social and political revolution leaving it vulnerable to communist penetration. The United States, Kennedy argued, should align itself with the forces of change in an effort to direct the revolution into acceptable 'democratic' channels. Rather than address the implications of this revolution in Latin America, the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy charged, had relied upon defensive anti-communist tactics: bilateral military alliances and collusion with dictators, the representatives of the old order. In fact, there had been a noticeable reorientation of Eisenhower's approach to Latin America in the

final years of his presidency. Jolted into action by Vice President Nixon's experience in Venezuela in 1958 when he was attacked by a mob in Caracas, anti-American demonstrations in Panama in 1959, and the increasingly anti-American declarations emanating from Havana following Castro's victory, the Eisenhower administration began to back away from its former dictatorial allies. Eisenhower launched the Development Loan Fund [DLF] and the Inter-American Development Bank [IADB] and signed an International Coffee Agreement designed to stabilize prices for that commodity.⁷ Nevertheless, from 1958 onwards, Kennedy advocated a new approach towards Latin America, emphasizing long range economic planning, economic integration, common markets and commodity price stabilization.

The incoming administration's concern about Latin America and its agenda for the region found explicit expression in the Report of a Pre-Inaugural Task Force on Latin America. The report claimed that, "in Moscow and Peiping revolutionary seizure of parts of Latin America appears to have been agreed on as an early target in the 'Cold War' now active in the Caribbean littoral."⁸ It went on to announce that, "the greatest single task of American diplomacy in Latin America is to divorce the inevitable and necessary Latin American social revolution from connection with and prevent its capture by overseas communist power politics."⁹

A number of the Task Force's comments concerning the nature of the struggle in Latin America are of particular significance in elucidating the administration's attitude and policy towards British Guiana. According to the Report, the government of British Guiana was "under strong Communist political influence and is in active contact with Castro."¹⁰ The colony was located on the edge of the Caribbean, identified in the Report as the area most vulnerable to communist penetration:

⁷For Eisenhower's policy towards Latin America see Stephen J. Rabe: *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* [Chapel Hill, 1988].

⁸Report, Task Force on Latin America, "Task Force Reports 1960" Folder, Transition Files [TF], Pre-Presidential Papers of John F. Kennedy [PreP], Box 1074, JFKL.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

"At the moment the military fighting in the 'Cold War ' lies in the Caribbean littoral plus perhaps Ecuador. In any part of this area guerrilla fighting can break out. Such warfare depends on established lines of communication for money, arms, munitions and men. Defensively the most urgent task is to prevent these lines being established."¹¹

British Guiana's importance was enhanced also by its proximity to Venezuela, its neighbour to the west. Venezuela's oil reserves made it "the richest prize" in Latin America, but it was also strategically vital as the "Southern hinge of the Caribbean littoral". The loss of Venezuela could activate a domino effect in the continent: "If it goes Castro or Communist, a general explosion all the way north to Guatemala seems possible."¹²

The Task Force Report formed the basis of the Alliance for Progress, the centrepiece of Kennedy's new approach in Latin America. The Alliance pledged \$20 billion in American aid to Latin America over a period of ten years, supposedly contingent upon the commitment of recipient states to self-help for economic development, democratic structures, and internal reforms. The administration was not, however, interested in economic development and social reform in Latin America per se. These concerns were secondary, deriving from its determination to combat the spread of communism in the western hemisphere. Whatever short-term political gains it may have brought, the Alliance was intended as a long-term attempt to alleviate conditions in Latin America thought to be conducive to revolution and communist gains, and was accompanied by a counterinsurgency effort to strengthen the internal security capabilities of Latin American states in combating revolution and subversion.¹³ At the programme's launch Kennedy reaffirmed the anti-communist imperative underpinning it in the regional context of the Monroe Doctrine: "We confront the same forces which have imperiled America throughout its history- the alien forces which once again seek to impose the despotisms of the Old World on the people of the New."¹⁴

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Stephen G. Rabe, "Controlling Revolutions: Latin America, the Alliance for Progress, and Cold War Anti-Communism", in Thomas G. Paterson[ed], *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, [NY, 1989].

¹⁴Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics, 13 March 1961, PPJFK, p.171.

Communism was after all a European ideological export. Kennedy explicitly extended the Monroe Doctrine to include the ideological penetration of the hemisphere.

A third context in which the Kennedy administration's policy towards British Guiana must be placed is that of the Cuban revolution, the breakdown of American-Cuban relations and Kennedy's unrelenting hostility towards Castro. Indeed, it is difficult to exaggerate the impact of the continued existence of the Castro regime in Cuba, as both a standing geopolitical affront to the Monroe Doctrine and a powerful domestic political weapon for the right, on the administration's attitudes towards the prospect of a marxist government in an independent British Guiana.

Any early sympathy Kennedy felt for Castro dissipated quickly in the later stages of the 1960 election campaign.¹⁵ Throughout 1960, Castro, in part because he anticipated that, in view of the fate of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala in 1954, the American government was likely to sponsor an attempt to overthrow his regime, actively courted the support of the Soviet Union in an attempt to guarantee the security of revolutionary Cuba. He moved closer to the Soviet Union, signing a trade agreement, opening diplomatic relations with Moscow and declaring his support for the Soviet Union's foreign policy. His gravitation towards Moscow was accompanied by a concomitant increase in his hostility to the United States. Concerned that Eisenhower might strike against Castro before the election, thereby bolstering Nixon's campaign, Kennedy moved to the right on the Cuban issue.¹⁶ In October 1960 he announced that, "Castro and his gang have betrayed the ideals of the Cuban revolution and the hopes of the Cuban people...He has transformed the island of Cuba into a hostile and militant Communist satellite, a base from which to carry Communist infiltration and subversion throughout the Americas."¹⁷ The thesis that Castro had subverted the revolution would become his administration's central rationale for its unremitting hostility to the new regime.¹⁸

¹⁵Michael R. Beschloss, *Kennedy v. Khrushchev: The Crisis Years 1960-1963* [London, 1991], p.101.

¹⁶For Cuba in the 1960 campaign see Kent M. Beck, "Necessary Lies, Hidden Truths: Cuba in the 1960 Campaign", *DH*, 8:1, 1984, pp.37-59; Beschloss, *Op.Cit.*, pp.101-102.

¹⁷Quoted in *ibid.* p.101.

¹⁸The thesis that Castro had betrayed the Cuban revolution was popularised by Theodore Draper in *Castro's Revolution* [New York, 1962] and *Castroism* [New York, 1965] and adopted by Schlesinger in the White Paper on Cuba he drafted for the administration in April 1961.

Once in office Kennedy tightened economic sanctions against Cuba, gave government assistance to Cuban refugees in Florida, and launched the unsuccessful CIA-planned Bay of Pigs operation.¹⁹

Much attention has been paid to the lessons Kennedy drew from the Bay of Pigs fiasco, relating in particular to the decision-making process and to reliance on the advice of experts. More striking perhaps is the absence of lessons drawn with regard to the wisdom of the administration's Cuban policy. There was no fundamental revision of policy after the Bay of Pigs, but simply a hardening of the administration's attitude towards Castro and broader communist activity in the developing world. Speaking before the American Society of Newspaper Editors [ASNE] in the wake of the invasion, Kennedy was uncompromising:

"Let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible. Should it ever appear that the inter-American doctrine of non-interference merely conceals or excuses a policy of non-action - if the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration - then I want it clearly understood that this Government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations which are to the security of our nation!"²⁰

The Taylor Board, established to investigate what went wrong at the Bay of Pigs, reported in June 1961, reiterating the administration's unwillingness to tolerate the continued existence of the Castro regime. The Board noted that, "there can be no long term living with Castro as a neighbor...while inclining personally to a positive course of action against Castro without delay, we recognise the danger of dealing with the Cuban problem outside the context of the world situation."²¹ The Bay of Pigs had effectively ruled out the military option, but it had not diminished the administration's determination to rid itself of Castro, rapidly becoming a domestic and international political albatross for Kennedy. The administration needed to reorient its strategy. Kennedy's ASNE speech highlighted a hemispheric emphasis in policy. Castro was more of a threat to the other countries of Latin America than he was to the United

¹⁹For the Bay of Pigs see Schlesinger., *Op. Cit.*, pp.219-278; Trumbull Higgins,*The Perfect Failure: Kennedy, Eisenhower and the CIA at the Bay of Pigs* [New York, 1987]; Peter Wyden, *Bay of Pigs* [New York, 1979]; Karl E. Meyer and Tad Szulc, *The Cuban Invasion: The Chronicle of a Disaster* [New York, 1962]; Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, "Anatomy of a Failure: The Decision to Land at the Bay of Pigs," *PSQ*, XCIX, 1984, pp.471-491.

²⁰Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 20 April 1961, PPJFK, 1961, p.304.

²¹Quoted in Beschloss, *Op. Cit.*, p.148.

States. "A nation of Cuba's size", the President argued, " is less a threat to our [American] survival than it is a base for subverting the survival of other free nations throughout the Hemisphere."²²

Following the Bay of Pigs, the administration intensified its efforts to isolate the Castro regime economically and politically within the Western Hemisphere, most dramatically realised with the expulsion of Cuba from the OAS in January 1962. It also debarred from receiving American aid any country which aided Cuba [although exceptions could be made for reasons of American national security], extended the trade embargo to include everything with the exception of medical supplies, and attempted to persuade its allies in Europe to impose further economic sanctions on the Cubans.

The attempt to isolate Cuba was accompanied by a campaign of unilateral covert action to sabotage the Castro regime and to assassinate Castro.²³ Indeed, the intensity of American covert activity in Cuba was sufficient to convince Khrushchev that Kennedy was preparing for a second invasion of the island and provide him with, at the very least, a convenient rationale for the build-up of Soviet forces on the island and ultimately for the installation of Soviet medium range ballistic missiles on the island in 1962.²⁴

There was no inherent inconsistency between Kennedy's commitment to economic development, political freedom and social reform in Latin America and the developing world generally, and his commitment to the containment of communism, even should it require covert activity and interference in the internal affairs of another state. The former was a function of the latter.

²²Address Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 20 April 1961, PPJFK, 1961, p.305.

²³Paterson, 1989, *Op.Cit.*; Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution.*, [New York, 1994], pp.258-261.

²⁴James G. Blight and David A. Welch, *On The Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis* [New York, 1989], p.29; Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* [Princeton, 1994], pp.29-32; James G. Hershberg, "Before the Missiles of October: Did Kennedy Plan a Military Strike Against Cuba?", *DH*, 14:2, 1990, pp.163-198; Paterson, 1994, *Op.Cit.*, p.260.

Finally, Kennedy's response to the prospect of the potential emergence of British Guiana as a marxist state, must be placed in the context of the series of international crises which beset his early months in office and the generalised atmosphere of global crisis which was a defining characteristic of his presidency.²⁵ During his campaign Kennedy had dwelt on the crisis in relations with the Soviet Union, where American inadequacy was symbolised by the [albeit imaginary] missile gap. Once elected, Kennedy was immediately confronted with crises in Laos, in the Congo, and in Berlin. There was the humiliation of the Bay of Pigs and the intractability of the Vienna summit. Yuri Gagarin symbolised Soviet supremacy in space. On 13 August 1961, the Berlin Wall was erected and only two weeks later, the Soviet Union resumed atmospheric nuclear testing. Theodore Sorensen, the President's Special Counsel, later recalled these first eight months as "the darkest for the President personally and for freedom."²⁶

With the frequency of international crises in the first eight months of 1961 outpacing Kennedy's ominous predictions in his State of the Union Address,²⁷ it might be assumed that the Kennedy administration had more important priorities than British Guiana. Indeed it did. But it must be remembered that much of the atmosphere of crisis of these months centered on the possibility of communist gains in the developing world, and arguably the most serious setback of all for the administration had come in the Caribbean with the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. Moreover, the stabilisation of the Soviet-American confrontation in Europe following the erection of the Berlin Wall shifted the front line of the Cold War increasingly towards the developing and uncommitted regions. Although Washington remained concerned about Khrushchev's intentions in Berlin and would remain so until the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Berlin Wall and the tacit acceptance of the division of Germany marked the consolidation of a *modus vivendi* in Europe. As Marc Trachtenberg has pointed out, "by the 1960s the system of great power relations in Europe had acquired a certain permanence and a certain stability."²⁸

²⁵Paterson, 1989, *Op.Cit.*, p.8.

²⁶Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* [New York, 1965], p.293.

²⁷Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, 30 January 1961, PPJFK, 1961, p.19.

²⁸Marc Trachtenberg, *History and Strategy* [Princeton, 1991], p.231.

Throughout these early months Kennedy's publicly expressed vision of the international situation was apocalyptic. This was the "hour of maximum danger", of "maximum peril". The tide of events was running against the United States. Things could get worse before they got better. But this atmosphere of crisis was paralleled by the administration's enthusiasm for meeting these challenges. The "hour of national peril" was also the hour of "national opportunity."²⁹ The atmosphere of crisis was matched by an atmosphere of activism in Washington. The administration had come into office determined to confront these problems and reassert American authority which, it argued, had been compromised during the Eisenhower years. The self-confidence of the Kennedy administration has been much remarked upon. Some commentators have seen its self-assurance as bordering on arrogance and conducive to myopia.³⁰ Its response to setbacks was to demonstrate its toughness. Hence, for example, the failure to reassess the assumptions underlying American policy towards Cuba after the Bay of Pigs. The administration was determined to pursue its policies actively and to get on top of troublesome and potentially troublesome situations. As Arthur Schlesinger Jnr. noted, Kennedy "wanted particularly to stay ahead of problems; nothing exasperated him more than to be surprised by crisis."³¹ It is in this context, indeed, that Ralph Dungan, one of Kennedy's Special Assistants, recalls encountering British Guiana: "we were kind of looking around at situations that we thought the administration ought to be on top of, and might not have been, that weren't on the top burner."³²

Both the generalised sense of crisis which pervaded the Kennedy administration at least through 1961, and that more specifically centered on the developing world, Latin America and particularly Castro's Cuba, served to heighten the administration's sensitivity to events in British Guiana, and would guide their attitudes towards Jagan and their policies towards his government over the following years. It is possible to identify a number of characteristics of the Kennedy administration's policies and circumstances in 1961 that informed and

²⁹Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union, 30 January 1961, PPJFK, 1961, p.19.

³⁰See for example David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* [New York, 1969]; Garry Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* [Boston, 1981].

³¹Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.425.

³²Telephone interview with Ralph Dungan, 15 April 1994.

conditioned its response to what it perceived as a potential communist threat in British Guiana.

First, the administration demonstrated a continued commitment to the containment of communism as the operational imperative of American foreign policy. It is impossible to isolate American policy in British Guiana from Washington's perception of a global communist threat and the need for its containment. The Kennedy administration's policies in British Guiana were the logical consequence of the globalisation of the policy of containment under Truman through the expansive terms of the Truman Doctrine of 1947 and the Korean War 1950-53. The movement of the Cold War into new areas and differences in strategy should not obscure this basic continuity.

Secondly, the administration revealed a predilection for an offensive, pre-emptive approach to the containment of communist expansion in the developing world and particularly Latin America, through techniques of immunization, quarantine and eradication. Immunization involved the advocacy of anti-colonialism and economic development in the Third World as a means of guiding forces of change into acceptable channels and preventing their falling prey to communist panaceas of development, and the strengthening of internal security forces within a state to resist possible communist subversion. The quarantine technique can be seen in the attempt to isolate Cuba and thereby confine the communist contagion to the island and prevent its spread to the mainland of Latin America, particularly after the Bay of Pigs disaster made military options less politically attractive. The administration also attempted to eradicate communism, attempting to stop the spread of communism by destroying it at its source. This can be seen in the attempts to overthrow Castro both militarily and then covertly. The Kennedy administration's attempts to pre-empt crises were not always successful. In the case of British Guiana it must be asked whether the Kennedy administration was trouble-shooting or trouble-making, whether it pre-empted or precipitated a crisis?

Finally, the importance assumed by credibility as a factor in the minds of American policy-makers should be noted. For both domestic political and international political reasons the Kennedy administration, particularly after the Bay of Pigs, was determined not to be seen or portrayed as 'soft' on communism.

The new administration first communicated its unease about the situation in British Guiana to the British government in February 1961. In advance of a prospective meeting between the new President and the British Prime Minister, scheduled provisionally for late March or early April, State Department officials were keen to discuss matters of mutual interest with their British counterparts.³³ British Guiana made its 1961 debut as an Anglo-American issue at the first of a series of meetings held in Washington on 9 February 1961, placed on the agenda at the instigation of the Americans. Their anxiety to broach the subject, it was reported from the British Embassy in Washington, was rooted in their fear that British Guiana might become "another Cuba".³⁴ British Guiana was one of the first in the list of Latin American countries for whom this analogy would be invoked and used to rationalise various forms of American intervention, including the Dominican Republic in 1965, Chile in 1970-1973, Nicaragua after 1979, and Grenada in 1983.

Regardless of the accuracy of the analogy, the problem of British Guiana from the start was for the State Department much less a colonial issue [although it was a colony] than a function of the Cuban problem. Indeed, the American position on British Guiana did not sit comfortably alongside the Kennedy administration's anti-colonial posture at the UN. Other colonial issues were discussed separately with the British in February 1961. The Cuban context elevated British Guiana to an agenda that included the more obviously pressing issues of Berlin and NATO.

The essence of American concern about Jagan, which intensified over the succeeding months as a result of events inside and outside the colony, was clearly communicated to the British at

³³Letter, Ramsbotham to Brook, 6 Jan. 1961, ZP14/1/G, FO371/159671, PRO.

³⁴Letter, Greenhill to Ramsbotham, 28 Jan. 1961, ZP14/27/G, FO371/159672, PRO.

this first meeting. The administration was "most concerned at the prospect of an independent Communist dominated British Guiana" and advocated the creation of an Anglo-American joint working group to discuss the problem and possible solutions.³⁵ American officials urged that Britain was responsible for leaving the "healthiest possible" heritage in British Guiana and should work to bolster "democratic elements" in the colony, to strengthen the administrative structure to withstand a communist onslaught, and be prepared to continue to invest and encourage investment in the country after independence. Specifically, Bill Burdett, Director of the Office of British Commonwealth and Northern European Affairs, asked if something could be done to "ensure that someone other than the PPP won the August elections", and if not, could independence for the colony be delayed as a means of buying time while alternative 'democratic' forces were nurtured?³⁶

What is striking about these early Anglo-American exchanges on British Guiana is the degree to which the agenda and patterns of argument that would dominate later Anglo-American discussions of this subject were already set. The Americans advocated intervention to alter the pattern of Guianese politics or delay independence while some alternative source of 'democratic' political authority could be established. The British meanwhile had concluded by 1961 that there was no viable alternative political leadership to Jagan and the PPP. Also, despite the amount of time that would be spent discussing it, these early talks revealed that the question of whether or not Jagan was in fact a communist was largely an irrelevant one.

As early as February of 1961 the State Department was advocating intervention in the internal affairs of British Guiana to prevent its becoming independent under a Jagan government. The Americans not only expressed their predilection for intervention, but also set out what would remain their preferred means of intervention: the bolstering of what they defined loosely as 'democratic' forces and the delaying of the date of independence if necessary. The inconsistency between this stance and the declared American position on colonialism was not lost on British officials. Over the coming months repeated American

³⁵Telegram, Washington[Caccia] to FO, No.87 Saving, 9 Feb.1961, ZP14/39/G, FO371/159672, PRO.

³⁶Record of Anglo-US Talks, 9 Feb.1961, ZP14/56/G, FO371/159674, PRO.

requests for the delaying of independence for British Guiana would cause amusement and consternation in equal measure in the British Colonial and Foreign Offices. As the Foreign Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home noted: "We should not miss this one when we are talking to the United States about the need to bring our colonial territories along in our own orderly time."³⁷

The distance between British and American assessments of the threat posed by the prospect of a Jagan government in British Guiana can be clearly seen in the records of the February discussion. The Americans saw Jagan's ideological proclivities a serious enough threat to their interests as to warrant his removal. The British on the other hand argued that there was no viable electable alternative to a Jagan government.³⁸ By 1961, the ideological component which had dominated British assessments of Jagan in 1953 had largely disappeared. Chastened by the failure of their earlier attempts to bolster 'democratic' elements and undercut Jagan's support, resigned to his continuing strength and taking hope from his moderation in office since 1957, the British argued that Jagan was more interested in the economic development of his country than in ideology. In any case, his self-confessed marxism did not make him a Kremlin-controlled international communist.

However, the Anglo-American discussions of February 1961 also revealed that, for the Americans, the question of whether Jagan was or was not in fact a communist largely missed the point, a fact British officials, particularly those in the Colonial Office, would take some time to recognise. The British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Harold Caccia, noted the American opinion that, "whether or not Jagan is himself a Communist...they fear the worst if he comes to power."³⁹ Edwin E. Vallon, Director of the Office of Caribbean and Mexican Affairs in the State Department noted that, "even if Jagan was not a Communist he was an obvious dupe."⁴⁰ A government led by Jagan would easily fall prey to a communist campaign of infiltration and subversion in Latin America. Jagan, even as a moderate, would allow a

³⁷Tahourdin minute, 15 Feb.1961, ZP14/39/G, FO371/159672, PRO.

³⁸Record of Anglo-US Talks, 9 Feb.1961, ZP14/56/G, FO371/159674, PRO.

³⁹Telegram, Washington to FO, No.87 Saving, 9 Feb.1961, ZP14/39/G, FO371/159672, PRO.

⁴⁰Record of Anglo-US Talks, 9 Feb.1961, ZP14/56G, FO371/159674, PRO.

communist party to operate freely throughout the country, which, given the assumed inability of Latin American countries to withstand the open operation of a communist party, would lead inexorably to eventual communist domination. If Jagan was in fact a communist, he was hardly likely to advertise the fact before he had secured independence, while he was still subject to British Government scrutiny. The British might argue that Jagan seemed to have moderated his position since 1953, but to the Americans, "it was obvious good sense for Dr. Jagan to lie low until independence while he consolidated his position."⁴¹

This kind of reasoning became central to the American position. It frustrated British officials and hampered their efforts to minimise the threat posed by a Jagan-led British Guiana in American eyes. It put Jagan in a no-win situation, making his repeated attempts to convince the American government of his democratic intentions largely irrelevant.

The distance between the British and American assessments of the Jagan threat and how far British thinking on the subject had come since 1953 are further highlighted in Sir Ralph Grey's review of the situation in the colony in March 1961.⁴² The Governor's observations underpinned the Colonial Office assessment of the situation and arguments made to the State Department at least throughout 1961.

By Grey's analysis, British Guiana's problems were economic rather than political. Although its position relative to other dependent territories was promising, British Guiana was faced with an unbalanced economy dependent on the export of primary products, growing unemployment and underemployment, and a rapidly increasing population. The issue of communism in British Guiana was diversionary and misleading. The international attention to the communist question, which the British themselves had encouraged through their actions in 1953, had inflated the relative importance of British Guiana in the international arena and deflected attention from the colony's real problems. In his attempt to tackle these problems, Jagan's economic thinking might be marxist, Grey admitted, but the PPP

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Despatch, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.12, 10 March 1961, A10110/5, FO371/155720, PRO.

government since 1957, he insisted, had not tried to further communist ends. Jagan and his party may be critical of Britain and the United States, but that seemed to Grey, "to spring from nationalism rather than from Communism." The PPP was not in terms of its rank and file support a communist party. In British Guiana, "they vote for Jagan because he is our Cheddi".⁴³

Any problem Jagan posed for the future of British Guiana, Grey argued, would not spring from his communist connections or his enthusiasm for Castro, but rather from his impracticality. Jagan, Grey felt, was unrealistic about the prospects for economic development and had no conception of how to run a cabinet-style government. Only Janet Jagan, whose past as a member of the Chicago YCL often lead her to be pin pointed as a communistic influence, could redeem the record of the PPP ministers in terms of efficiency and practicality. The contrast between Grey's assessment of Janet Jagan and that current in Washington was stark. Her reputation in Washington was not that of the efficient administrator. She was the only PPP leader singled out in Washington as an "acknowledged Communist", sharing control of the PPP with her husband and exercising "very strong influence over him".⁴⁴

In any case, for Grey, his impracticality and his communist connections aside, Jagan was the politician in the country with the widest following and would lead the PPP to victory in the elections scheduled for August 1961. Grey was not optimistic about the opposition parties' prospects in the August elections. Although he felt "sure that there are more people in the country who are in their hearts against the PPP than for it...they cannot and will not unite."⁴⁵ Talks between Burnham and D'Aguiar had come to nothing.⁴⁶ The election campaign was dominated by PNC-UF confrontation rather than cooperation. Grey was confident that the PPP would win the August elections and lead the country during the period of internal self-

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴SNIE 87.2-61, 21 March 1961, *Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS]*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, [Washington, 1996], p.514.

⁴⁵Despatch, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.12, 10 March 1961, A10110/5, FO371/155720, PRO.

⁴⁶Thomas J. Spinner Jr., *A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983* [Boulder: 1984], pp.77-78.

government. Under the terms agreed at the Constitutional Conference of March 1960, it would be a PPP government, therefore, that would lead the country into independence.

The first systematic exposition of the American assessment of Jagan and the likely consequences for British Guiana of his continuation in office appeared in a Special National Intelligence Estimate [SNIE] approved by the Intelligence Board on 21 March 1961.⁴⁷ The Estimate acknowledged the confusion surrounding the question of Jagan's ideological commitments and their implications for the future of an independent Guyana under his leadership. The evidence was equivocal. According to the Estimate, the PPP was "Communist led", staffed by leaders with communist connections, a number of whom were themselves believed to be communists. Although Janet Jagan was identified as a communist, Jagan himself was not, although it was observed that, "his statements and actions over the years bear the marks of the indoctrination and advice the Communists have given him".⁴⁸ Also, in spite of the PPP's communist connections, "neither the Communist bloc or Castro has made any vigorous effort to exploit the British Guiana situation".⁴⁹

The uncertainty surrounding Jagan's ideological commitments extended to the Estimate's predictions for the future of British Guiana under his leadership. The Estimate did not assume that either before or even after independence Jagan was likely to move quickly to establish a communist regime. Before independence, realising that he did not command the support to force the British out by revolutionary means, he would be unwilling to antagonise the British authorities by moving precipitately to the left, lest the British withhold independence or once again rescind the constitution.⁵⁰ Even after independence, although there was a possibility that Jagan would move to establish a communist state, the Estimate concluded that Jagan "would consider this undesirable, even if he were fully committed to the eventual establishment of such a state, in view of the lack of trained cadres in British Guiana, the territory's primitive state of political and social development, and the likelihood

⁴⁷SNIE 87.2-61, 21 March 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.514-517.

⁴⁸Ibid. p.514.

⁴⁹Ibid. p.515.

⁵⁰Ibid. p.516.

of adverse international reactions".⁵¹ It was more likely, the Estimate concluded that "an independent Jagan government would seek to portray itself as an instrument of reformist nationalism which would gradually move in the direction of Castro's Cuba".⁵² Under a Jagan government, an independent British Guiana could be expected to align itself with "Afro-Asian neutralism and anti-colonialism" and "at a minimum...to be assertively nationalistic, sympathetic to Cuba, and prepared to enter into economic and diplomatic relations with the Bloc, although such a government would probably still be influenced by the desire to obtain economic help from the UK and the US".⁵³

The SNIE formed the basis for talks with the British in April 1961, when the Joint Working Party requested by the Americans in February met in London with a view to agreeing a Joint Assessment of the situation and prospects in British Guiana. The Joint Assessment which emerged, however, was broadly reflective of British thinking, with little concession to the more acute American concern:

"While some of the proclivities and existing Communist contacts of some of the PPP leaders are facts to be reckoned with and in no way to be underrated, it cannot be said that they are committed to extreme policies or to control by the bloc. As in the case of economic aid, so in the field of external relations it is considered that the wise course will be to give every encouragement to British Guiana's political leaders to feel that they are fully accepted and welcomed by the West and not regarded with suspicion. A willing acceptance in the transitional period of the constitutional advances planned and the proffer of close and cordial relations as the new state emerges towards and into independence are likely to create the psychological climate most conducive to its political leaders looking to the West: and the converse is true...It is equally important that moderate elements in British Guiana should not be allowed to feel that their country is neglected by the West. A strengthening of the 'Western presence' will give encouragement to these elements to bring their views to bear more effectively."⁵⁴

American concurrence in the Joint Assessment was short-lived. In the run-up to the August elections, the State Department expressed its continued scepticism about the British approach in a telegram to the US Ambassador to Canada:

⁵¹Ibid. p.517.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid. p.516.

⁵⁴Notes for Secretary of State's talks with US Ambassador, 6 Sept.1961, A10110/25, FO371/155721, PRO.

"FYI HMG holds view Jagan is "salvageable for democracy" and best course for us is endeavor establish good relations with Jagan and seek win him over to West. Although we recognise Jagan is dominant political personality in British Guiana and that alternatives not attractive, we have considerable misgivings over following course advocated by HMG. End FYI."⁵⁵

Indeed, despite the Joint Assessment of April and predictions of a Jagan victory, the State Department remained hopeful that Jagan would not be returned to office in the August elections. As election day approached, for example, the State Department investigated the prospect of a last minute move by the UF.⁵⁶ Similar hopes appear to have surrounded the PNC. The British Colonial Attaché in Washington, John Hennings, hoped the election results would disabuse the Americans of their illusions about Burnham.⁵⁷

Private American groups were active in British Guiana during the election campaign. World Harvest Evangelism led by Dr. Lloyd Sweet, for example, was preaching the anti-communist gospel, though the effectiveness of this campaign was thought to be limited, with Sweet and his colleagues preaching mainly to the converted.⁵⁸ Jagan charged that the official American information service [USIA] was also mounting an anti-communist campaign in the weeks before the elections, showing anti-communist films on the street corners of Georgetown.⁵⁹ This allegation was denied by both the British and American authorities.

Publicly, the Kennedy administration kept its distance from Jagan during the campaign, rejecting the recommendation, in the days before the election from its Ambassador to Venezuela, Teodoro Moscoso, that the United States should issue a statement to "indicate our support whatever government goes into office, basing it [on] our adherence Bogota charter as hemispheric obligation."⁶⁰ Moscoso based his request on the assessment of Venezuelan

⁵⁵Telegram, DOS to Amembassy Ottawa, No.128, 12 Aug. 1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁶Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.15, 7 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁷Extract from Hennings Letter, 7 Aug.1961, CO1031/4177, PRO.

⁵⁸Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.18, 9 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁹Despatch, BG[Grey] to CS, No.361, 5th July[?] 1962, CO1031/3898, PRO.

⁶⁰Telegram, Caracas to SOS, No.245, 18 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

members of Acción Democrática [AD], the administration's favored party in Venezuela, that Jagan was not 'lost' to communism and that "some assurance technical and economic assistance from US prior to election not only would be intelligent politics vis a vis Jagan, but also would demonstrate to liberals of hemisphere that US does not always jump on bandwagon after driver has been selected."⁶¹ The Venezuelans argued that, "we must take a stand that will convince liberal elements of hemisphere that we mean business carrying out Alianza Para el Progreso politically as well as economically."⁶² A similar recommendation was made by US Consul Melby, who argued that it was necessary to counterbalance negative coverage of Jagan in the American press and to emphasise the American commitment to the development of emerging areas in order to avoid "poisoning [our] future relations with BG."⁶³ The State Department, however, regarded such a statement as "imprudent", given its "desire avoid giving anyone pretext for accusing us of interference."⁶⁴

To one vocal American observer, the United States was not doing enough to prevent a Jagan victory in the up-coming elections. Senator Thomas Dodd from Connecticut, a self-appointed sentinel identifying communist danger in the Third World, made famous by his obsession with the communist threat in the Congo, identified Jagan as an "avowed communist".⁶⁵ For Dodd, Jagan's re-election would have serious consequences:

"Potentially the situation is even more dangerous than the emergence of Castro. Castro at least is cut off from the Latin American mainland by hundreds of miles of ocean. But a Communist British Guiana would for the first time give the Kremlin a bridgehead on the South American continent, a bridgehead through which Castro and the Soviets could feed in arms and provide support for Communist guerrilla movements in Venezuela, in Brazil, in Columbia, and in all the surrounding countries...Castro by himself is reason enough for serious concern. But a combination of Castro and a communist regime in British Guiana would bring us to the very brink of catastrophe in Latin America."⁶⁶

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Telegram, Melby to SOS, No.17, 8 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁶⁴Telegram, DOS to Caracas, No.187, 19 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁶⁵"Communist Menace in South America", 17 April 1961, *Congressional Record- Senate*, Vol.107, Part 10, pp.12630-12631.

⁶⁶Ibid.

However, if the administration failed to intervene in the August elections it was not through choice. Although not even the administration's own estimate had been able to present unequivocal evidence of Jagan's communist commitments or of any willingness on the part of the Soviet Union or Cuba to support him, and it was considered unlikely that he would turn British Guiana into a communist state either before or immediately after independence, the Kennedy administration continued through early 1961 to press the British government to intervene in the elections to ensure Jagan's removal from office.⁶⁷ Despite repeated expressions of concern and requests for intervention at every level from the President down, the Americans were unable to persuade the British government to interfere, although Hugh Fraser, Parliamentary Undersecretary for the Colonies, did respond to one such approach that covert intervention might be considered after the elections.⁶⁸

At Kennedy's request, the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, made an eleventh-hour call for intervention. Only ten days before the election, Rusk wrote to British Foreign Secretary Lord Home, requesting urgent British action to forestall a Jagan victory.⁶⁹ Although acknowledging the divergence of British and American evaluations of the situation, Rusk presented the most explicit expression yet of American concerns about Jagan, placing British Guiana firmly in the context of the Cuban problem. "No doubt", he wrote,

"you would expect us to show considerable sensitivity about the prospect of Castroism in the Western Hemisphere and that we are not inclined to give people like Jagan the same benefit of the doubt which was given two or three years ago to Castro himself. However, we do believe that Jagan and his American wife are very far to the left indeed and that his accession to power in British Guiana would be a most troublesome setback in this Hemisphere".⁷⁰

Once again the British rebuffed the American request for action.⁷¹ Accepting Jagan as the natural leader of British Guiana, they were unwilling to jeopardise future relations with him should an attempt to influence the election, which given Jagan's relative strength had little

⁶⁷Telegram, DOS to SOS, No. Tosec 8, 5 Aug. 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XII, p. 519.

⁶⁸Telegram, DOS to SOS, 5 Aug. 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XII, p. 519; Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No. 977, 26 Aug. 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XII, pp. 522-523.

⁶⁹Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No. 708, 11 Aug. 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XII, pp. 519-520.

⁷⁰*Ibid.* p. 520.

⁷¹Message from FS Home to SOS Rusk, 18 Aug. 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XII, pp. 521-522.

chance of success, be exposed. Writing to Rusk on 18 August, Home observed that the possibility of influencing the outcome of the August elections had already been considered but had been rejected as impractical, neither "safe", nor "effective". Any attempt to manipulate the election results, Home asserted, would "only make matters worse".⁷² In any case, it was too late now to intervene.

This response came as no surprise to Washington, where it was recognised that the British were unlikely to agree to intervene, and indeed that any such intervention had little chance of success at such a late hour. Moreover, even if it were successful, given the unattractiveness of the anti-Jagan alternatives, interference might itself raise new difficulties. Rather than prompt immediate intervention, Rusk's approach to the Foreign Secretary was intended to set the stage for "more meaningful" Anglo-American cooperation on the problem after the elections.⁷³

Home's response, however, gave little indication that future Anglo-American collaboration on British Guiana would prove any more satisfactory to Washington. While professing to understand American concerns, the Foreign Secretary reiterated the commitment of the British government to progress towards independence for British Guiana under Jagan; although he admitted, in a thinly veiled jibe at the American position on colonialism, that "we have had to move faster than we would have liked."⁷⁴ Although the British retained the right to suspend the constitution, this was a measure of last resort. In the present anti-colonial climate, Home observed, "it is practical politics to take the latter course only when it is quite clear that a territory is heading for disaster".⁷⁵ In any case, he saw little indication that this extreme course would be necessary. While the State Department focused on the negative aspects of Jagan's ambivalence, Home subscribed to the tradition of British officials since 1957 of accentuating the positive, lamenting Jagan's communist connections and his admiration for Castro, but pointing to his erstwhile moderation and his expressed intention to

⁷²Ibid. p.521.

⁷³Telegram, DOS to SOS, No.Tosec 8, 5 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.519.

⁷⁴Message from FS Home to SOS Rusk, 18 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.521.

⁷⁵Ibid.

seek economic aid from the United States as encouraging signs that Jagan might not be lost to the West. Rather than become another Cuba, British Guiana might "end up in a position not very different from that of India". Although aware of American concerns, Home declared himself convinced that the policy of cooperating with Jagan, and seeking to "educate" him, remained the "only possible policy".⁷⁶ For Home, in August 1961 at least, future Anglo-American cooperation on British Guiana should be in support of this policy and did not imply any reassessment of its premises.

The election results more than confirmed British predictions. Senior level Colonial Office assessments of the likely outcome held that although the PPP would win they would probably only do so by a small margin.⁷⁷ British Guiana Desk Officer, Dawson, proved rather more accurate in his prediction that the PPP would win a clear majority, taking twenty or twenty-two seats.⁷⁸ In the event, the PPP won twenty of the thirty-five seats available, the PNC won eleven, and the UF four. This division of opinion between higher officials and lower level specialists was replicated also in the State Department and went far beyond the accuracy of election predictions. Different bureaucratic preoccupations produced differing perceptions of the threat posed by Jagan. On the American side, those at a higher level were predisposed to cast and interpret events in a Cold War, national security framework, while lower level specialists were more attuned to local and regional realities, but less responsive to external considerations. On the British side, different assessments within the Colonial Office were ultimately less striking than the bureaucratically defined distinctions between the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office and Prime Ministerial interests and attitudes.

The election demonstrated the continuing electoral strength of Jagan's PPP. Ironically, it also provided the rationale for an intensified campaign against Jagan by the opposition parties during the period of internal self-government. The PPP had won a clear majority of the seats but, the opposition pointed out, had garnered only 42.6% of the vote. The first-past-the-post

⁷⁶Ibid. p.522.

⁷⁷Telegram, London to SOS, No.590, 9 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁷⁸Ibid.

electoral system distorted the distribution of seats in the legislature in relation to the party's level of support in the country. With 41% of the vote the PNC had won only eleven seats. A system of proportional representation would give a more equitable distribution. However, it should be noted that the percentage of the total vote cast in the 1961 is not an entirely accurate guide to the level of PPP support as the party had fielded candidates and concentrated their energies in only twenty-nine constituencies. Nevertheless, for Jagan's opponents the results confirmed Grey's speculation that there were more people against the PPP than for it. Jagan might have been defeated in the face of a united opposition.

However, the election results suggested the prospects of a united opposition were more remote than ever. Relations between Burnham and D'Aguiar were at a nadir. The UF had won two of its seats in Georgetown, a PNC stronghold, defeating the PNC Chairman and General Secretary. Having to campaign intensely against the UF in Georgetown, Burnham argued, had deflected PNC energy and resources from marginal constituencies which should have been the main target. In the absence of the UF, he argued, the PNC could have won as many as eighteen seats.⁷⁹ In the aftermath of the election there appeared to be little potential for détente between Burnham and D'Aguiar. The US Consul Melby was pessimistic about the prospects of PNC-UF cooperation against the PPP in the new legislature.⁸⁰

Finally, the election campaign and results pointed ominously to the increasing racial polarisation of British Guianese politics and the potential for racial violence. Although the election day itself was peaceful, there were subsequently a number of racial incidents.⁸¹ Communism may have been the issue at stake in Washington, but in British Guiana, despite the anti-communist rhetoric of the opposition parties, it was race that dictated the election result. The opposition parties, certainly the PNC, used the communist issue less as a means of internal mobilisation than as an attempt to court international attention. The high level of electoral mobilisation was achieved through the usually covert manipulation of racial

⁷⁹Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.48, 25 Aug.1961, "BG General 8/24/61- 9/6/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁸⁰Ibid.; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.47, 25 Aug.1961, "BG General 8/24/61- 9/6/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁸¹Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Priority No.201, 23 Aug.1961, A10110/14, FO371/155720, PRO.

stereotypes and fears, behind a public façade of non-racialism erected at the leadership level. With the election ostensibly the last before independence, the racial stakes were high. According to Ralph Premdas, who investigated the increasing influence of race in Guianese elections between 1957 and 1964, the 1961 election marks the point at which Apanjaat politics finally triumphed over hopes for a Jagan/Burnham reconciliation.⁸²

Before the elections, John Hennings, the British Colonial Attaché in Washington, ventured the view that, in the event of a PPP victory, the Americans might be forced to adjust their thinking about British Guiana and the best approach to a Jagan government. The Americans, Hennings suggested, "are coming reluctantly to recognise that they may at last have to recognise Jagan as a fact of life and if the forthcoming elections confirm this they may accept in their own interests they can no longer afford to deal with him at one remove from us."⁸³ The election results established the need to come to terms with a Jagan government in British Guiana for the foreseeable future. Their position vindicated, the British appear to have had more success in pressing their agenda for British Guianese political and economic development on the State Department.

There was, in any case, little in Jagan's post-election statements to give the United States cause for concern. In keeping with Sir Ralph Grey's earlier predictions and the PPP's record in office since 1957, Jagan's statements were moderate in tone. He identified his priorities as independence and the securing of funds for economic development. He did reaffirm his commitment to socialism and to economic development largely through state planning, but he also reaffirmed that the PPP was not a communist party and that he was committed to parliamentary democracy and to the constitutional protection of civil rights. He denied that he had any intention of nationalising the sugar and bauxite industries and sought to assure his audience that any relations with the Cuban government would be purely commercial. There would be no shady deals with Castro. As he had asserted during the campaign, he intended to seek economic aid from the Americans and saw no inconsistency between this aim and his

⁸²Ralph Premdas, "Elections and Political Campaigns in a Racially Bifurcated State: The Case of Guyana", *JISWA*, Vol.14, 1972, pp.271- 296.

⁸³Extract from Hennings Letter, 7 Aug.1961, CO1031/4177, PRO.

preference for state planned development; the Americans had after all aided other countries with such preferences including India, Yugoslavia and Poland. He would take aid from anywhere, he announced, with the proviso that there were no strings attached. In the matter of foreign affairs he intended to remain neutral.⁸⁴ This was one area where he might fall foul of the United States government. The Americans had made it clear to British officials during the talks in February 1961 that it was not only communism that would not be tolerated in the western hemisphere: "Left-wing neutralist governments would be particularly unwelcome...in Latin America. They had no overriding objection to these governments per se but were convinced that in Latin American conditions they had neither the stability nor political maturity to risk falling prey to the Communists."⁸⁵ Moreover, in the bipolar, zero-sum context of the Cold War, in which, as Lars Schoultz has pointed out, the precarious global balance of power which so preoccupied successive American administrations might be visualised as a playground see-saw, a conversion to neutralism, if not as dramatic as an outright conversion to communism, nevertheless effected the equilibrium of the international system:

"It is not necessary for one participant to move to the opposite side in order to disturb the balance; all that must occur is for a participant to jump off- to leave the game by becoming non-aligned...Even true non-alignment is damaging to policy-makers who conceive of the world in bi-polar terms."⁸⁶

In the wake of the election the State Department did finally seem prepared to consider the more accommodating approach towards Jagan advocated by the British. In a memorandum to the President on 30 August, Special Assistant Arthur Schlesinger wrote: "The State Department feeling about British Guiana [which I share] is that we have no real choice but to feel Jagan out and see what we can do to bring [keep?] him into the western camp."⁸⁷ The State Department recommended that Jagan be offered technical and economic assistance, that

⁸⁴Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.44, 23 Aug.1961, "BG General 5/19/61- 8/23/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.53, 25 Aug.1961, "BG General 8/24/61- 9/6/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁸⁵Telegram, Washington to FO, No.87 Saving, 9 Feb.1961, ZP14/39/G, FO371/159672, PRO.

⁸⁶Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy Towards Latin America*, [Princeton, 1987], p.292.

⁸⁷Memorandum, Schlesinger to the President, 30 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.524.

the way be prepared for his entrance into the OAS and the Alliance for Progress and that he be received in Washington.

The British Ambassador in Washington, Caccia, noted a concomitant mellowing of attitudes towards Jagan in the American press.⁸⁸ Predictions of an imminent communist beachhead in Latin America were replaced with more measured responses. A *Washington Post* editorial of 23 August 1961 argued,

"It is too early to say whether Monday's election really means that this British colony will be 'lost' to Mr. Khrushchev...It would be a mistake to reach a conclusive judgment in the absence of more facts...By all accounts the vote in Guiana was orderly; whatever government is formed will have a claim to legitimacy that cannot be matched in Havana. Distinctions like this ought to be borne in mind as this country evolves a policy for British Guiana."⁸⁹

An editorial in the *New York Times* the same day echoed the State Department's new position with an uncanny accuracy:

"Dr. Jagan has been labeled by some high American officials and some Senators as a Communist, or the equivalent of one. If this were to prove the official United States government attitude, Dr. Jagan and his Government would certainly be in the communistic camp alongside of Cuba very soon. He has made it clear that he does not want this to happen...Dr. Jagan [has] pledged himself and his party to adhere to the principles of parliamentary democracy. He also expressed his desire and expectation to link Guiana economically to the hemispheric system. In fact Guiana will probably try to share in President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress plan. This does not mean that British Guiana will be politically aligned to the United States. The People's Progressive party professes neutrality in foreign affairs. There is no doubt that Dr. Jagan and his American-born wife are far to the left and very radical in their ideas. 'The People's Progressive party has definite objectives Dr. Jagan said on July 29 in a radio speech. 'It is dedicated to the goal, to the ideal of socialism.' Pending evidence to the contrary, the United States has everything to gain by taking Dr. Jagan's pronouncements at their face value. If British Guiana is handled by the United States with some understanding, sophistication and sympathy there is every reason to hope it will become a desirable member of the inter-American system."⁹⁰

⁸⁸Telegram, Washington to FO, No.494 Saving, 1 Sept.1961, A10110/20, FO371/155720, PRO.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰*New York Times*, 23 Aug.1961, p.32, col.2.

After listing Jagan's post election assurances the *New York Times* reported on the following day the Kennedy administration's response to his election under the heading "US Seeks Amity":

"The administration was reported today to be ready to give Dr. Jagan's regime in British Guiana every opportunity to prove the leftist leader's avowed intention of cooperating with the Inter-American system. Far from showing dismay over the victory of Dr. Jagan's People's Progressive party...high administration officials indicated that there was no thought here of giving up British Guiana as a loss to Communism...The Administration is aware that, as a republic, Guiana may evolve towards neutralism. But it is also felt here that hostility by the United States may unnecessarily push Guiana toward a commitment to the Soviet bloc or Cuba."⁹¹

Jagan's election met with a mixed reception in the Senate. As might have been expected, the most extreme reaction came from Senator Dodd. He reiterated his warnings that British Guiana under Jagan could become a beachhead for communist infiltration and subversion of Latin America, and accused the administration of complicity in Jagan's election victory. Its culpability, he argued, lay in both omission and commission. Despite his warnings, the administration had done nothing in the information field, for example, to prevent the election of Jagan. More serious still was the fact that only weeks before the election the Jagan government had been granted a World Bank Loan of \$2 million, which could only have enhanced his prestige and lent substance to his professed commitment to the economic development of his country. Dodd viewed this as an intervention in the elections on the side of the PPP.⁹²

Comment on the election results in British Guiana came also from more liberal quarters. Senator Stephen Young from Ohio, for example, reminded the Senate of Jagan's democratic credentials however distasteful his politics might be to them. The principle of self-determination should be universal. He called attention to the hypocrisy inherent in Dodd's arguments: "We cannot talk out of both sides of our mouth at the same time...We cannot risk

⁹¹*New York Times*, 24 Aug.1961, p.14, col.4.

⁹²"British Guiana", 23 Aug.1961, *Congressional Record - Senate*, Vol.107, Part12, pp.16647-16648.

war in Berlin over the right of Germans to self-determination while at the same time implying we should have prevented it in British Guiana."⁹³

Young spoke approvingly of the position taken in the *New York Times* editorial, reinforcing the British argument that the quickest way to ensure a communist regime in British Guiana would be to treat Jagan like a communist.⁹⁴ In his warnings against overreaction to Jagan, Young was joined by Senator McGee, who noted that, "we have acquired a severe tendency in this country to assume that whenever there is an election in which a person we do not favor has been elected, the communists must have engineered it."⁹⁵

Exchanges in the Senate in the aftermath of Jagan's re-election in 1961 revealed little depth of knowledge of the situation in British Guiana. Some statements were studded with factual inaccuracies and fallacious assumptions about the nature of the threat posed by a Jagan government. British Guiana in these exchanges served an illustrative, functional purpose to service the personal and parochial political ends and arguments of a number of Senators. For an obsessive anti-communist like Dodd, British Guiana was merely the most current manifestation of the deeper malaise of communist encroachment in the Third World. For critics of foreign aid policy, the World Bank loan to British Guiana could be held up as an example of administrative ineptitude in the foreign aid programme as a whole. For some Congressional liberals, the anti-communist reflex with which some of their colleagues had greeted the election of Jagan was evidence of misperceptions which had infiltrated American thinking, which led them to see an international communist conspiracy behind any unsatisfactory development and, wearing East-West blinders, to neglect other dynamics in the international system.

In the wake of the August elections, State Department and White House officials may have been more receptive to British ideas about dealing with a Jagan government than hitherto, but

⁹³"We Must Not Force British Guiana into Soviet Camp", 24 Aug.1961, *Congressional Record- Senate*, Vol.107, Part13, pp.16962-16963.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

the administration's public position as outlined in the *New York Times*, for example, was misleading. American reservations about Jagan had not been alleviated. American readiness to accept a more cooperative approach did not spring from any reassessment of the threat presented by Jagan. The State Department remained circumspect. Rusk reminded Bruce, for example, that "we should keep in mind possibility Jagan is Communist-controlled 'sleeper' who will move to establish Castro or Communist regime upon independence".⁹⁶ To the Kennedy administration, Jagan's election victory was, in Rusk's words "unpalatable".⁹⁷ Writing to Home on 26 August, Rusk suggested the prompt establishment of another Anglo-American Working Party to review the April intelligence assessment and to consider coordinated courses of action in the political, economic and information fields. In addition, Rusk noted the importance he attached to the "covert side", reminding the Foreign Secretary of Hugh Fraser's agreement in the previous June to the consideration of a covert programme following the elections.⁹⁸

Preparing for the Working Party discussions, the State Department developed a twin-track action programme to which it hoped the British would agree. The plan was summarised for the President by Schlesinger. "The idea, in short", he wrote, "is to use the year or two before independence to work to tie Jagan to the political and economic framework of the hemisphere, while at the same time reinsuring against pro-Communist developments by building up anti-Communist clandestine capabilities."⁹⁹ The Department was prepared to endorse and participate in the British cooperative policy, but it also sought a parallel covert initiative designed to "develop information about, expose and destroy Communists in British Guiana, including, if necessary, 'the possibility of finding a substitute for Jagan himself.'"¹⁰⁰ Although at this stage the covert programme was not clearly defined, the "first emphasis" was to be on "intelligence collection, with covert political action to come later".¹⁰¹

⁹⁶Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.1181, 5 Sept.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.530.

⁹⁷Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.977, 26 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.522-523.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* p.523.

⁹⁹Memorandum, Schlesinger to the President, 30 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.524.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁰¹Memorandum, Schlesinger to the President, 31 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.526.

American officials were not oblivious to the contradictions inherent in this twin-track approach of offering overt demonstrations of friendship and economic aid to an emerging nation while simultaneously covertly intervening in its internal politics. On one level it is possible to view the proposals as coherent. Both tracks, when it is assumed that economic aid has a concomitant political pay-off, can be viewed as attempts to influence the international and ideological affinities of British Guiana's government and its readiness to accept American hemispheric hegemony. On an operational level, however, there was a risk that the covert programme might undermine the overt policy. Recognising this risk, Arthur Schlesinger advised that the covert programme "must be handled with the utmost discretion and probably confined at the start to intelligence collection".¹⁰²

Rather than representing a radical revision of American thinking, Washington's acceptance of the British cooperative policy was a tactical manoeuvre. The State Department hoped to obtain British acquiescence to its covert programme as a quid pro quo for American acceptance of a cooperative overt policy. Priming US Ambassador Bruce for the September talks, Rusk observed that, "we have deliberately refrained up to now from intimating to British we prepared to try their prescription for handling Jagan. We hope this card will serve as leverage to obtain British agreement to our action program as a whole".¹⁰³

The American quid pro quo was explicitly laid out for the British before the Working Party assembled. A note to the Colonial Secretary from Bruce confirmed that the administration was now "prepared, working with the British, to try to favorably influence Jagan".¹⁰⁴ However, the adoption of this course would be conditional upon the British being at least willing to consider simultaneous covert intervention in British Guianese politics: "We would however first like to reach agreement with the UK about certain auxiliary programs of a covert nature, which we would hope to develop designed to increase our information about the extent of communist influence in the PPP and to reduce that influence."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰²Memorandum, Schlesinger to the President, 30 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.525.

¹⁰³Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.1181, 5 Sept.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.530.

¹⁰⁴Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], Personal No.100, 7 Sept.1961, A10110/30/G, FO371/155721, PRO.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

Moreover, the Americans wanted a commitment from the British that they would take the necessary steps to prevent a communist regime emerging in British Guiana should the attempt to bind Jagan to the West fail. They hoped to discuss "certain contingencies such as [a] the possibility of new elections before independence, [b] the use of the British reserve powers as a last resort to prevent a communist-Castro government from emerging, [c] the development of alternative leadership to Jagan in the PPP."¹⁰⁶

The note summarised the contingent nature of the American position thus: "..The US is prepared to extend the hand of friendship to Jagan and to cooperate fully with the British in supporting the Jagan-led government in British Guiana, in return for certain built-in guarantees should our misgivings, which are strong, prove despite our best efforts to be justified."¹⁰⁷

British officials did not share the American enthusiasm for a covert programme, objecting on two grounds. Firstly, such operations would run contrary to the policy of attempting to align Jagan with the West. Secondly, any traceable involvement in covert activities would jeopardise future good relations with Jagan and the prospects of influencing him and complicate the integration of British Guiana into the Commonwealth after independence.¹⁰⁸ Writing to Rusk on 2 September, Lord Home obliquely alerted the Secretary of State to the British government's reservations about covert operations. "My colleagues and I will enter these talks", he announced, "with the firm conviction that the emphasis must be in the political and economic spheres if we are to expect rewarding dividends".¹⁰⁹

Meeting with Ambassador Bruce on 7 September, the Colonial Secretary pointed out his "reservation in principle" not only concerning covert activities, but also with regard to the American request for "built-in guarantees", noting the limitations on British authority in

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Notes for Secretary of State's Talks with US Ambassador, 6 Sept.1961, A10110/25, FO371/155721, PRO.

¹⁰⁹Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.1147, 2 Sept.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.528.

British Guiana under the present constitution and the reluctance of the British Government to invoke its reserve powers to suspend the constitution. The "climate of world opinion" towards imperialism had changed considerably since 1953, making it difficult to justify internationally such projections of imperial authority.¹¹⁰ British readiness to exercise that authority in defence of inessential colonial interests had diminished.

However, the above concerns aside, British officials were enthusiastic about the American initiative, welcoming the apparent American readiness to commit themselves to a specific programme for British Guiana. The talks would offer an opportunity not only to encourage them in a friendly attitude towards Jagan, but also perhaps to tie them into bankrolling British Guianese development.¹¹¹

The September Working Party was viewed more seriously in Washington than that which had taken place in April. The State Department were determined not only to focus the attention of the Colonial Office "first team" on British Guiana, but also to secure the involvement of the Foreign Office in the discussions lest the issue should become a source of Anglo-American aggravation.¹¹² British Guiana was thus inflated from a residual colonial problem to be resolved by the Colonial Office into an issue involving the Anglo-American relationship, the smooth functioning of which was an imperative in British foreign policy to which all else was routinely subordinated. By invoking the Anglo-American relationship, the State Department sought to enlist the Foreign Office as an ally in its attempts to convince the Colonial Office, hitherto if not unsympathetic, then at least unresponsive to American concerns and requests, to accept its proposals for dealing with Jagan. This time the British were to be left in no doubt about the depth of American concern. The American representatives came to the talks embarrassingly well prepared.¹¹³

¹¹⁰Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], Personal No.99, 7 Sept.1961, A10110/33/G, FO371/155721, PRO.

¹¹¹Crichton minute, 29 Aug.1961, A10110/21/G, FO371/155721, PRO.

¹¹²Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.1086, 31 Aug.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.526-527. See also Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.1165, 4 Sept.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.528-529.

¹¹³Crichton minute, 8 Sept.1961, A10110/42G, FO371/155722, PRO; Letter, Thomas to Hennings, 4 Oct.1961, CO1031/4177, PRO.

The Working Party met in London 11-16 September 1961. Although the actual Report, subsequently approved by both British and American authorities, is not yet in the public domain, it has been possible to establish the main features and specific proposals of the programme that emerged. The Americans agreed to invite Jagan to Washington for a meeting with President Kennedy, "as evidence of their firm intentions to be friendly" and to discuss with him the possibility of \$5 million of American aid for British Guiana in 1962.¹¹⁴ An ICA representative would visit Georgetown to discuss Jagan's development programme, the Americans would upgrade their post in Georgetown to a Consulate-General and there would be an expansion of American and British information services. There would also be an attempt to interest countries such as India and Canada as well as certain Latin American states in aiding British Guiana.¹¹⁵ The British regarded this last proposal as an unlikely eventuality, at least on any substantial scale,¹¹⁶ but it was in keeping with the Kennedy administration's encouragement of multi-lateralism in foreign aid and its desire to increase both Canadian aid contributions and hemispheric involvement.¹¹⁷

There is little indication in the available documentation of how far the British government conceded to the American desire both for covert operations in British Guiana and for British guarantees. That of course does not mean that such agreements were not reached during the September discussions. It is not inconceivable that the British might, at the very least, have pledged as a last resort to invoke their reserve powers to suspend the British Guianese constitution. The British may have been reluctant to use it, but the power to suspend the constitution remained.¹¹⁸ Moreover, although the British retained their commitment to the independence formula agreed at the Independence Conference of 1960, they did agree to at least consider the possibility of fresh elections in British Guiana before independence, undertaking,

¹¹⁴Enclosure to Carter to Dawson, 20 Oct.1961, A10110/79, FO 371/155723, PRO; Telegram, CRO to Ottawa, Priority No.2024, 29 Sept.1961, CO1031/4177, PRO.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Enclosure to Carter to Dawson, 20 Oct.1961, A10110/79, FO371/155723, PRO.

¹¹⁷Special Message on Foreign Aid, 22 March 1961, "Foreign Aid 3/61- 4/61" Folder, Subjects Series [SS], NSF, Box 297, JFKL; Background Paper on Foreign Aid, 10-11 May 1963, "Pearson Visit 5/63" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 19, JFKL; Memorandum, Goodwin to the President, 24 April 1961, "Canada General 4/61- 5/14/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 18, JFKL.

¹¹⁸Notes for Secretary of State's Talks with US Ambassador, 6 Sept.1961, A10110/25, FO371/155721, PRO.

" to endeavour to adhere to the London formula which would provide for a conference on British Guiana independence not earlier than August 1962, to consider and consult with the United States about the feasibility of new elections being held prior to British Guiana independence."¹¹⁹

Neither is it inconceivable that the Kennedy administration secured an equally vague agreement from the British government to some or all of its covert action programme. In view of London's expressed reservations about a covert programme, Bruce was instructed in the run up to the September talks to sell the plan to the British on its intelligence collection aspects and to downplay its political action dimensions.¹²⁰ One subsequent American summary of the agreed policy certainly suggests that an agreement on some form of covert programme was reached:

"The current US program for British Guiana is based upon general agreement with the UK for a coordinated effort to get along with Jagan. At the same time resources are to be built up to enable a harder line to be put into effect if, after a reasonable time [but before British Guiana becomes independent], it is clear that British Guiana is going the way of Castro's Cuba."¹²¹

Nevertheless, the response of British officials to the outcome of the talks does not suggest that they considered themselves to have capitulated to American pressure for covert action. Rather, the British were pleased with the outcome of the discussions in which they believed their view of Jagan had finally prevailed. The Americans seemed to have accepted the inevitability of working with Jagan. Despite the obvious continued anxiety of the Americans, "moderate good sense finally emerged."¹²² In October 1961 the Working Party Report became the State Department's "new policy guidelines."¹²³ In its overt policy at least, the Kennedy administration seemed to have accepted British arguments and committed itself to the new programme in a "whole-hearted across the board effort to cooperate with newly

¹¹⁹Hutchinson minute, 24 Nov.1961, A10110/107, FO371/155725, PRO.

¹²⁰Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.1181, 5 Sept.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.530.

¹²¹Memorandum, Hilsman to Johnson, 17 Oct.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.258.

¹²²Letter, Thomas to Hennings, 4th Oct.1961, CO1031/4177, PRO.

¹²³Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.56, 25 Sept.1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

elected administration headed by Jagan and to foster effective association between British Guiana and the West."¹²⁴

The Kennedy administration was not engaged a path of intervention and subversion in British Guiana from the outset, although this was its reflex reaction and its preferred method for tackling the problem it perceived there. By October of 1961, British intransigence in the face of repeated American expressions of concern and requests for intervention from the highest levels had forced the administration first to abandon its hope for intervention in the 1961 elections, and then to accept, at least as an overt policy, the British agenda for future developments in British Guiana and the British prescription for preventing the emergence of a communist government. However, British satisfaction with the outcome of the talks would prove short-lived. The Anglo-American action programme which emerged from the September Working Party was ambivalent, internalising rather than resolving the different and conflicting British and American responses to the situation in British Guiana. American commitment to the overt side of the programme was limited. Their agreement to this policy had after all been intended as a bargaining counter to persuade the British government to accept a covert programme. American actions over the coming months would increasingly depart from the cooperative programme agreed in London.

¹²⁴Ibid.

Chapter 3

The Politics of Economic Aid: Implementing the Cooperative Programme. October 1961 - January 1962

In the overt programme which emerged from the Anglo-American Working Party of September 1961, the Kennedy administration appeared to have accepted the British agenda for the future of British Guiana, based on an attempt to integrate it with the West through a policy of cooperation. The administration agreed to invite Jagan to Washington to meet the President, and to furnish economic aid. Aid for economic development lay at the centre of the Anglo-American strategy for aligning Jagan with the West.

As British Guiana approached independence its economy bore the imprint of its colonial history. In 1961 it was characterised by a lack of economic diversification, heavily dependent on the export of a few primary products; sugar, bauxite and rice, which for the most part left the colony unprocessed. By the late 1950s the sugar and bauxite industries were at or approaching the upper limits of their productive capacity, and although there was room for the expansion of rice production the possibilities of new markets for this commodity were limited. In the absence of industrial development, British Guiana imported manufactured goods and foodstuffs and was beset by high levels of unemployment and underemployment. This structural imbalance was compounded by a demographic problem of some magnitude. The population was growing at a rate of 3% per annum, producing an increasing and increasingly youthful labour force which did not ease the unemployment situation. As the American Consul General noted in 1959, this population boom had "brought the country pretty close to the proverbial treadmill as far as living standards are concerned."¹

As a colony run for over a century exclusively in the interests of sugar production, planned economic development in British Guiana was a relatively new phenomenon, dating from a grant in 1945 of \$12 million under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, and had done

¹Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.150, 13 March 1959, 841D.00/3-1959, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

little to remedy the legacies of colonialism. Early efforts at planned development were hampered by the colony's limited planning and administrative capabilities. British Guiana's first ten year plan, for example, inaugurated in 1947, envisaged an expenditure of \$28 million, of which only \$2 million was spent in the first two years.²

Moreover, the crash development programme introduced by the Interim Government in 1954, following the PPP's removal from office, had been not so much a response to the colony's economic needs as a response to the popularity of the PPP. Explicitly departing from the recommendations of a World Bank Economic Survey Mission in 1953 that the emphasis in British Guianese development should be on productive investment, the Interim Government produced a programme which was characterised by heavy spending on welfare and social services, particularly housing. Operating from the crude and ultimately flawed assumption that an ameliorative programme would undercut the PPP's support, the Interim Government allocated 33% of the expenditure in this two year plan for social services.³ Such a calculation took little cognisance of either the fact that the task of weaning the electorate away from Jagan was not made easier by the absence of any obvious political alternative, or that political mobilisation in British Guiana was becoming increasingly racially rather than economically determined. The Interim Government's failure was emphatically underlined by the return of Jagan's PPP at the 1957 elections.

The need for economic development had been a preoccupation of the PPP, second only to independence itself, since the party's inception. This was a concern rooted not just in the immediate need to raise living standards in the colony, but in the idea that economic emancipation, breaking the patterns of external imperialist control, must accompany constitutional independence if that independence was not to be illusory. Throughout the 1950s Jagan consistently urged upward revision of development plans for the colony. The existing plans, he argued, were inadequate to tackle the scale of the problems, particularly

²Kempe R. Hope, *Development Policy in Guyana: Planning, Finance, and Administration*, [Boulder, 1979], pp.99-100. All figures in BWI \$ unless otherwise indicated. US \$1 = BWI \$1.71.

³Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.191, 20 Dec.1955, 741D.00/12-2055, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

unemployment. The plan for 1956-1960 did admittedly follow more closely the World Bank's recommendations, reducing the social services allocation and committing \$61 million out of \$91 million envisaged expenditure to economic development projects. However, after he resumed office in 1957, Jagan pressed for an expansion of the plan to \$200 million. His request was rejected by the Colonial Office.⁴

Jagan later described the years between the PPP's resumption of office in 1957 and its removal in 1964 as "the period of the People's Progressive Party in office but not in power."⁵ These were evidently years of frustration. Jagan believed the British government was stifling his efforts to carry out his programme, particularly in the economic field. Not only did they reject his demands for expansion of the development plan, but obstructed his attempts to further British Guianese economic development with help from Eastern bloc sources. Such was the fate of a proposed Hungarian glass plant, an East German rice bran oil factory and a loan from Cuba.⁶

In 1959 a new five year plan was drawn up. The 1960-1964 Development Plan was the first to be developed and implemented by an elected government in British Guiana. It was drafted largely by Kenneth Berrill, a Cambridge University economist assigned to the British Guiana government by the Colonial Office. The plan envisaged the expenditure of \$110 million over a five year period and, subject to review in 1962, the plan might be expanded to \$135 million. It was to be financed for the most part with a combination of grants and loans. The British agreed to make available a Colonial Development and Welfare Grant of \$23.2 million and an Exchequer Loan of \$38.4 million which would be made available in two installments of \$19.2 million. British Guiana would provide \$15 million, \$3 million per annum from its own surplus revenues. The plan still had a gap in its funding of \$23.4 million, which might be reduced by an anticipated 10% slippage in the plan, and which would have to be filled by international borrowing.⁷

⁴Cheddi Jagan, *The West on Trial: The Fight for Guyana's Freedom*, [London, 1966], pp.191-192.

⁵Ibid. p.188.

⁶Ibid. pp.189-192.

⁷Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown to DOS, No.62, 30 Nov.1959, 841D.00/11-3059, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

In the 1960-1964 plan the shift towards productive expenditure continued. Social services were again downgraded to receive only 16% of the available funds.⁸ Priority would be given to agriculture and the reclamation of lands for the propagation of rice. Jagan's critics could point to the concentration on the rice industry as a politically motivated employment bribe to the PPP's most fervent supporters in the rural East Indian community, many of whom were engaged in rice farming. But his supporters could as easily point to the fact that the plan eschewed politically popular welfare expenditure.

The plan provoked considerable controversy and a heated exchange in the *Journal Social and Economic Studies*.⁹ The plan was criticised as short sighted, as too concerned with the short-term objective of alleviating unemployment rather than the long-term imperative of raising per capita income. Its concentration on agriculture and in particular on rice-land projects would carry a low yield on the investment. Its sectoral allocations of funds would not produce rapid economic growth and would exacerbate the economy's structural imbalance. Development in British Guiana, it was argued, should be based on the diversification of agriculture and the establishment of primarily heavy and secondarily light industries.

However, given the domestic and international political climates of the early 1960s it is unlikely that a British Guianese government led by Jagan could have raised the level of capital necessary to carry out the research and investment required for such a programme. As it was, the Jagan government would not be able to raise the requisite amount of either domestic or foreign capital to implement the 1960-64 plan in full. Expenditures under the 1960-64 plan did not meet projected levels. Only \$78.5 million was spent.¹⁰

Jagan's main criticism of the plan was not the appropriateness of the allocation of funds but simply that there were not enough funds. Pruning requests from his ministries totalling \$260 million, Jagan had pressed for a \$200 million programme, challenging Berrill's contentions

⁸Ibid.

⁹SES, 9:3 and 10:1; Hope, *Op.Cit.*, pp.105-110.

¹⁰Ibid. p.105.

that British Guiana could not sustain a programme larger than \$110 million and that with interest rates at 6% and British Guiana's revenues increasing at only 6% per annum, a programme of \$200 million was beyond the colony's capacity to absorb. Jagan argued that funds could be borrowed at interest rates of less than 6%, from the DLF for example at 3.5%, or from the USSR at 2.5%, and that Berrill had underestimated British Guianese revenues.¹¹

On his return from the London negotiations over the 1960-64 Development Plan to Georgetown in August 1959 Jagan made clear his dissatisfaction with the programme. Reporting on his trip to a crowd assembled at Bourda Green, a customary stage for political meetings, Jagan attacked the programme as too small, and said that as the British were unable to provide adequate money for British Guianese development, he intended to look elsewhere, possibly towards a "no strings attached" loan from the USSR.¹² In the weeks that followed Jagan travelled the country seeking public endorsement for a possible Soviet loan. In these meetings he reportedly intimated that he had received assurances that the USSR was prepared to extend to British Guiana a \$100 million loan at 2% or 2.5% interest.¹³ He subsequently informed an American official that he had as yet not approached the Soviets, nor had they approached him.¹⁴ Talk of a Soviet loan was fizzling out by November 1959.¹⁵ But the issue was not dead.

Jagan finally gave specific expression to his previously vague references to Soviet aid in January 1961, requesting the Governor to approach the British government to seek blanket permission to make formal applications for long-term low interest loans and grants from Eastern bloc sources.¹⁶ Jagan insisted that "he did not advocate such loans in any ideological sense but purely as a straightforward business arrangement", and suggested that the British

¹¹Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown to DOS, No.62, 30 Nov.1959, 841D.00/11-3059, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

¹²Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown to DOS, No.30, 26 Aug.1959, 841D.10/8-2659, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

¹³Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown to DOS, No.37, 9 Sept.1959, 841D.10/9-959, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

¹⁴Despatch, Amcongen Kingston to DOS, No.148, 27 Nov.1959, 841D.00/11-2759, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

¹⁵Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.59, 25 Nov.1959, 841D.10/11-2559, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

¹⁶Letter, Grey to Macleod, 7 Jan.1961, A1124/1, FO371/155772, PRO.

government might examine the terms of any agreements with the Eastern bloc to determine that no strings were attached.¹⁷ The British rejected this request.¹⁸

Undaunted by the gap in funding in the existing plan, Jagan continued to insist that British Guiana needed an expanded development programme with more generous loans at lower rates of interest. After the PPP was returned to office in August 1961, an expanded plan was drawn up totalling \$413 million, which Jagan insisted was the minimum required to bring the colony to the point of take-off into self-sustained development. \$300 million of the planned expenditure was earmarked for social overhead projects, including land reclamation, roads, sea defences and hydro-electric power which would create the foundations for future development.¹⁹ It was for this plan that Jagan sought American funding during his visit to Washington in October 1961.

Jagan's long-standing commitment to securing aid for the economic and social development of his country was reinforced by domestic political necessity. Convinced of a correlation between economic development and his future electability, by the late 1950s Jagan argued that there was an economic conspiracy to oust him, telling one American official that the British government was "out to 'squeeze him out' by making it impossible for his government to get ahead with development schemes."²⁰ In conversation with the American Consul in 1958, Burnham remarked that, "Dr. Jagan's future political life depended chiefly on his ability to procure loans from abroad for the continuation and expansion of the colony's economic development program...He was glad this particular problem was Jagan's and not his at the moment."²¹ Economic development had emerged also as a major issue in the 1961 election campaign. Peter D'Aguiar, leader of the conservative UF, had claimed that, following a UF victory, the United States would provide \$1 billion in private investment and

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Draft Despatch, 'Re: Soviet and Eastern bloc loans', undated, A1124/1, FO371/155772, PRO.

¹⁹Letter, Grey to CS, 6 Nov.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO; Report by the Premier on the mission to US, Canada and Puerto Rico, Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

²⁰Despatch, Amcongen Kingston, to DOS, No.148, 27 Nov.1959, 841D.00/11-2759, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

²¹Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown to DOS, No.213, 24 June 1958, 741D.00/6-2458, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 3205, NA.

government loans for British Guiana's development.²² In his subsequent conversations in Washington Jagan would repeatedly point to the internal political difficulties he faced, an incongruous display of insecurity in view of the PPP's impressive third election victory. Jagan presented his own political future as hanging on the issue of economic aid. If he could not deliver economic development and employment to the people who had elected him, he argued, they would replace him with someone who could.

Prior to 1961, the American contribution to British Guianese economic development was restricted to an ICA technical assistance programme which began operating in 1954, to assist the Interim Government's development plan. American officials in Georgetown were as convinced as the Interim Government of the power of economic progress to combat political radicalism. Writing in 1956, the American Consul observed that,

"an improvement of economic conditions in the country is the sine qua non of a healthier political climate. The corollary to this is that since the United States wishes to assist the colony in making political progress it must be interested in amelioration of economic conditions without which little improvement politically can be made."²³

After the PPP resumed office in 1957, Jagan made several pilgrimages to Washington seeking aid for economic development. Despite his talk of securing a Soviet loan there is no evidence to indicate that he intended to rely exclusively on Eastern bloc aid. From 1958 onwards Jagan was consistently looking to Washington for economic aid and made a series of applications to the Development Loan Fund [DLF] to secure funding for road construction and drainage and irrigation projects. Foreshadowing his encounter with the Kennedy administration in 1961, Jagan's applications were repeatedly rejected on the grounds that his expectations of aid were unrealistically high and that his proposals were inadequately prepared and lacking in detail.²⁴

²²Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.206-207.

²³Despatch, Amcongen POS to DOS, No.11, 18 July 1956, 841D.00/7-1856, CDF1955-1959, RG59, Box 4451, NA.

²⁴Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.101, 26 Feb.1960, "500-Development Loan Fund [ICA]" Folder, Classified General Records [CGR] 1957-1963, Records of the Diplomatic Posts of the Department of State[RG84], Box 4, NA.

That Jagan's applications to the DLF were rejected on procedural or practical grounds belies the importance of political considerations in frustrating his attempts to secure American aid. The PPP's return to office in 1957 had complicated the politico-economic equation. American officials continued to assume that there was a direct relationship between economic development and political radicalism; that economic development would undercut support for the PPP. But they could not dictate the immediate political impact of development and assistance programmes. How could the incumbent PPP government be prevented from deriving political benefit from American aid? After 1957, American officials were forced to consider how to separate the long-term political functions of economic development from its immediate political impact. They found themselves torn between chancing that they might enhance the credibility of the PPP and alleviating the economic conditions that they regarded as conducive to communism. This contradiction was never fully resolved. For the most part, however, they assumed the political impact of American aid could be controlled.

Consul Woods, for example, outlined some purely political considerations in advocating DLF funding for a roads programme in 1959. Improved economic conditions in British Guiana would prevent the communist views presently restricted to the PPP leadership from gaining popular currency. Aid now would pre-empt the need for aid of the "fire brigade" variety later, providing "an inexpensive insurance policy against communism."²⁵

In an estimate submitted by the Georgetown Consulate in January 1961 it was noted; "US aid programs will not determine the course of political development in British Guiana, but they may be able to exert important influence."²⁶ The report rejected any expansion of the programme prior to the 1961 elections, lest it redound to the benefit of the Jagan government: "A crash increase in US aid now would not insure either a PNC or a UF victory, nor would it persuade Dr. Jagan to stop flirting with the Soviet bloc; it would expose the US to charge of

²⁵Despatch, Amconsul Georgetown to SOS, No.142, 24 Feb.1959, "500-Development Loan Fund [ICA]" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

²⁶Airgram, Georgetown to SOS, No.G-6, 24 Jan.1961, "Economic General Correspondence" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

attempt interfere in BG internal affairs."²⁷ Rather, preparation should begin on a programme which could be implemented soon after the elections. Indeed the elements of this programme should be contingent upon the election result. American assistance should be responsive to the political circumstances. Should the PNC or UF win in August, they "should be assisted in areas of special weakness, and in providing economic development that will undercut PPP strength". In this eventuality a roads programme to cover the East coast would be politically useful in demonstrating the PNC or UF government's concern for rural East Indian areas. On the other hand, should the PPP emerge victorious the assistance programme should have a different emphasis. It "should be directed toward economic improvement of British Guiana without enhancing Jagan's personal position."²⁸ Projects should further American interests, "but at the same time be so attractive that Jagan will have no choice but to accept them."²⁹

In April 1961 Melby recommended that British Guiana should be considered for a Peace Corps programme, suggesting action in the fields of teaching, social welfare and administration. The political calculation in his recommendation was clear. Anticipating that internal self-government would bring with it educational reform, Melby suggested that the "example of good American teachers can have a beneficial effect on the educational changes which will be introduced by the government." Making teachers available might counter the tendency of a PPP government to look to left-wing circles in recruiting staff for its schools. In the field of government administration too, "competent Americans... if placed in areas where the Guianese government structure is particularly weak, could be valuable in steadying and influencing the British Guiana government in a critical transitional phase."³⁰

If economic aid was a politically charged issue in British Guiana, it was an equally contentious issue in Washington. Under Eisenhower foreign aid, encompassed under the Mutual Security Program [MSP], became a regular battleground between the Executive and

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Airgram, Georgetown to SOS, No.G-11, 18 April 1961, "500-Peace Corps" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

Legislative branches.³¹ On Capitol Hill, foreign aid faced criticism or outright opposition from across the political spectrum. There was no foreign aid pork-barrel. A programme without a constituency of its own, foreign aid was of little direct demonstrable benefit to the American people except as a tool of containment and was explicitly sold as such. Some criticised the aid programme as maladministered and wasteful, given the pressing need of neglected regions at home for economic development.³² Liberals attacked the programme as too militarily oriented, too concerned with short-term political objectives such as shoring up unstable but friendly regimes. The American aid effort, they argued, should be concerned not with short-term Cold War concerns but with long-term development in the Third World. Conservatives argued that the programme did not in fact serve the short-term political objectives of the United States directly enough. A number were simply opposed to foreign aid per se. Two such individuals, Clarence Cannon of Missouri and Otto Passman of Louisiana, were in key positions to influence the aid programme; Cannon as Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and Passman in the Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. Although the die-hard opponents of foreign aid did not have the numerical strength to prevent the authorisation of an aid agency, they were able to circumscribe its operations through the appropriations process. The House Appropriations Committee routinely slashed Eisenhower's aid requests and the House routinely endorsed the Committee's recommendations. This annual ritual continued under Kennedy.

Heavily influenced by the work of the Charles River School in development economics, the Kennedy administration adopted the liberal critique of the existing aid programme and sought to reorganise and reorient America's aid programme, to move away from military assistance in the service of short-term political objectives and to emphasise economic aid for long-term development. There would be new criteria in the allocation of aid, with priority given to those governments who demonstrated through self-help, by undertaking necessary steps to prepare their economies to absorb American capital through measures such as land

³¹Burton I. Kaufman, *Trade and Aid. Eisenhower's Foreign Economic Policy 1953-1961*, [Baltimore, 1982].

³²Ernest Gruening, *Many Battles. The Autobiography of Ernest Gruening*, [New York, 1973], pp.409-424.

reform, that they were committed to economic development and not looking for a quick political fix.³³

In a Special Message delivered to Congress on 22 March 1961, Kennedy laid out his plans for the reorganisation of foreign aid. The administration of the existing programme was too diffuse. He would remedy its fragmentation by centralising aid administration in a single body, the Agency for International Development [AID]. The existing programme was also beset by the insecurity entailed in short-term financing. The process of annual authorisation and appropriation made for a lack of continuity and "weakened the incentive for long term planning and self-help by the recipient nations which are essential to serious economic development."³⁴ Kennedy wanted long-term country programming and long-term development loans rather than aid for specific projects, observing, "a program based on long-range plans instead of short-run crises cannot be financed on a short-term basis."³⁵ He asked Congress to authorise the new agency for at least five years and to grant it borrowing authority for five years. Thus, funds would be available to AID without the need for Congress to vote an annual appropriation. The architects of the new programme regarded long-term borrowing authority as central to the reorientation of aid towards long-term economic development. On this request, however, the administration immediately ran into congressional obstructionism. Opponents of foreign aid, unwilling to surrender their means of influencing the programme, castigated the request as back door financing. Although a number of other agencies had already operated under this back door to the Treasury system, the House Appropriations Committee had been engaged in a campaign to cut it back since the late 1950s.³⁶ Borrowing authority was denied. Funds for the new agency would be appropriated annually. A number of administration officials have observed in retrospect that congressional denial of long-term borrowing authority was not as detrimental to the operation of the aid programme as was feared in 1961.³⁷ William S. Gaud, for example, who served as

³³Special Message on Foreign Aid, 22 March 1961, "Foreign Aid 3/61-4/61" Folder, SS, NSF, Box 297, JFKL.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Memorandum, Bowles to Bundy, 9 May 1961, "Foreign Aid 5/61-8/61" Folder, SS, NSF, Box 297, JFKL.

³⁷Schlesinger, *Op. Cit.*, p.575.

the AID Assistant Administrator for the Near East and South Asia between 1961 and 1964 observed:

"Long term commitments are not helpful but are harmful in terms of achieving our purposes...If you believe that self-help is important then you must also believe I think that you have got to keep as much leverage as you can...If you enter into a two, three or four or five year commitment you bargain away your leverage right off the bat and you lose a great deal of the power you have to influence that country's behaviour...For my money the battle for long term commitment authority in 1961 was well lost."³⁸

At the time, however, it was a blow to the authority of the new administration. Moreover, the failure to secure long-term financing condemned Kennedy to an annual battle with Congress over the aid appropriation and assured a continuing high political profile for the foreign aid programme.

The reorganisation of aid administration was neither a painless nor an immediately successful process. The new aid agency, organised along geographical rather than functional lines, challenged the existing hierarchy within the aid bureaucracy which had previously been dominated by the functional technical assistance specialists. Its staff were demoralised by the uncertainty of restructuring. AID's first administrator, Fowler Hamilton, saw his role primarily in the field of congressional relations [in which he had little success], in organisation and in recruitment, rather than the day to day supervision of his agency's operations. AID was a disappointment. Schlesinger recorded that it "remained sluggish and appeared ineffectual" and that Kennedy grew increasingly impatient with its "seeming inability to act."³⁹ Schlesinger's recollection of the sluggish operation of AID is worth noting, in the light of Jagan's previous and forthcoming experience with Washington's AID professionals:

"Returning ambassadors would tell of the enthusiasm with which the local government had proposed one program or another, the excitement of planning, the filing of applications - and then the endless silence, interrupted only by the arrival of new technical missions or the request for further feasibility studies, until the government lost faith in the project and faith in Washington."⁴⁰

³⁸Oral History of William S.Gaud by Joseph E. O'Connor, February 16, 1966, p.6, JFKL.

³⁹Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, pp.595-596.

⁴⁰Ibid. p.596.

The conspicuous absence of any improvement in the administrative efficiency of the aid programme provided more ammunition for AID's congressional opponents. In 1962 Congress slashed Kennedy's appropriation request from US\$4.9 billion to US\$3.9 billion, and in the following year from US\$4.9 billion to US\$3.2 billion.⁴¹ Kennedy found it no easier than Eisenhower to sell the aid programme. Eisenhower had at least hit the right tone in marketing foreign aid. It would, Kennedy reportedly argued, have been easier to sell an agency had it sounded less like a charity and had been wrapped more explicitly in the flag of defence: "It should have been the International Defense Fund or something like that."⁴²

Foreign aid was a perennially embattled programme and AID was from the start an embattled agency. While Kennedy proclaimed that his new agency would stress long-term development plans and give priority to those countries prepared to help themselves, that crude political criteria would be replaced by dispassionate economic analysis, AID was far from immune to political considerations, a proclivity that was only reinforced by the programme's vulnerability. Dependent upon congressional authorisation and appropriations, AID officials sought to give their congressional opponents as little ammunition as possible. British Guiana could potentially provide such ammunition. The granting of a World Bank Loan to British Guiana in June of 1961 was immediately held up as an example of maladministration. Jagan's most vocal opponent in the Senate, Thomas Dodd, drew attention to the granting of this loan in the run up to the August elections in British Guiana, arguing that it constituted intervention on Jagan's behalf. As a 33% stockholder in the World Bank, the United States, Dodd argued, should have been able to prevent the loan.⁴³ Another Senator used the World Bank Loan to highlight another sensitive issue. Ernest Gruening of Alaska wondered whether the United States should be underwriting the economic development of the colony of another state?⁴⁴ Although these criticisms were somewhat misdirected in their assumption that the operations

⁴¹Ibid. pp.596-599.

⁴²Oral History of Robert Amory by Joseph E. O'Connor, February 9, 1966, p.56, JFKL.

⁴³Congressional Record, Senate, 87th Congress, 1st Session, 24 Aug.1961 - 5 Sept.1961, Vol.107, Part13, p.17661.

⁴⁴Ibid. p.17662

and procedures of the World Bank were routinely subject to American political control,⁴⁵ the incident highlights the problem British Guiana presented for AID. It was a potential political minefield.

AID was not the only actor in the field of foreign aid. The centralisation of aid administration had tackled only one dimension of the diffusion problem. Although the operational energies of the aid programme were now concentrated in a single agency, political decision making on the issues of foreign aid remained dispersed. For example, Chester Bowles, Kennedy's Under Secretary of State in 1961, accused the State Department, whose political desks "have the greatest day to day influence in the way foreign aid money is used", of continuing to view aid, economic as well as military, in the context of short term political purposes.⁴⁶ Indeed, Arthur Schlesinger has pointed to Kennedy's own discontent with the bureaucratisation and inertia of the State Department and its commitment to Cold War shibboleths.⁴⁷ However, at least in the case of British Guiana, the last word rested with the President. The picture of idealistic AID officials and White House staff struggling in the field of foreign aid against the purely political machinations of the State Department is a distortion of the reality of policy-making.

In late September 1961 the State Department moved ahead with the cooperative programme agreed upon by the Anglo-American Working Party. Even at its launch there was some indication of a lack of enthusiasm in Washington for the new programme. Although its premise was ostensibly the positive one of working with Jagan in an effort to align him with the West, its adoption was cast by the State Department in purely negative terms:

"Among the factors contributing to the decision to adopt this policy were 1] the impracticality of any alternative course of action; 2] the dearth of effective political leadership in British Guiana apart from Jagan; and 3] recognition that coldness toward Jagan and withholding of aid could only result in his gravitation toward the Soviet-Castro bloc."⁴⁸

⁴⁵Letter, Dillon to Dodd, 14 Sept.1961, File C0039, [White House Central Subject Files]WHCSF, Box 43, JFKL.

⁴⁶Oral history interview of Chester Bowles by Robert Brooks, 2 Feb.1965, pp.50-51, JFKL.

⁴⁷Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, pp.406-447.

⁴⁸Circular Airgram, No.CA-263, 4 Oct.1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

Nevertheless, despite such early indications of negativity, in accordance with what had been agreed in London, US Consul Melby was instructed to assure Jagan of the American desire for cooperation in the economic and political fields. The United States, Jagan was informed, was willing to extend an as yet unspecified but "modest" amount of economic assistance. Jagan was invited to Washington to meet the President. As evidence of American sincerity, an ICA representative would visit Georgetown to discuss British Guiana's development programme and the possibility of American assistance before Jagan's Washington visit.⁴⁹

Melby was acutely aware of the potential reverberations the proposed ICA visit might have in Georgetown. Coming in the wake of an election in which economic aid had been a major issue, and just prior to Jagan's Washington visit, the arrival of an ICA mission would, he argued, stimulate British Guianese expectations of massive economic aid. He urged that the mission's visit be played down, limited to only a single ICA representative.⁵⁰ The State Department concurred and ICA representative Michael Harris, accompanied only by an area director and an economist, arrived in Georgetown on October 1961.

The Harris mission was intended as more than a demonstration of America's good intentions. The visit provided an opportunity to apprise Jagan of the amount of aid he could expect to receive from Washington, to "dispel Jagan's unrealistic expectations" without alienating him to the point where he would turn immediately to the East for aid.⁵¹ The United States, Jagan was informed, would expand its technical assistance programme but would provide not more than US\$5 million in economic aid. This amount was inadequate to make up the shortfall in the present development plan, let alone finance Jagan's expanded plan. He did not hide his disappointment with the mission and the figure that emerged. Neither was he impressed with the American criticism of his development plan as unrealistic and in need of considerable

⁴⁹Telegram, DOS to Georgetown, No. Priority 56, 25 Sept. 1961, "BG General 9/29/61 -10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁰Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No. 82, 20 Sept. 1961, "BG General 9/7/61-9/28/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵¹Telegram, DOS to Georgetown, No. 73, 8 Oct. 1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

reworking before it would provide a basis for seeking aid.⁵² This was not a new criticism. The lack of specific adequate planning had been one factor which had held up Jagan's earlier discussions with the DLF. The notion that British Guiana's development plans were inadequate was not concocted in 1961 for the express purpose of stalemating Jagan, though he felt the Americans were stalling. They "had done it again. Instead of listening to needs BG for economic assistance all mission had done was put up reasons why US could not give him any help."⁵³

In its attempt to deflate Jagan's expectations of economic aid before his visit to the White House, the Harris mission failed. Neither would the US Consul or any number of British officials prove any more successful in their attempts to reduce Jagan's requests before he arrived in Washington. The only comfort Governor Grey derived from Harris's visit was that a few more Americans had seen British Guiana for themselves, an experience he mistakenly, but persistently, believed would reduce their apprehension about Jagan and enable them to place British Guiana in a more appropriate perspective.⁵⁴

If the mission had only minimal benefits it had two potentially damaging consequences, so much so that the State Department admitted that it had been a tactical error. Firstly, it reinforced the mutual suspicions between the Americans and Jagan in the run up to Jagan's meeting with Kennedy. Secondly, it cast the forthcoming discussions in Washington almost exclusively in terms of economic aid. Given Jagan's preoccupation with securing development aid it was already likely that his conversations in Washington would be heavily weighted in this direction. As Melby had predicted, with the assiduous cooperation of the Georgetown press, the Harris mission raised expectations in British Guiana that American assistance would be forthcoming, and consequently Jagan's already heavy political stake in acquiring such aid. In their content, the discussions in Georgetown were a dress rehearsal for

⁵²Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.110, 10 Oct.1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵³Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.114, 11 Oct.1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁴Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.123, 11 Oct.1961, A10110/71, FO371/155723, PRO.

those that would take place in Washington. The same arguments were reiterated on both sides, and the outcome would be equally as unproductive.

The British, Americans and Guianese were all aware that there was more at stake in Jagan's visit to Washington than American aid for British Guiana. Securing that aid was clearly Jagan's priority, but he acknowledged also a secondary political task, the need to improve his image in the United States, to counter the American perception of him as a potential second Castro and to convince the American public, Congress and the Kennedy administration of his commitment to their definition of democracy.⁵⁵

British officials were enthusiastic about Jagan's visit to Washington and meeting with the President. They had pressed for such a meeting as part of the Anglo-American programme. As an early demonstration of Western goodwill, the visit would be valuable as "part of the psychological campaign to keep Jagan in the Western camp".⁵⁶ Jagan's visit would also provide another test for the Governor's theory that meeting with Jagan himself would disabuse the Americans of the notion that British Guiana was potentially another Cuba. The British were interested too in securing American aid for British Guiana. The Colonial Office was keen that the Americans should shoulder the financial burden for the future development of a country that, once independent, would be within their sphere of influence. British officials were aware, however, that the Americans had set a ceiling of US\$5 million on aid to British Guiana. In the absence of any obvious American inclination towards bounty, they repeatedly urged Jagan to moderate his expectations of economic aid and to concentrate on the political aspects of the trip.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.58, 29 Aug.1961, "BG General 8/24/61-9/6/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.74, 11 Sept.1961, "BG General 9/7/61-9/28/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁶Letter, Barnes to Stevens, 30 Aug.1961, A10110/22, FO371/155721, PRO.

⁵⁷Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.119, 13 Oct.1961, "BG General 10/13/61-10/21/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL; Memcon, 'Partial Account of Visit to NY by Dr. Jagan, Premier of BG', 13 Oct.1961, "350-Jagan's Trip to US 1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA; Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

Although not oblivious to Jagan's aid agenda, the Americans held the political aspects of the visit to be paramount. Writing from the American Embassy in London, Ambassador David Bruce commented that the visit provided opportunities "to help make BG feel part of and comfortable in society of American states" and "for President at once to gauge character and turn of Jagan's mind and exert influence".⁵⁸ The greatest problem, Bruce felt, was likely to be "Jagan's counting on bringing back commitments for substantial aid".⁵⁹ He suggested lessening the blow of limited American assistance by pointing Jagan in the direction of non-governmental sources of technical assistance and investment. Although not themselves prepared to make a substantial offer of economic aid, the Americans, aware that Jagan's domestic political credibility was engaged on the aid issue, were keen that he should have something to take back to Georgetown, to prevent him turning immediately to the Soviet bloc. Kennedy proposed an approach to the British and Canadians to determine their upper limits on aid to Jagan.⁶⁰ Reminding the Canadians of their sizeable investment in the bauxite industry and the threat to that investment should Jagan turn to the East, the State Department urged them to make a large offer of aid to British Guiana. The Department inquired if the British government would increase its aid to the colony. The British rejected this suggestion. They were prepared to go no further than to consider the rephrasing of the existing aid allocation.⁶¹ An increase in British aid would have defeated one of the clear purposes of British policy: shifting at least some of the financial burden of British Guianese development onto American shoulders.

Despite the American emphasis on the political and psychological opportunities afforded by Jagan's visit, it was dominated by the subject of economic aid. British officials failed in their repeated attempts to persuade Jagan to take a longer term view, lower his expectations of immediate aid, and concentrate on improving his image in the United States. On one reading this was unfortunate. The British were correct to urge Jagan to concentrate on the political

⁵⁸Telegram, London to SOS, No.1527, 12 Oct.1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Memorandum, Bundy to Schlesinger, 18 Oct.1961, Chronological File 10.18.61-10.31.61, McGeorge Bundy Correspondence, NSF, Box 399, JFKL.

⁶¹Telegram, London to SOS, No.1651, 20 Oct.1961, "BG General 10/13/61-10/20/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

rather than the economic aspects of his visit. But their rationale in doing so was flawed. Jagan should have subordinated his economic objectives to his political objectives, not because, as the British argued, his economic objectives were unrealisable, but rather because improving his political image in the United States was the essential prerequisite to obtaining American aid. The decision as to whether or not to give economic aid to British Guiana was a political one.

However, it cannot be assumed that such an approach would have been any more effective. In addressing his image problem, Jagan faced a difficult task. The Americans had proved themselves predisposed to distrust him. Moreover, there were prejudicial preconceptions on both sides. Jagan was profoundly distrustful of the United States. He believed that American pressure had stimulated the British government to suspend the constitution in 1953, hardly an irrational view given contemporaneous American activities in Guatemala and Iran.⁶² More recently Jagan had complained of American interference in the 1961 election campaign, an accusation he would repeat in his meeting with Kennedy.⁶³ This assumption of American hostility pervaded the British Guianese delegation. John Hennings, who accompanied the delegation for the duration of their visit, noted of the party that their "Jack the Giant Killer optimism" that Jagan would get the aid he wanted, "was shot through with disbelief that the Americans were open to any persuasion. Their big business and free market enterprise prejudices insulated them against anything Jagan might say or do."⁶⁴ There existed amongst the delegation "a doctrinaire belief that they would get nothing because Jagan was a socialist."⁶⁵

The prospects of Jagan's visit bearing fruit, either in terms of his securing economic aid on the scale he desired, or establishing a relationship of mutual trust with the Americans, were remote.

⁶²Cheddi Jagan, *Forbidden Freedom: The Story of British Guiana*, [London, 1954] pp.83-85.

⁶³Memcon, 'Call of Premier Jagan of BG on the President', 25 Oct.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.537.

⁶⁴Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

Washington's commitment to the Anglo-American programme was fragile. Doubts lingered in official circles. Only a week before Jagan was scheduled to meet the President, for example, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research [INR] requested a review of policy towards British Guiana and advocated that the cooperative policy be abandoned.⁶⁶ INR Chief, Roger Hilsman, argued that "a successful US policy in British Guiana should start from the assumption that the Bloc must be precluded from a position of direct or indirect control or even substantial influence", and that the present policy was inadequate to achieve this objective.⁶⁷ There was, he argued, simply not enough time before British Guiana became independent to effect the necessary "institutional, political and economic readjustments of Jagan's thinking".⁶⁸ Moreover, heavily reliant upon the purchase of political influence through aid for economic development, the cooperative policy was likely to crumble under the weight of Jagan's expectations of American aid. It was clear that Jagan would not be satisfied with the amount of aid available. The US\$5 million on offer, Hilsman wrote, "is not enough to engage Jagan. We should recognise that it is going to take a lot more money if we pursue a course so heavily dependent upon economic blandishments".⁶⁹ Given the likely failure of the present policy, he argued that, "American planning should be directed to converting the UK to a program of direct anti-Jagan action".⁷⁰ The US, he argued, "should plan for the possibility that we will have no reasonable alternative but to work for Jagan's political downfall."⁷¹ Contingency planning for just this eventuality, Hilsman revealed, was already underway, despite the administration's commitment to the cooperative policy.⁷²

Jagan's visit to the United States was staggered, a visit to Canada, where the main subject of discussion was also the possibility of economic aid, intervening to distance an engagement in New York from his official meetings in Washington. The visit to New York was to receive

⁶⁶Memorandum, Hilsman to Johnson, 17 Oct.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.534-536.

⁶⁷*Ibid.* p.535.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹*Ibid.* p.536.

⁷⁰*Ibid.* p.535.

⁷¹*Ibid.* p.536.

⁷²*Ibid.*

an award for his "services to freedom" from the Great Neck Forum, an organisation which met with some disapproval in the State Department.⁷³ His appearance at the Great Neck Forum confirmed Jagan's position as a controversial figure in the United States and also revealed a degree of organised opposition to him. The John Birch Society, euphemistically referred to as community groups, dissuaded one hotelier from holding the Great Neck function.

Organised opposition to Jagan is also evidenced by the weight of correspondence descending on the State Department's Public Opinion Survey Section, which received nine hundred letters demanding the Jagan be denied American aid. The volume of mail on the subject of British Guiana at the time of Jagan's visit was dwarfing that of all other subjects, including Berlin. "Mail of these dimensions on an intrinsically minor issue must be a put up job," observed John Hennings. He noted also that some television commentators and some sections of the press, had been urging just this course of action on their consumers.⁷⁴

Also during the first leg of his North American visit, on 15 October 1961, Jagan appeared on the television show *Meet the Press*. His refusal to be critical of the USSR left, according to Schlesinger who gives the only contemporary account of the visit in *1000 Days*, "an impression of either wooliness or fellow-travelling", which "instantly diminished the enthusiasm for helping his government."⁷⁵ It was Jagan's *Meet the Press* performance, Schlesinger argued, which convinced Kennedy that policy towards British Guiana should be re-examined, and prompted him to prohibit any financial commitments being made to Jagan in advance of his own meeting with him on 25 October. Although it had already been intimated to Jagan that US\$5 million would be available, the provision of this money could be circumvented by the application of strict criteria: the Harris mission had made it conditional "upon British Guiana's coming up with convincing plans and projects."⁷⁶

⁷³Letter, Barnes to Stevens, 30 Aug.1961, A10110/22, FO371/155721, PRO.

⁷⁴Letter, Hennings to Grey, 19 Nov.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁷⁵Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.775.

⁷⁶Memorandum, Schlesinger to Hamilton, 20 Oct.1961, "BG General 10/13/61-10/20/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

The British Guianese delegation arrived in Washington on 21 October 1961. As had been anticipated, their meetings with American officials were dominated by the aid question, and followed the pattern established during the Harris mission's visit to Georgetown. Jagan pressed for an American commitment to financing his expanded development plan of \$413 million as the minimum required for British Guiana to take-off into self-sustaining growth. The American response, from the President downwards, was invariably that while the United States sympathised with British Guiana's problems and wanted to help, the amount Jagan was requesting was, given America's limited resources and worldwide commitments, beyond its capacity to finance. Moreover, American officials pointed out that they were subject to strict procedural requirements laid down in the new aid legislation. They argued that the \$413 million plan was unrealistic, but offered Jagan expert help in reappraising the plan and producing a balanced programme. From there consideration could be given to financing specific projects.⁷⁷

From Jagan's perspective, the least successful of his meetings in Washington were those which focused exclusively on the aid question, particularly those with Fowler Hamilton, administrator of the nascent AID. Hamilton, heading a politically vulnerable agency in its probationary year, had been reluctant to consider providing any aid to Jagan.⁷⁸ However, by the time of Jagan's arrival in Washington, Hamilton had acquiesced to the US\$5 million figure.⁷⁹ It was Kennedy, not Hamilton, who insisted that no financial commitments be made to Jagan.⁸⁰

The British Guianese delegation's first meeting with Hamilton on 23 October was uncontentious. It was restricted to an exposition by the Guianese of their country's needs and their plans for economic development. A follow-up meeting the next day was less successful. Determined that the time had come to "moderate Jagan's expectations", Hamilton used a

⁷⁷For memcons of Jagan's visit see "350-Jagan's Trip to US 1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84 Box 2, NA.

⁷⁸Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁷⁹Position Paper, 'Economic Assistance to British Guiana', 17 Oct.1961, "BG General 10/13/61-10/20/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

⁸⁰Memorandum, Schlesinger to Hamilton, 20 Oct.1961, "BG General 10/13/61-10/20/61" Folder, COS, NSF Box 14a, JFKL.

crude per capita analysis to demonstrate that the British Guianese request for aid was unrealistically high. The ensuing conversation highlighted the 'chicken-egg' problem, recast as a 'resources-plans' problem, central to the US-Guianese argument on the aid question: the Americans refusing to commit resources in the absence of a detailed plan, and the Guianese refusing to scale down their requests to a more specific level until it was established what resources were available.

The State Department was alert to the potential problem posed by Jagan's preoccupation with securing substantial US aid, and was anxious that Jagan should not go home empty handed, armed with a pretext for turning immediately to the Soviet bloc. Having failed in its attempt to commit the British and Canadians to making respectively further and substantial aid contributions, the Department arranged for technical assistance to be made available from inter-American sources. The ECLA, OAS and IADB were primed to jointly offer Jagan technical assistance with economic planning. Although British Guiana would technically not be eligible for inter-American assistance before independence, the State Department anticipated reimbursing the Inter-American organisations itself. The plan was "to enable him [Jagan] to claim to have opened a new source of aid which may offset disappointment at not getting more at once from the US."⁸¹

Jagan did accept the inter-American offer, but he interpreted it as the diversionary tactic which, essentially, it was. Offers of piecemeal assistance did nothing to ease his frustration at his failure to secure a substantial aid commitment from the US government. These frustrations came to a head in the British Guianese delegation's third meeting with Fowler Hamilton, on 26 October.

In this meeting, John Hennings reported, "Hamilton contented himself with rehearsing his old familiar standpoint and once again Jagan went back and forth over the old familiar ground."⁸² The circularity was broken when Jagan finally suggested that the United States, if

⁸¹Telegram, Washington[Colonial Attaché] to CS, Brief No.170, 19 Oct.1961, A10110/76, FO371/155723, PRO.

⁸²Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

not prepared to finance the \$413 million plan, could finance the shortfall in the present Berrill plan, which had already been approved by both the World Bank and the British Government. Alternatively, the Americans could offer a loan which might obviate the need for British Guiana to take up an Exchequer Loan which bore an interest rate of 7%. When Hamilton rejected even these requests, Jagan walked out of the meeting demanding another meeting with Kennedy, "to let him know exactly what he thought about being given the run around in this way".⁸³

Jagan's visit ended in a frantic scramble to repair the damage of the last Hamilton meeting, and agree a State Department communiqué before Jagan's departure. Schlesinger's account in *1000 Days* underplays the near collapse of the negotiations. Aside from noting that Jagan was "considerably upset" on learning that he would get no definite aid commitment,⁸⁴ Schlesinger fails to mention Jagan's walking out of the meeting with Hamilton, his own meeting with the Premier on 26 October in an effort to salvage a statement, the discussion of the draft communiqué in the back of Jagan's car en route to the airport, or the extent of the difficulties which arose in the negotiation of an agreed text.⁸⁵ It was, Schlesinger remarked in a considerable understatement, a "complicated negotiation".⁸⁶ Jagan suggested a number of amendments on the record breaking seventeen minute drive to the airport, while his plane was held on the runway. After his departure, he called the Department with further amendments.⁸⁷

The last minute drafting and redrafting of the final communiqué clearly demonstrated the degree to which Jagan's visit had failed to eliminate mutual mistrust. In the negotiations over the communiqué, Hennings observed, "Jagan's suspicions of them [the State Department] are only equalled by their distrust that he is seeking to swing something on them."⁸⁸

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.777.

⁸⁵Memcon, 'US Assistance to BG', 26 Oct.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.538-540; Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁸⁶Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.777.

⁸⁷Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁸⁸Ibid.

Jagan failed to secure a commitment of substantial economic aid from the United States. He did not even receive a commitment on the US\$5 million figure the Americans had earlier intimated would be available. The Americans undertook only:

- "1. To provide as early as possible, in consultation with the British Guiana Government, and unilaterally or in cooperation with hemisphere organizations, economists and other experts to assist the Government of British Guiana to bring the most modern economic experience to bear upon the reappraisal of its development program.
2. To provide technical assistance for feasibility, engineering and other studies concerning specific development projects.
3. To determine as soon as possible, after the steps mentioned in paragraphs one and two and on the submission of suitable projects within the context of the British Guiana development plan, what assistance the US can give in financing such projects, taking into account other United States commitments, available financial resources and the criteria established by applicable legislation.
4. To expand its existing technical assistance program."⁸⁹

One important question remains unanswered regarding Jagan's meetings in Washington. Why, although repeatedly apprised of the limited amount of aid that was available, did Jagan refuse to lower his sights and adopt a more circumspect 'foot in the door' approach? Why did Jagan persist in pressing for an American commitment to funding the \$413 million development plan? Perhaps he felt that a direct appeal to the President and senior American officials might yield more than the discussions with the more bureaucratically constrained underlings he was accustomed to meeting. Perhaps \$413 million was his opening gambit in an effort to bargain with the Americans. But Jagan was not in a bargaining position. His country's development and his own political reputation were heavily staked on securing aid. In any case, the records of Jagan's conversations in Washington reveal no attempts to bargain. Jagan consistently cast \$413 million as a minimum requirement. Jagan's requests for a smaller American contribution in his final meeting with Hamilton, which he repeated to Schlesinger the following day, were more desperate than tactical. Without a "specific money offer", he told Schlesinger, he would be in an "impossible political situation" at home.⁹⁰

⁸⁹DOS Press Release, No.746, 28 Oct.1961, "BG General 4/28/61-10/30/61" Folder, Subjects File [SF]1961-1964, White House Files [WHF], Schlesinger Papers, Box WH3a, JFKL.

⁹⁰Memcon, 'US Assistance to BG', 26 Oct.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.538-540.

There was some speculation that Jagan's request for western aid was insincere, that he desired an American rebuff as a pretext for turning to his preferred sources of aid in the East.⁹¹ John Hennings confessed that, "at times I felt that Jagan was deliberately pitching his demands high so that the Americans would confirm his prejudices by turning him down."⁹² However, such an analysis does not square with the fact that, as Hennings noted, "in the end he was unwilling to turn his back on any chance of getting US aid."⁹³ Perhaps Jagan was simply asking for what he believed was necessary. Whatever his motivation, Jagan's extravagant request was a tactical error. He had provided the Americans with a ready-made excuse to reject his requests. It was not a mistake that Burnham would make when he was given a hearing in Washington.

In terms of his primary objective, securing an immediate commitment of substantial economic aid, Jagan's visit to Washington was an exercise in frustration. There was, as Jagan recognised, more at stake. But in so far as his failure to secure American aid was symptomatic of his failure to establish a relationship of mutual confidence with the Americans or to improve his image in the United States, Jagan's visit was also a failure in political terms.

The improvement of his image was an important secondary objective for Jagan, and the records of his official conversations and public statements in Washington reveal a sustained attempt to clarify his political position. Jagan gave the most explicit public exposition of his position in an address to the National Press Club on the 24 October, where he stated clearly that he was an anti-colonialist, a socialist, committed to scientific socialism and state planning as the best path to economic development, but also a democrat and not the agent of any international conspiracy.⁹⁴ Hennings felt that in this speech Jagan "went as far as he felt he could to allay American suspicions of him".⁹⁵

⁹¹Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.131, 24 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁹²Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Draft Text of An Address to the National Press Club By Dr. Cheddi Jagan, Premier of British Guiana, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁹⁵Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

Jagan's efforts to improve his image were hampered by both American preconceptions and his own political gaffes. While full of praise for the candour of Jagan's speech to the National Press Club, Hennings was aware that Jagan faced a difficult task:

"Unfortunately the fundamentalism of the American press would not have been satisfied unless Jagan had vehemently repented of his socialism, had admitted that he had been misguided, had branded Kruschev[sic] and Castro as enemies of mankind and had announced that he was divorcing his wife on grounds of political incompatibility."⁹⁶

Moreover, during Jagan's visit, the State Department showed themselves to be extraordinarily sensitive to press and congressional opinions of Jagan. When asked by Hennings for a draft of a possible final communiqué on the evening of Jagan's address to the National Press Club. Burdett responded that, "we can't begin to think about putting anything on paper until we've seen which way the press jumps after his speech today."⁹⁷

Jagan's attempt to clarify his political position was also undermined by his own blunders. For example, following his speech to the National Press Club, Jagan was faced with specific questions on nuclear testing, Castro and Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe. When asked for his response to the explosion that morning of a 30 megaton nuclear device by the Soviets, Jagan side-stepped the question, stating that he would like to see all the money now spent on armaments diverted to economic development. Hennings observed, "by his [Jagan's] lights this was a reasonable answer but the suspicion that he was toeing the Russian line was palpable from the murmuring among his audience."⁹⁸ Similarly, Jagan's remark that Castro had the support of the Cuban people, however accurate, was hardly prudent.⁹⁹ Equally unacceptable was Jagan's position on Soviet imperialism. Choosing to define imperialism in purely economic terms, Jagan reasoned that since the GNP of the Eastern European satellites was growing, their domination by the USSR did not constitute imperialism.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Letter, Hennings to Grey, 19 Nov. 1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁹⁸Letter, Hennings to Grey, 30 Oct. 1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

In his official meetings, as in his public statements, Jagan repeatedly attempted to draw a distinction between his economic and political views; between his commitment to socialism and state planning in the economic sphere and parliamentary democracy in the political sphere. He stated also his determination to keep British Guiana out of the Cold War. The Americans responded by professing disinterest in the internal political and economic philosophies and organisation of any country, so long as it remained "politically independent".¹⁰¹ This was becoming a familiar litany, but it was a concept so lacking in definitional clarity as to be rendered objectively meaningless. Jagan probed for a definition of political independence. He inquired of Kennedy as to whether a commercial relationship with the USSR would constitute a violation of the 'political independence' principle. Kennedy responded that the United States was not opposed to commercial arrangements with the communist bloc per se unless it were to create a situation of economic dependence: "Then this would amount to giving the Soviet Union a political instrument for applying pressure and trying to force damaging concessions to its political interests and goals."¹⁰² 'Political independence' and 'economic dependence' were not clearly defined, but it was clear that the administration would be the arbiter of both.

Jagan was faced by a striking reluctance on the part of American officials to take his statements about his political and economic views at face value. The Americans took every opportunity to probe Jagan's ideological leanings through vague discussions of marxism, socialism and communism and found him "evasive".¹⁰³ Where British officials such as Hennings and Grey saw ignorance or confusion in Jagan's vagueness, those less predisposed to be charitable saw calculated evasion. On an optimistic reading of the visit, Hennings concluded that, at best, Jagan had convinced the Americans that he was misguided rather than malevolent.¹⁰⁴ Even this was of little comfort to Washington. Jagan might not be a dedicated communist but that in itself did not preclude an unsatisfactory outcome for the

¹⁰¹Memcon, 'Call of Premier Jagan of BG on the President', 25 Oct.1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.537.

¹⁰²Ibid. p.538.

¹⁰³Ibid. p.537.

¹⁰⁴Telegram, Washington[Colonial Attaché] to CS, Brief No.172, 27 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

United States. The Americans were rapidly coming to the conclusion that, in British Guiana, the game was probably not worth the candle. Schlesinger recalled that Kennedy doubted whether Jagan "would be able to sustain his position as a parliamentary democrat."¹⁰⁵ He reported Kennedy as saying:

"I have a feeling...that in a couple of years he will find ways to suspend his constitutional provisions and will cut his opposition off at the knees...Parliamentary democracy is going to be damn difficult in a country at this stage of development. With all the political jockeying and racial tensions, its going to be almost impossible for Jagan to concentrate the energies of his country on development through a parliamentary system."¹⁰⁶

For Jagan the trip to the United States was a failure. He had succeeded neither in securing a firm commitment of aid, nor in improving his image. Publicly he played down his disappointment, claiming to have succeeded in his objective of correcting American misperceptions.¹⁰⁷ Privately, however, he was less sanguine about the results of his Washington visit. He admitted to the Governor his "deep disappointment" that he had been unable to get a firm commitment of aid. He had wanted at least "to bring back some money to be going on with".¹⁰⁸

British officials attempted to rally Jagan's spirits. Sir Hugh Foot tried to impress upon him that he had at least established good relations in Washington, a questionable assumption, and, in a rather optimistic reading of the State Department's communiqué, had secured a statement "amounting to a promise of continuing and substantial aid".¹⁰⁹ To these arguments Governor Grey added the observation that, given the hype which surrounded the 'money mission' in Georgetown, it was better for Jagan politically that he had not been given a firm figure by the Americans as it would have been impossible to satisfy such expectations.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.777.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Report by the Premier on the Mission to the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico, October 1961, 3 Nov.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

¹⁰⁸Telegram, UKMISUN to CS, Brief No.153, 29 Oct.1961, CO1031/4178, PRO.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*

¹¹⁰Letter, Grey to Thomas, 6 Nov.1961, CO1031/4180, PRO.

For their own part British officials were relieved that Jagan's trip had come off apparently without any major disaster. The threatened eleventh-hour collapse of the negotiations had been averted. Despite their evident reservations, the Americans had agreed to send an economic mission. It appeared that the Anglo-American cooperative approach was still moving forward.

The American view of the visit was rather different however. From their perspective the communiqué did not represent a genuine commitment to future cooperation with Jagan, so much as a hastily drawn up attempt to repair the faltering negotiations. As Schlesinger recorded, the communiqué was designed to "give Jagan something to take home and satisfy the British without committing us to immediate action."¹¹¹ The Americans had given Jagan enough to prevent him turning to the Soviet bloc for the time being at least, but they had also denied him enough to quiet the administration's critics on the right.

In Washington Jagan's visit had produced scepticism rather than confidence. In its wake the Kennedy administration abandoned all pretence of enthusiasm for the implementation of either the Washington undertakings given to Jagan or the Anglo-American policy of cooperation of September 1961. In the closing months of 1962, the administration replaced cooperation with recalcitrance and vacillation. The promised economic mission failed to materialise, despite the repeated efforts of the British government to expedite its dispatch.¹¹²

As frustration at American inaction mounted in London and Georgetown, the Americans, under increasing pressure from the British and their own representatives in Georgetown, finally arranged to send a private economic consultant, Robert Nathan, to Georgetown on a crash basis to demonstrate the American intention to move ahead with the Washington agreements. If this was intended to mollify Jagan and the Colonial Office, it failed. It was a hastily arranged flying visit, concerned with the composition, timing and terms of reference

¹¹¹Schlesinger, *Op.Cit.*, p.777.

¹¹²Telegram, Amembassy London to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Info.25, 22 Nov.1961, "350-Jagan's Trip to US 1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG 84, Box 2, NA; Telegram, Amembassy London to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Info.28, 1 Dec.1961, "350-Jagan's Trip to US 1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG 84, Box 2, NA.

of the promised economic mission, with administrative details rather than economic matters. It was interpreted by Jagan as another American stalling tactic, masking the absence of any American intention to give aid to British Guiana.¹¹³

Nathan's visit to Georgetown was accompanied by an American approach to the British and Canadians requesting their participation in the forthcoming mission. The Americans proposed a multilateral mission including experts from the IADB, ECLA, the US and Puerto Rico, the showcase of non-communist development in the Americas, as well as Britain and Canada. Inter-American participation in the mission was not unexpected: it had been mentioned in the Washington communiqué. In pressing for British participation, the Americans argued that it was important to avoid the impression that they were "muscling in on British territory", and that, given the size of its existing commitments to the development plan, the British government should be party to its reappraisal.¹¹⁴ Moreover, a combined Western effort might come closer to giving Jagan what he wanted. It might also, Nathan suggested, help counter Jagan's socialistic inclinations, given "the greater discipline which could be exercised over the Guianese development program if several countries plus several international or regional institutions were involved."¹¹⁵ The multilateral approach carried other implicit political advantages. It would bind Jagan into a more complex relationship with Western countries and institutions than might be the case with bilateral American aid. Bilateral American aid could be more easily dismissed by a nationalist leader as attempted imperialist intervention. Finally, a combined Western aid effort would spread the political responsibility for the future of British Guiana. The Kennedy administration could share the burden of the risk it saw in cooperating with Jagan, and could deflect some of the domestic and international political fall-out should the cooperative approach backfire.

¹¹³Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.155, 1 Dec.1961, "350-Jagan's Trip to US" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹¹⁴Telegram, Washington[Colonial Attaché] to CS, Brief No.200, 22 Nov.1961, A10110/108, FO371/155725, PRO.

¹¹⁵Report on Mission to BG, 1 Dec.1961, "BG General 11/7/61-12/17/62" Folder, SF1961-1964, WHF, Schlesinger Papers, Box 3a, JFKL.

The suggestion was not welcomed by the British. It ran counter to the principle agreed by the Anglo-American Working Party that American efforts in British Guiana should appear "spontaneous" and not the result of a concerted Anglo-American approach. Moreover, the participation of British and Canadian experts in an economic mission that was supposed to be the American response to Jagan's request for aid would only add to Jagan's growing suspicions that the Americans were giving him the run-around. The Colonial Office were concerned also that membership of the mission would imply a commitment to increase British aid.¹¹⁶ Indeed, only a month previously the Americans had inquired as to the possibility of the British increasing their aid. The Americans denied that this was the intention of the multilateral mission.¹¹⁷ An internal memorandum indicates, however, that the State Department sought from the British and Canadians "not only team members but economic aid commitments."¹¹⁸

Determined that there would be no further commitment of British funds, the Colonial Office was prepared only to appoint a British liaison officer who would accompany the mission but who would not be a member of it. Although the appointment of a liaison officer was presented as a helpful gesture to the United States, the Colonial Office saw distinct advantages for the British in having this connection with the mission. With Canadian aid in particular often directed towards tied or export oriented projects of more benefit to donor than recipient, the liaison officer "might be able to exert some influence in steering investigations along lines most likely to be helpful to needs of British Guiana".¹¹⁹

Jagan himself was not much concerned about the national complexion of the mission. He was more concerned that it contain experts sympathetic to the economic philosophy of his government and that it should arrive as soon as possible.¹²⁰ The multilateral plan was not

¹¹⁶Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], Personal No.173, 24 Nov.1961, A10110/110, FO371/155725, PRO.

¹¹⁷Telegram, Washington[Colonial Attaché] to CS, Brief No.200, 22 Nov.1961, A10110/108, FO371/155725, PRO.

¹¹⁸Memorandum, Rewinkel to Kohler, 29 Jan.1962, 741D.00/1-2962, CDF1961-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹¹⁹Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], Personal No.173, 24 Nov.1961, A10110/110, FO371/155725, PRO.

¹²⁰Report on Mission to British Guiana, 1 Dec.1961, "BG General 11/7/61-12/17/62" Folder, SF1961-1964, WHF, Schlesinger Papers, Box WH3a, JFKL.

conceived of merely as a stalling device. There were clear advantages for the United States in the multilateral approach. The immediate consequence of this approach, however, was further delay. The complexities of organising the composition, timing and jurisdiction of a multilateral mission delayed the arrival of the economic mission, adding to Jagan's suspicions.

The delays of November and December 1961 were a source of exasperation in London, clearly reflected in a brief prepared in the Colonial Office for Macmillan's meeting with Kennedy in Bermuda at the end of December:

"We consider that if our major aim of policy is to be achieved, which is to keep British Guiana in with the West or at any rate check it from going in with the Eastern bloc it is vital that the Americans should be thinking in much larger terms than the US\$5 million which they now have in mind. It is almost equally important that they concentrate on producing some aid and very quickly indeed instead of putting so much emphasis on sending in missions which inevitably cause delay and lead to frustration on the part of British Guiana politicians."¹²¹

Frustrated in his search for economic aid, Jagan turned his attention to his other major preoccupation, the question of independence. If the West was unable or unwilling to provide adequate aid, he argued, then the colony should be given the freedom to seek aid elsewhere. Independence was also the one issue as guaranteed as economic development to galvanise the majority of Guianese behind him. If his opponents in British Guiana had reservations about independence under Jagan, they were in no position to publicly oppose it in principle. The PNC supported the resolution although with the reservation that provisions be made for the protection of minorities. Armed with an Independence Resolution adopted by both Houses of the Legislature, Jagan met the Colonial Secretary, Reginald Maudling, in London on 13 December 1961 to demand independence for British Guiana on 31 May 1962. Maudling rejected the demand, refusing to set either a date for independence or for the conference that he insisted must proceed it. He undertook only to consider and discuss the resolution with colleagues and to report back to Jagan in the New Year.

¹²¹CO Brief, Dec.1961, A10110/126, FO371/157726, PRO.

In preparation for his meeting with Jagan, Maudling was briefed to "avoid making any commitment as far as possible without irritating him [Jagan]."¹²² In the latter respect he failed. Jagan went immediately to the Fourth Committee of the UN, where he secured the introduction of a resolution stipulating that the British and British Guianese governments "resume negotiations immediately with a view to reaching agreement on the date of independence for British Guiana", and that the issue be considered by the Special Committee on Colonialism.¹²³

This resolution was due to be debated when the UN session resumed in January. Before the UN could reassemble, however, Jagan was informed that an Independence Conference would be held in May 1962. The British decision to advance the date of the conference and thereby accelerate the independence process has generally been interpreted as simple capitulation in the face of UN pressure.¹²⁴ The truth, however, was more complicated.

Before Jagan arrived in London in December 1961, the Colonial Office had already deemed it desirable to accelerate the independence process in British Guiana.¹²⁵ However, Maudling was unable to communicate these plans to Jagan in advance of their approval by the Colonial Policy Committee. The formula laid down at the Constitutional Conference held at Lancaster House in March 1960 had provided that an Independence Conference would not be called before August 1962 and independence would follow not much before mid-1963. Powerful arguments could be made, the Colonial Office recognised, for adhering to that formula. The present constitution providing for internal self-government was only five months old, and ministers should have the opportunity to gain experience and demonstrate their talents and reliability before the safety-net of British responsibility was removed. British Guiana as yet had no defence force or foreign service; prerequisites of independence. Neither did it have the capability to finance its development plan without external aid. A longer period before independence would buy more time to tie the American government into British Guiana's

¹²²Discussions with Dr. Jagan, Brief for Ministers, CO1031/4180, PRO.

¹²³Telegram, UKMISUN to CS, Brief No.169, 19 Dec.1961, A10110/128, FO371/157726, PRO.

¹²⁴Spinner, *Op.Cit.*, p.90.

¹²⁵Discussions with Dr. Jagan, Brief for Ministers, CO1031/4180, PRO.

economic development. It would buy time also for the British to settle the issue of Commonwealth membership for British Guiana about which the Commonwealth Relations Office was presently unenthusiastic. Moreover, a precipitous British withdrawal might produce a "minor Congo" in a "sensitive and vulnerable area". Finally, there were "certain obligations to the Americans". The British government had agreed at the Anglo-American talks of September 1961 to try to adhere to the Lancaster House formula. Although there was no commitment to stick to the formula, there was a "strong moral obligation" to try to do so and at the very least an obligation to consult the Americans.¹²⁶

Nevertheless, the Colonial Office advocated, and the Macmillan government accepted, that independence should be advanced. Whatever Washington's concerns, Britain had no strategic or economic interest in delaying independence. To do so might have serious and possibly violent repercussions, would poison future relations with Jagan and undermine the attempt to align him with the West. Moreover, the prospect of independence for British Guiana might force the Americans to face squarely the aid issue and to revise the assumption that economic aid for British Guiana was primarily a British responsibility. Moreover, the prospect of independence might force the American hand on the aid question. Finally, the resolution pending in the UN might provoke a "crisis" in UK-UN relations.¹²⁷ The British were working towards early independence before Jagan's meeting with Maudling or his appearance at the UN, but UN involvement did help to expedite the process. The British were keen that the announcement of an early conference date could be made before the UN session resumed, "to avoid any impression that this decision had been influenced by UN proceedings", but it is clear that they also sought to pre-empt discussion of the UN resolution, which might have set, in the British view, a dangerous precedent for UN involvement in Britain's colonial affairs, hitherto closely guarded as internal matters.¹²⁸

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Telegram, FO to Washington, No.61 Saving, 4 Jan.1961, A10110/2, FO371/161946, PRO; Telegram, SOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.133, 5 Jan.1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹²⁸Ibid.

Foreign Office officials predicted considerable difficulties in persuading the Americans to accept this revised timetable for independence. The smooth functioning of Anglo-American relations lay within the remit of the Foreign Office, and it should come as no surprise that Foreign Office officials were more sympathetic to American sensibilities and had a more sophisticated analysis of American motives than their colleagues in the Colonial Office. For example, Henry Hankey, Deputy Head of the Foreign Office American Department, observed:

"The Americans rightly regard Dr. Jagan who is a Marxist with considerable misgivings. They are likely to press Her Majesty's Government hard to delay independence for British Guiana as long as possible, given their fears that if an independent British Guiana led by Dr. Jagan were to emerge as another Cuba, the position of moderate governments struggling against Castroite and Communist influence elsewhere in Latin America would be weakened. The Colonial Office are apt to play down these fears which are in fact well founded."¹²⁹

However, the brief prepared in the Foreign Office for the CPC meeting, scheduled for 20 December, to consider advancing independence for British Guiana, concluded that, despite the anticipated American reservations, "the arguments in favour of an early constitutional conference seem stronger than the arguments for delay," and accepted the Colonial Office arguments that delaying independence would undermine the policy of aligning Jagan with the West and might also lead to disorders in British Guiana, which would have further strained British resources.¹³⁰

The initial reaction of the State Department revealed little enthusiasm for the proposal. The Department, Rusk wrote to Melby, would "prefer see UK control over Jagan extended for as long as possible" and saw "no advantage at this stage to UK departing from Lancaster House Formula and drawbacks to permitting Jagan bulldoze UK out of already agreed commitment."¹³¹ Melby, however, had some sympathy with British arguments. Although he recognised the desirability of continuing British control, he argued that to delay the

¹²⁹Hankey Minute, 5 Dec.1961, A10110/124, FO371/157726, PRO.

¹³⁰Hankey Brief, 19 Dec.1961, A10110/124, FO371/157726, PRO.

¹³¹Telegram, SOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Info.122, 19 Dec.1961, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

consideration of independence for no other ostensible reason than obstinate adherence to the Lancaster House Formula would "certainly boomerang with unfortunate consequences for both UK and US", particularly when Jagan's advisers were inclined to cast the United States "in role principal villain blocking independence" and his dissatisfaction with the delay in the arrival of the economic mission was mounting.¹³² In an attempt to fuse the British and American positions, Melby speculated that the British Government might be able to convince Jagan that it was considering early independence, while continuing to adhere to the Lancaster House Formula.¹³³ As pressure mounted in Georgetown, with British Guiana's independence due to come up before the UN, Melby abandoned the idea that Jagan could be stalled on this question, and argued that the balance of advantage for the United States, as well as for the British, lay in an earlier date for independence.¹³⁴

The State Department did accept the British proposal for advancing the independence timetable, but with expressed reluctance. Echoing its earlier preference for working not with Jagan but for his demise, the Department's acceptance of the new timetable was accompanied by a renewed request that fresh elections be agreed upon at the forthcoming conference and held before independence.¹³⁵ The PPP had won 42% of the vote in 1961 after all. For Washington, the PPP's status as a minority government presented both justification and opportunity for its removal. However, in January 1962, the British, unconvinced of either the political feasibility of holding such elections or that they would produce the result the Americans desired, did not anticipate that fresh elections would be held.¹³⁶

Melby was strongly opposed to the request for fresh elections, doubting that they would serve American interests. In view of what he regarded as the irresponsible leadership of the opposition parties and their precarious financial position, Melby believed that elections in

¹³²Telegram, Amconsul Georgetown to SOS, No.165, 22 Dec.1961, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.178, 7 Jan.1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹³⁵Telegram, Washington to FO, No.74, 8 Jan.1962, A10110/3, FO371/161946, PRO.

¹³⁶Hutchinson Minute, 9 Jan.1962, A10110/3, FO371/161946, PRO.

1962 would only result in the return of the PPP with an even larger majority. Insisting upon fresh elections was so obviously a device designed to remove the PPP that future relations with Jagan after his return to office would be even more difficult. Moreover, another racially based election campaign would only aggravate racial tension and increase the likelihood of violence. Melby counselled against departing from the cooperative approach, maintaining that,

" ..unless BG can be quarantined, hope for keeping BG out of Soviet orbit seems lie in combination judicious Western assistance, encouragement those Guianese with good sense and chances that government will mature as it realises full implications its responsibilities. Rather than straight-arming Jagan at this point, best approach for US still appears to be extending sympathetic but very wary helping hand."¹³⁷

Melby's position was, however, evidently not widely shared in Washington. Although it had not formally abandoned the cooperative aspects of the Anglo-American programme agreed in September 1961, the Kennedy administration displayed considerable recalcitrance in its implementation of the programme, specifically the undertakings made during Jagan's visit to Washington. In January 1962, the administration finally agreed to the dispatch of an economic mission, scheduled to arrive in Georgetown by 15 February, and pledged an expansion of its technical assistance programme to US\$1.5 million.¹³⁸ However, a proposed third strand of this economic assistance programme, a US\$5 million road construction project, had been shelved. The road had been intended as a high-profile impact project which would pay a high political dividend, repairing the damage done to the American image in British Guiana by months of vacillation on the aid question. It would be the "dramatic commitment...necessary to reestablish credibility and confidence".¹³⁹ Although the road-building project was expected to generate political capital in British Guiana, it was effectively vetoed by AID, in part because, according to Schlesinger, the agency was "still reluctant to expose itself to congressional criticism or to strengthen Jagan by making early demonstrations of support to his government."¹⁴⁰ For AID, domestic political capital was

¹³⁷Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.181, 13 Jan.1962, 741D.00/1-1362, CDF 1961-1963, RG 59, Box 1668, NA.

¹³⁸Memorandum, Schlesinger to the President, 12 Jan.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.540-541.

¹³⁹*Ibid.* p.541.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

paramount. While the announcement of the economic mission and the increase in technical assistance might be viewed as a positive, if belated, American contribution to the cooperative Anglo-American policy, or as evidence of the Kennedy administration's commitment to that policy, the simultaneous abandonment of the roads project was viewed in the State Department as a nail in the coffin of the cooperative approach. Writing to the President, Schlesinger observed that, while his own view was less pessimistic, the Department saw the January programme as "in effect, a reversal of the September policy of a whole-hearted try. Their feeling...is that knocking out the road [or some comparable demonstration that we mean business in aiding British Guiana's development] means the evisceration of the British Guiana action program and virtually guarantees its failure".¹⁴¹

Moreover, even as the Kennedy administration moved ahead with this limited implementation of the cooperative policy it moved also to step up its covert program. Writing to Fowler Hamilton on 12 January to confirm the dispatch of the mission and the increase in the technical assistance programme, Kennedy announced that he was "requesting immediate action to intensify our observations of political developments in British Guiana and by this and other means extend our program of reinsurance in case the situation should show signs of going sour."¹⁴²

The policy of cooperation that constituted the overt side of the Anglo-American programme in British Guiana had always been a British policy. It never enjoyed unconditional support within the administration, and American doubts were not alleviated by Jagan's visit to Washington. American scepticism was evident in the reluctant compliance which characterised American policy in the closing months of 1961 and in January 1962, and although this scepticism had not yet translated into an outright or formal rejection of the British agenda, American reticence on the aid question would itself prove to be of some consequence.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Memorandum from the President to Hamilton, 12 Jan.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.542.

On 25 January 1962 Assistant Secretary of State Frederick Dutton wrote to John Rousselot, a Californian Congressman opposed to economic aid for Jagan, setting out the American position.¹⁴³ On the specific question of aid to British Guiana, Dutton played down the undertakings given to Jagan in October 1961. The interpretation of these undertakings could be tailored to immediate political necessity: sometimes presented as evidence of unbridled generosity, and at others as evidence of circumspect restraint. Dutton noted that the "United States has made no decision on Premier Jagan's request for substantially increased assistance. The *only* understanding reached during his visit was that the United States would help reappraise British Guiana's economic development plans and increase the scope of the technical assistance program." ¹⁴⁴ These limited undertakings were made, he continued, within the framework of broader American policy which sought "to find an acceptable basis for long term relations with the duly elected leaders of British Guiana", and to "demonstrate to the people of British Guiana that their legitimate desires for social and economic progress can best be satisfied by cooperation with the West", in the interest of precluding a communist takeover once the colony became independent.¹⁴⁵ The cooperative approach remained officially intact.

Dutton's closing remarks, however, were more fateful. The administration, he stated, intended "to continue this policy so long as it appears justified, though we are alert continuously for events which would dictate changes of any kind."¹⁴⁶ Within a fortnight, events in British Guiana would provide a pretext for just such changes and would put an end to both American temporising and British Guiana's prospects for a peaceful transition into independence.

¹⁴³Letter, Dutton to Rousselot, 25 Jan.1962, Folder C0039, WHCF, Box 34, JFKL.

¹⁴⁴Ibid. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

Chapter 4

From Non-compliance to Intervention: The Collapse of Cooperation.

February 1962 - November 1962

Friday 16 February 1962 is remembered in Guyana as Black Friday. After a week of marches and demonstrations against the Jagan government and in the midst of a general strike, rioting engulfed the Guianese capital. Order was restored only with the arrival in the city of British troops. The rioting left five dead, over seventy injured and over \$11 million of fire damage.¹ Its consequences went far beyond the physical damage to Georgetown. The disturbances provided a pretext for a formal reorientation of American policy towards the Jagan government, from the reluctant cooperation which had come to characterise American policy by the end of 1961 to outright hostility.

With the Independence Conference scheduled for May 1962, the Americans were not alone in having misgivings about imminent independence for British Guiana under a Jagan government. Opposition groups in British Guiana were equally wary. The UF feared that, cushioned by its built-in racial majority, the PPP would pursue anti-capitalist policies that would destroy the colony's economy and business community. PNC supporters feared that, after independence, the PPP's guaranteed East Indian majority might translate into Indian chauvinism. Since the 1961 elections opposition politicians had been advocating constitutional changes such as the introduction of proportional representation to constrain that majority. The restiveness of their supporters found expression in violence on Black Friday.

The trigger for the demonstrations and riots of February 1962 was the introduction of an austerity budget by the PPP government. The government had been beset by financial crisis

¹Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No. 354 [London, 1962]. Figures unless otherwise indicated are in BWI \$. US \$1 = BWI \$1.71. Other accounts of the disturbances can be found in Thomas J. Spinner, *A Political and Social History of Guyana, 1945-1983*, [Boulder CO., 1984], pp.94-100; Cheddi Jagan, *The West on Trial*, [London, 1966] pp.219-221.

since it assumed office² and, despite Jagan's visit to the United States and Canada and PPP Chairman Brindley Benn's tour of European capitals, foreign aid was not forthcoming. The absence of this kind of international endorsement did nothing to alleviate the Guianese business community's suspicions of the Jagan government. In December 1961, as confidence dissipated, the government further incurred the displeasure of the business community with the introduction of stringent currency regulations and the suspension of currency convertibility in an attempt to stem the flight of capital from the colony.

Against this background of the government's deteriorating financial position and in an attempt to tackle it, on 31 January 1962 Finance Minister, Charles Jacobs, introduced the first recurrent and development budgets prepared by locally elected officials. In this task the government had enjoyed the assistance of Cambridge University economist Nicholas Kaldor, furnished as an advisor by the UN. Hitherto, under closer British scrutiny and tutelage, the PPP's efforts in the budgetary field were remarkable for their conservatism. British Guiana's budget for 1961, for example, was hailed by Melby as a "model of fiscal orthodoxy". Indeed the PPP, he noted, had a "fiscal record of performance that would be the envy of any openly conservative party in the western world."³

The budget Jacobs presented to the Legislative Assembly in January 1962 broke with this tradition dramatically, with estimates of recurrent expenditure and revenues at record high levels. It included plans for a sweeping revision of British Guiana's tax structure, to generate additional revenue to meet the projected deficit on the government's current account and to provide a surplus to be utilised in the development programme. Jagan was unwilling to forego completely his development priorities, even without an American contribution. The budget envisaged such measures as the raising of existing income and corporation taxes, an end to pioneer industry benefits, and a number of new taxes, including a capital gains tax, a net property tax, and a gift tax. There was also to be a 17% increase in import tariffs on what the government considered non-essential items. One of the most controversial features of the

²Ibid. p.208.

³Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.121, 9 May 1961, 841D.10/5-961, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

budget was a plan to introduce a compulsory savings scheme designed to raise an additional \$6 million a year for development purposes. Contributions would be made at 5% of salary and 10% of other incomes for persons earning \$1,200 a year or more.⁴

The government claimed the budget would "redistribute the wealth and provide for economic growth".⁵ Melby for one was not optimistic that the budget would stimulate economic growth in British Guiana, although it might succeed in redistributing the wealth. He predicted the consequences of the budget would be reduced investment, buying power, turnover and confidence, and indeed the anti-capitalist flavour of the new proposed tax structure confirmed Georgetown businessmen in their suspicions of the Jagan government.⁶

As the political manifestation of business interests in British Guiana, the UF was at the forefront of opposition to a budget it branded confiscatory and communistic. The PNC insisted conversely that some of the new taxation in the budget, in particular the compulsory savings scheme, was anti-working class, ignoring the PPP's insistence that the working class would have to bear only a 1% rise in the cost of living as a result of the new taxation on non-essential items. Against these attacks Jagan and his ministers sought to defend the budget as an attempt at self-help, the touchstone of American aid efforts through the Alliance for Progress.

The budget proposals were subjected to a myriad of often contradictory interpretations. For those who claimed the budget heralded a confiscatory future for British Guiana there was enough evidence to make this claim plausible.⁷ Equally, however, as Melby noted, "viewed in the abstract the budget could simply be a courageous effort of a developing country to raise necessary capital through its own resources."⁸ This view was frequently expressed outside British Guiana. One commentator regarded the budget as "courageous" and

⁴Despatch, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.81, 7 Feb.1962, 841D.10/2-762, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

"ingenious", and felt that it was "ironic that the first serious attempt to make the Guianese responsible for their own development should have caused such a tear in the fabric of society."⁹ Similarly, John Hennings claimed that the budget itself was "not too wrong headed", and echoed Jagan's argument that aid under the Alliance for Progress was supposedly predicated upon tax reform and self-help of this kind.¹⁰ To former Colonial Secretary Iain MacLeod, the tax proposals, if flawed, were not evidence of incipient communisation. He made clear to Arthur Schlesinger that the budget "was *not* a Marxist program. It was a severely orthodox program of a 'Crippsian' sort appropriate for a developed nation like Great Britain but wholly unsuited for an immature and volatile country like British Guiana".¹¹ The budget was endorsed editorially by *The Times* and *The New York Times*, and a Commission of Inquiry into the disturbances of February 1962 observed that there was "nothing deeply vicious or destructive of economic security in the budget."¹²

This interpretation, however, did not fit the political agenda of the Guianese opposition parties. Opposition politicians, with the cooperation of Georgetown's anti-Jagan press, including D'Aguiar's own newspaper the *Daily Chronicle*, seized upon the budget as an opportunity at the very least to make trouble for the Jagan government, and if possible to remove it from office. Marches and demonstrations led and addressed by opposition political leaders were conducted in Georgetown, and, in what was the first example of PNC-UF collaboration, the opposition parties staged a pre-arranged walk-out from the Legislative Assembly on 9 February.¹³ Another demonstration of this new found solidarity occurred on 15 February, when, flouting a government proclamation prohibiting demonstrations in the vicinity of the public buildings, Burnham and D'Aguiar led their supporters in a march which circled the buildings and then progressed to PNC headquarters where the two leaders ostentatiously shook hands for the benefit of the cameras.¹⁴

⁹Peter Newman, *British Guiana, Problems of Cohesion in an Immigrant Society*, [London, 1964], pp.72-73.

¹⁰Memcon, 'BG', 16 Feb.1962, "350-Political Affairs General 1962" Folder, CGR 1957-63, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹¹Memorandum, Schlesinger to Bruce, 27 Feb.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.549. Emphasis in original.

¹²Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No.354 [London, 1962], para.45.

¹³Research Paper on the PNC, prepared by Georgetown Special Branch. Copy provided to the author by J. Jagan.

¹⁴Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.218.

The political opposition was joined in its campaign by the trade unions and the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce. The Civil Service unions, which, reflecting the occupational racial segregation of British Guiana were predominantly African, had a long history of hostility and resentment towards the PPP, which they suspected of attempting to Indianise the service. More immediately they held a catalogue of grievances against the government relating to delays in implementing their pay award.¹⁵ The possibility of strike action had been simmering throughout January 1962, and on 13 February the strike was finally called. A general strike, in sympathy with the Civil Service Unions and against what it viewed as the anti-working class aspects of the budget, was announced by the TUC on the same day. The collaborative relationship between British Guiana's TUC and the PPP which had existed in the early 1950s, had ended with the TUC's transformation into an anti-communist, anti-Jagan institution after the constitutional suspension of 1953.¹⁶ PPP-TUC relations were not enhanced by the increasingly racial element in British Guianese politics after 1957: the Georgetown unions were largely African. Moreover, there was a long-running battle between the sugar workers union, the Man Power Citizens Association [MPCA] under the leadership of Richard Ishmael, and the PPP sponsored Guiana Industrial Workers Union [GIWU], [later reconstituted as the Guiana Agricultural Workers Union, GAWU], for representation in the sugar industry.¹⁷ Ishmael, who by virtue of presiding over the numerically largest union in the colony, was also General Secretary of the TUC, bore considerable personal resentment against Jagan and the PPP for their persistent attacks on the legitimacy of his claim to represent the sugar workers.¹⁸ Collaboration between the trade unions and the political opposition was evidenced on the 14 February, when the TUC allocated half of the time allotted by a police permit for a public meeting to the PNC.¹⁹

¹⁵Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No.354 [London, 1962], paras.54-56.

¹⁶For PPP-TUC cooperation prior to 1953 see Ashton Chase, *A History of Trade Unionism in Guyana*, [Georgetown, 1964], pp.177-202. For the reconstitution of the TUC in 1953 see Chase, *Op.Cit.*, pp.213-216.

¹⁷Ibid. pp.148-160, 202-209.

¹⁸Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No.354 [London, 1962], para.65.

¹⁹Ibid.

Georgetown's Chamber of Commerce also condemned the budget. Many of its members were prepared to subsidize the strike actions planned by the trade unions by continuing to pay striking employees. Some employers went so far as to lock out their workers.²⁰ It must be observed that the opposition of Georgetown's business community to the budget, and more broadly to the Jagan government, did not include British Guiana's largest expatriate business interests. For example, consistent with his company's espoused policy of working with the government of the day, the Chairman of Bookers, Sir Jock Campbell, described the budget as "a serious attempt by the Government to get to grips with the formidable economic problems of the country by a hard programme of self-help."²¹ It was not, Campbell declared, confiscatory.²² Both Bookers and Sandbach Parker dissented from the Chamber of Commerce's majority in favour of continuing to pay striking employees.²³

Neither the political nor industrial opposition was moved by government attempts to defuse the situation, taking little heed of the Finance Minister's postponement of the budget debate to allow time for consultation, or of modifications to the budget proposals.²⁴ These modifications were greeted by D'Aguiar, for example, as evidence of weakness. He continued to demand that the government should "stand or fall" by its budget and resign.²⁵ The modifications were intended to meet the complaints of the PNC and the TUC that the budget was anti-working class, but they failed to split the opposition as Jagan had hoped.²⁶ The issue at stake in February 1962 was not the budget per se. The budget was merely the pretext for an attempt to force the government from office.

The events of February 1962 illuminated the political landscape in British Guiana in a number of respects. Illustrative of the dramatic rural/urban split which broadly mirrored the racial divide in Guianese politics, they demonstrated the vulnerability of the Jagan

²⁰Ibid. paras.79-80.

²¹Quoted in Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No.354 [London, 1962], para.80.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.213, 217.

²⁵Ibid. p.217

²⁶Ibid. pp.217-218.

government in the face of a united opposition that could control the nation's capital. Although the PPP controlled a majority in the country at large and its support in the rural areas remained firm, the strength of the opposition in Georgetown was such that only the intervention of British troops to restore order on 16 February prevented the overthrow of the Jagan government.

However, if the anti-budget campaign had demonstrated the potential of cooperation between the UF and the PNC, whose relationship was more commonly characterised by recrimination and hostility, there was no evidence of a permanent collaborative arrangement. Andrew Jackson, prominent trade unionist and PNC General Secretary until February 1962, maintained that a PPP-PNC coalition was more likely than one between the PNC and the UF.²⁷ The anti-Jagan opposition remained fragmented. Moreover, its prestige was greatly reduced. Melby reported to the State Department that the opposition leaders had acted "irresponsibly" and "recklessly".²⁸ They had led protesters to the Public Buildings in clear violation of a Proclamation prohibiting such demonstrations and D'Aguiar had played a prominent role in the outbreak of rioting on Black Friday. The Commission of Inquiry appointed to investigate the disturbances found that the riots were sparked off by a false rumour promulgated by D'Aguiar that a child had died from the effects of tear gas, used by the police to disperse a gathering. There was also, Melby reported, "fairly conclusive evidence" that the violence had been planned by the PNC and UF.²⁹ Certainly, once the rioting had begun both Burnham and D'Aguiar had refused to use their influence to bring the violence to an end.³⁰ Melby noted that Burnham had "proved his skill at arousing Georgetown mobs, but also showed that he is either unable or unwilling to control them. His unreliability as a long-term alternative to Jagan is more evident."³¹

²⁷Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.255, 27 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-2762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

²⁸Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-3, 1 March 1962, 741D.00/3-162, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

²⁹Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.235, 18 Feb.1962, 741D. 00/2-1862, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

³⁰Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No.354. [London, 1962], para.110.

³¹Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-3, 1 March 1962, 741D.00/3-162, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

Neither did the opposition leaders emerge well from the Commission of Inquiry report. Burnham's role, for example, was, in the view of the Commission, dictated by personal ambition and political frustration. It recorded that "the real motive force behind Mr. Burnham's assault was a desire to assert himself in public life and establish a more important and more rewarding position for himself by bringing about Dr. Jagan's downfall."³²

The events of February 1962 also revealed the politicisation and loyalties of the British Guiana TUC. Prominent politicians from all parties were active in British Guiana's trade unions, but in contrast to its counterparts elsewhere in the Anglophone Caribbean, the BGTUC was not formally affiliated to any political party. In February 1962 the TUC's claim of political neutrality was exposed as a fiction. Its alignment in the anti-Jagan camp was clear. The Commission of Inquiry remarked on the TUC:

"There is very little doubt that, despite the loud protestations of the trades union leaders to the contrary, political affinities and aspirations played a large part in shaping their policy and formulating their programme of offering resistance to the budget and making a determined effort to change the government in office."³³

As was the case with the opposition political parties the TUC's reputation was damaged by its role in the attempt to bring down the government. TUC President Richard Ishmael was criticised by some of his members for having been 'duped' by Burnham into taking a political stand.³⁴ It should be noted however that Ishmael himself had previously demonstrated a willingness to involve the TUC in political activities and was at least as vociferous as the political leaders of the opposition in his desire to bring down the government in February 1962. Even after Black Friday, he was reportedly making requests for guns and dynamite from American trade union sources and claiming that, "if American labor had provided the guns requested last year Jagan would have been deposed".³⁵

³²Report of a Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in BG in February 1962. Colonial No.354. [London, 1962], paras.51, 147.

³³Ibid. para.63.

³⁴Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.255, 27 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-2762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

³⁵Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.241, 21 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-2162, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

The disturbances of February 1962 also demonstrated and reinforced the racial polarization of Guianese society as the major determinant of political allegiance. Although the Commission of Inquiry reported that the disturbances were not racially motivated, both British and American observers pointed to increased racial tension in the aftermath of the riots.³⁶ Speculation prior to the disturbances that the budget controversy might have cost Jagan the support of the East Indian middle class abated as the violence of Black Friday reinforced racial loyalties.

Finally, the British response to the February disturbances confirmed their unwillingness to repeat their performance of 1953. Emergency Orders in Council enabling the Governor to assume control of the colony were considered but were not invoked.³⁷ British troops arrived at Jagan's request. Suspending the constitution was regarded as a last resort. By 1962, neither the international climate nor the British Treasury could tolerate the extended period of British responsibility that suspension of the constitution implied.

The disturbances also affected American policy, not only occasioning yet another delay in the dispatch of the long-awaited economic mission, but also providing a pretext for the formal rejection of the Anglo-American cooperative policy, for which American enthusiasm had been lacking since its inception. As John Hennings observed, the demonstrations and disturbances in British Guiana had "provided a convenient excuse to enable the administration to get off the hook of a policy which from the point of view of internal American politics had never been anything but highly unpopular".³⁸ In any case, as Assistant Secretary of State Tyler pointed out, the cooperative policy had "not been really applied in practice subsequent to Jagan's visit to the US."³⁹ Indeed, he acknowledged, the delays and non-compliance which had characterised the American implementation of the policy since

³⁶Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.292, 26 March 1962, 741D.00/3-2662, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Letter, Fraser to CS, 20 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO; Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-3, 1 March 1962, 741D.00/3-162, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

³⁷Telegram, London to SOS, No.2908, 7 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-762, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

³⁸Letter, Hennings to Thomas, 22 Feb.1962, A10110/126, FO371/161952, PRO.

³⁹Memorandum, Tyler to Rusk, 18 Feb.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.543.

October 1961 had left Jagan "increasingly suspicious of the US", and the policy unworkable. "It is now doubtful", he wrote, advocating that the policy be abandoned, "that a working relationship can be established with Jagan which would prevent the emergence of a communist or Castro-type state in South America."⁴⁰

As rioting engulfed Georgetown, American officials, including the President, displayed an immediate interest in the political and constitutional implications of the situation, inquiring of British representatives as to the possibilities of a constitutional suspension, a delay of independence, or new elections.⁴¹ These questions had not yet been considered, let alone answered, in London, where the main concern remained the more immediate practical consideration of restoring and maintaining internal peace.

Even before a full report on the disturbances had been received from Melby,⁴² the Kennedy administration seized on the disturbances as a convenient pretext to signal to the British a shift in policy towards British Guiana. In a letter to Foreign Secretary Home, Secretary of State Rusk put an end to the stalling which had come to characterise American policy since October 1961, stating that, " I have reached the conclusion that it is not possible for us to put up with an independent British Guiana under Jagan."⁴³ He outlined a number of reasons for this change of heart. Firstly, the cooperative policy, which he reminded Home was "your policy", had failed to bind Jagan to the West. Jagan retained his communist connections, and his "grandiose expectations" of economic aid precluded the purchase of his allegiance.⁴⁴ Secondly, Rusk frankly acknowledged the role played by domestic political considerations in the redefinition of the American position, observing that public and congressional opinion in the US would not tolerate another Castro figure.⁴⁵ Finally, Rusk noted, Jagan advocated a

⁴⁰Ibid. p.544.

⁴¹Memcon, 'BG', 16 Feb.1962, "350-Political Affairs General 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA; Telegram, Washington to FO, No.504, 16 Feb.1962, A10110/23, FO371/161947, PRO; Letter, Hennings to Thomas, 22 Feb.1962, A10110/126, FO371/161952, PRO; Telegram, Washington to FO, No.529, 19 Feb.1962, A10110/27, FO371/161947, PRO.

⁴²Communication with Georgetown was interrupted at the time; Letter, Hennings to Thomas, 22 Feb.1962, A10110/126, FO371/161952, PRO; Melby's postmortem of the disturbances can be found in Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-3, 1 March 1962, 741D.00/3-162, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

⁴³Letter, Rusk to Home, 20 Feb.1962, A10110/39G, FO371/161947, PRO.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Castro-style Marxism-Leninism which the OAS had declared incompatible with the inter-American system at the Punta del Este Conference only a few weeks previously.⁴⁶ Rusk called for a re-examination of the British premise that there was no alternative to Jagan, and asked that "remedial steps", evidently a euphemism for political intervention, be taken. "I hope we can agree", he concluded, "that Jagan should not accede to power again."⁴⁷

Rusk's letter met a variety of responses in Whitehall, ranging from the indignant to the sympathetic, and reflecting the broad bureaucratic preoccupations of the departments and individuals concerned. The Colonial Office vented its frustration at American non-compliance with the Anglo-American programme. The Americans had failed to go beyond "psychological gestures", and had undercut their effect, by refusing to give Jagan substantive evidence of American goodwill in the form of economic aid.⁴⁸ American non-aid only encouraged Jagan to cultivate communist connections and was pushing him towards the Eastern bloc.⁴⁹ Moreover, because of their failure to extend aid, the American government bore some responsibility for the February disorders. Had aid been forthcoming, Jagan might have foregone the Compulsory Savings Scheme, the most unpopular proposal in the fateful Kaldor budget.⁵⁰

The Colonial Office also rejected Rusk's suggestion that there might be an alternative to working with Jagan. The willingness of Jagan's opponents to engage in extra-constitutional methods had not endeared them to the Colonial Office.⁵¹ There was, it continued to maintain, no attractive alternative leader capable of defeating Jagan in a free election. The Colonial Office claimed not to understand Rusk's suggestion that it should be agreed that "Jagan should not accede to power again". Such a profession of righteous ignorance seems disingenuous. The Office did concede that there may be circumstances in which "it may be in

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Note on Mr. Dean Rusk's Letter to the FS, undated, A10110/58/G, FO371/161948, PRO.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

the interests of British Guiana to remove it [the Jagan Government]".⁵² It is clear, however, that 'in response to American demands' was not considered to be one such circumstance. Jagan's removal would be predicated, the Colonial Office implied, upon internal, not exogenous circumstances.

There was rather more sympathy for Rusk's position in the Foreign Office, where the Deputy Head of the American Department, Henry Hankey, observed that "although Mr. Rusk's language is very strong the Americans have good reason to be appalled by the prospect of an independent Government in British Guiana under Jagan".⁵³ The Foreign Office, however, constrained by its deference to Colonial Office expertise and its agenda for British Guiana, was able to offer no practical means for translating this sympathy into a policy more attuned to American sensibilities.

Macmillan directed his attention to the interventionist implications of Rusk's letter. The hypocrisy of the American position was not wasted on a Prime Minister who, as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Eden's government, had endured American preaching on the evils of imperialism during the Suez crisis. Macmillan professed to have read Rusk's letter "with amazement" and to have found his interventionist suggestions, "incredible." How, Macmillan asked, "can the Americans continue to attack us in the United Nations on colonialism and then use expressions like these which are not colonialism but pure Machiavellianism?" Although Macmillan took some comfort from the frankness of the letter, which, he optimistically noted, reflected American confidence in the Anglo-American partnership, the letter, he observed, "does show a degree of cynicism which I would have thought Dean Rusk could hardly have put his pen to. He is after all not an Irishman, nor a politician, nor a millionaire; he has the reputation of being an honorable and somewhat academic figure."⁵⁴

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Hankey Minute, 21 Feb.1962, A10110/39G, FO371/161947, PRO.

⁵⁴Letter, PM to FS, 21 Feb.1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

Whatever sympathy may have existed for the American position in the Foreign Office, little of it was in evidence in Lord Home's caustic reply to Rusk's letter.⁵⁵ The reply did not take account of the Colonial Office critique of American policy, but rather most closely reflected the Prime Minister's preoccupations.⁵⁶ Home made little specific reference to the situation in British Guiana or the implications of the recent disturbances for future policy, which were still under consideration in London. However, he did not squander this rare opportunity to capture the moral high-ground from the Americans on a colonial issue, pointing out the hypocrisy inherent in the American position and the self-defeating element of their past unnuanced anti-colonialist stance, and responding to Rusk's suggestion that Jagan could be somehow removed and excluded from office, with a moral indignation that, in the light of future events, seems misplaced.⁵⁷

The Rusk letter marked the point where the Americans formally abandoned the cooperative policy of September 1961. It also marks the point where the Kennedy administration began to persuade the British out of what it regarded as misplaced complacency on the British Guiana issue, by elevating British Guiana from a residual colonial problem to be disposed of by the Colonial Office to an issue of Anglo-American relations requiring the attention of the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister. Moreover, the Kennedy administration would no longer be content to acquiesce to British policy preferences. Rather than falling in line behind British policy, the Americans after February 1962 showed themselves to be determined to take a more active role in shaping Anglo-American policy towards British Guiana.

Because of the growing hostility of the Kennedy administration towards the Jagan government, and the convenience of the February disturbances in providing a pretext for a change of American policy, and in the light of subsequent CIA operations in the colony, it has been speculated that the administration was complicit in the attempt to overthrow the

⁵⁵Letter, Home to Rusk, 26 Feb.1962, PREM11/3666, PRO. [Printed in *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.546-548.]

⁵⁶Bligh to Samuel, 7 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

⁵⁷Letter, Home to Rusk, 26 Feb.1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

government in February 1962. Philip Agee, for example, has suggested that the anti-budget campaign and strike of February 1962 were financed by the CIA.⁵⁸

Since early 1961 there had been a constant stream of representatives of various opposition groups, including the PNC and UF, offering to reveal to American officialdom Jagan's alleged communist inclinations and intentions, and seeking American financial aid and anti-communist propaganda material.⁵⁹ The existing record shows that such requests were met with a standard State Department response that the United States government did not interfere in the internal affairs of other states.

Although officially non-political, the British Guiana TUC also fed American fears of communist encroachment and sought American help against Jagan. In the week before Jagan's visit to Washington in October 1961, Richard Ishmael, President of the MPCA and General Secretary of the BG Trades Union Council [TUC], had called on the State Department to request its assistance in persuading the British to delay independence and financial help to strengthen the 'free' labour movement in British Guiana. In order to avoid the appearance of American assistance to opposition elements at a time when the administration was committed to the Anglo-American policy of cooperating with Jagan, the State Department felt this aid would be best channelled through the AFL-CIO and the international trade union movement.⁶⁰ To the State Department, assistance to strengthen the anti-Jagan unions was not necessarily incompatible with the policy of cooperation with Jagan.

⁵⁸Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, [London, 1975]; see also William Blum, *The CIA: A Forgotten History*, [London, 1986] p.120.

⁵⁹Despatch, Amembassy Caracas to DOS, No.1062, 5 May 1961, 741D.00/5-561, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 1667, NA; Telegram, Amconsul Georgetown to SOS, No.136, 3 Nov.1961, "350-Political Affairs General July-Dec.1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA; Memcon, 'Political Situation in BG', 11 Jan. 1961, 741D.00/1-1161, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1667, NA; Memcon, 'Forthcoming Elections in BG', 22 March 1961, "350-Political Affairs General Jan.-June 1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.100, 18 May 1961, 741D.00/5-1861, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1667, NA.

⁶⁰Memcon, 'Labor-Political Situation in BG', 4 Oct.1961, 841D.062/10-461, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA; Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.75, 10 Oct.1961, "BG General 9/29/61-10/12/61" Folder, COS, NSF, Box 14a, JFKL.

When the campaign against the budget began in February 1962, opposition groups had again turned to the United States for assistance.⁶¹ The State Department, however, agreed to provide only limited assistance in the information field, and urged Melby to "exercise care not be put in position in which Jagan could charge the US ConGen supplying ammunition to his opponents and becoming involved in internal politics."⁶²

Jagan himself argued that the Americans were complicit in the events of February 1962. In a statement he proposed to make before the Commission of Inquiry, he outlined what he regarded as American interference in the internal affairs of British Guiana. He did not pinpoint the CIA, but rather emphasized that the American refusal to provide economic aid had created the impression that his government did not enjoy the confidence of the United States, and so had bolstered the opposition. He repeated his accusations of American interference during the 1961 election campaign and made only one fresh allegation: he had heard a report that, in discussions with a group of Guianese resident in New York, the State Department had offered to help the opposition "liberate" British Guiana.⁶³

Although there was little that was new in Jagan's allegations, Grey persuaded him to omit them from his statement to the Commission, by arguing that, should the Americans regard his accusations as an "unfriendly act", he would damage British and British Guianese relations with Washington and squander any hope of receiving either economic aid or future sugar quotas from the United States.⁶⁴

In the heat of the February disturbances Jagan's accusations of American intervention had been more controversial. The United States, he alleged, was subsidising D'Aguiar and had sent intelligence agents into British Guiana.⁶⁵ Jagan restrained himself from making further

⁶¹Telegram, DOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.160, 6 Feb.1962, 841D.10/2-262, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

⁶²Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Priority 155, 3 Feb.1962, 841D.10/2-262, CDF1960-1963, RG59 Box 2478, NA.

⁶³Despatch, Grey to Maudling, No.361, 5 July[?] 1962, CO1031/3898, PRO.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.225, 15 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-1562, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.234, 17 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-1762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

public accusations after a report of his claims in the *New York Times* provoked a swift demand for an explanation and evidence from Washington.⁶⁶

Melby was sceptical about Jagan's accusations.⁶⁷ He was, however, aware of the potentially acute embarrassment of the allegations, and was concerned during and after the disturbances to avoid any impression of American connivance with the opposition. It was in Jagan's interest to blame the United States for February's events. If responsibility for the disturbances could be pinned on external interference rather than internal dissension, there would be no reason to delay British Guiana's progress to independence. For this reason Melby discouraged a proposal that Basil Blackman, a Guianese Citizen who was also the Education Secretary for the Caribbean Congress of Labour, and Morris Paladino, the American Education Director for the Latin American regional labour confederation ORIT, should be flown into British Guiana during the strike. Their ostensible motive for arriving in British Guiana would be to conduct an ORIT educational seminar, but the real reason for their visit would have been to bring the strike under the direction of these regional organisations, which were apparently not satisfied with its progress.⁶⁸ Melby's fears came close to realisation on 18 February, however, when Blackman, accompanied by two American trade unionists arrived in British Guiana in the midst of the strike as stowaways on a plane carrying a blood bank from Surinam.⁶⁹ Their arrival, Melby argued, provided a "heaven sent pretext" for Jagan to blame the riots on American imperialist intervention. Although the storm Melby anticipated over the trade unionists did not materialise, he did find himself embroiled with the Jagan government over the arrival in the colony of Joost Sluis of the Christian Anti Communist Crusade, an American citizen whom the government was eager to deport because of his connections with the UF.⁷⁰

⁶⁶Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Priority 175, 22 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-2262, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.248, 23 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-2362, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

⁶⁷Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.247, 23 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-2362, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.225, 15 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-1562, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

⁶⁸Telegram, POS to SOS, No.398, 15 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-1562, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

⁶⁹Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.47, 19 Feb.1962, CO1031/4285, PRO; Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, personal unnumbered, 20 Feb.1962, CO1031/4285, PRO.

⁷⁰Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.249, 24 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-2462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

Jagan made his accusations of American intervention directly to Melby on 20 February 1962, putting himself in the incongruous position of alleging American complicity with opposition activities in one breath, while in the next requesting the speedy dispatch of the economic mission and immediate financial aid. Although he could not answer for the activities of private American groups, Melby rejected Jagan's allegation of government intervention as "completely unfounded".⁷¹ Melby, however, has since conceded that he was not fully aware of CIA activity in British Guiana, beyond the unremarkable fact that one of his vice-consuls was CIA.⁷² Neither had British officials in Georgetown been made formally aware of any covert American activity. PPP ministers were reassured that, "if CIA operate in a British dependent territory they are disclosed to the local government." There seemed, Grey noted, "no real grounds for Ministerial suspicion."⁷³

The administration also denied at higher levels that the CIA had any hand in the events of February 1962. During a visit to Washington in March 1962, the British Undersecretary of State at the Colonial Office, Hugh Fraser, was given such an assurance by CIA Director John McCone, whom Fraser considered "not a brilliant but an entirely honest man".⁷⁴ In internal communications also, American officials consistently denied CIA involvement in the 1962 attempt to force Jagan from office.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, there was American covert activity in British Guiana in February 1962, and had been for some time, as part of the broader attempt to bolster anti-communist 'free' trade unions in Latin America. Since 1958, the CIA had been financing the international activities of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees [AFSCME], with the fictional Gotham Foundation serving as a conduit. In 1958, AFSCME's President, Arnold

⁷¹Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.242, 21 Feb.1962, 741D.00/2-2162, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

⁷²Interview with Everett Melby, 6 May 1994, Montreal.

⁷³Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.60, 23 Feb.1962, A10110/40E, FO371/161947, PRO.

⁷⁴Letter, Fraser to CS, 20 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

⁷⁵Letter, Cleveland to Stevenson, 9 March 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.552; Paper Prepared in the DOS, 15 March 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.555.

Zander made these funds available to the London based Public Service International [PSI], the International Trade Secretariat [ITS] for unions representing government employees. The funds were used initially for a recruiting drive in the northern countries of Latin America, which was directed by William Doherty Jnr., subsequently identified as a CIA agent.⁷⁶ In 1959, Zander's union opened a full time Latin American section on behalf of PSI. The new PSI International Representative was one William Howard McCabe, a man with no trade union background, who has also been identified as a CIA operative.⁷⁷ McCabe would play an important role in a general strike in British Guiana in 1963. He had accompanied Ishmael on his visit to the State Department in October 1961. He was also one of the stowaways who arrived in British Guiana in February 1962.

It is, however, not possible from the available evidence to go further than to observe the coincidence of McCabe's presence in British Guiana during the disturbances of February 1962. The only account of McCabe's role in February 1962 is his own. In conversation with Melby, who was unaware of McCabe's CIA connections, he claimed that the TUC strike had not been coordinated with the international secretariats "which had practically no knowledge events last few weeks BG". He was critical of opposition politicians whom, he argued, had manipulated the trade union leadership into blatantly political actions, the failure of which left the unions open to attack from the government, and claimed to have urged the unions to return to work and "get out of politics."⁷⁸ Nick Huijsman, Colonial Office desk officer for British Guiana received a similar account of the activities of the American unionists when he visited the colony in March, hearing that "even Dr. Jagan admitted their presence had been helpful."⁷⁹

Although it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about the role, if any, played by the CIA in the February disturbances, the CIA had at least penetrated the British Guianese labour movement which would act as an instrument of destabilisation in 1963. In any case, the

⁷⁶Agee, *Op. Cit.*, p.606.

⁷⁷*The Sunday Times*, 16 April 1967, p.1; Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and US Foreign Policy*, [London, 1969], pp.399-400; Agee, *Op. Cit.*, p.614; Blum, *Op. Cit.*, pp.118, 410-411.

⁷⁸Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.241, 21 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-2162, CDF1960-1963, RG59, NA.

⁷⁹Huijsman Minute, 30 March 1962, CO1031/4285, PRO.

Americans, from the perspective of non-intervention, are not easily absolved of some indirect responsibility for the events of February 1962. As both Jagan and the Colonial Office argued at the time, the American policy of non-aid had left a vacuum in development funding that Jagan had sought to fill through the controversial compulsory savings plan, and more broadly had emboldened the opposition and contributed to the decline of business and political confidence in the PPP government.

By the end of February 1962, the Americans had finally abandoned all prospect of working with Jagan and had served notice that they were prepared to work for his removal, but they had not outlined any ideas as to how this might be achieved, or given any consideration to building up an alternative leadership. They certainly were not yet prepared to engage in any public flirtation with British Guiana's opposition leaders. The State Department discouraged a visit to Washington in March 1962 by Burnham lest his presence be viewed as evidence of American connivance with opposition groups. Although Melby downplayed the significance of Burnham's prospective visit, arguing that "pilgrimages with outstretched palm to Washington and UN have become so routine for Guianese in politics that Burnham visit not likely to be interpreted as US-PNC conspiracy,"⁸⁰ Ambassador Bruce feared a different response in London, particularly at a time when the Americans were vigorously urging the British to reorient their policy in British Guiana. Burnham's visit might be viewed as a preemptive, unilateral decision on the part of the administration to throw its support to Burnham against Jagan. Such a visit, Bruce insisted would be "singularly, ill-timed, embarrassing, unnecessary and thoroughly undesirable."⁸¹ Should it go ahead, Bruce remarked, "I suggest I be given appropriate guidance as to how to explain affair to Foreign and Colonial Offices here, for I have no Baron Munchausen capable of doing so."⁸²

At the beginning of March 1962, estimates in Washington as to the prospects of the opposition groups were not optimistic. The British had long argued that Burnham and

⁸⁰Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.258, 1 March 1962, 841D.062/3-162, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

⁸¹Telegram, London to SOS, No.3200, 28 Feb.1962, 841D.062/2-2862, CDF 1960-63, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

⁸²Ibid.

D'Aguiar were undesirable alternatives to Jagan, and, more importantly, unelectable. Melby concurred with this assessment. Washington's renewed interest in British Guiana in the wake of the February disturbances led to the hasty preparation of a Research Memorandum by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research [INR], on the opposition. Based largely on Melby's despatches, the Memorandum, unsurprisingly, drew conclusions similar to those of the Consul General, recognising the limitations of both opposition parties and their respective leadership.⁸³ The PNC was self-consciously racist, obstructionist and unconstructive.⁸⁴ British criticisms of Burnham's personality had also hit home, and it was noted that, Burnham "has also been described by observers other than UK officials as opportunistic, egocentric, corrupt and venal."⁸⁵ On Burnham, the Memorandum concluded: "because Burnham is the leader of the major opposition party, most thoughts of an alternative to Jagan understandably turn first to him, but the overwhelming burden of the historical and documentary evidence is against him and would seem to rule him out."⁸⁶

The UF, it was noted, represented only conservative business interests. Although it was the party most ideologically acceptable and sympathetic to the United States, the UF had no broad appeal in British Guiana. In the Governor's opinion, D'Aguiar was "certifiable".⁸⁷ Moreover, both the UF and PNC had recently demonstrated they were prepared to use unconstitutional methods in their quest to remove the PPP from office.⁸⁸

The Memorandum also recognised that as long as elections were decided by race, neither the PNC or UF had sufficient mass appeal to win a general election on its own, and although Burnham and D'Aguiar had cooperated in February 1962, their future collaboration was not guaranteed. The only prospect for the future defeat of the PPP at a general election would be to draw away some of its East Indian support. The most likely candidates for electoral

⁸³Research Memorandum, REU-31, 'Assessment of Opposition Elements in BG', 7 March 1962, "350-Political Affairs General 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

⁸⁴Ibid. p.4.

⁸⁵Ibid. p.17.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid. p.9.

defection were the bourgeois East Indian businessmen who supported Jagan on racial grounds, not on the dual grounds of race and economic interest which tied sugar workers to the PPP. There is evidence of similar thinking in the Colonial Office. Huijsman commented that the "only chance of defeating Jagan would be development of large Indian bourgeoisie which would require both money and time."⁸⁹ With an Independence Conference looming, however, time was a commodity in short supply.

On a shorter term basis, the Memorandum speculated that dissension within the higher echelons of the PPP might bring about the downfall of the Jagan government in the Legislative Assembly. Jagan's majority in the Legislative Assembly was precarious; a switch of two votes was all that would be required to deadlock the Assembly and three defections from the PPP would bring the Government down. The PPP was no stranger to internal troubles. Rumours of new sources of strife within the party had been rife since November 1961. The Memorandum identified the main candidates for defection as Balram Singh Rai, Minister for Home Affairs, whose differences with Jagan over prospective labour legislation and the 1962 budget were well publicised, and the lower profile Mohamed Saffee and Mohamid Shakoore. This was no long term solution, however. Even if the government could be brought down, there was no guarantee that Jagan would not be returned at a subsequent election. In any case, the February disturbances had brought about a closing of racial ranks, making defections unlikely.

The State Department, while urging the British to abandon their existing cooperative policy towards Jagan, was unable to offer any practical alternative. The Americans themselves remained unconvinced of the viability of the existing opposition parties. In the absence of any obvious solution, the Americans sought to stall for time, urging the British to delay independence. The proposal was not well received in Whitehall. Home's reply to Rusk had offered the Americans little solace in their concerns and they received little more encouragement from subsequent exchanges. The Colonial and Foreign Offices were united in

⁸⁹Telegram, Amembassy London to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Info.64, 8 March 1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84 Box 2, NA.

their opposition to delaying independence, although where spokesmen for the Colonial Office stressed the economic burdens entailed in delaying independence, Hankey, for the Foreign Office, was inclined to stress the political implications of such a delay, and was "particularly wondering how HMG would defend itself before UN..."⁹⁰

The developing disparity between the American and British positions can be seen again in Home and Rusk's first face to face discussion on British Guiana after their caustic exchange of letters, on 12 March. The meeting was mellower in tone than their earlier exchange. Rusk observed that the President had thought Home's letter to have been "a bit sharp in tone".⁹¹ Home in reply, making virtue out of necessity, interpreted the sharpness of their earlier exchange as frankness which was laughed off as the "normal practice as between Oxford men".⁹² But despite this gloss, the meeting revealed no lessening of American concerns, or of their desire to be rid of Jagan. Nor did Rusk demonstrate any increased readiness to offer alternative solutions. The Americans sought to determine the thrust of policy but to leave the details of implementation to the British. Rusk told Home:

"The United States were really terrified of another Cuba on their continent. All the South American states joined with the United States in hoping that we could find ways and means of stopping Dr. Jagan from taking his country into the communist orbit. How could the United States and others help to prevent this?"⁹³

British policy was still under review, so while he left Rusk with the impression that he "sympathizes with our basic plan that Britain must not leave behind another Castro situation in this hemisphere", Home could tell Rusk little about future policy.⁹⁴ He conceded that the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the disturbances would put back the schedule for independence, but reiterated that it could not be long delayed. Neither was Home enthusiastic about covert political action to remove Jagan, although the option was not entirely excluded. Rusk concluded from their conversation that, "for present I do not believe

⁹⁰Telegram, Amembassy London to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Info.59, 28 Feb.1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84 Box 2, NA.

⁹¹Record of a Conversation Between the Secretary of State and Mr. Rusk, 12 March 1962, PREM 11/3666, PRO.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Telegram, Rusk to DOS, 13 March 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.553.

covert action with or without British is indicated. Home does not want to go down trail until overt possibilities of delay are fully exploited. It is quite clear, however, that he does not exclude such action if delay and procrastination do not succeed."⁹⁵

On 9 March 1962, Hugh Fraser, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, arrived in Georgetown. His visit had several objectives. The Colonial Secretary suggested that Fraser's visit would provide a clearer picture of events in British Guiana.⁹⁶ The Governor had requested that Fraser be despatched to Georgetown to local political leaders, in the hope of breaking the political impasse which had persisted since the February disturbances, with neither government nor opposition inclined to seek a solution.⁹⁷ Continued political deadlock could have consequences beyond British Guiana. Without a political solution, there was little prospect for the withdrawal of British troops, a point on which Macmillan made his position clear: "His [Fraser's] first job is to get the troops out. This is becoming quite a serious commitment."⁹⁸

More specifically, Fraser was seeking the agreement of the three political leaders to a declaration opposing further violence or undemocratic acts, a move that was designed to "snooker D'Aguiar" who the British believed had developed an "effective and dangerous organisation which can be called into action on hours notice."⁹⁹ He was also seeking Jagan's agreement to the appointment of a Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry. Jagan had been arguing that any inquiry into the disturbances should be undertaken locally or under UN auspices.¹⁰⁰ A local inquiry would have lacked legitimacy and been easily dismissed as biased by the opposition. A UN sponsored inquiry would have fallen foul of the British Government's hostility to UN interference in the affairs of dependent territories.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Minute, CS to PM, PM[62]15, 2 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

⁹⁷Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.60, 23 Feb.1962, A10110/40E, FO371/161947, PRO.

⁹⁸Minute, PM to CS, M65/62, 3 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

⁹⁹Telegram, Amembassy London to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Info.64, 8 March 1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

Fraser succeeded in enducing Jagan to accept a Commonwealth Commission and in brokering an arrangement whereby he and the other political leaders agreed to meet regularly under the chairmanship of the Governor to discuss the forthcoming independence conference, in an attempt to resolve their differences over the shape of the future Constitution, or at least to define the areas of conflict. Fraser observed at the time that "Burnham and D'Aguiar would be only too glad to wriggle out of this proposed Big Four meeting".¹⁰¹ Few meetings of this local summit took place and the exercise did nothing to reconcile the positions of the political leaders.

That the Independence Conference scheduled for May 1962 would have to be postponed was implicit in Fraser's insistence that the Commission of Inquiry would have to submit its report before a Conference could be held.¹⁰² No announcement of the postponement was made, however, until the beginning of May as Fraser was anxious not to jeopardise Jagan's agreement to and cooperation with a Commonwealth Commission. When the postponement was finally announced it was justified on the grounds that the Commission had not yet begun its work, let alone made its report. Indeed, its composition had not been finalised. Neither had there been much progress in the local party talks. The earliest date that the Conference could be held was mid-July. The postponement provoked only formal protests in Georgetown. Although unwilling to admit it publicly, the political leaders, including Jagan, accepted this delay as inevitable.¹⁰³

On learning of Fraser's visit to Georgetown, Kennedy requested that he be permitted to stop off in Washington on his return to London. Fraser and Kennedy were old friends, though this had little bearing on Kennedy's invitation. Consistent with reports that the Americans were dissatisfied with the information on British Guiana they were receiving from London, Kennedy was clear that Fraser's visit to Washington would be to discuss policy towards British Guiana with administration officials and with Kennedy himself.¹⁰⁴ Fraser found

¹⁰¹Telegram, BG to CS, 11 March 1962, A10110/83, FO371/161950, PRO.

¹⁰²CO Minute, 13 March 1962, A10110/83[B], FO371/161950, PRO.

¹⁰³Telegram, FO to Washington, No.2361 Saving, 1 May 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹⁰⁴Telegram, Washington to FO, No.747, 7 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

himself in the position of meeting the Americans to discuss his visit to British Guiana and his proposals for future British policy, even before he had reported to his own Ministers. Indeed, Ambassador Bruce saw Fraser's visit as a timely opportunity to influence British policy. Fraser, he urged, "should be give fullest exposure to all facets [of] US views during his Washington visit. Fraser will have much influence in determining HMG future policies in British Guiana and his first hand report to British cabinet on mission to BG likely to carry much weight."¹⁰⁵

Fraser was left in no doubt as to the seriousness with which British Guiana was viewed in Washington.¹⁰⁶ The intensity of American concern was confirmed by an array of high level officials. Deputy Under Secretary of State Johnson presented American concerns in the context of the Cuban problem; the administration did not want to be confronted with another Castro. Like Jagan, Johnson noted, "Castro had originally been presented as a reformer. We do not intend to be taken in twice".¹⁰⁷ White House officials, Schlesinger and Dungan, re-emphasized the congressional and domestic political implications of the issue. Sending an economic mission to British Guiana would have domestic political consequences for both the image of the administration and its foreign aid programme. Right-wing critics of the administration would use it as evidence of Kennedy's 'softness' on communism, and the foreign aid programme was unpopular enough already on Capitol Hill, without giving its opponents the additional ammunition of providing economic aid to a suspected communist.¹⁰⁸ This interpretation of American concerns as rooted in domestic politics was broadly accepted by British officials.¹⁰⁹ Kennedy himself gave over three and a half hours of his time to discuss British Guiana with the Undersecretary. Fraser's long-standing friendship

¹⁰⁵Telegram, Amembassy London to Amcongen Georgetown, No.Info.68, 15 March 1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹⁰⁶Letter, Fraser to CS, 20 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹⁰⁷Memcon, 'BG', 17 March 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.563.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹Telegram, Washington to FO, No.852, 18 March 1962, A10110/87, FO371/161950, PRO; Letter, Hennings to Thomas, 28 Feb.1962, A10110/56, FO371/161948, PRO; de Zulueta to PM, 15 May 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

with Kennedy may have had some bearing on the informal nature of their conversations: an hour and a half of their conversation was conducted in the White House swimming pool.¹¹⁰

Fraser, however, had his own agenda for the Washington meetings, intending once again to convince the Americans of the rectitude of British thinking. His objectives in meeting with the Americans were threefold: to smooth over the Rusk-Home correspondence; to "get the Americans to accept our policy of a fairly swift withdrawal from BG as the best"; and,

"to endeavour to change the American attitude in two fashions: a] to damp down the importance of British Guiana and b] to abandon their present policy of boycotting the Jagan government and renegeing on the various pledges of aid which the Americans made to Jagan during his visit to Washington."¹¹¹

Fraser sought to disabuse the Americans of their assumptions about British Guiana. British officials were evidently not rushing, in the wake of the February disturbances and in the face of increasing American pressure, to abandon the precepts that had guided British policy in British Guiana since the late 1950s. Fraser redeployed the familiar British argument that the situation in British Guiana had been blown out of all proportion. The colony's problems were racial and economic before they were ideological, and blame for the present racial tension could be apportioned to Burnham and D'Aguiar. Communism was a danger only so far as it might capitalise upon chaos. There was, Fraser reminded the Americans, no present alternative to Jagan, as the future of British Guiana rested with the East Indians, and there was, as yet, no other East Indian politician who could command a degree of support comparable to Jagan's. Fraser was frank also about the British government's opposition to delaying independence and its desire to leave the colony as soon as possible.¹¹²

Fraser adjudged his visit to Washington to have been an educational success. Ignoring American hints about an anti-Jagan programme of covert political action,¹¹³ he left Washington confident that he had effected a change in the American position and had

¹¹⁰de Zulueta to PM, 23 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹¹¹Letter, Fraser to CS, 20 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹¹²Ibid.; Telegram, SOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.224, 20 March 1962, "BG Independence 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84 Box 2, NA.

¹¹³Memcon, 'BG', 17 March 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.563.

convinced Kennedy that the long-awaited economic mission should be dispatched, anticipating US aid for British Guiana by June or July 1962 and suggesting that the Governor come up with some projects for the restoration of Georgetown for which American money would be forthcoming.¹¹⁴

However, from Fraser's account of his meetings in Washington, it appears that this shift was predicated upon possible changes in British policy, as yet undiscussed let alone approved in London, which Fraser had intimated to the Americans. Fraser's visit to Georgetown had left him convinced of the need for further constitutional safeguards to protect minority interests, in the form of the introduction of an upper house or proportional representation. Fraser does not appear to have considered such safeguards as anything other than a short-term token gesture to appease the racial concerns of the British Guianese opposition parties by acknowledging their fear of Indian chauvinism. There was, of course, the additional bonus that any changes to the constitution would necessitate another election, and so might silence American criticism of British policy by satisfying their desire for fresh elections before independence. The introduction of constitutional safeguards would serve a dual political purpose for the British, addressing simultaneously the racial tensions in British Guiana and American concerns. Fraser betrayed no awareness of the potentially varying political implications of the different safeguard proposals, that the introduction of PR could have very different consequences for British Guianese politics than the introduction of a senate. This can be partly accounted for by the fact that Fraser's proposals had not yet been considered in London. Moreover, Fraser's complacency about the introduction of constitutional safeguards is more easily understood in the light of his view that time was on the side of the East Indian in British Guiana. The changes he was proposing, Fraser appears to have believed, could not alter that basic fact. They would merely ease racial tension by giving the colony's minorities a larger degree of representation, and thereby ease the road to independence.

¹¹⁴Letter, Fraser to CS, 20 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

Philip de Zulueta, one of Macmillan's Principal Private Secretaries who functioned as a personal foreign policy advisor to the Prime Minister, made a similar assessment of Fraser's proposals:

"The main point of his recommendations... is that Dr. Jagan and the Indians are the people who will run British Guiana in the future and that they are the ones on whom the West should concentrate. We ought probably to have further elections before independence, thereby making a gesture to the Americans but independence ought to be achieved by mid '63 in any event."¹¹⁵

In light of the fact that PR would be the device ultimately used to remove Jagan from office, Fraser's talk of PR in March 1962 is significant in so far as it was, the available records suggest, the first occasion that it surfaced in Anglo-American conversations. However, on this occasion at least, Fraser did not present PR as Jagan's nemesis. He conceived of PR as a potential political expedient that would placate the Guianese opposition and the Americans without challenging the premises of British policy towards the colony. Fraser's suggestion that PR be introduced was not taken up by his Secretary of State, who accepted only the suggestion that fresh elections be held.¹¹⁶

Fraser had indeed succeeded in persuading Kennedy that the long-promised economic mission should finally be sent to British Guiana. It arrived in Georgetown on 18 April 1962, headed by newspaperman and stalwart Democrat, Harry Hoffman. However, the mission's dispatch did not reflect renewed American acquiescence in the British policy of cooperation with Jagan, and did not guarantee that American aid would be forthcoming. The Kennedy administration proved impervious to British warnings about the potential consequences of failing to follow up the mission with American aid.¹¹⁷ While the Hoffman Mission was in Georgetown, Fraser instructed Ormsby-Gore to reinforce this view in Washington:

"Our biggest concern continues to be the United States attitude to aid to British Guiana. The Governor's view which we share is that a visit by a United States economic mission may well do more harm than good to the Western cause if it is not

¹¹⁵de Zulueta to PM, 23 March 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹¹⁶CPC Minutes, 5 April 1962, CPC[62] 7th Meeting, Cabinet Committees: General Series from 1945, [CAB134]1561, PRO.

¹¹⁷Telegram, Amembassy London to Amcongen Georgetown, No.Info.74, 2 April 1962, "500-Economic Mission [Hoffman Report] 1961-62" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

followed up by an early grant of substantial aid. If it is the American intention to give aid to British Guiana, such aid should be given soon and should not await independence if it is to do any good. We have already made this point to the American Embassy but it bears reiteration."¹¹⁸

The Americans, nevertheless, were at pains to stress that they were under no obligation to underwrite British Guiana's future economic development. The mission's remit was to examine the existing development plan, make suggestions for revision or further study, and summarise its findings in a report to be made available to the government of British Guiana. The terms of reference for the mission noted that the final report "shall be technical in nature and contain no endorsement of the planners per se or commitments regarding its funding."¹¹⁹

Neither would Washington countenance Governor Grey's suggestion that the mission's terms of reference be expanded to allow for a study of the pressing financial problems of the British Guianese government.¹²⁰ Melby had suggested that an IMF expert might be recruited for the team for this purpose. But Grey's request was rejected by the administration on the grounds that such a study would be outside the terms of reference and the competence of the existing team. There was no effort in Washington to surmount these difficulties. The Jagan government's financial problems had already, in February 1962, proven to be a highly contentious issue in which the Americans were not keen to embroil themselves. Nor were they willing to materially alleviate the government's immediate financial difficulties. George Ball, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs, observed, "Department feels that implementation Grey's request may involve team in difficult and heated political quarrels raised by BG budget and possibly request by government for short-term budgetary aid from US."¹²¹

¹¹⁸Telegram, FO to Washington, No.2361 Saving, 1 May 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹¹⁹Telegram, SOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.AIDTO 84, 14 April 1962, "500-Economic Mission [Hoffman Report] 1961-62" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

¹²⁰Letter, Grey to Melby, 30 April 1962, "500-Economic Mission [Hoffman Report] 1961-62" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

¹²¹Telegram, SOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.PRITY AIDTO 119, 2 May 1962, "500-Economic Mission [Hoffman Report] 1961-62" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

Contrary to Fraser's expectations, the Americans were also unwilling to provide short term aid for the reconstruction of those areas of Georgetown burnt out on Black Friday.¹²² Sidney Dell, a UN Technical Adviser to the British Guiana government, suggested in March 1962 that the reconstruction of Georgetown provided a opportunity for the Americans and British to simultaneously regain political influence with the Jagan government and orient the course of economic development in British Guiana along capitalist lines.¹²³ By sponsoring a reconstruction effort the UN could also restore its credit in Georgetown: Kaldor had after all been provided as an advisor to the Jagan government by the UN. Dell envisaged a trilateral US-UK-UN programme whereby insurance claims arising from the February disturbances and subrogated to the British Guiana government and supplementary grants or loans of \$4-5 million provided under the Alliance for Progress would be available for the reconstruction of Georgetown, if the government agreed to a reconstruction plan similar to those used in Europe under the Marshall Plan. Such a scheme "would assure a much more prominent role for private enterprise in the future than that originally envisioned by Premier Jagan for the development of his socialist economic state."¹²⁴ Dell's plan faced a number of practical difficulties however. The destruction in Georgetown was not comparable to that visited on Europe's cities during World War Two. The Marshall Plan analogy was inappropriate.¹²⁵ Politically, moreover, it might be difficult to persuade Jagan to accept the Dell Plan when his government's priority was long-term development, particularly if US involvement with the plan would reduce the likelihood of an American contribution to the existing development programme. Grey predicted considerable economic difficulties arising, for example, from the technicalities of insurance claims or in persuading businessmen to rebuild in the existing political climate. These problems were not addressed as Dell's plan never passed beyond an embryonic, speculative stage. His suggestion was rejected by an American administration resistant to providing any aid to British Guiana that might incidentally increase the popularity of Jagan's government.

¹²²Telegram, London to SOS, No.3583, 29 March 1962, 741D.00/3-2962, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹²³Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 'Proposed British-US-UN Project for BG', 6 March 1962, "500-UN Technical Assistance to BG" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Letter, Grey to Melby, 20 March 1962, "500-UN Technical Assistance to BG" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA.

If the British had any remaining illusions or about the possibility of American aid for a Jagan government, or indeed about the overall direction of American policy towards British Guiana, Dean Rusk made another effort to dispel them on 29 April 1962. In a conversation with Lord Home, Rusk insisted that his government had no intention of fulfilling Jagan's desire for large scale economic aid, even though the Hoffman Mission was at present in Georgetown. The United States, Rusk said, "did not believe in subsidizing Dr. Jagan, but in getting rid of him. They could not put up with another Castro in the Western Hemisphere."¹²⁶ The conversation revealed the impasse in Anglo-American discussions on British Guiana which had prevailed, despite Hugh Fraser's optimistic claims, since the February disturbances. The American preference for a tough anti-Jagan policy, forcefully expressed in Rusk's letter of 20 February, had made little impact in London. For his part in this April encounter Home restated the British position that, although there was some present delay arising from a deadlock in the constitutional talks between the political parties, "we could not go back on our promise of independence."¹²⁷

If the Kennedy administration was resolved against providing economic aid to a Jagan government, why was the economic mission sent to British Guiana at all? Aside from the immediate cosmetic benefit of improving the American image in British Guiana and smoothing American relations with the Jagan government, both of which had been damaged by the accusations of American complicity in opposition activities in February, the administration had a number of other motives for sending the economic mission.

While the administration had no intention of providing aid while Jagan was in office, the mission could begin the groundwork to enable the United States to step in with an aid programme in the event of Jagan's removal. Indeed, in line with the Hoffman Mission's recommendations, the administration agreed to proceed with a number of architectural and feasibility surveys. The surveys did not represent a commitment to provide aid to the Jagan

¹²⁶Record of Conversation Between the FS and Mr. Rusk, 29 April 1962, A10110/124/G, FO371/161952, PRO.
¹²⁷Ibid.

government. Rather, "the completion of such surveys will enable the US to proceed rapidly with an economic assistance program *if such a decision were to be made*."¹²⁸ As Kennedy himself observed to Ormsby-Gore, moving ahead with the studies served a dual purpose, "to let people of BG know we are serious about helping them and to be that much further along with preliminary work by the time a new government comes to power in BG."¹²⁹

AID Administrator, Fowler Hamilton, stated that there was another motive in sending economic and survey teams to British Guiana, subsequently recalling that, "the only thing that went down there when I was there were study groups and one purpose of the study groups was to put some CIA people down there. I had gotten in touch with the CIA about this. We sent some technical assistance programs people and one of them was from CIA people."¹³⁰ Although the international labor movement was the major instrument of CIA activity in British Guiana there is no reason to doubt that AID may have provided cover for CIA operatives in British Guiana, as it did elsewhere.¹³¹

Aside from the brief exchange between Home and Rusk on 29 April there is no record of British Guiana having been discussed formally with the Americans by Macmillan or Home when they visited Washington in late April 1962, although prior to the visit the Americans had signalled their continued interest in the colony. British Guiana was placed on the agenda drawn up in preparation for the talks at the request of the State Department, who also suggested that the matter be raised in status during the forthcoming talks from a "minor irritant" in Anglo-American relations to a "topical question".¹³² The subject was discussed by lower level officials. Speaking for the State Department, William R. Tyler, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, rehearsed the usual American concerns, adding the new worry that an independent British Guiana under a Jagan government could prove

¹²⁸Memorandum, 'BG', 5 Sept.1962, "500-AID [General] 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA. Emphasis added.

¹²⁹Draft Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, undated, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.579.

¹³⁰Oral history interview with Fowler Hamilton by Edwin R. Bayley, 18 Aug.1964, JFKL.

¹³¹AID provided cover for CIA support programmes and operatives in Vietnam, Laos and Latin America. See for example, Victor Marchetti & John D. Marks, *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, [London, 1974] pp.16n, 59, 123-124.

¹³²Letter, de Zulueta to Samuel, 12 April 1962, PREM11/3783, PRO; Letter, Hood to Shuckburgh, 16 April 1962, PREM11/3783, PRO.

troublesome for the United States at the UN. Tyler also noted the inadequacy of the intelligence-gathering arrangements in British Guiana. The terms agreed to in the Anglo-American action programme of September 1961, to which he asserted the Americans had "scrupulously" adhered, were too restrictive.¹³³ Given that Jagan and others had assumed CIA connivance in the February disturbances, Tyler was inaccurate in his claim that existing American intelligence operations in British Guiana had been unobtrusive. He nevertheless requested an expansion of the intelligence programme in the colony.¹³⁴

Whether or not British Guiana was discussed at a Presidential-Prime Ministerial level in April 1962, the Washington visit clearly made some impression on Macmillan. On his return, he was moved to request a shift in British policy in British Guiana towards a more self-conscious readiness to meet American concerns; concerns which he accepted were rooted in American domestic politics. He wrote to Sir Norman Brook on 3 May 1962:

"It is clear from our talks in Washington that the Americans attach great importance to achieving what they would regard as a satisfactory solution in British Guiana. They are probably moved by internal political considerations as much as by genuine fear of communism. It is surely to our interests to be as cooperative and forthcoming as we can. In the future the Americans will have to carry the burden for British Guiana and so it is only fair that they should have a share in shaping its future."¹³⁵

In May 1962, at Macmillan's request, Sir Norman Brook assembled a committee to undertake an extensive review of British policy in British Guiana.¹³⁶ This review took place outside of the Colonial Office which had hitherto had virtually exclusive jurisdiction over the direction of British policy in the colony. This was reflected in Sir Norman Brook's recommendations. In line with the previous Colonial Office position Brook recognised that any delay of independence for British Guiana would "for UN reasons" be a short one. Similarly, he advocated that the policy of working with Jagan be continued. However, where the Colonial Office had previously simply accepted the inevitability of a Jagan government and then

¹³³Record of a Meeting at the White House, 28 April 1962, PM[W][62] 3rd Meeting, Committees and International Conferences Since 1945, [CAB133]246, PRO.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Minute, PM to Brook, M.112/62, 3 May 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

¹³⁶Ibid.

adopted a posture "dangerously close to sitting back and hoping for the best", now, while continuing to work with Jagan, there was to be a simultaneous attempt to achieve a multiracial coalition government. Brook suggested that "we should make a serious effort to secure by constitutional means, the election of a government before independence responsive to the wishes of all the communities in British Guiana - if possible a Jagan-Burnham coalition."¹³⁷ The irony in this proposal was strong. British officials were now recommending the reunification of the independence movement they had sought to break up in the 1950s. Governor Grey, who also advocated a PPP-PNC coalition, observed, "when I first came here I was advised that the worst possible fate for British Guiana and South America generally was for the wicked Jagan and Burnham to come together, but now it seemed to me that we were in such financial, economic, racial and social difficulties that only a political solution would avail."¹³⁸ Grey was aware, however, of the difficulty of bringing about such a solution. He floated the idea with Burnham and Jagan in late April 1962. While Jagan was receptive to the coalition idea, Burnham was not, making his participation dependent on his leading the coalition, a condition he knew Jagan would not accept.¹³⁹

Sir Norman Brook also suggested that a more formal arrangement be made for consultation with the Americans, in the form of an Anglo-US Standing Committee. This might counter American complaints that they were not being kept adequately informed of developments in British Guiana, and might also draw them into consideration of other colonial problems. In addition, such an arrangement would provide the British government with an opportunity to extract economic aid from the American government for newly independent territories.¹⁴⁰

Brook's suggestions were discussed by the Colonial Policy Committee on 18 May, and Macmillan wrote to Kennedy on 30 May to suggest closer coordination between the two

¹³⁷Edmonds Minute, 17 May 1962, A10110/150/G, FO371/161953, PRO.

¹³⁸Letter, Grey to Thomas, 30 April 1962, A10110/151/G, FO371/161953, PRO.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

countries on colonial issues.¹⁴¹ British Guiana, and also British Honduras, lying within the American sphere of influence, deserved special attention. Macmillan proposed that further informal and secret meetings on these subjects be held in London.¹⁴² Furthermore, the Prime Minister formally indicated that the British government intended to press for fresh elections in British Guiana before independence, a long-standing American request. This, Macmillan wrote, "will give us a little more time and also, perhaps, a further opportunity to establish whether, under a democratic system, there is any alternative to Dr. Jagan's government".¹⁴³ What he did not mention, however, was that further elections would give the British and American authorities an opportunity to subvert that democratic system, manipulate the election and remove Jagan from office before independence. It became evident over the following months that this was Washington's interpretation. It was not, however, necessarily the British intention. Macmillan's declaration in favour of fresh elections was carefully hedged by the proviso that there should be local consent, and Jagan was unlikely to agree. Moreover, a free and fair fresh election, which would almost certainly return Jagan to office, could be used by Britain as a final demonstration of the inevitability of a Jagan government, and to persuade the Kennedy administration to move ahead with economic aid. Indeed, Macmillan concluded his letter of 30 May 1962:

"If, however, it becomes clear, by a further expression of electoral opinion, that Dr. Jagan's party is the choice of the people, I hope we shall be able to persuade you that the best line for both our Governments to follow is to do our best to keep that Government on the side of the West by cooperating fully with it and giving it the economic support which it requires."¹⁴⁴

The American response was not prompt. It was only on 2 July that the administration, unwilling to tarnish its anti-imperialist image by becoming formally complicit in British colonial policy, rejected any further "formalization" of Anglo-American cooperation on broad colonial issues.¹⁴⁵ On the more specific question of discussions on British Guiana,

¹⁴¹Minute, Brook to PM, 28 May 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO; Telegram, FO to Washington, No.3908, 25 May 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO; Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.6512, 7 June 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.1961-1963, pp.569-571.

¹⁴²Ibid. pp.570-571.

¹⁴³Ibid. p.571.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.10, 2 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.573-574.

Kennedy made no reply until 20 July.¹⁴⁶ In the interim, in the absence of a working arrangement and an agreed policy with the Kennedy administration, and with Washington taking heart from the British agreement in principle to fresh elections, British and American policies continued to diverge.

While the British were encouraging a PPP-PNC coalition, the behaviour of the Kennedy administration was rendering this less likely. As Macmillan was instituting a policy review in London, a parallel review was underway in Washington. Between April and June 1962, the Kennedy administration reassessed both the threat posed by Jagan and the assumption that underpinned British policy that there was no viable alternative to Jagan, receiving Burnham in Washington, revising their estimate of him as a possible alternative, and emboldening him to stand against Jagan rather than seek to cooperate with him. As Macmillan was advocating Anglo-American discussions to coordinate a joint policy, State Department, White House and CIA officials were drawing up their own political action plan to rid themselves of Jagan.¹⁴⁷

In April 1962, CIA Director John McCone submitted a new SNIE, which reevaluated the prospects for an independent British Guiana under Jagan's leadership.¹⁴⁸ Less equivocal than that produced in 1961, the Estimate provided clearer intelligence support for the administration's desire to be rid of Jagan. It concluded that, "Jagan is a Communist, though the degree of Moscow's control is not yet clear. A Jagan government in the post-independence period would probably follow a policy of non-alignment in international affairs but would probably lean in the Soviet direction."¹⁴⁹ However, the SNIE was not optimistic about the prospects of securing Jagan's removal before independence, or finding viable alternative leadership. Independence was fast approaching. The British were not disposed to delay it for more than the few months necessary for the Commission of Inquiry to conclude its investigations, and it would probably come by the end of 1962. Any free election that was

¹⁴⁶Draft Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, undated, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.579.

¹⁴⁷Memorandum, Brubeck to Bundy, 8 Aug.1962, 741D.00/8-862, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁴⁸SNIE 87.2-62, 11 April 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.564-569.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.* p.565.

held in the interim would probably return Jagan to office. Moreover, if the Estimate was pessimistic about Jagan's future ideological orientation, the alternatives gave Washington little ground for optimism. For example, in the unlikely event that Burnham came to power, his government was likely to be "leftist and neutralist, though somewhat less radical and pro-bloc than the PPP".¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, with Jagan pin-pointed as a communist, in the absence of a convincing challenge to Jagan's leadership within the PPP, and with the prospect of a moderate interracial coalition particularly remote in the wake of the racial violence of February 1962, Burnham, who could command 41% of the vote, was the only plausible alternative to Jagan and was increasingly recognised in Washington as the lesser of two evils.

Although the State Department had successfully derailed Burnham's previous plans to visit Washington, he had already met with the State Department's Bill Burdett, who had been sent to Georgetown in the wake of Fraser's visit to Washington to provide the administration with an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. Burnham had indicated his continued desire to put his case in Washington and asked for American cooperation on four specific matters. He requested that any US aid that was given to British Guiana be provided for the people, and that the United States provide scholarships for British Guianese students. He also suggested that Washington might use its influence in London to persuade the British to introduce proportional representation for British Guiana. He insisted that Jagan would not be elected under this system, but that the only alternative to PR was civil war, because the PNC would have to "defend itself". For this purpose Burnham requested that the Americans provide money and arms to his party, through sympathizers in neighbouring Surinam. Burdett's response to Burnham's first two requests was positive. American aid, he maintained, was intended to help the country as a whole and not any particular party, and he agreed to look into scholarship possibilities. On the question of PR he was more guarded. PR was a new idea which would have to be fully considered before any influence could be brought to bear on the British. As far as money or arms were concerned, Burdett held to the official position that the United States did not intervene in the internal affairs of another state.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.300, 28 March 1962, 741D.00/3-2862, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Memcon, 27 March 1962, 741D.00/3-2762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

A low profile encounter in Georgetown was, however, hardly comparable to the discussions in Washington Burnham sought, and the State Department remained unenthusiastic about Burnham's visiting Washington lest it be 'misinterpreted'.¹⁵² When he finally arrived in Washington in May 1962 he was not granted the meeting with the President that he had hoped for. Melby, for one had objected to such a meeting as he did "not believe Burnham should be given political advantage which would accrue from call on President or Secretary."¹⁵³

Burnham's stated purpose in visiting the US was to "correct false image in US of BG which Jagan has given and enlist support among trade union circles."¹⁵⁴ He unquestionably made a favourable impression on those he met, emerging from the official record as the very antithesis of Jagan.¹⁵⁵ Where Jagan had been regarded as passionate and vague, Burnham impressed the Americans as being "unemotional and precise."¹⁵⁶ In his discussions Burnham succeeded where Jagan had failed. Telling the Americans what they wanted to hear, he branded Jagan and other senior members of the PPP "controlled communists", under instruction from the international communist movement.¹⁵⁷ To enhance the plausibility of his accusations, Burnham remarked that he had himself had first hand experience of taking orders from the British Communist Party as a member of the PPP before 1955. In addition Burnham repeated the by now familiar claims that the PPP had close connections with the Castro regime, and that arms were being smuggled into British Guiana from Cuba.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵²Telegram, SOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.278, 26 April 1962, "Political Affairs Opposition Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁵³Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, No.331, 27 April 1962, "Political Affairs Opposition Party" Folder, CGR 1957-63, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Edmonds Minute, 17 May 1962, A10110/150/G, FO371/161953, PRO.

¹⁵⁶Telegram, SOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.287, 7 May 1962, "Political Affairs Opposition Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁵⁷Ibid; See also Memcon, 'Situation in BG', 3 May 1962, 741D.00/5-362, CDF1960-1963, RG59 Box 1668, NA.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

In contrast, Burnham presented himself as a nationalist and a democratic socialist.¹⁵⁹ As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. recalled: "He seemed a very plausible fellow. He talked a straight social democratic line...He made a good impression...He seemed straightforward, well spoken, articulate, and talked the right thing to please. He talked democratic socialism."¹⁶⁰

In his task of 'correcting' the image of British Guiana, Burnham was assisted by the apparent inclination of American officials to hear what they wished. Jagan's past was fair game for Washington officials on the lookout for incriminating evidence of communist connections. But the same officials were prepared to overlook Burnham's own political past in the PPP, the frequent charges of racialism made against him, and British reservations about his personal qualities. They also extended Burnham a courtesy that had not been given to Jagan; the readiness to accept his statements at face value. Burnham took a number of positions that were not substantially different to those expressed by Jagan during his visit to Washington in October 1961. Like Jagan, for example, he pledged his party to a neutralist foreign policy.¹⁶¹ But where Jagan's position had been regarded in some quarters as disingenuous, Burnham's was accepted as sincere. This selective myopia has been succinctly explained by Ralph Dungan who served as a Special Assistant to the President from 1961-1964: "if it's a two horse race you've got to bet on one or another and that's exactly what happened."¹⁶²

Burnham outlined the PNC's intention to press for the introduction of PR at the forthcoming Independence Conference. The Americans were, however, not yet convinced that this was an effective method for removing Jagan. An INR study on the possible effects of the introduction of PR was not completed until the end of September 1962.¹⁶³ Aware of Burnham's meeting with Burdett in March, it was anticipated in the State Department that Burnham would ask Washington to try to persuade the British government to introduce PR.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Interview with Arthur Schlesinger Jr., 15 April 1994, New York.

¹⁶¹Telegram, SOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.287, 7 May 1962, "Political Affairs Opposition Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁶²Telephone interview with Ralph Dungan, 15 April 1994.

¹⁶³Research Memorandum, REU-64, 'An Examination of the Effects of the Possible Use of Proportional Representation in BG', "350-Political Affairs General 1962" Folder, 27 September 1962, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

The Department advocated the preparation of a detailed study to investigate the implications of introducing PR, but, aware of the demographic reality of an East Indian birth rate which far outstripped that of any other racial group, also observed that, "the effects of proportional representation have varied substantially in the various countries where it has been tried...It is possible that over the long term proportional representation might not be favorable to the PNC's aims."¹⁶⁴

In addition to his advocacy of PR, Burnham offered the Americans an alternative short-term scenario for Jagan's removal, baldly exaggerating the weakness of the Jagan government and his own strengths. He predicted that Jagan's government, rapidly losing public confidence, would fall within a month, with the defection of the Minister of Home Affairs, Rai, and at least two of his supporters in the legislative assembly. Burnham was confident that he could then negotiate an electoral arrangement with Rai, and envisaged a coalition government encompassing the PNC, the UF and Rai's adherents.¹⁶⁵ Burnham was presenting an imminent opportunity to detach part of the East Indian vote from the PPP, widely regarded as crucial in any attempt to build a long-term alternative to Jagan.

Factionalism and defection litter the history of the PPP and Rai had been a possible candidate for defection for some time.¹⁶⁶ His grievances had culminated at the PPP's Annual Congress at Easter 1962 when, defeated in a bid for the party Chairmanship, he accused the PPP leadership of vote rigging and corruption. There was some element of personal pique in Rai's position, in so far as he felt excluded from the inner circle of the PPP. However, in the tradition of PPP defectors Rai cast his dissension in purely ideological terms, viewing the Chairmanship election as "really an ideological struggle between him and his supporters and

¹⁶⁴'Suggested Answers to Questions', Attachment to Memorandum, Tyler to Johnson, 4 May 1962, 741D.00/5-462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁶⁵Memcon, 'Meeting with Forbes Burnham', 5 May 1962, 741D.00/5-562, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Telegram, NY to SOS, No.3631, 2 May 1962, 741D.00/5-262, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Telegram, DOS to Amembassy London, unnumbered, 7 May 1962, 741D.00/5-762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁶⁶Letter, Melby to Foster, 11 Jan.1962, "350.1-People's Progressive Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

the clique of communists who surround and influence Cheddi Jagan."¹⁶⁷ Rai was ready to provide evidence of communist leanings in the PPP. In conversation with Melby, Rai claimed that in a speech to a closed session of the PPP Congress, Jagan had declared that "the PPP must not be divided on the issue of communism. Every man must have a gun at his side."¹⁶⁸ Rai pointed to further evidence of encroaching communist influence in Jagan's attitude towards the Council of Ministers, which he routinely by-passed and wanted to turn into "a group of yes-men who must submit all decisions to him and carry out his orders on even minor matters."¹⁶⁹ Moreover, Jagan intended to scrap the Bill of Rights after independence, and members of the Progressive Youth Organisation [PYO] were being sent to Cuba for ideological indoctrination and military training.

Governor Grey played down Rai's allegations, maintaining that, "I still doubt Jagan's willingness to serve international communism".¹⁷⁰ Rai had not presented any new information about Jagan's international contacts, and had admitted in conversation with Grey that the PPP was not receiving any finance from Moscow and Havana other than through the uncontroversial practice of the paying of fares to conferences. Moreover, Grey for one did not share Burnham's optimism that sufficient members of the PPP would cross the floor with Rai to bring down the government. Burnham had exaggerated Rai's strength, revealing what Rai himself described as a "dangerously misplaced confidence". Neither Grey nor Rai himself was optimistic that the PPP could be defeated at the polls, even if the government could be brought down. In any case, Burnham had misrepresented the relationship between himself and Rai. No arrangement had been made before Burnham went to Washington, and Rai did not trust Burnham. He knew, Grey noted, "that Burnham would use him temporarily to bring Jagan down but would later cast him aside or swallow him up."¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS No.A-26, 24 May 1962, "350.1-People's Progressive Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Letter, Grey to Thomas, 30 April 1962, A10110/151G, FO371/161953, PRO.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

Burnham's confident talk in Washington about the PPP government's imminent demise was wishful thinking. Rai did not resign, believing he would take no followers with him unless he was removed from office by Jagan, and Jagan, with an eye on his slim majority refused to make an example of Rai, at least until the loyalty of other potential defectors had been secured or bought.¹⁷² The controversy fizzled until Rai was finally dismissed. In the end his dismissal proved inconsequential. By September of 1962, Burnham had revised his earlier opinion, now regarding Rai as an insubstantial figure.

The inaccuracy of his political forecasts notwithstanding, Burnham sufficiently impressed American officials to induce them to accept his suggestion that scholarships could be provided at American universities for Guianese students selected by the PNC. This would, Burnham suggested, counteract PPP scholarships to Eastern bloc countries and Cuba.¹⁷³ It would also enhance his own prestige. Moreover, by awarding these scholarships not through the normal AID channel, but instead through USIS, the Jagan government could be bypassed. The scheme fitted well with the American preference for aiding British Guiana without aiding the Jagan government. It was also, in Grey's words, "a resounding vote of no confidence in Jagan by the greatest potential givers of international aid".¹⁷⁴ Jagan was predictably incensed.

A similar rationale lay behind Burnham's advocacy of American support for a trade union housing scheme. The project envisaged the construction of 2,500 housing units for postal and other workers in the communications industry union FUGE, headed by PNC partisan Andrew Jackson. It would cost \$13 million, and would be funded through the industry ITS, Postal, Telephone and Telegraph Workers International [PTTI]. Burnham suggested that the Americans might channel funding for the project through the PTTI. Its "benefits would rub

¹⁷²Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.327, 26 April 1962, 741D.00/4-2662, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁷³Memcon, 'Situation in BG', 3 May 1962, 741D.00/5-362, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁷⁴Letter, Grey to Piper, 12 Sept.1962, A10110/224, FO371/161957, PRO.

off on the PNC", he claimed.¹⁷⁵ Again the Americans could help the people of British Guiana while preventing the PPP government from taking any credit for the project.

Burnham's first Washington foray was illustrative of the developing relationship between British Guiana's opposition groups and the international trade union movement. His visit was sponsored by the League of Industrial Democracy, and endorsed by AFL-CIO President George Meany. Burnham also included on his list of contacts in the United States PTTI's Walter Legge and William Doherty Jnr., in what Melby warned was a "PNC attempt develop inside track in Washington through PTTI."¹⁷⁶ Melby's suspicions were well founded. During his visit Burnham indicated that in subsequent communications with Washington he would prefer to use trade unionists to convey his messages rather than official diplomatic channels.¹⁷⁷ Melby, he argued, was "under certain inhibitions"¹⁷⁸. Walter Legge, PTTI representative, was Burnham's preferred contact with the US government. Legge spoke to the State Department on his behalf in June 1962, asking the State Department if it could persuade D'Aguiar not to run UF candidates against PNC candidates in Georgetown constituencies in the election Burnham believed was imminent.¹⁷⁹

Preparing for a return visit to Washington in September 1962, Burnham was confident enough in his Washington contacts to consider bypassing the State Department altogether. A visit to the Department was not on his itinerary, he told Governor Grey, and there was little point in having discussions with anyone less consequential to policy than an Assistant Secretary of State. He would use unofficial contacts in the White House [he cited Schlesinger and Richard Goodwin] and AFL-CIO officials, including President George Meany, to open doors for him.¹⁸⁰ State Department officials would themselves have preferred to forego the

¹⁷⁵Memcon, 'Meeting with Forbes Burnham', 5 May 1962, 741D.00/5-562, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁷⁶Telegram, Amcongeng Georgetown to SOS, No.331, 27 April 1962, "Political Affairs Opposition Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁷⁷Memcon, 'Meeting with Forbes Burnham', 5 May 1962, 741D.00/5-562, CDF1960-1963, RG59 Box 1668, NA.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Memcon, 'BG Political Situation', 4 June 1962, 741D.00/6-462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁸⁰Letter, Grey to Piper, 11 Sept.1962, A10110/223, FO371/161957, PRO.

potential political embarrassment of another Burnham visit.¹⁸¹ Melby, however, was not optimistic that Burnham could be dissuaded: "Burnham lately has been fairly smug about his prestige in Washington, and any attempt [to dissuade him] would only reinforce his opinion his importance and his determination make trip."¹⁸² Despite his disparaging view of the State Department, Burnham did meet with Undersecretary of State, Alexis Johnson and with Rockwood Foster, the Acting Officer in Charge of West Indies Affairs.¹⁸³

The purpose of this second visit to Washington, Burnham informed Grey, was to consult experts on proportional representation at the UN and in the Library of Congress, and to gauge the likely American response should he enter into an electoral arrangement with Jagan.¹⁸⁴ Jagan, Burnham insisted, was in such a desperate position that he would seek an electoral arrangement with the PNC as the only means of staying in office. For Burnham, such an arrangement would be temporarily expedient. Melby reported that, "Burnham implied he would enter into deals as this would make Jagan his captive and he could later destroy him. Burnham wanted assure Washington if deal concluded it would mean no retreat on his part from his anti-communism."¹⁸⁵

Grey was sceptical that this was the main purpose of Burnham's visit. Although there are no records of Burnham's other meetings in Washington, in conversation with State Department officials at least, he made no reference to a possible cooperative arrangement with Jagan. As far as he discussed coalitions at all, he continued to talk in terms of a coalition with the UF and Rai.¹⁸⁶ His conversation centered on the merits of proportional representation, the introduction of which he intended to insist upon at the forthcoming Independence Conference. In both of his State Department meetings he also requested that Washington

¹⁸¹Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.83, 4 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-362, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Memcon, 'BG', 7 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁸²Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.67, 4 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁸³Memcon, 'Interview with Mr. Burnham- BG', 14 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-1462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Memcon, 'Situation in BG', 18 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-1862, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁸⁴Letter, Grey to Piper, 11 Sept.1962, A10110/223, FO371/161957, PRO.

¹⁸⁵Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.65, 3 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-362, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹⁸⁶Memcon, 'Situation in BG', 18 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-1862, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Memcon, 'Interview with Mr. Burnham- BG', 14 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-1462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

provide financial assistance for the PNC, or as Burnham put it "money to penetrate the wall of racial prejudice". The PNC, Burnham claimed was moving towards multi-racialism, and had made contact with Hindu and Muslim religious organisations, but barely had the funds to support its two full time organisers. The PPP in contrast had thirty-five.¹⁸⁷

With Jagan's successor identified, the Kennedy administration by early July 1962, was finalising a new programme for British Guiana, central to which was a plan for covert political action to effect Jagan's removal through electoral manipulation. The proposed programme was submitted for the President's approval on 12 July.¹⁸⁸ Not everyone in Washington was satisfied with the proposals. Perhaps reflecting a formulaic distrust of CIA proposals amongst Kennedy's White House advisors following the Bay of Pigs as much as specific operational doubts about the programme, National Security Advisor, McGeorge Bundy, reported himself unconvinced that the "CIA knows how to manipulate an election in British Guiana without a backfire".¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Schlesinger recorded that the CIA plan "makes me nervous".¹⁹⁰ Writing on 19 July, Schlesinger stressed the importance of establishing if the CIA "can carry out a really *covert* operation- i.e., an operation which, whatever suspicions Jagan might have, will leave no visible traces which he can cite before the world, whether he wins or loses, as evidence of US intervention?"¹⁹¹ These reservations turned upon operational details and deniability, not on principle. Neither Bundy nor Schlesinger questioned the premise of the new programme - the desirability of getting rid of Jagan.

More difficult, however, was the question of how to secure the cooperation or even acquiescence of the British government. Hitherto the British had proved reluctant to abandon the policy of cooperation or endorse even a parallel covert political action programme. Yet, British support for the new programme, Bundy pointed out, "would be the most powerful

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Memorandum, Rusk to the President, 12 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.575-576.

¹⁸⁹Memorandum, Bundy to the President, 13 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.577.

¹⁹⁰Memorandum, Schlesinger to Dungan, 19 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.578.

¹⁹¹Ibid. Emphasis in original.

single force for its success".¹⁹² To minimise the anticipated British resistance, Rusk proposed a shift in the location for future Anglo-American discussions from London to Washington, so enabling the administration "to deal through a sympathetic British Ambassador with the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister rather than sending messages to our Embassy in London which in practice usually discusses British Guiana with the not so sympathetic Colonial Office."¹⁹³

Bundy suggested, moreover, that Kennedy himself, rather than Rusk, should inform the British of the switch to an active anti-Jagan policy, as an indication of the seriousness of American concerns and their determination to be rid of Jagan. After all, Bundy noted, "the last time he [Rusk] told Home 'we could not put up with Jagan' the British simply dug in their heels."¹⁹⁴

Indeed, it was Kennedy who outlined the new American proposals to Ormsby-Gore, during a weekend at the Kennedy family home in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts 21-22 July 1962.¹⁹⁵ Kennedy responded positively, if belatedly, to Macmillan's 30 May offer of renewed discussions on British Guiana, but in keeping with Rusk's suggestion requested that the talks take place in Washington rather than in London. Moreover, he made it clear that the cooperative approach which had constituted the official Anglo-American policy since September 1962 could no longer be the basis of any agreed policy. Given that Jagan was already obviously [and, Kennedy neglected to mention, rightly] "distrustful of US motives", there was "little chance of...obtaining his confidence" and it was, therefore, "unrealistic to hope now that BG could be kept on side of West by policy of cooperation".¹⁹⁶

However, the British remained evasive on the question of a political action campaign, at least through the summer of 1962, and continued, despite the Presidential appeal, to dig their heels

¹⁹²Memorandum, Bundy to the President, 13 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.577.

¹⁹³Memorandum, Rusk to the President, 12 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.576.

¹⁹⁴Memorandum, Bundy to the President, 13 July 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.577.

¹⁹⁵Draft Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, undated, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.579.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*

in, for example, postponing a decision on the new programme by proposing further studies.¹⁹⁷ Macmillan further underlined British hesitancy in a letter to Kennedy on 23 August, writing that although "we share your general objectives about British Guiana. It is more difficult to decide how these may best be achieved". Nevertheless, the Prime Minister was "not unhopeful that we may be able to agree on a reasonably feasible plan",¹⁹⁸ and although the available evidence offers no specific date, it would appear that some kind of Anglo-American deal had been struck by the time the British Guiana Independence Conference finally assembled on 23 October 1962, as the Cuban missile crisis drew to a close.

The Conference had been postponed twice; the May postponement had been repeated at the end of June, again justified on the grounds that the Report of the Commission of Inquiry had not yet been made available.¹⁹⁹ Further postponement, the Colonial Office had assumed, would not be unwelcome to the US.²⁰⁰ The British attempted to sweeten the pill for Jagan by inviting him to attend the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in September 1962.²⁰¹ Grey was instructed to remind Jagan that it was a particular privilege for representatives of dependent territories to be invited.²⁰² This did not, however, make the June postponement any more palatable to Jagan. He did not accept this second delay with the same good grace as he had accepted the first. Declaring to the Governor that he "had been good long enough and now he was going to be bad", he turned once again to the United Nations, announcing his intention to invite the Committee on Colonialism to visit British Guiana to see for themselves that the delay was unwarranted.²⁰³

¹⁹⁷Memorandum, Bundy to Burdett, 6 Aug.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.580; Memorandum, Bundy to Helms, 6 Aug.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.581; Memorandum, Brubeck to Bundy, 8 Aug.1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.581-582.

¹⁹⁸Message from the PM to President Kennedy, T.421/62, 23 Aug.1962, PREM11/4052, PRO.

¹⁹⁹Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], No.199, 30 June 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

²⁰⁰Telegram, London to SOS, No.4859, 29 June 1962, 741D.00/6-2962, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

²⁰¹Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], No.199, 30 June 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

²⁰²Telegram, CS to BG[Grey], No.200, 29 June 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO.

²⁰³Telegram, BG[Grey] to CS, Personal No.218, 2 July 1962, PREM11/3666, PRO; Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-8, 8 July 1962, 741D.00/7-862, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

The Conference was presided over by Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys. Sandys had added the duties of Colonial Secretary to his responsibilities at the Commonwealth Relations Office after the 'Night of the Long Knives' cabinet reshuffle in July 1962, when Maudling had moved from the Colonial Office to replace Selwyn Lloyd as Chancellor of the Exchequer. As Colonial Secretary, Sandys presided over a transformation of British policy towards British Guiana, which became more cognisant of American concerns and demands. He had already shaken up officials at the Colonial Office in his first meeting with them to discuss British Guiana in August 1962. The officials had expected their new Secretary of State simply to fix a date for the Independence Conference. Instead, he subjected them to an unexpected grilling, demanding a consideration of how PR might be used to remove Jagan from office, and how the Independence Conference might be steered towards such a constitutional change.²⁰⁴

Sandys outlined his final plan for the Conference in a note to the Prime Minister on 10 September 1962.²⁰⁵ The Conference would be "allowed to break down over the issue of proportional representation and certain other matters".²⁰⁶ Once it had broken down, the Guianese representatives would be sent home to attempt to reach agreement between themselves. This they would not be able to do. After several months the British Government would break the deadlock by imposing a solution: a referendum on the subject of PR, which would probably result in the acceptance of a new electoral system and necessitate an election. Following an election under PR and a further Conference, an early date would be fixed for independence. Sandys suggested that the Americans should be informed of his plan, "so that they may give such support as they think fit to Burnham".²⁰⁷ Although he baulked at this last suggestion, Macmillan approved Sandys' plan.²⁰⁸ Even before the date of the Independence Conference had been communicated to the British Guianese government, Kennedy was informed of Sandys' plan for the Conference.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁴Letter, Piper to Grey, 23 Aug.1962, CO1031/3131, PRO.

²⁰⁵Minute, Sandys to PM, PM[62]45, 10 Sept.1962, A10110/222/G, FO371/161957, PRO.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Letter, de Zulueta to Howard-Drake, 12 Sept.1962, A10110/222G, FO371/161957, PRO.

²⁰⁹Draft Telegram to Washington, undated, A10110/222G, FO371/161957, PRO.

The Conference progressed much as Sandys had predicted. It collapsed on 6 November. The British Guianese representatives were deadlocked over three issues: proportional representation, voting age and elections before independence. While Burnham and D'Aguiar wanted PR, a voting age of 21 and fresh elections, Jagan wanted to retain a first-past-the-post voting system and voting at age 18. He saw no need for fresh elections before independence. The Constitutional Conference of 1960 had accepted the principle of independence for British Guiana, and the 1961 election had proceeded with the assumption of all parties that the victor would lead the country into independence. For Jagan, the 1962 Conference had only to arrange the transfer of residual powers and to fix an independence date.²¹⁰

On the crucial question of PR, the respective positions of British Guiana's politicians, while couched in lofty terms, reflected the electoral advantage or disadvantage that the introduction of PR would bring to their parties. Jagan, leader of the natural majority party which would be electorally penalised by a shift from first-past-the-post to PR, castigated it as destructive of stable government and a potential threat to democracy, while Burnham and D'Aguiar, who would make electoral gains under PR, presented it as the only means of guaranteeing minority rights.²¹¹

Similarly, differences over voting age were simply a matter of political advantage. Lowering the voting age to 18 would add more East Indians than any other race to the electoral roll. Given that voting behaviour in British Guiana was racially determined, this would benefit the PPP.

CO officials speculated that compromise might have been reached at least on the issues of voting age and fresh elections. PPP representatives at the Conference did put forward a number of compromise proposals including the establishment of inter-party consultative committees to discuss economic and social issues, on which the government and opposition parties would be equally represented, and a bicameral legislature. They also proposed a

²¹⁰Report of the BG Independence Conference 1962, Cmnd.1870 [London, 1962].

²¹¹Ibid.

coalition with the PNC in which the PNC would hold 4 out of 10 Ministerial posts and also the position of Head of State with some veto powers. Unsurprisingly, in view of his earlier pronouncements on the conditions for a PNC-PPP coalition, Burnham rejected the offer.²¹² Burnham had called for a "spirit of compromise" at the Conference, but, at the same time, warned that there were "certain principles on which we shall not compromise".²¹³ Confident of American support, his definition of compromise was the complete capitulation of the PPP.

As he had projected in September, in the absence of agreement, and with all three Guianese leaders unwilling to submit to arbitration, Sandys sent them home to try to reach agreement between themselves. He warned that, if they could not reach an agreement, the British government would impose a settlement on the grounds that "since continued political uncertainty must inevitably prejudice the social and economic progress of the country, the present state of affairs must not be allowed to continue for much longer"²¹⁴. He did not indicate publicly what form this imposed British settlement might take.

1962 had begun with great optimism for Jagan. With an Independence Conference scheduled for May and independence envisaged by the end of the year, the British Guiana government had christened 1962 Freedom Year. By the end of October 1962 however, that optimism had dissipated. The twice postponed Independence Conference had collapsed. At home, although Jagan had survived one attempt to bring down his government, he faced a continuing state of financial crisis and persistent political opposition.

Despite these setbacks for Jagan, the Americans had little cause for complacency. Since the February disturbances they had been resolved that Jagan should be removed from office and had revealed new determination to take the lead in developing Anglo-American policy towards the colony. But their results had been mixed. They had found in Burnham an alternative to Jagan, but their dealings with the British were not always so satisfactory.

²¹²Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.272-273.

²¹³Report of the BG Independence Conference 1962, Cmnd.1870 [London, 1962].

²¹⁴Ibid.

Although the British government professed to share the American concern that British Guiana should not fall under communist influence, the disparity in the American and British perceptions of how this might best be achieved had continued, and the British had not been quick to submit to the American agenda. Nevertheless, Sandys' plan for the Independence Conference and beyond suggests that the British government had finally shelved the cooperative policy, and with a referendum on PR to precede fresh elections, had devised a means of holding the elections so desired by the Americans without having to secure Jagan's consent, while maintaining a façade of propriety. A PR electoral system, moreover, would work to the PPP's disadvantage even before the covert attempts at manipulation planned in Washington were factored into the electoral equation. Even so, although the first stage of Sandys' plan, the breakdown of the Conference, had gone according to plan, imposing a solution in the form of a referendum on PR could prove difficult, and an election under PR would not guarantee Jagan's long-term exclusion from office. Furthermore, the British government would prove as equivocal about the American anti-Jagan policy as the Kennedy administration had been about the British cooperative policy. But if Jagan's defeat was not yet assured, with the breakdown of the Independence Conference the administration had, at the very least, secured additional time in which to work for Jagan's removal. This it would pursue through a twin-track approach: continued pressure on the British and, in concert with opposition forces in British Guiana, a campaign to further destabilise Jagan's regime.

Chapter 5

Destabilisation and Diplomacy: The Dimensions of Intervention.

November 1962 - November 1963

"Americans are reluctant to believe that in any circumstances the best policy may be to do nothing. They must be up and doing, and even if they are persuaded that there is nothing for them to do, they want a continual flow of fresh information which they can chew over to reassure them their inaction is the right course. Agitated Americans, including Congressmen, who write to the State Department urging that America do something about British Guiana are told that this is primarily a British responsibility. Back comes the rejoinder: why don't you make the British do something? This is illuminating on the national character."¹

As Colonial Attaché in Washington, John Hennings was well accustomed to American prodding on British Guiana. His observations on the American predilection for activism were borne out in the wake of the 1962 Constitutional Conference. Neither the delay of independence implicit in the collapse of the Conference, nor Sandys' plan for an imposed referendum on PR and fresh elections, did anything to relieve American pressure on British officials. Sandys had threatened British Guiana's political leaders with an imposed solution if they failed to resolve their differences within a reasonable period of time. By January 1963 it appeared that, from Washington's perspective, that reasonable amount of time had elapsed.

Between January and March 1963, American officials in London, Georgetown and Washington pressed their British counterparts, on occasion at Kennedy's direct bidding, on the proposed timetable for proceeding with the imposed solution.² Their inquiries met with disappointment. British planning for British Guiana had been held in abeyance since the 1962 Conference. The Colonial Secretary, temperamentally inclined to deal with one issue at a time, had turned his attentions to other colonial issues.³ Moreover, despite Sandys' threat of imposing a solution, British officials balked at the operational realities of removing Jagan

¹Letter, Hennings to Thomas, 28 Feb.1962, A10110/56, FO371/161948, PRO.

²Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.277, 31 Jan.1963, 741D.00/1-2963, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Memcon, 'British Guiana', 11 Jan.1963, 741D.00/1-1163, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Memcon, 'BG Developments', 28 Jan.1963, 741D.00/1-2863, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA; Telegram, Washington to FO, No.808, 15 March 1963, A10110/14, FO371/167689, PRO; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.234, 29 Jan.1963, 741D.00/1-2963, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

³Ibid.

from office. With the political situation in British Guiana in early 1963 relatively quiescent, the British were content to sit tight.

In refusing to set a timetable for a referendum and elections under PR, British officials stressed the complicated contingencies and implications of this course of action. With the introduction of the 1961 Constitution, the British government had devolved all responsibility for internal affairs to the British Guianese government. Should the PPP government refuse to implement a referendum, the Constitution might have to be suspended.⁴ This course of action was virtually taboo in Whitehall. It was one issue on which the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and the Treasury were united. The Colonial Office, for example, maintained that, except in circumstances of civil unrest, British intervention would be counterproductive. Imposing a referendum on PR would be conceivable only if there was a demonstrable swing in favour of PR in British Guiana. Only then might it be possible to "brave out the odium of having intervened."⁵

Sensitive to allegations of imperialist interference, the British view was that Jagan's removal should be brought about from within British Guiana. His government was, by Hennings account, "becoming ragged and running downhill".⁶ Ideally his downfall might be brought about by a vote of no confidence in the legislative assembly. Reporting this to the State Department, John Hennings observed "in this way Jagan could be replaced with no stigma attached to the British government of having engineered his defeat through the imposition of a referendum and proportional representation."⁷ The parlous state of the British Guianese economy was cited as another possible internal spur to Jagan's removal. The British government could foreseeably be forced to resume control of the Ministry of Finance as the price for bailing out the Jagan government. This might in turn provoke Jagan's resignation.⁸

⁴Airgram, Amembassy London to DOS, No.A-1861, 19 Feb.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, Central Foreign Policy File [CFPF] 1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁵Memcon, 'Present British Thinking Regarding BG', 14 Feb.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Memcon, 'BG Developments', 20 March 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁸Ibid.

Hennings summed up the British position thus: "The UKG has the general feeling that to let things simmer is about right, since time is against Jagan."⁹ Melby provided a less charitable interpretation, however, noting that the British intended "to muddle along more or less indefinitely in the hope that some solution...will finally work itself out."¹⁰ Indeed, the most comprehensive critique of the British position came from this unexpected quarter. Of all the American officials involved with the British Guiana issue, Melby had hitherto been the most sympathetic both to the British position and to Jagan himself, and out of step with his superiors in Washington. However, two Consulate reports, *Time and Jagan* and *Timing for Elections in BG*, submitted on 14 March 1963, reflected growing American frustration at the continued unwillingness of the British government to intervene decisively to remove Jagan.¹¹

Melby challenged the British argument that Jagan's government would fall in its own time, arguing conversely that "unless definite action is taken, time favours Jagan".¹² He discounted the possibility of the Jagan government falling either because of defections in the legislature, or through an uprising. Party loyalty would militate against the first of these possibilities, and the presence of British troops would prevent the second. To accept the British view that Jagan "will somehow, sometime soon, disappear due to his own incompetence" was to avoid "the unpleasant reality that few governments fall through stupidity".¹³

The British 'wait and see' approach, then, would not result in Jagan's removal. Rather, Melby argued, the longer the delay, the more deeply embedded the PPP was becoming in the administrative life of the colony, and the more difficult it would be to exorcise its influence. Far from being in decline, Jagan's political support remained firm, and through a process of "administrative subversion" the PPP was penetrating the supposedly apolitical Civil Service

⁹Memcon, 'Present British Thinking Regarding BG', 14 Feb.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

¹⁰Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.234, 29 Jan.1963, 741D.00/1-2963, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

¹¹Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-249, 14 March 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63", Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-250, 14 March 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63", Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

and reaping the political advantages of being the party in power. Delaying Jagan's removal carried the risk that he might seize the initiative by calling for fresh elections and a fresh mandate under the existing first-past-the-post electoral system. Moreover, Melby speculated, should a Labour government be returned at the next British elections, it would probably be more sympathetic to the PPP's demand for early independence than the current Conservative government. He recommended that Washington impress upon the British the advantages of imposing a referendum on PR at an early date.¹⁴

Hennings predicted that once the Colonial Secretary returned to the UK and focused on the British Guiana problem in early March, he would, as a "man of action", want to resolve the situation and speed the British withdrawal.¹⁵ However, even after Sandys' return, the British remained resistant to a more activist policy. The Colonial Secretary did review the situation, but decided against the immediate imposition of a settlement, concluding that the "situation is not ripe for a British intervention".¹⁶ On 20 March 1963 Hennings summarised the British government's position as follows:

"Like the US, the UK is not willing to see BG become independent under a government of Jagan's persuasion. It remains less convinced than the US that Jagan is leading BG to Communism but is convinced - and extremely concerned- that he is leading it, by his hopelessly inefficient management, into economic and administrative chaos. However, the UK is not inclined to make a major policy decision or take a particular action at this time, preferring to watch the situation and informally review it every three weeks or so."¹⁷

American officials were not successful in persuading the British government to act decisively against Jagan in the early part of 1963. But American hostility towards Jagan was undiminished, and diplomatic pressure was not the only weapon in the American arsenal. The Kennedy administration was not committed to working solely through the British to dispose of Jagan. It also continued to distance itself from Jagan, denying him its financial

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Memcon, 'Present British Thinking Regarding BG', 14 Feb.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

¹⁶Telegram, FO to Washington, No.3017, 27 March 1963, A10110/14, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁷Memcon, 'BG Developments', 20 March 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

support and political endorsement. Moreover, it intervened more directly in British Guianese politics, working in cooperation with the colony's labour unions in a direct attempt to bring down the government.

Continued hostility was demonstrated when William R. Tyler, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, appeared before a sub-committee of the House Appropriations Committee on 12 March 1963. Under pressure from Committee members to justify giving assistance to a country which not only had a "pro-communist" leader, but was still a British dependency, Tyler made no secret of the administration's distaste for Jagan, or its objection to his continuing in office. He played down the level of existing American aid to British Guiana, which was, after all, limited to technical assistance. It was, he argued, intended as a demonstration of interest in the well being of the wider population of British Guiana, and "not intended to support the Leader or to indicate any sympathy whatsoever for his policies."¹⁸ The record of Tyler's testimony is interesting not only for his statement of the administration's opposition to Jagan, but also because the exchange between Tyler and members of the Appropriations Sub-Committee encapsulated much of the continuing domestic controversy over foreign aid. For example, they rehearsed the arguments about the political utility of foreign aid. Tyler argued that without a minimal amount of assistance the situation in British Guiana could deteriorate to a point, "politically, socially and economically, which will make it easier for the leader to consolidate his control over the country".¹⁹ Members of the Sub-Committee countered that any level of aid, however small, redounded to the political benefit of the incumbent government.²⁰ The episode is a graphic demonstration of the hostility of the Appropriations Committee to foreign aid which frustrated successive administrations, and lends credence to the argument of AID officials that providing substantial economic aid to British Guiana might have jeopardized the whole AID programme.

¹⁸Hearings Before a Sub-Committee of the Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, attachment to Letter, Melby to Grey, 13 Sept. 1963, "350- Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

Finally, when questioned about the imminence of the colony's achieving independence, Tyler asked that his response be taken off the record. Jumping off the record when he did, even Melby was prepared to acknowledge, looked "rather sinister."²¹ Tyler's indiscretion did not go unnoticed in Georgetown. His testimony became a central feature of PPP arguments that the Kennedy administration was working for its removal. By September of 1963, Jagan would be circulating copies of the testimony at the United Nations.²²

The administration's determination to distance itself from Jagan was illustrated further when Jagan visited the US in April 1963. During this visit Jagan was not scheduled to visit Washington or to meet with any government officials, and the administration made it clear that it would not welcome any such meetings.²³

The evident American hostility did not deter and perhaps even spurred Jagan in an attempt to reopen a dialogue with the Kennedy administration. On 16 April 1963, just prior to his departure for the United States, he sent a lengthy letter to Kennedy. Writing almost a year after the arrival in British Guiana of the Hoffman Economic Mission, Jagan inquired as to why the Mission's report had not yet been released. He derided the American government for failing to provide economic aid for his country despite the undertakings of October 1961, despite his persistent requests for American aid since 1958, and despite the fact that, through the reformist economic and budgetary policies of the present PPP government, British Guiana fulfilled the eligibility criteria for receipt of American aid under the Alliance for Progress.²⁴

Jagan also refuted some of the standard allegations made against himself and his government, asserting his commitment to a mixed economy, denying that the PPP had any intention of

²¹Ibid.

²²Letter, Melby to Grey, 13 Sept. 1963, "350-Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

²³Public Posture Toward Cheddi Jagan's visit to the United States and Canada', 16 April 1963, enclosure to Memorandum, Brubeck to Bundy, 18 April 1963, "BG General 2/7/63-10/3/63 and undated" Folder, Schlesinger Papers, WHF, Box WH3A, JFKL.

²⁴Letter, Jagan to Kennedy, 16 April 1963, "350-Jagan's Letter to the President" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

expropriating private property and maintaining that should nationalization be deemed necessary, adequate compensation would be provided. He defended his government's policy of trading with Eastern bloc countries as driven by the best economic interests of British Guiana, not by ideological impulses, and not by any "international conspiracy."²⁵

American hostility towards his government was not lost on Jagan. In the wake of the riots of February 1962 he had communicated to both British and American officials his concerns about American intervention and the adverse effects of American non-aid. He now took these allegations of American interference directly to the President. Moreover, not only was his government being snubbed and undermined, it was also being bypassed. Washington was ignoring the appropriate official channels in its funding of the university scholarships for British Guianese students and a TUC housing project.²⁶ These were the two projects sold to officials by Burnham in May 1962, as providing an opportunity to demonstrate American interest in British Guiana while circumventing the PPP.

Despite this barrage of accusations and recriminations, Jagan once again requested economic aid.²⁷ Unsurprisingly, Washington did not respond to this request. In a reply which was as terse as Jagan's letter had been lengthy, and under Melby's signature and not that of the President, it was strongly implied that there was little faith in Washington either in the ability of Jagan's government to utilise aid effectively, or in Jagan's commitment to democracy. No mention was made of the Hoffman Report. The reply stated only that the United States would continue its technical assistance programme and follow-up surveys for the Hoffman Mission.²⁸

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Letter, Jagan to Kennedy, 16 April 1963, "350-Jagan's Letter to the President" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

²⁸Telegram, DOS to Georgetown, 5 June 1963, "350-Jagan's Letter to the President" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

Although Jagan's "rambling dissertation" had been criticised in detail by American officials, it was decided not to dignify the letter with a detailed Presidential response.²⁹ British Guiana was in the midst of a general strike. William Brubeck, Kennedy's Executive Secretary, interpreted the situation in the colony thus; Jagan was "attempting to crush a general strike called by organized labor in an effort to preserve union rights."³⁰ Although this analysis of the strike, which paralysed British Guiana for eleven weeks, falls somewhere between the inadequate and the inaccurate, it was decided that under the circumstances a Presidential reply to Jagan's letter would be inappropriate, as it might enhance Jagan's prestige. Brubeck noted that, "Jagan would be delighted to engage in a public written debate with the President on the wrongs of British colonial rule and the need for imposing Marxist centralism on British Guiana."³¹ Neither Brubeck argued should the reply be detailed as "the impact of the letter on the general public in terms of discrediting Jagan will be greater if it [the US response] is brief and sharp by inference than if it gives a detailed argumentative rebuttal."³²

Within British Guiana itself, American activism found a channel for its energies in the trade union movement. The long-standing hostility of the BGTUC towards Jagan had already been demonstrated in February 1962. The trade union movement had long been identified as a potential bulwark against Jagan, and consequently as a likely early target in any attempt by the PPP to assume control of the economic life of the colony; a prerequisite for the establishment of a communist state in British Guiana. In the 1950s, the PPP's endorsement of the Guiana Industrial Workers Union [GIWU] as an alternative to the existing sugar union the Manpower Citizens Association [MPCA] which it regarded, not without some justification, as an unrepresentative and corrupt company union, was interpreted by its opponents as a dual union strategy aimed at the control of the sugar industry. Indeed, the PPP government's Labour Relations Bill of 1953 had been cited by the British government as

²⁹Memorandum, Brubeck to Bundy, 23 May 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63", CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Letter, Melby to Burdett, 18 April 1963, "350-Jagan's Letter to the President" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

³⁰Memorandum, Brubeck to Bundy, 23 May 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63", CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

evidence of the impending communist takeover when the constitution was suspended in that year.

Trade union anxieties about PPP encroachments in the labour field had been evident since the party was returned to office in 1961 and had stimulated the visit of TUC and MPCA President Richard Ishmael to Washington in October 1961 to request US assistance for British Guiana's unions.³³ The PPP's activities in the sugar industry were a particular source of disquiet. In the autumn of 1961 the party reactivated its campaign against the MPCA through a dual strategy involving both the penetration of the MPCA and the formation of the Guiana Sugar Workers Union [GSWU, later the Guiana Agricultural Workers Union, GAWU] as a successor to the GIWU, to challenge the existing union.³⁴

Trade union leaders were also concerned about the PPP's legislative intentions. Charles Hanson, an American labour officer visiting British Guiana in November 1961, observed that the colony's trade unionists were convinced the government was "contemplating legislation intended to assert governmental control over the trade unions and restrict their freedom of action", and were seeking international help in bolstering their organisations.³⁵ Indeed, as early as November 1961, Jagan's Private Secretary Jack Kelshall confirmed that the government was contemplating the introduction of labour legislation.³⁶ It was assumed that the PPP government would introduce legislation on the American model, requiring, for example, that all workers should be polled to select their preferred bargaining agents and compulsory recognition of the majority union in every industry. Hanson attempted to explain the paradoxical position of British Guiana's labour leaders in their opposition to such a fundamental measure as compulsory recognition. It was, after all, only the absence of statutory compulsory recognition for the majority union which had enabled the sugar

³³Memcon, 'Labor-Political Situation in British Guiana', 4 Oct. 1961, 841D.062/10-461, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

³⁴Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.29, 20 Oct. 1961, 841D.062/10-2061, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA; Despatch, POS to DOS, No.192, 13 Dec. 1961, 841D.062/12-1361, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

³⁵Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.47, 30 Nov. 1961, 841D.062/11-3061, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

³⁶Despatch, POS to DOS, No.192, 13 Dec. 1961, 841D.062/12-1361, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

producers to keep the PPP sponsored GIWU from replacing the MPCA [the largest and most influential union in the BGTUC] as the bargaining agent in the sugar industry in the 1950s. Hanson was under no illusion about the dynamic of bureaucratic and personal self-interest at work. He noted that the "fear of BG labor that politics will enter the union field often appears a confession on the part of labor leaders that they frequently use the unions for their own political purposes."³⁷

In an effort to help meet the PPP's campaign against the MPCA and the anticipated legislative onslaught on the TUC, Andrew McLellan, the AFL-CIO's Associate Inter-American Representative, arranged that from August 1962 onwards Richard Ishmael, President of both these organisations, would be paid to turn his attention from his duties as a headmaster to his union responsibilities on a full-time basis. Payment to Ishmael was arranged through the International Trade Secretariats [ITS's].³⁸ Ishmael proved to be a troublesome client, reluctant to give up his responsibilities as a headmaster and disappointed with the level of reimbursement he received.³⁹ He was described variously as "unreliable", "erratic" and "mentally instable".⁴⁰ But, like Burnham, his credentials as a fanatical anti-Jaganite, and the absence of any obvious alternative, trumped any reservations about his personal qualities. The AFL-CIO also agreed to fund the activities of five emergency field organisers for the MPCA, in its fight against a GSWU membership drive.⁴¹

British Guiana's trade unionists were also among the earliest beneficiaries of the activities of the American Institute of Free Labor Development [AIFLD], which over the next two decades would become "the foreign policy arm of the AFL-CIO and the US government's principal labour foreign policy vehicle".⁴² Born of the ad hoc educational efforts of Joseph

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Letter, McLellan to Ishmael, 16 Oct.1962, CA, BG 1962, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3, GMMA.

³⁹Letter, McLellan to Ishmael, 21 Sept.1962, CA, BG 1962, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3, GMMA; Letter, Ishmael to McLellan, 26 Sept.1962, CA, BG 1962, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3 GMMA; Letter, McLellan to Ishmael, 16 Oct.1962, CA, BG 1962, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3, GMMA.

⁴⁰Despatch, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.29, 20 Oct.1961, 841D.062/10-2061, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA; Telegram, POS to SOS, No.188, 27 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-2762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

⁴¹Letter, Ishmael to McLellan, 17 Aug.1962, CA, BG 1962, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3, GMMA.

⁴²Hobart A. Spalding Jr., "US Labour Intervention in Latin America: The Case of the American Institute for Free Labour Development[AIFLD]", *LCS*, 17:2, 1984, p.139.

Beirne of the Communication Workers Union in bringing Latin American trade unionists to the United States for training, AIFLD was chartered by the AFL-CIO in 1960 as a private, non-profit organisation. It received Kennedy's endorsement in the wake of the Bay of Pigs as part of the anti-Castroite programme in Latin America. A 1968 SFRC Staff Report noted that AIFLD's formation had been "primarily in response to the threat of Castroite infiltration and eventual control of the major labor movements within Latin America."⁴³

AIFLD's Board of Trustees was largely comprised of representatives of American labour and big business. Its first Chairman was J. Peter Grace, head of WR Grace and Co., a conglomerate holding substantial investments in Latin America and the Caribbean. He was joined by representatives of other companies with interests in Latin America that stood to lose heavily in the event of a rash of Castro-style nationalisations in the region, including Anaconda Copper, the United Corporation and Pan-Am Airlines.⁴⁴ Grace was frank about AIFLD's ideological mission. Through the Institute business and labour could "work toward a common goal in Latin America, namely supporting the democratic form of government, the capitalistic system and the general well-being of the individual".⁴⁵

The cooperation between American business and American labour represented on the AIFLD board was reflected in its programme. As its first Executive Director, Serafino Romualdi, admitted, one of the Institute's major goals was the elimination of the concept of class struggle in Latin American labour circles and the promotion of a cooperative relationship between labour and business. He wrote that, "the concept of various economic power elements in a free society working together instead of in opposition became the most fundamental credo of the Institution."⁴⁶ AIFLD was the institutional expression on an international level of the pro-capitalist ideology of American big labour.

⁴³Quoted in Ronald Radosh, *American Labor and US Foreign Policy*, [New York, 1969], p.415.

⁴⁴Serafino Romualdi, *Presidents and Peons: Recollections of a Labor Ambassador in Latin America* [New York, 1967], p.432.

⁴⁵Quoted in Hobart A. Spalding Jr., "US and Latin American Labor: The Dynamics of Imperialist Control", *LAP*, 3:1, 1976, p.54.

⁴⁶Romualdi, *Op.Cit.*, p.418.

AIFLD's activities were financed, however, not primarily by business or labour, but by the government. Between 1962 and 1967 AID provided 89% of AIFLD's revenues. Labour and business provided only 6% and 5% respectively.⁴⁷ Several writers have commented on AIFLD's relationship with the CIA. One has alleged that between 1961 and 1963 it received almost US\$1 million from CIA conduits⁴⁸, while Philip Agee has branded AIFLD as "CIA controlled".⁴⁹ Its first Executive Director was long-time anti-Jaganite Serafino Romualdi, the AFL-CIO's former Inter-American Representative and self-confessed anti-communist campaigner, whom Agee has described as the "principal CIA agent for labour operations in Latin America."⁵⁰ The Director of AIFLD's Social Projects Department and Romualdi's successor as Executive Director was the PTTI's William C. Doherty Jnr., also, according to Agee, a CIA operative.⁵¹

AIFLD operated in two fields. The first was educational. Latin American trade unionists were brought to the its headquarters in Washington DC,[subsequently in Front Royal VA.], to take courses and seminars in trade union organisation and structure, collective bargaining, labour legislation, and most significantly, democracy versus totalitarianism. Classes began in June 1962, and AIFLD's first class graduated the following September. Graduates were expected to activate a multiplier effect by sharing their knowledge with colleagues in their home countries. Moreover, AIFLD graduates were on their return home eligible for internships lasting nine months or longer, whereby the Institute would finance their union activities. The internship programme enabled six British Guianese graduates seconded to the strike committee to play an important organising role during the general strike in the colony in 1963.⁵²

AIFLD's other major field of interest was welfare projects. The Social Projects Department received its first contract from AID in August of 1962. It became active in assisting suitable

⁴⁷Figures quoted in Spalding, 1984, *Op.Cit.*, p.145.

⁴⁸Jim Mellen, "Leaders for Labor - Made in America" in NACLA, *New Chile*, [Berkeley CA: 1972], p.55.

⁴⁹Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, [London, 1975], p.600.

⁵⁰Ibid. p.620.

⁵¹Ibid. p.606.

⁵²Romualdi, *Op.Cit.*, p.352.

'democratic' unions in Latin America in areas such as housing development, and the establishment of credit unions and cooperatives, thereby bolstering the chosen union's local appeal. Indeed, through AIFLD a means was found to finance a housing project in British Guiana of the kind advocated by Andrew Jackson of the Postal Workers Union [PWU] and endorsed by Burnham.⁵³ Jackson had not been alone in his enthusiasm for such a project as a means of simultaneously demonstrating American benevolence and concern for the people of British Guiana, while also building support for the PNC. Bertie Nichols, President of the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union [CCWU], had been pressing the AFL-CIO to support similar projects for his union.⁵⁴ William Doherty Jnr., Director of the AIFLD Social Projects Department, visited Georgetown in early October 1962 to sign an agreement with the BGTUC whereby AIFLD would fund a number of social development schemes for workers in British Guiana, the first of which would be the construction of 500 low cost workers' housing units, at a cost to AIFLD of approximately US\$1.5 million.⁵⁵

How AIFLD intended to fund the housing project is not clear. AIFLD was obliged, under its contract with AID to secure AID approval before any projects could be undertaken in a particular country. Doherty, however, signed the AIFLD housing agreement with the BGTUC in full awareness that the State Department did not endorse the project, and that AID was unlikely to provide either a loan or even a loan guarantee to help with its implementation. He accepted the implementation of the BGTUC agreement to be wholly the responsibility of AIFLD, and insisted that financing for the housing project was available. It would, he claimed, be provided by the social welfare funds of trade unions in the United States.⁵⁶

Jagan was not oblivious to the activities of American trade unionists in British Guiana. Speaking at a PPP rally in March 1963, he repeated his allegations of American intervention

⁵³See Chapter Four, p.168.

⁵⁴Letter, Nichols to McLellan, 27 Dec.1961, CA, BG 1962, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3, GMMA.

⁵⁵Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-101, 14 Oct.1962, 841D.062/10-1462, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

⁵⁶Airgram, AID/W to Georgetown, No.AIDTOA-119, 23 Nov.1962, 841D.062/10-1962, CDF1960-63, RG59, Box 2478, NA.

in the 1961 election campaign, and accused the PNC of receiving financial support from the United States. Burnham, he claimed was willing to "sell his soul and his father's soul" to become Premier.⁵⁷ Not only was the United States corrupting British Guiana's opposition, however. In addition, "coming here to cause trouble are some parasites who call themselves trade unionists. A lot of people now parading are pretending to be for the people, they talk about democracy, but don't mean it."⁵⁸

Jagan's scepticism about American unionists was shared by international representatives of the British TUC. Walter Hood, a British TUC organiser working with the British Guiana Labour Union [BGLU], voiced his suspicions to the Governor in July 1962.⁵⁹ Hood described the AFL-CIO's Andrew McLellan as being "far too much interested in politics and dollars and the exercise of power for or against governments to commend himself."⁶⁰ He was scathing about "American unionists who sail in here for a day or two, 'latch on' to every relevant fact in half an hour, and know exactly what to do about the situation and where to apply their dollars."⁶¹ To the British TUC, the survival of trade unionism in British Guiana, and particularly the survival of the MPCA, depended upon keeping trade unionists out of politics. Hood was concerned that American dollars would seduce British Guianese trade union leaders into following a political, anti-communist and false agenda, instead of concentrating on "proper" trade union activities. American unionists, Hood predicted, would "pour out floods of dollars to anyone who is loud enough in his anti-communism."⁶²

The long anticipated PPP Labour Relations Bill was finally introduced to the legislative assembly on 22 March 1963. There was no prior consultation with either the trade unions or the political opposition. Similar in content to the 1953 Bill, it brought the government comparable difficulties. The Bill's proclaimed objective was "to ensure the compulsory

⁵⁷Airgram, Amongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-262, 21 March 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPF1957-1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Letter, Grey to Huijsman, 19 June 1962, CO1031/4286, PRO; Letter, Grey to Busk, 17 July 1962, CO1031/4285, PRO.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

recognition by employers as bargaining agents on behalf of the workers of those unions which, after due inquiry, appear to the Minister of Labour, to be truly representative of the workers in a particular industry trade or undertaking".⁶³ Additionally, it would of course ensure the removal of the MPCA as the main bargaining agent in the sugar industry, considered in the British Foreign Office to be the Bill's "real intention".⁶⁴

Others went further arguing that the passage of the Labour Relations Bill would enable the PPP to gain control not only of the sugar industry, but also of the whole trade union movement . It was feared that, through sheer force of membership figures, GAWU would dominate the TUC, much as the MPCA did at present, and lead it into affiliation with the communist World Federation of Trade Unions [WFTU]. Legislation that the PPP presented as designed to promote greater 'democracy' in the labour field was derided by its opponents as an attempt to increase government control of the trade union movement and another step on the road to communism.

In introducing the Labour Relations Bill without prior consultation, Jagan once again presented his enemies with an opportunity to oppose and attempt to overthrow his government. The Bill provided the pretext for the TUC, on 18 April 1963, to call a general strike. Commercial activity in the colony was brought to a standstill and, as in 1962, the participation of the civil service unions in the strike threatened to paralyse the government. The strike, supported by local businesses and underwritten by the AFL-CIO, became the longest in the colony's history, lasting eighty days. It was accompanied by an upsurge in racial violence. For the second time in as many years, the Governor declared a State of Emergency, and British troops were despatched to the colony to maintain law and order.

The strike's effectiveness reflected the mutually reinforcing political, racial and geographical divisions in British Guiana. It was at its most effective in Georgetown, an opposition stronghold, although the government was able to maintain essential services. CCL

⁶³Quoted in Reynold A. Burrowes, *The Wild Coast: An Account of Politics in Guyana*, [Cambridge MA., 1984], p.170.

⁶⁴ FO Telegram, No.45 Intel., 10 May 1963, A10110/45, FO371/167689, PRO.

representative Basil Blackman estimated that the strike, in its early stages, was 80% effective in Georgetown, with the almost complete backing of the civil service. The figures for the sugar industry revealed a different pattern in the countryside. According to Blackman, the strike, while 70% effective in the racially mixed factories, was only 40% effective amongst predominantly East Indian field workers.⁶⁵

This racial dynamic, John Hennings predicted, would prevent the strike from bringing down the Jagan government. A labour dispute, he argued, was not the right kind of issue. Jagan's removal could only be achieved with an issue on which British Guiana's East Indians would desert the PPP, depriving it of its popular support.⁶⁶

From the start of the strike the BGTUC was dependent upon American funding, and indeed Ishmael immediately turned to the AFL-CIO for assistance.⁶⁷ The TUC's financial situation at the outset of the strike was reported by Blackman to be "precarious".⁶⁸ To prevail, the TUC would need "immediate substantial assistance."⁶⁹ Indeed, the civil service unions were reluctant to participate in the strike in the absence of a guarantee of external financial support.⁷⁰ Blackman was not optimistic about the amount available from regional labour groups. It was the AFL-CIO that would provide the bulk of external financial assistance.

The exact amount provided by the AFL-CIO is difficult to establish. Estimates of the TUC's requirements ranged from US\$30,000 to US\$90,000 per week.⁷¹ The US Consulate General estimated US\$60,000 per week would be needed, a figure endorsed by PSI representative and

⁶⁵Telegram, POS to SOS, No.490, 30 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol13 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁶⁶Memcon, 'British Guiana', 23 May 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁶⁷Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.Priority 419, 26 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁶⁸Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.378, 24 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Telegram, POS to SOS, No.487, 28 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol13 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁶⁹Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.379, 24 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, Box 3839, NA.

⁷⁰Telegram, Amembassy POS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.12, 2 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

⁷¹Ibid; Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, No.398, 2 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

CIA operative William McCabe.⁷² In addition, McCabe was subsequently reported by the *Sunday Times* to have personally distributed at least £150,000 in strike pay, in his capacity as the representative of the PSI. This supposed gesture of solidarity from the PSI's international affiliates was almost solely provided by the US union AFSCME, which in turn received funding for its international activities from the CIA conduit, the Gotham Foundation.⁷³

It was vital also to the success of the strike that the mistakes made during the abortive general strike of February 1962 were not repeated. It was important that the strike remained ostensibly non-political in its objectives, and free from the political control of opposition politicians. It was also regarded as essential that the strike be as non-violent as possible. Trade unionists and American officials in Georgetown and Washington were concerned that any breakdown of law and order would prompt Jagan to impose a State of Emergency, and would legitimate troop intervention to break the strike in defence of the elected government.⁷⁴

None of these objectives were realised. It proved difficult to keep the strike separate from the political opposition. The opposition parties joined the TUC in opposition to the Labour Relations Bill, and the PNC increasingly assumed the responsibility for organising demonstrations and sit-ins as part of a passive resistance campaign against the government.⁷⁵ Governor Grey, acting on the insistence of the Premier, declared a State of Emergency on 9 May 1963, although the Emergency was declared not in response to violence but rather in response to shortages of food and fuel.⁷⁶ And although the strike was peaceful at the outset,⁷⁷ the colony descended into inter-communal violence in June 1963, following a riot at the

⁷²Ibid.; Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, No.403, 3 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

⁷³"How the CIA Got Rid of Jagan", *The Sunday Times*, 16 April 1963, pp.1,3.

⁷⁴Telegram, Washington to Amcongen Georgetown, No.Priority 448, 5 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, No.403, 3 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Telegram, McClellan to McCabe, 2 May 1963, CA, BG 1963, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, CF, Box 3, GMMA.

⁷⁵Burrowes, *Op.Cit.*, p.173.

⁷⁶Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.421, 8 May 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁷⁷Telegram, Georgetown to Washington No.Priority 451, 20 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

funeral of PPP luminary Claude Christian who had died of a heart attack.⁷⁸ The violence associated with the strike was not restricted to rioting, which had characterised the previous attempt to overthrow the government in February 1962. In 1963, violence also took the form of an organised bombing and arson campaign, and racially-inspired attacks on individuals and property generated a tit-for-tat pattern of reprisals. The violence in 1963, moreover, was not confined to Georgetown and spread to rural areas.

Beginning on 4 May 1963 the police conducted a series of raids on the headquarters of the three major parties, searching for arms and evidence of organised violence. Nothing was found at Unity House, the headquarters of the UF, but at the PPP's Freedom House and the PNC's Congress Place, the police turned up small arms, knives and ammunition. A safe at Freedom House was found to contain two German revolvers and ammunition.⁷⁹ The police made their "biggest ever haul" on 15 May, when they confiscated a .45 caliber machine gun and 950 rounds of ammunition from a PPP activist. The machine gun was discovered in a crate from the Rice Marketing Board [RMB]. A follow-up raid on the RMB ensued and produced some further ammunition and two unregistered pistols.⁸⁰ The opposition took this as evidence that the PPP was receiving weapons from Cuba or the USSR. However, the police searches yielded remarkably little. The arms seizures were certainly not commensurate with the rumours about PPP gun-running that circulated in Georgetown. Even William McCabe, no PPP partisan, expressed the view in April 1963, that, "there was probably no substance to the rumors that Soviet arms were coming into the country...Rumors of this type had been periodically surfaced during periods of tension".⁸¹

⁷⁸Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.489, 4 June 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

⁷⁹Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, No.Priority 405, 4 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.Priority 408, 6 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.Priority 406, 5 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

⁸⁰Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 444, 15 May 1963, "Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

⁸¹Memcon, 'Recent Labor and Political Developments in BG', 9 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

Also of interest were documents turned up during the police raid on Congress Place, relating to military training, and an insurrectionary committee responsible for executing a plan entitled "X13". Follow-up raids produced manuals on military training and firearms and a book on guerrilla warfare.⁸² A Special Branch Research Paper on the PNC confirmed the party's involvement in organized incidents of violence. On 1 April 1963 a secret security force was created within the PNC, headed by Claude Graham, a former Deputy Superintendent of Police. The functions of this group were recorded as follows:

"a] To collect all types of information; b] to screen party executives, employees and activists; c] to organise gangs to commit sabotage in time of tension and to be an answer to the Progressive Youth Organisation; d] to protect People's National Congress executives and other party personalities; e] to train their members in the use of arms with the main emphasis being on shotguns, pistols and rifles which would be most needed in the event of a civil war."⁸³

PNC activists organised attacks on the homes of East Indians and, beginning in May 1963, orchestrated a bombing and arson campaign in Georgetown, targeting for example, government ministries, the Rice Marketing Board, and several cinemas. These activities took place with the full knowledge of, and at the broad request of, the party's hierarchy, including Burnham himself, and the PNC's General Secretary Hamilton Green. Burnham, on at least one occasion, provided dynamite which he had received as a "gift". On 25 June 1963, he reportedly complained that the explosions were not causing enough damage, and suggested also that the party attempt to acquire hand grenades and other weapons from the Volunteer Force or the police.⁸⁴

The PNC did not have a monopoly on these activities. Following an explosion at the Rice Marketing Board, one of those responsible claimed that the bombing had been planned jointly by Burnham, D'Aguiar and Ishmael.⁸⁵

⁸²Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.232-233.

⁸³Research Paper on the PNC, prepared by Georgetown Special Branch. Copy provided to the author by J. Jagan.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

It was difficult from the outset to maintain the fiction that the strike was non-political.⁸⁶ Its politicisation, however, was most patent after the Labour Relations Bill lapsed. A confrontation in the Legislative Assembly between Speaker Gajraj, and several PPP members had resulted in the suspension from the Legislative Assembly of four PPP legislators, robbing the government of its majority. The Speaker, opposed to Jagan on both political and personal grounds, had permitted the opposition parties to filibuster PPP legislation to extend the State of Emergency.⁸⁷ "Verbally accosted" by the four PPP legislators, Gajraj suspended them from the Legislative Assembly pending an apology. Facing the possibility of a vote of no confidence, but unwilling to apologise to the Speaker, Jagan instead prorogued the assembly. The suspended members would be able to return, unapologetic, to the assembly when it reconvened. However, another consequence of the prorogation was the lapse of the Labour Relations Bill.⁸⁸

The lapsing of the Bill, the ostensible industrial cause of the strike, did not bring the strike to an end. The TUC and the government now became locked in protracted negotiations over terms and conditions for a return to work. Robert Willis, General Secretary of the Typographical Workers Union, sent by the British TUC to attempt to break the deadlock, endorsed Jagan's claim that the strike was a politically inspired attempt to overthrow the PPP government. Although he did successfully negotiate a return to work on 8 July 1963, it was only under threat from Willis to expose the BGTUC as intransigent, and deny it ICFTU financing, that British Guiana's labour leaders agreed to his proposals. He later recalled that "the strike was wholly political. Jagan was giving into everything the strikers wanted but as soon as he did so they erected new demands".⁸⁹

⁸⁶Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.378, 24 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.379, 24 April 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁸⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.243-244.

⁸⁸Ibid.; Telegram, London to SOS, No.5112, 18 June 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol19 Government of Dependencies" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁸⁹Quoted in Colin Henfrey, "Foreign Influence in Guyana: the Struggle for Independence", in Emanuel de Kadt[ed.], *Patterns of Foreign Influence in the Caribbean* [London, 1972], p.70.

Willis's experience confirmed the previously expressed fears of British trade unionist Walter Hood that American dollars would bring politics to the forefront of trade unionism in British Guiana. It was also symptomatic of a developing rift between the British and British Guianese trade union movements. In 1962, the BGTUC was already considering jettisoning the established channel of the International Department of the British TUC in its dealing with British trade unions. The Department was perceived in Georgetown as being effectively, if not intentionally, pro-Jagan. Ishmael in particular was keen to "circumvent" these channels and contact other, more sympathetic, trade union elements in Britain.⁹⁰ During the general strike itself, the BGTUC was disappointed with the level of financial support it received from British Trade Unions, preferring to deal with the AFL-CIO and regional labour groups rather than its metropolitan counterpart. Not only was the British TUC not forthcoming with financial support for the strike, but Hargreaves, visiting British Guiana in early June 1963, privately expressed the view that the strike was political. He argued that only Jagan or the British government could govern the colony, and given that the British were unlikely to resume direct rule, it was in the long term interests of the BGTUC to reach an accommodation with Jagan. Publicly, he counselled compromise and a speedy end to the dispute.⁹¹

In the face of allegations that the BGTUC had become an agent of the American anti-communist agenda, the Kennedy administration and British Guiana's trade unionists both claimed that the BGTUC had received no financial support from the US government, and that any assistance provided by the AFL-CIO during the period of the strike was fully consistent with the international trade union movement's principle of solidarity with the industrial struggles of its members.⁹² The solidarity defence, however, was dependent upon the maintenance of the transparent fiction that British Guiana's general strike had purely

⁹⁰Telegram, POS to SOS, No.188, 29 Sept.1962, 741D.00/9-2762, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 1668, NA.

⁹¹Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 436, 13 May 1963, "560-Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 494, 6 June 1963, "560-Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Telegram, London to Georgetown, No.Info.46, 8 June 1963, "560-Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

⁹²Telegram, DOS to Amcongen Georgetown, No.Info.551, 19 June 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-7, 14 July 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG", CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

industrial and no political objectives. From the available evidence, and particularly in the absence of CIA documentation, it is not possible to reach any definitive conclusions about the degree of American involvement in the 1963 strike, or the source of monies provided through the AFL-CIO. However, at the very least, it can be observed that American trade unionists, a number of whom had CIA connections, financed the continuation of the general strike in British Guiana, the main objective of which was clearly political: the overthrow of a democratically elected government. In addition, at least through AIFLD's educational activities, American government money was used to strengthen 'free' trade union forces in British Guiana, and was paying the wages of six AIFLD graduates serving as labour organisers during the strike.

American trade unionists continued to be active in British Guiana even after the end of the general strike. A return to work had been negotiated, but little had been resolved. The strike had revealed the racial and geographical polarisation of British Guianese society, the determination of the opposition, and its ability to attract external support. But, although it had demonstrated the PPP's unpopularity in Georgetown and in certain important sectors, the strike had conspicuously failed to overthrow the government. Political deadlock continued. Moreover, the central question of representation in the sugar industry remained unresolved, and in the wake of the strike GAWU continued to challenge the MPCA on the plantations. One trade unionist described the strike as "merely the first phase in the struggle against the PPP."⁹³ In late July, McLellan and McCabe met with Guianese trade unionists in Barbados, to conduct a post-mortem of the strike and plan a programme for the TUC over the coming year.⁹⁴ In pursuance of this "augmented program", American trade unionist Gene Meakins arrived in the colony on 23 September 1963 to help the BGTUC develop an effective public relations programme, aimed particularly at the sugar industry. Meakins arranged for a radio programme entitled the "Voice of Labour" to be broadcast twice daily, six days a week, beginning on 3 October 1963. In addition, production of the TUC newspaper the *Labour*

⁹³Letter, Nichols to McClellan, 19 July 1963, CA, BG 1963, CF, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, Box 3, GMMA.

⁹⁴Letter, McClellan to Nichols, 29 July 1963, CA, BG 1963, CF, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, Box 3, GMMA.

Advocate was expanded and the public relations offensive was carried directly to the plantations by a five man touring team.⁹⁵

The sympathies of the Kennedy administration were demonstrated graphically during the strike in a controversy over the storage of Cuban-supplied oil. With the Caribbean ports largely closed to British Guianese shipping as a demonstration of international trade union solidarity, the Jagan government began to import foodstuffs and petroleum products [POL] from Cuba. Without prior consultation with Governor Grey, the first order was placed through the PPP's own commercial arm, GIMPEX, at the end of May 1963.⁹⁶

The American government rejected a request from the government of British Guiana to store petroleum in storage tanks at the deactivated US airbase at Atkinson Field. Agreements between the two governments in 1948 and 1949 had made the base available to the British Guianese government for civil aviation purposes, which, in the view of the State Department, did not include the storage of Cuban POL.⁹⁷ The American rationale for rejecting the British Guianese government's request was outlined to the Foreign Office on 29 June 1963. To have permitted storage of POL at Atkinson Field would have been inconsistent with American policy, "formulated at the highest level to take all possible steps to impede Cuban shipping and trade". It would also have resulted in a public and congressional outcry potentially damaging to Anglo-American relations. Finally, by the end of June, the British Guianese government was already in receipt of two Cuban shipments of POL. A further shipment was, the State Department held, "far in excess present BG requirements and suggests GOBG intended to establish Cuba as permanent source BG POL requirements."⁹⁸ This final commercial concern was expressed also by oil companies operating in British Guiana. Their representatives sought to impress upon the BGTUC the need to ensure the supply of 'free

⁹⁵Letter, Meakins to McClellan, 2 Oct.1963, CA, BG 1963, CF, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, Box 3, GMMA; Letter, Ishmael to McClellan, 3 Oct.1963, CA, BG 1963, CF, AFL-CIO IAD1945-1971, Box 3, GMMA.

⁹⁶Letter, Grey to Melby, 30 May 1963, "560-General Strike Fuel Supplies" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG 84, Box 5, NA.

⁹⁷Letter, Melby to Grey, 10 June 1963, "560-General Strike Fuel Supplies" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG 84, Box 5, NA.

⁹⁸Telegram, DOS to Georgetown, No.581, 29 June 1963, "560-General Strike Fuel Supplies" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG 84, Box 5, NA.

world' petroleum products for the colony in order to "forestall possible permanent preemption of market by Cuban POL supplies."⁹⁹

Despite the circumstances of virtual blockade surrounding the PPP government's decision to import petroleum products and foodstuffs from Cuba, and despite Janet Jagan's insistence that this was only a temporary expedient, the incident was interpreted as evidence of the PPP's ill-intent by opposition figures in British Guiana, and by US Consul General Melby.¹⁰⁰

As the strike became more protracted, and with essential services maintained and the colony's economy still "limping along", Melby was not sanguine about the prospects for Jagan's overthrow. He observed on 15 June, for example, that "achieving a political end by an industrial strike may not be possible in non-industrialized society like BG."¹⁰¹ Jagan could not be removed, he believed, without British government intervention.

On Melby's analysis, moreover, the strike was not simply failing to remove Jagan. Far from damaging his government, it was enhancing the PPP's position and its programme for the future of the colony. The importation of foodstuffs and oil from Cuba had not only enabled Jagan to erect a façade of continued economic activity, but also, Melby argued, "made bloc penetration BG through bilateral trade a reality."¹⁰² By design, or through necessity in the face of a 'free world' blockade, Jagan was likely to adopt these arrangements as permanent. "We may find", Melby predicted, "that when conditions return to normal Guianese economy will in fact be tied in to large extent with Cuban economy and that of Soviet bloc, and that BG has become economic satellite of bloc while still a British colony."¹⁰³

⁹⁹Telegram, Washington to Georgetown, No.569, 27 June 1963, "560-General Strike Fuel Supplies" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG 84, Box 5, NA.

¹⁰⁰Telegram, Georgetown to DOS, No.546, 24 June 1963, "350-International Relations Miscellaneous" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 1, NA.

¹⁰¹Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 517, 15 June 1963, "560-Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

¹⁰²Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 542, 21 June 1963, "560-Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

¹⁰³Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 523, 17 June 1963, "560 Labor Unions, Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

Furthermore, within British Guiana itself the strike conditions were enabling the PPP to insert itself more effectively into the economic and commercial life of the colony; another development which Melby expected to persist after the strike. With the Civil Service unions on strike the PPP had been able to intensify its procedure of administrative subversion. In the distribution of imported POL through government depots, and the importation of Cuban foodstuffs through the PPP's commercial arm GIMPEX, only to be requisitioned and distributed by the government, Melby saw the emergence of state trading agencies for which the strike was providing convenient "in service training", and the potential emasculation of free enterprise in British Guiana.¹⁰⁴

Responsibility for this state of affairs, Melby argued, lay with the British government, who remained reluctant, even at the height of the general strike, to intervene decisively in the colony to break the deadlock. For example, a Colonial Office official, R.W. Piper, visiting Georgetown in May 1963, observed to Melby that the British were not prepared to assume the administrative burden of suspending the constitution unless it became unavoidable, and preferred to continue to "sit tight", intervening only to "keep blood from flowing".¹⁰⁵ Melby sharply dismissed the British position. The very presence of British troops to maintain law and order at the request of the government of the day served to prop up the Jagan government, and therefore constituted intervention. Behind the protection of British 'bayonets', Jagan was turning the strike to his advantage. "British 'non-intervention' in British Guiana is reaching dangerous point", Melby warned. "Despite all disclaimers, British have been intervening all along and in way which has worked to support Jagan."¹⁰⁶ More directly, he claimed, British Royal Navy officers had on one occasion been used to break the strike by piloting a "scab" oil tanker into port.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 542, 21 June 1963, "560 Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

¹⁰⁵Telegram, Georgetown to Washington, No.Priority 453, 20 May 1963, "560 Labor Unions Strikes" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-20, 6 Aug.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol2-3 Politico-Economic Reports" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, p.227.

Melby's critique of the role played by the British government in maintaining Jagan in power contrasts sharply with the PPP government's assessment of the British role. The PPP held the British government to be responsible for the breakdown, rather than the maintenance, of law and order in the colony. The division of functions and authority between London and the local government had created a situation in which the Governor and the Police Commissioner had been able to disregard the advice of local ministers in handling the security situation. Had this advice been taken, the PPP insisted, violence could have been contained in Georgetown and prevented from spilling into rural areas. British officials in Georgetown were, on the PPP's analysis, complicit in the attempt to overthrow the government.¹⁰⁸

During the strike Washington continued to press the British to take decisive action to remove Jagan. The breakdown of law and order, and evident unpopularity of the Jagan government could provide an opportunity for suspending the constitution and resuming direct rule. British officials, however, continued to maintain that Jagan's downfall would be best promulgated from within. However, if the British were consistently reluctant to act overtly to remove Jagan and to resume the responsibility for governing British Guiana, there is evidence to suggest that a number of British officials, including the Prime Minister, were aware of, and endorsed, external interference as a means of further discrediting the Jagan government and eroding its popular support, perhaps as an alternative to resuming direct rule. On 17 June 1963, for example, the American Ambassador to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, informed the State Department: "Members of UK del[egation] have recently told us they presume USUN informed on 'certain aspects of joint US-UK policy toward BG' particularly re: operations aimed at weakening Jagan and his party".¹⁰⁹

In addition, a message sent by Macmillan to Kennedy on 30 April 1963 appears to confirm British complicity in the 1963 attempt to overthrow Jagan's government. This letter inaugurated a period of intense Anglo-American attention to British Guiana at the highest

¹⁰⁸Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-13, 21 July 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol19 Government of Dependencies 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59 Box 3839, NA.

¹⁰⁹Telegram, NY to SOS, No.4517, 17 June 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol19 Government of Dependencies 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

levels between June and September 1963. Macmillan observed that, despite the hardship caused by the general strike, Jagan remained in office. Therefore, three courses of action were open to the two governments. The first option was to do nothing, but to wait in the hope that the strike would eventually succeed in moving Jagan from office: "to let things get worse and hope that our agreed plans will effect the necessary change in the government". It was, Macmillan argued, unlikely that this approach would succeed. The second option was to withdraw, granting early independence to the present government, or as Macmillan put it, to "make the wretched place independent and get rid of all our obligations." But Macmillan recognised that, tempting as this course might be for the British, it would be unacceptable in Washington. The final option would be to suspend the constitution and resume direct rule, a course about which he was clearly unenthusiastic. This would be, he observed, "colonialism in its flower" and would be condemned in the UN, the American press and other anti-colonial circles. The military presence that would be necessary to maintain law and order would divert troops required elsewhere. And in terms of administrative and military costs, resuming direct rule was simply beyond the resources of the British government.¹¹⁰

The Kennedy administration, however, did not share this view. American and British thinking on the next course of action was diametrically opposed. Of the three proposed courses of action Kennedy preferred the very one deemed unacceptable by the British: suspending the constitution and reimposing direct rule.¹¹¹

Opinion in British policy-making circles was moving in the other direction. A meeting of the Cabinet Overseas Policy Committee [OPC] on May 28 1963, clearly demonstrated British hostility to the idea of resuming direct rule. With the now five week old strike undermining the economy, and the internal security situation in the colony deteriorating rapidly, Sandys argued that it might soon be necessary suspend the constitution and resume direct rule. Sandys admitted that he and the Governor, a member of the 'do nothing' school, were not of the same opinion on this question. Grey had raised three objections. First, direct rule would

¹¹⁰Message to President Kennedy from PM, T251/63, 30 April 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

¹¹¹Telegram, FO to Washington, No.5670, 15 June 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

not solve any of the most basic problems. Secondly, Jagan might prove more troublesome and revolutionary if removed from office. And finally, additional troops would have to be found to maintain law and order. Sandys however had clearly run out of patience with the Governor's preferred strategy of waiting for the government to fall through its own ineptitude. A Burnham government was not an acceptable alternative and early independence was also unfeasible as it was likely to be accompanied by a breakdown in law and order resulting in a situation analogous to Cuba, or the Congo, or both. Suspending the constitution was in Sandys' view the only remaining option. With American financing, several years of direct rule could be used to build economic and political stability in the colony. Jagan could be detained, which could provide space for an alternative political leadership to emerge. Sandys was either ignorant or dismissive of the fate of Interim Government in the years following the 1953 constitutional suspension, when the same plan had been tried and had failed. The Colonial Secretary did not advocate the immediate suspension of the constitution. No action should be taken as long as Jagan and the local police could control the situation, but the Constitution should be suspended in preference to permitting Jagan to use British troops as a security force to sustain his government in power. In the meantime, he advocated some "precautionary steps" to clear the constitutional and administrative path for this eventuality.¹¹²

Although Sandys' precautionary steps were approved as a contingency measure, his views were not shared in the OPC. The impending prospect of resorting to direct rule prompted the OPC to re-evaluate the whole position. The debate in the Committee revealed some resentment that the government was remaining in a territory in which Britain had no economic or strategic interest and which had become a "continuing and substantial liability", solely at Washington's behest. Frustrated with this role as the agent of American interests, the Committee decided that Washington should be informed that, far from resuming direct rule in British Guiana the British government intended to revert to its original plan to grant early independence to the colony. The Committee were not unaware that early independence might have as its corollary an intensification of racial violence. But independence with all its

¹¹²Memorandum by CS, 25 May 1963, OP[63]9, CAB134/2371, PRO.

implications, or perhaps even the threat of independence, would at least force the American hand. The United States would have to assume responsibility for the territory in which it had the major superpower interest.¹¹³

Communicating this proposed policy reversal to Kennedy on 15 June, Macmillan outlined the problems involved in both imposing and maintaining direct rule in British Guiana, which he felt the President did not understand. Imposing direct rule was a complicated constitutional process, which would require rational justification if it was not to be condemned by the international community. Sandys' threat at the 1962 Constitutional Conference, to break the deadlock by imposing a settlement, did not constitute an adequate justification. Resuming direct rule was not what Sandys had had in mind in 1962. Imposing a settlement had been conceived of as a means of moving swiftly to independence. Neither would direct rule, once imposed, be a short-term measure. It would take, Macmillan predicted, at least five years to re-establish political and economic stability in the colony and to develop alternative political leadership. Once again Macmillan emphasised the unacceptable financial drain that the resumption of direct rule would place on British resources. He stated in conclusion:

"a decision to resume direct colonial rule raises for us political, military and above all financial problems of an almost insuperable nature. For these reasons we are now coming to the conclusion that we really have very little option but to revert to our previously announced policy of granting British Guiana early independence."¹¹⁴

The Kennedy administration was not impressed by Macmillan's proposed reversal of policy. CIA Deputy Director for Plans, Richard Helms, noted on 21 June "the significant extent to which British Guiana has become a major policy issue between the United States and Great Britain."¹¹⁵ From Washington's perspective the British government was renegeing on the understanding reached prior to the 1962 Independence Conference, which was interpreted in

¹¹³Meeting of the OPC, 28 May 1963, OP[63] 5th Meeting, CAB134/2371, PRO.

¹¹⁴Telegram, FO to Washington, No.5670, 15 June 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

¹¹⁵Memorandum For the Record, 'White House Meeting on British Guiana', 21 June 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.604.

Washington at least as an agreement that Jagan should be removed from office before British Guiana became independent.¹¹⁶

The Anglo-American impasse over British Guiana, evident in early 1963 but brought to a head during the general strike, was finally resolved at the end of June 1963. Kennedy added a British leg to his tour of European capitals to meet Macmillan at his country home, Birch Grove, 29-30 June 1963. American columnist Drew Pearson, writing in 1964, suggested that resolving the British Guiana issue was the sole reason for Kennedy's twenty-four hour flying visit to the UK.¹¹⁷ Certainly Kennedy regarded it as one of the most important issues to be discussed.¹¹⁸ British Guiana, however, received no mention in the communiqué issued at the conclusion of the talks. Kennedy was keen to downplay American interest in the colony, and to minimize press attention. The administration, he made clear, would publicly acknowledge no concern about British Guiana other than with regard to its racial problems.¹¹⁹

The Birch Grove meetings were presaged by preliminary talks at Secretary of State level. Rusk, Sandys and Home assembled in London on 28 June 1963. The disagreement over the desirability of the British resuming direct rule, in evidence in Kennedy and Macmillan's recent correspondence, dominated these conversations. Rusk was insistent that direct rule was the only solution, while Sandys cast about for possible alternatives. He outlined three courses: an immediate British withdrawal; direct rule; or the construction of an anti-Jagan coalition to lead the country into independence.¹²⁰ Each had its own drawbacks. Immediate British withdrawal with Jagan in charge, Sandys argued, might produce racial violence, a "Congo situation." An engineered Burnham-D'Aguiar anti-Jagan coalition, would be inherently unstable, and Jagan might be more dangerous in enforced opposition than he was in government. However, for Sandys the option of suspending the constitution and resuming

¹¹⁶Telegram, DOS to Embassy UK, No.6918, 21 June 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.605-606.

¹¹⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.248-249.

¹¹⁸Memorandum for the Record, 'White House Meeting on BG', 21 June 1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.604; Letter, Ormsby-Gore to Home, 26 June 1963, PREM11/4586, PRO.

¹¹⁹Record of a Meeting Between the PM and the US President, 30 June 1963, Doc.No.3, Visit to the UK by the President and Secretary of the US, June 27-30 1963, Vol.II, BG, PREM11/4586, PRO.

¹²⁰Record of a Meeting Between the FS, Commonwealth Secretary and US SOS, 28 June 1963, Doc.No.1, Visit to the UK by the President and Secretary of the US June 27-30 1963, Vol.II, BG, PREM11/4586, PRO.

direct rule was "particularly objectionable". Sandys, joined by Home, reiterated Macmillan's objections to this course. Suspending the constitution would be unpopular in British Guiana. It carried with it the risks of re-uniting the presently splintered independence movement, a second constitutional martyrdom for the PPP, and a violent anti-British campaign. The British Government was unwilling to pay the attendant financial, military and political costs. Finally, suspending the constitution would be virtually indefensible internationally, and might complicate the decolonization process elsewhere. "It seemed", Sandys observed, "most undesirable for Britain to expose herself in this way for the sake of a territory in which she had no profound interest".¹²¹

Rusk remained unmoved. As he reminded the Colonial Secretary, Britain did have a significant interest in British Guiana. It was not an interest in the future of the colony per se, but the uncertainty surrounding British Guiana's future course held potentially damaging ramifications for the broader imperative of maintaining a close and cordial Anglo-American relationship.¹²²

The disagreement over direct rule reflected this fundamental divergence in British and American thinking. From the British perspective, while HMG had the present responsibility for British Guiana, the United States had the primary interest in the territory that would continue long after British withdrawal. For example, Sandys floated the idea of securing American economic aid and a defence agreement for an independent British Guiana under an anti-Jagan coalition. Such arrangements, Sandys argued, would provide a "locus standi" for American intervention if there was a resurgence of the PPP threat.¹²³ They would also shift the responsibility for the colony onto the power with the most interest in its future development.

Rusk, however, voiced the persistent American reluctance to shoulder responsibility for the colony, while simultaneously wishing to dictate the course of British policy there. He

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid.

rejected Sandys' suggestion of an American-backed anti-Jagan coalition. The US, he said, "preferred a solution which enabled the British government to exercise the essential power in British Guiana", and reiterated the President's expressed preference for the resumption of direct rule. According to Rusk, "reversion to direct rule provided the only really satisfactory solution."¹²⁴

Amidst this deadlock, however, there were indications of potential compromise. Sandys expressed the view that, political considerations aside, direct rule would be workable if the Americans were prepared to "carry the financial baby", although he recognised that it would be difficult to secure adequate levels of aid from the Congress for a colony under direct British administration. He also suggested a quid pro quo on other colonial issues. He indicated that there might be a price for British capitulation to American demands, or at least some room for compromise. At the same time, he bolstered the British bargaining position with the thinly veiled threat that he was not yet prepared to exclude the possibility of granting early independence to the Jagan government. The meeting ended without agreement.¹²⁵

The move towards compromise began at Birch Grove two days later. The British were finally prepared to jettison the option of granting early independence. As the British moved to accommodate American demands, the American representatives were prepared to moderate their own stance on direct rule. The remaining option, an anti-Jagan coalition government, represented the compromise position. The British government could bring about the coalition through the introduction of PR. This might require an imposed referendum. After independence the Americans would play their part, building their interests in the colony, bolstering the coalition government with economic and social aid, and perhaps also reactivating their Atkinson Field base.¹²⁶ This approach had its own dangers. Reliance on anything resembling a democratic system ran the risk that the Guianese electorate might not agree with the British and Americans on what was best for British Guiana. In the face of the

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Record of a Meeting Between the PM and the US President, 30 June 1963, Document No.2, Visit to the UK by the President and Secretary of the US, June 27-30 1963, Vol.II, BG, PREM11/4586, PRO.

demographic reality whereby the East Indian birthrate outstripped that of the other racial groups, relying on democratic forms might be even more dangerous in the long term.

Although a compromise solution was emerging, the discussion was speculative. Neither the British nor Americans had given detailed thought to the logistics of this operation. How could the referendum be imposed? What if Jagan refused to participate? Would PR guarantee a Burnham/D'Aguiar coalition? Could such a coalition last? Would Jagan resort to violence?

Amidst this discussion of the minutiae of possible scenarios, Kennedy took the opportunity to reinforce the basic principles of the American position. The immediate communist threat was his greatest concern, from both an international and a domestic political perspective. He observed that,

"Latin America was the most dangerous part of the world because many countries in it might go communist at any minute. Next year there were elections in the United States. If Guiana had gone Communist meanwhile then the pressure for the United States to take some action against Cuba would rise and it would be impossible for any administration to resist."¹²⁷

For Kennedy, all the possible dangers and drawbacks of any course of action were subordinated to the imperative of preventing a communist takeover of British Guiana. He declared that he "saw the difficulties of any possible solution but these were rather less than the danger of British Guiana going Communist", and he was "prepared to put up with a great deal to prevent such a result."¹²⁸ When discussions were resumed later in the day it was quickly agreed to proceed with the anti-Jagan coalition option.

Lest the British had any doubts about the depth of Kennedy's determination to secure an 'acceptable' solution in British Guiana, it was powerfully reinforced by Ambassador Bruce's post mortem on the Birch Grove talks. In conversation with the Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, a former Ambassador to the United States, Harold Caccia, Bruce

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

echoed Kennedy's own emphasis on domestic political considerations in accounting for his concern. Caccia reported that,

"[Nuclear] Tests apart, British Guiana was the issue of far the greatest importance to the President. If British Guiana became independent under a leader commonly believed in the United States to be a Communist, the President would be vulnerable to damaging attack from all those who were far from content with the present position in Cuba. The Ambassador hoped that after what had been said we were in no doubt about the weight which the President attached to this issue. It would be of little avail to us whether the President's views coincided with our own or not on a variety of foreign issues if he was unable to be re-elected next year. It was as simple as that."¹²⁹

Both the British and Americans moved quickly in the wake of Birch Grove meetings to investigate the mechanics of the new plan. The Americans, however, were not immediately convinced that the plan to construct an anti-Jagan coalition would prove workable. Kennedy wrote to Macmillan on 5 July, "our people do not think there is any realistic prospect of increasing Burnham's numerical support."¹³⁰

On the British side, Sandys departed for British Guiana, arriving on 10 July 1963. He proposed the formation of a national coalition government including representatives from all the parties. The coalition would be temporary: Sandys suggested it might last for four or five months. Its purpose would be twofold: "to pacify racial feelings and prepare for the new constitutional conference."¹³¹ Jagan, for reasons of ideological irreconcilability, refused to countenance any coalition which included the UF, but indicated that he was prepared to enter a coalition with the PNC.¹³²

Since December 1962, Jagan had made a number of approaches to Burnham with a view to negotiating a PPP-PNC coalition. Burnham, however, was evasive.¹³³ Sandys' attempt to mediate a coalition was no more successful than Jagan's earlier efforts. Burnham suggested that one reason for Sandys failure was the fact that the two leaders never met face to face,

¹²⁹Caccia Submission, 8 July 1963, WP2/49/G, FO371/173294, PRO.

¹³⁰Telegram, FO to Washington, No.3445, 5 July 1963, WP2/46/G, FO371/173294, PRO.

¹³¹Telegram, Melby to DOS, No.Priority 30, 16 July 1963, "350-Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CRG1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹³²Ibid.; Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.275.

¹³³Ibid. pp.274-275.

and that Sandys had not been a reliable go-between: an interesting analysis from one who had consistently resisted Jagan's advances for such a meeting for over six months.¹³⁴ However, PPP-PNC differences were more substantive. Negotiations broke down over the allocation of ministerial positions and the relative representation of the two parties within the Council of Ministers. Burnham priced the PNC out of the coalition market. The PNC demanded an equal division of ministries between the two parties as an "indispensable condition" for entering into a coalition. Jagan argued that the PPP, as the majority party, should have six ministries and the PNC five.¹³⁵

Unsurprisingly, given the precarious internal security situation, control of the Ministry of Home Affairs also proved to be a contentious issue during the negotiations. In addition to an equal division of ministries, Burnham insisted that the PNC control this ministry. With a PNC Minister of Home Affairs, he confided to American officials, secret PPP arms caches could be seized. Burnham's expressed enthusiasm for disarming the PPP was accompanied by another request for American assistance in securing weapons for his own party.¹³⁶

Despite his failure to negotiate a coalition during his visit to Georgetown, Sandys persuaded Burnham and Jagan to agree to continue their discussions after his departure, in the publicly expressed hope that they could bury their differences and work towards a coalition. Even before these discussions had begun, Burnham declared that they would achieve nothing. But the exercise would be "necessary to convince HMG of fact". In his assumption of British naïveté about the prospects of a PPP-PNC coalition, Burnham was wrong. Sandys was not optimistic that the continuing Jagan-Burnham talks would result in a coalition government. But the negotiations were not without purpose. As he informed his Cabinet colleagues on his return, the fact that the talks were taking place at all might help to alleviate tension and the threat of violence in the colony.¹³⁷ Moreover, the talks and indeed their anticipated failure would serve an important presentational purpose for the British government, enabling it to

¹³⁴Telegram, Melby to DOS, No. Priority 30, 16 July 1963, "350-Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CRG1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷OPC Meeting, 17 July 1963, OP[63] 9th Meeting, CAB134/2371, PRO.

rely upon the defence that all possibilities had been exhausted before its resort to an imposed solution, and perhaps making such a solution more palatable to the international community.¹³⁸ Indeed, Sandys stated prior to his departure from British Guiana on 13 July 1963 that the negotiations could only be allowed to go on for a few months, reiterating the threat that if by then no agreement had been reached the British government would impose its own solution, as "the situation cannot be allowed to drift indefinitely."¹³⁹

By Jagan's account the continued discussions were in any case short lived. At only their second meeting on 18 July, Burnham insisted that the emergency regulations introduced during the general strike should be rescinded before further talks could go ahead. Jagan rejected this precondition, arguing that the emergency regulations were still essential for the functioning of the economic life of the colony.¹⁴⁰ The talks collapsed over this issue and the political stalemate persisted. Both opposition parties recognised that the deadlock served their interests, calculating that continued stalemate would eventually force the British government to intervene to remove Jagan.¹⁴¹

Despite the failure of the coalition talks, Sandys' visit to British Guiana had not been a wasted effort. After his return to the UK, the mechanics of the plan to remove the PPP government from office and replace it with an anti-Jagan coalition began to take shape. Sandys presented his plan to the OPC on 17 July 1963. The Constitutional Conference would be recalled in the autumn and, assuming that the British Guianese leaders would still be unable to reach agreement, he would make good on his threat to impose a solution. In a less than candid presentation, Sandys voiced his concerns to the Committee about the future of British Guiana in purely racial terms, neglecting to mention the American role in the decision to remove Jagan. The Committee had, after all, already expressed its opposition to American

¹³⁸Message to the President, T316/63, 18 July 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

¹³⁹Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, Unnumbered, 16 July 1963, "350-Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹⁴⁰Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.275.

¹⁴¹Telegram, Melby to DOS, No.Priority 30, 16 July 1963, "350 Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

dictate.¹⁴² Avoiding this contentious issue, Sandys argued that amending the Constitution to provide for a new electoral system would restore racial harmony.¹⁴³

The objective of this new electoral system, Sandys declared, would be to dismantle British Guiana's racial voting pattern. PR, as sought by the Guianese opposition parties, however, would not be sufficient. Under straight PR the Indian community might still, or at any rate soon, be able to command a working majority. To meet this problem Sandys envisaged that PR would be combined with a vote "pairing system" which would reward parties attracting multiracial support.¹⁴⁴

Ignoring Sandys' racial rationalisation of the PR solution, Macmillan, in communication with the President, frankly acknowledged the political dimensions of the new policy. Writing to inform Kennedy of the main features of Sandys' plan, Macmillan failed to mention its supposed racial implications. He did, however, assure the President that, "we are steering things along the lines which accord with your interests", and he was optimistic that the plan would secure "the defeat of Jagan and the formation of a coalition government of the two other parties".¹⁴⁵

Anticipating a strong reaction from Jagan against his solution, Sandys indicated that it might still become necessary to suspend the constitution. Jagan might attempt to circumvent the decision by, for example, calling for a fresh mandate under the present electoral system. American enthusiasm for a constitutional suspension had received no echo in Whitehall. Under Sandys plan, however, any suspension of the constitution was presented as an interim measure, qualitatively different from resuming direct control of the colony indefinitely, and not simply a retreat in the face of American pressure. Suspending the constitution would not be the solution per se, but a tactical measure to facilitate the implementation of a solution.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴²OPC Meeting, 28 May 1963, OP[63] 5th Meeting, CAB134/2371, PRO.

¹⁴³OPC Meeting, 17 July 1963, OP[63] 9th Meeting, CAB134/2371, PRO.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Message to the President, T316/63, 18 July 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

¹⁴⁶OPC Meeting, 17 July 1963, OP[63] 9th Meeting, CAB134/2371, PRO.

Indeed, in communicating this aspect of the new policy to Kennedy, Macmillan underlined the temporary nature of any constitutional suspension, reminding the President that "we are averse to direct rule as a solution to British Guiana politically because it would unite everybody against us. We should run this risk even with resuming direct rule for a short period, but at least we should in this way be doing it for a definite purpose".¹⁴⁷

The British government, Sandys proposed, should prepare itself to take this step. Under the existing British Guiana Act of 1928, the Governor could resume direct rule by relieving the local Ministers of their Executive powers. However, to suspend the constitution, it was necessary for the Order in Council to lie before Parliament for forty sitting days. This delay, Sandys argued, would gravely undermine the effectiveness of the suspension. The imposed solution might be marred by violence. He suggested therefore that, before the summer recess, the government should seek an amendment to the British Guiana Act to eliminate the forty day waiting period.¹⁴⁸

Sandys' plan finally addressed the central dilemma that the situation in British Guiana posed for the British government, and which had been articulated in the interdepartmental differences over policy. Sandys had devised a solution that, if implemented successfully, would enable the British government to comply with American demands for Jagan's removal while avoiding the international opprobrium of resuming direct rule and the financial burden of indefinite responsibility for the colony. Although the Foreign Office did not wholly share Sandys conviction that the introduction of PR held the key to a long term political solution for British Guiana, its primary concern was not British Guiana's political future. The Sandys plan did satisfy its two principal immediate requirements for any 'solution' in British Guiana. First, and most important, that it would not disturb the smooth functioning of Anglo-American relations. And secondly, that it could be rationalized and justified in the court of international opinion. The American Department's Dick Slater, commenting on Sandys' plan observed that whether or not PR could resolve British Guiana's internal problems,

¹⁴⁷Message to the President, T316/63, 18 July 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

"at least it would be acceptable to the Americans as it would at any rate in the short term reduce the likelihood of British Guiana achieving independence under the exclusive control of Dr. Jagan. It would also be difficult for our detractors in the United Nations to mount a serious attack on us because of such a move."¹⁴⁹

It is clear also from its response to Sandys' proposals which of these imperatives the Foreign Office felt most keenly. For example, the Foreign Office was prepared to endure any UN criticism which might accompany Sandys' proposed amendment to the British Guiana Act 1928. The amendment of the British Guiana Act would enable the British government not only to take the "drastic" step of suspending the constitution should it prove necessary, but would also allow for the implementation of "lesser measures". The examples of these lesser measures cited by Slater were the resumption of British control over immigration and trade - two areas of particular concern to Washington.¹⁵⁰

The immigration issue was particularly pertinent in July 1963 with the arrival in British Guiana of eighteen Cuban airfield technicians to assist the government air services. As the Cubans had arrived in the colony as tourists, the Governor had no constitutional authority to prevent their landing or to expedite their departure. Anticipating the likely reaction in Washington, the then Lord Privy Seal, Edward Heath, urged that the Cubans be ejected, portraying their arrival as the thin end of a wedge of Cuban infiltration, and predicting that the episode would have an "appalling" effect on both Anglo-American relations and British relations with Latin American republics paranoid about Cuban "contamination".¹⁵¹

However, the Foreign Office preference for deporting the Cubans was not broadly shared. As the Governor had no constitutional powers in this area, the only means of regaining British control over immigration would be to bring into force the secret Order in Council to transfer the executive powers of the British Guiana government to the Governor. Such an extreme course found little support in London. It would expose British planning to remove the Jagan

¹⁴⁹Slater Minute, 17 July 1963, A10110/115, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹Minute, Heath to CS, 16 July 1963, A10110/114, FO371/167689, PRO.

government. It would, it was recognised in the OPC, "precipitate a crisis and would place in jeopardy the plan for securing a more orderly introduction of a revised constitution".¹⁵²

As its plans for the future of the colony were being laid, the British were determined not to rock the British Guianese boat unnecessarily. They were concerned to avoid any harassment of the PPP government that might alert Jagan to their intentions to remove him, or prompt him to seize the initiative by, for example, calling an election or provoking violence. Any or all of these developments would frustrate the implementation of Sandys' plan, while bolstering Jagan's popularity and his international image as the embattled martyr in an anti-imperialist struggle. The long-term plan for securing Jagan's removal could not be jeopardised by minor irritations. As Macmillan explained the British position to Kennedy: "it may be better to shut our eyes to a few troublesome incidents like the Cubans on the airfield who we can easily eject when the time comes."¹⁵³ Moreover, there was no evidence to suggest that these Cuban airfield technicians were engaged in any subversive activities.¹⁵⁴

A similar pattern was revealed when the activities of GIMPEX, the PPP's trading arm, once again came to the fore in July of 1963, when the British Guianese government requested that it be allowed to borrow \$1 million from GIMPEX. The money had been deposited with GIMPEX by ALIMPEX, the Cuban state trading agency, as an advance payment for British Guianese goods.¹⁵⁵ Over the objections of the Foreign Office, the Colonial Secretary decided to make no attempt to veto the loan, casting it as a purely commercial transaction and not as a matter of external affairs warranting the intervention of the Governor. The bureaucratic battle-lines were clearly drawn.¹⁵⁶ Anticipating a strong reaction from Washington, the Foreign Office, stressing the loan's political implications, pressed for a veto. In the American Department Dick Slater observed that "GIMPEX and ALIMPEX of course constitute nothing but a very thin smokescreen: for GIMPEX read Jagan, for ALIMPEX read Castro."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵²OPC Meeting, 17 July 1963, OP[63]9th Meeting, CAB134/2371, PRO.

¹⁵³Message to the President, T316/63, 18 July 1963, PREM11/4593, PRO.

¹⁵⁴Brief for the Secretary of State's Visit to Moscow, No.B7, undated, A10110/144, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁵⁵Telegram, FO to Washington, No.6754, 20 July 1963, A10110/122, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁵⁶Slater Minute, 17 July 1963, A10110/120, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁵⁷Slater Minute, 11 July 1963, A10110/106, FO371/167689, PRO.

Permanent Under Secretary, Harold Caccia, was similarly fearful of the reaction in Washington. In view of Cuba's own well publicised financial problems, he noted, "it will not need an American of any financial expertise to guess where the Cubans must get any money to lend."¹⁵⁸ By contrast, in the Treasury the loan was regarded as a \$1 million saving for the British government. The Treasury, Slater observed, "would rather Jagan took money from the devil than from the British Exchequer."¹⁵⁹

The Foreign Office accurately predicted Washington's reaction to the GIMPEX loan. The State Department's Bill Burdett remarked that, "this would just about lift the roof off."¹⁶⁰ The Department stressed the loan's ideological, non-commercial implications, regarding it not as an attempt by the Jagan government to tackle its financial problems by whatever means were available, but as a direct Cuban subvention to the PPP. It formally requested therefore that the British decision not to veto the loan be reversed.¹⁶¹

The British, however, refused to reconsider their decision, employing the same reasoning as was used to justify non-action against the Cuban technicians.¹⁶² They were unwilling to take any provocative action against the PPP government, over a relatively minor issue, that might jeopardise their plans for Jagan's removal. This rationale again provided a means of containing both American frustration with what they regarded as the leftward drift of the Jagan government, and the American impulse for immediate action.

At the beginning of September 1963, Jagan once again sought a rapprochement with Washington. This approach is perhaps surprising in light of the increasingly anti-American flavour of the PPP publications *Thunder* and the *Mirror*, and the PPP's oft repeated

¹⁵⁸Caccia Minute, 17 July 1963, A10110/120, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁵⁹Slater Minute, 11 July 1963, A10110/106, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁶⁰Telegram, Washington to FO, No.2230, 20 July 1963, A10110/123, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁶¹Telegram, Washington to FO, No.2231, 20 July 1963, A10110/123, FO371/167689, PRO; Telegram, DOS to Georgetown, No.45, 20 July 1963, "510.1 Trade Relations Between Cuba Soviet Bloc and Newly Independent Countries" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA.

¹⁶²Telegram, DOS to Georgetown, No.53, 27 July 1963, "510.1 Trade Relations Between Cuba Soviet Bloc and Newly Independent Countries" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 5, NA; Brief for the Secretary of State's Visit to Moscow, No.B7, undated, A10110/144, FO371/167689, PRO.

allegations of American intervention.¹⁶³ However, Jagan sought out Melby specifically to discuss his government's deteriorating relationship with the United States and to seek ways to improve that relationship. Concerned that the US government had turned against him and citing the Tyler testimony as evidence, Jagan claimed that American hostility towards his regime was not only undermining his country's economy, but also his own position within the PPP. He told Melby that, "hotheads and extremists in [the] party no longer looked to him but acted on their own."¹⁶⁴

Melby recommended frank discussions with Jagan on the state of relations. Even if it was not possible to repair the relationship, at the very least, a frank exchange might reveal more about divisions in the PPP alluded to by Jagan.¹⁶⁵ Melby's view was not shared in Washington. The incongruity of this approach with the anti-American tone of PPP publications and statements had not escaped the notice of American officials. Neither was it compatible with the apparent readiness of the PPP government to expand its contacts with Cuba.¹⁶⁶ Washington remained unmoved by Jagan's approach. As Rusk reminded Melby: "We wish to avoid creating any impression, or enabling PPP to do so, that there exists any real possibility of improving relations between PPP and USG."¹⁶⁷

Jagan's discussion with Melby was not an isolated incident. Melby noted that it was the third time in ten days that such an approach had been made to the Consulate General.¹⁶⁸ Neither was it the last. In the week following his conversation with Melby, Jagan made a similar approach to US officials at the UN.¹⁶⁹ From their experience of Jagan's behaviour at the UN,

¹⁶³Airgram, Georgetown to DOS, No.A-306, 24 June 1963, "320-BG-US Relations" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 1, NA; Airgram, Georgetown to DOS, No.A-26, 18 Aug.1963, "320-BG-US Relations" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 1, NA; Airgram, Georgetown to DOS, No.A-24, 11 Aug.1963, "320-BG-US Relations" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 1, NA; Airgram, Georgetown to DOS, No.A-28, 18 June 1963, "320-BG-US Relations" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 1, NA.

¹⁶⁴Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.103, 5 Sept.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA. [Printed in *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, pp.610-611.]

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶Memorandum, Hughes to Rusk, 6 Sept.1963, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.612.

¹⁶⁷Telegram, DOS to Amconsul Georgetown, No.92, 7 Sept.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA. [Printed in *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.613.]

¹⁶⁸Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.103, 5 Sept.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3840, NA.

¹⁶⁹Telegram, NY to SOS, No.751, 10 Sept.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol19 Government of Dependencies" Folder, CFPPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Telegram, NY to SOS, No.805, 13 Sept.1963,

these officials too doubted his sincerity, observing, "if Jagan's purpose is really to establish friendly relations with US and to obtain economic aid, it is odd he at same time is distributing evidence of US hostility to his regime, as evidenced by Tyler's testimony before Appropriations Comite [sic], in what appears obvious attempt smear US as imperialist power."¹⁷⁰

As the Constitutional Conference approached, the British prepared to confront their worst case scenario: that in the face of Jagan's rejection of an imposed solution they would be forced to suspend the constitution in order to implement it. Anticipating the "major international row" that would follow a constitutional suspension, British diplomatic missions abroad were briefed for this eventuality.¹⁷¹ The official line was that the British government had decided to impose its own solution in British Guiana, in response to the deepening racial crisis in the colony, and that Jagan's political sympathies and affiliations had not been a factor in the decision.

British fears about the course of the Conference were unjustified. The Conference assembled at Lancaster House on 22 October 1963. Initially, Sandys was as prescient about the 1963 Conference as he had been about the 1962 Conference. As he predicted, British Guiana's political leaders remained deadlocked on the key issues of the electoral system, voting age, and elections before independence. However, the British government did not have to impose a solution on its own authority, over the heads of British Guiana's political leaders. On 25 October 1963, Jagan, Burnham and D'Aguiar wrote to Sandys:

"...we have not succeeded in reaching agreement; and we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that there is no prospect of an agreed solution. Another adjournment of the Conference for further discussions would therefore serve no useful purpose and would result only in further delaying British Guiana's independence and in continued uncertainty in the country. In these circumstances we are agreed to ask the British government to settle on their authority all outstanding constitutional issues, and we undertake to accept their decisions."¹⁷²

"Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol19 Government of Dependencies" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹FO Telegram, No.Circular 7, 22 Oct.1963, A10110/191/G, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁷²Report, BG Conference 1963, Cmnd.2203 [London, 1963].

Jagan had effectively signed away his right to protest whatever decisions Sandys might come to, and the Colonial Secretary did not waste this opportunity. He announced his decisions on 31 October 1963. Although Burnham would make a token protest that a date for independence had not been set, Sandys handed victory to British Guiana's opposition groups: the voting age would not be lowered and there would be fresh elections under PR before a date for independence would be set. Sandys cast his decision in terms of concern for the colony's racial problems. He held the development of political parties along racial lines since the PPP split to be the "root cause" of the present difficulties, apportioning blame for this to both the PPP and PNC. "Both parties", he said, "have for their own political ends, fanned the racial emotions of their followers, with the result that each has come to be regarded as the champion of one race and the enemy of the other".¹⁷³ PR, he argued, would break down this racial bipolarity.

To identify race, as Sandys did, as the primary determinant of political allegiance within British Guiana was accurate. But to identify it, as Sandys also did, as the mainspring of the announced constitutional changes was disingenuous. The alleviation of racial tension was not the sole or even the main motivation behind Sandys' decision. But he made no mention of Jagan's supposed ideological proclivities, nor, of course, of the insistence of Washington that Jagan be removed from office.

Of more interest perhaps than the introduction of PR per se, is the form of PR that Sandys selected. Despite his insistence that the new electoral system would encourage multiracial coalitions and eventually interracial parties, Sandys rejected the implementation of any additional device to help break down the existing racial voting pattern. The idea that the electoral system would not be straightforward PR, but would carry some modifications to encourage cross racial voting, had been touted by Sandys as a key feature of his solution when it was first presented in July 1963. It remained prominent in British planning and

¹⁷³Statement by the CS, Annex A, British Guiana Conference 1963, Cmnd.2203 [London, 1963].

discussions with American officials through the late summer and autumn of 1963.¹⁷⁴

However, Sandys jettisoned the idea, opting for straight PR on the Israeli model advocated by Burnham, in which the whole country is treated as one constituency and the electors vote for party lists of candidates.

Sir Ralph Grey later remarked that "neither he nor top CO officials really understood why Sandys choose straight PR with single constituency when strong cases had been made out for several other variations".¹⁷⁵ Grey doubted that Sandys' system would do anything to reduce racial voting in British Guiana. But race was not Sandys' primary concern. He had initially rejected the introduction of straight PR on political grounds, as too obviously a capitulation to opposition demands. But with Jagan's signature on the letter requesting that he settle the dispute, Sandys no longer felt bound to strive for any appearance of impartiality.¹⁷⁶

The question remains as to why Jagan agreed to British arbitration? He himself has provided an explanation.¹⁷⁷ He assumed that the setting of a date for independence would be included in any solution. With the Conference in deadlock he "was confronted with the alternative of either getting a decision on independence, or returning home without any."¹⁷⁸ With his government paralysed and the British Treasury likely to resume control of its financial affairs, he sought to break the log-jam. Moreover, he argued, without a firm decision on independence, opposition violence would continue. In any case, if he did not agree to British arbitration, he expected the British would impose their own solution. In this last respect at least he was correct. Sandys was prepared to impose a solution, even if its implementation required suspending the constitution.

¹⁷⁴Telegram, London to DOS, No.1247, 13 Sept.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol15 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; FO Telegram, No.Circular 7, 22 Oct.1963, A10110/191/G, FO371/167689, PRO; Telegram, London to SOS, No.1665, 2 Oct.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol15 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

¹⁷⁵Telegram, Georgetown to DOS, No.182, 22 Nov.1963, "350-BG Independence 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA.

¹⁷⁶Extract from Record of Meeting Between Commonwealth Secretary and Mr. Rusk, 19 Dec.1963, PREM11/4644, PRO.

¹⁷⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.279-280.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.* p.279.

Jagan protested Sandys' decision in a letter to the Prime Minister on 7 November 1963.¹⁷⁹ It constituted a "breach of faith" and a "betrayal of trust". The Conference had been called, Jagan supposed, to discuss independence. The British government had agreed to the principle of independence as far back as 1960. Yet no independence date had been set. Moreover, Jagan argued, setting a date for independence had been implicit in the request of British Guiana's politicians that Sandys' arbitrate their dispute. By failing to do this, and by imposing a solution so clearly partial to one faction and making no effort to broker a compromise, Sandys had "completely dishonoured the spirit of the mandate given to him by the leaders of the three political parties". In conceding to the demands of the opposition parties, Sandys had put a premium on violence and Jagan predicted further troubles. In what might be interpreted as a thinly veiled threat, he wrote that "the Guianese people may well question whether they can ever hope to fulfil their aspirations via the electoral and parliamentary road." The PPP, he declared, would not feel "honour bound" to accept Sandys' decision.¹⁸⁰

Beyond the rhetoric however, the immediate response of Jagan and the PPP to Sandys' decision was remarkable for its restraint. There was no immediate resort to a revolutionary guerrilla campaign. Nor was there any call for immediate elections under the present system. Jagan did not resign, although he did apparently consider this course.¹⁸¹ At the Conference, Jagan had proved to be more pliant than the British had anticipated. Similarly, his response to Sandys' solution bore little relation to British fears.

At the time of Kennedy's death in November 1963 Jagan remained in office, but the constitutional machinery for his removal had been put in place. Sandys had called for an election under an electoral system rigged to ensure Jagan's defeat in an ostensibly democratic manner. The British were confident the PR system would achieve the desired result. Jagan, for all his talk, appeared acquiescent. The British it seemed would be spared the inconvenience of a constitutional suspension. In conversation with Dean Rusk on 26

¹⁷⁹Letter, Jagan to PM, 7 November 1963, A10110/207, FO371/167689, PRO.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Telegram, Georgetown to DOS, No.182, 22 Nov.1963, "350-BG Independence 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA; Extract from Record of Meeting Between Commonwealth Secretary and Mr. Rusk, 19 Dec.1963, PREM11/4644, PRO.

November 1963, Home, who had now succeeded Macmillan as Prime Minister, remarked with respect to British Guiana that "this had gone off slightly better than had been hoped. It had even been slightly awkward that Dr. Jagan had given so little trouble."¹⁸²

¹⁸²Extract from Record of Conversation at HM Embassy Washington, 26 Nov.1963, A10110/216G, FO371/167690, PRO.

Chapter 6

Democracy Deferred: The Realisation of American Objectives.

December 1963 - December 1964 and beyond.

British complacency in the wake of the 1963 Constitutional Conference, that Jagan's removal from office could be effected with ease, was misplaced. Jagan's quiescence was short-lived. Chastened by his own inadvertent complicity in facilitating Sandys' decisions at the 1963 Conference, and aware of the likely result of a forthcoming election under PR, Jagan was no longer willing to act as an agent of his own destruction. The PPP launched a multi-track assault on the new constitution, designed to mobilise pressure, both within British Guiana and internationally, for a reversal of Sandys' decisions. Failing this, the party sought at least to force a postponement of the election under PR, destabilising the internal security situation in the colony to the point at which it was hoped the elections could not take place.

The PPP publicly condemned the Sandys' decisions and made repeated requests that they be reversed. It organised a series of marches and demonstrations in what Jagan described as a "hurricane of protest", culminating in a Citizens Freedom Rally on 31 January 1964.¹ It resorted also to legislative obstruction, international lobbying, and ultimately the promotion of violence. On a legislative level, the PPP government refused to cooperate with the implementation of Sandys' decisions, forcing the British government to amend British Guiana's constitution through Orders in Council.²

In an attempt to mobilise international pressure on the British government to reverse the Sandys' decisions, Jagan outlined his party's objections in a series of circular letters to all the Commonwealth Prime Ministers, who responded with varying degrees of sympathy.³

President Nkrumah responded by sending the Ghanaian Permanent Representative to the UN

¹Cheddi Jagan, *The West On Trial: The Fight for Guyana's Freedom*, [London, 1966], p.305.

²Ibid. p.314; Brief by CRO and CO, "Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and British Dependencies in the West Indies including British Guiana", PM[W][64] 28, Feb.1964, CAB133/247, PRO.

³Ibid.

to Georgetown to attempt to negotiate an accommodation between Burnham and Jagan in February 1964.

In the fast developing tradition of external attempts at mediation, the Ghanaian peace mission was a failure.⁴ Its efforts revealed the shifting balance of power in British Guianese politics. Symptomatic of his weakened bargaining position since the 1963 Conference, Jagan was prepared to concede both parity in the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Home Affairs to the PNC, in return for the replacement of PR with a mixed voting system on the Surinam model, with Members of the Legislative Assembly elected by both PR and first-past-the-post voting systems, and the introduction of a threshold of 12% of the vote for legislative representation of political parties.⁵ As Jagan's interest in obtaining a negotiated coalition settlement had grown, however, Burnham's had declined. If the British refused to reverse Sandys' decisions, a coalition with the PNC would provide the only means of preserving a governmental role for the PPP, and perhaps the only means of retaining wider political influence. Members of the PPP had already made informal overtures to the PNC regarding a coalition since the Constitutional Conference.⁶ However, Burnham's confidence that he would replace Jagan had been boosted by Sandys' decisions. He needed only to sit tight until the elections to capture the government. There was little to entice him into meaningful negotiations with Jagan. The Ghanaian sponsored negotiations ultimately foundered on the PNC's absolute refusal to forego PR, the sine qua non of the PPP offer.⁷ A later attempt at external mediation in May 1964 by Trinidadian Premier Dr. Eric Williams also ended in failure.⁸

Jagan's appeal to the Commonwealth did spark the belated interest of the Canadian government, whose hitherto virtual silence on the subject of British Guiana was surprising in

⁴Elisabeth Wallace, "British Guiana: Causes of the Present Discontents", *IJ*, 19:4, 1964, p.532.

⁵Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.312-314.

⁶Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-105, 22 Dec.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol 14 Elections" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to DOS, No.A-101, 15 Dec.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol 14 Elections" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, p.314.

⁸Wallace, *Op. Cit.*, p.534.

view of substantial Canadian bauxite interests in the colony. The Aluminium Company of Canada [ALCAN] had an investment in plant in British Guiana amounting to \$100 million. Half of the Canadian aluminium industry was dependent upon Guianese bauxite, and one Canadian official estimated that it would take two to three years to build up another source.⁹ Without official representation in Georgetown, the Canadian government was heavily reliant upon ALCAN officials for information and adopted their analysis of developments, if not their prescriptions for Canadian involvement. ALCAN's profits and Canadian dollar earnings would suffer should the bauxite supply from British Guiana be shut off by nationalisation. But ALCAN officials shared the Bookers' view that, notwithstanding some concern about Jagan's ideological leanings, their interests would best be protected by an cooperative approach to the Jagan government, based on an acceptance of local political realities. To this end they had, albeit unsuccessfully, attempted to persuade the Canadian cabinet to extend economic assistance and advice to Jagan.¹⁰ The present attitude and policy of the United States towards British Guiana, the Canadians suggested in early 1964, might prove counterproductive. Far from precluding communism, American policy might propel British Guiana towards communism, as had happened in the case of Cuba. The United States, the Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs declared, "might be making the same mistake about British Guiana as they had made about Cuba"¹¹, and the Canadian government was "anxious lest the United States should bring about a second Cuba in British Guiana".¹²

The Canadians signalled their new found interest in British Guiana's future with the establishment of a diplomatic post in Georgetown. Their reservations about the course of Anglo-American policy in the colony had, however, come too late to effect any change in

⁹Memcon, 'BG', 20 Dec.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol 1 General Policy Background 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

¹⁰Telegram, Amembassy Ottawa to Amconsul Georgetown, No.3[Info], 7 Sept.1961, "350-Political Affairs General July-Dec.1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA; Telegram, Amembassy Ottawa to Amconsul Georgetown, No.1 [Info], 17 Aug.1961, "350-Political Affairs General July-Dec.1961" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 2, NA; Memcon, 10 April 1962, "Economic Mission [Hoffman Report] 1961-62" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 4, NA; Memcon, 'Situation in British Guiana', 22? October 1962, "350-Political Affairs General 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

¹¹Record of a Meeting Between the FS and the Canadian SOS for External Affairs, 10 Feb.1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

¹²Record of a Meeting Between the FS and the Canadian SOS for External Affairs, 11 Feb.1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

that policy. In any case, given the depth of American hostility to Jagan, which over the preceding two years had successfully quashed a number of British reservations, it is unlikely that earlier Canadian involvement, particularly in the absence of an offer of substantial Canadian economic aid, would have substantially altered Jagan's fate.

The British were initially unperturbed by the PPP's campaign against the Sandys decisions.¹³ But the situation was transformed in February 1964 when GAWU, the PPP backed sugar union, called a strike. Ostensibly another round in the ongoing battle against the MPCA and SPA for recognition as the legitimate bargaining agent in the sugar industry, the GAWU strike was more than a strike for union recognition. It would also serve as a convenient demonstration of PPP power in the sugar industry, enhancing Jagan's bargaining position vis a vis the British government and in coalition negotiations with Burnham. Should GAWU succeed in its bid for recognition, PPP control over the sugar industry would be assured, and its influence within the TUC increased, even if it were removed from government. Moreover, should the strike fail, it would nevertheless stand as a useful demonstration of the reality that if, over the past two years, the opposition had challenged the legitimacy of the PPP government and demonstrated its capacity to hold that government to ransom by its control over the Georgetown trade unions and civil service, the PPP, with the unwavering support of the majority of East Indian sugar workers, posed a parallel threat to the stability of any non-PPP government, and consequently to British hopes of speedy withdrawal, through its potential to disrupt the country's major industry.

The strike quickly descended into racial warfare. The precise dynamics of this transformation however, have been obscured by the obvious partiality of existing accounts of the strike and its consequences. By Jagan's account, it was the importation of "scab" African labour from Georgetown to the sugar estates, some of whom acted as "vigilantes", and the brutal treatment accorded to peaceful picketers by the predominantly African police force which touched off the spiral of interracial violence.¹⁴ On the other side, trade union officials

¹³Brief by CRO and CO, "Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and British Dependencies in the West Indies including British Guiana", PM[W][64] 28, Feb.1964, CAB133/247, PRO.

¹⁴Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.306-307.

portrayed the recruitment of vigilante groups, for example, as a response to violent GAWU/PPP intimidation of sugar workers, and an attempt to keep the agents of this intimidation off the estates.¹⁵ Estate managers also complained that GAWU and PYO activists were intimidating their employees.¹⁶

Whoever was responsible for the outbreak of racial disturbances in 1964, both East Indians and Africans were subjected to racially motivated attacks and beatings and lost their homes, livelihoods and lives in arson and bombing campaigns as violence gradually engulfed the whole country.¹⁷ As the situation became more serious, the new Governor, Sir Richard Luyt, pressed the Council of Ministers once again to declare a State of Emergency and requested additional British troops be despatched to the colony.¹⁸ A State of Emergency, the third in three years, was declared on 22 May 1964. Following the murder of a senior civil servant and seven of his children in an arson attack on 11 June 1964, the Governor, frustrated by Ministerial refusal to authorise powers to the security forces which he regarded as necessary to meet the emergency, requested and was granted further powers including that of detention without trial.¹⁹

The disturbances of 1964 left 176 dead and 920 injured. 1,400 homes were destroyed by fire.²⁰ The legacy of this violence, however, cannot be measured simply by the death toll. British Guiana's villages became increasingly racially segregated as East Indians and Africans who found themselves in a minority in their own villages were forced to move, seeking security in communities where their own race predominated. Some 15,000 people were displaced.²¹ This process of segregation began at Wismar, where an attack by an African mob prompted East Indians in other villages surrounding the African stronghold in the bauxite town of Mackenzie to leave their homes.

¹⁵Report on BG, March 21-26 1964, CA, BG 1964, CF, AFL-CIO IAD 1945-71, Box 3, GMMA.

¹⁶Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.132, 2 March 1964, AK1062/4, FO371/174036, PRO.

¹⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.306-311; Wallace, *Op.Cit.*, pp.532-540.

¹⁸Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.233, 19 May 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

¹⁹Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.298, 12 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

²⁰Figures from Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, p.311.

²¹*Ibid.*

The Wismar incident has become the most infamous incident of the 1964 disturbances also as a demonstration of police partiality in the racial conflict. Janet Jagan, Minister for Home Affairs since Rai's departure from the PPP, received intelligence that violence was planned against the East Indian minority in this predominantly black bauxite region. The police and army, however, refused to reinforce the local security forces in the area, who later were alleged to have stood by and watched as East Indians were beaten, raped and murdered and their homes destroyed. Neither, Janet Jagan claimed, had they kept her informed of developments in the area when the violence broke out. Charging that the African-dominated police force was partial to the PNC, she resigned her portfolio on 1 June 1964.²²

Despite public appeals by Jagan and Burnham for an end to the violence, both PPP and PNC activists have been implicated in the violence of 1964. A bombing campaign in Georgetown was believed to have been the work of PNC activist Emmanuel Fairbairn, and in August 1964, the Commissioner of Police confirmed the PNC's involvement in "organised thuggery which is centrally directed", through "the subversive and criminal activities of a criminal gang" attached to the party.²³

The British authorities, however, were more concerned with the activities of certain members of the PPP and the PYO.²⁴ In June, the Governor exercised his newly acquired powers of detention disproportionately against the PPP and PYO.²⁵ Of 35 detainees, 32 were PPP activists. Only 2 members of the PNC were detained. The imbalance, Luyt insisted, reflected the fact that "the planned promotion of violence and subversion is almost a PPP monopoly. PNC reaction is largely spontaneous and not organised".²⁶ The PPP detainees included members of the Legislative Assembly, the Deputy Premier Brindley Benn, Moses Bhagwan,

²²Wallace, *Op.Cit.*, pp.533-534; Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.308-310; Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.265, 1 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

²³Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.311-312.

²⁴Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.236, 20 May 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

²⁵Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.298, 12 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO; Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.299, 13 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

²⁶*Ibid.*

Harry Lall, also the President of GAWU, and Victor Downer, identified by Luyt as the "main promoters of violence".²⁷ The detentions deprived the PPP of its majority in the Legislative Council, and taken together with the Governor's aggregation of powers during the State of Emergency constituted, in Jagan's eyes at least, the effective although not formal suspension of the constitution.²⁸ Recognising this, Luyt believed the detentions would prompt the Jagan government to resign, and he advised London to prepare for early direct rule.²⁹ In the event this step was not necessary. Violence in the colony abated somewhat, although it did not subside entirely, with the resolution of the GAWU strike which ended on 27 July with both sides claiming victory. GAWU, however, remained unrecognised.

As interracial violence intensified in late May and early June, Burnham and Jagan both expressed their interest in a coalition government to restore national unity. Burnham proposed an immediate all party coalition government to serve until the PR elections were held. Commensurate with his increasingly desperate position, Jagan was prepared to offer substantial concessions to the PNC with regard to the parity of the parties within the coalition. Even so, he was not interested in a short-term coalition and sought instead an arrangement of between two and four years, to extend beyond the PR elections, cushioning the impact of PR on the PPP's legislative strength, and conditional upon a commitment to replace PR with the Surinam voting system. Neither was he prepared to countenance the inclusion of the UF in any coalition.³⁰ Once again, both Burnham and Jagan's coalition offers were predicated upon conditions unacceptable to the other side. Despite the escalating racial crisis and the rhetoric of reconciliation, national unity continued to take a back seat to manoeuvring for party advantage.

The sincerity of Burnham and Jagan's coalition offers was questionable but, by the end of June 1964, British officials in the colony had come to regard a PPP-PNC coalition as the only means of restoring peace. Only two weeks after the detentions directed primarily at the PPP,

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.314-315.

²⁹Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.298, 12 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

³⁰Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.317-319; Thomas J. Spinner, *A Political and Social History of Guyana 1945-1983*, [Boulder CO, 1984], pp.106-107.

Governor Luyt had an apparent change of heart, appealing to the Colonial Office for a shift in policy to end the violence which, he argued, was threatening the long-term stability of the country and imposing a potentially indefinite drain on British resources.³¹

On taking up his position as Governor, Luyt recalled, he had understood his objectives to be "two fold" and "parallel". First, "to bring British Guiana in the fairly early future to independence with reasonable stability and peace".³² Secondly, "to ensure that Communism [namely Jagan and the PPP] is not in the saddle when independence is reached".³³ The intensifying racial conflict was, however, rendering these two objectives increasingly incompatible, as the commitment to the second was steadily undermining the first. Sandys' prediction that the introduction of PR would stimulate the formation of new parties and reduce the racial bipolarity of British Guiana's political life, had not been borne out by events. In Luyt's assessment, the elections, scheduled for 7 December 1964, were likely to leave one of the major racial sections in control of the government, while the other was totally excluded from political power, a situation which did not augur well for the future security situation in the colony. With no end to racial violence in sight Luyt had concluded that only a PPP-PNC coalition could bring peace. Failing this outcome, it might be necessary to reintroduce direct rule, possibly combined with the proscription of racial or perhaps all political parties, an option unlikely to be well received in London.³⁴

Luyt was not optimistic about the prospects for a coalition. The record of previous attempts to bring the two sides together was dismal and there was little incentive for Burnham to cooperate. Even Melby's successor as American Consul General, Delmar Carlson, stated that Burnham's only objective in any coalition arrangement would be to assert PNC control over the police force: hence his sustained interest in the Ministry of Home Affairs.³⁵

³¹Copy of telegram received from Georgetown, No.228, 28 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Telegram, Luyt to Poynton, 4 July 1964, enclosure to Minute, Poynton to CS, 7 July 1964, A10110/165G, FO371/173552, PRO.

The main obstacle to a PPP-PNC coalition was the United States whose commitment to the objective of ousting Jagan far outstripped its concern for the future stability of the colony. Carlson admitted to having pressurised Burnham to resist all coalition overtures.³⁶ The Americans would have to be won over to the idea of a Burnham-Jagan coalition before there could be any chance of success in negotiating such an arrangement.³⁷

Jagan too believed that the biggest obstacle to a coalition was the United States, and with a coalition now almost the only remaining means of perpetuating PPP participation in government, in early July he once again sought the opportunity to allay American suspicions of his party. Insisting that the events of recent months had demonstrated that only a PPP-PNC coalition could end interracial violence, and that Burnham could be enticed into a coalition only if it had the endorsement of the US government, he proposed that British Guiana's Attorney General, Fenton Ramashoye, visit Washington for discussions with American officials to secure backing for a PPP-PNC coalition. Jagan conceived of a coalition as a long term solution that would simultaneously reduce interracial violence and guarantee his party's survival in a PR era. The topics he listed for discussion in Washington included the "principle that any Guianese government must include appropriate representation" from the African and Indian cultural sections, and "appropriate guarantees" to make a coalition "a meaningful and enduring arrangement".³⁸ Committed to Jagan's removal and confident that this was imminent, Jagan's request was anathema in Washington. The State Department, playing the same waiting game as Burnham, rejected the proposal.³⁹

Neither were the Americans receptive to British interest in a Jagan-Burnham coalition. Sandys communicated the Governor's request to be authorised to negotiate such a coalition to the American Ambassador in London on 1 July. He did not receive much encouragement. There was little optimism in Whitehall that the Americans would acquiesce in the suggested shift in policy. In the view of Foreign Secretary, R.A. Butler, American domestic politics

³⁶Copy of telegram received from Georgetown, No.228, 28 June 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

³⁷Memorandum, R.A.Butler to CRS, FS/64/676, 1 July 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

³⁸Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.382, 1 July 1964, A10110/152, FO371/173552, PRO.

³⁹Martin Minute, 6 July 1964, A10110/152, FO371/173552, PRO.

militated against the Johnson administration agreeing to any PPP participation in the future government of British Guiana. 1964 was an election year and the Johnson administration would be "most unwilling to expose itself to attacks for being soft on communism."⁴⁰

It is interesting to note that the Colonial Office's proposed policy shift did not, surprisingly, provoke the wrath of the Foreign Office. In the Foreign Office view, approaching the Americans on the coalition issue could prove fruitless, but it would not be damaging. If it was unlikely that the Americans would lift their veto and encourage Burnham into a coalition with Jagan, the Foreign Office was equally sceptical about the chances of such a coalition ever materialising. It was thus unlikely to become a source of Anglo-American tension. The Foreign Office therefore had no qualms about further Colonial Office approaches to the Americans on the matter.⁴¹

Confident of American support, Burnham in early July came out forcefully against any PPP-PNC coalition, declaring unequivocally that the PNC would not enter into any coalition arrangements prior to the 1964 elections.⁴² Nor would it cooperate with any peace team that might be sent by the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers presently meeting in London and which Jagan, encouraged by a British Labour Party suggestion, was lobbying to find a compromise solution.⁴³ Burnham's position gave little comfort to Luyt who remained convinced that a coalition "may yet prove the only salvation for British Guiana and for Britain."⁴⁴

The Colonial Office, convinced that Burnham had been "put up" to this latest display of intransigence by the Americans, sought a means of allaying American fears of a Burnham-Jagan coalition.⁴⁵ Luyt suggested that the coalition approach be rationalised to the Americans

⁴⁰Memorandum, Butler to CRS, FS/64/676, 1 July 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

⁴¹Rennie Minute, 8 July 1964, A10110/165G, FO371/173552, PRO.

⁴²Telegram, BG[Luyt] to CS, Personal No.399, 6 July 1964, PREM11/4644, PRO.

⁴³Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.317-319; Memorandum, 'Remaining Colonial Problems', PMM[UK][64] A.26, CAB133/264, PRO.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Memorandum, Poynton to SOS, 7 July 1964, A10110/165/G, FO371/173552, PRO.

as a strategic move. The British government, he argued, should reassure its ally of its continued commitment to the primary objective of removing Jagan from office through the ostensibly democratic device of an election under proportional representation. It should emphasise, however, that a political solution, in the form of a Jagan-Burnham coalition, was necessary if increasing interracial violence was not to so undermine peace in the colony as to jeopardise the holding of the crucial election and leave Jagan in office indefinitely. The coalition would be temporary, to facilitate the election that was the centrepiece of Anglo-American plans for the colony but which depended on the restoration of peace. Simply deploying more troops to the colony, aside from the expense to the British government, might not be sufficient, given the sporadic and unpredictable nature of British Guiana's developing racial conflict, to bring the violence to an end. Moreover, in the absence of a political truce, Jagan might still feel free to boycott the elections and then to challenge the legitimacy of his defeat. It was vital that the PPP contest the elections and be seen to be defeated at the polls. It was therefore in both Burnham's and Washington's interest to work for a temporary coalition to ensure that elections under PR could go ahead. Thus, even if no coalition could be negotiated, and even its most vigorous proponents admitted that the odds were stacked against it, it would be Jagan and not Burnham who would appear to be blocking the path to peace and stability.⁴⁶

Luyt's rationale provided the basis for a message from Colonial Secretary Sandys to Rusk, requesting that the Americans support the attempt to establish a coalition by having their "people" encourage Burnham to adopt a more cooperative attitude.⁴⁷ The message, however, got no further than the British Ambassador in Washington, David Ormsby-Gore, now Lord Harlech, who recommended that discussion of the coalition proposal be reserved until scheduled Anglo-American talks on British Guiana began on 16 July, lest it appear that the British were "prejudging" the issues. The Americans, Harlech hardly needed to remind Sandys, would take "an awful lot of convincing that this new course is right."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Telegram, Luyt to Poynton, 4 July 1964, enclosure to Minute, Poynton to CS, 7 July 1964, A10110/165G, FO371/173552, PRO.

⁴⁷Telegram, FO to Washington, No.8493, 8 July 1964, A10110/164/G, FO371/173552, PRO.

⁴⁸Telegram, Washington to FO, No.2500, 9 July 1964, A10110/166/G, FO371/173552, PRO.

The coalition issue was the only contentious issue at the talks. On every other issue British and American officials were in harmony. Officials on both sides shared the assessment, for example, that the forthcoming PR election would result in Jagan's defeat. Making a mockery of Sandys' claims that the new electoral system would break down British Guiana's racial voting patterns, British and American officials calculated the PPP's likely demise by identifying PPP supporters and opponents with a crude count of East Indian and non-East Indian names in 31 constituencies for which lists of registered voters were presently available and then extrapolating the trend to the whole electorate. The PPP, it was estimated, would receive between 5% and 10% less of the vote than the opposition parties combined. Every effort would be made to support and encourage the development of small splinter parties that could further diminish the PPP's share of the vote.⁴⁹

British and American officials agreed also that substantial economic aid would be required to sustain a PNC-UF coalition government after the election. With the prospect of a Burnham-D'Aguiar government taking office, the Americans dropped their opposition to aid for British Guianese development. As a quid pro quo for Jagan's removal, the American government was prepared to provide US\$10 million for a crash development programme, of which US\$5 million would be immediately available to the new government. It was also willing to shoulder the burden of longer term economic development in British Guiana envisaging contributions of between US\$14.1 million and US\$17.6 million a year over five years to a development plan involving the total expenditure of between US\$17.5 million and US\$23.5 million a year over the five year period.⁵⁰

There was consensus too at the 1964 talks on one area of policy that had previously been the source of Anglo-American friction. Direct rule, it was now accepted on both sides, was not a viable policy option.⁵¹

⁴⁹Agreed Record, Anglo-American Consultations, 17 July 1964, A10110/175G, FO371/173553, PRO.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

The talks did reveal the potential for future Anglo-American friction should the PPP emerge victorious from the PR election, when implacable American hostility to Jagan would run counter to the British obligation, arising from the 1963 Constitutional Conference, to move ahead towards independence. But with victory predicted for the anti-Jagan forces, there was at this stage little contingency planning for a PPP victory.⁵²

On the question of a pre-election PPP-PNC coalition, however, even a temporary one, the Americans expressed several reservations, claiming that working for a coalition would set a "dangerous precedent" of inclusion for the post-election period and might later be used by Jagan to reinforce his insistence that peace depended upon the participation of both major parties in government. A Jagan-Burnham coalition before the PR elections would also be damaging to the UF's election campaign.⁵³ Slater, who attended the talks for the Foreign Office, thought such arguments "rather fragile". The basic American concern, he argued, was that the formation of a coalition government might precipitate the postponement of the PR election, and that once assured of continued British commitment to holding the election, as they were at the talks, the Americans would relax their opposition to a search for a coalition.⁵⁴ However, the formula for negotiating a coalition which emerged from the July talks was so tailored to and hedged by American reservations as to render an already difficult task well nigh impossible. The conditions attached to any coalition, that it would be temporary, that it would not effect the holding of an election under PR and that it should include the UF, effectively precluded PPP participation from the outset.⁵⁵

As 1964 wore on with no reversal of the Sandys' decision and little prospect of a rapprochement with Burnham, Jagan's last hope lay with the British Labour Party, which scored a narrow victory in the General Election in November 1964. A Labour government, Jagan hoped, would reverse or at least reconsider the Sandys' solution.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Slater Minute, 20 July 1964, A10110/175/G, FO371/173553, PRO.

⁵⁵Draft Message from SOS to Rusk, 22 July 1964, A10110/188/G, FO371/173553, PRO.

Labour's record on British Guiana was a mixed one. Jagan considered himself, British Guiana, and the other British colonies, already to be victims of Labour betrayal, finding little, for example, in the record of the Attlee government to distinguish its colonial policy from that of the stereotypically imperialist Conservative party. Attlee's government, in an effort to bridge the dollar gap, had betrayed the cause of colonial freedom, by continuing and extending the process of economic exploitation of the colonies under the smokescreen of development.⁵⁶ More specifically with regard to British Guiana, in 1947 the Labour Colonial Secretary, Arthur Creech-Jones, had ignored the PPP's protests about the Governor's nomination to the Legislative and Executive Council of Booker's Director Frederick Seaford, who had failed in his bid for election to these two bodies. Creech-Jones' successor, James Griffiths, moreover, had in 1950 made a number of recommendations, which were not accepted, to circumscribe the power of the elected members of British Guiana's government under the proposed Waddington Constitution.⁵⁷

Most galling of all, for Jagan, had been the official Labour reaction to the suspension of the constitution in 1953. Initially, the party's spokesmen had demanded that the government provide evidence to substantiate its claims against the PPP. However, under heavy pressure from British Guiana's opposition parties, anti-PPP West Indian politicians and the British TUC, whose position in the international labour movement set it at odds with the PPP, the Labour party's main speakers in the parliamentary debate on the suspension, Attlee and Griffiths, took little issue with the government. The party introduced an amendment which, while condemning the government's response to conditions in British Guiana as extreme, simultaneously endorsed its view of the PPP, and condemned the party's policies and methods.⁵⁸ That condemnation was recorded in a National Executive Committee [NEC] circular. The PPP Ministers had been given the "opportunity of exercising the responsibilities of office in the service of their people", but "instead of pursuing a policy of social reform and

⁵⁶Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.143-146; Cheddi Jagan, *Forbidden Freedom: The Story of British Guiana*, [London, 1954], pp.78-82. See also D.K. Fieldhouse, "The Labour Governments and the Empire Commonwealth 1945-51" in R. Owendale[ed], *The Foreign Policy of the British Labour Governments 1945-1951*, [Leicester, 1984], pp.83-120.

⁵⁷Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.143; Jagan, 1954, *Op. Cit.*, pp.79-80.

⁵⁸Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, pp.127-135; Jagan, 1954, *Op. Cit.*, pp.66-72; Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964*, [Oxford, 1993], pp.208-210.

seeking to justify the faith placed in them by the electorate, the leaders of the PPP pursued a communist policy and created a situation which necessitated the movement of troops to ensure the maintenance of law and order".⁵⁹

The suspension of the constitution in 1953 was a divisive issue for the Labour party. The PPP did have its defenders on the Labour's anti-colonial left-wing, including Tom Driberg and Fenner Brockway. In the House of Commons Emrys Hughes condemned the Churchill government's actions as those of "the iron hand and the wooden head."⁶⁰ Jagan and Burnham had flown to London in the wake of the constitutional suspension to attend the House of Commons debate on the subject and to disseminate the PPP version of events. During their time in London, Aneurin Bevan and Jennie Lee held a cocktail party in their honour, an event at which, it is worth noting in view of the events of 1964, Jagan has recalled meeting the future British Prime Minister Harold Wilson.⁶¹ Ian Mikardo invited Jagan to address his constituents, a move for which he was censured by the NEC.⁶² The views of Labour's anti-colonial left, in 1953 at least, held little sway with the party leadership, and its association with the PPP leaders in 1953 was explicitly against NEC policy.⁶³

However, if the Labour record boded ill for Jagan, by 1963 the growing influence of the left of the party on colonial issues was making itself felt. Aware that Labour were likely to form the next government, American officials had been canvassing the party's views on British Guiana since mid-1963. There was little comfort for the Americans in the responses to their inquiries. A Labour government, they suspected, would be less willing to accommodate American interests than had been the Conservative government.⁶⁴ Indeed, in March 1963, Melby had argued that the threat of the imminent return of a Labour government more

⁵⁹Appendix 2, Minutes of NEC Meeting, 16 Dec.1953, Card No.485, Series 1, Section 4, NEC Minutes 1952-55, Labour Party Archives [LPA], [Brighton, Harvester Microform, 1976].

⁶⁰Quoted in Howe, *Op. Cit.*, p.209.

⁶¹Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, p.320.

⁶²Howe, *Op. Cit.*, p.210.

⁶³Howe, *Op. Cit.*, p.210; Special Meeting of the NEC, 3 Nov.1953, Card No.482, Series 1, Section 4, NEC Minutes 1952-55, LPA, [Brighton, Harvester Microform, 1976]; Appendix 2, Minutes of NEC Meeting, 16 Dec.1953, Card No.485, Series 1, Section 4, NEC Minutes 1952-55, LPA, [Brighton, Harvester Microform, 1976].

⁶⁴Memorandum, Read to Bundy, 26 July 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol15 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

sympathetic to PPP demands for independence necessitated increased American pressure on the Macmillan government to impose an early referendum on PR.⁶⁵

David Ennals, the Secretary of the Labour Party's Overseas Department, communicated Labour's position to the American Embassy in London in July 1963. According to Ennals, Labour did not share the American assessment of the Jaganite threat, and was unenthusiastic about American involvement in the political affairs of the colony. "The basic fact of the situation", he wrote,

"is that the present government under Dr. Jagan had the largest group of seats in the legislature. This gives it the mandate to form the government and a right to expect to do so without unreasonable obstruction...the Labour Party views with extreme concern the allegation that United States money is being used to try to bring down Dr. Jagan's government. The situation is far too delicate to be seen in terms of black and white and it is vital that Dr. Jagan's brand of Marxism should not at this time be mistaken for Russian communism."⁶⁶

The only solution for the colony's political troubles was a compromise settlement, and external powers should avoid becoming committed to either side. The American role, "if you insist upon playing one, should be a pacifying one".⁶⁷ Similarly, Arthur Bottomley, Labour's front bench spokesman on Colonial Affairs, assured British Guiana's Deputy Premier Benn in the midst of the 1963 strike that "the Labour Party was sympathetic to Dr. Jagan and did not share the hysteria about his Marxism".⁶⁸

Following Sandys' announcement of his decisions in November 1963, Ennals informed American officials that Labour intended to oppose the imposition of PR. Jagan might be "far from ideal", but he was not "another Castro". And even if he were, Sandys' approach was counterproductive for several reasons. PR was too obviously intended to manoeuvre Jagan from office. It would accentuate rather than reduce racialism and, by stimulating splinter

⁶⁵Airgram, Amconsulate Georgetown to DOS, No.A-249, 14 March 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁶⁶Letter, Ennals to Irving, 5 July 1963, Enclosure to Memorandum, Read to Bundy, 26 July 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol15 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Note by Arthur Bottomley, Enclosure to Memorandum, Read to Bundy, 26 July 1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol15 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

parties, would give rise to political instability. Finally, the obvious British perfidy would increase Jagan's susceptibility to extremist influences within his party. Labour preferred "constitutional safeguards against majority abuses".⁶⁹ These, however, were unspecified.

The views of George Thomson, Labour's front bench spokesman on Caribbean Affairs, were more in line with American thinking. He regarded Jagan as "Communist" and "pro-Castro". Even so, Thomson had little enthusiasm for a Burnham government, which he felt was unlikely to be effective and might further aggravate the colony's racial problems, preferring an attempt to persuade Burnham and Jagan to work together.⁷⁰

Most ominous, perhaps, for the Americans were the views of the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker. Visiting Washington in February 1964, Gordon Walker indicated that the Labour Party would feel "uncomfortable" denying independence to a colony "when the situation is ripe". The United States, not Britain, he observed, had the main interest in the future of British Guiana, and while "Labour would like to find a way to give independence to British Guiana without affronting or injuring the US, Britain... cannot afford to appear as an agent of the US". He made it clear that he did not share American concerns about Jagan's ideological leanings, describing the American view as "exaggerated", and dismissed the notion that British Guiana could become a base for Castroite subversion on the Latin American mainland, noting that, "a bit of this sort of thing was bound to develop in Latin America". In any case, the interest was American, and countering subversion was therefore an American responsibility. Britain had "no real reason of its own to stay" and would like to withdraw its troops: "If a way could be found for the US to put its troops into British Guiana, the Labour party would not object." Gordon Walker was scathing about the planned introduction of the party list, single constituency form of PR. Labour, he said, might consider replacing it with an alternative form of proportional representation.⁷¹

⁶⁹Telegram, London to SOS, No.2282, 8 Nov.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol19 Government of Dependencies 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

⁷⁰Telegram, London to SOS, No.61, 3 July 1963, "350-Political Affairs General 1963" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA.

⁷¹Memcon, 'British Guiana', 19 Feb.1964, "Meetings with Walker, 2/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, LBJ Library.

Labour was more uniform in its condemnation of the Sandys' proposals in 1963 than it had been in its attitude towards the constitutional suspension a decade earlier. Jagan has claimed that he was further encouraged by the positions taken by the party leader, Harold Wilson, and by Anthony Greenwood, soon to be Colonial Secretary, both of whom were connected with the Movement for Colonial Freedom, Greenwood having served as its Treasurer in the early 1960s.⁷² According to Jagan, Wilson viewed the Sandys plan as "a fiddled constitutional arrangement."⁷³ Certainly he expressed this view privately.⁷⁴ Greenwood also pledged his sympathy, Jagan has claimed, writing to the Premier on 16 April 1964: "As you know, we have condemned Duncan Sandys' decision to impose proportional representation in British Guiana and we expect to express that position when the Order in Council giving effect to the decision comes up for debate in the next week or two".⁷⁵

In the event, however, the Wilson government did nothing to justify either American apprehension or Jagan's optimism. Wilson's Bevanite credentials were not unquestionable. He himself rejected the Bevanite epithet, and in the years since he had resigned with Bevan in 1951 he had gained a reputation for pragmatism and political compromise.⁷⁶ Moreover, Wilson's government had come to office with a paper thin majority in the House of Commons and amidst a sterling crisis which left its domestic programme dependent upon the goodwill of the United States. President Johnson's goodwill and readiness to underwrite the pound came at a price, most graphically demonstrated on the question of British support for the American position in Vietnam, and the American enthusiasm for the maintenance of a British military presence East of Suez to bolster the Western position in the Far East.⁷⁷ On the less publicly controversial issue of British Guiana, on which a concession to the American position was unlikely to be of dramatic strategic or domestic political consequence

⁷²Howe, *Op.Cit.*, pp.246-250.

⁷³Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.321.

⁷⁴PM Minute, 5 April 1965, Prime Minister's Office: Correspondence and Papers 1964-1970 [PREM13]137, PRO.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, [London, 1992], pp.154-251.

⁷⁷Ibid. pp.365-366, 382-394; Geoffrey Warner, "The Anglo-American Special Relationship", *DH*, Vol.13, No.4, 1989, pp.492-493.

for the British government, it is not surprising that it proved pliable in the face of American demands.

The Colonial Office's formulaic complaints about American interference rang hollow. Assuming the customary criticism of the American approach associated with his new department, Greenwood briefed Gordon Walker, now Foreign Secretary, for a visit to Washington in October 1964 that, "...the Americans must not be allowed to think that we shall be willing for their sake to delay the grant of independence to British Guiana or to ensure that it becomes independent only under a government which they would regard as acceptable." There was, he continued, "no question" of postponing the December elections. Despite his party's criticisms of Conservative policy towards British Guiana, he felt "inescapably committed" by the previous government to proceeding thereafter with an independence conference to set an early date for independence.⁷⁸ As a statement of British freedom of action, Greenwood's memo was unconvincing, apparently revealing a basic misunderstanding of the American position. With the new constitution in place and the elections scheduled for 7 December likely to yield the desired Burnham-D'Aguiar coalition government, the Americans no longer had any interest in delaying independence for British Guiana. It was not independence per se but independence under Jagan to which the United States objected so vigorously.

During his visit, Gordon Walker encountered no American objections to proceeding with the December elections. It was assumed in Washington that Burnham, in coalition with the UF, would win, and the Foreign Secretary was assured that while Washington was prepared to provide "massive aid" to such a government, no assistance would be forthcoming to any coalition government including the PPP.⁷⁹ Gordon Walker had shifted his position since his last visit to Washington, this time reassuring Rusk that he shared his assessment of Jagan, although he confessed to being less enamoured with Burnham.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Minute, Greenwood to Gordon Walker, 23 Oct.1964, PREM13/137, PRO.

⁷⁹Note for the Record, BG, undated, PREM13/137, PRO; Note for the Record, 9 Nov.1964, PREM13/137, PRO.

⁸⁰Ibid.

Jagan wasted no time after the October election in requesting a reconsideration of British policy. His request to Greenwood on 20 October 1964 was followed by meeting with the new Prime Minister on 29 October. While Wilson concentrated on the internal security situation and emphasized the need to stabilise conditions before the colony could move forward to independence, for Jagan the constitutional question remained paramount. Jagan pressed for the postponement of the December elections and a reconsideration of the Sandys' constitutional arrangements, with the purpose, he claimed, of bringing together a coalition government of the two major parties. He warned, with some prescience, that independence under Burnham would lead to a Latin American style right wing dictatorship in British Guiana.⁸¹

Wilson rebuffed Jagan's requests. The government would move ahead with the December elections, and would have no objections, Wilson claimed, to a Burnham/Jagan coalition emerging thereafter. He did not mention the implications of such a coalition for the future economic development of the colony, that PPP participation would preclude the coalition from receiving American aid. Wilson admitted that he had criticised the new constitution when it was announced, but he had never committed a future Labour government to reversing Sandys' decisions. It was a question not so much of principle but of circumstance: "HMG had now to deal with the facts as they found them...if the Labour Party had come to power in June it might have been possible to do something different: now it was too late and HMG saw no alternative but to let the elections go forward".⁸²

The decision to move ahead with the elections, however, did not make early independence a formality. Wilson emphasised three times during his meeting with Jagan that independence would not be forthcoming for British Guiana until Burnham, Jagan and their respective communities could demonstrate that they could live together harmoniously. The British government would not be held responsible for leaving a blood-bath in the wake of its

⁸¹Record of a Conversation Between PM and Dr. Cheddi Jagan, 29 Oct.1964, PREM13/137, PRO.

⁸²Ibid.

withdrawal.⁸³ Moreover, given that independence for his country had been, since the beginning of his political career, Jagan's primary objective, the British may have calculated that the threat of further postponement of independence would deter the PPP from any further obstructionism.

Wilson's position and rationale was echoed in a letter from Greenwood to Jagan on 4 November. The elections would go ahead. The Labour government had made no public commitment to reversing Sandys' decisions, and Jagan had, after all, agreed to submit the outstanding issues to Sandys for arbitration at the 1963 Constitutional Conference and had undertaken to abide by the Colonial Secretary's decisions.⁸⁴ He had sealed his own fate.

Interestingly, Greenwood sought to maintain the illusion of British independence from American pressure on the British Guiana issue. In his letter to Greenwood, Jagan, acknowledging the obvious American influence on British policy-making, had requested that the British and American governments jointly reconsider their plans for the future of the colony. Greenwood tartly, but misleadingly, replied that, "British Guiana is a British responsibility and though the Americans have a historic and hemispheric interest in this part of the world...decisions rest with the British government alone."⁸⁵

Wilson's first meeting with President Johnson took place in early December 1964, coinciding with the elections in British Guiana. Although heavily sanitised, the records of a ministerial meeting held on 25 November 1964 to determine the line to take with Johnson on British Guiana revealed a Labour government which recognised the necessity of tailoring its position to the reality of limited American tolerance. Although the view was expressed that a Jagan-Burnham coalition was "the prerequisite of stability" in British Guiana, it was also recognised that this was completely unacceptable to the administration and would block American economic aid on which the colony's future depended.⁸⁶ For the Wilson

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Letter, Greenwood to Jagan, 2 Nov.1964, PREM13/137, PRO.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Record of a Ministerial Meeting, 25 Nov.1964, PREM13/137, PRO.

government, the two preconditions for a British withdrawal, a Jagan-Burnham coalition, the ideal solution to British Guiana's political problems, and generous American economic assistance, the ideal solution to its economic problems, were incompatible. There was certainly some ministerial distaste for the role played by the United States in British Guiana and the potential consequences of the pursuit of the American Cold War agenda in the future political development of the colony. As one Minister noted, "while the US would find it difficult to live with another Cuban situation in the Western hemisphere there was a danger that British Guiana might become a second Congo as a result of great power rivalries there".⁸⁷ Nevertheless, with the interests of constructive Anglo-American relations militating also against a Jagan-Burnham coalition, in a capitulation to American sensibilities, the coalition solution was dropped. As another Minister adroitly observed, given American hostility to Jagan, "it was better therefore to work not for a coalition but for conciliation".⁸⁸

The available records of Wilson's visit to Washington indicate that the Prime Minister made no attempt to sell the coalition idea to the administration, taking instead the conciliation line. The main plank of Wilson's position remained that already communicated to Jagan: that British Guiana could not become independent until lasting peace and stability had been restored. It would be "irresponsible" of the British government to grant independence otherwise.⁸⁹ To achieve this result, a political coalition would be inadequate. Indeed, in conversation with Under Secretary of State George Ball, Wilson emphasised that peace and stability in British Guiana was conditional not simply upon the cooperation of the political leadership of the opposing sides, but of the broader conciliation of the communities they represented: "It was not merely a question of Dr. Jagan and Mr. Burnham being able to live together or even of the parties which they led, but of there being some prospect of the country as a whole settling down to a peaceful and stable future".⁹⁰

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Extract from Record of Conversation Between PM and Mr. George Ball, 30 Nov.1964, PREM13/137, PRO.

⁹⁰Ibid.

Preparing for Wilson's visit, with the elections that CIA intelligence officers confidently predicted would produce a non-Jagan government only days away, the State Department remained firm in its assessment of Jagan and its conviction that he must be removed.⁹¹ The briefing paper prepared for Wilson's visit held that, "in our view Jagan's record indicates that he is sympathetic to communist influence and we are afraid that any government in which he or his henchmen participate would be vulnerable to communist infiltration. That is why we have opposed him and...done what we could to support alternatives to him."⁹²

Anticipating vigorous PPP opposition if the elections went Burnham's way, the State Department reiterated its commitment to provide substantial aid to ensure the survival of a non-Jagan government, in the form of the crash programme for 1965 and thereafter through a consortium with Britain, and possibly Canada, to help meet British Guiana's long term development needs.⁹³ There would of course be no aid to a government including Jagan and his party.⁹⁴ On the question of a date for independence, the Department, with the essential proviso that a non-Jagan government was in charge, was indifferent.⁹⁵

British Guiana's first PR elections went ahead as planned on 7 December 1964. In addition to the PPP, PNC and UF, four other parties put forward candidates. The Peace and Equality Party [PEP], the National Labour Front [NLF], the Guyana United Muslim Party [GUMP], and the Hindu lead Justice Party [JP]. These latter two parties were of the most significance. As religiously based Indian parties, they were the parties most likely to take votes from the PPP. Both the PPP and the opposition accused each other of financing its campaign from external sources. The campaigns of the PNC, the UF and the two Indian splinter parties were, according to Jagan, lavishly funded by the United States.⁹⁶ British and American officials

⁹¹Intelligence Memorandum, OCI No.2842/64, 4 Dec.1964, "PM Wilson Visit 12/7-8/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, Box 214, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin TX [LBJL].

⁹²Visit of PM Harold Wilson, BG, PMW/B-14, 3 Dec.1964, "PM Wilson Visit Briefing Book 12/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, Box 213, LBJL.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Memorandum, Ball to President, undated, "PM Wilson Visit 12/7-8/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, Box 214, LBJL.

⁹⁵Visit of PM Harold Wilson, BG, PMW/B-14, 3 Dec.1964, "PM Wilson Visit Briefing Book 12/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, Box 213, LBJL.

⁹⁶Jagan, 1966, *Op. Cit.*, p.323.

had agreed at their talks in July 1964 that new parties should be encouraged and supported, although the record makes no specific mention of financial support.⁹⁷ On the other side, a CIA intelligence estimate produced immediately prior to the elections accused the PPP of financing its campaign with money "reportedly" obtained from Cuba and Algeria.⁹⁸

Unsurprisingly, none of these claims were substantiated with documentary evidence. An earlier attempt by the UF in 1962 to substantiate its claim that the PPP was receiving funding from the USSR with forged bank documents demonstrates not only the lengths to which the UF were prepared to go to discredit Jagan, but also the difficulty in evaluating the credibility of Georgetown gossip.⁹⁹ "Georgetown", one British official observed in 1962, "thrives on rumour and theatrical talk, so that it is difficult to tell what credence to attach to what one hears".¹⁰⁰ Similarly, controversial claims about gun-running, or that British Guianese students on scholarships to Cuba were being trained in guerrilla warfare techniques, went unsupported, or were revealed to be hoaxes.¹⁰¹

The elections went off peacefully. A team of Commonwealth observers appointed by the British government reported that the administration of the elections had been "fair and proper", with one, as it turned out, crucial, reservation; that a system of proxy voting provided for in the new constitution could be "open to manipulation" and "liable to abuse".¹⁰² This was an accurate prediction of the massive electoral fraud that would take place in the country's next general election in 1968.¹⁰³

⁹⁷Agreed Record, Anglo-American Consultations, 17 July 1964, A10110/175G, FO371/173553, PRO.

⁹⁸Intelligence Memorandum, OCI No.2842/64, 4 Dec.1964, "PM Wilson Visit 12/7-8/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, Box 214, LBJL.

⁹⁹Telegram, Amcongen Georgetown to SOS, No.92, 24 Sept.1962, "350-Political Affairs General 1962" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA; Airgram, Amcongen Georgetown to London, A-176, 20 Dec.1962, "350.1-People's Progressive Party" Folder, CGR1957-1963, RG84, Box 3, NA; Memcon, 'Senator Ann Jardim's Views on Situation in British Guiana and Need of UF Party for Financial Assistance', 7 Aug.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA; Telegram, London to SOS, No.2018, 23 Oct.1963, "Political Affairs and Relations BG Pol7 Visits Meetings 2/1/63" Folder, CFPF1963, RG59, Box 3839, NA.

¹⁰⁰BG, Report on a Visit 9-17 March 1962, CO1031/3715, PRO.

¹⁰¹Despatch, Georgetown to DOS, No.140, 17 June 1963, 941D.61/6-1761, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 3023, NA; Airgram, Georgetown to DOS, No.A-189, 6 Jan.1963, 741D.008/1-663, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 3023, NA; Telegram, Georgetown to SOS, No.4, 6 July 1962, 841D.05165/7-662, CDF1960-1963, RG59, Box 2478, NA; Letter, Scott to Parsons, 3 July 1963, AK10112/1, FO371/168146, PRO; Letter, Scott to Parsons, 5 July 1963, AK10112/2, FO371/168146, PRO.

¹⁰²Report by the Commonwealth Team of Observers on the Election in December 1964, Col. No.359, [London, 1965], p.5.

¹⁰³Spinner, *Op.Cit.*, pp.123-128.

The Commonwealth Commission's terms of reference restricted its observations to the conduct and administration of the elections. It was not within its remit to consider the constitutional controversy over proportional representation or the continuing state of emergency. Nevertheless one member of the Commonwealth team, Bakar Ali Mirza, an Indian MP, felt compelled, he claimed, by the experiences of his own country, to submit an additional memorandum questioning the definition of "fairness" as it applied to conditions in British Guiana at the time of the elections. "The discipline at the Election booths and the freedom of speech for the candidates were technically there", he wrote,

"but for the voter, the common man, there are elements in the life of British Guiana which have to be taken into account, before deciding, whether the elections were fair, if by fairness is meant the freedom to vote without any fear of adverse consequences at the time of voting or later on and existence of conditions that will not add to his security, if he did not vote according to a set pattern. The safety and security of the polling booth has not much meaning, if you have to pass the gateway of fear before entering it, and if your voting itself is predetermined by the demands of your security. In British Guiana the atmosphere is charged with fear. The Election therefore was not in support of any programme. It was a racial census as the analysis of voting would clearly show. It was a race in search of security and this also accounted for the heavy polling." ¹⁰⁴

The introduction of PR, he argued, had done nothing to ease racial bipolarity in the country. Indeed, the particular form of PR which treated the whole country as one constituency had encouraged racial divisions on the national level that might have been more easily contained in a more locally responsive electoral system.¹⁰⁵

The election results confirmed Mirza's arguments. Despite the anti-communist concerns of Washington and the anti-communist rhetoric of the PPP's opponents, the election results testified to the virtual irrelevance of the communist issue to the voters, and the continued and increased centrality of race. The routine denunciations of racialism by the PPP and PNC leadership masked organisational strategies which sought to mobilise the colony's racial sections with Apanjaat appeals which manipulated a fear of indefinite ethnic domination, for

¹⁰⁴Memorandum by Bakar Ali Mirza, Appendix VII, Report by the Commonwealth Team of Observers on the Election in December 1964, Col. No.359, [London, 1965], pp.14-15.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

which, with the imminent departure of the British, there might be no means of redress. A turnout of 96.98% reflected the high stakes in what was almost certainly the last election before independence.¹⁰⁶

The electoral system itself had contributed to the intensification of racialism in 1964. Far from reducing racialism, the form of proportional representation introduced was an invitation to intensified racialist campaigning as each party sought to mobilise its supporters across the whole country. Treating the whole country as one constituency rendered every vote crucial whereas, under the previous system, constituency boundaries had encouraged the parties to be more selective in their targeting of racial appeals.¹⁰⁷

The emergence of splinter parties, a fully intended consequence of the introduction of PR, had done virtually nothing to reduce either the hold of the PPP and the PNC on their respective ethnic sections, or the importance of race as the primary determinant of voting behaviour. GUMP, the most successful of the new parties managed to garner only 1,334 votes. Instead, the PPP and PNC had consolidated their racially based support. The Indian parties disappointed American hopes of splitting the PPP vote. Indeed, the PPP were the only party to increase their percentage of the vote from the previous election in 1961, from 42.6% to 45.8%. The PNC's share of the vote was slightly down on 1961. This was not unexpected in some quarters. Despite Burnham's confidence that the PNC could win enough seats to obviate the need for a tactical coalition with the UF, the CIA had predicted that the PNC would lose support, "because of involvement in violence and other tactical mistakes".¹⁰⁸ More than those of 1961, the election results of 1964 revealed a "very close correlation between race and voting preference", with the PPP and PNC share of the vote almost exactly mirroring the size of the Indian and African voting blocs.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶Ralph R. Premdas, "Elections and Political Campaigns in a Racially Bifurcated State: The Case of Guyana", *JISWA*, Vol.14, 1972, p.283-287.

¹⁰⁷Ibid. pp.289-290.

¹⁰⁸Intelligence Memorandum, OCI No.2842/64, 4 Dec.1964, "PM Wilson Visit 12/7-8/64" Folder, CF, UK, NSF, Box 214, LBJL.

¹⁰⁹Premdas, 1972, *Op.Cit.*, pp.282-283.

<u>Party</u>	<u>Total Votes</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>% Vote</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>% Vote</u>
	<u>1964</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1961</u>
PPP	109,332	24	45.8%	20	42.6%
PNC	96,651	22	40.9%	11	40.5%
UF	29,612	7	12.4%	4	16.3%
GUMP	1,334				
JP	1,119				
PEP	224				
NLF	177 ¹¹⁰				

Under the old electoral system the PPP would once again have formed the government. However, PR ensured that although the PPP emerged as the largest single party it did not hold enough seats to form a government. Convinced that the PPP had been "cheated not defeated", Jagan refused to resign. He had to be removed from office by an Order in Council.¹¹¹

On 13 December 1964, Governor Luyt asked Burnham to form the next government of British Guiana. As had been anticipated in Washington and London, Burnham and the PNC took office in coalition with the United Force. Three members of the UF were appointed to Ministerial posts. Peter D'Aguiar, hoping to exercise maximum control over British Guiana's economy was appointed Minister of Finance. An Independence Conference was held in November 1965, and British Guiana became independent as Guyana on 26 May 1966.

With the PPP out of office, Washington had achieved its objective. The Johnson administration demonstrated its endorsement of the new regime by providing the promised economic aid. In 1965 alone it supplied US \$12.3 million in loans and grants. American aid during the period of PPP ascendancy between 1957 and 1964 had totalled only US \$4.9 million.¹¹² In return, the coalition followed a self-consciously capitalist programme of economic development on the Puerto Rican model, emphasising infrastructural development which served the interests of local and foreign investors. The coalition severed links with

¹¹⁰Figures from Report by the Commonwealth Team of Observers on the Election in December 1964, Col. No.359, [London, 1965], p.4, and Jagan, 1966, *Op.Cit.*, pp.324-325.

¹¹¹Ibid. pp.325-326.

¹¹²Figures quoted in Chaitram Singh, *Guyana: Politics in a Plantation Society*, [New York, 1988], p.120.

Cuba and assumed a pro-Western international stance, following the American lead, for example, on that litmus test of Cold War loyalty, Chinese representation at the UN. Within Guyana, the new government set about attempting to suppress the activities of the PPP, detaining prominent members of the party.¹¹³

The realisation of American goals in British Guiana was not without cost. The primary American objective, the removal of the PPP from office had only been achieved at the cost of civil disturbances, the exacerbation of sectional divisions to the point of racial warfare, and the manipulation of democracy - all of which left a legacy of profound racial distrust and tenuous governmental legitimacy. For the people of Guyana, however, the price of this externally installed and assisted American client government continued to rise. The PNC-UF coalition was a fragile one, born of a shared hostility to the PPP and not of any ideological or racial affinity. Burnham, moreover, would brook no constraints on his personal authority, and set about consolidating his position at the apex of political power in Guyana. With elections scheduled for 1968 the PNC secured enough defections from other parties to obviate the need for UF support and evicted them from the coalition, then proceeding to reconstitute the Electoral Commission and manipulate the proxy and overseas votes to rig the election, setting a pattern of electoral fraud that would persist for over two decades.¹¹⁴ According to Paul Kattenberg, Deputy Chief of Mission in Georgetown between 1966 and 1968, the PNC, in the 1968 elections, was assisted by a clandestine operation instituted by an administration determined that its client be returned to power.¹¹⁵ American assistance to bolster Burnham after 1964 was not, by this account, limited to generous economic aid.

A combination of electoral fraud, state coercion and intimidation, the manipulation of inter-sectional ethnic fears and systematic ethnic partiality and corruption maintained Burnham in

¹¹³For Guyana under the coalition government and beyond see Singh, *Op.Cit.*; Spinner, *Op.Cit.*, pp.113-218; Henry B. Jeffrey & Colin Baber, *Guyana: Politics, Economics and Society. Beyond the Burnham Era*, [London, 1986]; Robert H. Manley, *Guyana Emergent: The Post-Independence Struggle for Non-Dependent Development*, [Cambridge MA, 1979].

¹¹⁴Singh, *Op.Cit.*, pp.39-42.

¹¹⁵Paul Kattenberg, Oral History Interview, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, 18 June 1990, pp.45-46.

power until his death in August 1985, and the PNC in power until 1992, when democracy was restored in Guyana, with the first free election in the country since 1964.

If a heavy price was paid by the Guyanese people for PNC rule, not even the United States derived long-standing benefits from the installation of their preferred government in 1964. Despite owing his elevation to political office in large measure to American efforts, Burnham's reliability as an American client was variable; the vagaries of Guyanese domestic politics and the financial and economic difficulties of his regime often running counter to the interests of the United States as hemispheric superpower. American leverage was restricted by the bipolarity of Guyanese politics whereby Burnham remained, whatever his limitations, the lesser of two evils in American eyes, the only alternative to the restoration of Jagan, or, after 1974, the radical and interracial Working People's Alliance. Relations between the United States and Guyana deteriorated after 1969. Indeed, it was under Burnham that Guyana became the second self-proclaimed socialist republic in the Western hemisphere, and it was Burnham who presided over the nationalisation of the foreign owned bauxite and sugar industries in the 1970s, a move which attracted the critical support of even the PPP for a time. Proclaiming a non-aligned foreign policy, and leading Guyana into a prominent position within the non-aligned movement, the Burnham regime moved closer to Cuba, China and the Eastern bloc during the 1970s. It should be noted, however, that it is difficult to regard these actions as evidence of a deep ideological commitment on Burnham's part, overlooked by the United States in the early 1960s, so much as the exigencies of an authoritarian regime scrambling to retain the power it had gained and retained illegitimately.¹¹⁶

Burnham and the PNC had learned well the lessons of Jagan's removal. Anglo-American intervention to dislodge the Jagan government bequeathed to Guyana not only a legacy of racial distrust but also the precedents of electoral and constitutional manipulation and

¹¹⁶Ralph R. Premdas, "Guyana: Socialist Reconstruction or Political Opportunism", *JISWA*, Vol.20, 1978, pp.133-164; Percy C. Hintzen & Ralph R. Premdas, "Race, Ideology and Power in Guyana", *JCCP*, Vol.21, No.2, 1983, pp.175-194.

disregard for democratic processes, techniques which persisted and were perfected by the PNC long after the British had left and American attention had turned elsewhere.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In June 1969, Cheddi Jagan led a two man delegation to the World Conference of Communist and Workers Parties in Moscow. His decision to sign the conference's declaration, "The Tasks of the Struggle Against Imperialism at the Present Stage and the Unity of Action of the Communist and Workers Parties and of all Anti-Imperialist Forces", formally enrolled the PPP as a pro-Soviet Communist party, answering the question which had troubled and divided British and American policy-makers for over a decade as to the logical or likely outcome of his professed marxist commitments. For the PPP, Jagan declared, the Conference was "like homecoming, like joining our ideological family".¹

Jagan's open embrace of the international communist movement and its Soviet leadership in 1969 can be understood only in the context of the events which led to his removal from office in 1964, and with which this study has been concerned. As he himself admitted to the Conference:

"Not only theory, but practice also has taught us that this is where we belong. Repeated attacks against us by the Conservative Churchill, Macmillan and Home governments, and betrayal by the social democratic Attlee and Wilson governments have established that only the international communist movement, in alliance with the democratic and progressive forces in the capitalist states, and the liberation movements in the colonial and neo-colonial countries, and not conservative, liberal or social-democratic leadership can liberate the working people of Guyana and elsewhere from imperialist exploitation and oppression."²

Moreover, the 1968 election in Guyana had confirmed the frequently expressed doubts about Burnham's fitness for office by demonstrating his intention to maintain himself and his party in government indefinitely and by whatever means necessary. Thus Jagan, by 1969, enjoyed the ideological luxury of a foreseeably permanent role in opposition. The demise of democracy in Guyana freed Jagan from the dependence on a class-inclusive appeal to a

¹Quoted in Robert H. Manley, *Guyana Emergent: The Post Independence Struggle for Nondependent Development*, [Cambridge MA, 1979], p.24.

²Ibid.

racially exclusive voting bloc, which, in the British analysis at least, had hitherto constrained the realisation of his marxist ideals.

Jagan's pro-Soviet orientation after 1969 cannot be explained simply as the inevitable outcome of his marxist beliefs. Nor can it account for the hostility of the Kennedy administration towards the Jagan government in the early years of the decade. Jagan's open espousal of marxism and the PPP rhetoric of the 1950s and early 1960s must be distinguished from the PPP government's record in office after 1957. The American view that Jagan was a communist, intent upon leading an independent Guyana into the Soviet bloc, was not the only conclusion that could be drawn from his behaviour after 1957, as the British analysis revealed. American and British perceptions both of Jagan and of the threat that he posed reflected both the relative positions of the two countries within the world order of the early 1960s and their different historical experiences. The Americans defined their interests in British Guiana in terms of their position as the leader of the Western alliance in a bipolar, zero-sum struggle against international communism. The British government came to the problem of British Guiana as a second rank power, committed to reducing at least some of its overseas commitments, and to the maintenance of a carefully cultivated image as an enlightened colonial power. Where the Americans saw the workings of international communism, the British saw anti-colonial nationalism, arguing from their experience with anti-colonial leaders that Jagan was a nationalist first and foremost and that his 'extremism' would be, and indeed since 1957 had been, moderated by the realities and responsibilities of office. Jagan's marxism, the British argued would be circumscribed by his necessary responses to the racialism that was the major determinant of British Guianese politics.

There is certainly evidence to support the British view. Jagan's commitment to marxism had not blinded him to the realities of political life in British Guiana. The PPP had embraced racist politics as the necessary route to power in the years following the party split in 1955. Although omitted from his own account of the period, and hardly commensurate with his reputation as an anti-imperialist nationalist leader and his later incarnation as a pro-Soviet communist, Jagan's repeated overtures for rapprochement with the Kennedy administration

as the American campaign against him mounted suggest that he came to recognise the broader realities of life in the Western hemisphere during the Cold War, and that, in this context, his political survival depended upon reaching an accommodation with the United States.

Events in British Guiana in the early 1960s do in this respect provide ammunition for the view that the Kennedy administration, like the Eisenhower administration before it, misunderstood the nature of third world nationalism; its obsession with the Cold War dichotomy of East-West led it to neglect local and regional conditions in the developing world and to misinterpret essentially nationalistic movements as communist directed or inspired. In their assessments of Jagan, American officials in Washington were particularly prone to filter his actions through an East-West lens. However, to ascribe the Kennedy administration's response to British Guianese nationalism to misinterpretation or misperception or indeed ignorance is to endow American policy-making with an inadvertence which in this case at least was clearly lacking.

However pervasive the East-West obsession in the thinking of Washington analysts, British Guiana's status as a British colony, and the American need to cooperate with the British to ensure the realisation of their objectives there, meant that American officials were regularly subjected to an interpretation of events in the colony that differed substantially from their own. British officials consistently challenged the American analysis of Jagan and the threat that he posed. This alternative interpretation, moreover, was not the exclusive preserve of the British. American officials on the ground in Georgetown, most notably the American Consul General, Everett Melby, shared the British perspective, at least until he abruptly, and without explanation, reversed his position and began to toe the Washington line on Jagan in 1963. Washington was fully appraised of the alternative and more nuanced interpretation of Jagan's ideological and political position, and the threats that a Jagan government could pose to the United States, but chose to reject it. That American officials were not ignorant of British Guiana's unique social and political makeup is borne out also by their exploitation of these conditions as an operational opportunity to effect Jagan's removal. At least in this instance, it

was less the case that American policy-makers were ignorant of the origins and nature of third world anti-colonial nationalism or of local conditions, than that they simply chose to ignore them where there was any risk that acknowledging them would be inconsistent with, or could compromise other more pressing national security and domestic political imperatives.

Jagan's later alignments notwithstanding, the evidence upon which he was designated an international communist in the early 1960s was, as American intelligence estimates themselves recorded, circumstantial. The question that remains therefore is how a Jagan government in a small and impoverished British colony could have posed a threat to the national security of the United States? Indeed, it is a question which would remain even had there been irrefutable evidence of insidious intentions on Jagan's part.

Writing to the President on 8 March 1962, Arthur Schlesinger Jnr. rather caustically observed that, "British Guiana has 600,000 inhabitants. Jagan would no doubt be gratified to know that the American and British governments are spending more man-hours per capita on British Guiana than on any other current problem."³ The same question is implicit: how could a country of no intrinsic interest to the United States become the object of such intense concern to American policy-makers?

The policy-makers never questioned the assumption that Jagan posed sufficient of a threat to the United States to warrant his removal from office, but they were less clear on the precise nature of this threat, rarely articulating their vague, if intense, perception of the threat presented by Jagan beyond references to the dangers of a "second Cuba" in the Western hemisphere. Although these dangers were never enumerated, the epithet encompassed a number of national security and domestic political concerns. That British Guiana might become another Cuba, and Jagan another Castro was a persistent refrain emanating from Washington, and the most prominent explanation for American concerns. This concern was not restricted to British Guiana. The determination to avoid a second Cuba was the driving

³Memorandum, Schlesinger to the President, 8 March 1962, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol.XII, p.548.

force of Kennedy's policy in the Western hemisphere more broadly, underpinning both the Alliance for Progress and counterinsurgency initiatives, and lending coherence to the administration's otherwise random recognition policy towards military coups in the region.⁴ It underlay his simultaneous espousal and denial of democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean. As the case of British Guiana graphically demonstrates, it also stimulated and rationalised covert interference in the internal politics of other states. In the Western Hemisphere, the much vaunted commitment of the Kennedy administration to democracy and reform was not principled, but functional. Democracy was not the end of policy, but one possible means to achieve the real end of American policy: containing the further spread of communism in the hemisphere - preventing a second Cuba while working to undermine the first. Should democracy cease to be expedient, it was expendable. Moreover, the imperative of preventing another Cuba did not die with Kennedy. Subsequent Presidents revealed themselves equally tenacious in pursuit of this objective.

In the case of British Guiana, a strict application of the Cuban analogy does not stand up to scrutiny. Similarities in the objective conditions of the two countries went little further than the obvious observation that the economies of both were dominated by sugar. In contrast to Cuba, British Guiana had no previous history of American influence over or intervention in its political or economic life. The level of American investment in British Guiana was in no way comparable to that in Cuba prior to the revolution. While Cuba, as one commentator has observed, "more than any place in Latin America had been virtually a de facto US colony"⁵, British Guiana's historical status and experience as a British colony had precluded American involvement, and as a consequence, although the United States ranked alongside the British as a target of PPP anti-imperialist rhetoric, the widespread anti-Yankee sentiment of revolutionary Cuba was absent from British Guianese politics. For his own part, despite his professions of admiration for Castro's transformation of Cuba, Jagan was no guerrilla revolutionary. He had chosen the path of constitutional democracy in his quest for office. His

⁴Stephen G. Rabe, "Controlling Revolutions: Latin America, the Alliance for Progress, and Cold War Anti-Communism", in Thomas G. Paterson[ed], *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy 1961-63*, [New York, 1989].

⁵Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1980* [New York, 1988], p.139.

anti-capitalist and pro-Soviet statements were not accompanied by a rejection of American aid for economic development. Economic development ranked second only to independence on Jagan's agenda for his country, and unlike Castro, Jagan was actively and persistently solicitous of American assistance in achieving this objective.

Nevertheless, the fear of a second Cuba conditioned the response of American officials to the Jagan government, distorting Washington's perceptions of Jagan himself, whose often ambiguous statements and policies were increasingly interpreted as definitive evidence of his communist intentions. Policy-makers chose to reject or ignore evidence that contradicted the preconceptions arising from the Castro-Jagan parallel. In Washington, British Guiana was always a function of the Cuban problem. American concerns about Jagan must be understood in the context of the radicalisation of the Cuban revolution, the concomitant breakdown in Cuban-American relations, the high and controversial profile of the Cuban issue in American domestic politics, and the implacable hostility of the Kennedy administration towards the continued existence of Castro's regime which stood as a permanent affront to the Monroe Doctrine in the Western hemisphere, and more broadly to American credibility as the leader of the West in the global zero-sum struggle against communism. British Guiana was itself of little intrinsic value to the United States. Its significance for American officials was derivative and symbolic. The threat to American national security of a second Cuba in British Guiana, or anywhere else in the Western Hemisphere, cannot be conceived of solely in terms of substantive or tangible American interests. The meaning of a second Cuba is found in the less tangible realm of perceptions and credibility.

Substantive economic or strategic American interests in British Guiana are inadequate to explain the hostility of successive administrations to Jagan. In economic terms, British imperialism had largely insulated British Guiana from the encroachment of American businesses. The position of the United Fruit Company in Guatemala for example had no parallel in British Guiana. Although there was some American investment in the bauxite industry, multinational business interests in British Guiana were overwhelmingly British and Canadian. It was British and Canadian companies that had most to lose in the event that

Jagan broke his oft repeated pledge that there would be no nationalisation of foreign holdings in British Guiana without adequate compensation. In any case, these companies espoused a cooperative approach towards the Jagan government as the best means of protecting their investments, an attitude which must be distinguished from the unrelenting hostility of British Guiana's native capitalists towards the PPP.

When coupled with the Kennedy administration's uncritical acceptance of the domino theory, however, the threat posed by the emergence of a potentially communist government in British Guiana assumed different proportions. American investment in and trade with British Guiana may have been negligible, but this did not hold true for Latin America as a whole. Direct American investment in Latin America in 1960 totalled over US \$8 billion, 25% of American direct investment worldwide. Latin America accounted for 20% of America's international trade.⁶ As Stephen Rabe has emphasized, Castro was demonstrating the vulnerability of the United States' economic position in Latin America, expropriating through nationalisation nearly US \$1 billion in American investments in Cuba within two years of taking power.⁷

In strategic terms, any immediate prospect that British Guiana would provide a base for Soviet military penetration of the hemisphere or an advance base for Soviet missiles receded with the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, at least temporarily putting an end to Soviet adventurism in the Western hemisphere. Yet, American hostility to the Jagan government continued undiminished. The resolution of the missile crisis had not diminished American concerns about Castroite subversion in the Western hemisphere. But there is little to suggest that British Guiana, even had the worst American fears about Jagan been justified, could have become an effective base for subversive activities. The colony did share borders with two key Latin American states, Venezuela and Brazil, the former in particular, held up by the Kennedy administration as a model of democratic reform and the alternative to the revolutionary path taken by Cuba, and already a target of Castroite

⁶Figures quoted in Rabe, *Op.Cit.*, pp.108-109.

⁷Ibid.

subversion. However, geographically, as a base for subversion, British Guiana was an inhospitable environment. It had no historic links and little contact with its Latin neighbours, with whom it shared not even a common language, and with whom communications were extremely restricted. The subversive potential of a communist British Guiana, however, lay not in its physical capability to export revolution, but in its power as a symbol of the inevitability of the spread of communism and the failure of the Kennedy administration to quarantine Cuba. The dominoes the administration was apt to see falling in Latin America could be set off by the power of example.

The primary importance of the countries of Latin America to American policy-makers during the years of the Cold War lay not in the region's economic or strategic value to the United States so much as its symbolic position as a traditional American sphere of influence within the wider context of a global struggle for power with the Soviet Union.⁸ For American policy-makers keeping Latin America aligned with the United States was crucial to the maintenance of American credibility, as important as the more tangible qualifications of military firepower, economic strength and strategic advantage to the realisation and exercise of world power in the Cold War era. Maintaining credibility required the United States to meet any perceived challenge to its authority in any area. Failure to do so risked simultaneously losing the faith of America's allies in the ability of the United States to lead and defend them, and emboldening America's enemies to adventurism and aggression. The need to preserve American credibility, historians of diverse ideological hues have argued, produced an expansive definition of American interests as interdependent and indeed indivisible, and provided the rationale for American involvement in areas of little intrinsic importance.⁹ If the United States were forced to suffer the indignity of the emergence of a second hostile state in its own backyard, let alone lose its historic sphere of influence in Latin America to the communist tide that would follow, the authority and ability of the United States to operate on the world stage, and therefore to contain the Soviet Union and avoid

⁸Lars Schoultz, *National Security and United States Policy towards Latin America*, [Princeton, NJ, 1987].

⁹Robert J. McMahon, "Credibility and World Power: Exploring the Psychological Dimension in Postwar American Diplomacy", *DH*, 15:4, 1991, pp.455-471; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appreciation of Postwar American National Security Policy*, [New York, 1982]; Kolko, *Op.Cit.*

nuclear conflict, would be put in jeopardy. In the case of British Guiana where the prospects of a successful American intervention were auspicious, a policy dictated largely by concerns for American credibility carried no serious or immediately apparent cost for Washington. The credibility imperative, however, had less benign consequences for the United States when over the next several years it informed the escalation of involvement in the war in Vietnam and the reluctance of successive administrations to disengage from that conflict.

That a Jaganite or even a communist government in British Guiana would not be the inevitable precursor to the loss of the rest of Latin America, would not have led to the fragmentation of the Western alliance, and would not have undermined the ability of the United States to contain the USSR, and that the Kennedy administration at bottom grossly exaggerated the importance of British Guiana and the threat posed by Jagan, seems obvious from a post Cold War vantage point, and indeed, seemed blindingly obvious to a number of British officials in the early 1960s. But American concerns were no less real for being inaccurate. Those concerns were encapsulated in the generic conception of the threat of a second Cuba.

The administration's concerns about a second Cuba also had a domestic dimension. British officials consistently reported American concerns in terms of American domestic and electoral politics. It would be tempting to ascribe the British perception of the role of domestic politics in shaping American foreign policy to Foreign Office prejudices, were it not for the fact that American officials, at the highest levels acknowledged the importance of domestic and electoral considerations. If the Kennedy administration was concerned about the challenge of a second Cuba to the credibility of the United States as the leader of the western nations in the global struggle against communism, it was equally concerned for the repercussions of a second Cuba on its own domestic credibility. The foreign policy embarrassments of 1961, the Bay of Pigs, Khrushchev's haranguing of the new President at Vienna, and the reactivation of the Berlin crisis, had only compounded the difficulties inherent in Kennedy's position as the first Democrat to occupy the White House since Truman had 'lost' China, and the administration's vulnerability to Republican attack on its

foreign policy record. More vulnerable than a Republican President would have been to charges of being 'soft' on communism, and with Castro predicting and indeed sponsoring hemispheric revolution, Kennedy was not prepared to be the President who 'lost' Latin America. The Kennedy administration may have had an expansive definition of what constituted communism, but its Republican opponents were unlikely to be any more discriminating. For Kennedy, with his eye on a second term, Jagan presented a domestic political threat in terms of the potential political capital that could be generated for the Republicans in the run up to the 1964 election, should a regime emerge which, regardless of the reality of its international position, could be presented as a second communist state in the Western hemisphere.

The debate over the 'loss' of China had made itself felt too within the State Department. Officials, chastened by the routing of the China hands in the McCarthy era, were unlikely to jeopardise their careers by giving any self-confessed marxist the benefit of the doubt. American interference in the internal politics of British Guiana in the early 1960s stands as a sharp example of how tightly interwoven international developments had become with domestic politics in Cold War America.

British Guiana stood at a confluence of American domestic, regional and global interests. In elucidating this interaction, Kennedy's rationale for American concern articulated at Birch Grove in 1963 is particularly instructive:

"...In his view Latin America was the most dangerous part of the world because many countries in it might go communist at any minute. Next year there were elections in the United States. If Guiana had gone communist meanwhile the pressure for the United States to take some action against Cuba would rise and it would be impossible for any administration to resist."¹⁰

Upon the fate of British Guiana, Kennedy impressed upon his British audience, might rest his own chances for re-election, the ability of the rest of Latin America to resist the communist

¹⁰Record of a Meeting Between the PM and the US President at Birch Grove House, 30 June 1963, Document No.2, Visit to the UK by the President and Secretary of the US, June 27-30 1963, Vol.II, BG, PREM11/4586, PRO.

tide, and he implied, the fate of the world. Irresistible pressure to act against Castro's Cuba, given the Soviet commitment to Cuba's defence, carried with it the risk of nuclear confrontation with the USSR.

The Kennedy administration was able to achieve its objectives in British Guiana with relative ease. There was no need, for example, to send in the marines as happened in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and indeed in the wake of the Bay of Pigs it must be judged unlikely that overt military action was an option open to Kennedy. Johnson, as the Dominican intervention demonstrated, was in this respect liberated by Kennedy's assassination, although both Presidents were constrained by continuing British responsibility for British Guiana. There is no reason to suppose, however, that had Jagan defied the odds, emerged victorious from the 1964 election, and led British Guiana into independence, the Johnson administration would have been reluctant to resort to military force to secure his removal. As it happened, however, such forms of intervention were unnecessary.

The achievement of the Kennedy administration's objectives in British Guiana was eased by the willing collaboration of the British Guianese opposition parties and trade unions which, opposing Jagan for a variety of racial, ideological and personal reasons, were assiduous in courting American intervention by invoking the spectre of a communist threat. In practice they served as functionaries for American designs in the colony. The racial fissures in British Guianese society and their infusion into the colony's political life provided a convenient avenue of intervention. It was not only the United States which stood to benefit from Jagan's removal from office; the relationship between the American government and British Guiana's opposition forces was reciprocal. The effectiveness with which Burnham, in particular, used the communist menace to enlist the United States on the side of the Afro-Guianese community in the internal struggle for racial supremacy in British Guiana highlights the vulnerability to manipulation by local elites which was the price of hemispheric hegemony for the United States in the zero-sum context of the Cold War. This is not to say that the Kennedy administration would not have sought to be rid of Jagan were it not for the machinations of opposition forces in British Guiana, but merely that without the willing

cooperation of these groups it would have faced a more difficult task. Moreover, in the absence of an obvious route for intervention it is possible that the Kennedy administration would have been more amenable to the British policy of working with Jagan in an attempt to tie him to the West.

Indeed, by far the greatest obstacle that the Kennedy administration faced in ridding itself of Jagan was persuading the British government to abandon the policy of cooperation and to acquiesce in Jagan's removal. That the American will finally prevailed should not obscure the difficulties that the American government faced in persuading its junior partner to accept its analysis of Jagan and its policy prescriptions for British Guiana. Initially, British and American authorities differed in their assessments of Jagan's ideological proclivities, the nature of the threat that he presented, and the best means of minimising that threat, a divergence which reflected the very different interests of the United States and the United Kingdom in the future of the colony. The American fear that Jagan could present them with a second Cuba was contested by the British Colonial Office which doubted that Jagan's oratorical flourishes or the editorial agenda of *Thunder* provided an accurate guide to Jagan's likely behaviour before or after independence. Jagan's moderation in office after 1957 was taken in London to confirm the Colonial Office dictum that the realities of power and responsibility were the most effective antidote to the excesses of anti-imperialist agitation or rhetoric. Moreover, the British characterisation of Jagan as a woolly-minded socialist, misguided but essentially well-intentioned rather than a dyed in the wool Soviet agent of international communism meshed conveniently with their desire to curtail their presence in and financial responsibility for a colony in which they had no remaining interest. In their prescriptions for countering communism in British Guiana, the Americans from the outset sought Jagan's removal while the British advocated integrating British Guiana with the West. In keeping with London's superior knowledge of and experience in British Guiana, it was the British agenda that dominated early Anglo-American collaboration on British Guiana, informing the overt side of the Anglo-American action programme of September 1961. While the British accepted covert intelligence collection, at this stage at least, they resisted the covert political action programme sought by the Americans.

However, the preferred British policy of cooperating with the Jagan to foster his association with the West, predicated as it was upon substantive American economic aid for his government, foundered on American non-compliance, the unwillingness of the administration to underwrite the development of a nation that could potentially prove to be a regional, global and domestic liability. The initial American impulse towards covert action to remove Jagan ultimately triumphed. During 1962, the level and intensity of American interest quickly elevated British Guiana beyond the exclusive purview of the Colonial Office, transforming it from a residual colonial problem to be disposed of by the CO, to a matter of Anglo-American relations for the attention of the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister. By the time the Independence Conference assembled in London in October of that year, the British government had submitted to the American agenda, accepting the premise that Jagan should be manoeuvred from power before British Guiana became independent.

Anglo-American differences persisted however. No sooner had the British agreed to collaborate in Jagan's removal that they began back-tracking, refusing to hold a referendum on PR, and resisting repeated American requests in 1963 for an immediate constitutional suspension and the resumption of direct rule, even when these requests came directly from Kennedy, culminating in Macmillan's threat in June 1963 to revert to the earlier policy of moving forward towards independence for British Guiana under Jagan. However, with the exception of this last threat, born of British frustration at the escalating racial violence associated with the 1963 strike, these disputes, however fraught, amounted to little more than quibbling over the details of the implementation of the agreed anti-Jagan policy. They should not be taken as evidence of British independence of action with regard to British Guiana. Ultimately, following Kennedy's emphatic reiteration of American concerns at Birch Grove, the British government declared itself willing even to suspend the constitution not only as a measure of last resort, but also to facilitate a broader 'constitutional' solution.

The absence of any British economic or strategic interest in the colony had eased the sacrifice in principle of Jagan's government and democracy in British Guiana for the health

of the Anglo-American relationship. The Macmillan government's reservations about the various means of implementing the anti-Jagan policy arose from concerns about Britain's own credibility. American policy-makers did not have a monopoly on such preoccupations. Britain's credibility, given its imperial past and its present status as a second rank power, was defined by different criteria to that of the United States, but it was a preoccupation of the British government nonetheless. In explaining their long-standing objections to suspending the constitution and resuming direct rule in British Guiana, for example, British officials referred not only to the substantive problem of the financial burdens of direct rule, but also to less tangible notions of Britain's image as a benevolent, decolonising colonial power, an image assiduously cultivated by the Macmillan government. The British government was concerned if possible to prevent British Guiana becoming a *cause célèbre* at the UN, which was the likely consequence of a second constitutional suspension. Moreover, if the American government was afraid of another Cuba, with an eye on their own international reputation, British officials were alert to another analogy and possible eventuality, a second Congo. Damage to Britain's reputation, it was assumed, could complicate decolonisation elsewhere, reducing British control over that process. British credibility, however, was also multidimensional. In this instance, the need to maintain Britain's credibility as a reliable, cooperative and privileged ally for the United States prevailed over its concern to present an image of an enlightened colonial power.

The full operational details of the Kennedy administration's campaign against the Jagan government have yet to emerge. Over thirty years have lapsed since Jagan was removed from office, but the CIA and State Department have only reluctantly agreed to the declassification of material relating to British Guiana in the 1961-1963 period, and have retained a number of documents. It is difficult to see what danger their release would occasion to national security in the post Cold War environment. According to State Department and CIA officials, their motivation in withholding the documents is their desire to avoid the embarrassment to the United States which would be attendant upon their release.¹¹ Although the contours of American intervention in British Guiana are discernible, until the gaps in the available record

¹¹*New York Times*, 30 Oct. 1994, p.1.

are bridged it will not be possible, for example, to put a definite date on Kennedy's decision for Jagan's removal, to define the terms of Macmillan's agreement to that objective in 1962, or to elucidate further the nature of the relationships between the CIA and American international trade unionists, or between the CIA and the political opposition in British Guiana.

In the meantime, however, embarrassment has already resulted not from knowledge of the events in British Guiana in the early 1960s, but rather from ignorance of those events. In June 1994, the Clinton Administration sought to appoint a new Ambassador to Guyana. The man identified for the post was none other the AIFLD Executive Director, William C. Doherty Jnr. Jagan professed to be "flabbergasted" and reminded the Clinton administration of the appropriate history. Doherty's nomination was abandoned. Interviewed for the *New York Times* in October 1994, Jagan commented on the continuing reluctance of American officialdom to declassify documents relating to his ouster:

"Everybody in Guyana knows what happened. I don't understand why they should be kept secret. I'm not going to use these documents to blackmail the United States. Maybe President Clinton doesn't know our history, but the people who advise him should at least know their own history".¹²

¹²Ibid.

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