

UNION INTRIGUE IN GUIANA

**CIA funds had a role in downfall of Jagan**

By William A. Price

**F**UNDS PROVIDED by the Central Intelligence Agency — and funneled through a U.S. trade union—have been linked to the downfall of the pre-independence progressive administration in British Guiana of former Prime Minister Cheddi Jagan.

The New York Times revealed (Feb. 22) that from 1959 to 1964 the CIA provided funds to the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFL-CIO) with which that union supported a 1963 general strike designed to overthrow the Jagan government and aided other anti-Jagan efforts. The strike, led by the present Prime Minister Forbes Burnham, a Negro, split the colony into racial camps when the anti-Jagan forces pitted the African population against East Indians such as Jagan. It paralyzed the South American colony and led to the 1964 elections in which Jagan's People's Progressive Party was defeated after three times being elected and three times being forced out of office. Just before the former colony, now Guyana, became independent May 26, 1966, Jagan wrote in the GUARDIAN (May 21, 1966): "With the departure of the British, the U.S. will move into the vacuum created. A new stage of neo-colonialism will thus be launched."

CIA funds were used by AFSCME, according to the Times, to set up in Washington an Inter-American Affairs Branch of the London-based Public Service International, an international confederation of public employees. The Washington operation was administered, according to the Times, by two CIA aides with the knowledge of the union's leadership. The use of the AFSCME as a transmission belt for CIA funds was terminated in 1964 after Jerry Wurf, running as a reform candidate, defeated the incumbent AFSCME president Arnold Zander. Zander is now national president of the United World Federalists with headquarters in Washington.

**WORKING UNDER** the AFSCME cover, the CIA agents gave advice to union leaders in British Guinea on how to organize and sustain the strikes, the Times said. They also provided funds and food supplies to keep them going and medical supplies to pro-Burnham workers in-



Mahoos in the Times, London  
 "The next thing, I suppose, they will be wanting degrees in espionage."

jured in the wide-scale strife which resulted. One CIA aide even served as a member of a bargaining committee from a Guiana dike workers union that negotiated with Jagan.

The CIA funds came to the AFSCME through the Gotham foundation in New York. Starting with a grant of \$7,500 in 1959, the amounts grew to about \$60,000 yearly from 1961 until they were terminated.

The AFSCME role in British Guiana was minor compared with the massive intervention by U.S. agencies, governmental and non-governmental, as reported consistently in the *GUARDIAN*. After a ten-day visit to the British colony, *GUARDIAN* editor-in-exile Cedric Belfrage described the general strike (*GUARDIAN*, July 4, 1963) as one "without a figleaf of justification." Then 66 days old, the strike, Belfrage said, had become "pure violence" in the effort to overthrow Jagan.

In "The AFL-CIO Cold Warriors are busy in Guiana," the *GUARDIAN* reported (June 27, 1963) a secret meeting in 1961 at New York City's Commodore Hotel between an "anti-communist" leader of the British Guiana Trades Union Council and AFL-CIO president George Meany which was attended by several other top AFL-CIO officials. The meeting followed by several weeks the August, 1961, elections which had swept Jagan into power. The visitor asked help to stop the "Cubanization of strategic British Guiana," the *GUARDIAN* reported.

Directly and through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions which it helped found, the AFL-CIO unions channeled \$20 million of their members' dues between 1949 and 1965 to support foreign trade unions which follow the U.S. line in foreign policy.

**THE INTERNATIONAL STAKES** were high in British Guiana. They were the unpublicized reason for President John F. Kennedy's 1963 trip to England, according to Drew Pearson, who was quoted in the *GUARDIAN* (March 28, 1964). "Though it was never published at the time," Pearson wrote, Kennedy's trip was caused by his "haunting worry that British Guiana would get its independence from England in July, 1963, and set up another communist government under the guidance of Fidel Castro. If this happened before the presidential elections of 1964 . . . Kennedy knew the political effect would be disastrous." Kennedy got a commitment from the English to postpone independence "because of the general strike," which Pearson said, "was secretly inspired by a combination of U.S.-CIA money and British intelligence." The strike, Pearson said, "gave London the excuse it wanted." The *New York Times* said (Feb. 22), "The riots, racial strife and strikes . . . undoubtedly played a part in bringing about Dr. Jagan's downfall."

In the *GUARDIAN* (May 21, 1966), Jagan wrote that the Burnham government "has strengthened the hold of imperialism" by granting oil concessions to foreign companies, by moving to denationalize the Guyana Electricity Corp., "which my government nationalized," and other methods.

"The workers and farmers," Jagan said, "are now reaping a bitter harvest." But, he added, "illusions about Anglo-American respect for fair play and free elections are being cast aside. And a many-sided campaign for genuine independence, under the slogan 'unity and struggle,' has been initiated."

### *A correction*

A MECHANICAL ERROR omitting several words distorted the meaning of a sentence in the article about the CIA in last week's *GUARDIAN*. In discussing the NSA in the eighth paragraph, the next to last sentence should have read: "In fact—aside from being a CIA front in its extensive international operations—NSA is an elitist-dominated and basically undemocratic movement whose leadership in the last several years has assumed a political stance to the right of the growing campus oppositional movement." Further on, another omission of words is misleading. This occurs where a "CIA-inspired myth" about a "liberal wing in the CIA" is discussed. The words "in the CIA" were missing.