

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Pres

WEEKLY REVIEW

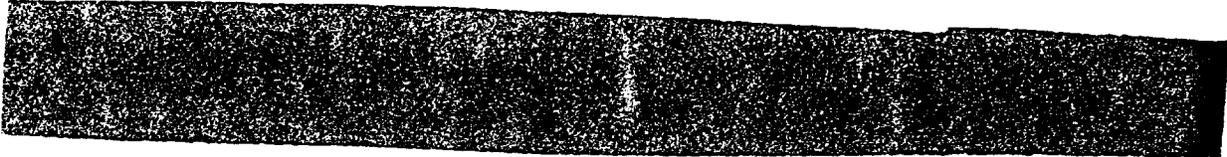
506.

4 October 1968

Pages: i-iii

Exemptions: NOT RELEVANT

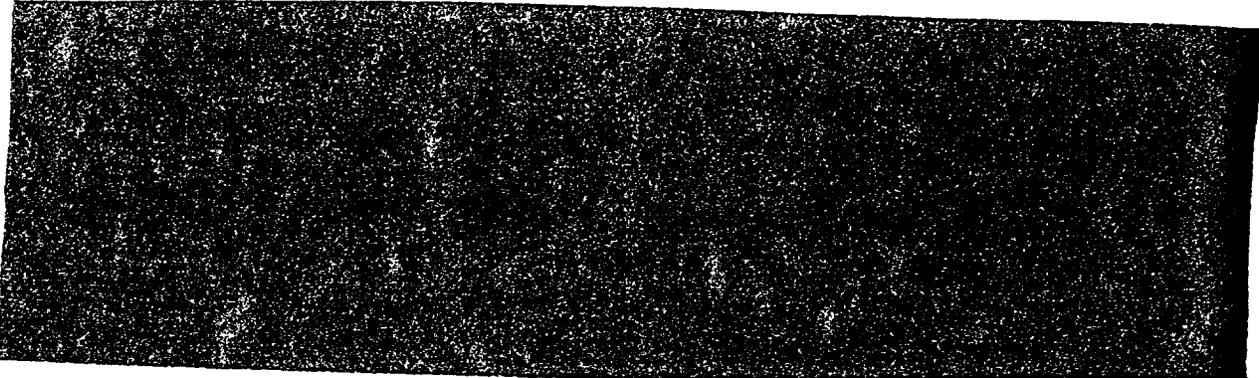


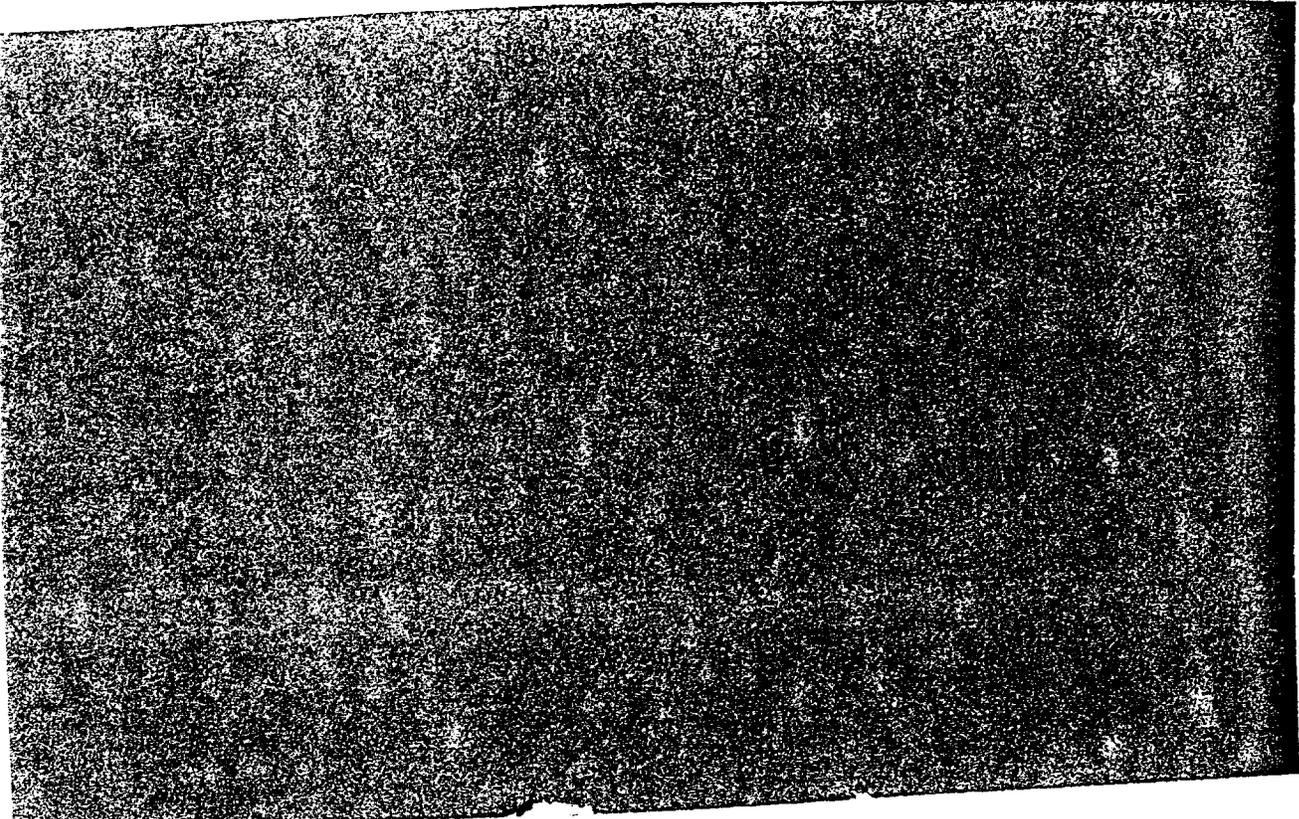


GUYANA'S ELECTION DATE SECRETLY SET

24

Prime Minister Burnham is hoping to get a clear majority in the election he is planning to hold on 16 December. Charges of rigging are already coming in from all sides.





NR

GUYANA'S ELECTION DATE SECRETLY SET

Prime Minister Forbes Burnham is planning to hold Guyana's first national election as an independent country on 16 December. So far, however, he is keeping the election schedule secret in order to give his People's National Congress an opportunity to organize its campaign ahead of the other political parties. He also probably believes that a short campaign will minimize the possibilities of violence.

In the last elections, in December 1964, Burnham defeated pro-Communist Cheddi Jagan's People's Progressive Party by forming a coalition with the small conservative United Force. This arrangement put a damper on Burnham's own liberal politics, and this year he will try to win on his own.

In Guyana, however, voting is almost entirely on racial lines. Jagan's East Indian followers



[REDACTED]

outnumber Burnham's Negro supporters, and Burnham has sought to increase his party's votes by registering Guyanese--mostly Negroes--living abroad.

Both the United Force and the People's Progressive Party are already claiming that there have been many irregularities connected with the overseas registration. They charge, among other things, that the registrars were biased and that inscription was far easier for a Negro than for someone of another race. The government, of course, has denied all such allegations

[REDACTED]

Even if Burnham should get a clear majority he would still like to form a coalition with the United Force. Such an arrangement would be mainly window dressing because Burnham plans to give the United Force little say in policy matters. A coalition would appear to have widespread multiracial support and, because the leader of the United Force is Guyana's foremost businessman, would lend an aura of financial stability to Burnham's regime. It would also enhance

Burnham's international image. There is a danger, however, that relations between Burnham and the United Force will deteriorate during the campaign and another coalition offer would be refused.

Jagan privately admits that he does not have a chance. It appears that his party will contest the elections in order to keep up morale and to make the going as difficult as possible for Burnham. Tactics are still being discussed, however, and the party could yet decide to boycott the election.

[REDACTED]

Racial tensions will increase as the political campaigns get under way, however, and incidents are certain to occur. The security forces could probably deal with violence on a small scale but would have trouble should an incident touch off disorders which become geographically widespread.

[REDACTED]

* * *