

SNIE 87.2-61
21 March 1961

~~SECRET~~

LBJ LIBRARY
Mandatory Review
Case # NLJ 94-289
Document # 12

SPECIAL
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE
NUMBER 87.2-61

PROSPECTS FOR BRITISH GUIANA

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 21 March 1961. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

APPROVED FOR RELEASE

~~SECRET~~

Nº

2

SEP 11 1997

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

DISSEMINATION NOTICE

1. This estimate was disseminated by the Central Intelligence Agency. This copy is for the information and use of the recipient and of persons under his jurisdiction on a need to know basis. Additional essential dissemination may be authorized by the following officials within their respective departments.

- a. Director of Intelligence and Research, for the Department of State
- b. Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army
- c. Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), for the Department of the Navy
- d. Director of Intelligence, USAF, for the Department of the Air Force
- e. Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff, for The Joint Staff
- f. Director of Intelligence, AEC, for the Atomic Energy Commission
- g. Assistant Director, FBI, for the Federal Bureau of Investigation
- h. Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations, for the Department of Defense
- i. Director of NSA for the National Security Agency
- j. Assistant Director for Central Reference, CIA, for any other Department or Agency

2. This copy may be retained, or destroyed by burning in accordance with applicable security regulations, or returned to the Central Intelligence Agency by arrangement with the Office of Central Reference, CIA.

3. When an estimate is disseminated overseas, the overseas recipients may retain it for a period not in excess of one year. At the end of this period, the estimate should either be destroyed, returned to the forwarding agency, or permission should be requested of the forwarding agency to retain it in accordance with IAC-D-69/2, 22 June 1953.

4. The title of this estimate when used separately from the text, should be classified:
~~FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~WARNING~~

~~This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.~~

DISTRIBUTION:

White House
National Security Council
Department of State
Department of Defense
[REDACTED]
Atomic Energy Commission
Federal Bureau of Investigation

PROSPECTS FOR BRITISH GUIANA

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the political situation and prospects in British Guiana, with particular reference to the coming elections and Communist potential in the colony.

THE ESTIMATE

1. British Guiana is a small outpost of empire with a population of over half a million, about half East Indian in origin and about a third of African descent. The remainder of the population includes small numbers of British, Portuguese, native Indian, and Chinese residents. Partially self-governing since elections in 1957, the colony is scheduled to assume increased responsibilities for its own affairs following new elections on 21 August 1961 and, if all goes well, to gain full independence two or three years thereafter.

2. The politics of British Guiana is dominated by the Communist-led People's Progressive Party (PPP) of Cheddi Jagan. Jagan is an East Indian, and his party draws its support almost entirely from East Indians, including not only poverty-stricken rural and urban workers, but also a considerable number of small businessmen in Georgetown and other centers. Jagan's US-born wife, who exercises very strong influence over him, is an acknowledged Communist. She shares with Jagan control of the PPP, and is a government minister. Several other PPP leaders are believed to be Communists. Jagan himself is not an acknowledged Communist, but his statements and actions over the years bear the marks of the indoctrination and advice

the Communists have given him. While there is no Communist party *per se* in British Guiana, a number of the leaders in the PPP have been members of, or associated with, Communist parties or their front groups in the US and the UK.

3. Moreover, these individual leaders maintain sporadic courier and liaison contacts with the British and US Communists and with Communist Bloc missions in London. Both Jagans have visited Cuba in the past year and have since chosen to identify the PPP with Castro's cause. However, neither the Communist Bloc nor Castro has made any vigorous effort to exploit the British Guiana situation.

4. The principal opposition to Jagan's party is the People's National Congress (PNC), a socialist party made up largely of city negroes. It is under the ineffectual leadership of Forbes Burnham, a negro and a doctrinaire socialist. Like most British Guiana politicians he was at one time allied with Jagan, and indeed was second to Jagan in leadership of the PPP. The United Force (UF), a party made up largely from businessmen of various ethnic groups, was recently organized and has not demonstrated any wide popular appeal. Neither it nor the PNC is disposed to work

with the other to present Jagan with a united opposition; previous efforts at coalition have failed.

5. The elections scheduled for August 1961 will be one of the last steps preparatory to independence, which the British have agreed to grant approximately 18 months after The West Indies achieves independence in 1962 or 1963. With the next elections not due for another five years, the winning party in this year's contest will carry the government through independence. During the transition period, the local British officials will retain ultimate authority for external affairs (including defense), but their present overall veto power will be narrowed to these matters. After the elections, the local government will assume full control of the police.

6. The election seems likely to hinge mainly on personalities and to be decided by voting along ethnic lines—though racial antagonisms have not been deliberately stirred up. Social and economic problems, though they will certainly be issues in the election, have not yet made as much popular impact in British Guiana as they have in most of the Latin American area. The PPP has promised to put through various schemes of economic development, but has been ineffectual in fulfilling its promises, partly through lack of technicians and funds. It wants to get more money out of the US-developed bauxite resources of the country. The good rice crop of the past year has made the economic situation seem improved and for the time being has tended not only to obscure PPP shortcomings, but even to redound to the party's credit. The PNC stands for anticommunism and the desirability of joining The West Indies (in contrast to Jagan's antifederation stance), but these are not popular issues. The UF's appeal against communism and for a businessman's government is even less effective.

7. Of the 35 districts from which members of the Legislative Council will be elected next August, the PPP appears certain of victory in 13; the PNC, in 15 or 16. Thus, control of the government will be determined by the electoral outcome in a half dozen or so of the 35 districts. A PNC-UF coalition could take

enough of these to assure itself a majority in the Legislative Council; but it is unlikely that such a coalition will be formed. Without such cooperation between the opposition parties, Jagan is almost certain to win in most of the pivotal districts. Accordingly, we believe that Jagan's PPP will probably succeed in winning the right to form the next government.

8. From time to time Jagan has threatened to boycott the elections, on the grounds that a redrawing of the boundaries of electoral districts, carried out by a British-appointed commissioner, was adverse to PPP interests. We think it highly unlikely that he will carry out his threat; and certainly he will not do so unless he believes his party is going to lose the elections.

9. Jagan's election as Chief Minister in the preindependence phase would not be likely to result in a dramatic and sudden shift to the left, since he would probably seek to avoid action which would discourage the granting of independence by the British and recognizes that he would lack sufficient support for a revolutionary attempt to force the British out. He is almost certainly mindful of the effectiveness with which the British moved in with force in 1953, when they feared he might try to set up a Communist regime.

10. However, with a new electoral mandate, Jagan will probably make a more determined effort to improve economic conditions than he has heretofore. This will entail pressure on the UK—and the US—for economic assistance considerably above present levels. If he feels that economic aid from the West is not adequate to fulfill requirements for development, he will go elsewhere being careful not to provoke the British. He has already indicated interest in an alleged Cuban offer of an \$8.5 million low-interest loan. At the same time, he may threaten nationalization or confiscation of foreign and local businesses to extract additional revenues and benefits.

11. How far a Jagan government might go after eventual achievement of independence is obscured by uncertainty about the nature and extent of his actual commitment to Com-

munist discipline and about the tactical aims of the Bloc with respect to British Guiana. We believe that British Guiana will obtain membership in the UN upon independence, and that it will align itself under Jagan with Afro-Asian neutralism and anticolonialism. At a minimum, we would expect his government 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. A good deal will depend on how far the spirit of social revolution has spread in nearby areas of Latin America. We think it unlikely that Jagan would give up his opposition to joining the federation of The West Indies (TWI), which would offer few economic rewards and would subordinate his regime to outside and predominantly conservative influences.

12. It is possible that Jagan, once he had a free hand, would proceed forthwith with an effort to establish an avowed Communist regime. However, we believe that he would consider this undesirable, even if he were fully committed to 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 of adverse international reactions. We consider it more likely 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. Such a regime would almost certainly be strongly encouraged and supported by Castro and the Bloc.

13. Before independence, the attitude and actions of the British will bear heavily on the situation in British Guiana. Thus far the British seem to have been motivated chiefly by a desire to see British Guiana independent. They have tried to get along with Jagan and to overlook his Communist associations because he has seemed to them the only man capable of running the country. Since their intervention in 1953 to halt Jagan's first bid for power, they have refrained from actions which would antagonize him; the Governor's veto power has never been used. Even though they retain the capability for controlling Jagan, we believe they will do little to interfere with political developments in British Guiana.