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Dear Peter,

It was a great pleasure travelling with you to Trinidad and I enjoyed our evening at Piarco.

I enclose an article about the B.G. elections which you might like to use for the economist. It is written in retrospect so that the time lag should not matter. Later on I'll do something about that other suggestion of mine about West Indian attitudes.

I hope all goes well with you. Maybe one day we shall meet in Jamaica.

Yours sincerely,



Guy Arnold

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THE BRITISH GUIANA ELECTIONS IN RETROSPECT

..... Guy Arnold

Looking back at the British Guiana elections and their result it is possible to learn several important lessons. Firstly, the attitude of the overseas press: in almost every case it displayed an ignorance of Guianese conditions, at least in terms of thought if not of fact; and it assessed the outcome only from the viewpoint of the West, of Britain or the United States, never of British Guiana itself. Secondly, the result gives some fairly clear indications as to likely Guianese trends in the immediate future, including relations with the West Indies Federation. Thirdly, it ought to make the West give serious thought to both its policy towards emergent nations and its reasons for giving aid.

Despite a few incidents and some rumours of the troubles that were likely to occur the elections were quiet and orderly. Indeed the Guianese have a right to be proud of the third election in their history for they showed a political awareness and sense of responsibility that many democratic nations would do well to imitate. The turnout at the polls averaged 89%; at no constituency did less than 84% of the voters turn out; at some, as many as 95%; in some cases 50% of the votes had already been cast by 9 a.m. The moderation shown in the statements of the three leaders of the contending parties, after results were know<sup>n</sup>, give every promise that British Guiana can evolve a democratic system of her own.

In British Guiana three things have emerged from the election: firstly, the racial divisions; secondly, that communism is not a major issue; and, thirdly, that Dr. Jagan and the People's Progressive Party are the only likely government for some time to come.

The P.P.P. had the almost solid backing of the East Indian Community who represent 50% of the total population. The P.N.C. drew their support from the African community, about 35% of the population while the United Force support was composed of European, Portuguese~~x~~ and Chinese as well as light-coloureds. The Africans in particular stressed the racial issue because they fear that the more rapidly increasing East Indians will swamp them. As long as race remains a dominant factor in elections it is clear that the PPP will win. What must also be faced by the minority groups in British Guiana is that the country is going to be a predominantly Indian country. If the African and white minorities do not wish in the future to become second class citizens, then they must ensure that they can compete effectively with the Indian with their contributions to the~~x~~ economy and running of the country.

Communism was more of an issue with the overseas press than with the Guianese although Peter D'Aguiar and the United Force used the communist bogey to attack Jagan. This was both foolish and irresponsible. Few of the more intelligent residents of British Guiana, whether Guianese or ex-patriate subscribe to the theory that Jagan is a communist, although they admit that he has communists and communist sympathisers among his followers. Unfortunately, far

too many overseas commentators talked in terms of the communist threat to South America and the possibilities of Jagan becoming another Castro without ever really thinking in terms of the country they were discussing.

Dr. Jagan is certainly a left wing socialist. The policy he advocates is one of increasing state direction and control while pursuing a course of neutralism within the Commonwealth. What most American and some British observers failed to appreciate was that such a policy is almost certainly the best possible for British Guiana at the present stage of its development. For a poor and underdeveloped country which lacks both resources and technical skills socialism is likely to be the most efficient answer. If the best advances are to be made as quickly as possible the state must be in the position to direct where these should be. Nor is it to British Guiana's advantage to align itself with the West; rather, a policy of neutralism is the only one that will enable the Guianese voice to be heard at all. Aid must be given because it is needed and not in any attempt to buy Guianese support for Western policies.

It is the hope of the Federation of the West Indies that British Guiana will become a member. This would seem most unlikely, at least for the time being. Firstly, British Guiana is the only Caribbean territory with an East Indian majority; as part of the Federation the Indians would become a small minority. After the racial bitterness of the election it will be some time before the Indians will consider such a change. Secondly, the P.P.P. will want

to exercise their power untrammelled by any Federal links, at least until they have negotiated complete independence; moreover, as an independent territory, British Guiana will be in a stronger position to ~~not~~ seek outside aid. Thirdly, the question of accepting immigrants from the Federation will be easier to avoid as long as they remain outside. This is particularly important from the point of view of the P.P.P. since West Indian immigrants would nearly all be African and this would upset the racial balance in British Guiana to the detriment of the East Indian. From the Guianese viewpoint the advantages of joining the Federation are, at the moment, doubtful, and unless some very strong inducements are produced British Guiana is likely to remain outside for some time to come.

More important than any of the foregoing is, perhaps, a lesson for the West. Emergent nations must not be regarded as potential Cold War partners; the attempt must be made to look at independence from the new nation's point of view. For its own sake the West must cease seeing everything in black and white. New nations have the right to choose socialism and neutralism and they should be left to do so without pressure. Aid, when it is given, must be given because it is needed and not as a bribe to secure allegiance.