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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. McGeorge Bundy
Special Assistant to the President
The White House

SUBJECT : British Guiana

1. You will recall that at our meeting on British Guiana on 21 November 1963 it was decided that the Department of State would send a message to the London Embassy to have them ask Ambler Thomas of the Colonial Office for an evaluation of the determination of Premier Cheddi Jagan to defy the decision imposed by Duncan Sandys, British Colonial Secretary.

[Redacted]

2. Jagan's current tactics and the probable future course of events were discussed with Thomas and R.W. Piper of the Colonial Office. They agreed that everything Jagan has said, particularly the Sessional Paper tabled by Jagan in the Legislative Assembly on 21 November, has been along the lines of non-cooperation or rejection of Sandys' decisions. So far, however, Jagan has not been confronted by a concrete situation requiring a specific act of cooperation, non-cooperation or outright obstructionism. Nor has there been internal disorders or a general breakdown of governmental process which would justify HMG's suspending the constitution. However, HMG fully intends to implement Sandys' decision and remains prepared to impose direct rule as soon as it becomes clear such action is necessary. For this purpose, contingency preparations (e.g., Order in Council and stand-by British personnel to go to British Guiana) remain in effect. The test may come fairly soon, as

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Authority *NWTRAC 14-7*
By *CTS*, NARA, Date *6/16/17*

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HMG hopes to sign up the Electoral Commissioner this week and send him to British Guiana for the preliminary survey during December. It is still not certain when he will have fully legal status to undertake the initial task of registering voters, as HMG's legal experts are still trying to decide whether an Order in Council authorizing this registration process must lie before Parliament for 40 days. Nevertheless, Thomas thinks the commissioner's activities will force the Jagan government to show its hand in a concrete fashion, since the registration process will eventually require the cooperation of the British Guiana Government, particularly the Civil Service.

b. At this point during the discussion, Thomas seemed quite firm in his estimate that Jagan, when confronted with this or some other concrete issue, would continue his non-cooperative line and that HMG would then impose direct rule. Later Thomas noted that the People's Progressive Party (PPP) still seemed uncertain about how to play its hand; that PPP ministers no doubt wished to retain their salaries; and that the PPP appears to believe that it should contest elections under the new system. However, Thomas also commented it would be difficult for Jagan to reverse his line and start cooperating in the implementation of Sandys' decisions.

c. My net impression of Colonial Office thinking is as follows: While not sure how Jagan will act in the future, the Colonial Office is working on the assumption that direct rule will become necessary. But since such action is likely to heighten domestic (particularly the Labor Party) and international criticism of British handling of the British Guiana situation, HMG will wait until Jagan's actions provide clear-cut justification. The British probably have not yet decided what would constitute such justification except in general terms such as the failure to cooperate in procedures for implementing Sandys' decisions, the outbreak of internal disorders or a general governmental breakdown. The Colonial Office will proceed in an orderly manner to implement its decisions and will remain prepared to cope as necessary with Jagan's reaction, but will not deliberately try to force him into a corner or find a pretext to oust him.

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d. The following additional points of interest emerged during our discussion:

1) The Colonial Office has seen little activity which might lead to the formation of an alternative East Indian party, although it probably is still too early to assess this prospect. (The wife of Balram Singh Rai is pregnant and Rai is so pleased by the possibility he will have a long-wanted son that he may be disinterested in politics.)

2) HMG will soon be instructing Sir Ralph Grey, Governor of British Guiana, to move ahead with establishing the "additional forces" mentioned in Sandys' final speech to the conference. This special force will be more akin to the police than an army, probably roughly along the lines of the present riot squads. The force initially may be under the Commissioner of Police, but so constituted as to be "detachable" in the future.

3) Regarding British Guiana's finances, the government apparently has money in the bank but may not be able to repay its debts when due. Without threatening Jagan, the British have told him that HMG might have to take over some control of finances if requested by the British Guiana Government to bail it out financially.

4) Present plans for implementing Sandys' decisions do not involve British Guianese legislative action. Instead, HMG Orders in Council will be used. Four are now contemplated to cover electoral registrations, the special force, the new electoral system, and the ultimate constitution (except for the electoral provisions. The latter would become effective after independence).

5) In responding to Jagan's letter of 7 November to Prime Minister Home, the British made clear to Jagan that Sandys' decisions were actually Cabinet decisions, as they sensed that Jagan thought he could appeal to HMG over Sandys' head.

6) The British intend to replace one battalion of troops, probably in January.

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7) Since his return Governor Grey has apparently had little substantive discussion with Jagan.

2. A copy of this memorandum has been made available to Mr. William C. Burdett of the Department of State.

Richard Helms
Deputy Director (Plans)

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