

# There was a ban on persons entering the Rupununi for some time

Friday, September 23rd 2005

Dear Editor,

It is interesting that Mr. Hamilton Green should make mention of Ranji Chandisingh in his letter (SN, September 21) on the Rupununi revolt. Mr Green says that Chandisingh is one of those persons who set records straight.

Significantly, Chandisingh wrote about the Rupununi revolt in the October-December 1969 issue of the PPP publication Thunder, in an article entitled "The Erosion of Civil Liberties." At that time he was a top executive member of the PPP. This is what he wrote:

"During the debate in Parliament (on the National Security Act of 1969 to restrict the movement of persons within Guyana and to prevent Guyanese leaving the country), Opposition members pointed out that in the vast Rupununi area - following the short-lived uprising - the Government imposed administratively a complete ban on persons entering the area. The charge was made that the Government had something to hide; it was not telling the whole truth about the situation in the Rupununi - particularly with respect to the treatment of the Amerindians. There was much speculation as to the number of deaths.

"The PPP sent two of its Amerindian members - one an organiser, the other a Member of Parliament - to investigate. They bought airplane tickets from the Guyana Airways Corporation and duly boarded the plane. Shortly after they landed, however, they were rounded up by police and sent back to Georgetown. Even priests who had served in the area were hustled out and prevented from returning. The Government had actually sealed off the entire area, long after there could be any military justification for this. Only Government officials and certain PNC activists were allowed in.

"At that time the Government was acting without any legal or constitutional authority. It was only subsequently that the Government - through this Act (National Security Act, 1969) - gave itself legal authority for such action."

Mr Chandisingh defected from the PPP in 1976 and joined the PNC and became a leading member of the PNC government. As far as I know he has not retracted when he wrote in 1969. Is it because he set the records straight since that time?

Yours faithfully,

Sasenarine Persaud