

## Guiana's Struggle Against FACISM AND RACISM

by  
Dr. Cheddi Jagan.

The question has been posed- how and why has the People's Progressive Party (PPP), which won 3 successive elections in 1953, 1957 and 1961, been removed from the government. The answer is that the British and U.S. imperialists having failed to destroy the PPP in spite of a Tory engineered split in the party in 1955, and "gerrymandering" of constituencies in 1957 and 1961, and seeing no prospects of defeating it and free and fair elections in the future, resorted to force and fraud.

They did not want another progressive independent state in the Western hemisphere. Alarmed and hysterical about developments in socialist Cuba, the U.S., after our victory in 1961 when we were poised for independence, stepped up their propaganda that an independent Guiana under Jagan was going to become a second Cuba and a gateway for international communism into South America. The slogan at home and abroad was, "No independence under Jagan".

Consequently, counter-revolutionary disturbances were engineered in 1962 and 1963 and a <sup>blockade</sup> ~~blockade~~ in 1963 with the aim of forcibly removing my government from office and giving the British Government the excuse for withholding independence and suspending or manipulating our constitution. The opportunistic, collaborationist political and Trade Union leaders, aided and abetted by reactionary local big business, a corrupt, big business controlled press and foreign imperialist <sup>combined</sup> elements (to use the words of the Commonwealth Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances of February 16, 1962,) to form a veritable torrent of abuse, recrimination and vicious hostility direct against Dr. Jagan and his government and each day gave fresh vigour to the agitation.

The excuse for the 1962 disturbances was the budget, which was largely influenced by the Cambridge economist, Mr. Nicholas Kaldor. It was described and attacked as "anti-working class" and "communistic". It took the Commission to point out that "the contradiction implicit in a measure being both communist in substance and oppressive of the workers was not a matter which troubled Dr. Jagan's opponents, for political slogans are not infrequently lacking in logic, and the multitude to whom they are addressed does not possess the faculty of discerning and incongruity or fallacy in what their leaders expound, before them."

However, declared the Commission, the real cause of the disturbances was political rivalry and fear that the government might enact measures injurious to the proprietary rights of the upper classes and businessmen.

Writing about the budget, Professor of Economics, Peter Newman, pointed out that it was the first serious attempt at self-help. In his article on "Racial Tension in British Guiana", he said:

"The first budget of the new Jagan government, under the influence of the distinguished British economist, Nicholas Kaldor, seriously attempted to increase substantially the amount of locally provided funds, to a degree beyond that envisaged by the original plan. A package consisting of higher rates for old taxes (e.g. import duties), new taxes, (e.g. capital gains taxes), and a scheme for compulsory private saving, was introduced. As we shall see, the timing of these admirable self-help proposals laid them open to misinterpretation. It is ironic that the grave riots in February of this year were sparked by the first serious attempt to make the Guianese responsible for their own economic development."

In 1963, the excuse for the disturbances, lockout and blockade was the Labour Relations Bill. Mr. Burnham, leader of the People's National Congress (PNC) made this clear when he uttered that the Bill was not the "causa belli" but the "ocasio belli", not the cause of, but the occasion for, the counter revolution.

This bill was patterned after the National Labour Relations (Wagner) Act of the New Deal Roosevelt administration. Its motivation, as that of its 1953 predecessor of the first PPP Government, was the elimination of company unions, the ending of jurisdictional disputes and the establishment of democracy in the trade union movement. Because of this, it was opposed by local and foreign big business, the ICFTU, the TUC, the two opposition parties and the imperialist controlled press. Because of the vast ICFTU directed propaganda, it has been made to appear that the trade union movement was opposed to and by the PPP government. The fact is that the super-structure of the Trades Union Council (TUC) is not a true reflection of the base of the trade union movement, and is a bastion of reaction. This is the explanation for the TUC's opposition in 1963 to the Labour Relations Bill which it supported a decade earlier in 1953. The enactment into law of the bill would have achieved two things; firstly, the company dominated sugar workers union, the Man-Power Citizens Association (MPCA) would have been replaced at a secret ballot of workers by the Guiana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) and the British sugar planters would have been forced to bargain with a militant union; and secondly, the GAWU, with the nearly 30 percent delegate representatives, which now go to the MPCA at the annual Congress of the TUC, would have had the opportunity of changing the reactionary TUC super-structure, now bossed by U.S. backed ICFTU puppet, and MPCA propped-up president, Richard Lehmsel.

The TUC was not always a reactionary body. Prior to the suspension of the Constitution, in 1953, it pursued a militant policy and supported the PPP. Its affiliates, catering particularly for workers in the sugar plantations, water-front, saw-mills, wood-plants and quarries, were constantly engaged in militant struggles for recognition, increased wages and improved working conditions.

But this militancy it also became a casualty of the Cold War. Through the influence and pressure of Mr. Serafino Romualdi of the ICFTU and ORIT, the TUC was unconstitutionally disbanded soon after the October 1953 forcible removal of the PPP from office. Six unions controlled by the Opposition, headed by the MPCA, formed a new T.U.C. And after his split of the PPP in 1955, Burnham strengthened this body with his British Guiana Labour Union and confused and split the Negro working-class with Socialist demagoguery and racism.

The Trades Union Council, as presently constituted, is dominated by unions catering for civil servants, teachers and other government employees in postal, airline, telephone and transport services, where the political opposition is well entrenched. The leadership of this group comes mainly from opportunists, labour aristocrats and the middle class which to a large extent has been pampered by colonialism and imperialism. Many of these "labour" leaders have been taken on scholarships to Washington D.C., U.S.A. for pro-capitalist and pro-imperialist indoctrination. Several have been put on the C.I.A. monthly payroll. They fight to maintain the status quo and to preserve entrenched positions.

U.S. involvement in our domestic affairs has been evident for some time. An unprecedented number of U.S. trade unionists and C.I.A. agents entered the country to stir up opposition to the government. During the whole period of the 1963 disturbances, a United States trade unionist, Mr. Williams McCabe, was instigating the political Opposition and the Trade Union Council to continue the strike while the British trade union adviser, Mr. Walter Hood, was urging a settlement. McCabe, with the help of other United States Trade unionists, the I.C.F.T.U and the American Institute of Free Labour Development, succeeded in imposing a blockage which almost completely stopped sea and air communications with the outside. Without the backing of these U.S. or U.S. - controlled organisations, in the 1963 counter revolution would have collapsed in a couple of weeks. And had the socialist governments of Cuba, China and USSR not come to our aid to break the blockade with fuel and supplies, we would have been forced out of office.

Earlier during the 1961 election campaign, the Christian Anti- Communist Crusade by its own admission spent \$45,000 in support of the Opposition. The United States Information Services also entered that contest. With their film projectors, they came to the street- corners and showed anti-communist and anti-castro films in a vicious propaganda campaign which coincided with that of the Opposition.

In early 1963, Mr. William Tyler, Under- Secretary of State for European Affairs, giving evidence before a Congressional Appropriation Sub-Committee, spoke disparagingly of my government and categorically stated that the United States government would be happy to see us out of office. to change the electoral systems.

The complicity of the U.S. and British governments in the plot to remove the PPP from the government was exposed by the U.S. columnist, Drew Pearson. In an article published on March 22, 1964, headed "Castro and Jagan" he said in part:

The United States permitted Cuba to go Communist purely through default and diplomatic bungling. The problem now is to look ahead and make sure we don't make the same mistake again. We are already on the way to making it in Haiti. But in British Guiana, President Kennedy, having been badly burnt in the Bay of Pigs operations, did look ahead.

Though it was never published at the time, this was the secret reason why Kennedy took his trip to England in the summer of 1963. He had promised Premier Fanfani and Chancellor Adenauer to go to Rome and Bonn, but London was added to the itinerary only because of Kennedy's haunting worry that British Guiana would get its independence from England in July, 1963, and set up another Communist government under the guidance of Fidel Castro.

If this happened just before the Presidential election of 1964 and it at that time a Communist Guian began seizing the Reynolds Metals aluminum operation and other American properties, Kennedy knew the political effect would be disastrous.

It wasn't in the communique issued by the United States and England after the Kennedy-McMillan meeting, but the main thing they agreed on was that the British would refuse to grant independence to Guiana because of the general strike against pro-Communist Prime-Minister, Cheddi Jagan.

That strike was secretly inspired by a combination of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) money and British Intelligence. It gave London the excuse they wanted."

The C.I.A. fomented disturbances opened the way for a fraud. At the October 1963 constitutional talks in London, independence was denied, and our traditional first-past-the-post district or constituency system changed to proportional representation. It was feared that had new elections been held under our traditional system, we would have won again. This demand for proportional representation was first made in 1954 by the Sword of the Spirit, a reactionary Catholic organisation, but was rejected by the Robertson Constitution Commission. It was raised in 1959 by Anthony Tasker, a nominated member of the Legislative Council and local head of the British sugar planters and taken up by the opposition parties and put forward at the 1960 London Constitutional Conference. It was however rejected by Mr. Ian McLeod, the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

We were also forced to go to elections in December, 1964 before the expiry of my government's normal term of office in August, 1965. And our demand, backed by a legislative resolution, for the reduction of the voting age from 21 to 18 was rejected.

Elections in late 1965 and voting at 18 would have brought more youths, thus more pro-<sup>PPP</sup> voters on the electoral roll. (British Guiana has a relatively young population; about 57% as compared with 29% in the U.K., is below the voting age).

There were other irregularities. the machinery for the conduct of elections was taken away from my government and placed in an Electoral Commission headed by the Governor and manned by an hostile administrative machine. Our conventional system of registration of voters by house-to-house enumeration was changed to personal registration. This precluded nearly 30,000 persons, mainly of the working class and peasantry, from getting their names registered and also opened the way to fraud-registration of the same person in more than one place and voting by proxy. By the extension of the system of proxy voting a procedure which came in for severe criticism from the Commonwealth Team of Observers, the way was opened for manipulation and mal-practice.

Besides these irregularities, there was an atmosphere of terror and intimidation created by the colonialists. The British Government, which spoke about non-interference in the affairs of an internally self-governing territory as in the case of Rhodesia, intervened on several occasions and eroded the constitutional authority of my government.

Early in 1964, three Orders-in-Council were made in London, amending our constitution. Powers held by my government and my ministers were placed in the hands of the Governor. He was authorised to withdraw money from the Treasury without the sanction and approval of the Legislature; he assumed powers held by the Minister of Home Affairs for the registration of voters and the conduct of elections; and he was put in complete control of the Emergency and of a new Force, the Special Service Unit, which was more than an arm of the Police, constitutional responsibility for which rested with the Minister of Home Affairs. In mid-1964, he used these powers to detain 33 PPP legislators and activists, including the Deputy-Premier and intervened in many other ways in favour of the opposition just prior to polling day. With the detention of the Deputy Premier and PPP Legislators, my government was robbed of its parliamentary majority and the constitution

constitution/ virtually suspended.

But despite the Governor's interference, and U.S. intervention on the side of the opposition parities with a vast amount of money, advisers and propaganda, the electors pronounced a vote of confidence in the PFP. We won a majority of votes in the 20 out of 35 administrative electoral districts which we had won as constituencies in 1961. Besides, we topped the polls with 46% of the votes, increasing our total by 3.3% as compared with a drop of .4% for the People's National Congress and 4% for the United Force (UF). However, dictated to by the US government, the British Labour Government responded to our vote of confidence by amending our constitution, ejecting us from office and installing the PNC which polled only 40% of the votes.

That the British Labour Government had completely succumbed to U.S. pressure became clear during a conference in November, 1964 with Mr. Anthony Greenwood, Secretary of State for the Colonies. I requested that the elections announced for December 7th be postponed and a Commonwealth Mission be sent out to British Guiana to help work out a solution for three reasons.

Firstly, Mr. Harold Wilson as leader of the Opposition, in a debate in the House of Commons in June 1964, had called the PR imposition "a fiddled constitutional arrangement" and had urged that a Commonwealth Team which "might consist of perhaps Canada, Jamaica, Trinidad, India and a representative of a West African State" should review our situation. And Horatio Bottomley, now Commonwealth Secretary had described the Sandys scheme as "riddled with disadvantages and which is quite unknown in any other Commonwealth territory .... those who supported him (Sandys) had done so, not because they think this will reduce racialism but because they think it will put someone in power whom they prefer to Dr. Jagan."

Secondly, Mr. Duncan Sandys, Tory Secretary of State for Colonies, in changing our electoral system and refusing to fix a date for independence had sacrificed principle for expediency and had dishonoured solemn pledges made by the British Government in 1960 at the London Constitutional Conference.

At that time the Conference White Paper had said that all matters of substance save that of independence had been settled and that when another Conference was called the question of independence was to be the main issue. This is how paragraph 59 of the Command Paper put it:-

"The revision in 1961, resulting from the deliberations of the Conference formed, in the views of Her Majesty's Government, a comprehensive and carefully balanced whole, naturally leading to the expectation that, when another Conference between Her Majesty's Government and a Delegation from British Guiana was held, there should be no question of substance for discussion save that of independence, the principle of which has been accepted in the terms of the formula set out in paragraph 12 of this Report."

But not only were solemn pledges dishonoured. The House of Commons and the United Nations were told by the British Government that it could not interfere in a self-governing country, yet it intervened and amended our constitution. In the case of Zanzibar, it refused the demand for proportional representation for the House of Representatives. Yet in British Guiana, it conceded proportional representation and in its worse form, against the strong opposition of my government.

Thirdly, that the British Government has placed a premium on violence, arson, looting and murder by conceding not one of our demands and even more than the opposition demanded. I had put into Mr. Greenwood's hands what was certainly political dynamite. This package comprised inter alia two top secret reports of the security Branch of the police on the "FNC Terrorist Organisation" and the statement made in the Senate by Mrs. Janet Jagan on her resignation as Minister of Home Affairs. In her statement, Mrs. Jagan complained that she had not been able to discharge her responsibility because she did not get effective cooperation from the British appointed Commissioner of Police. The security reports, produced in August and September 1953, gave precise details of those in the hierarchy of Burnham's People's National Congress, and the Trade Union Council, including an American citizen, who were involved in the disturbances of 1963- bombings, attempted bombings, arson etc. The second report recommended that twenty-five of the fifty persons named in the first report should be charged for conspiracy. But there were no charges and no detention.

I told Mr. Greenwood that the two security reports were withheld from me as Premier and from my Minister of Home Affairs. I argued that the outcome of the 1963 London Conference might have been different had I been armed with them.

Mr. Greenwood was not to be moved, he brushed my arguments aside and stuck to his Colonial Office brief. He said that he had confidence in the Commissioner of Police and that the facts in the reports were of <sup>questionable</sup> validity. The elections would go ahead, he pronounced.

The Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson whom I saw later that day and who in October 1963 had definitely told me that a Labour government if re-elected would do something to help, was more adroit. He offered a palliative- a Commonwealth Observer Team to observe the elections. I reminded him that there was nothing to be gained by observing a fraud- what was needed was a correction of the fraud.

Mr. Anthony Greenwood has since stated that had he intervened to postpone the announced December 7th 1964 elections so soon after taking office, it would have been a breach of ~~trust~~ and there might have been renewed violence and bloodshed. This of course was rationalisation for Labour's betrayal of the cause of peace and socialism and its complete subservience to U.S. imperialism. For even if Greenwood's hands were tied before the elections, he had the opportunity and responsibility after the elections to work out a solution satisfactory to the majority of the Guianese people.

Instead of doing this, at the very time he was appealing at the Labour Party Conference for unity and boldly talking about democratic socialism and international working class solidarity, he amended our constitution to force the PFP out of the government, and to clear the way for a puppet-pro-imperialist minority government headed by Burnham (The United Force formally joined the government three weeks later). The amendment became necessary because I had refused to tender my resignation as Premier and that of my colleagues in the Council of Ministers. We argued that the electorate, having returned the PFP not only as the largest single party, but as the only party with increased support, had given us a vote of confidence and thus a mandate to continue in the government. Besides our stand was also justified according to Latin American



I Latin American practice and British conventions. In Venezuela, at the recent elections the Accion Democratica, inspite of the fact that its total percentage of votes dropped from 49% in 1958 to 32% in 1964, formed the Government; its poll was the highest for any single party. And had United Kingdom conventions been followed in British Guiana, as leader of the largest single party, I would have been asked to form the government and it would have been left to me to form a coalition, failing which a minority government as Prime Minister Lester Pearson and his predecessor Mr. Diefenbaker had done in Canada.

However Greenwood could not take this course, his hands were tied. The Labour Party government was already committed to a cynical turn-about of policy very soon after it had taken office. On October 31st, the N.Y. Times reported that the British Government "bowing to United States wishes, had ruled out early independence for British Guiana" and was going ahead with the PR elections fixed for November 7th. "This development, reported by senior officials tonight", said the newspaper, "came after high-level British-American exchanges on how to check the spread of Castroism in the Western Hemisphere".... "Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker and Secretary of State, Dean Rusk examined the situation in their talks in Washington this week. Informants said that Mr. Rusk had left Mr. Gordon Walker in no doubt that the United States would resist a rise of British Guiana as an independent Castro-type state".

With Britians complete subservience, and United States' utter disregard for democratic processes and the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, there are danger signals ahead.

The puppet government is ruling the country with an iron-hand, the suspension of all constitutional guarantees and the continued detention of fourteen of our thirty-three comrades who were held since June, 1964 without charges and without trial. Terror has now become a way of life. Justice is bought and sold and tampered with. This is because of the utter servility of the Colonial Establishment to U.S. dictation. So servilenas it become that in appeasing the U.S. puppets here it is prepared to throw to the wolves some of its most loyal police officers who are facing life imprisonment at trials which are a travesty of justice.

However, in the new situation, there is the distinct possibility of uniting the working class and at the same time resolving the racial deadlock. This is because of the changed situation. While in the government we operated within a colonial strait-jacket-Colonial Office-influenced development programme heavily geared to infra-structure and agriculture: limited Western aid; inability because of constitutional restrictions to negotiate aid from socialist countries and to implement balanced industrial agricultural development plan-... caught in a vicious circle. Although we made tremendous achievements, particularly in the field of labour, health, education and agriculture, it was impossible to solve all the problems confronting the country, particularly of the African working class. In 1957, the PPP government inherited a 9% underemployment and 17% unemployment with the population increasing at the rate of about 3% per annum and the majority of the unemployed in the urban areas, populated predominantly by Africans. In this context, day after day, the imperialists and their local puppets propagandised that the PPP was governing the country only for the Indians and the PPP was mainly an Indian party. Indeed sections of the local and foreign press and the imperialists and their local agents made it appear that politics was mainly racial.

This was far from the truth. The fact is race and religion have been used by the colonialists to blur the basic issues. "Race" until recently was not a serious problem in this country of several ethnic groups- Indians, Africans, mixed or coloured, Amerindians, Chinese, Europeans and Portuguese. The two major ethnic groups, Indians and Africans, have for many years, played, worked and lived amicably together. Underlying the superficially of racialism is the basic struggle for national liberation, for land and jobs and freedom from exploitation by the imperialists, capitalists and landlords.

Commenting on the question of race, the Commonwealth Commission said of the disturbances of February, 1962:-

We found little evidence of any racial segregation in the social life of the country and in Georgetown. East Indians and Africans seemed to mix and associate with one another on terms of the greatest cordiality, though it was clear that the recent disturbances and the racial twist given to them by some of the unprincipled and self

self-seeking politicians had introduced slight, but it is hoped, transient over-tones of doubt and reserve. Among the inhabitants of Georgetown there is, of course, always present the danger that hostile and anti-racial sentiments may be aroused by a clash of the hopes and ambitions of rival politicians. We draw attention to this possibility because there have been indications that such friction in the past, although, as will appear in the course of this report, the disturbances of February 16 did not originate in a racial conflict, nor did they develop into a trial of strength between the East Indians and the Africans. .... but we are merely drawing attention to the circumstances mentioned above in order to show that there is no clear-cut division between the races and that although, broadly speaking, Dr. Jagan's supporters are for the most part East Indians and the supporters of the PNC are drawn mostly from the African races, the differences is not really racial, but economic and vocational.

..... The political professions of the PNC were somewhat vague and amorphous. There was a tendency to give a racial tinge to its policy. Mr. Burnham expressed the opinion that it was Dr. Jagan who was responsible for this unfortunate development. However, think that there is much substance in the contention of Mr. Burnham and it seems to us that whatever racial differences existed were brought about by political propaganda.

Opposition to the People's Progressive Party comes not because of race but principally because it is a mass party led by Marxists and because of its complete devotion to the cause of national liberation and its refusal to compromise with the imperialists and their local lackeys.

The PPP is multi-racial in content and outlook. The majority of its support is Indian. But, the Indians support the PPP for a complex of reasons mainly because of its socialist outlook and because it has always led their struggles against the absentee sugar planters and <sup>the</sup> landlords, mostly Indian. The wealthy Indian have no influence in its leadership. Some of them for racial and cultural consideration supported the party. But more recently, many shifted towards the United Force. This became increasingly marked since the passage of the 1962 Budget.

For instance, the following Indians are violently opposed to the PPP: Richard Ishmael, President of the Manpower Citizens Association, the sugar workers company-union, and boss of the T.U.C. ; Dr. Balwant Singh, president of Guiana All-Indian League (GAIL) and past (1963) president of the Civil Service Association; Abdool Majeed, merchant capitalist, Chairman until 1963 of the United Force; wealthy landlord and real estate owner, Hari Prashad, now Chairman of the United Force; and businessman Rahman Gajraj, mayor of Georgetown.

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To understand/somewhat confused racial picture, it is necessary to know how the present situation developed. ↴

Africans came to British Guiana as slaves to provide sugar plantation labour. The indigenous Amerindian population, now numbering only about 30,000, refused to be enslaved. Abominable conditions and harsh inhuman treatment led to escape and revolts. After the abolition of slavery in 1838, the Africans left the plantations. Portuguese were first brought as immigrants. Their numbers, however, were small. Then followed Indians from India and the Chinese. The freed Africans in the meantime moved to the city and to village settlements adjoining the sugar plantations. The Chinese and Portuguese did likewise. This explains why Indians still constitute the bulk of the population in the countryside.

The Portuguese who moved away from the sugar plantations migrated to the city and took their positions below the British mainly in administration and commerce. The Chinese also went into commerce, mainly in grocery trade. The Africans filled the lower positions in the administration and other jobs in the Government Services such as transport, postal, medical, etc., and provided the unskilled labour force for wage employment in the water front, sawmills, mines, quarries, etc.,

The British Europeans are very few in number in the government administrative and technical machine. They still, however, hold dominant positions in commerce and industry. The Portuguese also hold key positions in commerce and some strategic positions in administration. Over the years a differentiation took place among the Indians. 85% to 90% of them are still in the lowest rung of the economic ladder, engaged either as sugar workers or farmers, mostly rice. The others have become landlords, money-lenders, shop-keepers, rice-millers, and within more recent times, have been posing a serious threat in commerce to the Portuguese and Europeans in the capital. They are also developing as a native bourgeoisie.

To pose the problem, as has been done, as mainly an Indian-African problem is not a precise formulation of the position. Besides, the position of Indians in British Guiana is not analogous to that of Indians in East Africa. There as "middle strata", they were used as a buffer by the British against the national liberation movement of the African people. Here, the position is somewhat the reverse. The buffer role has been played by the middle class which is predominantly Portuguese, "Coloured" (mixture of white and African mainly) and African.

The Portuguese, "Coloured", and African middle class fought their political battles in the late 1920's. They were not interested as much in the masses as they were in a share of the plums of office. This struggle culminated in the abrogation in 1928, of a liberal constitution handed down from the days of the Dutch. However, despite this and the imposition of crown colony rule, the "Coloured" and African middle class eventually through the struggle of the Negro Progress Convention was brought into the wheels of administration and the Civil Service. This became almost an exclusive preserve - a preserve which the rising wealthy and near-wealthy Indians attempted to invade. The latter wanted positions of power and prestige in the Legislature and jobs in the Civil Service for their children. This led to the formation of the East Indian Association which was the political sounding board for the now middle class Indians - Landlords, rice-millers, businessmen, etc..

It was in this narrow context that the struggle prevailed before the advent of the PPP in 1950. The East Indian Association was more progressive than its African counterpart, the League of Coloured People (LCP). As representative of an out-group, it fought for reforms such as Universal adult suffrage (more Indians were disenfranchised because of the literacy, income and property qualifications; illiteracy was higher among East Indians) and self-government (the colonial status quo favoured the Coloureds and Africans who had become completely integrated and Westernized). The Indians who continued to cling to their language and religion and food habits, were discriminated against. Under the system of dual control of schools, Muslims and Hindus, for instance, had to become Christians, in order to get jobs as teachers in the Christian church controlled schools. And positions in the civil service were closed because of favouritism and nepotism.

Coming as it did in the early 1950's with a strong working class bias, the PPP was able by 1953 to destroy completely the racist influence of both the East Indian Association and the League of Coloured People. The latter was politically represented by the National Democratic Party (NDP) during the 1953 elections, later by the United Democratic Party (UDP) and subsequently after the 1957 elections, by the People's National Congress (PNC) which in effect was a merger between the UDP and the PPP supporters, mainly negro workers, whom Burnham took with him after he split the PPP in 1955.

This split was the direct result of the "divide and Rule" policy of the imperialists. It had its origin in the Robertson Commission of 1954 which whitewashed the suspension of the constitution in October, 1953 and recommended a period of constitutional marking time with a fully nominated government. It engineered the split by dividing the party leadership into communists and extremists on the one hand and socialists, democrats and moderates on the other and by suggesting that the latter group should break away from the former and change the policies of the party if there was to be an end to the period of marking time. Burnham and two other ministers of the government precipitated this split on the expectation that new elections would be forthcoming and that they would have taken with them enough support to capture 13 of the 18 constituencies won by the PPP at the 1953 elections - 5 seats in the capital, Georgetown under the control of Burnham and 8 seats in the sugar belt, then thought to be under the control of Dr. Lachmarsingh, president of the powerful, unrecognised, Sugar Workers Union, the Guiana Industrial Workers' Union (GIWU).

The split was not racially motivated - Burnham is African and Jai Narine Singh and Lachmarsingh (now deceased) are Indian. And only three of the African leaders out of a total of 11 in the General Council of the PPP went over with Burnham (two returned since then). Nevertheless it led to a resurgence of racialism among the rank and file. A majority of the African workers followed Burnham especially because of his demagoguery, and glib use of socialist phraseology.

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Following his defeat at the 1957 elections in constituencies specially gerrymandered for him, Burnham merged with the African racists of the UDP and LCP. Thereafter, his party, the PNC took a definite reactionary turn; anti-communism and racism (African as opposed to Indian) became its chief weapons.

Writing about this, Professor Peter Newman in the article entitled "Racial Tension in British Guiana" said:

Not surprisingly, this attention to a unified African front led to a need for a common enemy, a role which was filled by the East Indians. Operating within the restricted social and economic framework that I have discussed, the main animus of the party (PNC) was focussed on the racial issue, and even official party pronouncements began to take on a racial tinge. Since the PPP continued to maintain a public image of non-partisanship (although its local support was often less unbiased), many African intellectuals, especially among the younger group, began to feel dissatisfied with the racial policies of the PNC.

The 1962 and 1963 disturbances heightened racial tension between Indians and Africans. The opposition parties backed by foreign agents, used the urban lumpen proletariat and misguided workers to assault Indians, loot their stores and brutally beat up Ministers and government supporters. In 1964, the sugar planters' use of mainly African scabs to break the predominantly Indian sugar workers' 6-month strike led to serious racial clashes and many deaths. During the December, 1964 elections campaign, unscrupulous reactionary elements prostituted the racial issue. The PNC working predominantly among the urban African working class and in other pockets where Africans predominated, peddled the propaganda that the PPP was anti-African while the United Force Indian Leaders went into the country-side and attacked the PPP for being anti-Indian. And in the hope of further splintering the PPP, two new parties based on race and religion were created - the Muslim-led Guiana Muslim Party and the Hindu-led Justice Party. These Parties however failed to muster even 3% of the votes.

Now that the PPP is no longer in the government, and thus no longer the scapegoat, the class struggle, shorn of race and religion, will sharpen. Already there are signs of cracks in the puppet alliance as a result of the contradictions in the PNC/UF camp. Forced by the workers, even the reactionary T.U.C. super-structure is now demanding a national minimum wage of \$5.00 per day. The big-business-controlled press which had goaded the workers to counter-revolutionary disturbances only recently, are now appealing to the working class for "a sense of responsibility". There are indications that the government and its collaborators in the Trade Union movement will work out a wages policy with the aim of muzzling the demands of the workers. Mr. Burnham, the Premier who is noted for his ambiguity, has recently declared that \$4.00 per day is the barest minimum that is required by a worker but he doubts whether a \$5.00 per day minimum wage can be accommodated by the country's economy. His own Union is now in a dilemma. It must either implement the demand of the workers for a \$4.00 minimum daily wage, or fight the sawmill-owning capitalists, many of whom support both the PNC and UF.

These developments on the industrial front are likely to be the cause for grave dissatisfaction and discontent. There is already seething discontent among more than half of the population who support the PPP, who have openly expressed a country-wide post-election rallies that they were "cheated but not defeated". Also among the PNC and UF rank and file, there is discontent arising out of the formation of the coalition government. These parties have different professed aims and a great deal of open hostility was generated between them. The PNC leadership, while demagogically proclaiming that it was socialist, attacked the UF as a "fascist", "pro-big-business", party. The United Force retorted by attacking the PNC for being racist and socialist.

Actually, both the leadership of the UF and the PNC are basically reactionary and anti-working class. The leadership of the UF is under strong Catholic influence, its support coming from the well-to-do Portuguese and Indians, the "mixed, coloured" workers in clerical jobs who are in many respects the labour aristocrats and the poor Amerindians. The latter though the most exploited of the exploited support this reactionary party because they have been under the strong influence of the Christian dominations, most Catholic, who control and manage the schools in the interior where the Amerindians mainly live. The PNC leadership is predominantly coloured, African and middle class. Its following is almost 99% African of the working and middle classes.

Basic contradictions between the leadership and following of the coalition parties are likely to become evident soon. The coalition government has already, in only a few months, demonstrated that it is pro-imperialist and anti-working class. A Savings Levy which the PPP government introduced in 1962, based on a 10% compulsory saving by companies and 5% of salaries by individuals earning over \$300.00 per month was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and has now been changed to a Voluntary Savings Scheme at 7% interest, tax free. This is equivalent for companies to a rate of interest of over 10%. When these loans have to be repaid at double the amount in nine years, the burden will be shifted to the working class. An indication of this has already been given. Taxes imposed in our 1962 Budget on the imperialists and wealthy capitalists, have now been severely modified or abolished. A capital gains tax of 45% has been reduced to 10%. Other taxes - gift tax, turnover-tax, property tax, etc. - have been abolished and exchange control has been severely tampered with.

Meanwhile, the country is facing a deepening economic crisis. Trade with Cuba in rice and timber has been curtailed. The new government, while demagogically stating it had no objection to trading with Cuba, has refused to send a delegation to Havana to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement. This has brought the rice industry, mainly a local peasant industry, to a state of serious depression. Markets cannot be found for nearly 45,000 tons. The amount is likely to be augmented to another 30,000 ton surplus from the ensuing crop. And with the cessation of shipments of railway timber sleepers (ties) to Cuba, the timber logging and sawmilling industries have been severely hit. The sugar industry also faces a bleak future, faced with a falling world price.

Meanwhile unemployment grows and retrenchment of workers continue. Over the last 15 years, sugar production has more than doubled but the labour force has been reduced by nearly half. This pattern, common to other British West Indian territories, is causing grave social problems.

The workers thrown out of employment can find neither employment nor suitable agricultural land for cultivation. There is no pension scheme nor adequate compensation for termination of employment. Meanwhile, the absentee sugar planters continue with their programme of mechanisation and the extraction and draining abroad of super profits.

In the meantime, the puppet government is attempting to rule with the carrot and big stick. As in the period of the first interim government (1954-1957), the government is making a big ballyhoo about offers of loans and grants. Already about \$3 million of U.S. road building machinery and equipment have arrived. The loans and grants are to be mainly used for the construction of a road linking Georgetown to the plant at Mackenzie of the Demerara Bauxite Company, a subsidiary of Aluminium Company of Canada, and for the dredging of the Berbice River to facilitate bauxite extraction by the United States Reynolds Metals Company. Besides, an agreement has been signed with the latter company which is clearly a sell-out of our bauxite resources. And potential areas of mineral oil have been handed over to three foreign companies.

Already the imperialists have their tentacles deep into the structure of the economy, reserving for themselves the profitable sectors - production - sugar, (British), bauxite, manganese (North American) <sup>and the services -</sup> insurance, banking, shipping and foreign trade - while relegating the risky and unprofitable - rice, provision and fruit <sup>the</sup> farming - to local population. Sugar, bauxite and manganese alone account for more than three-quarters of the export income.

The PPP is now intensifying its activities on all fronts. Its biggest task is now to let the deluded supporters of the coalition government know that the government's policies based on breaking off trade with Cuba, complete subservience to U.S. imperialism, and the acceptance of aid with strings - concessions to foreign investors in the form of tax holidays, duty free importation of equipment and raw materials, accelerated depreciation write-offs and concentration on infra-structure and social overhead expenditures - cannot lead to real development.

Imperialist control has led to the extraction of fantastic surplus value from the Guianese working people. Over the past 16 years (1948-1964), with a total foreign investment of about \$275 million, super profits have been extracted amounting to \$362 million with fixed assets still worth about \$200 million. The annual rate of profit squeeze in 1964 <sup>in</sup> was about \$50 million and debt charges \$10 million as compared with a capital flow over the last 3 years of only about \$25 million per annum.

Meanwhile, the national debt has increased substantially from \$24 million in 1948 to \$127 million in 1964. And annual debt charges to service the national debt have jumped from 5% of revenues in 1954 to 17% in 1964. It is expected that by 1970, this percentage will be increased to 30% because of ~~the~~ high interest rates (6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>%).



/rates (6 $\frac{1}{2}$ -7%) and heavy dependence on foreign borrowings for economic development, mainly infra-structure and social overheads.

Faced with growing unemployment, land hunger, fiscal and other problems and the disenchantment of its own deluded supporters, the government will resort to the Hitlerite fascist weapons of terror, anti-communism and racism. Hitler used the Communists and Jews as scape-goats; here the scape-goats will be the communists and Indians. The PPP as the the vanguard of the national liberation movement is likely to be banned. There is also the definite danger that as soon as nominal independence is gained, this coalition government, backed by Anglo-American imperialism, will move to establish a Latin American, fascist-type dictatorship. Meanwhile, it is trying other manoeuvres. It is proposing to bring African West Indian immigrants into the country for the purpose of swelling the electoral role\* in its favour this and other manoeuvres fail to destroy the PPP and defeat it at future elections, and the imperialists still see the necessity of maintaining a sham of constitutionalism and democracy, they may resort to the containment, of tying British Guiana with a resuscitated neo-colonialist West Indies Federation.

The PPP, recognizing the dangers and difficulties ahead and noting the utter ruthlessness of the imperialists and the tremendous reserves which they can bring to bear behind their puppets, is mobilizing its forces for a one-sided struggle, and preparing the people for a long, tough fight. At the same time, it is intensifying its efforts to shed its ranks of illusions and remnants of reactionary racist ideas. Unfortunately because of the racist anti-Indian terror putsches since 1962/ <sup>of</sup> the People's National Congress and the imperialists, there has developed almost as a reflexion a counter-tendency of anti-African racism within the party. This the party is forthrightly combatting as it realises that racism is not only reactionary, but is a device of the imperialists to divide the working class and thus maintain colonial rule and exploitation. The achievement of national unity and racial harmony is thus the party's first objective. Another objective is the shedding of illusions based on fighting words and speeches of the leadership of the Anglo-American Alliance.

Fortunately, the Guianese people have experienced that lofty utterances such as the late President Kennedy's statement to a former editor of Investia that "the US. support the ideas that every people have a right to make a free choice of the kind of government they want", and to the former President of Venezuela that "the preservation and strengthening of freely elected constitutional governments is the aspirations of all the peoples of the Americas", and words such as freedom, democracy and peace are mere euphemisms for naked self interest and the preservation of the old order; that when American investments are threatened, they will resort to force and fraud as they have done in the Congo, Vietnam, Brazil, British Guian and now in the Dominican Republic. They now realize that they cannot rely on Western Social democracy, that fighting words, such as Harold Wilson's "rigged constitutional arrangement" become

contd....

become/ devoid of substance in the face of British subservience to U.S. imperialism.

The party, noting how racism has been exploited in the past, the deep divisions created by it since 1962 and the use to which it will be put in the future to maintain support behind the puppet government, realises that it will take some time before the fundamental contradictions, inherent in the alliance, would "mature". Consequently, it is combatting any sense of impatience, and "left adventurism" while at the same time mobilising the people for action and combatting ideas of defeatism and "fatalism" that the people's forces cannot succeed against the ruthless and powerful U.S. imperialism. While attempting to pursue a policy of forming alliances with as many strata of society as possible based on a democratic, national, anti-federal and anti-imperialist policy, simultaneously the party is on guard against infiltration by reactionaries, opportunists, racists, and spies. This is somewhat difficult because of the mass character of the party. Consequently, it is now considering re-structuring its constitution so as to maintain its mass character and preserve the moral and ideological purity of its leadership.

The party's immediate demands on which it is now rallying the people are:-

End emergency and release detainees,  
Genuine independence -anti-colonialism and anti-neo-colonialism.

A political settlement satisfactory to all the Guianese people based on new constitutional arrangements, new elections under changed electoral system and voting at 18.

Reconstruction of the Security Forces so that they reflect a broad cross-section of the country. Withdrawal of the British Army and the formation of a Guianese National Army.

Democratizing all institutions concerned with law and administration.