

STATEMENT BY THE GUYANA PEACE COUNCIL ON

WORLD DISARMAMENT WEEK

22nd April to 28th April, 1974

The Guyana Peace Council joins in the observation of World Disarmament Week, April 22 to 28.

The peace movement and kindred organisations are continuing their pressure for disarmament which is one of the main questions concerned with world peace.

This question was highlighted by the UN Secretary General in the course of his address to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on April 9. Mr. Kurt Waldheim dramatised the arms race by noting that during the three weeks session while the world population would increase by four million people in the face of world poverty, the world would spend some \$14,000 million (US) on increasing weapons stockpiles.

Disarmament today is occupying a prominent place in many anti-war movements, peace organisations and public opinion. This is especially so because of the continued arms race, atmospheric testing, the improvement of new ones with still greater accuracy and destructive power, and in view of the economic, political and social consequences which are becoming more and more serious. Attempts are being made to strengthen aggressive military blocs and stimulate the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

There still exists an increasing and even clandestine flow of weapons to countries carrying on colonial wars and to regimes engaged in policies of oppression, racial discrimination and apartheid.

Budgets are still accommodating fantastic allocations for luxurious expenditures on research for improvement of arms, and for stock piling of weapons, which cannot be used anyway without causing a retaliatory annihilating blow.

A glance at some statistics will show how the disarmament issue which is generally overlooked, can be convincing.

In World War II there were 54.8 million killed and 90 million wounded, and material losses amounted to over \$4,000,000 million. The more than \$22,000 million dollars spent annually by the US on the Vietnam war would have been enough to build 296,000 classrooms and provide 656,000 hospital beds.

The world spends 40% more on armaments than on education. The average expenditure per soldier world-wide is \$7,800, while average public expenditure for education is \$100 annually per child for the estimated 1,000 million children of school age.

In terms of gross product for the world, 7% is spent on militarism. This is equivalent to the total annual income of the 1,000 million people in Latin America, South Asia and the Near East combined.

In Guyana, expenditure on the Guyana Defence Force rose from \$6,727,000 in 1970 to the provision of \$13,598,000 in 1974. Similarly, our police force which receives military training, spent \$7,794,000 in

1970 but will spend \$14,384,000 in 1974.

The alternatives facing mankind are on the one hand, disarmament and socio-economic progress, and on the other, the continuation of the arms race and annihilating war.

There is, therefore, in Guyana, no room for complacency or indifference about the arms race, or for failure to recognise the need for continuous pressure for world disarmament.

We say this while fully conscious that there are in many parts of the world national liberation forces which have been waging a military struggle for freedom for generations. The cry for disarmament will still persist: for if the supply of new and powerful weapons is denied, by mutual agreement and ratified by conventions, to the subjugating powers, freedom will be more quickly won by the people resisting oppression, racial discrimination and age-long economic exploitation.

In these circumstances, the minimum steps that should be taken to consolidate detente in the military sphere are:

- (a) the abolition of foreign military and naval bases;
- (b) the disbanding of the NATO and Warsaw Pact military organisations, thus ending the confrontation of military blocs in Europe;
- (c) the setting up of nuclear-free zones in Europe;
- (d) the cutting back of armed forces and armaments in Europe without detriment to the countries concerned.

The Guyana Peace Council calls for the ratification of all the conventions of the U.N. on limitations of arms; for a drastic cut in military expenditure; for a transfer of resources from the military field to the field of peaceful productivity; for a regulation of military equipment and manpower, and for more collective bargaining on all areas of arms production, and/or supply and their testings.

We appeal to all peace lovers to join us in our struggle for relaxation of tensions both at home and abroad by concerting our efforts with our brothers world wide to demand universal disarmament and lasting peace.

APRIL 26, 1974.