

001256
(858)

OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
c/o FREEDOM HOUSE
41 ROBB STREET, GEORGETOWN.

16th November, 1977

To All Delegates of the Second Assembly
of the Caribbean Council of Churches.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I wish to welcome you to Guyana and hope that your stay and that of your colleagues will be pleasant and the deliberations of the Assembly will be fruitful.

I note that the Assembly will concern itself with the question of human relations, human rights and human development.

It is my view that it is not enough merely to espouse the traditional four freedoms -- speech, assembly, worship and press. Equally important are freedom from fear and freedom from want.

I am of the view that it is necessary to see development from a perspective broader than mere economic development. There can be no economic development if proper conditions do not exist -- conditions which have their roots in social and human relations. If the people's rights and freedoms are restricted, if the state is not allocating enough resources for the people's education, health and housing, powerful constraints can be built up which will impede the fullest potential for increased production and productivity. The pace of real development will therefore be dependent on the extent to which those who wield political power are willing and able to remove the obstacles to economic development.

During the recent past, more particularly in the 1975-76 period, some positive steps were taken to bring an end to foreign economic domination. But regrettably, Guyana today is a land of fear. The fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution are honoured in the breach. There is parliamentary democracy in name only.

Lack of democracy, racial and political discrimination, and denial of human rights have led to stagnation in production and have largely contributed to the grave financial, economic and social problems facing the country -- budget and balance of payments deficits, foreign exchange shortage, retrenchment and growing unemployment, increasing crime, deteriorating housing, health and educational facilities.

Unfortunately, no attempt is being made to solve the social and economic problems in a democratic way, through the meaningful involvement of the people at all levels of life. Administrative-police methods and coercion take the place of proper consultation and consent.

Because this way is bound to lead to further economic, social and political deterioration, to possible confrontation and to the danger of a rightist military authoritarian regime, there is the vital need for a political solution. In this regard, the People's Progressive Party (PPP) has proposed a National Front Government as the only alternative to economic chaos and dictatorship. This proposal needs the support of all men of goodwill, for what happens in this country can have consequences far beyond its borders, particularly in the Caribbean,

I take the liberty of attaching to this letter some relevant material which I hope you will find of interest.

Yours in Brotherhood,

Sgd. Cheddi Jagan,

Leader of the Opposition.

"We have to learn together to speak boldly in Christ's name both to those in power and to the people, to oppose terror, cruelty and race discrimination. We have to make the Church in every place a voice for those who have no voice."

(The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches)

CHRISTIANS AND SOCIALISM

... In the 1940s and 1950s the Council of Clergy and Ministers for Common Ownership (CCMCO) flourished, and later became the Society of Socialist Clergy and Ministers. Its leading figures included the then Bishop of Bradford (A.W.F. Blunt) and Canon Stanley Evans who wrote for the *Daily Worker*, pioneered relations with the USSR and the Russian Orthodox Church, long before it became safe or fashionable to do so, and was at the centre of the anti-bomb movements of the late 1950s. There was also the Socialist Christian League, of which R.H. Tawney was president, which was anarcho-syndicalist more than Marxist, while the then Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, did more than anyone to give socialism a basis in Christian theology. Later came the Christian Socialist Movement and the Roman Catholic Slant group, while various anarchist and pacifist groups continued to exercise their influence.

In recent years the 'Christian left' in Britain has been affected by a number of movements from overseas. First, the 'liberation theology' from South America. Here many Christians in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba and elsewhere, have been struggling to relate their faith to a revolutionary situation and to Marxist analytical tools. Out of this struggle has emerged a school of thought known as 'liberation theology' which is concerned with relating the Christian hope of redemption to the issues of development and justice in Latin America.

Secondly, the 'black theology' from the US and Africa, associated in particular with James Cone in New York City: black theology is a critical reflection on the Christian gospel through the eyes of the black experience of oppression and liberation.

Thirdly, the 'liberation theology' of the US which has links with, but is quite distinct from, its South American counterpart: the 'underground church' movement in the US of the 1960s focused on the civil rights movement and opposition to the Vietnam war, and the Berrigans were its folk heroes.

(The Reverend Kenneth Leech of the Parish Church of St. Matthew's Church, Bethnel Green, London, England, *Labour Monthly*, August 1977, page 351).

A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF RACISM

... Referring to these developments a Central Committee of the WCC stated:

"We give thanks to God that He has called many Christians to share in the leadership of the struggle for racial equality. We ask all Christians and the churches as such to join them and to support them."

So it is not surprising that out of the Fourth Assembly of the WCC in 1968 came the decision to launch a Programme to Combat Racism which should move out of the area of words and doctrinal statements into the arena of practical action. The Programme to Combat Racism (PCR) has made it clear that the struggle against racism is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers of evil, against the deeply entrenched demonic forces of racial prejudice and hatred that operate through social, economic and political structures. Because of the association of racism with power, the PCR has focused its attention on white racism allied as it is with military and economic power across the world. It has called its regional councils to attack with equal vigour local manifestations of racism, which is a universal sin.

There have been three major thrusts to the PCR. First, as an earnest intent to 'put our money where our mouth is,' we determined to raise a Special Fund, to be distributed annually as grants to organisations opposing racism so as to symbolise our solidarity with the oppressed and a sharing of power with the powerless. The significant thing about these grants was that they were to be given with no strings attached, the only condition being that they would be used for humanitarian purposes only, by organisations whose aims were not inconsonant with the aims of the World Council of Churches, which have ranged from Aborigine groups in Australia to Eskimos in Canada, and included liberation movements in southern Africa.

(Pauline Webb, member of the Central and Executive Committees of the World Council of Churches, *Labour Monthly*, August 1977, pp.354-355).