

Address to the Congress of Peace and Life, Against Nuclear War,  
Prague, 21-26 June 1983, by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, President of the  
Guyana Peace Council.

Mr. Chairman, honourable delegates to this Assembly, comrades and friends: Like all of my colleagues from the smaller "third world" countries, We feel honoured to be present here today at this undoubtedly most momentous time in the history of the world. We wish to begin reminding you of the statement of the Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Perez de Quellar, that the world today is faced with the alternative of survival or annihilation.

To choose survival would mean that we have opted for sanity, for the right to life by deciding to banish weapons of mass destruction, for disarmament and for the use of the world's resources for peaceful purposes, in meeting peoples needs. It would be repetitive to enumerate those needs, which are so well known, but in our own region - the Caribbean and Central America - a significant step in this direction would be for it to be declared a Zone of Peace.

To choose survival would also mean a return to the period of relaxation of tension following the Helsinki accords during the Carter administration. SALT I was ratified, and later SALT II was signed. But Carter left the scene without the ratification of SALT II by the U.S. Congress. The election of Ronald Reagan in November 1980 meant that the favourable climate of the period of detente would be rapidly dissipated.

Once again U.S. imperialism donned the counter-revolutionary robes of international policeman in defense of vested interests and maintenance of the status quo. In the 1960's, it proclaimed the right to intervene in any country which was allegedly "threatened by communism", and declared that there must be "no more Cubas in the Western hemisphere". In the 1980's, U.S. imperialism has again decided to deny to the Caribbean and Latin American peoples their right to decide their own future. Now their threats, and military and economic pressures are directed against the Grenadian, Nicaraguan and Surinamese revolutions and strenuous efforts are being made, overt and covert, to reverse them, and to prop up the military juntas in El Salvador and Guatemala.

A vast propaganda campaign has been launched, military manoeuvres and threats have escalated, tensions have increased; and daily the blood of patriots is being shed. Grenada is charged with exporting "the Marxist virus"; Nicaragua is accused of supplying arms to liberation fighters, who are called "terrorists"; and both revolutionary governments are said to be denying democracy and refusing to hold elections.

What imperialist hypocrisy! The money-changers in Washington forget their own past. Are not today's so-called terrorists the same as the "levellers and republicans", the epithets which had been hurled against the American revolutionaries during the American war of independence? Did not the rebellious American patriots sign an official alliance with, and receive nine-tenths of their arms from France in 1778, in their war against British colonialism? Did not Britain support, for their own reasons, Simon Bolivar against Spanish colonialism? If it was right for Britain and France to render such help, why is it wrong for Cuba, Nicaragua and other revolutionary states to give assistance to those fighting for freedom today? We say, it is not only right, it is their internationalist duty to do so!

And as regards democracy and elections, was not the first election for the first President of the U.S. of America held only in 1787, eleven years after the Declaration of Independence in 1776? And since when has imperialism become the champion for elections? Did not the CIA destabilise popular, democratically-elected governments in Guyana, Guatemala, Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, to name a few in the recent past.

This, indeed, is a time that tries men's souls. The vital need of the hour is unity, solidarity and militancy. To achieve this we must get our sights clear. Let us clear the air of the liberal garbage of "equal responsibility" and "equal guilt" as is being peddled over the state-owned and -operated radio in Guyana.

The real enemy of mankind must be identified; it is none other than U.S. imperialism. Ours is the duty to unite all the peoples, across ideological frontiers, in the "third world", the socialist community countries, the USA and other capitalist states. In this task we must not fail. Our very existence depends on its fulfilment. The arms race must be halted. Disarmament must be achieved.

The Caribbean Basin has been deemed "a circle of crisis". This is so because revolution is on the agenda; the long-suffering peoples are revolting. The various territories, island and mainland, are at different stages of national and social liberation revolution. The two phases of the struggle have become inter-twined.

Washington claims that the crisis is due to "Soviet designs" and the so-called "Soviet threat". This is palpably a smoke-screen. At the root of our problems in the region are the alliances between the military-industrial complex and the local oligarchies, the imperialist-imposed development strategies, the subjection and distortion of our economies, the subjugation and merciless exploitation of our peoples. Guyana is a classic example of imperialist diktat and local collaboration, which has led to unbearable burdens on the people.

In the nineteen-thirties, a time of industrial unrest in the region, especially in the British West Indies, a British Royal Commission described it as an "industrial slum". Today it is not very much better, although political independence has come to many.

It is against this background that the new wave of revolutionary effort must be viewed. We say: "Down with imperialism! Death to the traitors and collaborators!"

If the region is to be helped, US imperialist threats must cease, and US naval and other bases in Puerto Rico, Cuba, Panama and elsewhere must be eliminated. This Assembly could best contribute to that situation by declaring the Caribbean a Zone of Peace, by displaying the greatest solidarity with the revolutionary forces in the region, and by continuing pressure in the UN and all other forums for a New International Economic Order. Let us together intensify the struggle for peace, genuine democracy, freedom and social progress.