

BROADCAST BY THE PREMIER, DR. THE HONOURABLE
C.B. JAGAN, ON 6TH JUNE, 1964

Last week when I spoke to you our country was engaged in a grave civil strife. Over the past week the situation has improved considerably. There are still, however, cases of violence here and there. I hope that in the coming week a complete stop will be put to all forms of intimidation and violence, and that we will have seen an end to attacks, counter attacks and reprisals.

We must have peace. All of us, whatever our racial-ethnic background, have to live and die here, and we have to live together. This should not be difficult. We have all lived side by side, gone to school together, worked together and played together. And after all, we are brothers in the same cause - to improve the lot of all whether we work by hand or by brain.

There are some who try to accentuate differences among us. I would like to talk about the things which we have in common, and which unite us. For instance, no matter where our ancestors may have come from we have a common historical background. We have sugar in our veins; we have all nurtured and fertilised the sugar cane with our sweat and blood.

Whether you are an industrial worker or a farmer you have the same interest. Sugar workers, bauxite and manganese miners, be they Indo-Guyanese or Afro-Guyanese, want increased wages, improved working conditions and security in old age. Rice farmers - I am glad to note that an increase number of Afro-Guyanese are now engaging themselves in the cultivation of rice - need guaranteed markets, stable prices and freedom from the ravages of too much water or too little water. If you are a farmer planting crops other than rice, say in the Canals Polder, Pomeroun or North West District, you want, whatever your racial origin, to know that you will not get low 'glut' prices when you reap your ground provisions and when your permanent trees like coconut, coffee, cocoa and citrus begin to bear. And those of you in the City whether you are employed, unemployed or underemployed, you want security of employment and full employment.

I know that there are many fearmongers who go among you and try to influence you emotionally. Some go among the Indo-Guyanese and say that I am sacrificing them and wooing and embracing the Afro-Guyanese. Others go among the Afro-Guyanese and tell them that my Government is an Indian Government, that because of racial considerations it does everything for the country and little for the City, that the Indo-Guyanese own the land, real estate and dominate business, and that if they the Afro-Guyanese do not get together, they will soon lose even their jobs. In this way I am caught in the crossfire. Needless to say my Government cannot be for and against Indo-Guyanese, for and against Afro-Guyanese, at the same time. All this propaganda is meant to build up fears in your minds.

Clearly, the solution to our ills is not for the many to scramble for the relatively few jobs and limited drained and irrigated land; the solution is to create an expanding economy, to make more jobs and more land available.

Let me divert here a moment and tell you of my private conversations with the late President Kennedy and his aides. I told them in November 1961 that our problems are acute, that in 1957 when I first entered the Government we had inherited a very heavy burden. You will remember that according to the I.L.O. expert, Mr. McGale, we then had an unemployment rate of 18% and underemployment rate of 9%. (Incidentally latest figures seem to indicate that there was a drop in the unemployment figure to about 14.5% in 1960). I pointed out to the late President Kennedy that it was necessary for us to move forward rapidly in the industrial field if we were to avoid an explosion. I gave two reasons for this; firstly, that the unemployment rate was highest in the urban areas; secondly, the urban people were mostly Afro-Guyanese who wanted industrial jobs. I argued that rapid industrial development was necessary both for economic and political reasons. I said further that we could not rely only on conventional methods of development; that is, reliance mainly on private enterprise, both domestic and foreign. I referred to the recession in the West and the gluts in the world's markets at the time - to refer to one item

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alone, the Canadian Aluminum Interests had a few weeks before told me that there were five million tons of existing and planned surplus aluminum capacity in 1961. I argued that it was necessary for British Guiana to negotiate for aid and trade not only with the Western but also with the Eastern countries. My economic arguments were no doubt convincing because President Kennedy promised to aid, and later, after his interview with the Editor of Izvestia, indicated approval of me and my Government. Unfortunately irresponsible people have thwarted my efforts. President Kennedy being a politician was subjected to the same hysteria with which my Government is faced in this country. You know that leading persons have gone to Washington and New York and argued that no U.S. aid should be given to my Government; that the P.P.P. was getting money from Russia, that British Guiana was going to be a second Cuba and I another Castro. Facing his second-term elections, President Kennedy no doubt felt that British Guiana was too hot to handle. This is what some of my advisers and I gathered in talking to high-placed American officials and advisers who in explaining the reversal of U.S. attitude apologetically said that nothing must be done to prevent President Kennedy from winning a second term with a large majority. It is ironic and unfortunate that the President was shot before the coming elections.

I repeat - what we need in British Guiana is an expanding economy. This means political stability and independence but our present disturbed situation as in 1962 and 1963 will no doubt be used as an excuse for postponing independence. This is why in my recent speeches everywhere I went I have emphasised the four cornerstones for our present needs - racial harmony, national unity, national independence and peace and progress. I pointed out that without racial harmony there can be no national unity and without national unity there can be no national independence, and without independence there can be no progress.

As I see it, the quickest way to achieve these four objectives is to have a coalition government between the two major parties. I have been saying so since 1955. I anticipated our present tragedy after the split of the P.P.P. in 1955. In 1956 I was instrumental in getting established an all-party conference under the chairmanship of the late Dr. J.B. Singh. I proposed a united front government but our then Governor Sir Patrick Renison and other reactionary influences opposed this move. They deemed this as a communist trick and said it was evidence of dictatorial tendencies and of an intention to set up a one-party state. In 1957, when I was in Ghana attending the independence celebrations, I attempted to get West Indian leaders and the Prime Minister, now President of Ghana, to use their good offices to bring whatever influence they could bear on Mr. Burnham to re-unite the P.P.P. or bring the two factions of the P.P.P. in a coalition before the 1957 elections. But my efforts failed. Again, just before the 1961 elections, through the efforts of two Guianese resident in New York and the good offices of the Ghana Mission at the United Nations, an attempt was made to bring about a coalition between the P.P.P. and the P.N.C. Identical letters were written to both parties. The P.P.P. agreed, but the P.N.C. declined the offer. Unfortunately, at both the 1957 and 1961 elections, the main Opposition Party felt it would have won. And having lost, it became sulky and refused even then to accept my offer of a coalition. I recite these events not for the purpose of recrimination. I merely record them to show that our present tragic situation could have been avoided had the Opposition travelled a different road and acted responsibly like a democratic opposition or participated with us in the Government.

There is still time, but the hour is late. I know that there are many in both parties who will oppose a coalition government of the P.P.P. and the P.N.C. At the bottom, emotions today are very charged. As someone told me last week, it is difficult to talk about peace and unity to a man whose house has been burnt down; the man whose house has been burnt down thinks only about one thing - to burn someone else's house. But as I said last week this is a time to think not only with the heart but with the head. We cannot go from burning to burning and from killing to killing.

We must have peace. Unity at the top level is therefore absolutely essential whatever the risks, if unity and peace are to be achieved at the bottom.

I know that many will be dissatisfied with this line of approach. But we cannot procrastinate. Our situation is too charged. Let me relate my experience at one of my meetings. Last Sunday, at success, I spoke about the need for racial harmony, peace and national unity. At question time an Afro-Guianese came up. He was one of a

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very few of the non-Indo-Guianese at Success. He asked me to put up the people whether they would allow him to stay there. He related the plight of his position that if he moved his house and went into an African dominated village, he would be attacked because he was known as a P.P.P. supporter. I appealed to the people that a man must not be judged by the colour of his skin. They were satisfied with my appeals. However, one person got up and asked if I believed in the Law of Moses. I had to ask him where he thought an-eye-for-an-eye philosophy will get us at the moment. Of course, I understood his feelings. He was from Wismar. Prior to 1953, he was a leading P.P.P. activist. After the suspension of the Constitution he was hounded and victimised. One sympathises with the deep emotional feelings of such an individual but we cannot allow the philosophy of an-eye-for-an-eye or might-is-right to prevail.

Coalition between the P.P.P. and the P.N.C., I am sure will not be a bed of roses immediately, but will be the shortest road to peace, and, I hope, progress. Some may question why is it that I have not decided on the formation of a national government which will include the United Force. As I see it, we do not have mainly a racial problem. Race and fear are merely reflections of the deeper but fundamental struggle of the masses to be free from exploitation and to have a place in the sun. The United Force is too rooted in the preservation of the colonial status quo. The P.P.P. and the P.N.C., on the other hand, have professed similar intentions and objectives - welfare of the masses, a socialist domestic programme and a non-aligned foreign policy. A P.P.P./P.N.C. coalition will achieve unity of the working class and can work out our own Guianese socialist road to peace and progress. Such a government is likely to work together with less friction. The United Force will then become a democratic opposition. Issues will then be contested between the Government and the Opposition not on the basis of race but on the basis of programme and policy.

One of our Guianese intellectuals has posed this problem very well. I refer to Clive Y. Thomas who recently reviewed Dr. Raymond Smith's book 'British Guiana'. At the end of this review article, Clive Thomas wrote -

"There are two basic problems facing Guianese society.

- (i) The integration of the various cultural groups in the community and this has to take place largely by creolization.
- (ii) The need for a revolutionary change in the structure and values of creols system itself.

In relation to these problems the P.N.C. stands for solving (i) and then possibly (ii). The P.P.P. stands for the simultaneous solution of both. This factor explains why despite all the justified reservations about the left wing content of the P.P.P. the economic basis of its support, etc., it remains to the left of all other political groups.

When seen from this standpoint, 1953 is important not only because of the coalition that the P.P.P. in fact represented then but also because of what was left out of the 1953 coalition were those elements that would have solved problem (i) by way of extensive creolization and would have refused to consider (ii) as a problem. Not unnaturally, the most vocal elements outside the P.P.P. coalition (1953) were those who favoured the existing creole system by reason of their ascribed status within this system. This group was dominated by the upper urban coloured middle classes.....

In relation to the two problems the U.F. stands out quite clearly. The U.F. are primarily those elements that could not accommodate themselves to the promise of 'revolutionary' change in the structure of the creols system that still exists in the P.N.C. A coalition of the P.N.C. and the U.F. is certain to mean a watering down of the 'revolutionary' content of the P.N.C. In addition excluding the wide support of the Indians it is certain to fail in any attempt at a genuine solution to problem (i). Thus this type of coalition in office is the worst promise that exists for the future of Guiana.

A coalition of the P.N.C. and P.P.P. in office can ensure the solution of problem (i). It is however likely to have paradoxical effects. Within

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the P.P.P. those elements that accept the need for commitment to a common set of Guianese values are likely to be strengthened. Whilst within the P.N.C. those elements that would resist a serious solution to problem (ii) will be strengthened. This is the ultimate price of coalition. This is why it is inevitably medium-term. It leads to a solution of problem (i) and then the coalition is likely to be faced with the dilemma of what to do next or alternatively, how to approach problem (ii). There can be no agreed programme between these two parties that will go beyond successful integration (creolization)."

Forgive me for quoting so extensively.

And now to come back to the P.P.P./P.N.C. coalition. Because of the present deterioration of our society, because of the dangers to the future of our country everything must be done to bring this about. I am prepared to bend over backwards. You may be interested in knowing that when the Ghana Mission was here, I made several concessions including parity to meet the wishes of the Opposition. Recall that at the United Nations talks last year, I had opposed the demand for parity in the Council of Ministers. I did so because I was seeking to maintain a position of superiority or to give an additional ministerial post to one of my colleagues. I did so because we feared obstruction in our programme for social change. On this score, our apprehensions are shared by others besides ourselves like Clive Thomas. It must not be forgotten that many of those who opposed us in 1953 now hold dominant positions in the P.N.C. leadership.

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We are prepared to concede parity however unjustified the demand may be. I concede this even though I realise it may be a drag on our forward march. I am prepared to do this in the national interest and in the interest of peace. A coalition with parity will probably lead to friction but once an agreed detailed programme is hammered out at the beginning, there is less likelihood of serious friction, and if there is, then the issues could be put to the people for national debate and decision.

It is clear to me now, as it was since 1955, and I am glad to see that this is now dawning on many others also, that the best way forward is a coalition of the P.P.P. and the P.N.C.

I have today written Mr. Burnham, as the Leader of the Opposition, inviting him to join me in the Government. In this letter, the details have been set down. I hope that Mr. Burnham, in the national interest, will agree to meet me to discuss the four questions - constitutional, industrial, security and rehabilitation - which are today the cause of controversy and are tearing our country and people apart. I urge you to help me in this difficult task of forging this unity which is so vital at this critical juncture of our country's history. Let us jointly work together to settle outstanding differences and bring lasting peace to our country.