

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER,
PUBLIC BUILDING,
GEORGETOWN.

20th October, 1964

(Dear Secretary of State),

Certain disclosures during the last few weeks have thrown new light on the cause of the disturbances in British Guiana during the last three years. On 9th August, 1964, one Emanuel Fairbain was arrested by the Police after being found in possession of 657 rounds of ammunition, 2 pistols, explosives, two time devices for setting off electrical charges and several items of equipment used by the local security forces. Fairbain himself has since been revealed to be merely a paid thug and assassin, but the "Fairbain affair" has precipitated some startling disclosures concerning the political situation in my country and the role of the security forces.

2. First of all, the Fairbain affair caused to be brought to light evidence of the organisation and activities of a well-organised centrally-directed terrorist gang connected with the political opposition. This gang has been organised for violence, murder and sabotage for the purpose of overthrowing the elected Government and was in fact responsible for widespread murder and arson during the last two or three years. The other revelation was that of the inability, partisanship and corruption of the security forces, and the complicity of many of their members in the activities of the terrorist organisation. Let me say at once that many of these things had long been known to the elected Government (see Background to the present Situation appended to the letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 24th June, 1964, which accompanies this letter); but now for the first time the Government and the public became aware of the fully documented and other conclusive evidence of the existence of the organisation and its activities and membership, including the central directorate of the body.

3. A week after Fairbain's apprehension, on 17th August, 1964, the Commissioner of Police issued a statement confirming the existence in the country of organised thuggery which is centrally directed and which had been responsible for over 100 murders including 22 committed in Georgetown in which "women were bombed in shops and a cinema and children burned in their beds". The Commissioner gravely added that law-abiding citizens should know what they and the Police were faced with in the country.

4. In the meantime, a hue and cry was raised by opposition elements that Fairbain had been tortured by the Police, and an application was made for a writ of habeas corpus for his release. In connection with this writ, the Commissioner of Police on 29th August, 1964 swore to an affidavit that he had refused permission to Mr. J.R.G. Hope, a Barrister-at-Law, to see Fairbain on 9th August, 1964, because "Communication at that stage would have hindered inquiries which were instituted as a direct result of the arrest in respect of a series of serious crimes such as murder, arson, causing explosions to buildings and the subversive and criminal activities of a terrorist gang attached to a political party known as the Peoples' National Congress, and of which gang the subject (Fairbain) admitted that he was a member".

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5. In connection with Ex Parte Fairbain Habeas Corpus, the Commissioner of Police submitted the following security papers as part of his instruction to the Law Officers:

- (i) Research Paper on the activities of the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation, dated 14th August, 1963.
- (ii) A report by a Police Officer (on the same subject) to the Assistant Commissioner, Crime, dated 11th September, 1963.
- and (iii) A report by a Police Officer (on the same subject) to the Commissioner of Police, dated 21st August, 1964.

A copy of each of these reports attached as appendices to Council of Ministers Memorandum CP(64)330 is also forwarded herewith.

6. The security papers give full information on the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation. They give the names of about 50 of its members, both the paid thugs and assassins and the central directorate. They show that there is evidence to sustain a charge of conspiracy against 25 of the 50 members of the Organisation. (A few of these have now been charged and are before the courts for murder and other serious crimes). The directorate of the Terrorist Organisation consists of some of the leaders of the political opposition and the trade union movement. The papers show beyond a shadow of doubt that the violence during the disturbances were politically motivated. The marauding bands who roamed the streets of Georgetown looting business places and beating people, the large number of bombings resulting in great damage to property, loss of life and injury to persons - all of these were centrally directed by the leaders of the Peoples' National Congress. It is to be noted that the victims of the looting, bombings, violence and murder were, or were believed to be, supporters of the Government.

7. A study of the security reports makes it abundantly clear that the object of the sabotage, violence and terrorism was the overthrow of the elected Government. The first security report called "Research Paper on the Peoples National Congress Terrorist Organisation" states as follows:

"This Organisation which is backed by a trade union representative and political leaders, has resorted to acts of sabotage and terrorism. It is paving the way for the overthrow of the democratically elected Government by force and it should be considered as a security target of great importance if the democratically elected Government should be given the protection and security of governing for the period it should be in office".

8. The security papers show that members of the Police Force and Volunteers were involved in the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation. Paragraphs 45 to 50 of the Research Paper tell of meetings between the leaders of the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation and members

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of the Volunteer Force, and of the support promised to the Terrorist Organisation. Thus several members of the Volunteer Force were involved in the activities of the gang. Mention is also made of six Policemen who were members of the gang. Paragraph 49 reads in part as follows:

".....The men who are members of the B.G. Volunteer Force mentioned that they would give the party (P.N.C.) all support in relation to instructions in the handling of arms in defensive measures. Ninety-five percent of the members of the Volunteer Force were already (sic) to defend themselves, the P.N.C. and the United Force against communism...."

And paragraph 50 reads in part as follows:

"The Staff Sergeant who was questioned..... said that he was permanently employed with the Volunteer Force; he was a supporter of the P.N.C. He was in charge of arms. The Volunteer Force had 600 men, more than 600 rifles, 80 sten guns and 60 bren guns....."

It should be mentioned that members of the Volunteer Force including a sergeant named in the reports as a member of the Terrorist Organisation have since been charged with the murder of six members of two families.

9. There is evidence, too, in the security papers that foreign countries are giving aid to the Terrorist Organisation. Paragraph 3 of the Research Paper mentioned that it was proposed at the time of the formation of the Organisation that efforts would be made to get funds from the United Kingdom and the United States of America and arms from Dutch Guiana (Surinam) and Venezuela. Paragraph 49 of the same paper also states:

"A revolution must start at some point, with the British Army taking over strategic points and the Volunteer Force standing by in Georgetown and New Amsterdam. Within thirty-six hours the Americans would be in the country and within forty-eight hours the Government would be ousted from office by force".

Paragraphs 108 to 110 of the Report of 11th September, 1963 describe a meeting of members of the Terrorist Organisation at the home of a Peoples' National Congress activist and one of the leaders of the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation on 26th August, 1963. The Report reads:

".....had decided not to blow up the Government oil tanks at Kingston anymore because it could be dangerous; many lives would be lost, including lives of members of the Party. He mentioned that when the Cuban ship arrived they would have to blast it up because they did not want any communist goods to come into the country and they would make an example to show results to the American people".

It is mentioned, too, that monetary transactions are arranged between an American citizen, who pays frequent visits to British Guiana, and a prominent member of the local trade union movement.

10. The security reports were withheld by the Police from the Minister responsible for internal security and from the Government. So the elected Government could take no action in this matter. Nor did the Police, despite the information at their disposal since 1963, take any action against those they knew to be carrying out acts of terrorism and subversion. Had the 50 members of the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation - a few of whom have now been charged for the series of bombings in Georgetown - been kept under surveillance, had their homes and offices been searched at the time the information became available to the Police, had they been arrested and charged as was recommended in one of the security reports, many lives would have been saved, including those of "womerbombed in shops and a cinema and children burned in their beds", to which the Commissioner of Police referred in his statement. Nor would the great tragedy of Wismar have occurred in which a few people were killed, many injured, 220 homes burnt, and 2,000 people driven from the place they had made their home, destitute and bereft of the results of their life's work.

11. I wish to emphasise that while the elected Government knew that the political Opposition was using violence as an instrument of policy, it did not then have positive or conclusive evidence of this. Such evidence was available to the Police and the British Government as early as August, 1963 but it was withheld from the elected Government. The then British Government apparently suppressed this evidence for political purposes. Despite the information at the disposal of the Police, when powers of detention were assumed by the Governor, these powers were immediately used to detain 34 members and supporters of the People's Progressive Party and only 2 from the Peoples' National Congress. Thus the Opposition Party was protected and the Government Party was wrongly smeared and accused of crimes of which they are innocent.

12. My Government considered the security documents referred to above at a meeting on 9th September and agreed that the Governor be advised

- (i) to release immediately the members of the People's Progressive Party who are wrongly detained for acts now clearly known to be the acts of the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation;
- (ii) in the interest of justice, to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that those members of the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation named in the security papers against whom there is evidence of murder, conspiracy, and terrorist and other illegal activities are prosecuted; and to detain at once the other members named in the papers as being involved in the activities of the Organisation;
- (iii) to dismiss all civil servants, government employees and teachers recorded as being members of the Terrorist Organisation;
- (iv) to disband immediately the Volunteer Force, which is drawn from the Opposition strongholds of Georgetown, New Amsterdam and Mackenzie,

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- (v) to recruit a new force of Volunteers consisting of twelve companies from twelve recruiting areas scattered throughout the country, thus ensuring that the force reflects a broad cross-section of the community;
 - (vi) to take immediate steps to correct the racial imbalance in the Police Force, not in the next five to seven years, but in the next few months, and to seek a grant from the United Kingdom for this purpose;
 - (vii) to revoke the Order for the recall of licensed firearms and to return all such arms to their owners;
 - (viii) to dismiss the Commissioner of Police, Mr. P.G. Owen, for withholding vital information relating to the security of the country from the Government, for failing to take action against a Terrorist Organisation which he knew was carrying out acts of terrorism, subversion and murder, and for acting generally against the interests of the country;
- and (ix) to bring to the attention of Her Majesty's Government the state of affairs in the country, and the consequences of foreign intervention, particularly the existence and activities of a widespread Terrorist Organisation, which have led to the political arrangements and constitutional innovations (failure to grant independence, the imposition of Proportional Representation, the rape of the constitution and the efforts to force the Government into an election before the expiry of its normal term of office) aimed at the defeat and destruction of the Government; and to request that an attempt be made to bring about a political and constitutional settlement acceptable to the great majority of the people of this country.

So far very little action has been taken on these decisions.

Need to review constitutional arrangements now being imposed on this country:

13. There can be little doubt that the disturbances had been organised with the object of removing the elected Government from office and to bring about at the same time the postponement of Independence. The disturbances of 1962 in fact, led to the postponement of the Independence Conference from May to October, 1962, and the delay in granting independence itself. The disturbances of 1962 and 1963 haunted the Independence Conference held in London in October, 1963 and were the decisive factor in its deliberations and conclusions. In announcing his decisions to the Conference on 31st October, 1963, the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Duncan Sandys, said:

"That (i.e. racialism) is the curse of British Guiana today. The whole life of the country is poisoned and weakened by mutual suspicion and fear between two predominant racial groups the Indians and the Africans.

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The state of tension has become acute in the last few years, and has led to racial murder, arson and violence. Last summer it reached the point where law and order could not be maintained without the assistance of two battalions of British soldiers".

"If confidence and co-operation are to be restored more positive steps must be taken to encourage the healthy development of political life along non-racial lines. The opposition parties have insisted that in order to achieve this, a change in the electoral system is essential".

"Unfortunately, in British Guiana this electoral system (first-past-the-post), while providing clear parliamentary majorities, has not provided strong government. The fact is that the administration of the country has been largely paralysed, the Government is insolvent, and law and order can be maintained only with the help of outside troops".

14. It will be seen from the foregoing that the evidence upon which the former Secretary of State based his conclusion that the first-past-the-post electoral system had produced ineffective Government was in fact not evidence of the failure of the system but of the results of carefully engineered activities of a terrorist organisation. There is therefore need to review the constitutional arrangements now being imposed. It must be pointed out, incidentally, that the imposition, including a general election under proportional representation, is being carried out with a large number of the members and supporters of the Governing Party under detention, and with the security forces intimidating, harassing and terrorising activists of the Party. The Governing Party has had to protest to the Governor repeatedly the last few weeks against acts of intimidation and terrorism carried out by the security forces against activists and organisers of the People's Progressive Party, apparently designed to prevent them from carrying out their organising activities.

15. It is already clear that the proposed proportional representation system is unlikely to produce stable government. A realistic estimate of present electoral support, and recent events have served to confirm my view that the most likely outcome of the proposed proportional representation election will not lead to a settlement in British Guiana.

16. At the last General Election the main political parties were returned as follows:

People's Progressive Party	-	20 seats
Peoples National Congress	-	11 seats
and United Force	-	4 seats

If the new elections contemplated later this year were on the basis of the existing 35 constituencies, the voting results would probably be the same as in 1961. However, the voting system has now been changed from first-past-the-post to the list system of proportional representation, in the hope of bringing about the defeat of the People's Progressive Party. Should the People's Progressive Party fail to get over 50% of the votes, it is very probable that the Peoples' National Congress with even fewer votes:

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than the People's Progressive Party, can form a minority Government relying on United Force voting support in the Legislature. The constitution as presently amended by the Colonial Office makes no provision whatsoever which would ensure the cooperation of the majority parties. It therefore seems certain that the proportional representation system is unlikely to result in the cooperation of the majority parties and hence a situation will come about which will lead to further disorders and violence.

17. An even more serious outcome of an election under the proportional representation system would be the crystallisation and hardening of racialism (two new parties have now been formed -- the first appealing to Muslim Indians and the second, appealing mainly to Hindu Indians) and the bringing into power of a group whose chief instrument as has already been shown is terrorism and organised thuggery.

Reorganisation of the Security Forces:

18. The events of the last three years have shown the need for reorganisation of the Security Forces to reflect a broad cross-section of the community and to make them more adequate to the needs of the country. There is considerable evidence of dereliction of duty and discriminatory practices by the Police and Volunteer Forces. (The text of the statement by former Minister of Home Affairs is appended to the letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 24th June, 1964, which accompanies this letter). The security papers already referred to also show that several members of these forces are members of or are involved in the Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation.

19. At present Indians while constituting 51% of the population form only 17% of the Police Force and the proportion in the Volunteer Force is substantially less.

20. The Governor has recently set out proposals for correcting racial imbalance in the British Guiana Police Force. This was to be done by increasing the proportion of Indians in the Force from approximately 17% to approximately 35% over a period of 5 years. The Governor has proposed an increase in the Force from 1,559 of which 274 were Indians, to 1,988 by the end of 1969, of which 429 would be Indians.

21. However the Governor's proposed programme would not result in a reflection in the Police Force of the racial composition of the country in the near future; for at the end of the 5-year period (by 1969) the other races would still outnumber Indians by 1,293 to 695. The imbalance in the Police Force is one of the causes of the break-down in law and order and the lack of confidence in the Force. There is need for a crash programme such as has been put into effect in many emergent countries. (In Israel and East Africa, there have been large extensions of the Police and Military with no marked drop in standards). But the Governor takes the surprising view that a 'crash' programme should be introduced only if it first obtained the blessing of the Opposition Parties and the Police Federation. The Governor must surely be aware that in the existing circumstances and for obvious reasons it would be impossible to obtain such support either from the Opposition Parties or the Police Federation.

22. My Government has recently considered this matter and has submitted proposals for

- (i) the reorganisation of the Police Force;
- (ii) the preservation of the balance in the Special Service Unit;
- (iii) the disbandment of the present Volunteer Force and the recruitment of a new Force in its place.

These proposals are set out in the memorandum on the reorganisation of the Security Forces which accompanies this letter.

Attitude of United States Government:

23. There can be little doubt that an important element in the present situation is the distrust and suspicion with which my Government is viewed by the United States Government. It is no secret that the United States Government regards my Government as a security risk in its main sphere of influence. This attitude of the United States Government has served to encourage irresponsible elements in their total opposition to my Government and has made compromise and a settlement impossible. I therefore recognise that settlement should be built on a basis which will reassure the State Department on the question of security.

Urgent need for economic aid:

24. Recent crises have adversely affected the revenue of the country and have made it nearly impossible to raise loans. At the same time the birth-rate continues to outstrip economic growth. Present tensions are partly the result of economic difficulties and urgent attention must be given to these if there is to be a lasting settlement. There is need for generous economic aid

- (i) for the general social and economic development of the country; and
- (ii) to assist with the rehabilitation of displaced persons and persons who have suffered loss or injury in recent disorders. A detailed request for such aid has already been sent forward.

25. In view of the points made herein my Government asks the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs

- (i) to take steps to ensure that early action is taken on the decisions of Government on the security reports;
- (ii) to review the constitutional provisions now being imposed on the country;
- (iii) to take urgent steps to ensure that the security forces are reconstituted so as to reflect a broad cross-section of the community;
- (iv) together with the British Guiana Government to enter into discussions with the United States

Government towards a treaty settlement which would reassure the United States Government, on the problems of hemispheric security;

- (v) to provide aid on a scale in keeping with the urgent needs of the country.

26. I should be grateful to have an early opportunity of discussing these matters.

Yours sincerely,

Cheddi Jagan

Premier

N.B.

The following documents accompany this letter:

1. Letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies dated 24th June, 1964 including the following appendices:
 - Appendix I - Background to the Present Situation The Disturbances of February, 1962, 1963 and 1964.
 - Appendix II - Statement by Senator the Honourable Jagan Jagan, Minister of Home Affairs
 - Appendix III - Appointments in the Public Service and Police Force in British Guiana.
2. Memorandum CP(64)330 - The Peoples' National Congress Terrorist Organisation: Failure to take action by the Police.
Background Papers.
Minutes of Meeting of Council of Ministers
3. CP(64)364 - Court of Inquiry - Emanuel Fairbain.
Minutes of Meeting of Council of Ministers
4. CP(64)383 - Reorganisation of Security Forces.
Minutes of Meeting of Council of Ministers.