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57 Fifth Avenue
New York 3, New York

1 February 1962

Mrs. Janet Jagan
Georgetown, British Guiana

Dear Janet:

Before this letter ends, I hope that I will have justified my addressing you so familiarly.

I was most pleased to meet you again at the U.N. After such a long time, I can surely understand why you had forgotten our earlier, brief encounter. So many things have happened since that day in June 1950! Similarly, much has happened to me, also. Yet, for some reason, the memory of our meeting has lingered.

I recall clearly how I visited you in your small combination home and office. My husband and I had wandered about Georgetown, after having been shown the Botanical Gardens, the Cemetery, St. George, St. Peter, and the Immaculate Conception. But this did not blot out the conception we received of poverty, underdevelopment, and exploitation. The brassy band and other circuses did not drown out the severe education, health, welfare, and other developmental needs. Seemingly, only you and your P.P.P. were attempting to come to grips with the real problems.

You permitted us to stay awhile as you operated a small hand mimeographing machine, and at the same time, worked as nurse and hygienist as your husband treated the poverty-stricken cane cutters who filed in for relief of their dental and other woes. In my notebook I recorded: "It is so obvious that a majority of the patients cannot pay, and yet, here is this attractive young professionally-educated couple, laboring away in this totally unproductive vineyard!"

I even remember our discussion of the issues that were of concern at the time. Campbellville, trade-union unity, very sub-standard housing. I still have a copy of Thunder!

I don't know why these memories have persisted. This early strong feeling of identification may have been on humanitarian grounds. From what I have read, we were born near the same time, in the same country. We are both parties to what would be considered in some circles--"an inter-marriage." Certainly, in your case, this last seems irrelevant. In my notebook, I also had the beginning of a small story I'd planned to write about you. It began:

"Her name was 'Janet,' but somehow I kept wanting to call her 'Ruth.' ~~This because~~ This because hers was a classic case where the lovely Old Testament story comes alive. "Your people shall be my people, and my people your people."

Following this visit, I often read, and sometimes kept, the fragmentary notices about British Guiana. Most of what I saw was biased, and even though it was before the current cold war hysteria, it was liberally sprinkled with what your husband calls "labels."

In New York, the more profitably engaged and other professional Guianese were hostile to my defense of your efforts, and had little understanding or sympathy for the mass struggle. I recall that once, on the way home from a snob-ridden Guianese cocktail party, my husband observed: "Everyone seems to be against Dr. Jagan but the people."

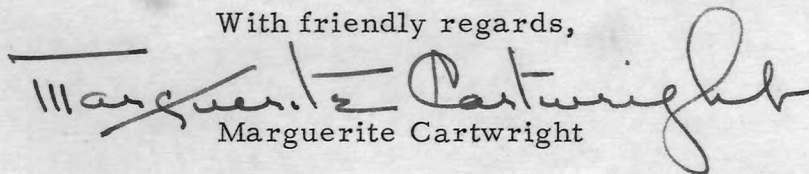
My life, too, began to be crowded with activities, but these were related to the freedom struggle of my ethnic cousins across the sea. In Ghana, where we'd both been invited as government guests, I chanced to run into your husband. He, of course, did not remember me, but I told him how I'd kept clippings about him with the expectation that I might try someday to present him more sympathetically to the American people. He listened politely, with that tolerant expression statesmen reserve for gushing female journalists, thanked me, and went on his way.

As I'd promised to send him old clippings when I got home, I did so. Thereupon, he, still polite, dictated the letter which I still have. It is dated 19 April 1958. He was enroute to the celebrations of the W.I. Federation.

I certainly did not intend to go into this much detail, but I felt that I wanted you to see me as something more than an agreeable, dumpy little woman whom you met at the U.N., and who claimed to have met you long ago. Moreover, I'm afraid that your Mr. Cummings regards me as a Jagan newcomer, of whom today there are, of course, many.

It is my plan to write you at least once again, wherein I'll comment on the situation here and the most cordial letter which I received from your Minister of Education, Mr. Nunes. In fact, I will give him this next letter to fetch to you when he returns next week.

With friendly regards,


Marguerite Cartwright