

# Hark The Rolling of The Thunder

BY JANET JAGAN

According to the minutes of the Executive Committee of the People's Progressive Party — a point which I had not remembered until finding this old record — I was elected Editor of THUNDER at a meeting held on February 15, 1950. I continued as Editor until mid-1956 when Brindley Benn was elected to the post.

The first edition of THUNDER was published in January 1950, with the masthead carrying the beautiful poem by William Morris, which has been on every edition of THUNDER since then: "Hark the rolling of the thunder! Lo the sun! And lo thereunder, Riseth rath, and hope and wonder." The price for the 12 page, 8 x 6 inch monthly publication was two cents.

The name of the Party's official organ was chosen sometime late in 1949, when final details for the formation of the PPP were being formulated. The first page carried this announcement: "PAC has now become THUNDER. THUNDER is the organ of the People's Progressive Party. Only with your help can we realise our aim to reach at least 10,000 readers with progressive local international news and views."

By May, 1954, THUNDER, which had that year moved from a monthly to a weekly and was now a four page, 14 x 8 inch publication, announced that its circulation was 12,000. One week later, the announcement was made that it had gone up to 16,000.

This jump in circulation was no doubt a result, not only of the quality of the paper, which was the only people's journal in the country, but also due to sympathy and solidarity. The April 24, 1954 issue had printed this: "Due to the closing down of Arcade Printery (the printers of THUNDER) by the police and the subsequent action of guarding the Printery, THUNDER which was to come out on April 10th., was forced to be delayed until this date. We ask our thousands of readers and supporters to bear with us during this difficult period".

The "difficult period" was that following the suspension of the constitution in October 1953, the occupation of the country by British soldiers, curfew and restriction

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laws, the harassment and jailing of Party members and the ongoing aim of destroying the Party. The printers of THUNDER were at that time being harassed and the printery was under 24-hour police guard.

The fore-runner of THUNDER was the PAC Bulletin, the official publication of the Political Affairs Committee. This began in November 1946 and was published as a twice-monthly mimeographed news sheet. In November, 1949 PAC, in its third anniversary issue, went into a printed monthly paper, of the same format as the first issue of THUNDER which followed this two months later. My name was listed as the person responsible for the printing of PAC, although, as far as I recall, it was a joint effort of the Committee.

The first Editorial Board of THUNDER, appointed at the same time I was elected Editor, included Cheddi Jagan, Ashton Chase, Rudy Luck, Martin Carter, L.F.S. Burnham, Sydney King and myself.

In the issue of April 1950, the "Aims and Programme" of the People's Progressive Party was published for the first time. In this declaration, the Party expressed its aim of abolishing exploitation and oppression, economic crises, unemployment and war, which "will be achieved only by the socialist reorganisation of society" and pledged itself to the task of winning a "free and independent Guiana, of building a just socialist society in which the industries of the country shall be socially and democratically owned and managed for the common good, a society in which security, plenty, peace and freedom shall be the heritage of all". This historical document was, if it is believed, the first ever declaration for the independence of Guyana.

THUNDER, up until it became a quarterly theoretical and discussion journal in 1969, under the editorship of the late Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr., was a mini-newspaper, carrying news, views, official documents of the Party, letters, party news, etc. Some of the glorious poems of Martin Carter were first printed in THUNDER, as was this moving protest published on July 31, 1954 against the oppressive British presence —

### IF TODAY

If today our city is like a house of stone  
rigid and cold, silent and still  
It is because a soldier walks with a gun