

# **The Guyana Story**

(From Earliest Times to Independence)  
By Dr. Odeen Ishmael

## THE EARLY AMERINDIAN SETTLEMENTS

It is generally believed that Guyana's first inhabitants, the Amerindians, originally entered the territory of what is now known as Guyana about 11,000 years ago. Initially they lived on the low, swampy coastland region.

Much of the coastal plain was built up by alluvial deposits from the rising Atlantic Ocean during the period ranging from 17,000 to 6,000 years ago. Large rivers which were formed also brought huge deposits of silt from the continental interior and dumped them into the ocean. These silt deposits formed part of the alluvium which helped to create the coastal plain. There were periods when the rising waters stabilised allowing mangrove forests to develop. As the waters rose at a later time, these forests were destroyed and were covered over with silt on which new forests grew during different periods. As the coastland built up, the sea retreated but left behind a series of parallel sand and shell beaches, now known as sand reefs, up to about 10 miles inland.

West of the Essequibo River, large peat (or peat) swamps were formed. Archaeological surveys in the region have unearthed evidence to show that the first

people of Guyana formed settlements around some of these large peyegasse swamps.

Research by the Guyanese anthropologist, Dennis Williams, shows that while the earliest Guyanese were hunters, about 7000 years ago they graduated to become hunter-gatherers. Some of these hunter-gatherers used a variety of plants to produce oils, fibres and dyes. These activities were the early horticultural experiments of the early inhabitants. Archaeological studies reveal that a group of these people occupied Barabina Hill near to Mabaruma around that period.

In the North-West District and the Pomeroon where they were firmly established as fish, turtle, snail and crab catchers, their settlements were more permanent, but in the interior areas they moved their campsites from time to time. Some of these settlements were in the Mazaruni basin, the Pakaraima highlands, the Rupununi and the Berbice River.

The tools of the hunter-gatherers included bedrock grinding surfaces which were used to make polished stone tools, bark beaters of chipped stone (used for extracting bark cloth), projectile points, chisels, axes, and adzes. These tools, no doubt, helped in creating the dug out canoe. Chipped quartz produced small tools such as scrapers and gouges. Bone was used for making awls, fish hooks and personal ornaments. Basketry skills were also developed and were used in the manufacture of fish traps and food containers.

The subsistence systems varied from region to region. In the south-west Rupununi, the hunter-gatherers were fishermen, while in the New River area they were collectors. However, their livelihood was affected by seasonal short-ages of the particular food resource.

Dennis Williams' studies reveal that in the North West District and Pomeroun, the diet of the early Amerindians consisted of fish, turtles, crabs, snails, a variety of wild animals, larvae of beetles that deposited their eggs in the eetay palm, wild cashew, eetay palm flour, and wild honey. Those who later lived in the savannahs hunted water-fowl, fish, turtle, cayman, deer, sloth and monkey. Many of these animals were trapped in isolated pools after the rainy season. The eetay palm which also flourished in the savannahs provided a type of flour. In the rain forest area, Amerindians lived on fish and wild animals; while near to the Brazil border wild nuts formed part of the diet.

## THE LATER AMERINDIAN SETTLEMENTS

Beginning about 4,000 years ago, the riverbank areas were affected by severe droughts and, as the water levels in the rivers dropped, the salt water from the sea encroached further inland. Animals along many of the river banks migrated further inland to places with a steady fresh water supply. Human communities also moved to those areas, not only for fresh water, but also to follow the animal food supply. Dennis Williams' studies show that these droughts dried out many of the pegasse swamps in the North West District and the prolific growth of the eetay palm suffered as a result. The subsequent decline in the supply of starch forced the early people to look for alternatives in the higher regions. One of these alternatives was the cassava, and the domestication of this root vegetable saw the gradual establishment of permanent agricultural communities. The earliest of such settlements in the North West District were established around Hosororo and later in the Aruka River (in the North West District) about 3,000 years ago. But archaeological research has shown that Amerindian groups actually began living in those areas, though not on a permanent basis, from about 3,400 years ago

About 2,000 years ago, the first farming community appeared on the Corentyne River near to Wonotobo Falls. Later, other communities developed on both banks. The district around Orealla began to be settled about 1,000 years ago. From this area there was a western expansion across the intermediate savannahs up to the Demerara River.

Archaeologists have investigated a number of these settlement sites at Hitia (Berbice River), Tiger Island, Taurakuli and Doctor Ho Landing (Abary River); Idaballi, Karabu, Kibileri, Yamora, Barabara-Shanale, St. Francis and St Cuthbert's mission (Mahaicony and Mahaica Rivers); and Seba (Demerara River). Most of the people living in these areas were Arawaks but some were Warraus. The largest Arawak settlement was Abary village in the upper Abary River which unfortunately now lies under the reservoir created by the Mahaica-Mahaicony-Abary (MMA) project in the 1970s.

When the Dutch came to Guyana they established plantations, forts and trading posts along the coastal rivers. Two well-known settlements at that time were Nibbi and Ouden Amen on the Abary River. In the seventeenth century, this latter settlement was described as a village of 16 to 18 thatched houses, each large enough to accommodate four to six families.

Nibbi was a trading post at the end of the sixteenth century; today it is identified (by Dennis Williams) as the settlement of Idaballi while Ouden Amen is now the settlement of Karabu. Plantation den Berg, established by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, has been identified as the site of Hitia on the Berbice River.

Because of the swampy nature of the land, some Amerindian communities constructed huge earth mounds of over 20,000 square yards (18,000 square metres) about 2 metres above swamp level on which they built their houses. These houses, grouped together, were surrounded by wide ditches. Their agricultural plots were also created on similar types of mounds. Dennis Williams' studies, based on the evidence of ceramic patterns, indicate that an early form of this settlement was at Joanna, (in the Black Bush Polder area on the Corentyne), going back to about 1,500 years ago.

Probably because it was felt that it was too energy-consuming to maintain these mounds over a number of generations, settlements later graduated to the sand reefs which were themselves somewhat elevated over the swampy areas. The farm plots, on which cassava was the main crop, were kept on the swamp borders and also on clearings on the sand reefs, even though the latter areas possessed relatively poor soils. A series of settlements sprang up along these reefs from the Corentyne to the North West District.

Interior settlements began about 1,000 years ago with movements from the coastal areas, even though some other groups arrived from the Amazon region in the south. The Rupununi Savannahs began to be permanently peopled only from the early eighteenth century, even though hunter-gatherers had lived in that region a few thousand years earlier.

The adoption of the bitter cassava played a major role in Amerindian subsistence. Due to its lasting quality, it expanded the potential for travel and exploration. The cassava produced starch in the form of cassava bread, casreep (which acted as a preservative of meat), and farine (flour) - all of which could last for a relatively long period.

The development of cassava cultivation also helped in the growth of a technology associated with its processing. To this end, the stone grater,

matapee (a basket work press to remove the cassava juice from the grated cassava) , sifter, ceramic griddles and containers were developed.

Settlements in the rain forest areas were not permanent since soil fertility was poor and there was need to move to new locations to farm. Shifting cultivation was also associated with shifting settlements.

Work was done collectively especially in forest clearing and house building, but specialisations in stone working, pottery, basket weaving and cane making did occur. Sexual division of labour also assisted in increased productivity.

The early Amerindians who lived on the riverbanks produced a wide variety of rock engravings and rock paintings. These engravings and paintings, depicting animal and plant resources, were begun by the hunter-gatherers, but they continued through succeeding generations. Some anthropologists suggest that these engravings and paintings represent the hunter-gatherer tradition of enumerating food items in order to ensure the replenishing of nature on which man's survival depends in marginal environments.

On the Berbice and Corentyne Rivers a different type of rock engraving can be found. This is known as the Timehri engraving. This pattern of engraving shows a solitary costumed human figure and is the type which is dominant in parts of Amazonia.

## MAIN AMERINDIAN GROUPS UP TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

By the nineteenth century, the principal Amerindian tribes inhabiting Guyana were the Caribs, the Akawois or Waikas, the Arawaks and the Warrous or Guaraunos. Interestingly, the Arawaks, Caribs and Akawois called themselves "Lokono", "Carinya" and "Kapohn", respectively - all meaning "the people" in their respective languages.

Among other tribes of less importance were the so-called Arawak-Akawois, or Wauwejans, who were considered descendants of both the former tribes, though distinct from each of them; the Magariouts, or Manoas, a powerful and warlike tribe dwelling in the region watered by the upper Essequibo and the Mazaruni; the Wai-Wais residing near the source of the Essequibo; the Patamonas (Paramonas) occupying the area of the Pakaraimas and Potaro River; and the Macushis and Wapisianas of the Rupununi area.

The Caribs and Akawois constantly raided the Wapisiana settlements, seizing many of these people to use as poitos (slaves). What precise localities the Wapisianas occupied is difficult to trace, but in the year 1833, when their numbers has become greatly reduced, they were found at the headwaters of the Essequibo.

Mention must also be made of the Arecunas and the Pancays who lived in the upper Cuyuni, and of the Pariacots who also possibly inhabited the same district.

### 1. The Caribs

Of all the tribes, by far the most numerous and powerful throughout the whole period of Dutch occupation of Guyana was the Carib nation, known as the warriors among the native inhabitants. In the later period, during the British occupation, though still claiming and receiving precedence among the Amerindians of British Guiana, their numbers had become greatly reduced and they were in some instances industrious cultivators of the soil. But in the early days of the colony, the Caribs, surpassing as they did all other tribes in personal bravery, were the great freebooters on the coast from Trinidad to the mouth of the Amazon. They were strong enough to control the waterway of the Orinoco, and they permanently occupied the lower portion of the right bank of the Orinoco as far as Barima. In the

interior Guyana, they were found on the upper Essequibo, the Mazaruni, the upper Cuyuni, the Pomeroon and the Barima, and they moved freely through the forest region.

## 2. The Akawois

Next in importance to the Caribs were the Akawois. The tribe was found in the lower Essequibo, the upper Cuyuni, the Demerara and the Pomeroon. It is probable that this tribe, like the Caribs, was nomadic in its habits, and was to be found scattered throughout the Dutch colonies of Essequibo, Berbice and Surinam.

In the early years of British occupation, the Akawois were described as the most pugnacious of the Amerindian tribes, the Caribs having to a large extent lost their ascendancy and being greatly reduced in numbers. The Akawois were at that period occupying the area between the upper Demerara River, the Mazaruni and the upper Pomeroon.

## 3. The Arawaks

Following the Akawois in importance were the Arawaks, described by Major John Scott in 1665 as being "the best humoured Indians of America, being both very just and generous-minded people", and as inhabiting the region between the Corentyne and the Waini Rivers. Nearly two hundred years later they were described by another English writer as "of all the tribes the most docile, cleanly, and of the best stature and personal appearance", but at the same time as being "immoral, fickle and inconstant, and possessing none of the warlike spirit of the Caribs and Akawois".

The Dutch employed them at the Post of Moruka, for the fishery in the Orinoco and the salting industry generally, and also for recapturing fugitive slaves. In 1771, Centurion, the Spanish Governor of Guayana (east of Orinoco), reported to the Court of Spain that the Arawaks had for many years been united to the Dutch and incorporated in their colonies both in relationships and other ties. After the British took possession of the Dutch colonies, the Arawaks readily sought employment as labourers, especially in the plantations up the rivers, but they were reluctant to work among the African slaves on the coast.



The Arawaks were regarded as the aristocracy of the Amerindian tribes and superior to all of them in the scale of civilization.

#### 4. The Warrous

The Warrous originally inhabited the swampy morasses and islands in the mouth of the Orinoco, as well as the lower reaches of the Barima. Owing to ill-treatment by the Spaniards in 1767, they migrated in great numbers to the Barima district which they, as well as the other Amerindian tribes, regarded as Dutch territory. In this locality they still remained after the British had taken over the Dutch colonies.

The Warrous had none of the warlike characteristics of the Caribs and Akawois. They were mainly boat-builders, owing to the skill with which they hollowed out - without any instrument but the adze - the canoes used by the Amerindian tribes of Guiana. Almost amphibious in their mode of life, they were expert fishermen who kept up a noted fishery of the lower Orinoco. The women were skilful in the manufacture of baskets and of the hammocks known as the sarow hammocks which they made from the eetay palm. This pith of this palm also provided an excellent type of bread which was the Warrous' principal means of subsistence. Under the British Government, these people became more industrious and contributed more labour to the sugar plantation than any other Amerindian tribe in British Guiana.

#### 5. The Macushis and Wapisianas

The Macushis and Wapisianas drifted from Brazil into Guyana from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Most likely, they crossed in the area of the Ireng River and began settling in the north part of the Rupununi savannahs. Later, the Wapisianas began to migrate to the south of the Kanuku Mountains. Some historians believe that they did so to avoid the slave-raiding Amerindian tribes who came from the Rio Negro and Rio Branco regions of Brazil. There is evidence that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both the Macushi and Wapisiana villages erected defences against these raids. It is possible, too, that the Wapisianas moved away from the north savannahs because they and the Macushis had become enemies.

In the 1780s, more Macushis and Wapisianas who were living in the Rio Branco region of Brazil fled to Guyana to escape from the Portuguese who were forcibly attempting to place them in mission settlements. Smaller groups from decimated tribes from the same region of Brazil also moved into Guyana and joined up with either the Macushis and Wapisianas after this period.

## 6. The Arecunas

The Arecunas originally lived in upper regions of the Caroni and Paragua Rivers of Venezuela. After 1770, the Spanish Capuchin missions, with the support of the Spanish colonial authorities, began to forcibly resettle them from those areas in missions located on the Orinoco. Groups of these people escaped to Guyana to avoid this forced resettlement and established villages in the upper areas of the Mazaruni and Cuyuni Rivers.

## 7. The Patamonas

Very little is known of the history of the Patamonas who have probably resided in parts of the Pakaraima mountain region for a very long time. An early contact between them and Europeans was made in the early nineteenth century when they were described as mountaineers.

## 8. The Wai-Wais

The Wai-Wais were first found in a village located in the Acarai Mountains around 1837 and their presence was noted by Robert Schomburgk in 1843. They gradually moved to settle in the extreme south of the Rupununi savannahs. There is still some doubt as to when they first arrived on Guyanese territory, but it is felt that their arrival was due either to pressure from the Portuguese in the Rio Branco region or from another more powerful Amerindian tribe.

## THE FATE OF OTHER AMERINDIAN GROUPS

In addition to the nine existing Guyanese Amerindian tribes, other groups also lived in Guyana, but over time have either been absorbed into other tribes or have altogether disappeared. In 1843, Robert Schomburgk, who surveyed the boundaries of Guyana, listed thirteen tribes in a paper he presented to the Royal Geographical Society of London. These were the "Arawaks, Warraus, Caribs, Accawais, Macusis, Arecunas, Wapisianas, Atorais or Atorias, Tarumas, Woyavais (Wai-Wais), Maopityans, Pianoghottos, and Drios."

In other reports he wrote about encountering small groups of Amaripas, Daurais, Maionkongks and Borokotos near the borders with Brazil and Suriname. He pointed to the fact that since 1840 large numbers of Amerindians died from smallpox, and was dismayed at the drastic reduction in the populations in southern Guyana in the four years since 1837 when he had first visited the region.

Earlier, in 1823, William Hillhouse, an "ex-Quartermaster-General of Indians", who lived among the Amerindians and was himself married to an Amerindian, mentioned one other tribe - the Attamacka - as living in Guyanese territory.

But even before the time of Hillhouse and Schomburgk, the early Dutch settlers of Essequibo in the late seventeenth century, and throughout the eighteenth century as well, reported having contacts with Magariouts, Parcays and Pariacotts in the upper Cuyuni River area.

As far back as 1596, Amerindians described as Eaos, who lived in the Moruka area, were evicted by the Arawaks with the assistance of the Spanish who had settled in the Orinoco region of what is now Venezuela. A smaller group, the Shebayos, who also lived in the Moruka area, also disappeared, but it is believed that they were assimilated into the Arawak tribe.

The Paravianas, somewhat related to the Caribs, at one time lived in the upper Demerara River and the middle Essequibo River areas. They were driven out by the Caribs who continually attacked them; and even when they resettled in the upper Essequibo, they were again expelled by further Carib raids. They eventually found themselves in the Takutu area near the

then unmarked border with Brazil. There they were rounded up by the Portuguese and forcibly moved to mission settlements in the Amazon. The Dutch, to whom they were loyal, never came to their assistance. A few Paravianas who managed to escape eventually were protected by the Wapisianas in the Rupununi. The last full-blooded member of that disappeared tribe died in the Rupununi in 1914.

The Tarumas, who were mentioned by Schomburgk, probably escaped into the Acarai Mountain region of Guyana from the Rio Negro sometime between 1715 and 1721 during a period of forced removal of Amerindians by the Portuguese authorities. The Tarumas, who lived near the Kassikaityu and Kuyuwini Rivers, became well-known for their apron belts, cassava graters and their trained hunting dogs which they traded to other tribes.

In 1851 Rev. W.H. Brett wrote in *Indian Missions in Guiana*: "The Tarumas formerly lived near the mouth of the Rio Negro. The Carmelites had a mission among them as early as 1670. Disagreeing with other tribes, and being ill-used by the Portuguese, a portion of them fled northward, and settled near the headwaters of the Essequibo. Death made such ravages among those who remained that the tribe was considered extinct. Mahanarva, the well-known Carib chief, in 1810 brought the first information of their existence to Georgetown, but his account was so exaggerated that they were described as amphibious, and taking shelter in caverns under water. They are about four hundred in number, and their language differs from that of other Indians of Guiana."

Unfortunately, at the beginning of the twentieth century, no member of the tribe survived an influenza epidemic. This epidemic was apparently so severe that the Kassikaityu River, where the Tarumas once lived, is still referred to by the Wai-Wais as "The River of the Dead."

In 1868 Rev. W. H. Brett, wrote in *The Indian Tribes of Guiana*: "The Atorais are now nearly extinct. Including a sister tribe, the Tauris or Dauris, who formerly dwelt apart in the forests, but are not united with them, the Atorais probably do not exceed one hundred persons."

Earlier, Richard Schomburgk reported in his *Travels in British Guiana 1840-1844* that in 1841 the Schomburgk boundary survey expedition, during a

stop-over at a Wapisiana village, met Miaha, an old Amaripa woman "about 60 years of age", who was "the last of her race".

Richard Schomburgk at that time also reported the "total number of still living Maopityans amounted to 39" and that they were living together "with some 20 Tarumas from whom they had chosen their chief".

The Portuguese drive in Brazilian territory to "re-settle" Amerindian tribes, forced other groups such as Maopityans, Atorais, Daurais, Drios, Pianoghottos and Amaripas to escape to southern Guyana. It is possible that some of these groups eventually moved back to Brazil, while others came under the protection of the Macushis and Wapisiansas with whom they inter-married.

## THE ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS IN THE GUYANA REGION

In 1492, the first known European explorers reached the Caribbean region when Christopher Columbus, sailing under the Spanish flag, landed in the Bahamas. For nearly 50 years after, very few ships sailed in the region.

In 1499 Alonzo de Ojeda and Amerigo Vespucci, sailing together, reached the northern coast of South America in the region of Suriname. They then sailed west along the coast of Guyana. Vincente Yanez Pinzon in 1500 also sailed along the Guyana coast, but no attempt to land was then made, with the exception of an unsuccessful effort by Pinzon in the neighbourhood of the Amazon.

Immediately after the territorial discoveries were made by Columbus, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella petitioned Pope Alexander IV to recognise the "new" lands as Spanish possessions. At that time, the Pope's declaration was regarded as the supreme law in the Christian world, and it was important for Spain to win papal recognition of its discoveries, particularly at the same time when Portuguese explorers were reaching lands in Africa and Asia. The Portuguese had also approached the Pope to recognise their African "discoveries" as their legal possessions.

In 1493, as a result of these requests, the Pope drew on a map a north-south line 100 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands and proclaimed that all lands discovered west of that line belonged to Spain. When the Portuguese objected that the line was too near to Africa, the Pope, after consultations with the Portuguese and Spanish sovereigns, in 1494 drafted the Treaty of Tordesillas by which the line was shifted to 270 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. Thus, the American continent, with the exception of Brazil, fell under Spanish domination.

The Treaty of Tordesillas is significant because it would be used in later years by Venezuela, who inherited Spanish rights after independence, to lay claim to nearly the whole of Essequibo. However, it is important to note that, except for the rulers of Spain and Portugal, other European sovereigns never recognised this Treaty which divided the world between Spain and Portugal.

By the year 1500, the coast from the Amazon to the Orinoco began to be referred to as Guyana. At first little attention was placed on exploring this

region. Actually, the Spaniards only began to take an interest in South America when Pizarro found gold in Peru.

In Colombia, the Spaniards learned about the legend of El Dorado and his golden city of Manoa. They tried desperately to find the fabled golden city there, and after they failed, they moved eastwards to look for it in the Guyana region.

Many expeditions came to Guyana. An important one was led (about 1530) by Don Pedro Malaver da Silva who investigated the region between the Essequibo River and the Oyapok River to the west. His expedition was a disaster and all, except one member of his party, were killed by the Caribs. The lone survivor Juan Martinez, according to his own story, begged the Caribs to spare his life which they did. He lived with them in the Caroni district for ten years, and then escaped by way of the Essequibo River to the island of Margarita on the coast of Venezuela. There he told people of his experience and said that he was living in the golden city until he escaped.

Not much is known about Martinez. Another account says that in 1531 he was a crew member of a ship captained by Don Diego de Ordas on an expedition up the Orinoco. Martinez was in charge of the munitions, but after the gunpowder exploded, he was punished for his negligence by being set adrift in a canoe. It was in this manner that he was found by his captors.

### The Legend of El Dorado

In one version of his tale, Juan Martinez related that his Amerindian captors blindfolded him, and after a forced march for four days, took him to their city. His blindfold was removed and he was astounded at the sight before him. As far as he could see were houses made of gold and precious stones. For an entire day, they marched him through the golden city, which was built on the banks of a lake named Parima (in the area of the Rupununi), until they arrived at the palace of their king, El Dorado. The king ordered that he should be treated well, but prevented him from leaving the city which was called Manoa. According to Martinez, El Dorado was bathed with gold dust and anointed with fragrant spices and herbs each day.

After many months, Martinez longed to return to his own people. At first El Dorado refused, but finally relented. He gave him a large quantity of gifts of gold and precious stones and provided him with guides to lead him to the Orinoco River. However, on the way hostile Amerindians attacked them but Martinez managed to escape, despite being wounded, with two gourds of gold beads. Somehow, he managed to reach Margarita where he related the tale to priests who nursed him of his wounds.

This story, which was probably aimed at winning sympathy for himself, fired the imagination of many adventurers and soon the existence of a golden city in the Guyana region was much talked about in Europe.

While there existed many stories of the location of the mythical Manoa in Andean locations in Peru and Colombia, it was the Spanish Governor of Trinidad, Antonio de Berrio, who was responsible for fixing its site in the boundaries of Guyana. He himself made three expeditions to the region in 1584, 1585 and 1591. After he sent his lieutenant Domingo de Vera to make further explorations in 1593, Berrio declared that the city was near the source of the Caroni River, an eastern tributary of the Orinoco.

The Spaniards under Berrio were unable to get further into the interior. Sir Walter Raleigh, writing of 1595, stated that Berrio "dare not send any of his soldiers any farther into the land than to Carapana, which he called the port of Guiana". Large reinforcements arrived from Spain and they were put under the command of Domingo de Vera in 1596, so that Berrio had at his disposal some 470 men. He was able to, at once, send an expedition in the supposed direction of the fabled city of Manao. But the column was cut off by the Amerindians with the loss of over 350 men, and famine and pestilence decimated those who remained.



## RALEIGH'S FIRST EXPEDITION TO GUYANA



One of the adventurers and explorers who believed in the existence of the golden city in Guyana was the Englishman Sir Walter Raleigh, a businessman and explorer with military experience, who was also a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth herself was a bitter enemy of Spain with whom England was at war during the last quarter of the sixteenth century.

In 1594, Raleigh sent an expedition led by Captain Jacob Whiddon to the Guyana region to obtain information about Manoa. He returned to England with additional details of the myth. One year later, Raleigh himself decided to sail to Guyana saying that, besides looking for gold, he was going there to attack the Spaniards who had by this time established settlements on the Orinoco River.

While one of his main aims was to search for the golden city, Raleigh also planned to set up a colony in Guyana to be used as a base from where, with the help of Amerindian allies, the Spanish would be expelled from Peru and the treasures of that region sent to England.

Raleigh first stopped at Trinidad where he attacked the newly established Spanish colony and burnt the capital, St. Joseph. With the Spanish Governor Antonio de Berrio as his prisoner, he then set off for the Orinoco to search for Manoa. Berrio, who himself had attempted to find the golden city, tried to discourage Raleigh explaining that he had lost hundreds of men, horses and cattle on his previous trips.

Raleigh and his captains, Lawrence Keymis and George Gifford, and 40 men set out in small boats in their expedition up the Orinoco. (Ocean-going vessels could not pass through the Orinoco delta). For many weeks they

suffered severe privations, including the deaths by disease of some of the men, but Raleigh urged the team to press on. Eventually, they arrived at an Amerindian village where they were entertained and given gifts. The chief told them that a large gold mine was located about four days' journey farther upriver, but after searching for it, the expedition did not find it.

Raleigh's men attacked a few small Spanish settlements on the Orinoco River, and explored a few of that river's tributaries. They also questioned the Amerindians they met, but no one could provide them with information about Manoa.

He left two young members of his crew with friendly Amerindians in the right bank of the Orinoco for the purpose of learning the language of the natives. He also ordered them to learn the geography of the country and to identify suitable sites on which to establish English colonies. It certainly was Raleigh's intention of returning later.

After releasing Berrio, Raleigh returned to England with the feeling that the golden city could still be found. He encouraged his countrymen to establish a colony in the Guyana region, and to win support from the English queen and from investors, he advertised the country by describing his trip up the Orinoco in his book, *The Discoverie of the Large Rich and Bewtiful Emphyre of Guyana*.

He described Guyana as rich and beautiful, with glorious rivers and possessing several varieties of birds and plants and delicious fruits. He stated: "Whatever prince shall possess it, that prince shall be lord of more gold, and of more cities and people than either the King of Spain or the great Turk." But he also wrote that in the interior was a tribe of Amerindians whose heads were below their shoulders!

Raleigh's book, which became very popular on the European continent, encouraged explorers to pay attention to Guyana, and by the year 1600, English, French and Dutch ships were already trading in the main rivers of the northern South American coast.

## RALEIGH'S SECOND EXPEDITION TO GUYANA

Shortly after Raleigh left the Guyana region, soldiers from the Spanish settlement of Cumaná, west of the Orinoco, were sent to apprehend the two Englishmen Raleigh had left behind. They managed to hold only one of them named Francis Sparry; the other had been killed and eaten by a jaguar. The young Englishman, and the Amerindians with whom he resided, informed the Spanish soldiers that Raleigh was expected back in March 1596.

In 1596, Raleigh sent his lieutenant, Lawrence Keymis, back to Guyana in the area of the Orinoco River, to establish contact with the two Englishmen and the Amerindians there and to gather more information about the golden city. It is not known if he learned of the whereabouts of the Englishman whom the Spaniards held. But he did describe the site of a village (which became the Spanish settlement of Santo Thomé) as a "ranceria of some twenty or thirty houses at the mouth of the Caroli".

During his exploration of the coast between the Amazon and the Orinoco, he visited 52 rivers and claimed discovery of 40 of them. In addition, he mapped the location of Amerindian tribes and prepared geographical, geological and botanical reports of the country. He also sent one of his captains, Leonard Berry, to explore the Corentyne River which he did until he was stopped by rapids on that river.

In his report, Keymis expressed the view that Manoa could be reached by way of either the Corentyne or the Essequibo rivers. His report named "Lake Parima" as the location of Manoa, and shortly after, cartographers in Europe actually showed the location of this lake and city on their maps of the Guyana region. (One version of his report fixed the city of Manoa somewhere between the sources of the Essequibo and the Rupununi Rivers on a "Lake Roponowini").

Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603 and was succeeded by James I who immediately established peace with Spain. Many favourites of Elizabeth were dismissed from high office, and Raleigh was soon after accused of being part of a conspiracy to assassinate the king. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London until 1617 when he managed somehow to convince King James to allow him to return to Guyana to search for the golden city. The King most likely gave his permission because he hoped that any

acquired treasure would help to finance royal projects. However, the King warned him not to provoke any clashes with the Spaniards with whom England was at peace.

Raleigh set sail with 14 ships and 500 men and finally cast anchor near the mouths of the Orinoco. From here he sent his lieutenant Keymis with an expeditionary force up the river.

By this time, the Spanish Governor of Trinidad, Antonio de Berrio, had strengthened the defences of the small settlement of Santo Thomé on the lower Orinoco aimed at blocking any encroachment by non-Spanish expeditions. The Spaniards tried to prevent Keymis and his men from passing the settlement, but using superior force, the English destroyed it and proceeded upstream. Unfortunately, in the fighting, Raleigh's son was killed. From Amerindians they met, Keymis was unable to obtain any information of the golden city and eventually reported his failure to Raleigh. Angry words were exchanged between them over the death of Raleigh's son, and Keymis, probably in remorse, committed suicide.

After an unsuccessful stay of 26 days, the expedition returned to England. Meanwhile, the action of the English in destroying San Thomé was reported to James I by the Spanish authorities. Raleigh was blamed for this unfriendly act and was, immediately on arrival back in England, imprisoned on the charge of treason. He was beheaded in 1618 to give satisfaction to the Spanish King.

## EARLY DUTCH EXPLORATION

The first Europeans to colonise Guyana were the Dutch who arrived at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In 1579, the European provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland and Zutphen, which were all ruled by Spain, joined together to form the Union of Utrecht. Sometime later, the union referred to itself as the United Provinces (of the Netherlands). In 1581, this union of Dutch speaking people declared its independence from Spain. The war which broke out between Spain and the United Provinces continued until 1648, with an interval of partial truce from 1609 to 1621.

Up to the time of the declaration of independence, no Dutch sailing expedition had been made to the South American coast. However, by 1592 interest had developed and an Antwerp merchant, William Usselinx, had begun to advise merchants of possible enterprises on the American continent.

The Dutch, during their war of independence against Spain, also attacked Portugal which had been united with Spain in 1580, since both countries had the same king. Portugal had many possessions in the East Indies, so the Dutch sent expeditions to attack them there.

### Cabeliau's voyage

The first known Dutch expedition to the coast of Guyana was led in 1598 by the sea-captain, Abraham Cabeliau. He noted between the Corentyne and the Orinoco Rivers, the following rivers: "Berbice, Apari, Maychawini, Maheyca, Demirara, Dessekebe, Pauroma, Mrauga, Wayni." (These are known today as Berbice, Abary, Mahaicony, Mahaica, Demerara, Essequibo, Pomeroon, Moruca and Waini).

Cabeliau did not enter the Essequibo River because he was told by some Amerindians he met that there was nothing available to be traded at that location. However, he did some trading with Amerindians on the Barima and Amakura Rivers before sailing up the Orinoco as far as San Thomé to look for the gold mine that Raleigh had written about. He also traded with Amerindians there as well as with others in the lower Orinoco. In his report, he described the Orinoco River and the South American coast as far as the

Maranon River (or Amazon River) as still unconquered. He also stated that the Caribs were able to resist incursions by the Spaniards who could only be found in the area of the Orinoco River.

Cabeliau's voyage was very shortly after followed by the voyages of many other Dutchmen.

By the truce of 1609, the Dutch were prevented from trading in "places, towns, ports and havens" held by the King of Spain. On the other hand, Spain recognised the right of the Dutch to trade in the countries "of all other princes, potentates and peoples" who were willing to trade with them, without any interference from the King of Spain, his officers, subjects or dependents. By a secret Article agreed upon between the Dutch and the Spanish, this right was understood to include the region of the West Indies.

## EARLY DUTCH SETTLEMENTS

By 1613, the Dutch were settled in various points upon the coast between the Orinoco and the Amazon. In that year the Spaniards surprised and destroyed a Dutch post on the Corentyne River. In a report announcing this achievement, the Spanish commander stated: "It would be well to free our coasts of them entirely, for from the River of Maranon (Amazon) to the Orinoco, there are three or four more of their settlements, and their plantations are very considerable. They have possessed themselves of the mouths of these two rivers and are making themselves masters of the produce and possessions of the natives."

The Spanish parish priest and vicar of Trinidad in a letter of the 30 June 1614 stated that he had been informed that from the river called Guayapoco as far as the Orinoco, a distance of 200 leagues, there were four Flemish settlements.

In 1614, the Dutch, supported by the Caribs, besieged Trinidad. Reinforcement ammunition were later sent from Spain with a view to protecting that island which was in imminent danger.

Towards the end of that year, a Dutchman named Claessen, who had founded a settlement on the Wiapoco, petitioned the States-General of the Netherlands to establish a new colony in the ports of the West Indies. In 1615, the King of Spain was presented with a report and a map showing the places between the Amazon and the Island of Margarita, where it was believed that the Dutch intended to settle. From this report, he learned that the Dutch had navigated the Orinoco as far as its junction with the Caroni River, and the Waipoco as far as its third fall. The report also mentioned that the Dutch were spending large sums of money in colonial enterprises and that they wanted to put the commerce of Guyana directly under the control of the States-General.

In a description of Guyana made about 1669, Major John Scott stated that in 1616 the Dutch Captain, Adrian Groenewegen (Scott reported the name as Groenewegel), with a small fleet that sailed to Guyana, settled the Essequibo and built Fort Kykoveral "on a small island 30 leagues up the River Disseekeeb (Essequibo), which looked into two branches of that famous river". According to this description, it was Groenewegen who first opened up the interior of Guiana to trade and settlement, and he and his

settlers lived on friendly terms both with the natives and with the foreigners, especially English traders, in the West Indies.

Groenewegen was actually sent by the Anglo-Dutch firm of Courteen and Company to establish a settlement in Essequibo. He was particularly interested in exploration and trade and, in the company of a Captain Mattheson, he travelled to the south of the country in search of Manoa del Dorado. It is believed that they reached as far as the Takutu River, and even the Rio Branco. On two occasions, Groenewegen destroyed the town of Santo Thomé when he led raids against the Spaniards there.

The origin of the Essequibo colony is still unclear. There apparently were two parallel administrations, one headed by Groenewegen, and the other by Adrian van der Goes, an appointee of the Dutch West India Company. Groenewegen's settlers were more enterprising and prosperous than those on the Company's settlement. The Company so badly neglected its colony that in 1632, van der Goes and his settlers abandoned their colony and returned to Amsterdam.

The following year, new Dutch settlers came from Tobago, but they joined Groenewegen's settlement since the other was completely abandoned. It is believed that they brought the first African slaves with them to Kykoveral. The Company's settlement and investment there were saved by the Zeeland Chamber which helped to fund resources and eventually sent van der Goes and another group of colonists in late 1632 back to Essequibo.

Groenewegen was very friendly with John Powell who had settled Barbados for the English in the 1620s. When the English colonists faced starvation in 1627, Powell sailed to Essequibo for help and Groenewegen assisted him with a cargo of cassava and other food supplies. He also sent a small group of Amerindians to teach the English to plant cassava and other root crops on the island.

At this period, the Spaniards were definitely excluded from the coast east of the Orinoco. They probably visited that area of coast for trading purposes at the close of the sixteenth century; but after the first arrival of the English in 1595 and the Dutch in 1598 and in succeeding years, it became more and more off-limits to them. The English and the Dutch allied themselves with the Caribs against the Spaniards; and after the sacking of Santo



Thomé by Raleigh in 1618, the Arawaks, until then the friends of the Spaniards, also turned against them.

As a result of these reverses against the Spaniards, the settlement of Santo Thomé was in 1619 on the point of being abandoned altogether. This was only prevented by the arrival of the new Governor with some small reinforcements. Representations were at once made as to the defenceless state of the settlement which was so far away from any areas settled by the Spaniards. The nearest province was that of "Venezuela" about "120 leagues" away. No discovery or settlement, it was urged, could be carried out until the town was prepared to defend itself from attacks.

In 1619, Geronimo de Grados was sent from Santo Thomé to Guyana to force the Arawaks to obedience. However, he met with six ships of the English and Dutch in the Essequibo, and he was taken prisoner. This was the last of the early Spanish voyages to the east of the Orinoco. Those who made them did not appear to have explored the country or done more than visit the mouths of the rivers.

## THE DUTCH WEST INDIA COMPANY

When the truce of 1609 between Spain and the Netherlands came to an end in 1621, the Dutch States-General granted a charter to the West India Company. This charter gave the Company a monopoly of twenty-four years of trade with the countries of America and the West Indies. It was also authorised to make, in the name and by the authority of the States-General, contracts, leagues and alliances with the princes and the natives of the lands within its sphere of action. In addition, it could build fortresses, appoint governors, soldiers, and officers of justice, and generally establish colonies under the sovereignty of the States-General.

The general affairs of the Company were managed by an Assembly of Nineteen. There were separate Chambers for several provinces of the Netherlands under the control of Directors representing the shareholders in these provinces. These Chambers might, and frequently did, embark upon ventures of their own in which the Company had no financial interest. The colonisation of Essequibo was carried out by the Chamber of Zeeland acting separately in this way.

### Other Dutch settlements

At the date of the charter (of the Dutch West India Company) there was already a Dutch colony established in Essequibo. This was verified in a statement by the Zeeland Chamber in 1751 in support of a claim to exclusive trade with Essequibo. The Chamber reported that the colony of the Essequibo had been already frequented by the Zeelanders at the time of the granting of the charter in 1621. No doubt, within a few years after that date, an organised colony under the West India Company was in existence on that river. In the discussions of the Zeeland Chamber on the 10 December 1626 it was resolved "to allow Jacob Canyn to come home from Isekepe, in accordance with his request, and to fill up his place with another". On the 17 December 1626, Johannes Beverlander was "taken into the service of the Company for three years, to lie in the river of Isekepe together with Jan Adriaens van der Goes". On the 22 April 1627, in granting to Abraham van Pere permission to establish a private colony and a fort in the Berbice River, the Zeeland Chamber strongly forbade his colonists "to come into the River Essequibo nor into any other rivers where the Company, whether of this or of other Chambers, has its colonists or folk".

The seat of Government was at Kykoveral. The first mention of this fort was made in the minutes of the Zeeland Chamber of the 5 May 1644. But the Fort Essequibo was mentioned as early as 1637 in a letter to the West India Company by Jacques Ousiel, who was at that time the Public Advocate and Secretary of Tobago. In the Spanish documents relating to the burning of Santo Thomé in 1637, it was stated that the Dutch, having carried off the Blessed Sacrament from the church at that town, kept it guarded at their Fort at Macarouni (Mazaruni) or their Fort at Essequibo.

In 1628, the West India Company employed assistants to work "on the Wild Coast" - a name by which the coast between the Essequibo and the Orinoco had become well known.

In 1629, the English and the Dutch, under the command of Adrian Jansz Pater, attacked and destroyed Santo Thomé and afterwards fortified themselves in the branches and creeks of the Orinoco River.

In the sailing regulations first issued in 1632, and renewed in 1633, 1635 and 1637, the States-General specifically mentioned the Orinoco as the limit westward where uncharted vessels could sail without violating the monopoly of the Company. Spanish sources established evidence that in 1637 the Dutch were settled at the mouths of the Amakura, Essequibo and Berbice, from where in that year they again attacked and burned Santo Thomé and raided Trinidad.

In 1638 it was reported to the King of Spain that the Dutch were seeking favourable sites for the foundation of new settlements. The same report stated that they had access to all ports east of the Orinoco; that they traded with the Amerindians of the Orinoco, and were in close alliance with the Caribs.

The charter of the Company was further renewed for a period of twenty-five years from the 1 January 1647.

## TREATY OF MUNSTER

The independence of the Netherlands was finally recognised by the Treaty of Munster which was signed on the 30 January 1648. The terms of the Treaty stated that the navigation and trade to the East and West Indies should be maintained as indicated by the charters which were granted. All "potentates, nations and peoples" with whom the States-General and the East and West India Companies, within the limits of their charters, were in friendship and alliance, were to be included in the Treaty. The King of Spain and the States-General were respectively to remain "in possession and enjoyment of such lordships, towns, castles, fortresses, commerce and country" in the East and West Indies and Brazil and on the coasts of Africa, Asia and America as they then respectively held and possessed. In this description were specifically included the places which the Portuguese had taken from the States-General since the year 1641, as well as all places which the States-General should subsequently come to conquer and possess, without violating the Treaty.

With reference to the mention of places taken by the Portuguese from the Dutch since 1641, it should be remembered that in that year the Portuguese had severed themselves from the Crown of Spain, and were, at the date of the Treaty of Munster, regarded by the King of Spain as rebels. The object of this provision was that the Dutch should be at liberty to recapture from the Portuguese all places which the latter had acquired at their expense during the Portuguese rebellion.

## DUTCH TRADING REGULATIONS

On the 10 August 1648, the States-General again issued trading regulations more specific than any which had been previously published. By these regulations, uncharted vessels were forbidden to trade on the Wild Coast. The mouth of the Orinoco was again made the starting point at which ships not belonging to the Dutch West India Company had the liberty to sail and trade. This clearly indicated that the whole of the coast between the Orinoco and the Amazon was treated as belonging to the West India Company.

## DUTCH COLONIZATION

In 1656, the Dutch were driven from Brazil by the Portuguese. The effect of this was that they concentrated their efforts upon Guyana. On the 24 December 1657, a contract was entered into between the Zeeland Chamber and the West India Company and the three Dutch towns of Middelburg, Flushing and Vere, by which the towns agreed to establish colonies on the Wild Coast under the supervision of the States-General and the Company. A Commissary was appointed to act under Aert Adriaensen, the Governor already in Essequibo, and in February 1658 colonists sailed for Guyana.

According to the agreement of the terms of the partnership of the three cities, provision was made for a slave ship to be sent to bring slaves from Africa, as the supply of slave labour was found to be essential for the working of the colony.

## POMEROON SETTLEMENT

In August 1658 news was received in the Netherlands of the safe arrival of the colonists. A new settlement was at once made on the Pomeroon River upon which the town of New Middelburg was founded. A fort built a few miles higher up was named Nova Zeelandia. The earliest mention of New Middelburg was made in a report of the proceedings of the Committee of the three cities on the 2 January 1659. At that meeting a letter from the Commandeur, dated at New Middelburg, the 15 September 1658, was read.

In the same year, 1658, the city of Amsterdam proposed to colonise a part of the Wild Coast. The Zeeland Chamber protested, claiming the exclusive right to the entire Wild Coast.

The settlement of New Middelburg on the Pomeroon soon became very prosperous. Byam, the Governor of the then English colony in Surinam, writing in 1669, stated that "Bowroom and Maraco, alias New Zeeland", was "a most flourishing colony..., the greatest of all they (the Dutch) ever had in America".

He added that the English, after having temporarily made themselves masters in 1665 of "all the great Province of New Zeeland and Desseceub", were in turn obliged to surrender to a Dutch relieving force from Berbice and were forced to give back 1,200 slaves they had taken.

In 1665, the English had captured the colony, storming the Dutch fort of Moruka. The extent and importance of the settlement was such that possessions of it was regarded as winning with it the country right up to the Orinoco. Major Scott, the Commander of the English forces reported in his Description of Guayana: "This year the English could boast of the possession of all that part of Guiana abutting on the Atlantik Ocean from Cayan on the south-east to Oronoque on the north-west (except a small colony on the River Berbishees) which is no less than 600 English miles."

In 1666, the colony was recaptured by the Dutch; but the settlement on the Pomeroon remained neglected for some time. Essequibo, however, continued to be prosperous. On the 26 August 1669, it was reported to the Zeeland Chamber that a ship had arrived "with 50,000 or 60,000 pounds of sugar, and 20,000 pounds of letter-wood which had been made and cut in Essequibo by the Company's Negroes".

In 1674, a new chartered Company was formed with the same rights and limits of those possessed by the former Dutch Company. Pomeroon and Essequibo were specifically mentioned in the grant.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE COLONY OF BERBICE

In 1627, Abraham van Pere, a Dutch trader, received permission from the Dutch West India Company to start a colony on the Berbice River. Shortly after, he sent 40 men and 20 boys to settle at Nassau, about 50 miles upriver. Van Pere had a good knowledge of the territory since he had apparently been trading with the Amerindians of the area for a few years before 1627. He later applied his trading skills when he was contracted by the Zeeland Chamber to supply goods from Europe to the Dutch settlements in Essequibo.

At Nassau, where a fort was built, the settlers planted crops and traded with Amerindians. African slaves were introduced soon after the settlement was established to cultivate sugar and cotton. The situation was very peaceful until 1665 when the settlement was attacked by an English privateer. However, the colonists put up a strong defence and the English left after causing some damage to the settlement. This was a period of war between the English and the Dutch, and an English expedition led by Major John Scott attacked and seized Dutch settlements in Essequibo.

Meanwhile, the Berbice administration attempted to expand the size of the colony by establishing a trading post as far west as the Demerara River. At that time the Demerara area was unoccupied, but the West India Company objected to the presence of the trading post after claiming that the Demerara River fell under its jurisdiction. The trading post was then moved in 1671 to the Abary River which eventually became the boundary of Berbice and Demerara.

During the late 1680s when yet another European war was being waged, the French privateer, Jean Baptiste du Casse attacked Suriname and Berbice in 1689. His attack on Suriname was a failure, but he did some damage to the Berbice settlements. Commander de Feer of Berbice agreed to pay a ransom of 6,000 guilders before du Casse agreed to withdraw.

Berbice remained at peace until 1712 when the infamous French buccaneer, Jacques Cassard, with official French support, sent his men in warships to attack the colony. This was the period of the War of the Spanish Succession when the English and Dutch were allied against the French. The ships, commanded by Baron de Mouans, sailed up the

Berbice River and attacked Fort Nassau. The Dutch commander, de Waterman, was forced to surrender the colony.

De Mouans demanded a ransom of 10,000 guilders for the private estates and 300,000 guilders for the fort and the estates of the van Pere family. While the private planters were able to raise the sum demanded of them, the Commander could only manage to gather 118,000 guilders on the van Peres' account. De Mouans grudgingly accepted this sum and a promissory note for the remainder. To ensure that this note was honoured, he left with two members of the Berbice Council as hostages. The buccaneers also took with them 259 of the best African slaves.

The van Pere family refused to pay the balance of the ransom to de Mouans, but after negotiations that lasted two years between the French company that sponsored the buccaneers, and Van Hoorn and Company, financial backers of the van Pere family and other Berbice planters, the Dutch company settled the issue by paying 108,000 guilders for the colony. The van Pere family subscribed a quarter of this sum, thus maintaining a financial interest in the colony.

Following this raid, Berbice suffered an economic decline. While the payment of the ransom was being negotiated between 1712 and 1714, the French firm that financed the buccaneers took away two shiploads of sugar. After the ransom was paid, there was great need to repair damage that occurred during the raid and also to improve production of sugar, but there was a severe shortage of slaves. The Dutch West India Company refused to permit Van Hoorn and Company, the financial backers of the Berbice colony, to transport slaves with their own ships and insisted that only the Dutch West India Company's ships had to do so. But since an advance payment of two-fifths of the price for each slave had to be made to the Company, slaves were hard to come by since the Berbice planters could not raise the credit required.

While the lack of slaves slowed progress, the shortage of capital for investment also posed a severe drawback. Since profits could not be seen, the Commander, de Waterman, was dismissed, but his successor Anthony Tierens could not do any better. The directors of Van Hoorn and Company then decided to raise capital by forming a new company with the express purpose of raising 3,200,000 guilders. This new company, the Berbice



Association, was launched in 1720 but it could only start with a working capital of one million guilders.

Anthony Tierens, the Commander, now came under the supervision of the Berbice Association. He was ordered to establish new plantations and to introduce coffee cultivation. By 1722, he was able to establish on the Berbice River the plantations of Johanna, Cornelia, Jacoba, Savonette, Hardenbroek, Dageraad, Hogelande, Elizabeth and Debora.

## A NEW CHARTER FOR BERBICE

With the change of ownership of Berbice, the Dutch West India Company expressed grave concerns. In a letter to the Directors of the Berbice Association, the Company insisted that Berbice was under its jurisdiction. The Berbice Association disagreed and pointed out that the Company lost that right when the colony was seized by the French privateers in 1712. The Association also mentioned that van Hoorn and Company had obtained it back from the French company that financed the privateers; this French company had no agreement with the West India Company.

The Association then petitioned the States-General of the Netherlands for a separate charter but this received strong opposition from the West India Company. After much wrangling, an agreement was finally reached and a charter was granted on 6 December 1732. As part of this agreement, the Association consented to pay 600 guilders a year to the Company which would in return supply slaves on reasonable terms to the colony.

The charter permitted the Association to:

1. Grant lands to private individuals;
2. Collect a tax of 50 pounds of sugar for each inhabitant, white or black;
3. Levy a custom duty of two and a half percent of the value of imported or exported goods, and a tonnage duty of three guilders per 4,000 pounds on all ships entering or leaving the harbour;
4. Collect a special head tax, to be agreed upon by planters and other inhabitants, to meet the cost of maintaining forts.

The Colony was also to be ruled by a Governor and an Executive Council. The Executive Council was later called the Court of Policy and it was comprised of the Governor as President and six of the Association's managers or master-planters. A Council of Justice, consisting of the Governor and six persons other than those in the Court of Policy, would administer criminal justice in the Colony.

Under the new charter, the Berbice Association appointed Bernard Waterham as the first Governor in 1733. His first acts were to establish the Court of Policy and the Council of Justice.

By 1735, Berbice began to show economic improvement. By that time, the Association had 12 estates, but there were 93 new private plantations on both banks of the Berbice and 20 on the banks of the Canje. These plantations were involved in the production of sugar, coffee, cocoa and cotton.

As Berbice gradually developed, the planters saw the need for a fort near the mouth of the Berbice River, particularly since Fort Nassau was badly in need of repairs. Crab Island was selected by an engineer to be the site for the new fort but the Berbice Association felt that the proposed costs were too high and this proposal was shelved. Continued demands for the new fort were made, and Andries Lossner, the Governor who succeeded Bernard Waterham, succeeded in building it at the mouth of the north bank of the Canje River. This fort was named Fort St. Andries in Lossner's honour.

As new plantations were established, the population grew with the arrival of more civil servants from Amsterdam. By 1762, the Berbice plantations had a population of 4,423 comprising 346 Whites, 244 Amerindians and 3,833 African slaves.

## EXTENT OF DUTCH SETTLEMENT

In 1676, the Spanish Council of War of the Indies discussed the question of the Dutch colonies on the coast of Guyana. The Council was concerned that the Dutch were establishing new settlements in the region without informing the King of Spain. However, it decided that to bring such a complaint before the States-General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands was not advisable. The Council was advised that the Dutch at that time held the chief portion of the coast of Guiana from Trinidad to the Amazon River, and had settlements in Berbice, Essequibo and Surinam.

In 1684, Santo Thome was sacked again, this time by the French and Caribs, and when the Spaniards reoccupied it, the Caribs in the portion of the Orinoco district under Spanish control, fled to Barima, Waini and Amakura, areas which they knew were controlled by the Dutch.

As early as 1679, a Postholder had been stationed on the Pomeroon, and in 1686, the Central Council of the West India Company decided to recolonise that area. A new Commandeur, De Jongge, was appointed to govern that river independently of the Governor of Essequibo and he immediately proceeded to organise cultivation of sugar, coffee and subsistence crops. A wooden fort was completed in 1688, but in 1689 it was surprised and sacked by the French. After the French withdrew, it was not rebuilt, even though the Company did establish a Post on the river.

In the Essequibo River area, from 1681 onwards the area of actual plantation extended along the rivers Cuyuni, Mazaruni, and the middle Essequibo. In 1681, an island in the mouth of the Cuyuni River was cleared and planted with cassava for the use of the garrison. By 1694, a new plantation on the River Cuyuni above the fort was established.

But the Dutch, in addition to planting, also were involved in hunting and fishing, and Posts were established at various parts of the territory in question.

The hunting and fishing were undertaken as a necessary part of the economy of the colony, for the supply of meat to the plantations which had been cleared from the forest. Small sailing vessels were sent to the mouth of the Orinoco and also in the Amakura to salt manatees and turtles for the sustenance of the garrison. Bush hogs were hunted in the Cuyuni River

area with the assistance of the Akawois and Caribs. These two tribes were previously at war, but the Dutch were able to get them to establish a truce.

## DUTCH POSTHOLDERS

The system of Posts probably came into existence in 1674 when Postholders received payment for services upon the Essequibo. In 1679, a Post was set up in Pomeroon and four years later in Barima where the Dutch obtained much annatto and letter-wood.

By the year 1703, Posts were in existence on the Demerara and Mahaicony Rivers and there was one on the Pariacot Savannah, in the upper Cuyuni.

Lists of Posts prepared by the Dutch from time to time showed that Postholders were at different periods stationed at different places a considerable distance up the Essequibo, at more than one place on the Cuyuni, and in Pomeroon and Moruka.

In 1701, in view of the approach of war (by a number of European nations), each district in the colony of Essequibo was organised for defensive purposes. In the regulations issued for this purpose by the Court of Policy, the governing council of the colony of Essequibo, Commissaries were appointed to visit plantations in order to organise the planters against attacks.

In 1709 and 1712, the Dutch Post at Wakepo (Pomeroon) was attacked by the French and Spaniards, but was successfully defended by the garrison with the help of Amerindians until 1714 when the war ended.

## INVASIONS OF GUYANA (1665-1712)

The Dutch faced their first serious attacks in 1665 when Major John Scott was sent by the Governor of Barbados, Lord Willoughby, to invade the settlements in the Pomeroon. By that time, prosperous sugar plantations were already established in that area. Scott, in alliance with Caribs, seized Nova Zeelandia and, after leaving 50 men to hold it, he proceeded up the Essequibo and occupied Kykoveral with 20 men.

The occupation of Kykoveral by the English did not last long, for the Dutch Commander of Berbice, Matthys Bergenaar, was able to march overland with a group of soldiers and recapture it. At the same time, a French expedition arrived in Pomeroon to help the Dutch who were their allies. They besieged the English at the fort at Nova Zeelandia and starved the men into surrendering. The prisoners were shortly after massacred by the Arawaks who were allies of the French.

Thus, Essequibo reverted to the Dutch, and Admiral Crynssen, who had earlier captured Suriname from the English, arrived as Commander. He concentrated his attention on redeveloping Kykoveral and the surrounding areas. Pomeroon was not regarded as a priority.

In 1676 the Dutch established a trading post on the Pomeroon River. Ten years later, they decided to appoint a separate Commander to control affairs on that river while maintaining a Commander at Kykoveral. This caused some difficulty because the Commander of Kykoveral refused to render assistance to his counterpart in Pomeroon. Nevertheless, within two years, settlements sprang up and sugar cultivation was established again.

In 1684, as stated before, Santo Thomé, on the Orinoco, was attacked by French buccaneers with the assistance of the Caribs. When the Spanish regained control, the Caribs fled to the regions of the Barima, Waini and Amakura Rivers which they knew were under Dutch control.

It must be pointed out that buccaneers and privateers were authorised by Governments to which they were loyal to attack places controlled by enemies of those governments.

During the late 1680s when another European war was waged, the French privateer, Jean Baptiste du Casse attacked Suriname and Berbice in 1689.

The Suriname attack was a failure, but he did some damage to the Berbice settlements. Commander de Feer of Berbice agreed to pay a ransom of 6,000 guilders before du Casse agreed to withdraw.

In the same year, French buccaneers, aided by the Caribs, attacked Pomeroon after first landing at Barima.

The War of the Spanish Succession of 1708-14 again brought military action to Guyana when in October 1708, three French privateers, under the command of Captain Ferry, sailed up the Essequibo and attacked settlements on both banks. The Commander of Kykoveral refused to send help to the settlements saying that he had to protect the Fort. At that time there were only 50 soldiers under his command. The privateers met resistance at Plantation Vryheid (Bartica) from the owner and his African slaves, but this did not last long. Only after Captain Ferry was paid a ransom of 50,000 guilders did he agree to leave with his privateers.

One year later, another group of French privateers again attacked Essequibo. Pomeroon was also attacked the same year by the French and their Carib allies. However, Commander Blake, the Post-holder, and the few soldiers under his command were able to defend the settlement after killing many of the invaders. In December 1712, Pomeroon was attacked again by a combined force of French and Spanish buccaneers, but Blake and his men were able to drive them away.

In November 1712, as referred to before, Berbice came under attack from French buccaneers led by Baron de Mouans. This was part of an expedition organised by Jacques Cassard who was at that time leading an attack on Suriname. The buccaneers inflicted considerable damage on the Berbice plantations and Commander de Waterman was forced to surrender the colony. The buccaneers did not withdraw until they were paid a large ransom. They had initially demanded a ransom of 300,000 guilders from the estates of the Van Pere family, the owners of Berbice, but since only 118,024 guilders could be raised, De Mouans agreed to accept a bill of exchange drawn on the Van Pere's account in Amsterdam.

## THE BERBICE-SURINAME BOUNDARY

As has been already stated, Berbice was settled in 1627 by the Dutchman Abraham Van Pere. A few years later Suriname was settled by Lord Willoughby and Lawrence Hyde under a grant from the English King, Charles II. In the beginning, therefore, Suriname was a British and Berbice a Dutch possession. Due to European imperial rivalries in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the colonies frequently changed hands and these changes played their part in the story of the boundary between Guyana and Suriname.

Soon after the middle of the seventeenth century Suriname was conquered by the Dutch. Immediately after, the neighbouring proprietors, Van Pere of Berbice and Van Somelsdyk of Suriname, agreed that their plantations should be separated by Devil's Creek, a creek west of the Corentyne River. However, this private agreement could not be regarded as affecting in any legal way the boundary between the two colonies, and in 1794 the Governor of Berbice, Abraham Jacob van Imbyse van Batenburg, challenged the legality of the act of the two proprietors in presuming to demarcate territorial boundaries. In a letter dated 23 March 1794 to the Directors of the Berbice Association in Amsterdam, Van Batenburg made the point that, under the terms of the grant of Charles II to Lord Willoughby, the western limit of Suriname could not be regarded as extending further than one English mile west of the River Coppename, a river which in fact lay several miles to the east of the Corentyne River. Batenburg referred to the act of the proprietors as "an illegal act from which it is not to be inferred that the true boundary limit between Berbice and Suriname could be at that place (i.e., at Devil's Creek)." As such, Batenburg asserted that the land between the Coppename and the Corentyne Rivers belonged to neither colony.

The proprietors of the estates in Berbice did not themselves accept this property transaction as validly defining the boundary between the two colonies, and repeatedly made demands on Batenburg to make grants of land in the area between Devil's Creek and the Corentyne River. Actually, the Governor declared that the Corentyne coast had proved to be "a perfect gold mine for the cultivation of cotton" and numerous applications were being made to the Berbice authorities for grants of land on the coast between Devil's Creek and the Corentyne River.



Shortly after this protest to Amsterdam, Batenburg updated an extraordinary meeting of the members of the Court of Policy of Berbice on the correspondence between himself and the Governor of Suriname over the boundary between the two colonies, and of his protests to the imperial government in Amsterdam over what he regarded as illegal claims of the Suriname authorities to land west of the Corentyne River.

By 1799 colonial conquests caused both Berbice and Suriname to become British colonies. Berbice was taken in 1796 and Suriname in 1799. For administrative purposes, however, the Dutch Governors of the two colonies were not removed. Batenburg remained Governor of Berbice while Frederici, the Dutch appointee, retained his post as Governor of Suriname. In 1799 the two Governors met at Paramaribo and concluded an agreement providing that Berbice should have control over the land between the west bank of the Corentyne River and Devil's Creek.

The terms of the Agreement specified that the west coast and west bank of the Corentyne River as far as the Devil's Creek, which previously were part of the colony of Surinam, were now considered as belonging to the Government of Berbice.

The Agreement was formally published in a proclamation of the Governor and the Court of Policy in New Amsterdam on 20 January 1800. (It is on this Agreement of 1799 that the Dutch in the last half of the twentieth century based their claim that the western bank of the Corentyne River formed the boundary between Guyana and Suriname).

Indeed, the Agreement stated that "none of the Islands situate in the River Corentyne shall be included in this provisional cession, but always be acknowledged to belong to the Government of the Colony of Surinam." By expressly stating Suriname's ownership of the islands, the Governors, therefore, excluded the river from their agreement, thus clearly implying that the entire river did not belong to Suriname.

The Agreement did not acknowledge Suriname's sovereignty over the Corentyne River itself. A provision of the Agreement did guarantee Surinamese certain rights of movement in the river for the purpose of trading with the Amerindians but it was more consistent with the exercise of sovereignty over the river by Berbice rather than by Suriname.

In 1802, the Treaty of Amiens handed back both Suriname and Berbice to the Dutch. But in September 1803, Berbice was re-taken by the British. The Articles of Capitulation, drawn up between Britain and the Netherlands in September 1803 in relation to Berbice, recognised the 1799 Agreement but did not demarcate the boundary in a formal way.

In the years following 1803 nothing was done to settle the boundary by treaty, but the Corentyne River was accepted in practice as separating the two colonies. At the end of the Napoleonic Wars the Convention of London (1814), confirmed at the Peace of Paris (1815), gave back Suriname to the Dutch while retaining for the British the colonies of Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice, but again the boundary between Berbice and Suriname was not defined. When the British colonies were united in 1831 and became British Guiana, the eastern boundary remained as undefined as it had been when Berbice was a separate colony.

## DUTCH PROGRESS

At the time of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1714, the Dutch had established control over a great part of Guyana. They were occupying positions on the coast as far as Barima and established a Post on the Pariacot Savannah in the upper Cuyuni River in the interior of the country. In addition, they were already opening up the higher reaches of the Essequibo, Mazaruni and Cuyuni from the junction of these three rivers. By that time, too, they had established friendly relations with the Amerindian tribes in the interior, who looked to them as their arbiters in tribal disputes and offered them assistance in time of hostile attack.

Since about two decades after Kykoveral was founded, the settlers who were cultivating lands on the banks of the Essequibo River, demanded that the fort on Kykoveral should be moved to Flag Island protection for them. Successive Commanders refused to do this, but in 1718, the Commander of Essequibo agreed that the Fort did not have the space to accommodate officials and soldiers. He, therefore, ordered the construction of a building to house the Council Chamber and the Company store at Kartabo on the point between the mouths of the Mazaruni and the Cuyuni. A plan to develop a township around this building never materialised.

Throughout the course of the century, the settlers depended on Dutch ships to bring supplies from Amsterdam. However, these ships were so unreliable that the governing Council of Ten felt that if they depended on these ships, the settlers could face starvation. To avert this, the Council declared Essequibo a free port in 1685. Then in 1716, it opened up Essequibo to anyone who wished to settle in the colony and soon after, some English farmers abandoned Barbados, Antigua and other West Indian islands and resettled in the Dutch colony.

Agitation for a fort to be constructed on Flag Island (later to be called Fort Island) continued throughout the seventeenth century. It was not until around 1720 that a poorly constructed fort was eventually built on the island.

In 1722, the officials of the West India Company were making explorations in the interior in order to ascertain the nature of the soil with a view towards the establishment of plantations there. A report by Maurain Saincterre, an

engineer of the Company, stated that the ground was even better above in the Essequibo, Mazaruni and Cuyuni Rivers than below, but that the rocks, falls and islands, up to that time, prevented Europeans from establishing sugar plantations there. He also reported that plantations might be established on the Demerara, Pomeroon, Waini and Barima Rivers, and all the creeks in those areas. In 1723-24, other plantations of coffee and cassava were established in Cuyuni.

In 1726, the Dutch decided to move the Post at Wakepo to the Moruka River, and to erect a station there at a point which gave them command of the route to the Orinoco by the inland waterways.

A subsequent report in 1728 from the Postholder at this station stated that a Dutch vessel from Suriname was seized by the Spaniards while fishing in the Orinoco. There was a great possibility of war and this led the Dutch to reinforce that Post.

By 1730, there were coffee plantations both above and below the falls in Cuyuni. Experiments were also made in the planting of cocoa and indigo. There was a plantation in 1732 on Batavia, an island in the Cuyuni, and in 1733, the Court of Policy reported that coffee and cocoa were being cultivated with the use of African slave labour.

In March 1732, a Swedish captain with a small vessel arrived in the Essequibo River. After his departure, a rumour reached the colony that he would return to take possession of a tract of land in the Barima River which, it was reported, the King of Spain has presented to the late Elector of Bavaria, who had been Governor of the Netherlands, and who had in turn given it to the King of Sweden. To prevent any such Swedish incursion, the Dutch mobilised their Carib allies in the Barima to prevent any settlement.

The Spanish Governor of Orinoco, alarmed over the rumour of a Swedish incursion, also wrote to the Governor of Essequibo suggesting that the Dutch Governor should not tolerate the Swedes near to the colony of Essequibo. The Governor of Essequibo himself reported to the West India Company that, should the Swedes try to establish themselves between the Orinoco and the colony of Essequibo, he would be obliged to try to prevent it.

## THE ARRIVAL OF LAURENS STORM VAN GRAVESANDE

In 1720, a fort was constructed on Flag Island (later to be called Fort Island). However, when Laurens Storm van Gravesande arrived as secretary to Commander Gelskerke in 1738, he immediately criticised its architecture and was vocally against its use. He set about to rebuild the fort on Flag Island and by 1743 work had progress so much that the seat of Government was moved to this new location. The fort itself, named Nova Zeelandia, was completed in 1744. The establishment of this sound means of defence gave confidence to planters who occupied lands upriver to abandon them and begin cultivation on lands down river. More settlement and cultivation of the coastal areas began with the arrival of small farmers from the English colonies in the West Indies.

Gravesande was appointed Commander of Essequibo in 1742 on the death of Commander Gelskerke. He tried to encourage Dutch settlers to the colony but few came even though they were granted a concession of no taxation for ten years. Gravesande then granted the same concession to English settlers who seized the opportunity and migrated to Essequibo.

He also organised the free planters into a College of Keizers or Electors whose task was to nominate free planters to fill vacancies in the Council of Policy and the Council of Justice.

Sugar cultivation provided good profits, and soon plantations began to be established on the coastal plain, east of the Essequibo River. Here the land was fertile, and to obtain maximum profits, the Council granted large areas of land to planters. However, because of the low level of the land, an elaborate system of drainage and sea-defence was necessary. The planters themselves had to finance the building of this system which was enabled by the large profits that sugar was earning in the eighteenth century.

European businesses invested capital in the sugar plantations which continued to grow in number as the years went by. But sugar cultivation needed a large supply of labour and slaves brought from Africa filled this need. However, at first there was a shortage of slaves due to the fact that little attention was paid to health conditions and there were not many female slaves to ensure natural increase.

While all these were happening, there was a running battle between the Zeeland Chamber (one section of the West India Company) and the governing local Council of Ten which ran the affairs of Essequibo and, later, Demerara. From 1675, the Council refused to accept that the Zeeland Chamber could decide on the internal government of the colony. Since the Zeeland Chamber failed to send ships with supplies on a regular basis, the Council of Ten invited ships from all the Chambers (of the Company) to trade with Essequibo in order to obtain necessary goods. The Zeeland Chamber then proclaimed that only ships receiving its permission could enter Essequibo. The Council never liked this decision and little effort was ever made, even by Gravesande, to halt the smuggling that ensued. Due to the great need for slaves and consumer goods, smuggling of these commodities was rampant between the West Indian islands and Essequibo. This dispute between the Chamber and the Council dragged on and it seriously affected the administration of both Essequibo and Demerara.

The dispute between the Council and the Zeeland Chamber as to which body controlled the internal affairs of Essequibo and Demerara continued until August 1770 when the States General referred the issue to the Stadtholder of the United Provinces. The Stadtholder ruled that the trade to Essequibo could not be controlled by the Zeeland Chamber alone, but special privileges were granted to this Chamber because it was responsible for establishing the colony. He also ruled that the West India Company would not grant permits for trade in Essequibo and Demerara unless the Zeeland Chamber sent sixteen ships there with goods every year.

## DUTCH PROGRESS IN MAZARUNI AND CUYUNI

About 1738, an unusual kind of settlement was established on an island in the Cuyuni by a number of creole slaves who had revolted and sought refuge there. They reached an agreement with the Government (of Essequibo) by which they would continue to live on the island but would perform a regulated amount of labour upon the plantations. This community was frequently referred to in Dutch reports from Essequibo, and the inhabitants were known as the Company's "half-free creoles".

Between the years 1740 and 1744, Directors of the West India Company attempted to establish a mining industry in the colony. A mining engineer, Hildebrandt, was sent from Europe and at the end of 1740 he began geological surveys in the Mazaruni district. He then proceeded to the Cuyuni district where, in 1742, he opened a copper mine about three days' journey up that river from Kykoveral. The experiment, however, had no practical results from a commercial point of view.

In 1743, as stated earlier, the Dutch seat of Government was removed from Kartabo to Flag Island (Fort Island) in the Essequibo River. A new fort and Government buildings were built there and called Zeelandia (not of course to be confused with Nova Zeelandia at Pomeroon from 1657 to 1666).

About this time new plantations were being established along the banks of the lower Essequibo River where the soil was more fertile than further that river as well as the upper areas of the Mazaruni and Cuyuni. The Dutch, however, retained the right to the upper lands by sending old and feeble slaves there. The authorities also made grants of land to planters in the Mazaruni and Cuyuni districts.

Lower down, upon the estuary of the Essequibo, on both the east and west sides, the area of plantation expanded very rapidly. In 1753, the Director-General, Gravesande, reported that he foresaw that in a short time all the land would be granted and that there would be none remaining for new settlement.

In 1746, a Frenchman, Ignatius Courthial, applied to the Court of Policy for permission to cut a road through the forest in Cuyuni. This permission was granted and Courthial reported in 1748 that he had completed the "road" from the Orinoco to the old fort (apparently Kykoveral), and from there to

Berbice. In reality, there was a start to this project, but this road was never completed most likely through a shortage of funds or because the Dutch wanted to stop the steady escape of slaves along this route. A draft plan for this road project was presented by Gravesande, on a visit to Holland in 1750, to the Zeeland Chamber.

In 1751, in the course of the controversy between the Zeeland shareholders and the general body of the Dutch West India Company as to the administration of the Essequibo colony, the former clearly announced their intention to remain in possession of Essequibo, with all its subject rivers, from the Berbice River to as far as the Orinoco River.

In the Dutch controlled areas there were peaceful exploration and trade, and development of coffee, cocoa and indigo plantations. By the admission of the Spanish around 1740, the Dutch were established in Guyana and were occupying with their "cities and mills" all the territory from the Orinoco to Surinam. The Spanish also suspected that the Dutch planned to make themselves masters of the mouth of the Orinoco and to establish plantations there.

By 1748, the Spanish were establishing missions on the area east of the Orinoco River. In a map dated 9 August 1748, and signed by Storm Van Gravesande, a Spanish Mission was shown a short distance above the mouth of a creek, a tributary on the left bank of the Cuyuni. The site of an intended Mission at the mouth of the same creek was also indicated. Under the impression the Spanish intended to encroach on Dutch-controlled territory, Gravesande wrote to the Governor of Cumaná that the Dutch would effectively oppose any Spanish mission established in the Cuyuni. The Spanish Governor subsequently replied that he knew nothing of any mission at that location.



## PLANS BY SPAIN AND PORTUGAL AGAINST THE DUTCH

In 1753, the Governments of Spain and Portugal began to demarcate their frontiers in South America. At that time, the Dutch in Guyana were engaged in repressing with some difficulty a revolt of their African slaves, and both the Spanish and Portuguese thought that they could take advantage of the situation and seize the Dutch colonies. Two objectives of this plan were to partition the territory between Spain and Portugal and to take possession of supposed mines. They, therefore, agreed that both countries should form settlements near the Dutch colonies with a view of preventing their extension. At the same time, by giving covert assistance to the revolted African slaves, they also hoped that they would force the Dutch to abandon Guyana.

With a view of carrying out this project, secret instructions were given to the Boundary Commissioners to find out on arrival at Cumaná (in Orinoco) the extent and population of the Dutch colonies, and how it would be possible to surround them. The plan was not the undertaking of an open expedition against the Dutch, but the promotion of secret acts of hostility or outrage which would oust the Dutch from their colonies. In the secret instructions to José Inturriaga, who represented the Spanish Government, it was suggested that support should be given to the rebellious African slaves. In addition, it was proposed to send into Dutch territory a group of Spaniards who would direct and lead the slaves in their raids. These Spanish infiltrators would claim to be outlaws from the Spanish nation; thus, Spain would avoid the risk of accusations by the Dutch.

The Boundary Commissioners were on their way near to Guyana by the 15 February 1754. By September of that year, Gravesande, the Dutch Governor of Essequibo, had received information which led him to suspect the object of the expedition. He asked for instruction from the Netherlands as to how he should handle this Spanish aggression, and complained of the inadequacy of the resources at his disposal for defending the Moruka Post. He feared that this Post would bear the brunt of any impending attack, but he hoped that with the assistance of the Caribs of Barima, he would be able to defend Essequibo.

In October, Gravesande, believing that a Spanish attack was imminent, ordered the closing of all inland waters and passages. He also asked his Carib allies in Barima, Pomeroon and Cuyuni to keep themselves ready

and armed. Boats were sent out to guard the coast, with instructions to cruise as far as the mouth of the Waini River.

At this time, it must be noted that the Spaniards had no knowledge whatever of the areas where they were about to penetrate. Their only information was probably obtained from Nicolas Collaert, a Dutch deserter, who had drawn up a map of the Cuyuni River for the Spaniards, seemingly for the purposes of the Boundary Commission between Spain and Portugal.

The expected invasion by the Spanish never occurred. The Spanish expedition under Inturriaga failed for want of provisions, among other causes. In February 1755, Gravesande felt that the danger of the attack had almost disappeared. He reported, however, that the Yuruari River, a tributary of the Cuyuni which, in his opinion, was indisputably within Dutch territory, had been seized by the Spaniards. The Amerindian chief in the area of the upper Cuyuni Post had, as usual, approached the Dutch to offer help against the Spaniards.

In 1756, the Dutch received information of another Spanish threat to Guyana. On the 28 May of that year, the Dutch Postholder at Arinda, high up the Essequibo River, reported to Gravesande there were rumours that some Spaniards had made themselves masters of the entire Rupununi savannah above Arinda. The Postholder claimed that the Spaniards were also occupying three other places, "one on the Wenamu, a branch of the Cuyuni; another above Masseroeny, in Queribura, and the third above Siparoeny".

Of Spanish settlements in any of these localities no trace was ever found.

Meanwhile, in 1755, a new Post on the Cuyuni was definitely established by the Dutch somewhere between the mouth of the Curumo and that of the Acarabisi.

In 1758, Dutch traders were living on the Tucupo (a branch of the Cuyuni), and on the Barama. In 1769, the Prefect of the Spanish Missions reported that a Dutchman had been living since 1761 on the Aguirre River, and that Dutch families had been living at the mouth of the Curumo.

## SPANISH RAIDS ON DUTCH TERRITORY (1758-1768)

In 1758, an expedition of about 100 Spanish soldiers invaded Dutch territory on the upper Cuyuni and raided the Dutch Post. The expedition was undertaken in secrecy and was followed by a hurried retreat. Two Dutchmen with their wives and an African slave were taken away as prisoners. The Spaniards claimed that the Dutch had established a settlement there for the purpose of Amerindian slave trading in the Spanish Mission district, and it was for this reason they moved against it. The raid was clearly an act of aggression but it resulted in no addition to the area of Spanish occupation or control.

The Director-General of Essequibo, Gravesande, strongly protested the raid in a letter to the Spanish Commandant at Guayana. In this letter, the claim of the Dutch to the territory was declared to be indisputable. The letter was answered by the Acting Governor of Cumaná, Don Nicolas de Castro, who stated that the Cuyuni region was included in the dominion of the King of Spain. However, when the papers were referred to the Legal Adviser of the Government of Cumaná, he reported that the justification for the destruction of the Post, on the ground that it was established for the slave trade, was a matter for the Government at Madrid.

The Dutch did not re-occupy the Cuyuni Post until 1766. This delay came about because they were occupied in assisting with the suppression of the Berbice Slave Rebellion in 1763. However, while there was no Post, provisional arrangements were made for watching the river.

In 1766, the Cuyuni Post was re-established at a point lower down the river than that of the former Post. After trying a site on the banks of the river, the Postholder in 1769 moved the Post to an island between the two falls which he called Toenamoeto ("at the rapid of Tonamo").

The re-establishment of the Cuyuni Post was followed by a series of rumours of planned Spanish attacks by the Spaniards upon it. Though these rumours were without foundation, yet certain acts of aggression by the Spanish authorities in the area led the Dutch again to make a formal protest to the Court of Madrid in 1769.

With respect to the Barima area, Gravesande, in 1749, stated firmly that the district was under his jurisdiction. In 1760, when the Spaniards seized

some Dutch fishing vessels there, Gravesande, in reply to an inquiry by the West India Company, stated it as his view, based on local tradition and maps in his possession, that the colony extended to Barima. A register of the colony enclosed in a letter from the Director-General, dated 9 February 1762, stated the boundary as existing to the Amakura. Reports of the Secretary to the West India Company in 1761 and 1762 showed the Waini was treated as a Dutch river, and a Report of 1764 and a letter of 1768 showed that the colony of Essequibo included the Barima and Waini. In 1766, the Barima was treated as the boundary between Dutch and Spanish territory, with the west bank being the Spanish side.

In 1766, Gravesande complained to the Spanish Governor of the behaviour of certain outlaws residing west of the Barima. The Spanish Governor replied that he had no means of reaching the spot indicated, and felt the Dutch Governor had jurisdiction to take action against them.

There was little doubt that at this time there were Dutch plantations in the Aruka, a tributary of the Barima, and at Koriabo higher up on the Barima. In 1768, the Spaniards, secretly and without previous complaint, made a raid upon Barima and destroyed a Dutch plantation, which was probably on the Aruka, but they did not themselves hold or occupy that river district.

## FURTHER PROBLEMS WITH THE SPANIARDS

### DUTCH FISHERY IN ORINOCO

To supplement food supplies for their slaves, the Dutch for many years fished for morocut at the mouth of the Orinoco. However, this activity was much hindered by the Spaniards who claimed that the vessels were not fishing but smuggling.

In 1746, three canoes from Essequibo, while fishing in the Orinoco, were captured by a Spanish vessel from Trinidad. Gravesande protested to the Commandant of Orinoco, and on the 11 February 1748, was able to report to the West India Company that no such problems would occur in the future. He could not, however, get satisfaction for the canoes, because the Commandant alleged that the seizure had been by a privateer from Trinidad which was out of his jurisdiction. Finally, in 1749 one of the canoes was returned; the other two were confiscated because the Spaniards claimed that they contained mercantile goods and were thus involved in smuggling.

In 1760, some fishing craft were again seized near Point Barima and the authorities of Santo Thome refused to return them claiming they were engaged in the slave trade.

In the following year, Don Jose Solano, Governor of Caracas, referred in a Report sent to Spain that the Spanish Commandants of Guayana and Orinoco had sometimes given consent to the Dutch to fish in the Orinoco and for them to build huts to sun and dry their fish.

In 1762, fishing boats were seized off the Waini, and even in Demerara, but this was the work of privateers or pirates from Trinidad. When complaints were made to the Spanish authorities in Orinoco, the stolen property was returned.

Another invasion of Dutch territory by the Spaniards occurred in 1769. Some Capuchin missionaries with a force of soldiers arrived at the Moruka Post to claim Amerindians who had fled from the Spanish possessions. When the Postholder protested, they gave him a certificate showing that they only came to claim their own Amerindians. Later, after an inquiry by the Spanish Government held in consequence of the Dutch protest which

followed (mentioned below), it was discovered that the missionaries and the soldiers had been directed by the Spanish Commandant to go only as far as the mouths of the Orinoco. The Commandant reported that his orders had been exceeded by the missionaries and the soldiers. He also reported that in the "vast Province of Guiana", the entire coast was occupied by "foreigners", while the Spaniards had possession of "the mouth of the Orinoco in one corner as an outlet to the sea". He added that the Dutch often followed their fugitive slaves actually into the Orinoco, knowing that the Spaniards were "49 leagues from the mouth".

In the same year (1769) rumours, which afterwards proved to be false, had reached Essequibo that the Postholder at Arinda, high up the Essequibo, had been murdered, as was alleged, by the Spaniards. It was also reported that new Missions held by a strong force, were being formed upon and near the Cuyuni, above the Post which the Dutch had re-established on that river.

#### DUTCH PROTEST OF 1769

As a result of these events, a strong protest referring in detail to all grievances of the Dutch colony was addressed by the States-General of the Netherlands to the Court of Spain, and delivered by the Dutch Ambassador towards the end of August 1769.

This protest made a specific claim to the whole basin of the Essequibo and Cuyuni, stating that from almost time immemorial the Dutch had been in possession of these rivers and their tributaries. It also complained of the Spanish acts of aggression against the Dutch colony.

This claim the Spanish Government never denied; and the King ordered an immediate inquiry by the Commandant of Guayana into the Dutch complaints.

As regards the rumours of an attack upon the Post at Arinda, this was denied by the Spaniards. In the course of the subsequent inquiry, missionaries who gave evidence, explained that the Arinda Post was inaccessible to the Spaniards.

The Spanish Government, however, denied that the Dutch had a fishery in the Orinoco and, therefore, they could not have interrupted Dutch activity there.

## SPREAD OF DUTCH PLANTATIONS

About this time, plantation was rapidly extending to the west of the Essequibo. In 1771, a private estate in Moruka with cattle upon it was put up for sale and, though it was probably in an uncultivated condition, it found a purchaser. In 1772, the plantations reached along the Essequibo coast almost near to Pomeroun. Gravesande was against allowing them to go further, but he retired in 1772, and during the rest of the century, a steady advance of settlement was made. In 1777, it was reported that there were few lower lands left; and in 1799, shortly after the British occupation, it was reported to the Government that cultivation had reached along the sea-coast as far as the Pomeroun.

## RELIGION AMONG THE DUTCH IN GUYANA

With the establishment of Dutch colonies in Guyana, Christianity also took root since the Dutch settlers and traders were also Christians. At first, the state-recognised church, the Dutch Reformed Church, was the only one granted permission to operate in the colonies. This church ministered only to the Dutch settlers, and made almost no attempt to convert African slaves and Amerindians.

Naturally, there were some settlers who did not believe in the teachings of this state church, but they kept their beliefs to themselves. Nevertheless, by law, all Dutch settlers had to subscribe to its financial upkeep. Even so, persons who were not members of the Dutch Reformed Church - such as Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Jews - were, until the last half of the eighteenth century, prevented from holding any public office.

The West India Company encouraged Jews to settle in Essequibo, but the few who established plantations apparently treated their slaves badly, thus encouraging small slave rebellions. For this they earned the dislike of the other Dutch colonists who discouraged other Jews from settling in Guyana.

Among the early Dutch settlers in Essequibo and Berbice there were no organised churches established for quite a while. Despite the authorities' preference for the Dutch Reformed Church, persons holding other Christian religious beliefs were allowed to settle in the colonies and establish plantations. These included mainly Lutherans, Presbyterians and Anglicans. The Anglicans were mainly English settlers who migrated from the West Indian islands.

Permission to build Catholic churches was not granted until the eighteenth century. The Dutch authorities, particularly in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, were distrustful of Catholics whose loyalty they felt was in doubt since Catholic Spain was the enemy of the Protestant Netherlands. Further, the Spanish presence in territory just west of Guyana also influenced the Dutch decision.

In addition, it was difficult to find clergymen to serve in Essequibo and Berbice. It was not until 1688 that the first clergyman of the Dutch Reformed Church, Rudolph Deynes, arrived to minister to the settlers in



Essequibo. He did not remain for long, and others were appointed in quick succession. In 1730, Herbertus Gravenbroek was appointed to the position and he served in this capacity for thirty-one years. He was succeeded by Isaac Lingius who also served for a lengthy period. His brother, Hermanus, became the first clergyman of the Dutch Reformed Church in Demerara, but he was removed by the French occupiers in 1783. He was succeeded by a Catholic priest, Edward Lindeker, who was very popular among the Dutch residents. Lindeker also ministered to the Catholic population until his death in 1820.

By this time, too, growing Lutheran congregations, which were absorbing the supporters of the Dutch Reformed Church, were established in Essequibo and Demerara. But organisation of religious activities was apparently not given serious regard, and this was reflected by the wide absence of church buildings in Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice, even though religious services were conducted at the homes of some planters. When the British occupied the colonies in 1796, there was no church in Demerara and only Fort Island had one in Essequibo.

#### Dutch religion in Berbice

In Berbice, the Dutch Reformed Church began to face competition from around the latter half of the eighteenth century from other denominations such as the Lutherans and the Scottish Presbyterians. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, most of the following of the Reformed Church was absorbed by the Lutherans and the Presbyterians. By that time, plantation owners who were Lutherans or Presbyterians formed a large section of the planter class in the Dutch colonies.

It was not until 1738 that the Dutch authorities first allowed another religious group to conduct missionary activities in Guyana. In that year, two Moravian missionaries were granted permission by the Berbice Association to work among the African slaves on plantations owned by the Van Eys brothers far up the Berbice River. But their work of teaching the slave children to read and write brought them into conflict with the plantation owners and they were forced to leave after only two years.

But they did not give up their efforts in Berbice. They moved in among the Arawaks in the area of the Wiruni Creek, a tributary of the Berbice River, and by the time they departed in 1763, they had made a significant

documentation of the language of those Amerindians. Moravian missionaries did not return to Berbice until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The Lutheran Church was first established in Berbice in 1742. From the beginning, it faced severe pressure from the Dutch Reformed Church, but through great determination from its early leaders and followers, it survived and grew in influence.

The growth of the Lutheran Church in Berbice was influenced by a planter, Lodewijk Abbensets, who later became a member of the Berbice Courts of Policy and Justice. Abbensets arrived in Berbice in the mid-1730s and quickly associated himself with a growing group of other Lutheran planters. In 1743, he called a meeting of these planters and they discussed measures to expand their religious influence. They shortly after sent to the Court of Policy an application signed by 60 Dutch settlers in October seeking approval from the Directors of the Berbice Association in Amsterdam to permit the Lutherans to build a church and a school. Based on the recommendation of the Court of Policy, approval was given on the 11 May 1744 by the Berbice Association which also granted freedom of worship to Lutherans in the colony. Lutherans, from this time, could also be appointed to public office.

But this freedom was modified by the Court of Policy which ordered that Lutherans must continue payments for the upkeep of the Reformed Church and that any Lutheran who wanted a free coloured child baptised must agree that the child, on reaching adulthood, could not apply for public office.

Even though the Lutherans were organised as a group with Abbensets as leader, they did not find a pastor until October 1752 when one came from Germany. But by this date, no church was erected and services were conducted in the house of a planter.

Soon after, the Lutherans were granted two lots in the village of Nieuw Amsterdam, which bordered Fort Nassau. A brick building to house the church was built there with the use of slaves, some of whom were skilled in bricklaying and carpentry. Funds to purchase materials were raised mainly from among Lutherans in Berbice. Lutherans in Essequibo - who still did

not enjoy freedom of worship - subscribed 200 guilders. The first service in this first Lutheran church was conducted on the 5 August 1753.

Within a short while, another church with clay walls and a thatched roof was erected further up river to meet the needs of planters there.

During the Berbice Slave rebellion, the brick church at Nieuw Amsterdam was the only building in the village that was not damaged. It was probably for this reason that the Governor and the Dutch army took control of it as a defensive position.

The Lutheran Church ran into financial difficulties after 1763 and to offset these it became the owner of a successful coffee plantation named Augsburg on the Berbice River. By this time, too, the Anglican Church began to take roots after it was established by the influx of English settlers from the Caribbean islands.

Abbensets himself encountered stiff political opposition through his arrogance. In 1765 he broke the law when he publicly beat a freed African. He was ordered to pay compensation to his victim and was also expelled from the Courts of Policy and Justice. He died in 1767.

When the capital of Berbice was moved to the new town of New Amsterdam at the junction of the Berbice and the Canje Rivers in the 1790s, the Lutheran Church was given a plot of land there and a church was built on it in 1803.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMERARA

It was Gravesande who made the decision that agricultural development should move towards Demerara. The fertility of the soil and the depth of the river helped him to make this decision. From 1746, he began to grant land on the banks of the Demerara River for sugar cultivation and within two years there were 18 plantations which were established. Settlements were growing at such a rapid pace that Gravesande recommended to the Directors of the Zeeland Chamber that a separate commander for the Demerara River should be appointed.

This recommendation was accepted, and in 1752, Gravesande himself was appointed Director-General of Essequibo and Demerara, while his son Johnathan, was appointed Commander of Demerara. Johnathan established the capital of Demerara on the island of Borselen, located about 25 miles upriver. Here the Secretary's office, the Commander's house, a small fort and barracks for soldiers were built.

Johnathan Gravesande had hoped to encourage settlements around Borselen, but new English settlers, who came in relatively large numbers, opted to settle and cultivate lands the banks of the river near to the Atlantic coast. In 1748, Laurens Gravesande had erected a guard house, or brandwagt, near the mouth of the river on its right bank (where Georgetown is today), and this provided protection to the settlements and plantations there. By 1763, English settlers formed the majority of the population of Demerara and they owned roughly one-third of the existing plantations. They were also the first to introduce water-driven sugar mills which helped their plantations to show large profits.

By 1770, development in Demerara had far surpassed that in Essequibo. Four years earlier, a Dutch bank in Amsterdam had started to provide credit finance to sugar planters who seized the opportunity to increase their investments. The result was that while Essequibo's sugar plantations increased from 68 to 74, those of Demerara expanded from 93 to 130.

Johnathan Gravesande died in 1761. His brother-in-law, Laurens van Bercheyck, a land surveyor succeeded him to the post. He was credited in 1763, during the Berbice Slave Rebellion, for establishing an alliance with the Amerindians of Demerara to prevent the rebelling Berbice slaves from crossing into Demerara. He died in 1765 and his successor Cornelius van

den Heuvel, a planter, proved to be very inefficient. Since he and the elder Gravesande were not on friendly terms, the administration of Demerara suffered. When some of the Demerara planters suggested that the capital of Demerara should be moved from Borselen Island to the junction of the Hoobaboo Creek and the Demerara River, he opposed it because he owned estates near to the island. Finally, in 1770 he resigned from the post and Paulus van Schuylenburg was appointed to the position. The planters tried to get him to move the capital, but he also refused.

Gravesande himself resigned as Director-General of Essequibo-Demerara in 1772 and was succeeded by George Hendrik Trotz. Three years later on 14 August 1775 Gravesande died at his plantation, Soesdyke. Though it is believed that he was buried on Fort island, his grave has not been found.

## THE SLAVE TRADE

One of the aims of the Dutch Government, when it established the West India Company in 1621, was to obtain a share in the African slave trade which was largely controlled by the Portuguese. At that time Portugal was united with Spain, with whom the Dutch were at war. Therefore, the Dutch also attacked the Portuguese and seized many of their slave trading posts in West Africa.

With the expansion of plantations in the Americas, and the increasing market for slaves, other European countries, including England and France, also established trading companies to supply slaves to their colonies.

It is estimated that the English transported 1,900,000 slaves to their colonies in the Caribbean from 1651 to 1807 when they finally abolished the slave trade. The French, whose trade lasted between 1664 and 1830, shipped about 1,650,000 to their colonies. In roughly the same period, the Dutch took 900,000 to the Guianas and the West Indies. Of course, these figures do not include those who died on the sea voyage and those who were killed by slave hunters in the gathering process in Africa.

The European slave trading companies and also independent slave traders carried out their slave collecting in western Africa in the areas of Senegal, Gambia, the Gold Coast, the Niger delta, and even as far south as the Congo River and Angola. The captains of slave ships traded directly with African chiefs or through "factors" who were European agents in charge of slave collecting centres. At these centres, the slaves were kept in enclosed areas known as baracoons.

All over western Africa, domestic slavery existed within various tribes. Actually, the lowest caste within these tribes were born and lived as slaves and performed the task as servants in households. Merchants who also owned slaves used them for carrying heavy loads through the forest and savannah.

"Prisoners of war" captured during inter-tribal warfare and raids were generally sold to European slave traders. In many cases, groups of African "slave catchers" were employed by the factors to raid villages and capture

the residents who became part of the growing slave collection in the baracoons.

Many slaves were obtained very far inland where they were collected in a "coffle" and marched to the coast. Two slaves were chained together around the leg and groups of four were secured by a rope. At times, a Y-shaped stick was fastened with the fork round the neck of the slave walking in front and the stem resting on the neck of the slave walking behind. Free Africans employed by the slave catchers guarded the coffle.

On arrival on the coast, after many days of travel, the slaves were penned up in the baracoon, where they were prepared for sale. They were washed and their bodies were shaved and oiled to give them a good appearance. The European buyer who arrived in his slave trading ship would examine each slave before he agreed upon a price. The African slave dealers often demanded payment in cowrie shells, their own currency, and certain European goods which included iron bars, brass basins, and good quality cloth. In the 1690s, a slave was bought for goods equivalent to about 4 English pounds. About a hundred years later, as some records show, a British slave trader paid for each male slave 96 yards of cloth, 52 handkerchiefs, 1 large brass pan, 2 muskets, 25 kegs of gunpowder, 100 flints, 2 bags of shot, 20 knives, 4 iron pots, 4 hats, 4 caps, 4 cutlasses, 6 bunches of beads and 14 gallons of brandy.

### The Middle Passage

From the baracoons, the slaves, chained in groups, were transported in small boats to the slave ships which was anchored either midstream of a large river or off shore in the Atlantic. The slaves were terribly afraid of what faced them. Some thought that the white sailors were cannibals and they also believed that going to another land far away was like going to hell. Because of the dreadful fear of their future they faced away from their homeland, they occasionally rebelled but were repressed with force. Some of them, rather than face the journey across the unknown Atlantic, jumped overboard from the slave ships and were drowned.

The slave ship travelled for about three months along the coast of west Africa stopping at slave collecting stations along the way to purchase additional slaves. Finally, the ship, with its full cargo of slaves packed

closely together in the hold, turned west and sailed away towards the American continent.

Each slave ship was constructed to transport large numbers of slaves. A typical ship's hold was 5 feet 8 inches deep and this was packed with slaves lying flat on the floor. On the walls, shelves 6 feet wide were built and upon these slaves were made to lie down close to each other. In this way, a ship was built to transport about 450 slaves, but it was not unusual for 600 to be packed in it.

The trip to the Caribbean region, known as the Middle Passage, took from five to eight weeks. The slaves were fed on deck and occasionally some managed to leap overboard. While there was a steady loss of life through suicide, most of the deaths were caused by disease brought about by the unhealthy situation in the ship's hold. Small pox, eye diseases and dysentery were common and these also affected the ship's crew. It is estimated that about 10 percent of slaves perished on the Middle Passage.



## SLAVERY ON THE PLANTATION

The date of the first arrival of African slaves in Guyana is not known, but it is believed the first group were brought by Dutch settlers who migrated from Tobago from as early as the mid-seventeenth century. As plantations expanded on the coast of Guyana, more slaves were brought from West Africa in ships owned by the West India Company. There were occasions, too, when planters bought slaves smuggled from the West Indies by English traders.

On arrival of a slave ship at different ports in Berbice, Essequibo, and Demerara, auctions were held and planters came from all over to find bargains. The slaves were exposed naked and were closely inspected by the prospective buyers to determine if they were healthy. They were made to jump, swing their arms and legs and were examined like farm animals.

Entire families were auctioned, but buyers showed no concern over family bonds by making purchases which separated husbands and wives and children from parents. Friends and relatives were also separated from each other in the process.

On the plantation, the slaves were housed in buildings which were some distance away from the master's house. Most of these slave houses had thatched roofs and walls of old boards or of wattle and mud. The floor was the earth itself and there were no furniture except some rudimentary pieces that the slaves, over time, managed to make.

While the slaves were provided with certain foodstuffs by the master, they raised their own subsistence crops of vegetables, plantains and root crops on small garden plots that the master allowed them to use. However, they could only do their personal farming on Sundays when they had no work on the plantation. They also took the opportunity to fish on Sundays in the nearby canals, the rivers or the ocean.

Each adult slave was given one pound of salted cod fish every Sunday by the plantation owner. The salted cod fish was imported from North America. A child slave was given a smaller allocation. On special Christian holidays, there was an additional allowance of about a pound of beef or pork, some sugar and a quantity of rum.

The slaves also obtained a clothing allowance roughly every year. The men received a coarse woollen jacket, a hat, about six yards of cotton, and a piece of canvas to make a pair or two of trousers. Women received the same allowance as the men, but children received none. The children remained naked until they were about nine years old, or were given cast-off clothing that their parents managed to find or were able to purchase.

The work day of the slaves began even before day-break. They were marched to the fields by slave drivers who controlled them with whips. Slave drivers were themselves slaves who were specially selected by the White plantation owner. A White overseer supervised the entire operation. With farm implements allocated to them, the slaves worked in the fields and were occasionally lashed by the slave drivers if they attempted to idle. Around the middle of the day they were given an hour's break to refresh themselves. The work day ended at about eight in the evening. But the slaves who worked at the sugar mills during the grinding season were forced to work even longer hours.

Slaves were punished in various ways. For striking a White man, a hand could be cut off. But whipping was the most common form of punishment and this was inflicted liberally and in the most cruel form. The whipping was done by a slave driver under the watchful eye of a white overseer, and it was not unusual for the victim to be beaten to death.

### Methods of Control

The White plantation owners used various methods to maintain complete control over their slaves. Their principal method was that of "divide and rule". Members of the same tribe were separated on different plantations to prevent communication between them. The aim behind this was to prevent any plans to rebel if they were together. This separation, however, created a problem of communication, since the plantation would have different groups of slaves speaking different languages. Therefore, the planters had to find a way to communicate with their slaves. Soon a new language, known as Creole-Dutch, developed and this became a common tongue among the slaves. When the British took control of Guyana in the nineteenth century, English words were injected into the language and it became the basis of the Guyanese Creolese language.

Slaves were also prevented from practising their religions. Quite a few slaves were Muslims while many others had their own tribal beliefs. But since the Christian planters saw non-Christians as pagans, they made sure that the slaves could not gather to worship in the way they were accustomed when they lived in Africa.

Later Christian missionaries were permitted on the plantations and they were allowed to preach to the slaves on Sundays. In time, many of them were converted to Christianity; it was the general feeling that the converted slaves became docile and were not willing to support rebellion on the plantations.

Another means of control was the creation of a class system among the slaves. Field slaves formed the lowest group, even though some of them had special skills. Then there were the factory slaves who worked in the sugar boiling process. Higher up were the artisan slaves such as blacksmiths, carpenters and masons, who were often hired out by the planters. These slaves also had opportunities to earn money for themselves on various occasions. Still higher up in this class system were the drivers who were specially selected by the White planters to control the other slaves. The domestic or house slave had a special place in this arrangement, and because they worked in the master's house and sometimes receiving special favours from the master, they held other slaves in contempt. Usually, the slaves in the lowest rung of this social ladder were the ones who rebelled and often domestic slaves were the ones who betrayed them by reporting the plots to their master.

Then there were divisions based on colour. In the early days, it was relatively easy for a pure African to rise to the level of a driver. But mixtures occurred through the birth of children as a result of unions between White men and black women (mulatto), White men and mulatto women (mestee) and mulatto men and black women (sambo). Some slaves of succeeding generations thus had lighter complexions, and the White planters discriminated in favour of them. These slaves with White fathers or White relatives were placed in positions above those of the field slaves. This was the beginning of colour discrimination in the Guyanese society. Of course, in all of this, the Europeans - the Whites - occupied the highest rung of the social ladder and they found willing allies among the mixed or coloured population who occupied the intermediate levels. The pure Africans remained at the lowest level.

## "Free Time"

Except for earnings enjoyed by the artisan slaves, most of the slaves depended on obtaining money by selling surplus produce from their provision grounds and also the sale of livestock that they reared. On Sundays, village markets were held and the slaves seized the opportunity to barter or sell their produce. On these occasions the slaves made purchases of a few pieces of clothing and other items for their homes.

The Sunday markets were also occasions when slaves from different plantations were able to socialise and to exchange news and pieces of gossip.

There were also times of recreation. These were usually at the end of the "crop" and at Christmas and on public holidays when the slaves were allowed to hold dances which had to end by midnight.

Slaves were also allowed to purchase their freedom through the process of manumission. However, by the time slaves saved up enough money to buy their freedom, they would have already become old and feeble. In some cases, female slaves who bore the master's children were manumitted while they were still relatively young.

## THE WORK ON THE PLANTATION

The estate land consisted of cane-land, provision grounds, woodland and pasture. Each planter preferred to have more than 200 acres of cane land. Provision grounds were used by the slaves to cultivate root crops, plantains and vegetables for food. The woodland provided lumber and firewood and the pasture was used for grazing cattle.

The cane fields had either newly planted canes or ratoons. The ratoons were new shoots growing from old cane roots which were left in the ground after a previous crop of cane was harvested. Usually a ratoon field was less productive.

A typical sugar estate had factory buildings such as the mill, boiling house and curing house. Around these factory buildings there were other smaller buildings and sheds in which, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, carpenters, masons, coopers and other artisan slaves worked. There would also be a small "hospital" for sick slaves, and a small "jail" which kept slaves who were being punished. There were storage rooms for tools and supplies and sheds which sheltered livestock or stored cane trash or bagasse which was used as fuel.

Not far from the factory buildings were small houses in which the European managers and supervisors lived. They were generally overseers, book-keepers, skilled craftsmen and office staff. In the biggest house lived the estate owner. The slave quarters were some distance away from the homes of the managers.

### The Sugar Crop

The slaves were given the task to prepare the land for planting. Their normal working day began before daybreak and ended after sunset. They cleared the grass, and bushes by weeding and burning. Cane holes were dug and into these cane tops were planted. As the cane grew, gangs of slaves manured the field and weeded bushes that sprang up around the cane plants. Female slaves did much of the weeding and the manuring. After 12 to 15 months the cane was now mature. The field was set afire to burn off the leaves from the cane stalks and at the same time to get rid of snakes which lived there. The field slaves, using cutlasses, then cut the

cane stalks, packed them in bundles and loaded them on to ox-drawn carts which transported them to the mill.

At the mill, the cane was crushed and the juice flowed through gutters to large metal containers. The cane trash was removed and stored for use as fuel for the boilers. The juice in the large containers was clarified by heating and the addition of a small quantity of lime. This clarified juice was then ladled into a copper boiler in which it was boiled. After a while, the juice from this copper boiler was ladled into a smaller boiler and was boiled again, and then still further in a yet smaller boiler. By then, it had changed into a sticky syrup which was allowed to cool, and then poured into wooden hogsheads standing on beams in the curing house. Through small holes at the bottom of the hogsheads, molasses seeped out and was collected in containers set below the beams. After about three weeks, the remaining syrup in the hogsheads crystallised to form sugar. The sugar remained in the hogsheads which were later packed into ships for export to Europe.

Some estates also manufactured rum by fermenting juice from the first boiling and about the same quantity of molasses.

Almost all of this specialised work carried out in the manufacture of sugar and rum was done by skilled artisan slaves who were highly valued by their owners. During the milling season, slaves worked in shifts throughout the day and night.

Even after the crop season was over, the estate owner did not allow his slaves to be idle. The fields had to be prepared for the new crop, weeding and manuring of the ratoons had to be done, and repairs to drainage and irrigation canals, fences and buildings had to be carried out. Work was even found for children from the age of six years old. They collected firewood, cut grass to feed farm animals and fetched drinking water to slaves working in the fields. The plantation owners did not want their slaves to involve themselves in idle conversation since they felt that the discontented slaves may use the occasion to plot rebellion.

## RELIGION OF THE SLAVES

The second half of the seventeenth century saw the establishment of a plantation economy in Guyana based on African slave labour. The bulk of the African slaves were brought from Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, Gold Coast and the Bight of Benin. They belonged to several tribes and several language groups.

The general view held by the Dutch planters, and the English planters after them, was that the African slaves did not hold to a system of beliefs that could be described as a religion. At best - so the members of the plantocracy and the church that served them felt - their beliefs amounted to nothing more than heathenish superstition.

Not a few of them, perhaps, felt that the Africans were incapable of religious sentiment. But the Africans held religious beliefs derived from their homeland. It may be useful to note that some of the slaves, particularly these who came from the Fula-speaking area of Senegambia, were Muslims.

Toby, a young Hausa-speaking Muslim slave in Hanover, Berbice, debated religious questions with the Rev. John Wray, the Congregational missionary in Berbice in the early nineteenth century.

Interestingly, Wray's successor in Berbice, Rev. Howe, was very impressed with Toby's intelligence and his desire to acquire knowledge, that after converting him to Christianity, he arranged for the young man to go to England for further training by the London Missionary Society. He was granted his freedom and his name was changed to Thomas Lewis. In 1836, he returned to Berbice as a catechist-teacher.

Toby's ancestors were most likely converted to Islam when that religion penetrated West Africa from the north by way of the Sahara Desert. But Islam among Africans did not long survive the Middle Passage and the plantation system. The practice of the planters of separating tribesmen from one another, and of discouraging the assembling of slaves for any purpose whatsoever, was not calculated to allow Islam to survive.

Again, the small number of African Muslims that came to Guyana lacked the leadership of Imams and the possession of the Qu'ran. Then, too, the

plantation life did not lend itself for long prayers at fixed times, worship on a set day, fasting at prescribed periods, or feasting on holidays which did not coincide with those observed by the plantocracy. As such, the plantation which was geared exclusively to sugar production gave no scope for the development of Islam as the Senegambian village did.

But if the Islam that came with African slaves did not survive the conditions of slavery, the name "Fulah" came to be used as a descriptive of indentured Indian Muslims and their descendants. The Blacks who labelled them Fulahs clearly knew Fula-speaking Africans who were Muslims.

On the other hand, indigenous African religious beliefs, which became labelled as "obeah", survived the difficulties of estate life in Guyana. But these beliefs underwent significant changes although they remained clearly "African" in structure. Three factors were mainly responsible for these changes.

In the first place, African religious ideas were capable of modification in response to the new circumstance of estate life. Secondly, the practice of African religion was frowned upon by estate authorities. This meant that the religion could only be practised secretly and irregularly. The result has been that some aspects of African religious practices withered away while others lost their nationality and language and became garbled. Thirdly, the exposure to Christianity led not only to the conversion of Blacks to that religion, but also to the overlapping of African and Christian beliefs.

While in Jamaica, after 1760, it became an offence punishable by death for slaves to practise obeah, it is not clear if the same situation existed in Guyana. Nevertheless, the slaves did not lack "religious" leaders who, however, were not as well trained or as carefully chosen as the priests who served the African villages and compounds.

The policy of the plantocracy of separating African tribesmen from one another (as far as this was practicable) also affected the development of African religion in Guyana, since that religion traditionally had a strong link with the tribe.

(Note: The author is indebted to the writings of Dr. Dale Bisnauth on this topic).



## DUTCH CONTROL OF ESSEQUIBO

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Dutch had established themselves in all sections of the Essequibo region. Using Kykoveral, and later Fort Island, as their base of operations, Dutch traders and agents appointed by the Director General travelled to various locations by foot and canoe. They established contacts with various Amerindian villages with which they traded European goods for annatto dye, letter-wood, and crab oil.

The Essequibo River was established as the main communication route and by the third decade of the century, a post was set up at the junction of the Siparuni and Essequibo Rivers. (In 1756, this post, known as Arinda, was shifted further upwards to the junction of the Rupununi and Essequibo Rivers).

Beginning from the early 1740s, the Director General, Gravesande, took steps to establish total control of the Essequibo basin. He sent Nicolas Hortsman, a surveyor, to locate the source of the river and plant the Dutch flag there. This task was carried out, but shortly after, Hortsman deserted to work for the Portuguese in Brazil just south of the source of the Essequibo.

In the area of the Mazaruni River, the Dutch established both company and private plantations. Trading was also conducted with the Amerindians who lived there. Gravesande clearly regarded the Mazaruni basin as Dutch territory, and on one occasion when he learned that Amerindians loyal to the Spanish had moved into the area, he sent a force of loyal Caribs to eject them.

The Dutch established a Post on the upper Cuyuni river as early as 1680 in the Pariacot savannah to trade with the Amerindians. (This savannah is located north and west of the Yuruari River to the banks of the Cuyuni - areas which are now part of Venezuela). An intermittent vibrant trade in horses from the Spanish settlers further west in the Orinoco developed from this time. The horses were herded along a trail on the bank of the Cuyuni to Kykoveral from where they were sent to the sugar-mills on the Essequibo plantations.

This trail was also used by runaway African and Amerindian slaves who fled from the Dutch plantations to Venezuela. A Frenchman, Ignatius

Courthial, contracted by the Dutch authorities in Essequibo, thought of using this trail to build a road from Demerara to the upper Cuyuni. He drew up a plan for this project which Gravesande, on a visit to Holland in 1750, presented to the Zeeland Chamber. There was an actual start to this project, but, most likely through a shortage of funds or because the Dutch wanted to stop the steady escape of slaves along this route, it was halted.

In the North West District, the Dutch by the beginning of the eighteenth century were in control of the basins of the Pomeroon, Moruca, Waini and Barima Rivers. In Barima, a small French settlement was established in 1689 but was abandoned shortly after, even though traders from Martinique continued to trade with the Amerindians there. In 1734, there were reports that the Swedes were planning to settle in the area. However, this never occurred.

Gravesande, from the time he became the Director-General of Essequibo, regarded the right bank of the Barima as Dutch territory and the left as Spanish. But, interestingly, the Spanish were firm in the opinion that both banks belonged to the Dutch. This was stated very clearly in 1766 when the Spanish Governor of the Orinoco, after being requested by Gravesande to arrest a gang of criminals who were based on the left bank, replied that he felt the Dutch Director-General had jurisdiction to make the arrest.

## **The Beginning of the Berbice Slave Rebellion**

In Guyana, the African slave population grew as plantations expanded. The main concern of the White plantation owners was to extract the greatest amount of labour from the slaves. Little effort was ever made to improve the wretched and degrading living conditions under which they were forced to live. With the harsh treatment and brutal punishments inflicted on them by their owners, some of them rebelled while others, from time to time, escaped into the forests. Those who were recaptured suffered horrible deaths as punishment, meant also as a deterrent to other slaves who might have also planned to escape. Some of those in Berbice who escaped managed to reach Suriname where they joined up with Bush Negro colonies.

In 1762, a slave rebellion of 36 male and female slaves occurred on Berbice, then a Dutch colony. But after the slaves repelled a militia force sent by the Governor, Van Hoogenheim, the rebellion was finally repressed by a stronger force of the Dutch militia. Some of the slaves escaped but at least one was executed. But the repressive techniques of the planters were bringing matters to a boiling point, and just a few months later, around the 23 February 1763, a more organised revolt took place. This uprising became known as the Berbice Slave Rebellion.

The uprising initially broke out at Magdalenenburg, a plantation on the upper Canje River owned by a widow, Madam Vernesobre. The slaves killed the manager and carpenter, burned down the owner's house, and moved on to neighbouring plantations, and as far as the Corentyne, to urge support from the slaves there, some of whom attacked their owners and either joined the others or escaped into the forest.

Very quickly, the rebelling Africans were organised as a fighting force by Coffy, who was a house-slave on another Canje plantation, Lilienburg, where the slaves had also rebelled. Coffy had been brought to this plantation ever since he was a child and was trained as a cooper by the owner, Barkey.

On hearing the news of the outbreak of the uprising, the Governor, Van Hogenheim immediately sent to the planters in the Canje all available military assistance he had at his disposal. This was made up of 12 soldiers and 12 sailors from one of the five ships in the harbour. At that time, the

entire colony had only 346 Whites (including women and children) and 3,833 African slaves. Mulattos who also formed a section of the population generally sided with the Whites throughout the period of the rebellion.

The rebellion, which began on privately owned estates, soon attracted the slaves on plantations owned by the Berbice Association. The rebels burned buildings and cane fields and attacked and killed a number of White men and women. Soon they reached plantations on the Berbice River, and among the plantations attacked were Juliana, Mon Repos, Essendam, Lilienburg, Bearestyn, Elizabeth and Alexandria, Hollandia, and Zeelandia. Slaves from these and other plantations joined the rebel forces which moved steadily towards the capital of Berbice, Fort Nassau, located 56 miles up the Berbice River on its right bank. When they attacked the plantations, they seized gunpowder and guns belonging to the owners.

Meanwhile, those among the White population who managed to escape sought refuge on the five ships in the Berbice River, at Fort Nassau, Fort St. Andries at the mouth of the Berbice River, and in a brick house at Plantation Peerboom, about 70 miles upriver on the left bank. Some others, in panic, fled through the forest to Demerara. The feeling of hopelessness was compounded by an epidemic of dysentery which affected the Whites.

On the 3 March, a rebel group, numbering over 500, and led by Cosala, then launched an attack on the brick house at Peerboom which was heavily fortified by the White defenders. The rebels threw balls of burning cotton on the roof which began to burn, but the defenders were able to put out the fire. During a period of inaction, the manager of Plantation Bearestyn demanded to know why the Africans were attacking "Christians". Cosala shouted back that they would no longer tolerate the presence of Whites or Christians in Berbice since they (the African rebels) were now in control of all the plantations.

After a period of negotiations, the rebels agreed to allow the Whites to leave the brick house unharmed and depart for their boats in the river. But as the whites were leaving, the rebels opened fire killing many of them and taking many prisoners. Among the prisoners was the wife of the manager of Plantation Bearestyn whom Coffy kept as his wife.

Coffy, accepted by all the rebels as the leader of the rebellion, then declared himself Governor of Berbice, and set up his administration at

Hollandia and Zeelandia. He selected Akara as his deputy, and set about drilling his troops and establishing discipline. Two other leaders who emerged were Atta and Accabre, the latter being very disciplined and military-conscious. Other military leaders included Cossala and Goussari. Work gangs among the Africans were also organised to farm the estate lands to produce food supplies to sustain the population.

But from the beginning, Coffy encountered difficulties with his forces since some sections felt that by defeating the Whites meant that they could now act as they pleased. Small groups roamed across the countryside plundering abandoned estates, while some others spent most of their time drinking rum and dressing up in European clothing plundered from the plantations. A number of creole slaves - those born in the colony - did not wholeheartedly support the rebellion, and they gave up themselves to plantations which were far removed from the area of rebel activity.

## The Collapse of the Rebellion

Meanwhile, the Dutch Governor, Van Hoogenheim and other whites at Fort Nassau, were undecided on what they should do. The Governor wanted to defend the colony, but the Court of Policy voted for abandonment. Morale was indeed very low. Finally on the 8 March 1763 Fort Nassau was abandoned after the buildings were burned and the cannons spiked. The Whites travelled by boats to Fort St. Andries which Van Hoogenhiem quickly found to be inadequate, both for housing and for defence, since there were no provision grounds and running fresh water. He had preferred to stop at Dageraad, a plantation about 10 miles down the river from Fort Nassau, but the others did not agree.

At Fort St. Andries, Van Hoogenheim had just agreed to allow the Whites to abandon Berbice, when an English ship with 100 soldiers arrived from Suriname. Van Hoogenheim immediately withdrew his decision to abandon the colony and began to re-organise its defence. He dispatched 25 soldiers to Plantation Fredricksburg up the Canje and left a small group with two ships to guard the mouth of the Berbice River. With the remaining larger group, he along with volunteers among the Whites sailed up with three armed ships to Dageraad.

There Van Hoogenheim fortified the previously abandoned buildings and arranged the three ships so that their guns would defend this new defence position. The rebels, led by Akara, immediately launched three successive attacks on the Whites but they were driven back.

Coffy, who did not approve these attacks, immediately after, on the 2 April 1763, wrote to Van Hoogenheim saying that he did not want a war with the Whites. He also proposed the partition of Berbice between the Whites and Blacks with the Whites occupying the coastal area, and the Blacks the interior.

In the meantime, the Governor sent a group of two loyal slaves and two Amerindians to Suriname for assistance. Help was also sought from Essequibo-Demerara. Stalling for time and hoping for reinforcements to arrive from the other Dutch colonies, he wrote back to Coffy saying that he had sent the partition proposal to Holland and was waiting for a response. Thereupon began an exchange of letters between Coffy and Van

Hoogenheim in which the former insisted that he held the latter in great respect and meant him no harm. However, he did list the names of the planters who were excessively cruel to their slaves, saying that their cruelty caused them to rebel. He was probably using this tactic to divide the Whites and hoping that the Governor would surrender them to the rebels. Coffy also proposed a face-to-face meeting between the two of them, but Van Hoogenheim ignored this suggestion.

Coffy's letter stated:

"Coffy, Governor of the Negroes of Berbice, and Captain Akara send greetings and inform Your Excellency that they seek no war; but if Your Excellency wants war, the Negroes are likewise ready. Barkey and his servant, De Graff, Schook, Dell, Van Lentzing and Frederick Betgen, but more especially Mr. Barkey and his servant and De Graff, are the principal originators of the riot which has occurred in Berbice.

"The Governor (Coffy) was present when it commenced, and was very angry at it. The Governor of Berbice asks Your Excellency that Your Excellency will come and speak with him; don't be afraid but if you won't come, we will fight as long as one Christian remains in Berbice.

"The Governor will give Your Excellency one half of Berbice, and all the Negroes will go high up the river, but don't think they will remain slaves. Those Negroes that Your Excellency has on the ships - they can remain slaves.

"The Governor greets Your Excellency."

Maintaining his delaying tactics, the Governor continued to insist in his correspondence to Coffy that he was still awaiting a response to partition proposal from Holland.

Meanwhile, by the end of March, the Director General of Essequibo-Demerara, Laurens Storm van Gravesande had received information about the rebellion and he instructed the Commander of Demerara to seek assistance from the Caribs, Arawaks and Akawaios to mount an attack on the Berbice rebels from the south. Gravesande also wrote to the Zeeland Chamber and the Directors of the Berbice Association in Holland, and the Governor of St. Eustatius seeking military assistance for the Whites in

Berbice. Eventually, two well-armed ships with 158 soldiers arrived in Berbice.

By this time, Coffy lost his patience with Van Hoggenhiem, and on the 13 May 1763 he agreed to an attack on Dageraad. His forces numbered about 2,000 while the Whites had about 150 armed men. The three ships in the river maintained a steady firing of their heavy guns on the attackers and by mid- afternoon, they were forced to withdraw after suffering a loss of 58 dead. Eight Whites died during this battle.

After this defeat, Coffy wrote to Van Hoogenheim again offering his partition proposal which he hoped would bring peace with honour. In a very firm statement, he insisted that "in no case will we be slaves again."

But the defeat of the Blacks helped to open up divisions in their ranks. Those who had been field-slaves began to express disapproval of Coffy, who was a house-slave. Atta was the leader of this "field-slave" faction. Tribal jealousies also emerged and fights broke out between members of different tribes. Creole Blacks also at times attacked those who recently arrived from Africa. These divisions seriously undermined the military strength of the rebels and helped to encourage the Whites to regroup their forces.

Interestingly, soon after their arrival, a group of Dutch soldiers, including Jene Renaud and Sergeant de Niesse who had mutinied and deserted the post on the Corentyne, were captured and employed by the rebels to train the troops and make weapons. Coffy used them for training his forces, and some even led small bands of the rebels in guerrilla attacks on plantations controlled by the Whites. (Initially, due to distrust, some of these Dutch deserters were killed by the Africans).

Meanwhile the differences between Coffy and Atta continued to grow and eventually Atta challenged him for the leadership. The opposing supporters fought each other and after Atta's faction won, Coffy killed his own close supporters before shooting himself.

Atta, now the new leader, appointed Accabre as his military commander, and three other leaders, Quacco, Baube and Goussari rose up among the ranks. But by this time reinforcements were arriving to support the Whites. A combined Amerindian force was already moving through the forest from



the south, and from the 19 December 1763 soldiers who had arrived from Holland were moving up the Canje and Berbice Rivers and taking back control of the plantations. Large numbers of Africans surrendered while others fled into the forest. But some mounted resistance, but they were quickly suppressed by the Dutch soldiers. However, in two battles, including one at Wikki Creek, the African forces were able to score victories.

Atta and Akara were soon after taken prisoner, but Accabre with a disciplined band resisted the Dutch forces by using innovative military strategy. In the end he himself was betrayed by Akara and Goussari, by then prisoners of the Dutch, and was overwhelmed by the superior number of the Dutch soldiers and was captured. When he was brought before Van Hoogenheim, he proudly admitted his role as a leader of the rebellion.

Accabre, Atta, Akara, Quacco, Baube and Goussari, as well as many other rebels were executed. Between March and April 1764, 40 of them were hanged, 24 broken at the wheel and 24 burned to death. Others who were rounded up were re-enslaved and put back to work on the plantations, now back under control of their White owners.

The Berbice Slave Rebellion, which lasted for 10 months, marked the first serious attempt by a large group of enslaved people to win their freedom in Guyana. Significantly, it was also the first organised attempt to win freedom in the entire American continent. Despite the division in the ranks and the eventual failure of the rebellion, from it emerged the first group of Guyanese revolutionary heroes who initiated the struggle against colonial oppression.

## Spanish Ideas of a Western Frontier

In 1781, during the American War of Independence, the British captured Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice from the Dutch. During the period of their occupation, the British surveyed Essequibo along the coast to a point beyond the Barima and inside the Great Mouth of the Orinoco. A map was drafted by the officer in charge of this expedition and was later published in London in 1783. A note on this map showed the western boundary of the colony as the Barima River but which was shown in the position really occupied by the Amakura.

In 1782, the French seized the colonies from the English, and in the following year when peace was established, they were handed back to the Dutch. At that period, the French were allies of the Americans who were fighting their war of independence against the British. The Dutch remained neutral during the American War of Independence but supplied the Americans with goods and, as such, were regarded as friends of the French.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there was much discussion among Spanish officials as to the measures to be taken to protect their frontier between the Orinoco and the Cuyuni.

In 1787, a Spanish missionary in the Orinoco region, Fray Thomas de Matrarro, wrote to Don Miguel Marmion, Governor of Guayana, that "where the Cuyuni and the Yuruan join, there is a convenient site to build a strong house or fort to stop the passage of the Indians so that they might not go to Essequibo, and to prevent the entry of the Dutch to these Missions and savannahs."

In a Report dated the 10 July 1788, Marmion, after setting forth "the destitute, miserable and backward state of the province", outlined a scheme for the further settlement of the lands upon the frontier. He considered that the south bank of the Orinoco from the point of the Barima, about 60 miles inland to the Curucima Creek, being low lying and swampy, should be disregarded as useless. He also proposed that the frontier should run along this creek along the ridge of the Imataka Mountains to the south-south-east to the Cuyuni River; and from there to the Mazaruni, and

then to the Essequibo. The report added that the frontier should then follow the Essequibo to its source.

Marmion explained that the Dutch traversed the Cuyuni in canoes and thus carried on their traffic in slaves and in other merchandise and products of the country, and that there was no obstacle to prevent them coming in and going out every time they wished to inspect the Spanish possessions. He urged the Spanish authorities to settle the savannah region on the upper Cuyuni as this would stop the Dutch, who had already occupied the Cuyuni, from continually extending their colony.

Nevertheless, he recognised that, however desirable, the settlement of the frontier could not begin nearest to the boundaries of the Dutch possessions on the Cuyuni. This was because of the expense and difficulty of transporting cattle, provisions and other necessaries to such a distance, and by the difficulty in finding colonists who would be willing to settle in new lands which were remote and devoid of communication.

Marmion, no doubt, treated the junction of the Uruan and the Cuyuni as the limit of the Spanish territory in that direction. He considered that by holding the mouth of the Uruan, the Spaniards would secure not only all the territory which they then held but all they could hope to settle. (These areas in the upper basin of the Cuyuni were later to be awarded to Venezuela by the Arbitral Tribunal in 1899).

Up to the end of the eighteenth century, Spanish control of the district to the east and south of the Orinoco was literally confined to the sites of their actual settlements and Missions. There was very little occupation of outlying territory to the east of the river, and there was no attempt to develop the resources of the country by the opening of mines, the felling of timber, or by fishing and hunting. Such enterprises did not fall within the scheme of the Missions, and the poor relations between the Spanish missionaries and the Amerindians outside their Missions, in any case, would have rendered them impossible.

## GUYANA UNDER BRITISH, FRENCH AND DUTCH (1781-1783)

During the American War of Independence which broke out in 1776, the French joined the Americans in fighting the British. Even though the Dutch remained neutral, they carried out contraband trade and were the suppliers of goods to the Americans. The British therefore decided to seize the Dutch colonies to prevent them from being used as depots for shipping goods to the Americans. In 1781, the British took control of Essequibo-Demerara without resistance when they arrived there with four privateering ships. The British allowed the settlers to retain their property, but the property of the West India Company was seized.

In Berbice, the Governor Pieter Hendrik Koppiers, on learning of the capture of Essequibo-Demerara, organised his small militia in an effort to show resistance, but it could do nothing when the British privateers arrived on the Berbice River and seized Fort St. Andries. As the privateers moved upriver, the crew burned buildings at Plantation Vryheid where apparently was some Dutch resistance. Soon after they captured Fort Nassau and Koppiers reluctantly ceded the colony to a British representative who arrived from Demerara. As with the case of Essequibo-Demerara, the Dutch colonists were also allowed to keep their property and Koppiers continued to hold the post as Governor.

With the British in control of the colonies, there was an influx of British settlers from Barbados and they were given land grants along the coast to cultivate sugar, cotton and coffee. However, since sugar was proving to be the most profitable, most of these new settlers abandoned coffee and cotton cultivation and concentrated on sugar

## THE BEGINNING OF THE CAPITAL

Shortly after they seized the colonies, the British, under the command of the Lieutenant Governor, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Kingston, constructed a small fort at the mouth of the Demerara River to protect the harbour. This fort was named Fort St. George, and near to it administrative buildings were erected to house the government of Demerara. The British also began laying out the beginnings of the town in the vicinity of the fort, near to which a little settlement developed.

But then, in January 1782, a French fleet arrived and the British were forced to surrender the colonies. Immediately, the new French administrators set about to build a town at the mouth of the Demerara River. Persons wishing to live in the new town were requested to apply for lots. Two parallel canals running east from the Demerara River were dug by slaves and the dirt which was excavated was used to build a dam between these canals. Settlers in the new town built their houses on both sides of this embankment which later was surfaced with bricks made from burnt clay. The resulting road later became known as Brickdam. The canals which ran at the back of the houses served as routeways for cargo. The town was first called Longchamps, but later the name was changed to La Nouvelle Ville, literally New Town.

The French also built two forts at the mouth of the Demerara River; the fort on the eastern side was named Le Dauphin and that on the western bank was named La Reine.

In Berbice, the French dismissed Koppiers but they continued the policy of the British of granting lands on the coast for cultivation.

When the war ended in 1783, the colonies were handed back to the Dutch who immediately renamed the new town Stabroek after the president of the West India Company. To ensure good drainage, numerous canals were dug and small sluices, called kokers, were built to control the drainage system. Streets, many of which were to be later lined with trees, were also laid out in a rectangular pattern. By 1789, the town had 88 houses and 780 residents.

## FROM DUTCH TO BRITISH HANDS (1783-1803)

When the Dutch regained control in 1783, the new Director-General of Essequibo-Demerara, Jan Espinasse, decided to revise the constitution under which the colony of Essequibo-Demerara was governed. Instead of a joint Council of Policy to govern both Essequibo and Demerara, two Councils of Policy were to be established. Previously the Council of Policy had equal numbers of official and unofficial members, but now official members, appointed by the Director-General, would form the majority in each of the new Councils.

The proposal for the new constitution was bitterly opposed by the planters, who selected the unofficial members of the Councils. The planters finally sent a petition to the States-General in Amsterdam opposing the constitutional change. The States-General, after reviewing the petition, appointed a constitution committee headed by William van Sirtima to investigate the state of affairs in Essequibo-Demerara.

The committee finally recommended that there should be only one Council of Policy with equal official and unofficial representatives with the Director-General having a casting vote. However, there were now to be established two Courts of Justice, one for Demerara and one for Essequibo. Each was to be headed by a President - the Director General for Demerara and the Commander for Essequibo.

The Dutch authorities, shortly after, recalled Espinasse and van Sirtima was appointed Governor with instructions to implement the revised constitution which, by then, had obtained the support of the planters.

Since the constitution commission also gave an unfavourable report of the role of the West India Company in managing the affairs of Essequibo-Demerara, the States General refused to renew its charter in 1791. A Council for the Colonies was then established by the States-General to oversee the affairs of the Dutch colonies.

### The Batavian Republic

Meanwhile, in Europe, the French revolution had broken out in 1789, and initially it was supported by the British. But when the revolutionaries executed the French King, the British declared war on France. The

Netherlands, now an ally of the Britain, was invaded by French forces in 1795, and the Dutch head of state, the Prince of Orange, fled to London from where he urged all Dutch colonies to place themselves under the protection of the British. The French renamed the Netherlands the Batavian Republic and set up a puppet government made up of Dutch supporters of the French revolution.

Dutch colonies, including Guyana (Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice), became extensions of the Batavian Republic. This was particularly so in the Guyana where the majority of the Dutch colonists were supporters of the French Revolution, and hence, the Batavian Republic.

When a British warship in May 1795 arrived at Demerara to convey the instructions of the Prince of Orange, the Court of Policy, which by then had a majority of revolutionary supporters, refused to accept British protection for the colonies, and expressed loyalty to the French-Batavian Republic alliance. But the governor, van Sirtima, who opposed the French and the position taken by the Court of Policy, resigned his position and departed the colony on the British ship. Shortly after, a pro-republican government was set up by representatives of the planters.

However, political opinions began to change very quickly when the planters learned that supporters of Victor Hughes, an extremist leader of the French revolutionaries, were proposing that the African slaves in the West Indies and Guyana should be provided with weapons to help them win freedom from their masters. The planters in Guyana owned large numbers of slaves, and naturally, they could never be supportive of such a position.

Opinions also changed from support of the Batavian Republic when the planters realised that they could not ship their sugar, cotton and coffee except in English ships, which at that time controlled the seas. The planters needed to send their goods to Britain to pay off debts owned to British merchants.

In Guyana at this period, very good quality of sea-island cotton was cultivated on the Essequibo coast and Canje on plantations financed by British merchants. Cultivation had actually commenced in the 1740s when English settlers began arriving in Guyana. All of the cotton was exported to Britain where it fed the numerous cotton mills. With supplies threatened by

the French-Dutch alliance in Guyana, merchants in Britain encouraged their government to seize control of the Dutch colonies there.

This occurred in April 1796, and by the time of the Treaty of Amiens which ended the war in March 1802, seven-eighths of all property belonged to English settlers. In this six-year period, the number of sugar plantations increased by five-fold, with most of them established along the Atlantic coast from the Corentyne district to the Essequibo coast.

Substantial economic progress was also recorded during the six-year British occupation. In Demerara-Essequibo sugar production jumped from about 4 million pounds to over 17.5 million pounds, coffee from 4.8 million pounds to 7.5 million pounds, and rum from 86 thousand gallons to 475 thousand gallons.

By the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802, Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice were handed back to the Dutch, only to be seized back again by the British in September of the following year when war broke out again in Europe. They remained in the possession of the British to whom they were finally ceded when the war ended in 1814.



## **BERBICE AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

Between 1764 and 1777 economic progress in Berbice was very slow on account of the fact that the planters refused to agree to increased taxation. In addition, successive governors were incompetent and were unable to motivate development. It was not until Pieter Hendrik Koppiers became governor in 1777 that positive changes were seen.

When the Dutch reorganised the colony of Berbice after the slave rebellion of 1763 collapsed, a small town grew up around Fort Nassau which continued as the capital. However, with the steady migration to the coast, a new settlement began to establish itself near the mouth of the Berbice River at its junction with the Canje River from around 1782 when the French took possession of the colony. When the British took back control the following year, they expanded the granting of lands on the coast to planters, many of them English, and this encouraged more people to move to this new settlement.

With the opening of new lands, plantations, on which mixed farming took place, grew up on the west coast and the west bank of the Berbice River. Many of these plantations cultivated cotton, and a few small mills to process the cotton were erected on them.

In 1784, Berbice was handed back to the Dutch, and Koppiers, who had been removed by the French, was reappointed as Governor. He immediately cancelled all the land grants made by the British and the French and ordered the planters to vacate those areas. The affected planters protested this order in petitions sent to Directors of the Berbice Association and the States-General in Amsterdam. The States-General agreed that lands granted by the British should remain in the hands of those who owned them on condition that a land tax was paid. However, it ordered that lands granted in West Berbice by both the British and French must be abandoned. As a result, many plantations on the West Coast and West Bank Berbice, especially those south of Itacha, reverted to bush after cultivation ceased.

The cutback on cultivation saw a reversal of economic progress in Berbice, and the Berbice Association placed the blame for this on Governor Koppiers. The Directors expressed their dissatisfaction over his administration and reprimanded him on many occasions. He subsequently

asked to be relieved of the position of Governor and migrated to Demerara. After he left, Abraham Jacob van Batenburg was appointed as Governor.

In 1784 when Berbice was restored to the Dutch, an engineer, Herlin, was sent from Amsterdam to build a town in the area of the growing settlement at the junction of the Berbice and Canje Rivers. The land was cleared of the forest and divided into quarter-acre lots, and soon a few scattered houses were erected. By 1791, the town, named New Amsterdam, was firmly established and became the new capital of Berbice; and soon after, the Governor, Van Batenburg moved into a newly built Government House.

Meanwhile, the States-General of the Netherlands was concerned that the trading activities of both the West India Company and the Berbice Association were conducted more for the benefit of those two organisations rather than for the Dutch nation as a whole. As a result, the Company's charter failed to win renewal in 1791 and Essequibo-Demerara was placed under the control of a "Council of Colonies", a department of the Dutch Government. Four years later, the charter of the Berbice Association was cancelled and the colony was put under the control of a "Committee of Colonial Affairs" in Amsterdam.

In 1796, Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice were seized by the British. In Berbice, Batenburg was kept on as Governor by the British who again continued the granting of land to new settlers who migrated mainly from Barbados. Over a hundred new cotton plantations were established and slaves were imported in greater numbers. The slave population grew from 8,232 to 17,885 during the period 1796-1802. Large areas of land were also put up for sale by the colony's government, and much of these were bought by Lord Seaforth who became Governor of Barbados in 1801.

## GROWTH OF GEORGETOWN

Between 1783 and 1800, small "towns" grew up around Stabroek. First was New Town which was originally established by the French in 1782. In this area, American traders set up offices close to the river and built a wharf where American trading ships discharged and loaded their goods. This wharf became known as American Stelling and the road in the vicinity became known as America Street.

The main street of Stabroek was Brickdam which was about one mile long. A muddy embankment which was erected to keep back the river became known as Water Street. This street was gradually strengthened with the debris of fires which was spread on its surface.

It was the British, after 1796, who began to expand road-building in the town. In 1797, a road which later became known as High Street was built. Camp Street was laid out in 1805, and by 1806, other roads were completed.

At around this time, Plantation Vlissingen, a coffee plantation, occupied a large area north of Stabroek. In 1804, its owner, Daly, obtained permission to convert part of the plantation into a town. This section was bought by a Mr. Lacy who renamed it Lacytown and built three bridges over the boundary canal to link it with Stabroek and a neighbouring new ward, Cummingsburg, originally owned by a Scotsman, Thomas Cumming.

Later, Plantation Vlissingen came under the ownership of Joseph Bourda and from this plantation were later carved out Robb's Town (Robbstown) and Newtown. Robb's Town, in its early period, was known as Bridgetown because of the Barbadians who settled there. However, when John Robb leased a large part of the district and started a housing scheme, the area became known as Robb's Town.

Cummingsburg was originally an estate known as La Bourgade owned by Thomas Cumming, who served as a member of the Court of Policy. He sold off lots along the bank of the Demerara river to merchants who wanted to build storehouses there. The area east of what is now Main Street to Cummings Street, which was divided into residential lots, was given the name Cummingsburg. At that time the locations where Main Street and Cummings Street are currently occupy, were canals which were connected by other canals running east to west to the Demerara River. As time went by, some of these canals were filled in to form streets.

Kingston started when barracks were built there to house British troops. This ward eventually incorporated a plantation owned by Eve Leary. Soon the elite of the society set up residences in that locality.

Werk-en-Rust was originally a plantation south of Stabroek. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the owners began selling off land near to the

Demerara River to saw-millers. At first people did not want to live in Werk-en-Rust because a cemetery was located there. However, as the demand for living space arose, more and more people decided to settle there, and by 1799, it became an extension of Stabroek.

As the urban area expanded, there came a need for the establishment of various services. An attempt was made by J. C. de La Coste in 1790 to publish a newspaper. He imported a printing machine for this purpose, but the newspaper was not successful. A post office was set up by the Government in 1796. In the same year, the idle newspaper printing machine was bought by Mrs. Volkerts and by employing two Barbadian printing technicians, she obtained contracts to print Government notices. Not too long after, she began publishing the first known Guyanese newspaper, the Royal Essequibo and Demerara Gazette.

Medical services were first organised during the French occupation (1782-83). However, the first hospital, occupying the site of the present-day Guyana Stores, was built by the British in 1796 to treat British troops afflicted by yellow fever. A few years later, a hospital for sailors was built at the site currently occupied by the Museum.

When the British re-occupied Guyana in 1803, the entire urban area at the mouth of the Demerara River was referred to as Stabroek. In 1812, it was renamed Georgetown, and Stabroek, like other "burgs" which developed, became "wards" of the newly renamed capital of Essequibo-Demerara.

## The Beginning of British Guiana

In Europe, war broke out between Britain and France in 1803. The war prevented merchant ships from Holland and Britain to sail to Guyana and the planters found problems in obtaining supplies. The planters in turn were unable to export their products and to pay their instalments on mortgages held in British and Dutch banks. By this time investment by British banks in the Guyanese sugar plantations was very high but they faced a serious problem of the devaluation of their stocks if shipping was not resumed. The British bankers felt that only the resumption of British control of Guyana could save their investment and this view was supported by the planters in Guyana.

The British invasion of Guyana occurred on the 17 September 1803 and the soldiers were joyously welcomed by the planters. The capitulation was signed on the following day (in Stabroek) by Commodore Samuel Hood and Lieutenant-General William Grinfield on the British side and Governor Meerteens and some of his councillors for the Dutch. But Grinfield, the commander of the British forces, immediately faced difficulties presented by the Court of Policy (in Demerara-Essequibo) which had a high representation of planters of Dutch origin. By the terms of the surrender of the Dutch colonies (Demerara-Essequibo and Berbice) to the British, it was agreed that no new establishment would be introduced without the approval of the Court of Policy. As a result, when the British decided to establish a customs house and income tax, the Court of Policy objected on the grounds that these were "new establishments". Nevertheless, the British imposed these over the objections of the Court of Policy.

Within a month, the British appointed a Governor, Lt. Colonel Nicholson, who oversaw the immediate administration of the colonies until separate Governors were named for Berbice and Essequibo-Demerara.

In 1812 Major-General Hugh Lyle Carmichael was appointed Governor of Demerara-Essequibo. In May of the same year he changed the name of Stabroek to George Town after the heir to the British throne, who later became George IV. Then in October, on behalf of the Government, he purchased an area of land in Cummingsburg for a Parade Ground. Towards the end of the century, half of it was used for the development of the Promenade Gardens while the other half remained as the Parade Ground.

Up to this time Dutch was still the official language of the courts but Carmichael modified this by ordering that all legal documents must now be written in both English and Dutch.

The Dutch planters who held influence in the Court of Policy and the College of Keizers (part of the combined Court of Policy) offered stiff opposition to Carmichael's administration. The College of Keizers in particular was seen as an exclusive domain of the Dutch planters who always nominated one of their own when a vacancy occurred. Without receiving approval from Britain, Carmichael abolished this body and handed over its duties to the Financial Representatives (in the Court of Policy).

During the same year, the United States of America joined the war on the side of France, and in September American warships blockaded Georgetown. A British force stationed in Georgetown launched a successful attack on the Americans and drove them away from Guyana's shores. However, in February 1813, a British patrol ship, the HMS Hornet was sunk off Mahaica after a battle with an American warship, the Peacock.

During the period 1803-1814, English planters who owned three-quarters of the property in the colonies faced severe economic hardships on account of crop failures. These planters were faced with great difficulties in meeting payments on mortgages held mainly by Dutch and English investors. By existing Dutch law, plantations experiencing such difficulties were handed over to Dutch administrators who could put them up for sale and then purchase them at any price. The English planters were therefore at the mercy of the Dutch and could obtain little justice from the Court of Justice which was controlled by Dutch lawyers. At one time seven members of the Court were administering 60 indebted estates.

The English planters felt that the situation could not improve unless the colonies were formally ceded to Britain. This finally occurred in 1814 when a Convention held in London confirmed the capture of the colonies. The Convention decided that Britain would keep the colonies along with the Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) on the condition that Britain paid one million pounds to Sweden (which were debts owed by Holland to Sweden) and also two million pounds to Holland itself. This decision was confirmed by the Treaty of Paris in 1815.

With final British control established, a proclamation was issued which settled the debt situation with the Dutch and English investors. Under an arrangement, the Dutch holders of mortgages on English-owned plantations agreed to suspend their claims in return for a new mortgage for the whole amount owed, plus interest.

As has been mentioned, separate Governors were appointed for Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice, but as the years progressed, the Governor of the former assisted in the administration of the latter when its Governor was absent. Gradually, the opinion that the colonies should be united became popular, and it was no surprise when King William IV on 4

March 1831 issued a Commission which united Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice as the Colony of British Guiana. Sir Benjamin D'Urban, who was serving as Governor of Essequibo-Demerara was appointed the first Governor of the united colony. In 1838, for administrative purposes, the united colony was divided into the three counties of Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice.

At first, the unification brought about some dissatisfaction among Berbice planters who felt that they did not have sufficient representation in the united Court of Policy. They had hoped for a reduction in taxation, but this did not happen.

## CONTROL OF ESSEQUIBO AFTER 1750

During the eighteenth century, the Posts maintained by the Dutch were at strategic positions so as to control respectively the upper Essequibo, the upper as well as the lower Cuyuni, and the coast district, together commanding the whole area claimed by the Dutch.

The Dutch, since the middle of the eighteenth century, assumed the right to control trade in the upper regions of the Essequibo as well as the Mazaruni and Cuyuni. In addition, the British in 1810 made a treaty with the Carib chief, Manarwan, who lived in the upper Essequibo, whereby the Amerindians agreed to submit themselves to British jurisdiction.

It was equally clear that the Dutch were recognized as having similar rights in the Mazaruni District. Spanish Amerindians, coming from the Spanish Missions, asked for the permission of the Dutch Commandeurs to settle in that locality. In 1748, when the Spaniards began to attack and kidnap Amerindians in the area near the head-waters of the Cuyuni River, the Spanish Commander was warned by the Dutch Commandeur of Essequibo, Laurens Storm van Gravesande, of the consequences which might ensue from such conduct. Gravesande, on this occasion, decided to give permission to the Amerindians to make reprisals. When it was reported in 1767 that Spaniards had incited the Akawois against the Caribs in that district, Gravesande forbade the Caribs to injure that tribe, on the ground that they were Dutch subjects.

In 1833, Amerindians who had migrated from Venezuela settled at a point ten days' journey up the Cuyuni River where they regarded themselves as in British territory, since the "Spanish frontier" at that time was considered as situated at the head of the Mazaruni and Cuyuni Rivers. The districts of Amakura and Barima were occupied by Amerindians who also acknowledged the Protectorate and jurisdiction of the Dutch.

The Caribs were the most important tribe of these regions, and trade was carried on between them and the Dutch. In 1684 a party of Caribs, who had been expelled from Suriname by the Governor, settled in Barima. They allied with the French with whom they acted against both the Dutch and the Spaniards in the war which was fought at that time. But this was only temporary, for the Essequibo Dutch made friends with these Caribs by the end of the century. The Barima District was from then considered as within the sphere of the Postholder of the Pomeroon.

In 1733 the Caribs of Barima were engaged in the slave trade with the Dutch who instructed them to prevent any settlement of Swedes in that district.

When Amerindians from the Orinoco area sought refuge from attacks by the Spaniards, they escaped to the Barima District, clearly because they believed that once settled there they would be outside the Spanish sphere of influence.

British jurisdiction, after 1802, was exercised in the district of the Barima River and its western tributaries, the Aruka and the Kaituma. The Amerindians were unanimous in affirming in 1839 to Crichton, Superintendent of Rivers and Creeks, that the Spanish, and later the Venezuelan, authorities never exercised jurisdiction east of the Amakura.

In 1849, Mc Clintock, the Postholder of the Pomeroon, formally appointed Amerindian captains for upper and lower Barima, Barama and Waini. This succession of captains was never interrupted in the nineteenth century.

The magistrate of Pomeroon, Im Thurn, who was appointed in 1882, supervised the district as far as Amakura, and from 1886 exercised jurisdiction up to the banks of that river. In 1891 he was appointed Government Agent for the North-West District, then carved out of what had previously been the Pomeroon District. He took up his residence at



Morawhanna, at the junction of the Mora Passage and the Barima, and administered the area as far as Amakura. Under his administration, police stations were established at Amakura, Barima Point, Morawhanna and at Koriabo on the upper Barima.

## EARLY BRITISH ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Immediately after the British took possession of Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice in 1803, they began to implement changes in the administration of the colonies with the aim of removing the strong Dutch influence which was present.

Meanwhile, in 1806 the slave trade was abolished in the two colonies, as well as in Trinidad; final abolition occurred in other British territories during the following year. Regulations were put in place to prevent transfer of slaves from one colony to another, but this did not prevent trafficking in slaves from the Caribbean islands to Berbice and Essequibo-Demerara.

Some planters sold their plantations in Barbados and bought new ones in the two Guyana colonies and used a loophole in the regulations to transfer their slaves from Barbados to their new plantations. In this way, it was easier to move slaves from Barbados to Berbice and Essequibo-Demerara than between the two Guyana colonies since purchases of plantations by Berbice planters in Essequibo-Demerara and vice versa were not common.

Governor Carmichael, in 1812, had abolished the College of Keizers without the consent of the British Government because it was packed with Dutch planters who opposed his administration. He had transferred their powers to the Financial Representatives (in the Court of Policy), but this plan backfired because the Financial Representatives soon acquired more powers over financial matters than was originally planned. They were even in a position to oppose the Governor's budget estimates.

But soon after the unification of the colonies in 1831, Governor Benjamin D'Urban brought an end to this state of affairs by re-establishing the College of Keizers and setting up a separate College of Financial Representatives, both of which now also had representatives from Berbice. Both of these Colleges functioned as parts of the united Court of Policy headquartered in Georgetown. At the same time, the constitution under which Berbice was governed up to 1831 was abolished, and the united

British Guiana was administered under the constitution that previously governed Essequibo-Demerara.

As a result of the unification, there was also now only one Court of Justice which comprised of three judges. For civil cases, and cases of lesser importance, the Governor, on the advice of the Court of Policy, established Inferior Courts which later became known as magistrate courts.

## AMERINDIAN LOYALTY TO THE BRITISH

When the British took possession of the colonies of Essequibo-Demerara and Berbice from the Dutch, they continued the system of their predecessors, as far as possible, in administration of Amerindian affairs. The Amerindians, on the defeat of the Dutch, had retired to the remote districts of the interior, and it was the aim of the British to attract them to the areas near and on the coast.

The Court of Policy, (the local governing Assembly), in 1803 took careful consideration of the position of the Postholders and decided that their retention would be beneficial. The Postholders were instructed to use their best endeavours to pacify the Amerindians in the event of any discord. With a view to encourage friendly relations with the tribes, the Postholders were to distribute gifts to them on certain occasions and to prevent the colonists from subjecting them to forced labour.

"Protectors of Indians" were appointed from about 1803. They acted as a means of communication between the Postholders and the departments of the colonial Government, and it was their duty, among other matters, to supervise the Postholders and to report misconduct on their part. The Protectors were paid no salary and were chosen from among the most reputable citizens in the district for which a Postholder was appointed. It was to them and the Postholder that the colonial Government looked for information and guidance on Amerindian questions.

The exercise of jurisdiction over disputes and offences by British officers and courts of laws was greatly extended by the British. Amerindians readily submitted to British jurisdiction, tacitly in most cases, but sometimes in consequence of an express agreement with a tribal chief.

In 1779 the Dutch Government had officially recognized the Amerindian chiefs by a formal distribution of commissions and symbols of offices. The British Government continued this policy but later found that the permission to choose their own chiefs led to the election of "unsatisfactory" persons. As a result, during the governorship of Sir Henry Light which ended in 1848, the appointment of chiefs, or captains, was vested in the executive Government of the colony.

During the early period of British administration, there was a continuous growth of employment of the Amerindians as labourers. As time went on, in the Pomeroon District, to a great extent they actually took over this role from the African population.

Amerindians were employed in the cultivation of annatto, cassava and yams, in cutting grass and bush, in thatching the Post houses and similar work. The Arawaks were very useful as labourers, though they disliked the manufacture of sugar and any type of field work, to which the Warrous and the Akawois did not object.

### **Missions in Amerindian areas**

To instruct the Amerindians in Christianity, British Missions were established. In 1831, one was established by the Church Missionary Society at Bartica Point. A church was erected and instruction commenced in the Creole Dutch dialect. On the following year, the Society established another Mission south of Pirara between the Essequibo and Takutu Rivers. Towards 1840 three other Missions were established on the Essequibo - one at Urua on the Rupununi, another at Waraputa on the Essequibo above the mouth of the Potaro, and a third at Karia Karia on the lower Essequibo near Fort Island. Between 1840 and 1845 other Missions were established on the Waini, Barima and Moruka Rivers, and at Kabakaburi on the Pomeroon. At all these Missions, schools were built and, in addition to religious instruction, academic subjects were taught to the Amerindian children.

One of the most important Mission settlements was at Santa Rosa Mission which was established on the left bank of the Moruka, about 26 miles from the sea. The inhabitants were chiefly Arawaks who, in 1817 and the following years, in order to avoid the struggle between the Spaniards and the revolted Spanish colonies, had migrated from the Orinoco and settled

at Moruka. In 1833, these Amerindians, about 300 in number, who professed the Roman Catholic faith, were granted an area of land to develop a permanent settlement. Between 1840 and 1850 some of them returned to the Orinoco and a decline of the settlement stepped in, but from 1875, after the church was rebuilt, it began to flourish again.

## THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT IN BRITISH GUIANA

In England, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the anti-slavery movement, initiated by Granville Sharpe, had taken root. After Lord Mansfield, the Chief Justice, upheld Sharpe's petition that slavery was illegal in England thus setting free 14,000 African slaves there, the movement attracted more support. Some of the supporters of the anti-slavery movement established the London Missionary Society in 1796 with the aim of sending missionaries to teach Christianity, initially to Africans in Sierra Leone (in West Africa) and in the British colonies in the Caribbean from 1807.

A religious group known as the Quakers, with Sharpe as a leading participant, set up a committee to fight the slave trade. Soon, influential personalities such as James Ramsey, Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce joined the cause and they organised a pressure-group known as the "Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade". Wilberforce was a leading Member of Parliament and his speeches against the slave trade and slavery won more support for the cause among other Parliamentarians. Their combined pressure along with the efforts of the growing abolition movement eventually assisted in the passage of the Abolition Bill (to end the slave trade) in 1807.

However, it was not an easy task for the British Government to abolish the slave trade which at that time provided thousands of jobs for British subjects.

Meanwhile, sugar planters in Guyana and the Caribbean and their political and financial backers in Britain were not yet ready for the final abolition of slavery. They decided that it would be better to support legislation to improve the physical, moral and religious conditions of the slaves. Legislation which was enacted to meet these objectives was referred to as "Amelioration".

The London Missionary Society began its activities in Guyana shortly after the end of the slave trade. This was in response to a request from Hermanus Post, the owner of Plantation Le Ressouvenir who believed that if slaves were influenced by religious teachings, they would be more docile and obedient. A chapel was erected on the plantation and in 1808 the Society sent John Wray to run the mission there until 1813 when he was transferred to the Society's Mission in Hanover, Berbice. Four years later, Rev. John Smith was sent to fill the vacancy at Le Ressouvenir in Demerara.

The Missionary Society faced stiff opposition from the governing authorities, and Governor Murray told Smith that if he ever taught any slave to read he would be deported from the colony. Murray insisted that the Society's task was not to educate slaves but only to make them contented. This was also the view of most plantation owners. They also argued that slaves should not be taught religion on the grounds that Christianity and slavery were not compatible. As early as 1808, the Royal Gazette, a publication which carried the views of the colonial administration in Guyana, had written: "It is dangerous to make slaves Christians, without giving them their liberty."

But since the British Parliament had requested that slaves should be given religious instruction, the plantation owners, despite their opposition, were obliged to allow it. But they tried to make the missionaries' tasks very difficult by trying to stop their slaves from attending religious services and the planters even attended these functions to create loud disturbance.

Eventually, the Secretary of State (in the British Government) sent a Circular Letter to Governor Murray of Essequibo-Demerara advising that slaves should be given passes to attend religious services. Murray, in turn, sent his own interpretation of the circular to Smith which was completely different from what was instructed by the Secretary of State. The Governor's interpretation instructed plantation owners not to allow their slaves to attend religious services on Sundays without passes and not even to allow them to attend in the evenings. Many of the owners also bluntly refused to issue the required passes. As a result, attendance at religious services dropped sharply.

## RUMOURS OF FREEDOM

In England, some organisations were established to campaign for the abolition of slavery in the British colonies. These included the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Methodist Society, and the Anti-Slavery Society formed in 1823.

The Anti-Slavery Society was very influential since among its members were the Quakers and important Members of Parliament including William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson and Fowell Buxton. In April 1823 Buxton presented a motion in the House of Commons calling for a gradual abolition of slavery in all British colonies, but it was defeated because the majority felt that abolition of slavery would leave the planters without a labour force. Instead, measures to ameliorate the condition of slaves were adopted. These ordered that female slaves should not be whipped as punishment and drivers should not carry whips in the field.

Lord Bathurst, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, immediately sent these new amelioration rules in a letter to all Governors of British colonies. In Berbice, Governor Henry Beard, as soon as he received the letter, sent it to Rev. John Wray to read it to the slaves. In Essequibo-Demerara on the other hand, Governor John Murray deliberately delayed its publicity. Even though he received the letter on 23 June 1823 he waited until 2 July to present it to the Court of Policy and urging the members, who were all slave owners, not to act on it immediately. It was not until 7 August the Court of Policy passed the required resolutions to adopt the amelioration rules.

While the amelioration rules were awaiting adoption in the Court of Policy, house slaves overheard their masters discussing them. Not fully understanding the implications of the new rules, they felt that the planters had received instructions to set the slaves free but were refusing to do so. This rumour was passed on to other slaves orally and in writing by some slaves who had acquired reading and writing skills. One of these slaves, Jack Gladstone, heard the rumour from a slave owned by the Governor, and he wrote a letter to the members of Bethel Chapel informing them of the matter and signed his father's name on it. His father was Quamina, a deacon of Bethel Chapel.

On 25 July, Quamina, on learning of the matter, approached Rev. John Smith and informed him that the King of England had granted freedom to the slaves but it was being withheld. Smith said that he had not heard of any such order and that such a rumour was false. Smith added that he had heard that the British Government wanted to make regulations to improve the situation affecting the slaves, but not to set them free. Quamina was not satisfied with what he heard and most likely felt that Smith, being a White, was siding with the planters and the Governor. He apparently reported to the other slaves, some of whom began to make preparations to seize their freedom which they felt was being deliberately kept away from them.

## THE DEMERARA SLAVE UPRISING

The slaves in East Demerara were convinced that the Governor and their masters were withholding their freedom from them and many of them felt they had no other option than to rise up against those who were not carrying out the King's orders. On the morning of Sunday 17 August 1823, slaves at Mahaica met together at Plantation Success and three of them, Jack Gladstone, a cooper on that plantation, Joseph Packwood and Manuel, assumed some kind of leadership of the group. All of them began to plan an uprising, but Gladstone's father, Quamina, who arrived at the meeting later, objected to any bloody revolt and suggested that the slaves should go on strike. When someone asked if they should get guns to protect themselves, Quamina said he would have to seek the advice of the Rev. Smith on this matter.

Quamina departed for Bethel Chapel at Le Ressouvenir and after the Sunday service, he and two other slaves, Manuel and Seaton, went to Smith's home. There they told the priest that the managers of the plantation should go to Georgetown to "fetch up the new law." Smith rebuked them and advised them against speaking to any of the managers about this, saying if they did so they would provoke the Governor. He begged them to wait until the Governor and their masters inform them about the new regulations. When Quamina told Smith of the uprising being planned, the priest asked them to request the other slaves, particularly the Christians, not to rebel. Quamina promised to obey Smith and he sent his two companions to urge other slaves not to rebel. He also told Smith he would send a message in the evening to the Mahaica slaves not to rise up against their masters.

But despite Quamina's efforts, the slaves were determined to rebel from the following evening. Their plan was to seize all guns on the plantations, lock up the Whites during the night and then send them to the Governor on the following morning to bring the "new law." All Quamina could do was to implore them not to be violent in the process.

But on the morning of Monday 18 August, the plan was leaked by Joseph Packwood, a house slave, who revealed it to his master, John Simpson, of Le Reduit plantation, located about five miles east of Georgetown. Simpson immediately gave this information to Governor Murray who with a group of soldiers rode up to the area of Le Ressouvenir and La Bonne Intention where he met a large group of armed Africans on the road. He asked them what they wanted and they replied, "Our right." He then ordered them to surrender their weapons, but after they refused he warned that their disobedience would cause them to lose whatever new benefits the new regulations aimed to provide. Further, Murray asked them to go home and to meet with him at Plantation Felicity the next morning, but the slaves bluntly refused this invitation.

It was very late that afternoon when Rev. John Smith first heard of the uprising. In a note to his informant, Jackey Reed, a slave who attended his church, he stated that hasty, violent measures were contrary to Christianity and begged Reed not to participate in the revolt.

Shortly after, while Smith and his wife were walking on the plantation, they saw a large group of noisy African slaves outside the home of Hamilton, the manager of Le Ressouvenir. Smith begged them not to harm Hamilton but they told him to go home.

That night the slaves seized and locked up the White managers and overseers on thirty-seven plantations between Georgetown and Mahaica in East Demerara. They searched their houses for weapons and ammunition, but there was very little violence since the slaves apparently heeded Quamina's request. However, some slaves took revenge on their masters or overseers by putting them in stocks; this action resulted in some violence a few White men were killed. The White population naturally were very terrified and feared they would be killed. But the slaves who were mainly Christians did not want to lose their religious character so they proclaimed that their action was a strike and not a rebellion. At the same



time, not all slaves joined the rebels and they remained loyal to their masters.

The next day an Anglican priest, Wiltshire Austin, suggested to Governor Murray that he and Smith should be allowed to meet with the slaves to urge them to return to work. But the Governor refused to accept this suggestion and immediately declared martial law.

The 21st Fusileers and the 1st West Indian Regiment under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Leahy, aided by a volunteer battalion, were dispatched to combat the rebels who were armed mainly with cutlasses and bayonets on poles and a small number of stands of rifles captured from plantations. At first, the movement of the troops was hampered since many of the wooden bridges across the various plantation canals were destroyed by the rebels.

The suppression of the rebellion saw much violence. On Tuesday, 19 August, there were major confrontations at Dochfour estate where ten to fifteen of the 800 rebels were killed; and at Good Hope where six rebels were shot dead. On the morning of 20 August, six were killed at Bee Hive plantation and forty at Elizabeth Hall.

There was also a major battle on the same day Bachelor's Adventure where more roughly 2,000 slaves confronted the military. Lieutenant-Colonel John Thomas Leahy who had about 300 men under his command asked them what they wanted. They responded that they wanted to work for only two or three days a week. Leahy told them if they lay down their arms and returned home he would tell the Governor what they wanted. But perceiving that they were not interested in surrendering their arms he, accompanied by one of his officers, Captain John Croal, went up to them and again enquired what they wanted. They shouted that they wanted their freedom which the King had granted to them. Leahy then read the proclamation of martial law to them. When he completed the reading, Jack Gladstone, one of the slave leaders, showed him a copy of a letter signed by many plantation owners that they were not abused by the rebels.

One of the other leaders then suggested that they should hold Leahy and Croal as hostages, but Gladstone objected strongly and prevented such an occurrence. Many other rebels suggested that all the slaves should march to Georgetown to present their demands to the Governor, but Leahy

discouraged this saying that if they did so they would all be hanged, and suggested that they should communicate to the Governor through him. He then gave them half an hour to decide to surrender their arms, failing which he would order his men to shoot. However, the rebels continued to show defiance and Leahy ordered his troops to open fire. Many of the slaves fled in confusion while some others quickly surrendered their weapons to the troops. In this savage crushing military action more than 250 were killed. A report prepared by Governor Murray two days later praised Leahy and his troops and noted that only one soldier was slightly injured while noting that "100 to 150" slaves were shot dead.

The uprising collapsed very quickly since the slaves, despite being armed, were poorly organised. After their defeat at Bachelor's Adventure, the Governor proclaimed a full and free pardon to all slaves who surrendered within 48 hours, provided that they were not ringleaders of the rebellion. He also offered a reward of 1,000 guineas for the capture of Quamina whom he regarded as the main leader of the rebellion.

In the military sweeping-up exercises that followed, there were impromptu court-martials of captured slaves and those regarded as ringleaders were immediately after executed by firing-squad or by hanging. Many of the corpses were also decapitated and the heads were nailed on posts along the public road. Among those hanged was Telemachus of Bachelor's Adventure who was regarded as a "ringleader" of the uprising at that location.

Some of the rebels who escaped were also hunted down and shot by Amerindian slave-catchers. Quamina himself was shot dead by these Amerindian slave-catchers in the back lands of Chateau Margot on 16 September and his body was later publicly hanged by the side of the public road at Success. Jack Gladstone was later arrested and also sentenced to be hanged; however, his sentence was commuted but he was sold and deported to St. Lucia in the British West Indies.

Out of an estimated 74,000 slaves in the united colony of Essequibo-Demerara about 13,000 took part in the uprising. And of the 350 plantations estates in the colony, only thirty-seven were involved. No doubt, many who did not take part sympathised with the rebels and shared their suspicion that the planters would spare no efforts to prevent them from obtaining their freedom.

On 25 August, Governor Murray set up a "court-martial" headed by Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Arthur Goodman, for the trials of the arrested rebel slaves who were considered to be "ringleaders." The trials which continued into early 1824 were conducted at different plantations and the prisoners were executed by shooting or hanging and their heads were cut off and nailed to posts. Over 200 Africans were beheaded and their heads placed on stakes at the Parade Ground in Georgetown and from Plaisance to Mahaica in East Demerara. Of those condemned to death, fourteen had their sentences commuted but, like Jack Gladstone, they were sold to other slave owners in the British West Indies.

In addition, there were other sentences, including solitary confinement and flogging of up to 1,000 lashes each. Some were also condemned to be chained for the rest of their servitude.

Meanwhile, on the day of the Bachelor's Adventure battle, the situation took a strange turn when Rev. John Smith was arrested and charged for encouraging the slaves to rebel. While awaiting trial, he was imprisoned in Colony House. His arrest, undoubtedly encouraged by many of the planters, was seen as an act of revenge against the priest for preaching to the slaves.

Despite being a civilian and charged for the crime allegedly committed before martial law was proclaimed, he faced a trial by a military court-martial presided by Lieutenant Colonel Goodman from 13 October to 24 November 1823. He was tried for four offences: promoting discontent and dissatisfaction in the minds of the slaves towards their masters, overseers and managers, and inciting rebellion; advising, consulting and corresponding with Quamina, and aiding and abetting him in the revolt; failure to make known the planned rebellion to the proper authorities; and not making efforts to suppress, detain and restrain Quamina once the rebellion was under way.

Smith denied the charges but, nevertheless, he remained imprisoned for seven weeks in Colony House before his trial took place. He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged and was transferred from Colony House to the local prison. He appealed to the British government which subsequently ordered a commutation of the death sentence and restored his freedom. However, while awaiting information of the results of his

appeal to arrive by ship from England, he died from pneumonia in the prison on 6 February 1824. To avoid the risk of stirring sentiment against the slave owners, the colonial authorities buried his body before daybreak but deliberately did not mark his grave.

The information that he was acquitted actually arrived in Georgetown on 30 March, weeks after his funeral. (Significantly, the appeals court in repealing his sentence also banned him from residing in Guyana and any other British Caribbean territory and ordered him to post a bond of 2,000 pounds.) News of his death was later published in British newspapers; it caused great outrage throughout Great Britain and 200 petitions denouncing the actions of the colonial authorities were sent to the British Parliament.

In Guyana, the slaves regarded Rev. Smith's death as a sacrifice which was made on their behalf, and soon after, they began referring to him as the "Demerara Martyr."

The numerous petitions, including some by parliamentarians, and newspaper comments condemning the military trial and the death sentence on Rev. Smith finally resulted in a formal motion being raised in the British House of Commons. It called for the members to "declare that they contemplate with serious alarm and deep sorrow the violation of law and justice" in the trial of Rev. Smith and urged King George to adopt measures to enable the just and humane administration of law in Demerara to "protect the voluntary instructors of the Negroes, as well as the Negroes themselves and the rest of His Majesty's subjects from oppression."

The motion was presented by a Member of Parliament from the Opposition and it was debated on 1 June and 11 June 1824.

Speeches opposing the motion and supporting the trial by court martial were made by parliamentarians on the government side as well as ministers of the government, including the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, George Canning. Speaking in support of the motion were leading members of the Opposition, including the famous leader of the anti-slavery movement, William Wilberforce, but despite their strong arguments, the government majority voted against it.

The forceful speeches on both sides examined the trial of Rev. Smith through the perspective of various laws - British common law, Dutch law, British military law, Dutch military law and Demerara colonial law.

The debate also threw light on the political feelings of British lawmakers of the early nineteenth century regarding their opinions on slavery and British amelioration policies in Guyana and the British Caribbean possessions. In addition, it exposed some of their views on the East Coast Demerara slave uprising of August 1823 which was a major blow to colonial rule and most likely helped to hasten the end of African slavery in the British colonial territories.

## THE END OF SLAVERY

The campaign for the end of slavery gained momentum in Great Britain and it was expected that slaves in the British colonies would soon be set free. Finally, on the 28 August 1833, the House of Commons in England approved the Emancipation Bill which was earlier introduced by Thomas Buxton.

The final Act, which would come into effect on 1 August 1834, stipulated that:

- (1) Immediate and effective measures would be taken for the abolition of slavery throughout the British colonies.
- (2) All children born under the passing of the Act, or under the age of six shall be free.
- (3) All slaves over the age of six years would have to serve an apprenticeship of six years in the case of field slaves, and four years in the case of others.
- (4) Apprentices should work for not more than 45 hours per week without pay, and any additional hours for pay.
- (5) Apprentices should be provided with food and clothing by the plantation owner.

(6) Funds should be provided for an efficient stipendiary magistracy, and for the moral and religious education of the ex-slaves.

(7) Compensation in the form of a free gift of 20 million English pounds should be paid to the slave owners for the loss of their slaves.

The Emancipation Act successfully ended one phase of a long and bitter struggle against a system which transformed people into beasts of labour with absolutely no human rights. Actually, slave society regarded the African slaves as mules and even referred to the offspring of a European and an African female slave as a "mulatto", meaning literally a "young mule".

As one phase of Guyana's colonial society came to an end, an equally difficult period began. The slaves were told of their forthcoming freedom and waited with eager joy to throw off their cruel chains and, in some cases, even more cruel masters.

It will be recalled that the East Coast Demerara rebellion of 1823, led by Quamina and implicating Rev. John Smith, was largely fuelled by the feeling that the planters were deliberately withholding news of the impending freedom of the slaves. In 1833, however, Governor James Carmichael Smyth did not make the same mistakes as John Murray did ten years earlier when he failed to make public a circular from Britain proposing certain improvements in the conditions under which slaves lived and worked in British colonies. It was this document which the slaves mistook at that time for the Emancipation Order, a mistake which precipitated the slave revolt of 1823.

Governor Smyth, however, had informed the slaves of the freedom date fixed by Britain even before that Act was published in the colony on 19 October 1833. However, he did not explain clearly to the slaves the implications of the apprenticeship system which was to succeed slavery.

There were some planters who were unwilling to comply with the Emancipation Act. Some Berbice planters announced their intention to remove their slaves immediately to Nickerie in Suriname before Emancipation Act came into force so as to avoid its effect. Suriname did not abolish slavery until 1863.

It must be noted that attached to the Emancipation Act was the condition which bound most of the freed slaves to their former masters until 1840 and which required them to work on the masters' estates seven and a half hours each day for six days each week of the year. On news of their emancipation, the slaves were either too overjoyed to note this binding condition, or did not fully understand what it meant.

Their masters, who were generally bitter about it, and in opposition to emancipation, avoided all discussions and preparations for the changed status of the slaves on August 1, 1834.

The long-awaited day, Friday 1 August 1834, finally arrived. It was a public holiday and many Africans who were now Christians attended religious services. Others danced in their homes, in their yards and in the streets and the merry-making continued late into the night.

But a rude shock awaited all the ex-slaves early the following morning when they were ordered back to the fields and other workplaces. This caused great confusion since they failed to understand how they could have gained their freedom and still be forced to work in their detested old posts.

But this condition was part of the Emancipation Act - an Apprenticeship period of six years - where the freed slaves were compelled by law to serve their old masters just as they had done when they were slaves. The masters were required to provide moral and religious education for the ex-slaves, but the planters' hostility to the Emancipation Act as a whole really meant that they would treat this six year period as an extension of slavery, even though the working hours were greatly reduced to seven and a half hours a day instead of the nine and ten hours they formerly demanded of each slave.

There was disorder on the East Coast of Demerara and grumbling throughout the colony in this first week of August. The Governor appeared personally in various places to address workers and explain the obligations which now fell upon them.

The planters called for martial law, no doubt hoping to by-pass the Emancipation Act altogether. But Governor Carmichael Smyth refused this request.

Confusion and disorder broke out on the West Coast Demerara and on August 8 four women were sentenced to the treadmill for riotous behaviour and refusal to work. Five men were sentenced to two days each on the treadmill, and thirty-nine strokes with the cat-o'nine-tails.

The Governor visited West Coast Demerara and brought some amount of order and understanding to the workers.

With the end of slavery, the plantation owners in Guyana received very high compensation from the British Government for the "loss" of their slaves. For each slave they received an average of 52 English pounds, which was the highest amount paid in any British colony. For a headman or driver, slave owners received as much as 230 English pounds. On the other hand, the ex-slaves, who had laboured to produce wealth for the planters and the colonial Government, received not a single cent in compensation.

## DAMON AND THE ESSEQUIBO REBELLION

On the Essequibo coast workers protested the apprenticeship scheme and there were sporadic stoppages of work throughout the week starting Sunday, August 3rd.

On that Sunday, Charles Bean, proprietor of Plantation Richmond, joined with other planters to kill sixty-five pigs belonging to his workers. They slaughtered the animals because they claimed the pigs destroyed the roots of the young canes. But the real reason was to cut off any alternative livelihood for their workers so that the apprentices would remain bound to estate labour. Planters in Essequibo and other parts of British Guiana even went so far as to cut down the fruit trees of their front lands which they felt would provide free meals for the ex-slaves, and, hence, encourage them not to work on the plantations.

On Saturday, August 9, the labour situation worsened dramatically on the Essequibo Coast. About seven hundred workers (ex-slaves) on the plantations between Richmond and Devonshire Castle stopped work and gathered in the Trinity Churchyard at La Belle Alliance.



Planters called for troops, and about forty armed soldiers of the West India Regiment under Captain Groves arrived from Capoey and took up their positions around the churchyard. In the meantime, a Richmond labourer, Damon, who by now was one of the leaders of the workers, ran up a "flag" on a pole as a sign of their freedom and independence from the planters.

When the minister of the church appealed to the crowd to disperse, they argued that since they were free they did not wish to return to the plantations to be forced to work. They stated that they were taking refuge in the churchyard which belonged to the King.

Charles Bean next tried to address the workers on behalf of the planters, but he only succeeded in inflaming them further by his threats and display of arrogance. He ordered two rural constables who were present to arrest two of the "ringleaders" (Damon was not one of them), but the two were immediately rescued by their friends. Bean and his fellow planters then called upon the soldiers to open fire on this unarmed crowd. Captain Groves, showing good control, declared that he would take no such action and would await the Governor's arrival.

The soldiers also did not act because they recognised that this was no mob, but just a crowd of peaceful workers gathered under their make-shift flag in order to show they were free people.

Governor Smyth arrived on Monday 11 August and the crowd quickly and peacefully obeyed his orders to end the seizure of the churchyard. Damon's "flag" which flew proudly for a few days in the churchyard was pulled down.

The Governor addressed the workers the next day at Plantation Richmond. He explained the Apprenticeship period which was in force, arrested the leaders of the demonstration, and ordered the rest back to work. Damon, by this time, was being referred to as the "Captain" and hence leader of the unrest.

He and a number of others were taken to Georgetown, tried and found guilty of rebellion. None of these men had threatened a single planter or his property and had not attacked anyone. They had simply stopped working for a few days and assembled under their own flag. Four of them were sentenced to terms of imprisonment and severe floggings while two were

sentenced to transportation (to New South Wales, Australia). Damon was sentenced to be hanged.

At the trial one of the judges protested against the trial proceedings but Chief Justice Wray insisted on the death penalty for Damon. He ruled that the hoisting of a flag, though by persons unarmed, was an act of rebellion, and though all were equally guilty, under the Roman-Dutch law, some might be punished more and some less.

At noon, on Monday October 13, 1834, Damon was hanged on a scaffold specially erected in front of the new Public Buildings. (The Public Buildings - which now house the Guyana National Assembly - had earlier been declared open on 3 April 1834).

## THE APPRENTICESHIP PERIOD

As mentioned earlier, the Emancipation Act (of 1833) stipulated that the slaves would continue to work on the plantations as "apprentices" for a further period of six years if they were field slaves and for four years if they were house slaves. They were to work for seven and a half hours a day, or forty five hours a week. This was a deliberate action to ensure that the plantation owners were provided with free labour even after slavery was abolished. Much of this arrangement was not explained to slaves after the Emancipation Act was passed.

In British Guiana, the 1 August 1834 was declared a public holiday by the Governor. While many slaves celebrated emancipation by making merry, others went to their churches to offer prayers.

On the following morning, the "freed" Africans were more than surprised and very angry when they were ordered by their masters to return to work. On many plantations they refused to work, and the Governor himself had to visit quite a few plantations in Demerara to explain the apprenticeship regulations to the African workers. By the 5 August, the situation had reached such a crisis that he had to issue a proclamation ordering all the "apprentices" to obey the regulations.

The Africans were thus forced back to work, but they did so reluctantly. From time to time short strikes occurred, and there were acts of sabotage, as during the slavery period, on plantation property.

Harsh punishment, including flogging and imprisonment, was inflicted on disobedient apprentices. Some were also sentenced to cruel punishment on the treadmill. Even the British Government became concerned that the Africans were being unfairly treated and, as a result, it appointed "stipendiary" or special magistrates to listen to complaints from both Africans and planters. In general, however, these magistrates took the side of the planters and did little to halt the unfair treatment. In many cases, local planters were appointed as temporary magistrates by the Governor until the arrival of the appointees from England.

It was generally felt by the ex-slaves that the special magistrates were biased towards the planters. This happened because in some cases, punishments imposed by the planters were supported by the magistrates. Also, if an apprentice broke the law, such as refusing to work, the case was passed on to the regular magistrate who generally imposed very harsh punishment such as whipping and imprisonment. But a few of the special magistrates were not popular with the planters since they frequently upheld the appeals of the apprentices.

The planters themselves devised their own methods to control the "apprentices". Those who refused to do overtime work had their rations reduced and were refused their handouts of rum, sugar and salt-fish. The planter could also decide if an apprentice's work was not satisfactory, thus forcing the apprentice to do extra work when he could be working for wages. It was a usual practice for a planter to put an apprentice in the lock-up on a trumped-up charge to await the arrival of the magistrate on the plantation. However, the charges would be dropped just before the magistrate's arrival, but the apprentice would still have to work the extra time equivalent to the period he was jailed. On some plantations where the ex-slaves had provision grounds, the planters made it difficult to earn money from them. In many cases, the planters ordered that fruit trees should be cut down, while others prevented the ex-slaves from keeping livestock.

The planters, because of their control of the Court of Policy, were able to influence the passage of laws to control the ex-slaves. It became illegal for

apprentices to leave the plantation even during their free time unless they had written permission from the owner or the overseer. A special regulation fixed high fees for licences for those who had special skills to practise their trade. This affected the ex-slaves who were craftsmen - such as carpenters, coopers, masons and blacksmiths - and also those who had small retail shops and fishing boats. Even those who did door-to-door selling of their farm products were pressured with high trading licence fees.

During this period, the planters were also thinking about the future when they would no longer have free labour provided by the "apprentices". They knew that after the end of the apprenticeship period, the African workers would be in a position to make demand for high wages since there were no other groups of workers available. They thus opted to encourage immigration, and some free Africans from the Caribbean islands, and also from the USA, were brought to British Guiana as paid labourers from 1835. The first group came from Antigua where African slaves were given total freedom in August 1834. Small groups of Portuguese were also brought from Madeira as indentured labourers from 1834.

Based on the monthly reports the special magistrates sent to the Colonial Office, it was clear that the "apprentices" continued to endure harsh punishments as they did under slavery. In 1837, a British Parliamentary Committee recommended that certain punishments such as the flogging of women should be halted.

By 1838, the British Government felt that further problems might arise if one group of "apprentices" would continue to provide free labour on the plantations for a further two years after the former house-slave group were finally set free in 1838. It therefore proclaimed the freedom of all "apprentices" on the 1 August 1838.

With a free population now outside the controls of the sugar planters, the Government saw the need to maintain law and order. As a result, a regular police force was formed in 1839 and it was made up of an Inspector-general, three Inspectors (one for each county) and 286 men. It also had a mounted section with 40 horses. Even before the establishment of the police force, order was maintained by rural constables and also by a small military force known as the West Indian Regiment stationed in Georgetown. From time to time, groups of these soldiers were deployed to different parts of the country when there were signs of trouble. Some members of this

Regiment were ex-slaves who had been recruited even before Emancipation.

## THE ARRIVAL OF THE PORTUGUESE

From the time of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and, particularly, during the period of the campaign to end slavery, the planters of the Caribbean and Guyana were aware of the acute need to find a substitute labour force that was both cheap and reliable to fill the ranks of the soon-to-be-liberated Africans. They initially were interested in seeking a labour force from Europe since they realised that there was a decreasing proportion of Whites in the colony. They felt that this imbalance could be remedied by recruiting indentured labour from European countries. In addition to strengthening their own security, they wanted to have an alternative labour force to compete with the ex-slaves for plantation jobs after emancipation and thus forcing down employment costs.

In late 1834, a small group of Portuguese recruited from the poverty-stricken Portuguese-owned island of Madeira arrived in Guyana to work on a sugar plantation in Demerara. Then on May 3, 1835, 40 indentured peasants arrived from Madeira on the ship, "Louisa Baillie". The arrivals were brought in through the private enterprise of the planters who were made aware of the great poverty and political instability in the island. The hard-pressed Madeiran peasants were most likely eager to seek their fortune in a land being referred to as "El Dorado". By the end of the year 553 others had arrived and were contracted as indentured labourers to various sugar plantations.

The Madeiran peasants were capable farmers since they were born and bred on a small and mountainous island where every square inch of the soil was precious. Their recruitment was part of a migration scheme based on a "bounty" system. Under this system, public money, made available by the British Government, was used to pay the planters for each immigrant transported to the Colony.

In 1835, in addition to the Portuguese who arrived, small groups of Germans and English farmers were also recruited. In 1836, 44 Irish and 47 English labourers landed in Guyana, and in following year 43 Scottish labourers arrived from Glasgow. In 1839, 209 Maltese and 121 Germans were added to the population. Many of these labourers did not adapt well to

the climate and they suffered from a high mortality rate. In particular, the Maltese, who were indentured to Hibernia in Essequibo, suffered badly and their social conditions deteriorated so very rapidly that the Governor cancelled their indentures and arranged for them to be shipped back to Malta.

Between 1836 and 1839 the planters did not recruit any Portuguese, but this situation changed in 1840 when 15 Portuguese from Madeira arrived to be followed by 4,297 in 1841.

The first arrivals suffered from deficiency in diet, poor accommodation and, above all, overwork in a rigorous climate in order to improve their economic status. Yet, suffering, and even death, did not deter them, for 30 of the original emigrants, at the completion of their indenture, returned to Madeira with their earnings and encouraged their families, relatives and friends to migrate to Guyana. The later arrivals from Madeira seemed to be less impoverished, acclimatised better, and suffered little from sickness.

The year 1841, however, proved to be a bad year for the immigrants as yellow fever was raging in British Guiana and, among the children, measles spread rapidly with fatal results. Concern over the high death rate of the Portuguese led to the setting up of a commission of inquiry by the British Guiana Government to investigate the reasons for the sickness and mortality among the emigrants.

Based on the results, instructions were duly sent to the recruiting agent in Madeira to discontinue sending emigrants to Guyana after March 1, 1842. Migration was also halted when the Governor and the Bishop of the island began a scare campaign warning those who wanted to go to Guyana that they would be branded and sold as slaves on arrival. This caused the emigration to slow down to a trickle. Despite the mortality and the subsequent stoppage of emigration from Madeira, yet more than 1,200 Portuguese arrived between 1842 and 1846. A turn-around occurred in 1846 when a famine struck the island and this encouraged over 6,000 of the inhabitants to migrate to Guyana under the "bounty" system that year.

By 1848, an additional 4,000 left the island for Guyana. But migration was halted again in 1848 due to a high mortality rate among these new immigrants, but it resumed in 1850. From then on, small numbers of Portuguese continued to arrive until 1882 when the last group of 182 came.

In the period from the inception of Portuguese migration, 30,645 indentured labourers arrived mainly from Madeira, while smaller groups came from the Azores, Cape Verde and Brazil.

The Portuguese labourers rarely remained on the sugar plantations after they completed their period of indenture. Generally, they found it physically difficult to carry out the tough tasks in the sugar cane fields. But they were also influenced by the popular opinion that working in the sugar cane fields was akin to slavery. In addition, they felt uncomfortable working alongside Blacks and Indians, ethnic groups that Whites regarded as socially inferior. They, being White, also felt it was below their dignity to associate themselves with such a menial position in the colonial society. Many of the planters, themselves Whites, also were in an uncomfortable position of ordering people of their own ethnic group to do strenuous field work. A suggestion by the planters for the Portuguese to be given the status as British citizens was never followed up.

As soon as their two- to four-year period of indenture ended, they moved off the plantations and on to their small plots of land as well as into the huckster and retail trade. The White merchants in Georgetown employed many of them as agents to retail imported goods to the rural areas. They quickly took over this role from some Africans and mulattos who had this task. As retailers, they established shops and supplied basic supplies to the plantation workers who were, by this time, mainly Indian indentured labourers. A few of them also began importing their own goods, including famous Portuguese wines, from Madeira.

The Portuguese adapted very quickly to commerce. During their indenture, they worked hard and saved their earnings which they invested mainly in their business. By 1851, in Georgetown, 173 out of the 296 shops belonged to Portuguese. In New Amsterdam, they owned 28 of the 52 registered shops while in the villages they had 283 of the 432 shops. By the end of the nineteenth century, large Portuguese firms were beginning to appear on Water Street in Georgetown.

The Portuguese made a significant contribution to the economy of the country as they moved into every type of business. Eventually, they formed a significant section of the growing merchant class, and became a buffer class between the non-White population and the English expatriate population. However, they were generally regarded by the English planters

and civil servants as belonging to a slightly lower social status, and these Englishmen soon classified them as a different ethnic group from that of "Europeans". .

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE LABOUR SHORTAGE

Despite the fact that the apprenticeship system forced the ex-slaves to continue to provide a great proportion of free labour on the plantations, the amount of available labour (free or paid) was not sufficient to maintain a steady level of production. The situation became even more acute after 1838 when apprenticeship ended.

In 1829 there were about 230 sugar and 174 coffee and cotton plantations, almost all of which were fully cultivated. But by 1849 these were reduced to 180 sugar and 16 small coffee plantations. Cotton cultivation on a commercial scale no longer was feasible because of competition from slave-produced cotton in the United States. The cotton mills in England preferred to purchase cotton from the United States because the prices were lower.

Whole districts were being abandoned and taken over by bush. Where flourishing estates existed, there were now only small scattered provision grounds cultivated by the ex-slaves who lived in small villages.

In the area between the Abary and Mahaicony Rivers the large cotton plantations which had existed were abandoned and overrun with bush. This situation also existed in the district between the Mahaicony and Mahaica Rivers and even on the previously more flourishing area on the west bank of the Mahaica. There was an almost total neglect of roads, bridges and canals. The freed Africans who lived in those districts established small squatting villages on some of these abandoned plantations, or through their own savings, managed to collectively purchase some of these lands from the European owners especially after 1838. In the backlands, they cultivated small farms to produce fruits, ground provisions, plantains and vegetables. They also kept a few cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry.

On the East Coast Demerara, the labour shortage was more strongly felt after 1838, when the Africans withdrew their labour and opted to move to the villages which they established outside the limits of the existing plantations. The three best estates in the entire country - La Penitance,



Ruimveldt and Houston - suffered badly from decreased production through intermittent labour shortage.

The West Demerara area did not fare better. On the West Bank Demerara, the abandoned coffee lands became occupied by African squatter settlements.

The situation was even worse in Essequibo. Leguan which had 23 sugar and 3 coffee plantations before 1834 had only 8 producing plantations in the 1840s. A significant reduction of sugar, coffee and cotton cultivation on Wakenaam, Hogg Island, Tiger Island and the Essequibo Coast also occurred.

With regards to the situation in Berbice, it was no different. After 1838, of the rural population of 18,000 over 12,000 were living on small freeholds and bush and squatter settlements. By the 1840s, almost all the cotton plantations were abandoned. The West Coast Berbice district which was one of the greatest cotton producing areas in the entire country became a desolate area with the complete abandonment of the plantations. As with the eastern part of Berbice, only a few sugar estates continued to show some form of progress.

Meanwhile, the planters were losing money because of the wages they now had to pay to the labourers on their estates. In 1842 they announced a reduction in wages, and the African labourers immediately retaliated with a strike that lasted for six weeks. The planters were forced to reinstate the wage structure before the strike was called off.

But most of the Africans were not too interested in working on the estates. They continued to occupy the houses they lived in during slavery, cultivated their small farm plots and caught fishes in the canals. They thus maintained themselves by this form of subsistence. Whenever they needed money, they grouped themselves under a headman and bargained with the planters for a quantity of work for the highest pay possible. After completing the task in three or four days, they would then disperse until another task was arranged for them.

While some planters were selling off their unprofitable estates, others devised a system to ensure that cultivation continued. This system was known as metayage, under which planters divided up their estates into

plots which they gave to individual labourers to cultivate sugar cane. Half of the sugar produced was to be kept by the labourers, but any rum that was manufactured was to be retained by the planters.

But after a very short period the system failed because the African labourers preferred to work for short periods for cash payments; they were not prepared to face the risks of crop failure or a drop in the price of sugar.

## WEST INDIAN AND AFRICAN MIGRATION TO GUYANA

With the passing of the Emancipation Act in 1833, the sugar planters in Guyana anticipated a labour shortage even though the apprenticeship system would force the ex-slaves to continue to provide free labour. As a result they made plans to recruit labourers from the West Indies and elsewhere. (Chapter 47 tells of the recruitment of Portuguese indentured labour).

Because of the close proximity of the West Indian colonies, the planters felt it would be more economical to bring a paid labour force from those islands. Between 1835 and 1838, about 5,000 labourers were recruited from Barbados, St. Kitts, Antigua, Montserrat and Nevis. These islands either had no apprenticeship system or they had a fairly large free African population by 1834. The employment of West Indian full-time wage labour was carried out by the private sugar planters who competed sharply among themselves for the available migrants. Many of the newly recruited migrants were openly induced by other planters who offered them higher wages to leave their employers.

Migration to Guyana was creating a shortage of labour in the West Indian islands and thus pushing up wages. Naturally, the West Indian planters tried to discourage migration since they wanted a full complement of labour force in their own islands.

In 1839 a Voluntary Subscription Immigration Society was formed by the Guyanese planters to bring labourers from the West Indies in particular. Members of this Society received immigrants in proportion to the share capital they invested. The Society brought into Guyana over 2,900 labourers mainly from Barbados during 1840 to 1841.

From 1841 the British government became involved in the migration scheme when the "bounty" system was applied in recruiting labour from the West Indies. But after objections from the West Indian planters, the British Government discontinued the system with regard to recruiting labour from their islands. The island governments also banned recruiting agents on their territories in an effort to prevent migration to Guyana.

The Guyanese planters also looked to Africa to obtain an additional labour force after 1834. In the period that followed, slaves from Africa continued to be transported to the United States, Cuba and Brazil. Some of the slave ships were boarded by British warships and the Africans removed from them. Most were returned to Africa, but some of them were taken to Guyana and the West Indies as indentured labourers.

Permission was also granted by the British Government for the recruitment of contract labour from West Africa. This recruitment and emigration from West Africa was closely controlled since there were fears that if too many persons were contracted it could stimulate an internal slave trade in that region. From 1841, agents began to recruit labourers from Sierra Leone, most of whom had been liberated from the slave trading ships boarded by the British. Between 1838 and 1865, a total of 13,355 Africans came to Guyana as contract labourers.

## THE ARRIVAL OF THE EAST INDIANS

Despite the recruitment of West Indian, African and Portuguese and other European labourers, this did not help very much to ease the labour shortage. After the West Indian islands placed restrictions on emigration, the sugar planters in Guyana began to look further afield to obtain a large labour force. One of them, John Gladstone, the father of the British statesman, applied for permission from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to recruit Indians to serve in Guyana for a five-year period of indenture. Gladstone himself owned a sugar plantation in West Demerara.

Gladstone's proposed venture was supported by a number of other sugar planters whose estates were expected to obtain some of the Indians to be recruited. By this time Indians were being taken to Mauritius to work on the sugar plantations and were proving to be very productive. Gladstone's request was granted and he, Davidson, Barclay and Company, Andrew Colville, John and Henry Moss, all owners of sugar plantations in Guyana,

made arrangements to recruit 414 Indians. Of these 150 were "hill coolies" from Chota Nagpur, and the remainder were from Burdwan and Bancoorah near to Calcutta. (The word "coolie", a corruption of the Tamil word "kuli", referred to a porter or labourer).

To transport these Indians, two ships, the *Whitby* and *Hesperus* were chartered. The *Whitby* sailed from Calcutta on the 13 January 1838 with 249 immigrants, and after a voyage of 112 days, arrived in Guyana on the 5 May. Five Indians died on the voyage. The ship immediately sailed to Berbice and 164 immigrants, who were recruited by Highbury and Waterloo plantations, disembarked. The ship then returned to Demerara and between 14-16 May the remaining 80 immigrants landed and were taken to Belle Vue Estate.

Of the total of 244 Indians who arrived on the *Whitby*, there were 233 men, 5 women and 6 children.

The *Hesperus* left Calcutta on the 29 January 1838 with 165 passengers and arrived in Guyana late on the night of the 5 May, by which time 13 had already died. The remaining 135 men, 6 women and 11 children were distributed between the 8-10 May to the plantations Vreedestein, Vreed-en-hoop and Anna Regina.

On their arrival, the male adult Indians agreed with the estate owners to a contract, part of which (for Belle Vue plantation), stated:

1. We engage to perform willingly and diligently our duty as labourers, with the usual time allowed us for rest and food; and should we be, at any time during the period hereinafter named, unable to perform our duty, from sickness or other inevitable cause, we hereby agree to relinquish all claim upon our master for wages during the time we are absent, provided we are found in food and clothing while so absent from work.

2. As . . . the natives shall not be a burden to the colony in the event of their leaving their employment, one rupee per month shall be retained from the pay of each individual till there shall be sufficient sum to provide a passage for each to Calcutta, and should no such contingency take place, the money shall be restored at the end of five years.

Only the adult male immigrants - not the women and children - were bound by this five-year contract of indenture. Based on the contract, they received the following rate of pay:

Davidson, Barclay and Company, owners of Highbury and Waterloo estates in Berbice paid (per month) superintendents 24 guilders, headmen 10.10 guilders, labourers (men) 7.10 guilders, and boys 6 guilders. The other estates (in Demerara) paid superintendents 16 rupees, headmen 7 rupees, labourers (men) 5 rupees, and boys 4 rupees.

At that period the value of a guilder was 17 British pence when a British pound was made up of 240 pence. The value of a rupee was about 28 British pence.

The hours of work varied from estate to estate, but generally the working period was from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. with a two-hour rest period around midday.

On the estates, each immigrant received a weekly allowance of food. Some estates gave the following: 13 lbs. rice, 1½ lbs. dried fish, ¾ lb. onions and a small quantity of pepper and ghee (or butter). Other estates gave daily allowances of 28 ounces of rice, 4 ounces of dal (yellow split peas), 1 ounce of ghee or oil, half an ounce of salt, 2 ounces of dried fish, 2 ounces of tumeric or tamarind, and 1 ounce of onion and pepper.

The allowance generally included 2 blankets, a jacket, 2 dhotis, 1 cup, 1 wooden bowl and 1 cup (to be shared by four persons).

Within six months of their arrival, reports reached Britain that the Indians were adapting to their new living situation, but by January 1839 agents of the Anti-Slavery Society accused some planters in Demerara of ill-treatment, including whipping, and expressed concerns over the high death rate of the Indians. The Society, which kept a close watch on the plantations to ensure that slavery in another form was not re-introduced, claimed that because of bad treatment which included flogging and imprisonment, some Indians had run away from the plantations. It also reported that each indenture was paid an equivalent of less than a third of what they should be getting.

Shortly after, a three-man team led by the Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, John Scoble, visited Guyana to investigate the conditions under which the Indians worked and lived. After observing the conditions first hand they reported their concerns to the Governor, Sir Henry Light. In response to these charges, the Governor appointed a commission of inquiry and several African plantation labourers, who bravely gave evidence, supported the Society's accusations against the offending planters. The commission found that the Indians were indeed being ill-treated and the Governor ordered the prosecution of those who had brutalised them.

When news of the ill-treatment of the Indians reached India, the British authorities there immediately placed a ban on emigration to Guyana. The sugar planters in Guyana were very upset over this development since they were hoping that, if they continued to obtain a sizable labour force, they would be able to make fairly large profits.

Despite the bad treatment on some estates, other Indians, especially on the Berbice estates, were generally well treated.

Nevertheless, the death rate was relatively high. Of the 396 Indians who arrived in May 1838, 48 had died by January 1839. By the end of the indenture period in 1843, an additional 50 died. It was clear that the immigrants did not acclimatise well and fell sick very quickly.

At the end of 1843 when their period of indenture came to an end, 236 Indians (206 men, 12 women, 14 boys and 4 girls) departed for India in two ships, the Louisa Baillie and Water Ditch. Sixty others opted to remain in Guyana.

## NEW INDIAN IMMIGRATION AFTER 1845

The planters were also at this period agitating for state-aided immigration even though this was opposed by the influential Anti-Slavery Society in England. But in Guyana, the planters, who held a majority in the Combined Court of Policy, decided to pressure the British Government to agree to help fund immigration from India. Their chance came in 1840 when the Combined Court of Policy was presented with a proposed tax ordinance which would approve funds totalling \$206,000 to pay civil servants in the Colony. The planters refused to approve it unless immigration from India

and elsewhere was permitted. The British Government then sent the Governor of Trinidad, Sir Henry McLeod, to negotiate with the planters who eventually won their demand. After the British Government agreed to re-open immigration, the Combined Court of Policy passed the tax ordinance.

While the sugar planters managed to obtain a limited quantity of labour from Madeira, West Africa, the West Indies and Europe, it was not until 1845 that immigration from India resumed, this time with the aid of government funds. In that year, two ships transported 593 Indians from Calcutta while one ship brought 233 from Madras. A steady flow continued in 1846 when 4,019 arrived from Calcutta and Madras. In 1847 a total of 3,461 arrived and 3,545 came the following year.

Many of these new immigrants (who came from 1845 to 1848) were unsuitable for field work since they were generally poor city dwellers. On arrival in Guyana, some of them abandoned their tasks on the plantations and resorted to a life of wandering, begging and doing menial jobs.

When this new batch of Indians first began to arrive in 1845, they refused to sign any written agreements with the plantation owners. As a result they had the option of working for not more than four weeks. In 1846, this increased to six months, but the planters felt that even this period was insufficient. Two years later, the hiring period was extended to one year; later in 1848, the British Government agreed to extend it to three years just before another ban was placed by the Indian Government on emigration from India. This ban was implemented because of the high death rate among Indians in Guyana.

When Indian immigration to Guyana resumed in 1851, the indentured labourer was required to agree to a contract period of five years. This was reduced to three years in 1853.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE GUYANA-VENEZUELA BORDER DISPUTE

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century, the British Government felt it was necessary to demarcate Guyana's borders. In 1840, the British Government issued a commission to Robert Schomburgk, a German surveyor, geographer and naturalist, authorizing him to survey and mark out the boundaries of British Guiana. It was the intention of that Government, when the work was completed, to communicate to the Governments of Venezuela and Brazil the views of the British Government as to the true boundary of the colony, and then to settle by negotiation any details to which these Governments might take objection.

In carrying out this commission, Schomburgk personally investigated practically the whole of the country (west of the Essequibo): first, from Barima Point and the Amakura River as far as the confluence of the Acarabisi Creek with the Cuyuni River; later, the whole area stretching west and north between the Essequibo and the Cuyuni.

Schomburgk did not discover or invent any new boundaries. He took particular care to base his reports from actual exploration and information obtained from the Amerindians, as well as from the evidence of Dutch remains at Barima and on the Cuyuni. He, thus, was able determine the limits of Dutch possession and the zone from which all trace of Spanish influence was absent.

With his reports Schomburgk submitted maps of his surveys, on which he indicated the line which he would propose to the British Government for adoption. He also called attention to the fact that the British Government might justly claim the whole basin of the Cuyuni and the Yuruari (a tributary of the Cuyuni located in Venezuela), on the ground that the natural boundary of British Guiana included any territory through which flowed rivers, themselves tributaries of the Essequibo.

With a view of facilitating the negotiations for the adjustment of the boundary, he proposed that Great Britain should consent to surrender its claim to a more extended frontier inland. It was on this principle that he drew the boundary line which since became famous as the Schomburgk Line, which included, therefore, much less territory than that claimed by Great Britain.



It was at this period that the discussions with Venezuela about the boundary commenced. The first approach made by the Venezuelan Government was in January 1841 when, in reply to the British announcement of the boundary, it proposed the negotiation of a Treaty of Limits, and expressed a desire that this Treaty should precede the survey and demarcation of the frontier.

Later in the year, the Venezuelan Government renewed the proposal for the negotiation of a Treaty and, at the same time, protested against Schomburgk's proceedings in placing boundary posts at certain points. The Venezuelan Government was informed, in reply, that in the opinion of the British Government, the negotiation of a Boundary Treaty should follow rather than precede the survey operations. The reply added that although Schomburgk had put up certain marks, he was fully aware that the demarcation as made was merely a preliminary measure open to future discussions between the two Governments. The Venezuelan Ambassador in London, Fortique, renewed his protests, and Lord Aberdeen, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, consented in January 1842 to send instructions for the removal of the boundary posts which had been placed by Schomburgk near the Orinoco. However, at the same time, it was distinctly declared that the British Government was not abandoning any portion of its rights over the territory which was formerly held by the Dutch.

In 1843, Fortique, the Venezuelan Ambassador in London, requested the speedy conclusion of a Treaty to define the boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana. Then in a note of the 31 January 1844, he presented the first formal statement of the Venezuelan claim that the territory of the Republic extended to the Essequibo River.

The main grounds on which this claim was based were the following:

1. Spain was the first discoverer and occupant of the New World.
2. The Spaniards had at an early date explored and occupied the Orinoco and all the contiguous country, and the Barima, Moruka and Pomeroon Rivers.
3. At the time of the Treaty of Munster, the Dutch had no possessions in Guiana, or none at least on the northern and western side of the Essequibo.

4. The Spanish dominion extended as far as the Essequibo, and any possession of the Dutch to the west of that river was an usurpation, and had not been approved by Spain.

The statement concluded by insisting that the Essequibo was the natural boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana, and that the British colonists possessed little or nothing beyond that river.

To this claim a reply was promptly sent by Lord Aberdeen, in which, while it was admitted that the American continent was first discovered and partly occupied by the Spaniards, it was observed that such fact could have no bearing upon the matter under discussion. The reply further pointed out that while Venezuela was without a settlement of any sort upon the territory in question, the concession of the Essequibo as the boundary would involve the immediate surrender by Great Britain of half of British Guiana.

Lord Aberdeen also stated that Great Britain was willing to concede out of friendly regard for Venezuela, a part of the British extreme claim in the upper Cuyuni area, providing that the Amerindian tribes living there should be properly protected.

Lord Aberdeen's proposal, when communicated some time later to the British Guiana Government, was found to be extremely unfavourable to the colony. The British Guiana Government stated that the proposal would interfere with settled districts, and it was characterized by the Governor, Henry McLeod, as "going far beyond any concession which the Venezuelans were entitled to expect".

The Venezuelan Government, however, failed to appreciate the large concession of British rights which had been proposed solely as a means of facilitating a satisfactory adjustment of the boundary question. No reply was sent to Lord Aberdeen's Note, and it was consequently decided by the British Government in 1850 that as the proposal had remained for six years and still not accepted, it might be considered as having lapsed. The British Charge d'Affaires in Caracas was instructed to communicate this decision to the Venezuelan Government.

In 1850, the British Government felt that Venezuela was making military preparations aimed at attempting to occupy Barima Point and other territory

claimed by Great Britain. There was an immediate exchange of Notes between the two countries, and it was finally agreed that neither party should occupy or encroach upon the territory in dispute, but no definition of the territory was ever discussed.

This arrangement was termed the "Agreement of 1850" to which the Venezuelan Government frequently appealed, but which it repeatedly violated in succeeding years.

Venezuela's first acts of violation were the occupation of fresh positions to the east of its previous settlements, and the founding in 1858 of the town of Nueva Providencia on the right bank of the Yuruari. In consequence of this latter action, the Governor of British Guiana, Philip Wodehouse, was sent in 1858 to Caracas to negotiate for a settlement of the boundary, but he found the Venezuelan State in so disturbed a condition (as a result of civil disturbances) that it was impossible to commence negotiations, and eventually he came away without having effected anything. For the next nineteen years the civil disturbances in Venezuela prevented any resumption of negotiations.

#### The Guyana-Suriname Border (1831-1899)

Up to the period of the establishment of the united Colony of British Guiana, the upper reaches of the Corentyne River were largely uncharted. In 1841 the British Government commissioned Sir Robert H. Schomburgk to survey the boundaries of the Colony of British Guiana. As part of this activity, Schomburgk proposed exploring the upper extent of the Corentyne River. As a result, the Governor of British Guiana suggested to the Governor of Suriname that he should send a commissioner to cooperate in the exploration of the river which was regarded as the boundary between the two colonies. However, the Government of Suriname declined to participate in the survey on the grounds that the Governor "having no instructions to that effect, was unable to appoint a commissioner and that as he was not aware of any difference of opinion as to the boundary and did not anticipate any, he saw no occasion for sending a representative."

Schomburgk accordingly explored the Corentyne River alone and in its upper reaches found two rivers, the Kutari and the Curuni, which united and flowed into the Corentyne. Schomburgk named the united river the

Corentyne and sailed down it to the coast. As a result of this journey the Corentyne with the Kutari as its source was mapped as forming the boundary between British Guiana and Suriname. Subsequently maps drawn by both Dutch and English cartographers embodied Schomburgk's findings. Thus, for example, in 1892 in Dornseiffen's Atlas, published at Amsterdam, this was the delineation followed. This delineation remained unchallenged until after the turn of the twentieth century.

Meanwhile, in 1871 Barrington Brown, a geologist, while carrying out a geological survey, discovered a river in Guyana to the West of the Kutari which he named the New River. It was his opinion that the New River was larger than the Kutari, and that the latter, for that reason, ought to be regarded as being only a branch. Nevertheless, despite this assertion Barrington Brown himself mapped the New River as a tributary of the Corentyne. Both the British and the Dutch continued to publish maps on this basis until 1899 when W.L. Loth, a land surveyor in Suriname, drew a map which, for the first time, showed the New River as the continuation of the Corentyne.

Significantly, Loth, eleven years before in 1888, had produced a map of the Guianas, "based on the best available information and my own measurements" and issued with the approval of the Governor of Suriname, which showed both the New River and the Kutari but with the Kutari as the Boundary river.

In 1899, the Arbitration Tribunal in Paris demarcated the boundary between the colony of British Guiana and Venezuela and referred to British Guiana's boundary with Suriname as continuing "to the source of the Corentyne called the Kutari river". The Dutch authorities used this occasion to raise a protest in which they claimed that, as a result of Barrington Brown's remarks in 1871, the New River and not the Kutari ought to be regarded as the upper continuation of the Corentyne and for this reason the boundary. To this protest, Lord Salisbury, the British Secretary of State on behalf of the United Kingdom, in 1900 replied that it was now too late to reopen this particular issue as the Kutari had long been accepted on both sides as the boundary.

## THE VILLAGE MOVEMENT

Immediately after Emancipation the European planters and the Government took a decision not to sell land to the free Africans. The general aim was to ensure that the Africans continued to be a source of labour on the plantations.

But economic circumstances forced the planters, shortly after, to change their position. Many cotton plantations in particular became unprofitable by 1838 because Britain began to purchase cheaper cotton from the United States where there were very large cotton plantations which used African slave labour. The smaller cotton plantations in Guyana could not survive in such a situation and some of them were abandoned. The owner of Plantation Northbrook, a cotton plantation on the East Coast Demerara, decided to sell it to a group of 83 Africans for 30,000 guilders, equivalent to 2000 British pounds or \$10,000. These Africans, like many others, had saved money that they had earned from over-time work over the years. They were mainly headmen and mechanics from Grove, Paradise, Hope and Enmore; and since much of the money they had saved was in the form of coins, they had to transport the payment in wheel-barrows to the seller.

Shortly after, Queen Victoria agreed to a request from the new owners to rename the plantation Victoria, in her honour.

By 1839, Africans purchased plantations of Lichfield, Golden Grove, St. John and Providence in West Berbice. Lichfield was bought by one person, Cudjoe Mc Pherson for \$3000, and he later divided the plantation into 12 sections which he sold to other Africans for a profit.

By this time the planters realised that many Africans had accumulated much savings, so they immediately raised land prices. When 61 Africans bought Beterverwagting, a plantation smaller than Northbrook, they had to pay \$22,000 for it. New Orange Nassau, a plantation of 800 acres, was purchased by 128 persons for \$50,000 in 1840 and it was renamed Buxton in honour of Thomas Buxton who championed the cause of Emancipation in the British Parliament. In 1841, another group paid \$80,000 for Plantation Friendship, located next to Buxton.

Some planters used other methods to make quick money by selling portions of their estates to African labourers. On the Essequibo Coast, for instance, the owners of Dageraad, Mocha and Westfield divided the front lands into lots and sold them for \$100 to \$200 each. Soon, a thriving

"proprietary" village of Africans developed in that area and was named Queenstown in honour of Queen Victoria. In the same manner, the front lands of Plantation Aberdeen were divided and sold to Africans who established the village of Williamstown. In a very short time, other "proprietary" villages were established throughout the coast of Guyana.

In 1840, the White sugar plantation owners decided to reduce the wages for African field and factory labourers. They claimed that they had to do so because the export price per ton of sugar had dropped below the cost of production. The owners also discontinued the allowances of food and medicine to the workers, most of whom had continued to live on the plantations. To deprive the workers of other forms of subsistence and to force them to accept the lower wages, they also prevented them from fishing in the canals, and destroyed their pigs and chopped down the fruit trees growing on their small cultivation plots. If the African labourers did not comply meekly to this new situation, they were expelled from estates.

In response to these developments, the African workers on the Demerara and Essequibo estates went on strike from January to March. This strike greatly affected sugar production, since the indentured Indian, Portuguese and other imported African labourers were still insufficient to handle all the work.

The Africans were of the view that they had no economic future if they continued to reside on the sugar plantations. They were seeing other Africans buying up the abandoned cotton plantations, and they felt that they too must acquire their own land. During the period of the strike, 65 of them pooled their savings and purchased Plaisance for \$39,000. The estates of Peter's Hall, Farm and Garden of Eden on the East Bank Demerara, and Danielstown and Bush Lot on the Essequibo Coast were also acquired in 1840 by groups of Africans.

Another strike in December 1847 to protest another cut in wages, forced more Africans to abandon the sugar estates. Some of them moved to the existing villages while others who had no savings squatted on Crown lands.

The moving away of Africans from the estates placed added pressures on sugar production and the planters used devious means to force them to return to work there. One of these means was to let loose water from the estate canals to flood the nearby African villages. The planters, no doubt,

felt that if the Africans' farms were damaged, they would return to the estates to work.

The African villages also faced administrative problems during the 1840s. The shareholders, or proprietors, possessed no experience in cooperative management, and since they used up their savings to purchase land, they had nothing left for maintaining the roads, bridges, sluice gates, and drainage canals. As a result, the conditions of the villages and the communal plantations deteriorated.

The land buying by Africans continued until 1852. There were at this period over 82,000 Africans of working age and roughly half of them lived in villages and worked from time to time on the estates. By that time, too, Africans had established 25 villages on lands that they purchased for over one million dollars. Africans also owned over 2000 freehold properties.

### The Arrival of the Chinese

Even though the planters in Guyana had expressed interest in introducing Chinese labourers since Emancipation, it was not until 1851 that such recruitment first began.

Because of the long travel distance from China, at first Chinese were not recruited since it was cheaper to transport Indians. While it cost a planter 13 British pounds to transport an Indian labourer from Calcutta or Madras, the cost was 15 pounds to transport a Chinese immigrant from any of the Chinese ports. But because of the growing need for labourers for the sugar estates, some planters decided to recruit Chinese especially during the period between 1848 and 1851 when Indian immigration was suspended.

In August 1851, the British Guiana Government agreed to pay the planters a bounty of \$100 for each Chinese landed in the Colony. The following month George Booker, one of the sugar estate owners, arranged for the first shipment of Chinese to work as indentured labourers. The 115 men and 39 boys who were recruited were transported from the port of Amoy on the Lord Elgin. The ship departed on 23 July 1852 and after a journey of 177 days arrived in Georgetown on 17 January 1853. On this difficult voyage 69 of the passengers died.

Another ship, the Glentanner, chartered by Hyde, Hodge & Co, left Amoy with 305 men and boys and arrived in Georgetown on 12 January 1853. A total of 51 passengers died on the journey. The same Company recruited another 352 men and boys later in the year and they were shipped from Amoy on the Samuel Boddington on 25 November 1852 and arrived in Georgetown on 4 March 1853, after a voyage which lasted only 98 days during which 52 passengers died. (On this journey, the Chinese mutinied and almost managed to take control of the ship).

Most of the Chinese who arrived during this period were assigned to estates in West Demerara.

The British Guiana Government expressed concerns about the physical quality of the Chinese who were recruited and also about the large number of boys who were apparently passed off as adults. Subsequently, the Government withdrew the bounty payment to the recruiting planters on 1 August 1853.

Earlier that year, James White, who had been the recruiting agent for the British Guiana Government in India, was appointed as Emigration Agent for the British West Indies in China. However, he was dismissed in June of the following year mainly because he failed to recruit any Chinese labourer.

In 1853 also, the British Government had decided to support a government-sponsored recruitment programme, but by May 1854 the British Guiana Government decided to halt immigration from China due to the transportation costs which had increased by over 66 percent and also because of the failure to recruit women.

Resulting from the absence of Chinese women among the immigrants, many of the men established conjugal relations with African women. The "mixed" children born out of these unions were referred to as "Chinee-duglas".

The Chinese proved to be good workers on the estates to which they were indentured for a five-year period. Subsequently, the planters influenced the Governor (Philip Wodehouse) to appeal to the British Government on their behalf to allow the transport of Chinese to Guyana through private enterprise. At first, this was not supported by the British Government, but eventually in 1857 permission was granted for recruitment for a one-year



period. Towards the end of 1858 two ships overloaded with 761 passengers, collected from "baracoons", left Hong Kong for Georgetown arriving in March and May 1859 respectively. On these two ships 60 persons died on the long voyage.

In 1858 the authorities in the Chinese provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi (served by the city of Canton) began to encourage people to migrate, and this enabled the recruiting agents to finally contract females who were part of entire families. On 24 December 1859 the Whirlwind sailed from Hong Kong with 304 men, 56 women, 7 boys (under the age of 15 years) and 4 girls (under 13 years of age). The voyage lasted 78 days and not a single life was lost.

During 1859-60 five more ships left Hong Kong and Canton for Guyana where 1549 men, 298 women, 53 boys, 26 girls and 18 infants landed.

In succeeding years ships continued to sail from the ports of Hong Kong, Canton, Amoy, Swatow, and Whampoa with Chinese immigrants who included a disproportionate amount of women. The Dartmouth which made the final voyage, sponsored by Hyde, Hodge & Co., started from Hong Kong on 24 December 1878 and after 81 days arrived in Georgetown with 515 passengers (436 men, 47 women, 18 boys, 5 girls and 9 infants). In this group were about 70 Christian converts.

For the entire period of 1853 to 1879, a total of 13,541 Chinese landed in Guyana.

## The Chinese on the Plantations

On arrival in Guyana, the Chinese immigrants agreed to the following terms of employment:

1. Payment was at the same rate as an indentured labourer - \$4 a month - with sufficient food.

2. The working period would be seven and a half hours per day, except Sundays and holidays.
3. Free housing and medicines would be provided by the estate owner.
4. One dollar per month would be deducted from the wages for monetary advances made in China.
5. Every immigrant could terminate his contract at the end of a year, on payment, for each unexpired year of the contract, of a sum equal to one-fifth of the amount of the passage money.
6. Every female Chinese immigrant was required to live on the same estate with her husband, or with her father if she was single, and would not work unless she agreed.

These terms were discussed with the Chinese immigrants who signed agreements with the recruiting agents in China before they departed for Guyana.

The first batch of Chinese were assigned to Plantation Blankenberg, West Coast Demerara, and to other estates on the West Bank Demerara. Those who arrived later were distributed to other estates, including to a few in Berbice and Essequibo.

Working conditions were relatively good on most of the estates, but some Chinese labourers complained from time to time of ill-treatment.

The Chinese came from many regions and they spoke different dialects.

They also had varying skills and religious beliefs. Many of them were social outcasts picked up from the streets while others emigrated to escape misery and war. But they were concerned about maintaining their language and forms of their culture, and some of them, who had a relatively good level of education, organised night schools on the sugar plantations to teach the boys writing and singing.

A labourer who completed his contract was offered the option of renewing it, or a sum of \$50 as a partial payment for a return passage to China. Very few Chinese opted to leave Guyana, but those who did so travelled on the

ships that transported back to India those Indians who decided to leave Guyana on the completion of their indenture. Those Chinese who left were not only agriculturalists; some of them had worked as doctors.

There were also some Chinese immigrants who were not interested in working as sugar cane farmers because they felt the pace of work was too demanding. In May 1860 several of them left their estate (near to Georgetown) and marched to the city to protest their working conditions to James Crosby, the Immigration Agent General. At La Penitance they were stopped by mounted police who beat them with their staffs and forced them to turn back.

Those who did not want to work on the plantations had the options of buying their way out of their contract, escaping from the estates, or committing suicide. The first option was expensive since the labourers were earning only \$4 a month.

There were many cases of Chinese who escaped from the estates. Many of them managed to reach Charlestown which was becoming the local "Chinatown", but they were eventually caught and imprisoned for 30 days and returned to their places of work from where they usually escaped again.

There was also an unusually high rate of suicides among Chinese men but it could not be determined if a dislike of plantation work was the cause.

The immigrants' traditional food, rice, was imported but it was very expensive. Plantains soon became a chief source of food. There were many incidents of Chinese labourers stealing plantains from farms owned by Portuguese and Africans, and those who were caught were brought before the court and punished by flogging. Later, some Chinese planted rice on small plots, but since Indians who were already cultivating rice expanded their production, the Chinese resorted to purchasing their supplies from them.

The Chinese, like many Indians, used their savings to purchase land from African landowners. They were also astute businessmen and, by the 1880s, had established themselves in business, particularly in operating grocery stores in the rural villages and also in Georgetown and New

Amsterdam. They also established laundries and restaurants in the two towns.

### The Work of O Tye Kim

The most well known Chinese immigrant in Guyana was O Tye Kim, also known as Wu Tai-Kam. He was born on one of the islands near to Singapore. His family was very poor, but he managed to obtain an education during the 1840s at a school run by the London Missionary Society in Singapore where he was converted to Christianity. There he found employment with the British Government as a surveyor, in which capacity he served for about ten years. He showed intense interest in studying the scriptures and spent much of his time in preaching to people in Singapore. By this time he had a wife and three children and his economic circumstances were much improved.

O Tye Kim eventually was employed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and soon after he left for England. There he established an alliance with the Church Missionary Society which decided to send him to work among the Chinese immigrants in Guyana in 1864. The Society paid his passage to Guyana and provided him with funds to meet his initial expenses.

In Guyana, he quickly won the friendship of Governor Sir Francis Hincks who supported the establishment of a church in Georgetown to minister to more than one hundred and twenty Chinese Christians. He also travelled on foot to all the sugar estates, at his own expense, to meet with Chinese immigrants, and had great success in converting the non-believers among them to Christianity. In a very short time, he established great influence among the Chinese immigrants who sought his advice and made voluntary contributions to him.

Within a year of his arrival in Guyana, O Tye Kim developed a plan to resettle Chinese, who had completed their indenture, on an agricultural settlement called Hopetown on Kamuni Creek, a west bank tributary of the Demerara River. For this project he obtained the permission of the Government, and he began the settlement with 12 Chinese settlers, and by the end of 1865, under his careful supervision, Hopetown's population grew to 170 inhabitants.

The settlement was largely self-sufficient, and O Tye Kim kept a tight control on its economic and social development. The settlers, in addition to producing agricultural commodities, manufactured large quantities of charcoal, the sale of which O Tye Kim organised in Georgetown.

O Tye Kim's work among the Chinese was given official recognition when the Court of Policy Guyana appointed him as a paid missionary with special responsibility to minister to the Chinese population.

For over two years, the settlement prospered, even though from time to time some of the settlers accused O Tye Kim of conducting their affairs for his own personal benefit. Then in 1867, O Tye Kim was involved in a scandal when he had an extra-marital affair with a "Coloured" woman in Georgetown. In embarrassment, he went to live somewhere on the Essequibo coast, and finally in July 1867, it is believed that he left secretly for Trinidad and nothing more was heard about him.

Meanwhile, the economic well-being of Hopetown declined from 1867 and the settlement never recovered. Most of the settlers abandoned it and migrated to Georgetown and other large villages on the coast.

## THE "ANGEL GABRIEL" RIOTS OF 1856

With the Portuguese moving into the retail business after they stopped working on the sugar estates, they found themselves at an advantage since they were favoured with credit facilities by the established White merchants. These merchants were also importers and wholesalers. Africans and "Coloureds" who previously served as their distributing agents were no longer preferred to carry out these functions. Naturally, the Africans felt that they were discriminated against, and it increased the ill-feeling between Africans and Portuguese. Such animosity already existed when the Portuguese from Madeira were introduced as labourers on the sugar estates since their employment forced down existing wages Africans were earning.

It was around this time that James Sayers Orr, a staunch critic of Roman Catholicism, began to hold religious meetings in Georgetown during which he, at first, upbraided Africans for being lazy. But when he learned that

African retailers of goods were losing out to the Portuguese, he began to blame the latter as the cause for the hardship experienced by the Africans.

Orr himself was "Coloured". His mother was a "Coloured" woman and his father was a Scotsman who was a co-owner of Plantation La Penitance. Though not much was known about him, it was generally believed that he was wealthy and might have been financially supported by his father.

Orr spent some time in Britain and the United States and returned to Guyana in December 1855. While in Britain he began holding open-air meetings and summoned his audience by blowing a horn. Such antics earned him the nickname "Angel Gabriel", a name which he began to proudly use. From Britain he travelled to New York where he continued his anti-Catholic preaching activities. One report in an American journal described him as a "fanatical demagogue" because he made wild and inflammatory accusations against certain individuals and groups. He was also blamed for a riot which occurred in New York after he had delivered one of his sermons.

In Georgetown, his attacks on the Portuguese also included verbal outbursts against the Roman Catholic Church since most Portuguese were members of that body. These attacks raised anger among the Portuguese and in February 1856, one of them, John Taggart, applied to the Georgetown magistrate asking Orr to halt his accusations. But the magistrate told Taggart he had to file a private charge against Orr. Instead of doing, so he organised a group of his friends to physically assault Orr who, however, received information about the plan and kept away from the area where the mob was waiting for him. On the day after, Orr addressed a large crowd near to an open-air market, and this alarmed the Governor so much that he placed a ban on all public meetings in Georgetown. Orr attempted on a number of occasions to defy this ban and he was eventually arrested and charged for instigating a disturbance of the peace. He appeared before a magistrate who referred the case to the Supreme Court. He was held in prison while awaiting the trial.

When news circulated that Orr was detained for trial, Africans who were part of his street-corner audiences began to violently attack Portuguese in Georgetown. These included looting of Portuguese shops, and people were even assaulted inside their homes. Violent attacks on Portuguese spread to Mahaicony and to Dalgin up the Demerara River and there were clashes in

parts of Essequibo and Berbice. Eventually the police managed to control the situation but not before much damage was done to property owned by the Portuguese. Many persons also sustained severe injuries. Later in the year, the Government paid a compensation of \$250,000 to the Portuguese who suffered damage to their properties.

After the riots were put down, Orr was tried and found guilty as charged. He was sentenced to a term of imprisonment with hard labour at the penal settlement in Mazaruni where he died in November 1856 after suffering from dysentery.

## THE GROWTH OF EDUCATION BEFORE 1840

Before the beginning of the nineteenth century there were not many people in Guyana who could read and write, and these included almost all the African slaves. Those who had some form of education included planters, merchants, government officials and some free persons of African descent. During the period of Dutch colonisation, small schools were established by the planters to educate their young children, who, when they grew older, were sent away to Europe to continue their education.

From the early days of colonisation, the planters objected to the education of the slaves. Even attempts to expose them to Christian teachings faced the wrath of the planters.

By 1800 there existed a few small private schools which catered for the children of the White planters and the government officials. One such school was established in 1808 by Hermanus Post, the Dutch owner of Plantation Resouvenir, in one of his buildings in Georgetown. He hired the first teachers of this school which was attended, not only by children of the planters and government officials, but also by the children of soldiers, free Africans and "Government slaves". In many cases, the free Africans were mulatto children of plantation owners. As the school attendance grew, Post appealed to the London Missionary Society for assistance and the Rev. John Davies arrived in January 1809 to run the school which by that time had about 40 pupils. They were taught reading, writing, arithmetic and Christian knowledge daily.

The school building was also used as a church which drew a congregation of over 300, including many slaves. Rev. Davies preached to this gathering

three times a week and also taught some of its members to read parts of the Bible.

On Plantation La Ressenouvir, Rev. John Wray had arrived in 1808 to preach to slaves at a chapel Hermanus Post built. He also taught some slaves to read parts of the Bible and to write. The slaves who learned to read then taught their companions to do so.

Mrs. Wray was also involved in the educating the children of the "upper class" in Demerara, and later in Berbice, after her husband was transferred there. She received payments from the planters and was able to send her two daughters to England to boarding school. Later they returned to Guyana to take charge of Mrs. Wray's school.

While stationed in Berbice, Rev. Wray established a school in New Amsterdam. This school had between 40 to 50 pupils, most of whom were free coloured children who approached their studies seriously. However, Rev. Wray faced difficulties caused by a group of Whites who opposed the attendance of non-Whites at the school. Nevertheless, he carried on his work and by 1813, this school had 80 pupils, including children of slaves.

Meanwhile, the churches organised by the London Missionary Society were teaching some adult slaves to read the Bible, and by 1814 five deacons from among the slave population were ordained.

After the East Coast Demerara slave insurrection (in 1823) which saw the condemnation of Rev. John Smith allegedly for supporting the slaves, the White plantation owners of Essequibo-Demerara called for the banning of missionaries from the Colony. Rev. Smith had taught some slaves to read and write during the period he served as a missionary. He faced strong opposition even from Governor Murray who had threatened to expel him from the Colony if he attempted to teach Africans to read.

The London Missionary Society reported in 1836 that a free African, Thomas Lewis, who was educated in England, was keeping a school at Union Chapel in New Amsterdam. Lewis was formerly a Muslim known as Toby who could read the Arabic text of the Koran.

In February 1837, an institution known as "The Berbice School" was set up in New Amsterdam. It was run by Mr. and Mrs. Parish who came from



London. Mr. Parish died within five months of this arrival, but the school continued for some time.

In the same year the Anglican Church established a school in New Amsterdam, and within a year, four more were set up in different parts of Berbice.

During the same period two Anglican boarding schools for Amerindian boys and girls began operating in Bartica. When the missionary left the area in 1845 due to ill health, there were 56 boys and 35 girls attending these schools.

Between 1824 and 1839 many school buildings were erected chiefly by the Anglicans, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge, Presbyterians, Methodists and the London Missionary Society. By 1841, there were 101 primary schools which were attended by a sizeable proportion of African children. This expansion was encouraged by the British Government, particularly in the period before Emancipation, because it saw the necessity of educating Africans to meet the demands of the civil service and other employment areas following the granting of their freedom.

In addition to these schools, there were "private schools" which were maintained through funding from religious denominations, private individuals, estates, and, from 1830, the Government. Additional funding from the Government was made through the Negro Education Grant which was channelled mainly to the Anglican Church.

#### Expansion of Public Education (1844-1876)

In 1844, Queens's College was established by the Bishop of the Anglican Church, Rev. William Austin. The aim behind its establishment was to provide secondary education to the sons of the middle and upper classes. The tendency at that period was for the upper classes to send their sons to England for a secondary education. The school was first housed in Colony House, located on the site now occupied by the Victoria Law Courts. It was later moved to two other locations, including the site now occupied by the Bishop's High School where it remained to the end of the nineteenth century.

Bishop's High School, originally called Bishop's College, was organized by the Anglican Church in 1851, first as a theological school which also doubled as a teacher training institution. Not too long after, it was decided to expand it to cater for secondary education for the daughters of the middle and upper classes.

The Catholics also expanded secondary education by setting up St. Stanislaus College for boys in 1866 and a high school for girls in 1880.

With the growth of the Indian population in Guyana, the question of the education of Indian children became a matter of concern to the Government and also to the Christian churches. Christian priests moved into the plantation areas hoping to convert the Indians (who were Hindus and Muslims), but they met with little success. Primary schools were established, but the head teachers complained about the irregular attendance of Indian children. It was partly as a result of this that in 1876 the Compulsory Education Ordinance was enacted. It made education compulsory up to the age of 12 years for children in rural areas and up to 14 years for children in Georgetown, New Amsterdam and Buxton. This Ordinance also outlawed employment of children under the age of nine years.

There were many Indian parents who kept away their children, especially the girls, from the schools because they did not want them to be taught by African teachers, and also they feared that the children would be influenced by Christian religious teachings. However, the real story was that many of the Indian parents kept away their children from schools so that they could earn money doing jobs on the plantations.

The plantation owners themselves were happy to have gangs of children working in the fields, and it was widely believed that they disagreed with the Compulsory Education Ordinance. The Immigration Agent General, at that time, a close friend of the planter class, wrote later in his 1888 Report that the Ordinance was a source of hardship to the Indian parents since on most estates "large gangs of little children under that age (the age of nine), are often employed in light work such as carrying earth, ashes or manure and this is not only a benefit to the parents but also a source of pleasure to themselves. No one who has seen these children work, each with a little basket in which to convey a nominal load, running backwards and forwards in high glee and spirits, could fail to feel pleasure at witnessing their being

thus trained up to active and industrious habits. . . The employment of children under nine years of age may be, and no doubt, open to grave objection, when the condition and nature of their occupations are such as to produce physical and moral degeneracy; but in a country, where their work is as much pastime as labour and is conducive to the promotion of health and vigour, both of body and mind, the necessity of such a restriction does not appear to me to exist."

The Ordinance also specified that the compulsory attendance rule was not to be enforced during the first ten years of the Indian immigrants' arrival in Guyana.

### The Development of the Creolese Language

The first African slaves, drawn from different tribes, developed a rudimentary "pidgin" to communicate with each other. On arrival in Guyana they added some words and expressions drawn from the language of their Dutch masters, and as time passed, this "Dutch-Creole" went through changes and modifications.

As a new generation of slaves was born in the country, Dutch-Creole became the first language of these children who continued to add new words and expressions to it. As a result, the development of "Creolese" intensified. When eventually the English took control of Guyana, the slaves added more and more English words and expressions to their vocabulary, and with succeeding generations, the "Dutch-Creole" eventually disappeared. However, some Dutch words remained in the now English-based "Creolese", as did some from the French language, acquired when the French briefly occupied Guyana in the late nineteenth century.

An attempt was made by Robert Schomburk in the 1840s to explain the evolution of the dialect during that period. He wrote: "In European families, English is of course the general language of conversation; not so among the coloured people and Negroes, who talk a mixture, one might almost say, a real "pidgin" derived from almost all the idioms of Europe and Africa, the indigenous "Creole-Dutch"; the Dutch language which was brought by the first owners of the Colony constitutes its basis. In the constant change of ownership, the next-following temporary possessors on each occasion

left behind certain traces of their language with the result that, in the course of time, among the coloured people and Negroes, many a common expression is seen to be derived from the Dutch, French, English and African occupation, and has now also spread amongst the indigenous coastal tribes."

If this explanation can be considered as fairly accurate, then it can be also understood that words and expressions from the Indian, Chinese and Portuguese immigrants were also added to the developing Creole language. The Indians contributed words and expressions of kinship and agricultural terms, while the Chinese and Portuguese added names for foods. As more and more contacts were made with the Amerindians, words from their languages became absorbed into this "Creolese" language.

The Creolese language, which closely resembles English, remains as a unique cultural Guyanese product which continues to undergo change as new words and expressions from different cultures are added to it.

### Hardships Faced by the Indians

The planters, after finding that they could no longer punish the Indian immigrants by flogging, used their political clout to pass in the Court of Policy the Immigration Ordinance in 1864. This Ordinance declared that employers must provide suitable houses, hospital accommodation and medical attention for the Indians. It also stipulated that wages were to be same as those paid to Africans who worked on the plantations.

But the Ordinance also spelled out the obligations of the Indian labourers and punishments for breaking the laws. If an indentured Indian refused to attend daily roll call, or to do work given to him, he was placed before a magistrate and faced a fine of \$24 or up to two months in prison. He would also forfeit his wages if he was drunk on the job or used insulting language to his supervisors. If he was absent for seven consecutive days, or found more than two miles from his workplace on a work day, he was also charged for deserting and faced a punishment of up to two months in prison. The law also specified that an indentured labourer must obtain permission from the manager if he wanted to visit any area away from the plantation on which he was indentured.

While the Indian indentured labourers were forced to carry out their obligations, they rarely obtained the benefits stated in the Ordinance. Their housing conditions were extremely poor and they continued to live in barrack ranges - referred to as "logies" by the Indians - which afforded almost no privacy to families. Medical attention was rudimentary and was not always provided.

It was also usual for homes of the indentured labourers to be forcibly entered by supervisors to compel them to go to work, to search for stolen goods, to make arrests, all without warrants. The Indians voiced their complaints over the treatment they received, but very little was done by the plantation owners to improve the situation.

Work stoppages began to break out from time to time and they were sometimes led by ex-soldiers who had served in the Indian army and had taken part in the famous Indian Mutiny of 1857. In 1869, a strike broke out at Leonora and the deputy manager was assaulted during the demonstrations by the workers. The police eventually broke up the demonstration and arrested the leaders who were later sentenced to prison.

The manager of the plantation could make life difficult for the indentured Indians. He could force them to move from their residence to one which was more inconvenient, and he could suspend them from work, impose fines and even expel them from the plantation.

On the other hand, the estate owner encouraged the Indians to practise their religions, and even donated land and money to help them build their temples and mosques.

One of the chief problems that faced Indians during the early years was the shortage of women of their own ethnic group. This shortage often led to murders; there were situations in which wives were killed by their jealous husbands after the wives deserted them for other men.

In general, the East Indians were isolated in their communities on the sugar estates and many of them wanted to remove themselves from this seclusion. One of the ways open to them was to return to India after their period of indenture. (Actually there was a steady return to India until 1949 when the last batch of 311 left Guyana. Between 1843 and 1949, a total of

75,547 Indians left Guyana for India and they took with them over five million dollars in cash and jewellery).

Some Indians also moved to Georgetown and New Amsterdam to search for better jobs. While some gained success, others who possessed no skills resorted to begging and sleeping on the pavements.

In an effort to obtain economic freedom, peasant farming was seen as a positive avenue. Those who managed to save some money purchased plots of land from the African landowners and involved themselves in vegetable farming and rice cultivation.

Some plantation owners, realising that more and more Indians were attracted to independent peasant farming, tried to prevent them from leaving plantation work by influencing the Court of Policy to enact legislation in 1853 to halt this process. This law forced the Indians to serve as indentured labourers for the first five years, and for the second five years as either a free labourer or as an indentured labourer. This regulation was amended in 1858 to allow for a payment of \$50 to each Indian adult (or \$25 to a minor) who re-indentured himself. The aim behind this law was to keep the Indians on the plantations and prevent them from competing on the free labour market.

### The Des Voeux Letter

The sugar planters held a dominating influence in the Government of British Guiana, and they pressured the Court of Policy to enact legislation on the treatment of indentured labourers in their favour. Among the few Whites who opposed their views were James Crosby, the Immigration-Agent General appointed in 1858, Joseph Beaumont, the Chief Justice, and William Des Voeux, a magistrate. These three men were determined that the immigrants should be properly treated and given fair justice. From time to time, Beaumont and Des Voeux dismissed charges brought by planters against the Indian immigrants. Crosby also did his part by bringing charges against those planters who illegally stopped the payment of wages to their workers.

As a result of their actions, the Governor, Sir Francis Hincks, who sided with the planters, in 1865 brought about the dismissal of Beaumont and

spitefully transferred Des Voeux from one district to another. Eventually, Des Voeux was transferred to St. Lucia as Administrator in 1869. Hincks had earlier taken away Crosby's powers and reduced his responsibilities to that of a clerk.

After the 1869 disturbance at Leonora and two others which followed shortly after, Des Voeux, from St. Lucia, wrote a long letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies in which he accused the administration of Hincks with oppression and injustice.

The main points of Des Voeux's letter were:

1. The Combined Court of Policy, dominated by the sugar planters, made immigration laws which were in their favour.
2. The Governor showed bias towards the planters and acted unfairly towards the Indian and Chinese immigrants.
3. Officials in the Court of Policy owed their positions and livelihood to the sugar industry and thus they also showed bias in supported the interests of the sugar planters.
4. Medical personnel, employed on the sugar estates, declared the fitness of immigrant workers, even though these workers were ill. Sick workers were discharged from hospital and forced to return to work. If they were unable to go to work, they were charged with desertion and faced imprisonment.
5. Magistrates and judges showed unfairness to immigrants and sided openly with the planters.
6. Immigrants were brutally punished by some estate managers.

Des Voeux's letter eventually forced the British Government to establish a commission of enquiry to investigate the complaints. He himself was summoned as a witness, but due to injuries he suffered in a riding accident, he was not able to expressed himself clearly. Nevertheless, many of his charges were upheld by the commission of inquiry and some of his recommendations were accepted. One of these was the restoration of the powers of the Immigration-Agent General. However, changes for the better

were slow in coming since many of the laws which stipulated harsh punishments for absenteeism continued to exist.

## Riot at Devonshire Castle

Throughout September 1872, Indian indentured labourers on sugar plantations on the Essequibo coast expressed their dissatisfaction over tasks allocated to them, as well as the poor wages and the long working hours. They also vocally complained about unfair deductions from their wages and the ill treatment and abuse they experienced at the hands of overseers. From time to time they expressed their grievances to the plantation owners who did nothing to alleviate these problems.

The situation worsened on Tuesday, 24 September 1872 when the field labourers at Plantation Devonshire Castle complained to the acting Sub-Immigration Agent in the district that they were being underpaid for their work. Parag, a factory worker, at the same time accused the plantation owners of forcing him to work all night in the factory. The official apparently did not show much concern over this accusation, saying that workers could not be ordered to work more than ten hours in the factory. Based on this response, Parag, on the following day, encouraged his colleagues to stop working after they had laboured for ten hours. This brought him into conflict with the estate manager who ordered his arrest. However, his colleagues rallied to his side and prevented such action, but they, in turn, were accused of threatening the manager's life.

Realising that their problems would not be resolved by the local officials and the management of the plantation, the labourers of Devonshire Castle, accompanied by those of Anna Regina who were experiencing similar problems, made plans to travel to Georgetown seek a solution from either the Immigration-Agent-General or the Governor. But these plans did not materialise; however, the Anna Regina workers managed to meet with the Acting Inspector of Police and Mr. Trotter, the Sub-Immigration Agent from whom they received promises that their grievances would be investigated.

On 28 September 1872, the Devonshire Castle workers went to the local magistrate and voiced their dissatisfaction with the rates of wages they were receiving. The magistrate, who was empowered to deal with labour disputes, promised to examine their complaints and to ensure that they



obtained justice. However, the workers did not feel confident that anything would be done for them, and on their return to the estate they behaved in a disorderly manner. Some of them attempted to attack an overseer but others restrained them.

Finally, on the next day - 29 September 1872 - the labourers decided to strike in protest. Despite their action, the plantation management made little effort to listen to their complaints. But later that morning, they were asked by officials to appear at an inquiry four miles away at Danielstown Village; however, they refused to attend since they felt that their complaints would again be dismissed. By this time, most of them had already become very infuriated, and a large crowd armed with sticks, swarmed in an aggressive mood towards the overseers' compound from which the overseers and their families were forced to evacuate.

The police were notified of the disorderly behaviour on the plantation, and 24 armed policemen under a police inspector arrived to face a riotous crowd of striking workers. Accompanying the policemen was the local magistrate who ordered the crowd to disperse, but as the strikers refused, he read the Riot Act. He gave them one hour in which to move away and return to their homes and warned that if they refused stern actions would be taken. He specifically appealed to the women and children to leave the area. Seeing the crowd was ignoring his orders, he advised the police inspector to place his men in such a position that they would not be surrounded.

As the crowd became more rowdy, the inspector ordered the policemen to break up the mob. While they moved forward with their guns ready to shoot, the incensed crowd also advanced and attacked them with sticks. The police then opened fire and five workers were killed, and seven others seriously injured. Those who died were Kaulica, Beccaroo, Maxidally, Baldeo and Auckloo.

The authorities later claimed that the inspector gave no order to fire, but that the shooting occurred after a policeman's rifle went off accidentally after a striker's stick hit the barrel, and this caused the other policemen to assume that the order to shoot was given.

Fifteen labourers were subsequently arrested by the police for unlawful assembly and rioting, but they were later freed by the Supreme Court of Criminal Justice.

Thus, the Devonshire Castle protest was crushed with brute force and became the first major action in which Indian indentured labourers were killed by the colonial police.

Soon after, an inquest was held but the verdict was not surprising. As expected, the inquest found no fault with the action of the police. The coroner declared that "the riot . . . would, but for the fortunate explosion of these rifles, have become a widespread rebellion, most disastrous in its consequences". One local newspaper, *The Colonist*, openly rejoiced at the horrible tragedy, stating that "the leaden argument has brought submission quicker than all honeyed words that could have been used". This reflected the view of the colonial authorities and the local business class which showed no sympathy for the problems experienced by the Indian plantation labourers.

## Indian Settlements

Indian immigration continued to be financed by the Government into the 1860s. Much of this financing was raised through loans obtained in Great Britain, by advances from the British Government, and from the general revenue of the Colony. But this system created financial problems and in 1864 a decision was taken by the British Guiana Government to create an Immigration Fund to finance the cost of immigration. This Fund was drawn from general revenue, duties levied on estates' supplies, indenture and re-indenture fees paid by planters, fees paid for renewal of certificates of exemption from labour, and fees for the registration of Indian marriages. The amount paid into this Fund grew significantly with each succeeding year.

By 1869, about 30,000 Indians had become qualified for return passages. The estimated cost of these passages was over a quarter of a million dollars which was an expense the Government could not easily bear. Further, repatriation to India was depleting the plantation of the labour force while the Government was losing money by paying for the return trip. To prevent the reduction of this work force, the Government promoted the idea of granting land to the Indians instead of the return passage.

This idea was originally proposed by the Immigration General, James Crosby, but Indians had not made a decision to settle permanently in Guyana. It was not until 1877 that they began to seek permission from the Government to purchase abandoned estates. In 1880, the Government purchased Huist Dieren, an abandoned estate in Essequibo, and divided it into lots which were offered to some Indian families in exchange for the return passages to India.

In 1882, the new Governor, Sir Henry Irving, halted this scheme since he felt it was costing the Government too much to purchase the land. He devised a scheme by which lands owned by the Government (i.e., Crown lands) were to be sold at cheap prices to Indians. However, such purchases did not mean that the Indians were surrendering their right to their return passages. Many Indians liked Irving's policy and very soon Indian settlements were formed at Cotton Tree (West Berbice), Brighton (Corentyne) and Maria's Lodge (Essequibo), among other areas.

But Irving's plan did not receive full support from the planter class, and after he completed his term and departed from Guyana in 1894, the original plan of giving land to Indians in exchange for the return passages was re-introduced. Under this arrangement, the Indians were to be selected by the Government for lands in some settlements to be created. It was as a result of this change that Helena (East Demerara), Bush Lot (West Berbice) and Whim (Corentyne) were purchased by the Government and house lots and farm plots were given to selected Indian families in 1897.

### The Cent Bread Riots

Ever since the anti-Portuguese riots of 1856, bad feelings continued to exist between Africans and Portuguese. Both groups held prejudices against each other, and there were constant accusations that the Portuguese businessmen failed to deal fairly with the "lower class" Africans. Africans also made accusations that Portuguese who committed criminal acts against Africans were punished less severely than Africans who committed crimes against Portuguese. An incident of a Portuguese man being reprieved for killing his African reputed wife intensified these feelings particularly when not too long before an African man was hanged for the murder of his Portuguese wife.

On the 19 March 1889, a fourteen-year-old African boy surnamed Nurse went to Portuguese shop in Stabroek Market to purchase a small loaf of bread which cost one cent. After he paid for it, he took another larger loaf valued two cents and attempted to leave the shop. Vieira, the Portuguese shopkeeper, attempted to stop him, and in an argument that ensued, he struck the boy with a stick.

Vieira was promptly arrested by the market constables who took him to the nearby police station where he was quickly released, but he was shortly after re-arrested and held in custody. The boy was also taken to the police station and then to the Colonial Hospital where he was admitted.

While all this was happening, a rumour circulated that a Portuguese man had killed an African boy and that the police had been instructed to release the man.

Within a short while a full scale riot broke out and groups of Africans attacked Portuguese shops and people of Portuguese descent in the Stabroek Market. After police cleared the market, the rioters, comprising mainly of women and youths from the poorer sections of Georgetown, ran through the city stoning the houses owned by Portuguese and attacking people on the streets. Portuguese shops were broken into and looted, and Portuguese citizens were pulled out from tram cars and beaten.

The Sheriff of Georgetown, Henry Kirke, on command from Governor Gormanston, organised the police, and 100 special constables, armed only with batons, were ordered to protect the city from the mob. But they were unable to do so since the mob attacked them with knives, sticks and bottles and stones, and many of the peacekeepers were injured.

The rioters set fire to houses and shops in Alberttown, Charlestown and Albouystown where heavy looting also occurred. During the night, the rioters in groups of about fifty to a hundred moved through the city streets and attacked houses and business places.

Early on the morning of the 20 March, Kirke asked the British Guiana Volunteer Force for assistance. The Force of 42 men tried to contain the rioters but within two hours of daybreak 31 of them had received injuries. The Governor ordered the Volunteer Force to open fire on the rioters, but this did not happen as the rioters decided not to confront the guns and moved away to other areas of the city to carry on their marauding.

Some of the rioters attempted to spread disorder in the rural areas but they did not succeed. Portuguese shops at Meadow Bank, Agricola and Peter's Hall on the East Bank Demerara were attacked, but Africans in those villages helped to defend those businesses and chase away the troublemakers.

By late afternoon, the police and Volunteer Force managed to disperse the mobs and take back control of the city. By that time there was substantial damage to property later assessed at over \$39,000. One person was killed; he was a Barbadian of African descent who was stabbed by a rioter while he was helping a Portuguese friend defend his shop. Actually, throughout the rioting, many Africans came out to protect Portuguese from the mob.

Over 230 persons were arrested and charged. Most were found guilty in the magistrate court and sentenced to two months hard labour. The Portuguese shopkeeper, whose act of beating the African boy instigated the riots, was also sentenced to two months imprisonment.

As an aftermath, the Government paid compensation amounting to \$39,452 to the Portuguese who suffered damage to their property.

### Development of Local Government

The early communal villages, established after ex-slaves bought up abandoned plantations, produced mainly root crops (ground provisions) and plantains. But because of inadequate local markets, these crops did not produce steady profits for the villagers.

In addition, the villages were not properly managed and public works such as clearing drainage and irrigation canals and repairing bridges did not receive adequate attention. As a result of this, the Governor, Sir Henry Light, during 1839-1840, appointed the stipendiary magistrates, Strutt and Lyons, to assist the villages to develop a system of local government.

A document known as the Agreement was worked out and it demonstrated the determination of the Africans in the villages to improve the political, physical, social and moral welfare of their society. While each village had its own Agreement, some of the principles pertaining to raising money for public works were reflected in the Agreements for the other villages.

The village of Victoria agreed to have a governing Committee of seven members to be elected by the proprietors. Meetings of this Committee were to be held on the first Saturday of every month, except in the case of emergency meetings which could be called at any time. The Committee was also obligated to call a general meeting of all the proprietors every six months.

To raise money for public works, each proprietor had to pay one dollar per month to the village Committee which used the accumulated sum for repairing bridges and kokers, making roads and digging drains and trenches. If a proprietor failed to pay his monthly subscription, the members of the Committee could enter his farm and reap sufficient of his produce to meet this fee.

The Committee members themselves had to be committed to their task and any member who was absent from a meeting (except in the case of illness) was fined four dollars.

The Victoria Agreement also specified that land could not be sold to "strangers" without the consent of the Committee. Even if they were guests of a proprietor, strangers were not allowed to go to the farms owned by the villagers, and could not even remain in the village for more than a day without the permission of the Committee.

There were also strict rules against immorality. The Agreement stated: "Any proprietor, householder or person of whatever sex, committing themselves in drunkenness, cursing, swearing, fighting, gambling, dancing . . . shall be taken up, and a fine put to him or her, said fine not to exceed five dollars for the first offence, second and third to be doubled in proportion . . ." In addition, anyone carrying firearms without permission faced a fine of five dollars.

Regulations for business places stated that all shops, including rum-shops, were to be closed on Sundays. The Committee also agreed to erect two buildings to be used as places of Christian worship and as schools.

While Victoria had its specific Agreement, this village like all the others, by law, had to subscribe money to repair the public road which ran through it. However, problems arose when some proprietors failed to pay their monthly subscription since not all the villages had a system by which farm produce could be seized to meet the payment. As a result, the Court of Policy decided that an estimate of the cost of public works in each village should be made, and based on this estimate, each proprietor would be assessed a specific amount.

After 1848 village councils (or Committees) were elected in many of the villages to collect the assessments and to supervise the public works taking place. Subsequent Governors changed these councils to Village Management Committees and later again to Village Board of Improvement Commissions. These latter two were not very popular among the proprietors of the villages because they had no autonomy and were expected to carry out the wishes of the Governor who could even

## Resistance to Taxation at Friendship

In 1862 when Sir Francis Hincks arrived as Governor, he observed that the East Coast Demerara area was suffering from a serious drainage problem. He decided that a steam-powered drainage pump should be set up in that location, and to defray the cost of \$24,000 for the pump, he imposed a levy on the villages of Buxton, Friendship and Beterverwagting.

Buxton and Beterverwagting accepted this taxation but Friendship refused to pay. The village Board called a meeting to discuss the issue with the proprietors who expressed strong opposition to paying for the pump. Some of them used abusive language in expressing their opposition and they were eventually charged by the police with disorderly behaviour. Those who led this opposition to Hincks' levy were James Jupiter, Blucher Dorset, Hector John, Webster Ogle, Chance Bacchus and James Rodney (Snr).

After the villagers refused to pay, Hincks sent a marshal to serve notices on the proprietors whose levy ranged between 59 cents and \$2.55. Despite the small size of these payments the proprietors stated that they would not pay on the grounds that the Governor was breaching a principle by which the villagers were being denied the right to decide on the payment instead of it being imposed on them.

On the 24 October 1862, the marshal returned with 50 soldiers, 50 armed policemen and a number of unarmed policemen to force the villagers to pay. As the villagers again refused to pay, the Governor ordered that their homes should be sold, and the Chief Engineer of the colonial Government was authorised to sell them at a public auction. This was eventually done but the proprietors, who were still living in their houses, were told that their properties would be returned to them if they paid up the levy within one week. It was later found out that a small group of property owners quietly broke ranks and decided to pay the levy, thus managing to regain their homes.

But the majority refused on principle to pay, and when they were finally dispossessed of their homes, they decided to push their case further for the return of their properties. They subscribed money and chartered a schooner to send Hector John, Webster Ogle and Chance Bacchus to England to present their petition to Queen Victoria. The schooner stopped



in Barbados where the three men met the Governor of that island. But after they explained their mission, the Governor advised them to abandon their mission to England and return home.

On their return to Guyana, the proprietors of Friendship sent numerous petitions to Hincks and the Court of Policy demanding the return of their homes. This continued for about five years but both the Governor and the Court of Policy refused to accede to their requests. Some of the proprietors finally decided to take back their homes by force, but they were arrested and charged with criminal trespass. They were shortly after convicted by a magistrate; however, an appeal which was heard by Chief Justice Beaumont acquitted them.

After this acquittal, the dispossessed proprietors planned to make another attempt to regain their homes. The six leaders tried to quietly re-enter their homes, but a fight broke out between their supporters and the friends of the new owners. Police reinforcements had to be called in from Georgetown to put down the riot. The aftermath of these events was that the original proprietors never regained their properties.

## BUILDING THE SEA DEFENCE AND DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Ever since the start of Dutch colonization of Guyana, the early colonists observed that many parts of the sea coast experienced cyclical periods of erosion as well as flooding during high tides. However, since settlements were located mainly on river banks, and not along the coast, the problems of erosion and flooding were not taken seriously. But as settlements extended along the coast in the late eighteenth century, flooding of low-lying lands during high tides became a matter of concern. Also, during the periods when there was an accumulation of silt which built up the coastal plain, drainage canals were silted up and water accumulated during the rainy season was difficult to remove.

Georgetown, in the early nineteenth century, began to feel the effects of erosion and flooding. The Eve Leary area which housed the barracks of the West India Regiment was badly flooded at times, and the residents of the surrounding areas felt that the War Office in London should provide funds to build permanent sea defences. The War Office, on the other hand, insisted that it had been providing grants for sea defence works over the

years to the benefit of that part of the town. As such, it stated in 1849 that the town council should take on the responsibility of sea defence, and threatened to remove the Regiment if the barracks continued to experience flooding. But this threat was never enforced even though flooding periodically occurred.

Eventually in 1855 the Combined Court voted a sum of \$135,000 to erect sea defences for Georgetown.

In the meantime, a few proprietors of estates used their own resources to build earthen embankments as sea defences to protect their lands from floods during high tides. After a while, the Government realised that sea defence should not be left to the estate owners, and an effort was started by the Government to build a strong sea wall in Georgetown from Camp Street to Kitty. This wall was completed in 1882.

The Director of Public Works was given the authority to monitor the sea defences throughout the country. He could order any proprietor to use his own funds to build sea walls (or sea dams), but he could also recommend the spending of government funds to assist the estates. Loans were also made available to proprietors to erect sea defence.

To allow for easy drainage, and also to obtain irrigation water from the inland areas, each coastal plantation was established in a rectangular pattern. The front faced the river or the sea while the back had the wet savannah or a creek as its boundary. Parallel canals on the two sides ran from the back lands to the sea or river and emptied through kokers (or sluices). Smaller canals (or trenches) cut across the breadth of the plantation to connect to the main parallel canals, and the flow of water through them was also controlled by smaller kokers.

Before 1838, all of these waterways were dug by the slaves using shovels as their tools. After this period, paid African labour and Indian indentured workers carried out the excavation works. For every square mile of land which was used for sugar-cane cultivation, about 49 miles of drainage and 16 miles of irrigation trenches were dug. In the process of digging canals and trenches on the sugar plantations, over 100 million tons of earth were excavated.

The estates were drained by gravity during low tides. Those which faced the sea experienced serious drainage problems during the cyclical build-up of silt along the coast. During these periods, which lasted about seven years, the kokers (sluices) were blocked by accumulation of silt, and drainage had to be done by pumping which was very expensive.

With regard to irrigation, from the early nineteenth century, sugar estates were able to obtain water during periods of low rainfall from a natural conservancy on their southern boundary. The idea of a permanent conservancy was developed by Dr. Michael McTurk, a member of the Georgetown Town Council, and based on his plan, an Ordinance was passed in 1828 to build an earthen dam to trap water in the East Demerara conservancy.

## Central Government

When Great Britain finally took possession of Guyana in 1814 its plan was to give the colony a stable form of government in order to create a favourable business climate for British investors. It was with this objective in mind that a form of Crown Colony government was set up after 1838. After this system of government was established, only the White planter class continued to be represented in the various legislative institutions. The African ex-slaves who formed the great majority of the population had no voting rights. As a result, the Governor, appointed by the British Government, took upon himself the authority to represent their interests, but on most occasions, he tended to support the positions taken by the planters.

In reality, the government was not patterned exactly as that of other Crown Colonies in the Caribbean. In addition, it was not fully representative of all sectors of the population. It was made up of a Court of Policy, a College of Financial Representatives and a Combined Court.

The Court of Policy comprised of an equal number of "elected" members and non-elected official members appointed by the Governor. The Governor, as President of this branch of the government, could use his casting vote and join with the official members to outvote the elected representatives.

The College of Financial Representatives was made up of members who were directly elected by the very limited White electorate. In the Combined Court, the elected members outnumbered the Governor and the nominated official members since it was made up of all members of the Court of Policy and the College of Financial Representatives meeting together.

According to this constitution under which this form of government existed, the Court of Policy had no control over financial matters and the Combined Court, which dealt mainly with financial matters, had no powers to determine government policies.

The elected members of the Court of Policy did not hold their seats for a fixed number of years, but vacancies would arise through resignation or death. When a vacancy arose, the planters' political body, the College of Keizers, would meet to nominate two candidates, one of whom would be elected by the members of the Court of Policy. (The members of the College of Keizers were elected by the planters and retained their positions for life, unless they resigned or left the colony permanently).

While the planters were satisfied with this constitution, the merchants and other members of the business community objected to it because they felt that the College of Keizers should not be given exclusive powers to select candidates for the Court of Policy. The business community wanted this College to be abolished and that there should be periodic elections in which the members of the Court of Policy would be chosen by direct vote of the limited electorate.

The merchants also objected to the qualification required for election to the Court of Policy. An eligible candidate had to own at least 80 acres of land of which 40 acres must be under cultivation, or a house valued more than \$5,000 above any existing mortgage; or for those who owned no house or land, an annual rental of such property which was not less than \$1,200. While the poorest planters possessed these qualifications, few merchants possessed them even though they had a great amount in liquid cash.

Due to these existing differences, a political movement known as the Reform Association was founded. Its members were mainly merchants and a number of Congregational ministers, including Rev. Edwin Angel Wallbridge who arrived in Guyana in 1842. Some planters who were dissatisfied with the College of Keizers were also among the membership.

One of the Association's chief organisers was John Emery, the editor of the newspaper, Guiana Times. Public meetings by the Association during May 1838 in Berbice and in Georgetown called for constitutional reform which included the expansion of the franchise. The Georgetown meeting was attended by large numbers of free and "apprenticed" Africans from the East Coast Demerara.

The Reform Association continued its agitation throughout the 1840s and it gathered more and more support from the new group of property-owning Africans. In October 1845 it decided to petition Queen Victoria to abolish the semi-official College of Keizers and for the expansion of the electorate by lowering of the property and financial qualifications.

It was not until 1849 that the colonial authorities agreed to some reform when they decided to expand the electoral roll which allowed a small proportion of Africans to become voters. A person now qualified to be a voter if he earned \$60 per month or paid taxes amounting to \$24. In those days, these sums were very high and few Africans could show these amounts of liquid cash. Therefore, these qualifications kept out hundreds of Africans who had the worth in homes or land, but did not earn that amount of money or paid this amount in taxes.

The new electoral roll included only 621 persons; there would have been more but many Africans who qualified did not register because they felt it was a plan by the Government to impose new taxes. In addition, a large proportion of the qualified Africans were female, but they could not register as voters because women were not granted the franchise. By 1850, an increasing number of qualified Africans decided to register as voters, and this increased the roll to 916.

No other constitutional reform took place in ensuing years until 1891 when the colonial authorities decided to abolish the College of Keizers and to allow periodic elections to the Court of Policy. A decision was also taken to add three elected and three non-elected official members to this body. Candidates for election had to possess land or immovable property valued at not less than \$1,500, while a person who earned at least \$40 a month qualified to vote. The constitutional reform also included the creation of an Executive Council to assist the Governor in day to day administration of the government.

## The Surveys of Brown and Sawkins

In 1857, gold was discovered in the area of the Yuruari River, a small tributary of the upper Cuyuni. Since the British Guiana government was not too sure if the Yuruari was located east of the "Schomburgk Line", the Governor, Philip Wodehouse, sent two expeditions to the area to verify its location. However, only one team, led by Sir William Holmes, managed to reach the upper Cuyuni, but the report it submitted could not determine the exact position of the river relative to the "Schomburgk Line".

Ten years later, after there were more gold discoveries in the upper Cuyuni and the upper Mazaruni Rivers, the British government appointed two British geologists, Barrington Brown and James Sawkins to survey the interior of the colony. Shortly after their arrival in Georgetown in November 1867, they travelled with their survey team to the Pomeroon District to begin their work, which included mapping and preparing geological reports. On completing the surveys there, they moved on to survey the area from the Waini River to the Barima and the Barama Rivers. From there they went to the upper Cuyuni and the Mazaruni.

After this first round of their surveys, the two geologists split up to undertake separate expeditions in 1868. Sawkins did a survey of the Demerara River while Brown mapped the Essequibo River and parts of the Rupununi savannahs. The two met in the Rupununi area in late 1869, but then parted again to survey the areas near to the border with Brazil. Brown went towards the source of the Essequibo River and mapped two of its tributaries, the Rewa and Kwitaro Rivers. Meanwhile, Sawkins mapped the Takutu River and then joined up with Brown in December 1869.

On their return to Georgetown, Sawkins decided to take a break from the surveying task. However, Brown continued in 1870 to explore and map the interior of Essequibo, and eventually arrived at the Kaieteur Falls on the Potaro River on the 24 April. He became the first person of European origin to see these falls.

He then travelled to Georgetown to complete his report, but in July he went back to Kaieteur to measure the height of the falls. His calculation showed a total height of 822 feet made up of two drops, the main part being 741 feet, and a second drop of 81 feet over the rocks at the bottom of the main fall.

In late 1870 and during part of 1871, Brown and Sawkins teamed up again to survey the Corentyne, Berbice and Mazaruni Rivers. On the completion of their work in those areas, they departed for Britain in 1871.

In the course of their expeditions, the two geologists traversed some of the territory mapped by Robert Schomburgk more than two decades before, and they were able at times to make corrections on some of the information he had gathered. They also prepared reports on the geology of the areas they surveyed and the work they completed provided a wealth of information on the geography and geology of the country.

#### Further Claims by Venezuela (1876-1890)

On the 14 September 1876, the claims of Venezuela to western Essequibo were again made in a letter that Government sent to the Earl of Derby, then British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. These claims were substantially the same as those stated before in 1844.

However, the letter of September 1876, in addition, relied upon the Bull of Pope Alexander VI of 1493 which granted Spain most of the lands in America. Venezuela also alleged that the Catalonian Capuchin missionaries had occupied the district between the Orinoco and Cape Nassau and between the sea and the Caroni River. The letter further quoted from an old treaty (the Cartel of Aranjuez) which was made between Spain and the Netherlands for the mutual surrender of fugitive slaves in their South American territories. According to the first article of this treaty, an agreement was reached for both Governments to recover fugitive slaves in Essequibo, Demerara, Berbice, and Suriname. Venezuela suggested that Essequibo, according to the Cartel, referred to the river.

A perusal of the treaty, both in the French and Spanish texts, however, showed that this suggestion was unfounded and, further, from the documents which were referred to during the negotiations for the treaty, it was clear that the words Essequibo, Demerara, Berbice and Suriname were used throughout as well-known descriptions of the Dutch colonies. It was also clear that Essequibo was the name commonly applied to all Dutch possessions between the Boeraseri River, situated on the east of the Essequibo River, and the Orinoco.

After the British rejected these claims, Venezuela on the 13 February 1877 sent another letter to the British Government suggesting a settlement of the question by the adoption of a conventional line fixed by agreement between the two countries. This proposal was accepted by the British Government.

Subsequently, on the 19 May 1879, Venezuela, in a Note to the British Government, stated that it possessed proof that the Essequibo River was the eastern boundary of Venezuelan Guiana; the Venezuelan Ambassador, at the same time, requested the Government of Great Britain to make a proposal for "a frontier of accommodation".

In reply, the British Government stated the boundary which the British Government was entitled to claim comprised the territory claimed by the Dutch in their protests of 1759 and 1769. It observed that the claim of Venezuela made in 1876 would involve the surrender of a province then inhabited by 40,000 British subjects, and which had been in the uninterrupted possession of Holland (The Netherlands) and Great Britain successively for two centuries. The British Government also expressed its readiness settle the matter by mutual concession.

On the 21 February 1881, in a Note to the British Government, Venezuela proposed a frontier line starting from a point one mile to the north of the Moruka River, drawn from there westward to the 60th meridian and running south along that meridian. This would have granted the Barima District to Venezuela.

Replying on the 15 September 1881, the British Government rejected the boundary line proposed by Venezuela and stated that the right of the British Government to the Barima District could not be questioned. The British Government, in this reply, proposed another line which conceded part of the British claim to the upper Cuyuni and Amakura areas. However, in spite of frequent inquiries by the British Government, no response to this proposal was received from the Venezuelan Government.

In September 1883, the British Government asked the Venezuelan Government to enter into discussions to settle the boundary dispute. However, the latter replied that the country's Constitution prevented the conclusion of Treaties relating to boundaries, for it denied any Power the right of ceding either by exchange or reparation the smallest portion of any



territory assumed to constitute a part of the dominions of the Republic of Venezuela. The Venezuelan Government, therefore, proposed the reference of the question to an arbitrator as the only means of settlement.

It appeared to the British Government that the same provision of the Venezuelan Constitution which prevented the solution of the question by means of a Treaty might be invoked as a pretext for not abiding by the Award if it should prove unfavourable to Venezuela. The British Government, therefore, declined the proposal to refer the boundary to arbitration, but expressed the hope that some other means of settlement might be devised.

In October 1884, the Venezuelan Government suggested that since the British Government had declined arbitration on the boundary question, the matter should be referred to a court of law, the members of which should be chosen by both Venezuela and Great Britain.

To this the British replied, in February 1885, that the proposal presented constitutional difficulties which prevented the British Government from agreeing to it. Great Britain declared that it was not prepared to depart from the arrangement proposed by Venezuela in 1877 to have the boundary fixed by mutual accord between the Governments of the two countries.

In 1886, the British Government proposed to Venezuela that the territory lying between the boundary lines respectively suggested by Venezuela and Great Britain in 1881 should be considered as the territory in dispute between the two countries. Within these limits the boundary line should be traced either by an arbitrator or by a joint commission on the basis of an equal division, with due regard being paid to natural boundaries.

This recommendation, however, was not accepted by Venezuela which continued to assert the claim to all territory as far as the Essequibo River despite its proposal in 1881 of a boundary line along 60 degrees West longitude.

In the meanwhile, a series of encroachments by the Venezuelan Government on the territory in dispute, in violation of the Agreement of 1850, had led the British Government to the conclusion that some definite step must be taken for the protection of the rights and interests of British Guiana.

The most serious violation occurred when the Venezuelan Government in 1883 and 1884 issued grants of land and concessions for the purpose of colonisation in the territory between Barima Point, the Moruka, and the source of the Essequibo. As a result, the British authorities sent officers to warn off any persons who should attempt to put these grants and concessions into effect. Two rural constables were commissioned for the Amakura River in March 1885, and a British Post was established there in August 1886.

In October 1886, a notice by the British Government was published in the London Gazette stating that titles issued by the Venezuelan authorities to land within the territory claimed by the British as forming part of British Guiana could not be recognized by the British Government. The notice declared that any person taking possession of, or exercising any right over such land under the Venezuelan titles, would be treated as a trespasser under the laws of British Guiana.

The publication of this notice drew protests from the Venezuelan Government which shortly afterwards announced its intention of erecting a lighthouse on Barima Point, and stated that if Great Britain opposed this step, diplomatic relations would be broken off.

The British Government offered to agree to the establishment of the lighthouse if it received a formal statement that this measure would in no way be held as surrendering the British claim to the territory in dispute.

This offer was, however, rejected. The Venezuelan Government then for the first time denied that the territory between the Orinoco and the Pomeroon could be considered as being in dispute between the two countries; and it demanded the immediate evacuation of this territory (by the British) and the submission of the whole question to arbitration.

After the rejection of the Venezuelan Government's claim and the refusal to comply with its demands for evacuation of the territory, Venezuela accused Great Britain of "acts of spoliation", and, after expelling the British Ambassador in Caracas, diplomatic relations were broken off by Venezuela in February 1887.

During 1890 and 1893, negotiations were instituted by the Venezuelan Government for the renewal of diplomatic relations and a settlement of the boundary dispute. However, they failed to have any successful result because of the persistence of the Venezuelan negotiators in asserting the claim of Venezuela to all territory as far as the Essequibo River.

## **The Early Period of Road and Railway Transport**

In the eighteenth century the authorities ordered each plantation owner to build and maintain a public road and bridges to connect to the two adjacent neighbouring plantations. The original width of the roadway was 16 feet, but this was later increased to 36 feet, and rough red bricks, made from burnt clay, were used to surface it. This road was deemed a public right of way, and if the plantation owner refused to build or maintain it, the government authorities would carry out the task and then demand payment from him. If he could not meet the payment, his land could be sold by the West India Company or the Berbice Association to recover the cost.

When the British took control in Guyana in the early nineteenth century, a Commissioner of Roads and Bridges was given the task of supervising the maintenance of the public roads and bridges. Those plantations which did not keep the public road in good condition faced the penalty of being sold to recover the cost if the government was forced to carry out the task.

The plantations which were purchased by ex-slaves after 1838 experienced early problems in raising money to maintain the public road and bridges, with the result that they were, at first, in a state of disrepair. However, when these "proprietary villages" established forms of local government and levied their own local taxes, they were able to obtain funds to carry out maintenance.

Relatively swift movement along the coastal roadway was hampered by the rivers flowing to the Atlantic Ocean. Privately operated ferries, which included boats, barges and large rafts moved people and good across until later in the nineteenth century when wooden bridges were built across the Boerasiri, Mahaica, Mahaicony, Abary, and Canje Rivers as well as the Anamoromise Creek flowing through No. 66 Village to the Corentyne River. Government-owned ferries continued to operate across the larger rivers (Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice) and large steamers were used to maintain this service.

Since almost all the plantations were located on the coast or the lower river banks, the interior forest and savannah areas had very few roadways, and the local Amerindian population used mainly tracks and pathways, or the rivers, to move from one settlement to another.

As the population grew, the need for the movement of an increased volume of goods arose. In March 1837, only twelve years after the first iron railway was built in England, the British colonial authorities commenced plans to build and operate a railway between Georgetown and the Mahaica River. Early that month, government officials met with all the proprietors and representatives of the estates on the East Coast of Demerara to discuss the proposal of constructing the railway. This proposal received unanimous support since the estate owners felt that the railway service would drastically cut the expenses for transporting sugar and other goods to Georgetown and, thus, reduce overall the cost of sugar production.

As a follow-up to this meeting, a committee was soon appointed to take responsibility for building the railway between Georgetown and Mahaica. Eventually, a joint stock company, the Demerara Railway Company, was formed to organise financing to run the entire operation.

The company, soon after, hired Frederick Catherwood, a British civil engineer with experience in the construction and operation of railways in England, to carry out the project. On his arrival in Guyana, he surveyed the East Coast route, and later he also mapped out the proposed line to be taken for a railway on the coastal area between the Demerara and Essequibo Rivers.

The main problem the company faced was that of raising the necessary finance in Guyana because many sugar planters claimed they were almost bankrupt as a result of the loss of their slave labour due to Emancipation. Since they could not raise the required capital, two-thirds of the shares were acquired by investors in Great Britain and Holland.

The delay in raising capital forced the railway plan to be delayed until 1845 when legislation was finally enacted to regulate the constitution of joint stock companies for carrying on public works and to authorise the acquisition of land for such purposes. The passage of this legislation enabled the company to raise the required funds in London very quickly. A total of 100,000 British pounds was required, but the company was able to acquire double that amount.

In October 1845, a management committee was appointed to supervise the construction of the project. Eventually, a bill proposing the construction of

the railway was passed by the Court of Policy in July 1846. Then in March 1847, Frederick Catherwood began his task of building the railway.

For the Georgetown's terminus, the Demerara Railway Company purchased an area at the junction of Main and Lamaha Streets in the city. Here, in August 1847 work commenced on the building of a large railway station with workshops, coal sheds and large water tanks. Construction other stations along the route also started shortly after.

That same year three railway steam engines, purchased in London, arrived in Georgetown and they were, respectively, named "Mosquito", "Sandfly" and "Firefly".

At first, a shortage of labour and finances impeded the construction of the railway. As construction continued, the cost escalated and government intervention was necessary to assure the repayment of loans offered. But despite such problems, after nearly 15 months the railway was opened as far as Plaisance on 3 November 1848 with two trains running daily between this village and Georgetown. This became the first railway system on the South American continent.

Further problems arose as the railway extended, since land was required by the company for the route through the various plantations and the proprietors were not willing to give up any part of their property without obtaining a favourable price. But through the intervention of the government, an agreement was reached by which proprietors were paid a compensation of \$40 per acre of land utilised for the railway.

By May 1849, the railway company became dissatisfied with the service provided by Catherwood and his contract was terminated and this led to a further delay in construction. Financial problems, however, was the main cause but this was remedied when the government in July 1849 approved a loan of 50,000 pounds to the company. Construction supervised by Mr. Manifold, Catherwood's assistant, then moved quickly and the railway line reached Buxton in March 1850, Enmore in October 1850 and Belfield in November 1850.

The following year the company was again plagued by financial problems with the result that worked almost grounded to a halt and there was little progress for almost two years. The situation was so serious, the Demerara

Railway Company's committee resigned and Manifold was left in charge of all affairs. Again, the government intervened ease financial pressure on the company through a special ordinance in 1853 which reduced the rate of interest on the 50,000-pound loan from 6 percent to 4 percent annually.

Work recommenced at a rapid pace and the line reached Two Friends in October 1854. There followed another slowing down of the project, again due to the shortage of funds. As before, the government had to come to the rescue. On 1 August 1863, the railway reached Clonbrook and, finally, the Mahaica terminus at Helena in August 1864.

On 31 August 1864, the Governor, Sir Francis Hincks, formally declared the railroad open. Its length was nearly twenty-two miles and the total cost of construction was estimated to be 313,890 pounds. Of this figure the Demerara Railway Company raised 249,023 pounds while the remaining sum of 64,867 pounds was acquired through government loans.

The railway was very popular among the people on the East Coast Demerara, and soon there were demands for it to be extended further to Rosignol on the west bank of the Berbice River, 62 "railway" miles east of Georgetown. But it was not until 1890 that the government granted a contract to the Demerara Railway Company to build the line between Mahaica and Rosignol, and also another line between Vreed-en-Hoop and Tuschen west of the Demerara River.

The extension to Rosignol was constructed from 1897 to 1900 and its terminus was the ferry stelling on the left bank of the Berbice River, thus allowing for easy connection by ferry steamer across the river with New Amsterdam. This part of the project included the building of sturdy iron railway bridges across the Mahaica, Mahaicony and Abary Rivers.

The first section of the Demerara-Essequibo railway was laid down after 1900 between Vreed-en-Hoop and Greenwich Park, and later extended to Parika in 1914.

The Demerara Railway Company was later sold to the Colonial Transport Department of the government, which took over control of the railway services from 1 January 1922.

The railway not only helped in quick and easy movement of the travelling public, but it also transported large quantities of goods very efficiently. Bulk sugar from the estates was moved with relative ease to Georgetown for export. But despite the popularity of the railway, many sugar estate owners, at first, were wary of it for a particular reason. They felt it would encourage their workers to abandon their jobs on the estates and settle on lands near the railway and become peasant farmers. The movement of people to live and farm in the vicinity of the railway did occur, but this did not pull away workers from the sugar estates as the estate owners feared.



## Establishment of a Money System

Before the arrival of the Dutch in Guyana, the Amerindians survived on subsistence farming, hunting and fishing. From time to time they used a barter system by which they exchanged goods with each other. For example, one person might give half a deer to his neighbor in exchange for a basket of sweet potatoes.

But actually, the Amerindians did not barter much among themselves since they farmed, hunted and fished in communal groups, and they shared the produce among themselves.

Later, the Dutch colonists and traders bartered European goods such as knives, cutlasses, and cloth for indigo and dye-woods which were collected by the Amerindians.

Money was introduced by the Dutch colonists, but there was never much in circulation. Actually, for large business transactions, they rarely used money. It was normal for them to write promissory notes which eventually would be redeemed from their agents in Amsterdam where they sent their sugar and other produce to be sold.

The Dutch colonists introduced the guilder and other coins such as pennings, stivers and bitts whose values fluctuated over time. Side by side with these coins from other European nations circulated. These included the English guinea, the Mexican dollar, and the Portuguese gold ducat, moidore, and joe. By the end of the eighteenth century a type of paper money issued by the Government or the banks in Europe began appearing in Guyana. Usually, when a person had accumulated a quantity of paper money, he would exchange the notes for gold at the Receiver's Office for Colonial Taxes. This Office would then re-issue the paper money to the general public again.

When the British seized over Guyana in 1803, English coins began to make a gradual appearance. But the Dutch coins continued to be the main means of commercial exchange throughout the rest of the century, by which time the Portuguese and Mexican coins could hardly be found in circulation.

Many slaves saved coins that they acquired by doing odd jobs during their free time, or through the sale of the produce from their provision grounds. Interestingly, the first bank to be established was a savings bank for the slaves in 1828. This occurred at a time when the British Government was implementing policies aimed at improving the social condition of the slave population in its colonies.

In 1836, two other banks, the Colonial Bank and the British Guiana Bank, were set up. The former, many years later, was taken over by Barclays Bank, while the latter, during the second decade of the twentieth century, was absorbed by the Royal Bank of Canada.

In 1900, the Dutch coins were withdrawn and were replaced by British coins such as the half penny, penny, sixpence, twelve pence, shilling, florin, half crown, crown, sovereign and guinea. Official British paper money was also introduced into Guyana at this time. This system of currency remained until 1951 when Guyana joined with the British Eastern Caribbean territories to use common Eastern Caribbean coins and currency notes, even though many of the British coins continued to circulate for a while. Guyana, on attaining independence in 1966, withdrew from the Eastern Caribbean currency board and began to issue its own coins (one cent, five cents, ten cents, twenty-five cents, fifty cents) and currency notes with values of one dollar, five dollars, ten dollars and twenty dollars.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE GOLD INDUSTRY

Between 1849 and 1857 reports of gold discoveries in Essequibo were circulating in Guyana. Then in 1860 the Superintendent of Rivers and Creeks declared that gold could be found on the beds of some rivers in Essequibo. Not too long after, the owner of a Georgetown jewellery establishment, B. V. Abraham received permission from the Government to prospect for gold in the Cuyuni River. Abraham set up machinery at Waririe on the right bank of Cuyuni and managed to gather small quantities of gold, but the gold company which he established with a capital of \$75,000, could not maintain itself since only small quantities were being found. Mining operations were halted and Abraham, on behalf of the company, asked the Court of Policy for financial relief claiming that over \$65,000 was spent without obtaining any profit. This request was refused.

Abraham was convinced that gold existed in large quantities but more capital investment was necessary. He travelled to England to convince business persons there to subscribe capital to his company so that he could continue the mining operations. However, investors in England were discouraged by the report of the geologists Brown and Sawkins, who stated that Guyana was unlikely to produce large quantities of gold. Further, the British Government at that period declared that there should be no mining in the area where gold was found because it had an agreement with Venezuela that due to existing territorial claims, neither country should occupy it.

Abraham returned to Guyana where he established a business association with D'Amil, a Portuguese wood-cutter, and they secretly mined for gold and both men became very wealthy.

In 1863 a quartz crushing operation was started in the Cuyuni, but the low quantity of gold obtained forced it to close down.

In 1879, after information circulated that gold was found in other parts of Essequibo, many individuals left the coastal region and became independent gold miners in various tributaries of the Essequibo River. In October of the same year, one African gold miner, Jules Caman, using a place-washing system, found relatively large quantities in the Akaiwanna Creek and the Konawaruk Creek, two of the smaller tributaries of the

Essequibo River. Gold was also found in areas near the source of the Demerara River.

The Venezuelan claim to most of Essequibo at first hampered the development of the gold industry in that area. As late as March 1887, the Officer Administering the Government (or acting Governor) of British Guiana, Charles Bruce, issued a public notice that licences issued for gold mining were subject to a subsequent settlement of the border dispute with Venezuela. This notice did not help at all to encourage investors interested in gold mining.

This state of affairs changed in 1889 when the new Governor Viscount Gormanston announced in the Combined Court that the British Government would no longer recognise any Venezuelan claim east of the Schomburgk Line. He declared also that the territory near the Orinoco, where gold was also found, would become a separate administrative area known as the North West District.

The dismissal of the Venezuelan claim encouraged gold miners to rush back to the Essequibo region, particularly to the Potaro where large gold discoveries were made. The Essequibo Gold Mining Company was established and it operated mainly in the Potaro River area where it made rich finds and earned large profits for its investors.

Gold mining had a serious effect on labour on the coastal areas especially in the sugar industry. This was because many of the male African workers departed for the gold fields with the hope of earning quick riches. In an effort to stem the drain of labour, the Government in 1880 imposed a royalty on would-be gold miners of 2 percent. But this did not halt the flow especially since sugar was fetching a low price in Europe. Earnings were never sufficient and hundreds of African men in the villages found great difficulty in finding employment in the estates and in the towns. Gold mining became a lure for these men and they singly or on groups departed for the interior districts in search of gold. Most of these miners operated independently or in small partnerships as soon as they staked mining claims in the interior areas where they "panned" for gold in the rivers. Since much of their diet consisted of salted pork, they began to be referred to as "pork-knockers". The settlement of Bartica, the gateway to the interior, became a busy service centre, growing rapidly in size and officially becoming a township in 1887.

As gold production grew, the sugar estates continued to face a serious threat of losing many of its skilled workers. The Government in 1896 published its Mining Regulations which placed a number of demands on gold miners, possibly with an intention of discouraging them from moving to the gold fields. Prospectors, in addition to the royalty they had to pay, now had to fill out lengthy forms to obtain licences for which fees were charged. In addition, they had to submit themselves to a body search when they were departing from the gold fields. Nevertheless, these actions did not deter more and more persons from becoming gold miners, some of whom branched out into digging up the gravel banks of the river to search for diamonds after those gems were discovered in Mazaruni.

## GROWTH OF GEORGETOWN

The town of Stabroek was renamed Georgetown in 1812 when it began to be governed by a Board of Policy. Three years later, this Board appointed a Receiver of Town Taxes and a Clerk of Markets. By this period, commercial activities were growing and there were already a number of open-air markets in various parts of the town. A Board of Health was appointed in 1832 after a small outbreak of cholera.

As the population grew and more "burgs" were added, thus expanding Georgetown, the Court of Policy passed an Ordinance on 1 March 1837 to establish a governing authority made up of a Mayor and Town Council. The Council comprised of 11 elected councillors and every year they elected one of their numbers to be the Mayor. The franchise was very limited and a town resident qualified to vote in Council elections only if he had a house rated at a value of 3,500 guilders. A candidate for a position on the Council had to own a house valued at over 8,000 guilders. In subsequent years these qualifications were lowered. In 1860 a candidate for councillor had to own premises valued \$1,500 while a voter was required to own premises with an appraised value of \$250. Further lowering of these qualifications took place in 1898.

The first Mayor of Georgetown was John Croal, and among the first Council members, all of whom were wealthy merchants and landowners, was George Booker who was also a sugar plantation owner.

The Town Council was provided with powers to run all the affairs of Georgetown, including collecting taxes, policing and superintending the markets. It also was in charge of providing health services and building and maintaining roads, canals, bridges and kokers.

In 1839, just two years after the Town Council was established, it clashed with the Governor who said it was his right to determine how the Council's funds should be used. After an ordinance passed by the Court of Policy gave the Governor that final authority, the Council wrote to the British Government to protest this move. The petition of the members of the Council won a great deal of sympathy in London, and in 1840, an Order-in-Council issued by the British Government overturned the ordinance. This action severely reduced the role of the Governor and the central Government in the financial affairs of the municipality.

City Hall, the building housing the administrative office of the Mayor and Town Council, was officially opened in July 1889. The building which cost \$70,500 was designed by Rev. Ignatius Scoles and built by Sprostons Ltd.

While the Town Council was beginning to exercise its authority, other activities were taking place. In September 1838, the Anglican Church began building the St. George's Church and by 1842, when Georgetown was designated a city, it was ready for opening. However, the brick building was badly designed and it shortly after suffered from heavy structural damage and later had to be demolished. A second building was eventually erected but after that became inadequate, it too was demolished. In 1889, work commenced on a large wooden cathedral on the same site, and it was declared open in 1892 at a ceremony presided over by Bishop Austin, even though the building was not completed until 1894.

In 1897, as a result of the growing Muslim population in Georgetown, a mosque was erected in Queenstown. The building of this major place of worship was spearheaded by Goolmohammed Khan, one of the leaders of the Muslim community.

One of the major problems that Georgetown faced was the availability of water for domestic use. In 1825, one of the leading citizens, Dr. Michael McTurk, proposed the construction of a canal to bring water from the Lamaha Creek some distance south of Georgetown. The proposal won support from both the central Government and the Town Council, and by 1829, a canal from the Camuni Creek to Georgetown was completed with the use of the labour of hundreds of slaves. In the town itself, trenches branching off from the Lamaha Canal were dug, and these provided the supply of water to the residents. It was not until 1885 that the people of Georgetown began to get their water supply through pipes after mechanical pumps were purchased by the Council.

From the late eighteenth century, the most popular market place was an open expanse of land where the Stabroek Market building is now located. The area, which was already known as Stabroek Market, was designated as a market by the Town Council in 1842 and taxes were collected from the vendors. As the market grew in size, the need was felt for a permanent building to house the growing commercial operations. An iron building, occupying an area of 70,000 square feet, was designed and built in 1880-

1881 by Edgemoor Iron Company of Delaware, USA at a cost of \$236,000. To prepare the foundation of the building which became known as the Stabroek Market, 50,000 square feet of the shore of the Demerara River had to be reclaimed. The building was finally opened to the public in November 1881.

Following a request by interested Georgetown residents in 1877 for the establishment of botanical gardens, an area of 276 acres at the back of Plantation Vlissingen was bought by the central Government for \$72,000. Part of this block of land was used for the Botanic Gardens, the original laying out of which was completed in January 1889.

Street lights made their appearance in Georgetown in the mid-nineteenth century when lanterns were hung on some of the main streets. By 1873, the newly formed Georgetown Gas Company enabled lighting to be done by gas. Then in 1891, the introduction of electricity brought electric lights along Brickdam and High Street where the more wealthy residents had their homes.

In terms of transportation, the Georgetown Tramways Company in 1879 introduced tramcars pulled by mules. A Canadian firm purchased both the Tramways Company and the small electric company in 1901, which under one management, became known as the Demerara Electric Company. This Company operated in some parts of Georgetown an electric tram service which ceased activities in 1930. The Company also supplied electricity to Georgetown and its environs and was eventually purchased by the Government after 1957.



## EARLY ADMINISTRATION OF NEW AMSTERDAM

After the founding of New Amsterdam in 1791, it was governed by a Board of Police until 1844. Main Street was constructed in 1811 and one year later the Governor delegated a commission to plan and execute the construction of roads, bridges and a drainage system. By then the area of the town had expanded to 554 acres.

To manage the town, a Board of Management established in 1825 and in 1838 this became a Board of Policy. Further changes occurred in 1844 when the Board of Policy was dissolved and a Board of Superintendence was appointed by the central Government to manage the town's affairs.

This Board functioned as a Town Council and appointed a Receiver of Taxes, a Secretary, a Clerk of Markets, a Surveyor of Works and a Town Superintendent who was also the Inspector of Nuisances. However, the Board of Superintendence was not an independent entity since the Court of Policy had to authorise its annual budget and assessment of taxes.

Under the supervision of the Board of Superintendence, the Town Hall was constructed in 1868. A public hospital was built ten years later.

The Board members from time to time requested the central Government to establish an elected Town Council. These requests were denied every time they were made, but finally in 1891 the Government decided to establish a Town Council, and after its election, the Board of Superintendence was abolished.

The new Council was made up of seven members. Only those persons with properties in the town rated at a value of \$1,000 could qualify to stand as a candidate for Council elections; voters had to own property valued \$400.

The composition of the Council changed in 1916 when representatives of the Government were appointed to it. There were now nine members, six of whom were elected and three appointed by the Government. At the same time, any resident who had property rated at a value of \$500 or paid \$40 in rent for a house now also qualified to be a candidate for the Council. Property qualifications for a voter also dropped to \$250 or if he paid a rent of \$15 a month.

As the town grew commercial activity developed along the Strand, the street running parallel to the Berbice River, and along Pitt Street near to which a thriving market developed. Schools and churches were built and civic organisations made their appearance. A ferry service across the Berbice linking New Amsterdam and Rosignol also expanded over the years.

The town also faced a number of problems, among which was that of obtaining a regular supply of water for domestic use. At first water was obtained from a canal on its boundary with Plantation Smythfield and Plantation Vryheid. Efforts over a period of years to negotiate water rights through Plantation Vryheid, then a sugar estate, failed. But eventually the Council obtained permission from the Government to obtain water from a canal which connected to Calabash Creek, a tributary of the Canje River. The canal passed through Plantation Vryheid but the Government declared that it was located on Government property thus preventing the estate owners from making any objection. In 1915 mechanical pumps were purchased and residents began to receive water through pipes.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE RICE INDUSTRY

Rice cultivation in Guyana was introduced by the Dutch in the early eighteenth century. They brought seed for the crop from Carolina in North America and small fields were cultivated on the plantations in Essequibo. When the French briefly took control of Guyana in 1782, seed was imported from the French colony of Louisiana.

The Dutch plantation owners were importing rice, grown in southern Europe and in Carolina, for domestic consumption. The rice cultivated in Guyana was used mainly to supplement the diet of the slaves, and not too long after, some of the African slaves began cultivating small plots in their farming areas on the plantations. By the mid-eighteenth century, runaway slaves also subsisted partly on rice they planted in swampy clearings in inland areas where they were hiding.

As part of the effort to discourage slaves from escaping, plantation owners sent groups of their loyal slaves to locate and destroy the rice fields cultivated by the runaways. One report of 1810 told of a large field which was destroyed in the back lands of Mahaicony.

After Emancipation, there was an expansion of peasant farming as many of the Africans acquired their own lands. Some of them practised rice farming on a small scale, but they still continued to depend on other crops for their main source of food. Some attempts at large scale rice farming were not successful because of an irregular supply of irrigation water and poor knowledge of cultivation methods. One company which was formed in 1853 to cultivate rice on a large scale on the West Bank Demerara experienced these problems and was forced to close operations after a few years.

From around 1860 Indian immigrants on the West Coast Demerara who were experienced in rice farming began to cultivate the crop. By 1865 they had planted about 16 acres of rice but their efforts at first were not very successful also because of poor irrigation. But they persevered and more and more Indians in other parts of the country joined in the enterprise, even though it was still done on small plots. Around 1870 drought conditions led to a decline in acreage cultivated, and only in the Abary district on the West Coast Berbice rice farming continued unhindered.

Following improved weather conditions, there was an upsurge in cultivation mainly on the Essequibo coast where more and more Indians, who had completed their indenture, turned to rice farming. By 1886, over 200 acres of land in Anna Regina were under rice; by 1893, rice was cultivated on over 2,500 acres in different parts of the country. As more and more Indians acquired land, much of which were bought from African landowners and also from the Government, rice cultivation continued to expand. More than 7,500 acres of rice land existed by 1898; in 1920, the area under rice expanded to over 55,000 acres.

As rice production expanded, imports also gradually declined. Up to the mid-1890s nearly 19,000 tons were imported annually, but by 1900 this amount decreased to about 8,000 tons. This decline continued year after year, and in 1917 the final import of 70 tons was made.

But while imports were declining, Guyana had in the meantime commenced exporting rice to the West Indian islands. This export trade commenced in 1903 when five tons found a market in the West Indies; by 1917, over 14,000 tons were exported.

## THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE OF 1891

The Immigration Ordinance enacted in 1891 regulated labor conditions on the sugar plantations. It was signed into law by the Governor after approval from the Court of Policy.

The Ordinance provided for employment of indentured Indians by the task and by the day. Except for Sundays and holidays, a field worker was obliged to work for 7 hours a day, while a factory worker's work day lasted for 10 hours. Despite these new specifications, many sugar plantation owners kept their workers on the job for even longer hours but were not prosecuted for breaching the law.

The minimum wage was 24 cents per day for able bodied men, and less than 16 cents for other workers who were not "able bodied." This latter group included boys and women.

The payment for task work was supposed to be equivalent to that paid for day-work, but this did not generally occur. As such, some workers from

time to time expressed their dissatisfaction to the plantation managers and to the immigration agents.

The ordinance also directed that if the task of a worker was not properly performed he could be punished by being fined or jailed. The punishment was a fine of 5 dollars or 14 days imprisonment on the first conviction; this penalty was doubled for a second conviction. Absence from work was punished with a fine of 10 dollars or one month in jail. However, workers who were ill were excused.

Other offences included drunkenness, willful deceit in the performance of work, and using insulting words or gestures to employers or anyone in authority. Serious offences included encouraging other indentured workers to refuse to work, and damaging employers' property. Punishment for these more serious acts was a fine of 24 dollars or imprisonment for two months.

The indentured laborer was also restricted to the plantation. It was also illegal for him to work for anyone else. Actually, he could not leave the plantation unless he obtained permission from the owner. He was entitled to a pass for one day and night if he worked for two consecutive weeks. If he was absent without leave for more than seven days from the plantation, he was declared a deserter and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

There was an important exception to this rule. A pass was not required by worker if he was leaving the plantation to make a complaint to a magistrate or the office of the Immigration Agent-General. But in doing so, he could not leave in the company of more than four other indentured persons. This requirement was not always enforced and on many occasions larger groups left the plantations to lodge complaints about their treatment at the office of the Immigration Agent-General in Georgetown.

Based on the regulations of the 1891 ordinance, the Immigration Agent-General had to investigate the complaints of indentured workers and make rulings without any lengthy delays.

The ordinance of 1891 also instructed the employers to provide suitable housing for the workers and a fine could be levied if this was not done. Despite this, no plantation owner was ever convicted even though their workers were housed in unsanitary and dilapidated living quarters which also offered them no privacy.

## The Non Pareil Riot

Indentured workers complained regularly that the ordinance imposed harsh penalties on them, and that it was imposed for the benefit of the plantation owners. These conditions resulted in a riot at Non Pareil (on East Coast Demerara) on 13 October 1896 after Indian indentured workers staged a strike. One of the strike leaders was Gooljar who originally was indentured in 1871, and after he completed his contract, he became a cloth seller, and worked with the police force. He returned to India in 1890, but came back to Guyana in 1894 as a re-indenture to the Non Pareil sugar plantation where his experience and leadership qualities won the respect of the other Indian indentured workers.

The strike itself stemmed from actions taken by a planter who attempted to transfer to other plantations several Indian indentured workers whom he considered troublemakers. This arose after the workers protested against low wages and increased tasks at the plantation, and also the repeated sexual assaults on Indian women and girls by the White overseers. After they halted work, they went to the Immigration Agent-General's office to complain. On their return, they were confronted by a party of police, commanded by Captain G. C. De Rinzy, widely regarded as one who generally applied violent methods in curbing workers' protests. They attempted to arrest four of the men, but the crowd quickly prevented this action. The police, without reading the riot act, then opened fire on the crowd, killing five persons, including Jungali, who had earlier complained that his wife was abducted and raped by one of the overseers. Others who died were Kandhai, Chinahoo, Rogy and Mahabir. In addition, 59 indentured workers were injured in the hail of police fire.

## Bechu's criticisms of the indenture system

It was this massacre that spurred the indentured Indian, Bhoshunath Chattopadhyay (known as Bechu) to write letters for the next four and half years to the editors of the Chronicle and several newspapers in which he brilliantly championed the cause of the immigrant laborers. His letters sharply upset the planter class and on two occasions (1898 and 1899) he was prosecuted for libel, but divided juries could not find him guilty.

Buchu expressed opinions most forcefully against the severe working conditions and the penalties imposed on the indentured Indians. He himself was a relatively highly educated Bengali immigrant who was well versed in the English language. As an orphan, he was raised by Presbyterian missionary lady in Calcutta and had lived and worked with other missionaries as a copyist and domestic help. Though he was never educated in a school, he had been taught by his missionary guardian as a child and as he matured he developed a keen interest in English literature.

As an adult, he indentured himself to Guyana and he was contracted on Plantation Enmore in 1894 where he worked in the house of the deputy manager until his indenture ended in 1897. In his first letter published in the Chronicle in November 1896, he condemned the White overseers' sexual exploitation of Indian females; refusal of estate hospitals to provide medical treatment to un-indentured Indians; and the planters' frequent breaches of labor laws in order to impose their total control of the Indian indentured workers and their families.

So powerful was his condemnation of the indenture system that the West India Royal Commission, appointed by the British government to examine working and living conditions of the people in the British Caribbean, invited him to present evidence and a written submission to the four-member commission when it visited Guyana in early 1897.

In his submission to the Royal Commission, Bechu cited his own personal experience as an indentured worker Bechu, pointing out that the concept of equality embodied in the contract was never applied in practice nor were the specific provisions of the contract applied by the planters or enforced by the colonial government. Workers also were afraid to complain against the drivers and overseers because they feared being prosecuted on trumped up charges.

Bechu noted the rampant practice of concubinage and sexual exploitation of Indian women by overseers and managers which he explained was a serious source of management-worker conflict and which resulted directly in the frequency of wife murders among Indians.

He opposed further immigration on the grounds that it was contrary to the interests of the indentured and free Indians in Guyana. As an alternative, he suggested Indian immigrants on the completion of their indenture,

should be provided an incentive to settle in the country by providing them land instead of return passage to India.

Bechu writings in the local newspapers drew sharp responses from the sugar planters some of who responded by writing rebuttal letters to the same newspapers. But these only acted to encourage Bechu to respond with other letters to dissect their arguments.

Bechu eventually departed from Guyana and returned to India in 1901.

Unfortunately, all the exposure of the ills of the indenture system by Bechu and subsequently by other Indians failed to move the authorities to apply remedies. For over 26 years their demands for the immigration ordinance to be amended fell on deaf ears, and it was not until 1917 that the Court of Policy finally decided to amend this law. The Court of Policy no doubt was sensitive to the representations of the Indian government which expressed concerns over the treatment of indentured Indians in Guyana. In addition, the influential role of the anti-emigration movement in India, which was supported by Mohandas Gandhi, was instrumental in pressuring the colonial authorities to amend the ordinance

The amended ordinance stipulated that criminal actions against indentured workers were abolished. Civil measures including repatriation to India, in extreme cases, were now to be applied. Penalties were drastically reduced and fines could not exceed one-third of the weekly wage. Imprisonment for labor offences was also abolished.

### Political Changes (1891-1917)

In 1891, after a strong petition by the Reform Association (then known as the British Guiana Reform Association), the colonial authorities finally abolished the College of Keizers. In the constitutional reforms which were enacted, the Court of Policy was also expanded to include six additional elected members, three of whom were to be elected and three appointed by the Governor. Qualifications for membership to the Court of Policy were also expanded to include anyone with immovable property exceeding a value of \$7,500. An Executive Council under the chairmanship of the Governor was also created.



Under this new constitutional arrangement of 1891, elections were held to fill the three newly created seats in the Court of Policy. One of the contestants was Patrick Dargan, a "Coloured" lawyer who based his campaign on a free and liberal education for all. He was among those who had consistently argued since 1886 that entrants to the civil service should be selected based on a competitive examination. However, the Government refused to accede to this demand claiming that it would lead to the selection of socially inferior persons who would be "good clerks but bad administrators". Dargan felt that the refusal to allow a competitive examination was denying young African men jobs in the civil service. He was very vocal in expressing this view in a number of newspaper articles.

Despite waging a vibrant election campaign, Dargan was defeated. Two other African lawyers, J. A. Murdock and W.E. Lewis who contested the other two seats also lost their election bid.

Before the 1891 election, there were 18 representatives in the two Colleges of the Court of Policy. They included 13 Europeans, 4 Coloureds and only one African, William Smith, a Georgetown merchant who was also the first African to become a member of the Guyana legislature. In the 1891 elections, no African was elected, and only two Coloureds won seats.

The 1897 elections saw a stronger campaign by the non-White segment of the population to win representation in the Court of Policy. Dargan contested a seat and so did Andrew Benjamin Brown, an African. The Progressive Association, which had absorbed the Reform Association, was divided as to whether or not it should support Brown. However, when the White-owned paper, The Echo, launched personal attacks on Brown because of his ethnic background, the Association came out in full support of him.

Associated in the attacks on Brown were some Anglican clergymen who openly made anti-Black statements, including a suggestion that Africans should be given special legal status which amounted to an early promotion of a form of racial separation. The Anglican Church was openly involved in politics and its leadership openly sided and campaigned for particular candidates.

Almost all the candidates backed by the Progressive Association were elected. They included Dargan and Brown whose campaigns were ably supported by the educator A. A. Thorne.

Thorne himself did not stand as a candidate. He involved himself in education and established the Middle School in which many African boys and girls received an education equivalent to that provided at Queen's College and Bishop's High School. In 1902 he was elected to the Georgetown City Council and actively promoted a number of reforms in that body. In 1904 he was involved in a celebrated court case after he wrote an article in a Boston newspaper while on a visit to the United States. His article described how the sugar industry was dominating all sectors of Guyanese society. The Argosy newspaper in Georgetown wrote a sharp criticism of Thorne's article and he sued for libel. Ironically, his friend Dargan was the legal representative of the Argosy, but in the end, the judge ruled that a libel was committed and Thorne was awarded \$500 in damages.

Thorne entered national politics in 1906 when he was elected as a Financial Representative but he lost his seat in a subsequent election. He was re-elected in 1916 as a member of the Court of Policy.

The 1906 elections saw more Guyanese from the non-White establishment winning seats into the legislative body. They included P.N. Brown, an African lawyer, and two Portuguese, Francis Dias, a solicitor, and J. P. Santos, a merchant.

During the next five years, further amendments were made to the constitution including a reduction on the property qualifications for membership to the Court of Policy from \$7,500 to \$5,000. The franchise was also reduced from an earning of \$40 a month to \$25 a month.

Despite the lowering of the franchise qualifications, very few Indians registered as voters. In 1911, of a total Indian population of 126,517, only 251 were on the voters' list. The situation did not improve very much two years later when just about six percent of adult Indians were registered as voters. The cause of this was generally an ignorance of the English language in which the registration papers were printed.

In 1916, a few prominent Indians presented themselves as candidates for elections. They were Thomas Flood, a merchant and Government contractor who was a candidate for the Court of Policy for West Demerara and Joseph Alexander Luckhoo, a lawyer, who contested as a representative for South West Essequibo. Edward. A. Luckhoo, mayor of New Amsterdam, and J. A. Veersawmy, both members of the legal profession, and Ashraf Ally, a merchant, contested for the positions as Financial Representatives. However, only Joseph Alexander Luckhoo was successful, and he became the first East Indian to be elected to the national legislature, the Court of Policy.

## INDIAN SETTLEMENTS

In 1885 the Government appointed a Commission headed by the Attorney General, J. W. Carrington, to determine how a land settlement scheme could be established for Indians in compensation for their return passages to India. The Commission met with plantation owners, groups of Indians and other interested persons, and visited a number of places suitable for settlement. The Commission subsequently established a Return Passages Committee in September 1896 to obtain the sites and to select the settlers.

In 1896 Helena, an abandoned sugar plantation on the west bank of the Mahaica River, was purchased by the Government. It was then surveyed and divided into lots, and the old drainage canals were also cleared.

Distribution of house lots and cultivation plots to the selected settlers began in April 1897, and by the time this process was completed, 1,206 persons were in possession of land in the settlement. However, all the persons granted land in Helena did not move from their former places of residence to reside there. Some owned farms elsewhere and they had to sell those properties before they could move. In addition, many of them were employed on the on-going Demerara railway project for relatively good wages and were not ready to surrender their jobs to settle permanently at Helena. As a result, the settlement suffered from neglect.

The Carrington Commission felt that the settlers could not manage Helena without Government support. The Governor, Sir Walter Sundall, therefore, appointed Rev. James Cropper of the Canadian East Indian Mission as superintendent of Helena, and also of Whim, another Indian settlement which had started on the Corentyne.

Cropper was faced with numerous problems at Helena due to the fact that many of the new proprietors were not living there, and also because those who were occupying lands were very poor. The long drought of 1899 worsened their plight since their crops, particularly rice, suffered badly. Thus, the collection of rates for the maintenance of infrastructure was not an easy task.

The Whim settlement started in September 1898 when land for housing and cultivation was allocated to settlers. By March 1899, land was shared out to 574 persons.

Many of the persons granted land at this settlement previously resided at the nearby sugar estates of Port Mourant and Albion where they had jobs, mainly as cane cutters, when they were not working on their own lands. The long drought in 1899 forced many of them to abandon their plots and return to Port Mourant and Albion, but they gradually returned to Whim as the weather conditions improved. Some of them also experienced severe economic problems because they incurred heavy debts after borrowing from money lenders to finance the building of houses. It took some time before they could eventually pay off these debts.

The settlers cultivated mainly rice, but also planted coconuts, coffee and fruit trees. With their earnings from the sugar estates they were able to erect better houses than their counterparts at Helena.

Current expenditure to maintain the settlement was defrayed from rates collected from the new proprietors. However, progress was slower than expected and the Government decided not to expand the settlement.

A third settlement for Indians was established at Bush Lot in West Berbice. The area was an abandoned estate which was heavily indebted to the Government for rates, and the proprietor sold it to the Government for \$1,200. Comprising of an area of 1,306 acres of which 463 acres were waste land, it was handed over to the Return Passage Committee in March 1897.

The early settlers of Bush Lot experienced the problems associated with the drought of 1899 and their rice crop was severely affected. Even though house lots and cultivation plots began to be distributed from 1899, it was

not until February 1902 that Bush Lot was officially declared an Indian settlement. A sum of \$40,000 acquired from the immigration fund was spent on laying out the settlement and the digging by shovel-men of a canal, over three miles long, to the Abary River to obtain water supply.

As at Helena and Whim, many of the persons granted lands, did not move to Bush Lot immediately and so the erection of dwelling houses progressed slowly for the first few years. Although land was allotted to 1,227 persons when the settlement began, only 394 were in occupation in 1904, and 632 by 1911.

To maintain the village, such as clearing drains and fixing the streets, residents were asked to give voluntary labour, but they were not cooperative and they refused to do so unless they were paid.

Maria's Pleasure on the island of Wakenaam started in 1902 when 168 lots were distributed. However, only 40 persons built homes and rice and coconuts were cultivated. But since most of the new land owners could not be found, not enough rates were collected.

In 1903, the immigration agent reported that some owners were using their house lots for cultivation purposes while their cultivation plots were left unoccupied. The following year the Government expressed dissatisfaction with the problems occurring in Maria's Pleasure and decided to place this settlement, as well as Bush Lot, Whim and Helena, under the control of the Board of Health. This was eventually done in March 1905.

In 1905, the Government abandoned the scheme to settle Indians in exchange for their return passages, and agreed instead to assist them in purchasing land. In 1912-13, the Government purchased the abandoned estates of Unity-Lancaster on East Coast Demerara from their owners and improved the drainage and irrigation canals. The land was then divided into one-acre plots which were sold for \$20 each.

Around the same period Clonbrook, another abandoned estate just a mile to the west of Unity-Lancaster, was also purchased by the Government and divided into house lots and cultivation plots. Each house lot was sold for \$30 while a cultivation plot cost \$20.

On the West Coast Demerara, Windsor Forest and La Jalousie, with a combined area of 3,000 acres, was offered for rent at a rate of one dollar per acre for the first year, and six dollars for each subsequent year. The tenants had the option of purchasing the land by paying \$8.50 per acre for 25 years. A nearby estate, Hague, was also leased out in lots and offered under similar terms.

## EARLY EDUCATION OF INDIANS

Up to 1870 very few Indian children were attending schools and this became a matter of concern to the Government. In 1876 the Compulsory Education Ordinance was passed to enforce elementary education. This Ordinance prohibited the employment of children under the age of nine years or those over nine who did not hold a certificate of proficiency from a primary school. School attendance was made compulsory up to the age of twelve in rural areas and fourteen in Georgetown, New Amsterdam and Buxton. As a result of this Ordinance, the country was divided into educational districts, each with an education officer to enforce attendance of children to schools.

East Indian parents, most of whom were Hindus and Muslims, objected to this Ordinance on the grounds that the schools were run by Christian bodies, and they feared that their children would be forced out of their religions and converted to Christianity. Some of these parents opposed it also because it removed the children from working on the estates which helped to supplement family earnings. As a result, the Ordinance contained certain exceptions in regard to enforcing compulsory education on East Indian children.

Since there were no Hindu and Muslim schools, except for those held in the afternoons in temples or mosques to teach religion, it meant that at first most East Indian children did not attend any primary school. This suited many of the sugar plantation owners very well and they made full use of the excessive child labour on the sugar estates.

By 1890, the Government gave grants to support schools while the sugar estates provided money for school buildings and staff. However, only a small number of East Indian children were attending the schools since many parents at that time did not show much interest in educating their

children. The estate managers seemed content with this state of affairs and did little to improve the situation.

As a result of the non-attendance of the great majority of East Indian children in the existing schools, the Governor, Sir James Swettenham, not wanting to upset East Indian parents, in June 1904 issued a circular to address this problem. This "Swettenham Circular" contained instructions to the effect that East Indian parents should not be prosecuted during the first ten years after their arrival in the Colony, if on "religious grounds" they refused to send their children, particularly their daughters, to the schools operated by Christian churches.

In other words, the Circular, which was supported by the sugar planters, almost completely exempted East Indian parents (and their children) from the provisions of the Compulsory Education Ordinance of 1876. Nevertheless, a growing proportion of parents sent their children to schools, but in most cases the daughters were kept at home.

The Swettenham Circular was finally withdrawn in 1933 after much agitation by Indian community leaders, and primary education became compulsory for East Indian children. However, up to then only 19 percent of East Indian children were enrolled in primary schools; in 1937 the figure increased to 29 percent.

## EFFORTS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TO CONVERT INDIANS

From the beginning of the indenture period, the Christian churches made efforts to convert the Indians. The first batch of Indians who arrived in 1838 included only three Christians who tried unsuccessfully to influence their colleagues to convert.

The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in 1852 made the first concerted attempt to preach Christian ideas to the Indians. Missionaries visited the plantations, and even though the Indians respectfully listened to their message, they refused to abandon their religions and only very few converts were made.

The Anglican and Roman Catholic churches also made efforts to convert the Indians with very little success. Their failure with the Indians, especially when they were very successful with the Chinese migrants, made them

very worried. In 1871, the Anglican diocese in Georgetown gave this explanation of the difficulty in converting the Indian population:

"He (the Indian) has more pride of race; he has a keener intellect and has that pride of country and of race which prevents him from becoming a convert to any of the new doctrines preached to him."

The sole Indian missionary of the Anglican Church in the late nineteenth century, Rev. Ebenezer Bhalawant Bhowe, felt that the failure was due to the fact that Indians believed if they became Christians they would have to remain in Guyana. The Indians came to work for a relatively short period and they felt they would become outcasts in their home communities in India if they converted to Christianity.

In addition to Bhowe, another Anglican missionary, Rev. Henry Bronkhorst also worked valiantly for over 34 years to convert Indians, but he also showed very little success.

The Canadian Presbyterian Church entered the scene in the 1860s by establishing the Canadian East Indian Mission in Guyana. It appointed a number of East Indian catechists to work among the Indians on the plantations. One of the chief missionaries of the Canadian Mission was Rev. James B. Cropper who concentrated on providing educational opportunities for the Indian population. He felt that if the Christian churches set up schools to educate the Indians, they (the Indians) would better appreciate Christian teachings and values and would willingly convert from Hinduism and Islam.

In the late 1890s, when the Government was beginning to establish settlements for Indians who completed their indenture, Cropper was appointed as superintendent for the settlements of Helena and Whim. At Helena, he established the first Canadian Mission primary school in 1896. In subsequent years (in the early twentieth century) a few Canadian Mission schools were built in areas with a large East Indian population. Cropper was also interested in making available quality secondary education, and to this end the Berbice High School was started in New Amsterdam in 1916. Among its first teachers were some recruited from the United States and in a very short time the school earned a very good reputation for itself.



Cropper, by this time, was managing the affairs of the Canadian Mission Church, and he continued in this post until 1940 when he retired.

Another denomination that worked among the Indians was the Lutheran Church. It started its evangelical work in Guyana in 1919 and was also involved in education. It erected a number of primary schools in various parts of the country, and later one secondary school at Skeldon on the Corentyne.

Despite all the evangelical work of the Christian denominations among the Indians, the conversion rate was significantly very low and the proportion of Hindus and Muslims among the Indian population remained almost unchanged. By 1931, when there were about 124,000 Indians in Guyana, only about 1,000 of them were Lutherans, and roughly the same amount were members of the Canadian Mission Church. There were also 1,958 Roman Catholics and 3,465 Anglicans who were Indians.

## AMERICAN INTERVENTION IN THE GUYANA-VENEZUELA BORDER DISPUTE

In 1877, the Venezuelans proposed to the British Government that both countries should take the existing border dispute to arbitration for a final settlement. During the same time, the Venezuelans also began to woo the support of the United States of America by appealing to that nation to support their claims. However, the United States, during that period, refused to become involved. Venezuela, itself, never diverted from its view that arbitration was the only means of settling the border dispute.

Despite its refusal to be involved in the issue in 1877, the policy of the United States by 1886 began to take a decisive turn when it offered advice to the British Government to solve the issue. By then, the United States had achieved great economic strength and international political stature, and many leading American politicians viewed their country as a major competitor to Great Britain in the field of international politics.

In 1895, Grover Cleveland, who was then serving a second term as President, realised that his administration was losing popularity especially among western and southern farmers and workers everywhere in the country. He and his Secretary of State, Richard Olney, in an attempt to divert attention from the domestic problems that faced the country, decided

to adopt a vigorous foreign policy. They, therefore, agreed, inter alia, to support the Venezuelan side in the boundary dispute with Great Britain.

Through the efforts of the Cleveland administration, a resolution was introduced in the United States Congress urging Venezuela and Great Britain to settle the dispute by arbitration. The resolution passed through both Houses of Congress unanimously and President Cleveland signed it on the 20 February 1895.

This act by the United States Congress gave the Venezuelans what they desired since 1877 full United States intervention in favour of Venezuela. With Cleveland's approval, Richard Olney prepared a statement of the case on the 20 July 1895, which was then presented to the British Government. In this statement, Olney protested against the enlargement of British Guiana at the expense and defiance of Venezuela, thus assuming, without any specific proof, that the British had already violated the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 which had declared that "the American continents by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers". Olney stated, with no justification, that the Monroe Doctrine had the full status of international law. He also demanded that the issue be put to arbitration.

On the 7 December, the British reply to Olney's letter was finally received by the United States Government. It was issued by the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, who countered Olney's contentions, and denied that the Monroe Doctrine was applicable to the border dispute. Referring to the demand for arbitration, he declared that the only parties competent to decide whether or not it was "a suitable method of procedure ... are the two parties whose rival contentions are in issue. The claim of a third nation, which is unaffected by the controversy, to impose this particular procedure on either of the two others, cannot be reasonably justified and has no foundation on the law of nations".

The British Prime Minister declared that his Government was "not prepared to admit that the interests of the United States are necessarily concerned in every frontier dispute which may arise between any two of the states who possess dominions in the Western Hemisphere". He also insisted that his Government could not consent to arbitrate the British claim to any of the territory east of the Schomburgk Line. The British Government, he

concluded, "cannot consent to entertain, nor to submit to the arbitration of any power or of foreign jurists, however eminent, claims based on the extravagant pretensions of Spanish officials in the last century, and involving the transfer of large numbers of British subjects, who for many years enjoyed the settled rule of a British Colony, to a nation of a different race and language..."

On the 17 December 1895, the President delivered a special address to the United States Congress in which he dealt with the border dispute. He used a great part of his address to defend the Munroe Doctrine. He also announced that he would appoint a commission to determine "what is the true divisional line between the Republic of Venezuela and British Guiana. The inquiry to that end should of course be conducted carefully and judicially, and due weight should be given to all available evidence, records, and facts in support of the claims of both parties".

He declared that following the report of the commission, "it will, in my opinion, be the duty of the United States to resist by every means in its power, as a wilful aggression upon its rights and interests, the appropriation by Great Britain of any lands or the exercise of governmental jurisdiction over any territory which after investigation we have determined of right belongs to Venezuela. In making these recommendations I am fully alive to the responsibility incurred and keenly realize all the consequences that may follow."

## ARBITRATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN GUYANA AND VENEZUELA

Cleveland's speech to the US Congress was seen as a direct threat of war with Great Britain if the British did not comply with the Venezuelan demands now openly championed by the United States. Actually, almost immediately after Cleveland's statement to the United States Congress, American military forces were put on combat alert in case war should break out with Great Britain.

Cleveland's warlike statement was discussed all over the United States. In some quarters there were expressions of enthusiasm for war on the British and general public opinion was thus manipulated to turn in support of the President. On the 18 December 1895, Congress voted 100,000 dollars for

the United States Venezuelan Boundary Commission (which was to be formally established on the 1 January 1896).

Even the President's political rivals were caught up in the spreading of the war hysteria. One of the leaders of the Republican Party, Theodore Roosevelt (later to become a Vice-President and President himself) during this period wrote in support of a war with Great Britain , even suggesting that should there be a war, "we (the USA) would take Canada".

Indeed, in the United States, the expectancy of war against Great Britain was so great that the Irish National Alliance, a strong anti-British organisation representing Americans of Irish ancestry, revealed that it would supply one hundred thousand volunteers for the war!

But there were also strong expressions of opposition to Cleveland's statement. Scores of newspapers printed scathing criticisms of the President's policy over the Venezuela-British Guiana border dispute saying that it was extreme and provocative.

The Venezuelan Government was quick in congratulating the United States Government for its stand against the British and for its open support for Venezuela. On the 19 December 1895, the day after the President's message was approved by Congress, the Venezuelan Ambassador to Washington, José Andrade, called on Secretary of State Olney to express his country's appreciation.

But business circles in the United States were deeply alarmed over the possibility of war between the United States and Great Britain. This alarm, generated by the President's special message to Congress, caused panic selling in the Wall Street stock exchanges in New York.

In Great Britain, Cleveland's statement was severely attacked, while the semi-official media in Germany by and large described it as highly provocative.

With the expectancy of war hanging on the balance, Pope Leo XIII, towards the end of December 1895, offered to find a solution to the escalated border crisis. But this offer was not taken up by either the United States or Great Britain.

In British Guiana itself, a state of excitement existed; and while the residents vehemently rejected the Venezuelan claims to all territory west of the Essequibo River, the British Government never officially consulted its subjects during the crisis period and during subsequent negotiations with the United States and Venezuela.

During this period, Great Britain was already faced with a state of war in its colonial possessions in Southern Africa, and obviously had no intention of having any violent confrontation with the United States. The British Government, therefore, stepped up its exchange of diplomatic letters with the United States and Venezuela with the aim of bringing an early end to the dispute.

The United States, nevertheless, intended to push the Venezuelan claim to the extreme. In January 1896, based on a decision of Congress, the United States Venezuelan Boundary Commission was established. It was headed by David J. Brewer, the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The other members were Richard H. Alvey, Chief Justice of the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia, who was also a skilled Spanish scholar; F.R. Coudert, a distinguished member of the New York bar and of the counsel of the United States in the Bering Sea dispute of 1892; Dr. D.C. Gilman, a noted geographer and President of the John Hopkins University; and Andrew D. White, a historian and diplomat. The Commission selected Judge Brewer as its Chairman, and appointed as its secretary, Severo Mallet-Prevost, a trained scholar and lawyer.

For a few weeks the work of the Commission was the leading news item in British and American newspapers.

Meanwhile, diplomatic correspondence was continuing with greater momentum. This was occasioned by the German Kaiser's open support for the anti-British actions of President Kruger of the Transvaal (in South Africa). The Kaiser's statement, made in January 1896, was seen as an open threat of war by Germany on Great Britain, and the latter decided to try to win the support of the United States in case a European conflict should break out.

Side by side with the increased diplomatic negotiations, the British arduously worked towards the improvement of Anglo-American friendship. By February 1896, the tensions seemed to have cooled down to a great

extent and there was expectancy that a solution on the border dispute would be forthcoming later in the year.

Discussions were opened later in the year between Great Britain and Venezuela, with the encouragement of the United States, and they finally reached an agreement in November on a treaty to send the dispute to international arbitration. By this Treaty of Washington signed by Venezuela and Great Britain on 2 February 1897, both Great Britain and Venezuela agreed that the decision of the arbitration tribunal would be a "full, perfect, and final settlement" of the border dispute.

Shortly after, the United States Venezuelan Boundary Commission was dissolved and it sent a lengthy Report to President Cleveland. The Report examined the history of Dutch colonisation in Essequibo and the geography of the area, and compiled hundreds of historical documents and prepared an atlas containing seventy-six maps. All of this material was subsequently made available to Venezuela for its case before the Arbitral Tribunal which met in Paris in 1898-1899.

## THE ARBITRAL AWARD

By the terms of the Treaty of Washington of 1897, Great Britain nominated Lord Herschell, the Chief Justice, and Lord Justice Richard Henn Collins, a Justice of the Court of Appeals and the Privy Council to the Arbitration Tribunal. They were at that period two of the leading judges in Great Britain. Venezuela, on the other hand, nominated Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Melville Fuller, and another U. S. Supreme Court Judge, David Brewer, who had served as Chairman of the dissolved United States Venezuelan Boundary Commission. The choice of American judges by Venezuela was a clear indication of the full confidence that Venezuela held for the United States for championing its case.

To choose the fifth arbitrator, the British and Venezuelan nominees were expected to submit to both governments separate proposals of names of several jurists acceptable to each party. However, in both proposals, only the name of Frederic de Martens, a distinguished Russian jurist and writer on international law, appeared, and he was chosen as the fifth arbitrator and President of the tribunal.

Martens' scholarship, skill and integrity had become well known in international legal circles and, undoubtedly, these qualities influenced the judges chosen by Venezuela and Great Britain to name him as the president of the arbitral tribunal. (In 1902, three years after the work of the tribunal ended, de Martens was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize).

Just before the tribunal was making arrangements to begin hearing of the case, Lord Herschell died and the vacancy was filled by the new British Chief Justice, Lord Charles Russell.

On 15 March 1898 each party submitted its case in writing to the tribunal. Venezuela's case was contained in three volumes and an atlas, while that of Great Britain was in seven volumes and an atlas. Four months later, on 15 July 1898, each party submitted its rebuttal. Venezuela's rebuttal was presented in three volumes and an atlas while Great Britain's was in two volumes accompanied by six maps. Then on 15 November 1898 each party submitted its final printed argument-Venezuela's in two volumes and Great Britain's in one.

The hearing of the oral arguments was conducted in Paris, France, during a three-month period from 15 June to 15 September 1899. During this period there were fifty-four sessions of four hours each.

Great Britain was represented by a four-man counsel, namely, Sir Richard E. Webster, Attorney-General; Sir Robert T. Reid, a former Attorney-General; George R. Askwith and Sidney Rowlatt.

Venezuela was also represented by four counsel, namely, General Benjamin Harrison, a former President of the United States; Mr. Severo Mallet-Prevost, former Secretary of the United States Venezuelan Boundary Commission; General Benjamin T. Tracy, an ex-Defense Secretary of the United States; and James Russell Soley.

In opening Great Britain's oral arguments, Sir Richard Webster delivered a speech that lasted thirteen days. Mallet-Prevost, for Venezuela, followed this with one that also lasted thirteen days. After these two long arguments, Sir Richard Webster closed the case for Great Britain while General Harrison did so for Venezuela.

One week after the final oral session, the tribunal on 4 October 1899, presented a unanimous Award which put an end to the border controversy that had lasted for over fifty-eight years - a controversy that nearly caused three countries (Great Britain and the United States of America and Venezuela) to go to war.

The Award, which was completed and signed by all five judges on the 3 October 1899, the day before it was handed down, stated:

". . . Now, we the undersigned Arbitrators do hereby make and publish our decision, determination, and Award of, upon and concerning the questions submitted to us by the said Treaty of Arbitration, and do hereby, conformably to the said Treaty of Arbitration, finally decide, award, and determine that the boundary-line between the Colony of British Guiana and the United States of Venezuela is as follows -

Starting from the coast at Point Playa, the line of boundary shall run in a straight line to the River Barima at its junction with the River Mururuma, and thence along the mid-stream of the latter river to its source, and from that point to the junction of the River Haiowa with the Amakura, and thence along the mid-stream of the Amakura to its source in the Imataka Ridge, and thence in a south-westerly direction along the highest ridge of the spur of the Imataka Mountains to the highest point of the main range of such Imataka Mountains opposite to the source of the Barima, and thence along the main ridge in a south-easterly direction of the Imataka Mountains to the source of the Acarabisi, and thence along the mid-stream of the Acarabisi to the Cuyuni, and thence along the northern bank of the River Cuyuni westward to its junction with the Wenamu, and thence along the mid-stream of the Wenamu to its westernmost source, and thence in a direct line to the summit of Mount Roraima, and from Mount Roraima to the source of the Cotinga, and along the mid-stream of that river to its junction with the Takutu, and thence along the mid-stream of the Takutu to its source, and thence in a straight line to the westernmost point of the Akarai Mountains, and thence along the ridge of the Akarai Mountains to the source of the Corentin called the Cutara River. . ."

### Settlement of the Border with Brazil

Although the territory east of the Cotinga River bordered by the Takutu River on the south, was awarded to British Guiana by the tribunal, Brazilian



citizens, even before 1899, were crossing into this area and even into the Rupununi district east of the Ireng and Takutu Rivers to settle since on the belief that those areas belonged to Brazil. As a result, the Governor of British Guiana appointed a postholder and rural constables to police the area.

However, a period of lawlessness and near anarchy developed and this situation was not halted until the 6 November 1901 when the British and Brazilian governments signed an arbitration treaty by which they agreed to submit the question on the boundary between Brazil and British Guiana to the King of Italy, Victor-Emmanuel III.

The arbitration was conducted entirely by written case and argument, after the Italian King decided that it was unnecessary to hear oral evidence. Eventually the King awarded to Brazil the area of about 4,000 square miles of territory south of Mount Roraima bordered by the Cotinga River on the west, the Takutu River on the south, and the Ireng River on the east and north.

The award also stated:

In virtue of this declaration every part of the zone in dispute which is to the east of the line of frontier shall belong to Great Britain, and every part which is to the west shall belong to Brazil. The frontier along the Ireng (Mahu) and Takutu is fixed at the "thalweg" and the said rivers shall be open to the free navigation of both conterminous States. . .

In accordance with this award the boundary was demarcated in the 1930s by a joint team of surveyors from Brazil and Great Britain.

Significantly, this section of territory awarded to Brazil had been granted to the British Guiana by the British-Venezuelan arbitral tribunal, despite claims to it by Venezuela. When Venezuela in 1962 officially renewed its claim to the territory west of the Essequibo River on the grounds that the 1899 Award was null and void, that nation did not make any official claim, and has never since made any, to that section of territory handed over in 1904 by British Guiana to Brazil.

**MARKING THE GUYANA-VENEZUELA BOUNDARY**

As a result of the Award, Great Britain lost control of the mouths of the Amakura and the Barima Rivers, in addition to a large tract of territory in the upper Cuyuni basin. However, the Award coincided to a great extent with the Schomburgk Line.

Venezuela, too, did not get all that it wanted, but it obtained control of the mouth of the Orinoco River, described as "the very pith of the award" by American cartographer, Marcus Baker, who had worked for the United States Commission on boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana.

In commenting on the Award, Justice Brewer, a member of the Arbitration Tribunal declared: "Until the last moment I believed a decision was quite impossible, and it was only by the greatest conciliation and mutual concessions that a compromise was arrived at. If any of us had been asked to give an award, each would have given one differing in extent and character. The consequence of this was that we had to adjust our different views, and finally draw a line between what each thought right."

Justice Brewer also expressed the view that the British arbitrators were profoundly impartial and that they displayed a strict sense of justice throughout the entire proceedings of the Tribunal.

Immediately after the Award was made, both Benjamin Harrison and Severo Mallet-Prevost, two of the lawyers who represented Venezuela before the Tribunal, were quoted by the London Times of the 5 October 1899 as declaring that the Award was "Venezuela's victory". Mallet-Prevost was emphatic about the "victory", and stated that the Award was of great value to Venezuela since it granted that country the Orinoco estuary.

The official Venezuelan comment was that of general satisfaction, even though there were some expressions of disappointment with the Award generated by newspapers in that country. The British press also expressed disappointment over what it termed as Britain's "losses".

In a comment on the 7 October 1899, Venezuela's Ambassador to Great Britain, Jose Andrade who was also the brother of the then Venezuelan President declared: "...We were given the exclusive dominion over the Orinoco, which was the principal aim we sought to achieve through arbitration..."

The United States of America was also satisfied. Just two months after the Award, President Mc Kinley, addressing the United States Congress on the 5 December 1899, expressed the view that "the decision appears to be equally satisfactory on both sides".

In keeping with the decision of the Arbitration Tribunal, a Mixed Boundary Commission appointed jointly by Venezuela and Great Britain, carried out a survey and demarcation, between 1901 and 1905, of the boundary as stipulated by the Award. The British Commissioners were Harry Innes Perkins and Charles Wilgress Anderson while those of Venezuela were Dr. Abraham Tirado and Dr. Elias Toro. The resulting boundary line was set out on a map signed by the Boundary Commissioners in Georgetown, British Guiana, on the 7 January 1905. Three days later, the following Agreement was published as a Sessional Paper of the Combined Court of Policy of the Colony of British Guiana:

A concrete and positive acceptance of the boundary line was shown by the Venezuelan Government when in 1911 it published a map signed by F. Aliantaro, the Minister of Internal Relations. This map, published to commemorate the centenary of Venezuelan independence, showed the boundary line as demarcated by the Mixed Boundary Commissioners six years previously. A similar map was published in 1917 by the Venezuelan Government.

In 1931 a boundary commission made up of representatives from Great Britain, Venezuela and Brazil made special astronomical, geodesical and topographical observations on Mount Roraima so as to fix the specific point where the boundaries of Brazil, Venezuela and British Guiana should meet. After diplomatic notes were exchanged among the three nations represented on the commission on the 7 October and 3 November 1932, an agreement was finally reached on the specific location of the meeting point of the boundaries. The matter of the border was then considered permanently settled.

## **THE GUYANA-SURINAME BOUNDARY (1840-1926)**

When the nineteenth century came to an end, the boundary between Guyana and Suriname remained unsettled and no additional effort was made by either side to reach its final delimitation.

In 1910 Lieutenant C. C. Kayser of the Dutch Navy sailed up the Corentyne River, surveyed its upper areas and published an account of his findings and a map based on his surveys. He discovered another large branch of the Corentyne River which entered that river on its eastern side about 20 miles below the New River, and this he called the Lucie River. (Interestingly, the Dutch would not assert that the Lucie is the real Corentyne and all the rest a tributary - no doubt conscious of the implications that such a theory would hold were the boundary with Suriname to run along its course).

In February 1913, the Dutch Government accepted the Kutari River as the boundary position when the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Dutch Parliament said "the observation that, from the most recent researches, the New River has been proved to be the real Corentyne, and consequently forms the boundary between Surinam and British Guiana, is based on a misconception. On the contrary, it is a fact established both by history and by international law, and agreed to by the British Government, that the boundary, is formed by the Corentyne and its upper course, the Kutari-Curuni, and to this water course the ordinary rules of international law obtaining in respect of joint boundary rivers are wholly applicable."

During the same year, W.C. Farabee, Professor of Anthropology in the University of Philadelphia, explored the Kutari and the New Rivers. He was accompanied by John Ogilvie who, in a sworn declaration, attested, contrary to Barrington Brown's opinion, that the Kutari was bigger than the New River. The matter excited great attention in Holland in the latter part of the 1920s. Dr. Yzerman, one of the leading Dutch authorities on the subject, exhaustively discussed the question in a lecture to the Dutch Royal Geographical Society.

This Dutch recognition of the Kutari as the boundary between Suriname and British Guiana was further reinforced by a statement made on March 27, 1924, by the Netherlands Minister of Colonies in the Dutch Parliament. In answer to two Deputies who desired information respecting the boundary

between Suriname and British Guiana, the Minister referred to the rejection in 1900 by the British Government of the Dutch claim to a boundary on the New River and said, "Subsequent to the exploration in question, which was carried out in 1843, it has been the Kutari-Curuni specifically which in its upper reaches, i.e. until its confluence with the New River, has been regarded as the boundary river. . ."

The Netherlands Minister for the Colonies in further statements to the Dutch Parliament in 1925 reported that Dr. Yzerman had shown that the basin of Kutari-Curuni was considerably more extensive than that of the New River, and did not justify the Dutch claim that the New River and not the Kutari-Curuni was the principal source of the Corentyne. This conclusion was later supported by scientific measurements of the comparative flows of both rivers taken by a Dutch expedition in 1926.

On June 23, 1925, the same Minister said: "The territory on the other side of these rivers (i.e., Curuni-Kutari) is one over which, according to the facts recognised up to the present, the authority of the Netherlands does not exist. . . . For years the British administration has issued concessions or licences there for obtaining balata. The action taken on the British side has therefore long been based on the standpoint that the British administration possesses rights there.... (For) decades the Corantine with its affluent the Curuni continued upstream by the Kutari river, has remained the boundary for the two parties concerned. This river line has hitherto always been accepted, de facto, as the boundary between British and Dutch Guyana. On this point therefore no uncertainty exists. . . ."

Again, on February 24, 1927, the Minister of Colonies declared: "Since about a century England has as a matter of fact had the disposal of the territory between the New River and the Curuni-Kutari.... As we now have boundaries which have become historical and which do not trouble us at all (i.e. the boundary formed by the western bank of the Corantin and Curuni-Kutari rivers) our claims are not particularly strong. It would therefore appear to me that should this matter be discussed with England the Netherlands standpoint would be weak. . . ."

**DISTURBANCES AT PLANTATION FRIENDS**

Plantation Friends, located on the east bank of the Berbice River, was a flourishing sugar estate at the beginning of the twentieth century. In early 1903 the workers, most of whom were indentured Indians, asked the estate manager for an increase in the payment for preparing beds to plant new cane tops. A worker received at that time a payment of 40 cents for each bed that was prepared. After the manager refused this request, a strike resulted, and on the 6 May 1903, a large group of striking workers went to New Amsterdam to state their grievance to the Immigration Officer.

The manager of Plantation Friends also met with the Immigration Officer and firmly denied that the workers had ever asked for an increase in wages.

He then proceeded to make a formal complaint to the magistrate, Mr. Brummell, that four of the striking workers had threatened to kill Gooding, his overseer. The magistrate issued a warrant for the arrest of the four men but the men were not immediately apprehended by the police.

Magistrate Brummell also ordered the striking workers to return to their jobs on the plantation. He suggested that after the period of work was completed, the matter of a pay increase should be settled by arbitration.

The impending arrest of the four men clearly upset the other workers who refused to obey the instruction of the magistrate and continued the strike on the 7 May. The manager, in the meantime, had requested police support, and early that morning 25 armed policemen arrived from New Amsterdam to confront the striking workers. The manager instructed the police to arrest the four men for whom warrants had been issued. As the four workers were held by the police, the crowd protested loudly and demanded their release. Some of the workers in the crowd became disorderly, and two of them were arrested. As the six arrested workers were about to be taken by the armed policemen to New Amsterdam, the crowd surged forward and tried to free them. However, the policemen kept the protesting workers back by pointing their bayonets at them.

By this time Magistrate Brummel had arrived on the scene, and as the crowd pressed forward, he read the Riot Act and ordered the police to fire a warning volley in the air. The angry workers responded by throwing bottles and stones at the police who opened fire at them. The result was that six workers were killed and seven seriously injured.

The shooting and killing caused the crowd to wildly disperse and eventually to quell their protests. A coroner's inquest into the killing blamed the striking workers for causing the disturbance, and complimented the police and the magistrate for their "administrative tact". The magistrate himself, in giving evidence at the inquest, supported the shooting the workers. He stated that the policemen were justified under the circumstances in firing on the crowd and that he would have been guilty of a gross dereliction of duty if he had failed to give the police orders to fire.

The coroner sharply castigated the Immigration Agent for not visiting Plantation Friends before the tragic event even though he knew of the existing labour problem. The coroner noted that the Agent's presence at the plantation on the morning of the 7 May could have prevented the arrest of the six men and thus averted the disturbances that preceded the shooting.

The six men who had earlier been arrested were charged with riotous behaviour, and during their trial, they were defended by an African lawyer, S. E. Wills. However, all six men were convicted by the same magistrate who supported the shooting. A Congregational minister, Rev. Henry John Shirley, openly sympathised with the Indian labourers, while the Governor, James Swettenham, stated that he was not satisfied with the conduct of the manager of Plantation Friends. He insisted that if the manager was not dismissed, he would remove all the Indians from the estate.

## SUGAR WORKERS' STRIKES IN 1905

In 1905 the sugar estates in Demerara were affected by numerous strikes. These strikes which were for better wages, were generally spontaneous and unorganised. In making demands for increased wages to meet the increase in the cost of living, the workers approached the managers of the estates to state their case. However, their demands were rejected.

On the 2 December 1905 factory workers at Diamond Estate stopped working after their request for increased wages were bluntly refused by the manager. The porters wanted an increase from 36 cents to 48 cents a day while the sugar curers asked for 56 cents instead of the 40 cents a day they were getting.

The striking workers gathered by the factory gate, and shortly after, armed policemen and a group of British soldiers were sent to the estate and they took up their positions near the factory and other estate buildings. With signs of growing protest in other sugar estates in Demerara, armed policemen were also sent to those areas to protect the factories and other estate buildings.

At Plantation Ruimveldt, immediately south of Georgetown, male and female weeders also asked for an increase for weeding and preparing sugar beds. They were being paid 2 cents per bed and they asked the manager for an increase to 8 cents. These workers left their jobs in the fields and, after gathering together and carrying their cutlasses and other tools, they went to meet the manager, Mr. Ross. They surrounded him near his home and noisily voiced their demands. But he refused to listen to them and instead sent for the police.

When the armed policemen arrived they ordered the workers to put their implements on the ground and leave the area. Some obeyed but most of them refused. Shortly after, the police arrested George Henry whom they regarded as one of the leaders of the striking workers. Henry had allegedly touched the shoulder of Ross to attract his attention to a point he wanted to express. He was charged for assault, and after being manhandled by the police, was imprisoned in the Manager's fenced yard.

The large crowd of workers tried to enter the yard, but the armed policemen prevented anyone from entering. As the people pressed forward, the police opened fire and two men were killed and several others injured.

The following day 20 cane-cutters marched to Georgetown to complain to the Governor, Sir Frederick Hodgson, and to ask him to support their demand for higher wages. But the Governor refused to meet with them saying that he could not interfere in any dispute concerning wages fixed by sugar estates.

The strike spread to all the sugar estates on the East Bank Demerara. By the 4 December cane-cutters on the West Bank estates joined the strike and forced the factory at Plantation Nismes to stop its milling operations.



The sugar plantations owners over the next week systematically broke the strikes by identifying the ringleaders and expelling them from the estates. This action left the other workers leaderless, and in order to eke out a living, they had to continue to work for low wages.

## THE 1905 RIOTS

On the 28 November 1905 workers employed at the Sandbach Parker wharf in Georgetown went on strike for higher wages, demanding 16 cents an hour instead of the 48 to 64 cents a day they were receiving. They carried out a picketing exercise outside the wharf throughout the day, but even though most of them were very peaceful, some of them threatened other workers who attempted to break the strike.

By the next day, workers at the other Georgetown wharves joined the strike in solidarity and also demanded higher wages from their employers. They teamed up with the Sandbach Parker workers in mounting the picketing exercise along Water Street.

By the 30 November, hooligan and criminal elements, including many women and youths, began to mingle in the crowd of striking workers and attempted to rob stores along Water Street. Soon, a full scale riot broke out and some stores were attacked and looted. Armed police moved in and managed to disperse the rioters, but they only moved away to other parts of the city to gather in small groups and plan their strategy for the next day.

On the 1 December, rioters attacked shops in La Penitance and Ruimveldt. The police opened fire at Ruimveldt and many of the rioters were injured; four of them died shortly after. The killings inflamed the riotous crowd who moved to other parts of the city to attack and loot business places and private residences. The Portuguese Pawnbrokery on Robb Street and Humphrey Pawnbrokery on Robb and High Streets suffered the worst damage and losses in the looting that occurred.

The owners of stores along Water Street, where the wharves were located, closed and barricaded their buildings as a safety precaution. But this did not prevent the crowd from breaking down their doors and looting them.

The rioting took on a racial overtone when the crowd stopped horse-carriages carrying persons of European descent. These persons, who were seen by the rioters as closely associated with the owners of the wharves and other businesses, were roughed up and robbed by the hooligans who also threw stones and bottles at the carriages that refused to stop. Some other persons, including three magistrates and Attorney General Sir T. C. Rainer, were also chased and beaten by the hooligans. Later in the afternoon, the rioters moved along Main and High Streets and attacked and looted the homes of Europeans. The police, in an effort to disperse the rioters and looters, opened fire, but this did not prevent them from moving to other areas to carry out further mischief.

The riots spread to the area around the Public Buildings where two persons were shot dead by the police. By the end of the day, 8 rioters were shot dead by the police, and about 30 others suffered bullet wounds. Many police men were also injured when they were attacked by the rioters. By this time, the police had, to a certain extent, taken control of the streets and had arrested many persons.

Meanwhile, a large group of striking workers met at the Parade Ground with three leading members of the Georgetown City Council, J. W. Davis, A. A. Thorne and Dr. Rohlehr, to intervene with the Governor on their behalf. The three men met with the Governor, Sir Frederick Hodgson, at the Public Buildings which were surrounded by hundreds of people. The delegation told the Governor that if he decided to hold an inquiry to investigate the workers' grievances, the crowd would disperse.

Shortly after, the Governor addressed the crowd and promised to hold an inquiry and requested everyone to disperse and go home. However, the crowd refused to obey and, after Davis spoke with them, it was agreed that the Governor would meet with six workers' representatives along with the three Councilmen on the following day.

The following day saw a continuation of rowdy behaviour. Striking workers and hooligans tried to stop employees at other business places from going to work and severely beat those who opposed them. Marauding gangs of women and youths, armed with sticks and pieces of wood, attacked and robbed Whites and also other persons on the streets. A large gang of rowdy women even attacked the Police Station at Brickdam and seized a consignment of bread purchased for the policemen stationed there. But the

police managed to regain control after arresting and locking up six of the women.

Later in the day, at a meeting at the Parade Ground, large groups of workers were urged by Dr. Rohlehr and others to adopt orderly behaviour and discuss their demands peacefully with their employers. Immediately after, the workers' representatives met with the Governor to discuss their demands.

The Governor also met with delegations of employers between the 2 and 4 December, and negotiated a settlement with them. It was finally agreed that a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce would work out a new wage proposal for all workers on the wharves.

By the 4 December, all rioting and street robberies ended after two British warships arrived with a contingent of soldiers. These soldiers were immediately sent to patrol various areas of the city where they helped to put a stop to the activities of the hooligan gangs.

The strike eventually ended on the 6 December with the workers failing to obtain any wage increase. They had also become more divided among themselves since many of them accused others of reporting them to the police. By then, too, hundreds of persons were arrested and charged for various crimes. Some of them were later sentenced to terms of imprisonment accompanied by flogging with the cat-o'nine-tails. Women who were convicted of for their criminal behaviour during the riots had their hair cut off.

## LABOUR UNREST (1906-1910)

On the 25 September 1906 workers employed at the Bookers and Sandbach Parker wharves in Georgetown went on strike to demand an increase ranging from 48 cents to 72 cents a day. Unlike 1905, the workers decided to stay at home instead of gathering on the streets. However, the strike did not have any significant effect because both Bookers and Sandbach Parker employed other persons, including a number of ex-convicts, to do the jobs of the striking workers. By the 28 September the strike had collapsed, but many of the workers, on returning to their workplaces, learned that they had been dismissed.

One of the strikers was Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow, then 22 years old, who was charged by the police for throwing bricks at one of the strike breakers. But when the case came before the magistrate, the injured man admitted that someone from a small crowd threw the bricks at him, but he could not positively identify Critchlow as the one who did so. The magistrate subsequently dismissed the case.

As in 1905, there were simultaneous protests on the sugar estates. Field workers - all East Indians - at Providence, East Bank Demerara, at the same time of the wharf strike, stopped work in protest against the low wages they were being paid. Armed with their forks and other agricultural tools, they marched to Georgetown to meet with the Immigration Agent to voice their grievances. The police, after a while, managed to get them to lay down their tools, and the Immigration Agent listened to them and promised to investigate the issue.

From time to time, other labour stoppages took place in various parts of the country, especially on the sugar plantations. In December 1908, workers at Plantation Friends, East Bank Berbice, took strike action against the low wages and, also armed with their tools, marched to New Amsterdam. They subsequently met with the Immigration Agent who promised to look into their complaint. After the Agent's investigation, the manager of the plantation agreed to a small increase in payment to the workers who expressed their satisfaction.

Similar strikes occurred at Plantation Wales, La Bonne Intention, Marionville (Leguan), Leonora and Peter's Hall between 1908 and 1910. These strikes also resulted after the workers expressed dissatisfaction over the low wages they were receiving. In most cases, the Immigration Agent, after investigating, sided with the management of the plantations, and pay increases were refused.

In almost every instance, some workers were arrested for assaulting their supervisors and were fined in the magistrate's court. During a strike at Plantation Friends in May 1910, police had to be called out because rumours had reached New Amsterdam that a riot had broken out on the plantation. What really happened was that field workers were always complaining that the overseer was cheating them of their wages by underpricing their tasks. One day, the overseer, on visiting the cane fields was

approached by a group of 40 workers who accused him of cheating them. An argument ensued, and the enraged workers gave him a sound beating with canes and sticks. He managed to escape on his mule to the area of the public road, and immediately after a report was sent to the police. The arrival of the police sparked a work stoppage, but after the Immigration Agent promised an investigation, the workers resumed their tasks. An inquiry by the Agent into the incident took place shortly after, and the findings were accepted by both the management and the workers.

Meanwhile, the police later arrested eight of the ringleaders in the assault incident and they were convicted and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

## THE LUSIGNAN RIOT IN 1912

On the 18 September 1912, at Lusignan Estate, East Coast Demerara, a large number of Indian indentured workers in the shovel gang went on strike. They were protesting the wages of 20 cents per rod paid to them for digging trenches. They also claimed that the rising cost of food products necessitated higher wages. They encouraged other workers on the estate to join them and soon a large noisy crowd of workers gathered in the vicinity of the public road. The police, not too long after, arrived on the scene to prevent any disturbance.

The workers moved to the estate office to meet the manager, Brassington, but failed to see him. At that time, Brassington and his deputy, McKenzie, had just finished examining the work of the shovel gang in the fields, and were riding their horses to return to the office when a worker told them that the men were on strike. Brassington sent a message that he would meet with the strikers to examine their problems. But before he and McKenzie could get back to the estate office, a large group of angry strikers approached them in a threatening manner. The strikers rushed at them, but they raced their horses away from the area and sped for Brassington's home.

The strikers chased behind them and surrounded the home and cut telephone wires leading to it. Brassington, meantime, had collected all the ammunition he could find, and gathered 19 African factory workers whom he provided with guns and placed as guards by the windows.

Some of the strikers attempted to cross a bridge leading to the house but were warned that they would be shot. This warning was not heeded, and as some rushed into the yard, Brassington and McKenzie fired at them, first above their heads, and then at them after they continued to press forward. One worker, Nankoo, was shot in the abdomen, and this forced a general retreat. The workers took the severely injured Nankoo with them, and stubbornly refused to take him to the estate's hospital.

The shooting dispersed the crowd which moved away from around the house. The striking workers then decided to take their protest to the Governor, and about 300 of them, armed with their shovels, marched the 12 miles to Georgetown, taking with them the severely injured Nankoo, who subsequently died.

They attempted to go to Government House to lay their grievances to the Governor. But the police prevented them from entering the compound, and while they grouped themselves on the roadside, the Immigration Agent General, A. H. Hill, arrived to talk with them. Eventually, a small delegation of the strikers met with the Governor, Sir Walter Egerton, and explained their grievances to him.

Brassington, in a subsequent statement to the police, insisted that he feared for his life and for those in the house, and that he had ordered the shooting in self defence. At an inquest, even though one worker, Krishna, firmly accused Brassington of shooting Nankoo, the verdict arrived at was that the worker died after being shot by "a person or persons unknown, to prevent serious outrage." Krishna himself was a Punjabi and was regarded as a leader of the workers, and he played a leading role in organising the protests on the estate.

Despite the finding of the inquest, Brassington was arrested and charged for murder but was subsequently acquitted at his trial during which Krishna again accused him of shooting Nankoo. Twenty-four workers were also charged for riotous behaviour, but after two trials in which the jury disagreed, the case was dismissed. However, sixteen of them, as a form of punishment, were transferred to other estates.

## THE ROSE HALL DISTURBANCES IN 1913

At Plantation Rose Hall on the Canje River (in Berbice) it was the custom to grant two to four days holiday at the end of the grinding season. Because the men had done satisfactory work throughout 1912, with some of them even working on Sundays, the manager, Smith, generally regarded as an uncompromising Scotsman, promised them four days of holiday.

On the 27 January 1913, one week after the grinding season, the holidays were granted by the manager but with the condition that the labourers used the time to clean up the area in which they lived. However, the workers were dissatisfied with this requirement, and the displeasure increased when the manager cancelled the holidays on the very next day, claiming that planting had to be done. He promised to grant the remaining part of the holidays later in the year.

But the workers refused to obey this order, and even those who wanted to return to work were prevented by others from doing so.

On the 29 January, all the indentured labourers turned up for work, but at the end of the week Smith took legal action against seven men whom he felt had influenced others from not resuming work on the 28 January. The other labourers protested sharply to the manager saying that they had all on their own stayed away from work and asked him to withdraw the summons against their seven colleagues. Smith refused, and a large group of the indentured labourers marched to New Amsterdam to complain to the Immigration Agent. After hearing their case, the Agent managed to influence Smith to agree to his original promise of granting four days of holiday. The manager also agreed to withdraw the summons against the seven men providing they paid the legal costs. However, when the men made a plea for the costs to be paid in instalments, Smith angrily refused this request and re-instituted the summons against them.

On the day of the trial (during mid-February 1913) about 300 indentured labourers from Rose Hall gathered in the New Amsterdam court compound, and noisily protested the charges and threatening retaliation if their colleagues were convicted. In the trial itself, the defence counsel, Joseph Eleazer, advised the seven men to plead guilty and the magistrate fined them three shillings (72 cents) each and ordered them keep the peace for six months. But apparently, Smith was not satisfied, and on February 17, he asked the Immigration-Agent General for permission to transfer Jangi Khan (with his wife) and four other indentured labourers to other estates

claiming that they had instigated the latest protests. However, the five workers were not immediately informed that they would be sent to other estates. The police, nevertheless, received orders to carry out the transfers but this action was not taken immediately. Some time after, the five persons were eventually informed of their impending transfers.

The situation deteriorated on the 4 March when some indentured labourers were charged for bad work and wilful deception. For the next nine days, the labourers refused to work and from time to time they issued threats to their supervisors. They openly called for the dismissal of the deputy manager and a driver, Jagmohun, and also insisted that the five workers should not be transferred. They also prevented other drivers and overseers from entering their workplaces and tried to stop non-indentured Indians from going to work. An air of tension prevailed and some lawlessness, including damage to estate property, also occurred.

On the 13 March, the day of the trial of those who were charged, the other workers refused to go to work and instead went to the court to hear the cases. At the same period, more policemen were sent to the police station at Reliance, Canje, on the request of the assistant manager of Plantation Rose Hall. (Smith was away on leave during this period).

On the same day, the Inspector General of Police and the Immigration Agent suddenly decided that since police motor-cars were present at the court house, the transfers of the five labourers could be done then. Jangi Khan, who was among those in the court compound, was held by the police and was being placed in a car to be taken away, but some of his colleagues, armed with sticks, pulled him away and prevented him from entering the vehicle.

The news of the planned transfers of the five persons spread very quickly, and this incensed the other workers. The five were not prepared to move so suddenly, and they were fully supported by their colleagues. The authorities, realising the strong opposition from the crowd, decided not to proceed with the transfers hoping to carry them out at a later date.

Later that day, a large force of policemen headed by the Inspector General of Police (equivalent to Commissioner) and a Police Inspector went to Rose Hall to prevent intimidation and acts of vandalism and to arrest five indentured labourers for threatening violence. These five included Ganga,



who was regarded as one of the leaders of the indentured labourers. The crowd apparently felt that the policemen were about to seize the five to be transferred, since many were unaware that arrest warrants were issued for another five who had threatened violence.

The police called on the threatening crowd to disperse, and the Riot Act was read. The policemen then arrested Ganga, and they were immediately attacked by the crowd with sticks and broken bottles. The police thereupon opened fire and 14 men in the crowd were killed.

A Commissioner was appointed by the Governor to investigate the circumstances of the killings at Rose Hall. The Commissioner found that police did not inform the labourers very clearly whom they were about to arrest. He also stated that if they were told very clearly that the men who were to be transferred would not be removed by force, the tragic event would not have taken place. Despite this finding, no blame was placed on the police for the killings.

## WORKERS' PROTESTS IN 1917

As a result of the World War which broke out in Europe in 1914, essential imported food supplies became scarce, and prices of these commodities rose very quickly. Many merchants in Guyana were also involved in black-marketing, and this caused prices of foodstuffs to rise even more. But while prices were rising, wages remained stable, and this did not help in any way to improve the economic conditions of the people. Workers were very dissatisfied, and throughout 1915 and 1916 there were short strikes in Georgetown and on the sugar estates.

By the beginning of 1917, the economic situation had further deteriorated. Demanding increased pay and a shorter working day, wharf workers went on a ten-day strike from the 4 January 1917. The strike was also in protest against the rising cost of living during war time; in most cases, essential food items had doubled in price from the pre-war 1914 period to the beginning of 1917. Even in the period from January to October 1917, essential food items further increased in price from between 50 to 100 percent.

This strike was held in a generally peaceful atmosphere. Hubert Critchlow, who by this time was a respect leader of the wharf workers, led a three-man team to meet with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the issues affecting the workers. Three days after the strike started, the employers agreed to a nine-hour work day and a 25 percent wage increase, but the workers did not agree on the latter. The strike therefore continued, and the employers were eventually forced on the 13 January to agree to most of the demands of the workers. The workers obtained the nine-hour work day, satisfactory increased wages, and overtime payment for work done after 5.00 p.m. The increased wages brought their earnings to between 72 cents to about \$1.20 per day, depending on the type of work they carried out.

The strike on the wharves, in the meantime, had spread to other areas, as was the pattern on previous occasions. Garbage collectors went on strike on the 9 January, but their demands were quickly met. On the same day, workers at some saw mills stopped working, and after their employers readily agreed to their demand for increased wages, they returned to work.

On the same day workers of the Demerara Railway Company, the Ice Factory and the Match Factory also stopped working and demanded increases in wages. The strikes at the Ice factory and the Match Factory were settled quickly with workers receiving increases. But the price of soft drinks, produced by the Ice Factory, was immediately increased on the grounds that this was necessary to offset the increased costs of labour.

The railway strike lasted for one week, and it seriously affected movement of people and goods from Georgetown to the rural areas. Eventually it ended after all categories of railways workers were granted a 7 percent increase.

While all of this was happening, sea defence workers and road workers on the East Coast Demerara walked off the job after demanding increased wages. Some of them were granted modest increases while others who were on contract work were dismissed and replaced by new labourers, from among the growing pool of unemployed persons, at the old rates.

Meanwhile, non-indentured Indian workers on the sugar estates in Demerara between March and May also agitated for higher wages. This demand was taken up by "free" Indians employed at Plantation Golden Fleece on the Essequibo Coast in September. The intervention of the

Immigration Agent General was necessary to bring about a solution in all these cases.

This strike fever gained momentum, especially since all workers were concerned over the rising cost of living and they felt that the demand for better wages was a just cause. The Government was obviously concerned about these stoppages, and tried as quickly as possible to examine Government workers' issues as soon as they arose. Thus, towards the end of the year when the Post Office and the Public Hospital workers protested, without striking, for higher wages, the Government immediately set up a committee to work out a satisfactory arrangement.

### HUBERT NATHANIEL CRITCHLOW: THE EARLY YEARS

Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow was born in Georgetown on the 18 December 1884. His father, James Nathaniel Critchlow, had emigrated from Barbados and was employed as a wharf foreman by the Booker Group of Companies, while his mother Julia Elizabeth Critchlow, born Daniels, was originally from the Essequibo coast. The young Hubert Critchlow attended the Bedford Wesleyan Primary School but left when he was 13 years old after his father died. He had reached up to Standard 4 (equivalent to Grade 6 in American schools), but he felt that he had to find a job to help maintain his home.

While attending school he had excelled in sports, and he continued to do so as a young man. He soon became a popular sports figure and during the period 1905-1914 he was the country's middle-distance athletic champion. He was also a good footballer and cricketer.

Soon after Critchlow left school, he worked as an apprentice at the Demerara Foundry, and at the turn of the century he obtained employment as a dock labourer on the waterfront. Due to his active representation of his fellow workers during the 1905 strike in Georgetown, his popularity grew. He continued to champion workers' rights, and was always called upon to represent their case to employers in the years that followed.

During the strikes in 1917, he represented the interest of waterfront workers in collective bargaining, and by then was regarded as the leader of all waterfront workers. He became even more popular when he helped to secure increase wages for them.

In the 1917-1918 period, Critchlow led a petition for an 8-hour day. He was pressured by the Chamber of Commerce to withdraw his name from the petition, after all the other petitioners were forced to do so, but he obstinately refused. He was immediately fired from his job and blacklisted from obtaining employment, and he had to depend on assistance from close friends for sustenance.

Being unemployed, he devoted all his time to the campaign for the 8-hour work day. In December 1918, he and a small delegation of workers met with the Governor, Sir Wilfred Colet. It was after this meeting that Critchlow developed the idea of forming a trade union, and he immediately began making the arrangements for its formation. The union, the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), was eventually established on the 11 January 1919.

The union experienced numerous problems on its establishment. The employers saw it as a force aimed at fomenting industrial unrest, and issued open threats to workers who were union members. Despite this, membership grew and by the end of its first year, it had more than 7,000 financial members comprising waterfront workers, tradesmen, sea defence and road workers, railroad workers, balata bleeders and miners, some Government employees and hundreds of sugar estate labourers. Branches of the union were also set up in various parts of the country.

Critchlow was employed on a full time basis by the union, and he never stopped being a spokesman for the workers, and publicised their grievances and demanded improved working conditions and better wages for them. But he faced opposition from the more educated members of the union who felt that his limited education should not allow him to have such high responsibilities. These members, who were in the minority, wanted a doctor or a lawyer to lead the union. In January 1920 at a meeting of the union, a motion was introduced requesting Critchlow to hand over all the union's funds to Dr. T. T. Nichols, and two lawyers, J. S. Johnson and McClean Ogle. But the motion was rejected by a huge majority and a vote of confidence in Critchlow was passed.

## CRITCHLOW IN THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE

The early years of the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU) were marked by personal rivalries between the professionals and the rank and file

members who held leadership positions. In particular, there were personal clashes between A. A. Thorne and Critchlow. Allegations of corruption in the use of union funds also surfaced.

A serious unemployment crisis developed in the early 1920s, following the end of the World War, and there were strikes and riots in Georgetown in 1924. Since similar problems occurred in the British West Indies, a strong solidarity among the trade unions was forged in all the territories. A number of West Indian labour conferences also took place, and the BGLU played a leading role in all of them. During this period, Critchlow served as Secretary-Treasurer of the union; C. T. Andrews was elected President of the union in 1922.

Spearheaded by Critchlow, the union also campaigned vigorously for the reduction of rents in Georgetown. At that time, most workers, particularly those on the waterfront, lived in rented buildings in the city. When a rent reduction was won in 1922, a committee of tenants designated the 3 July 1922 as "Critchlow Day."

In April 1924, there were many strikes by various categories of workers in demand of a shorter working day and higher wages to combat the rising cost of living. When the employers refused to give in to these demands, riots broke out in various parts of Georgetown, despite appeals by Critchlow for workers to desist from violence. After the police made numerous arrests of both men and women who were charged with inciting and for causing violence, Critchlow advised workers to end the strikes. There was some opposition to this, but in the end his decision was heeded after he declared that he would ask the Governor to intervene in the matter of wages.

Immediately after, Critchlow asked the Governor, Sir Graeme Thompson, to set up an Arbitration Board to examine the wages issue, and to force both the employers and the workers to accept its award. However, since there was no legislation to allow for the establishment of such a Board, the Governor appointed a Commission which included Critchlow as one of the two workers' representatives. This Commission issued a report on April 24, but it did little to improve the situation.

Meanwhile, sugar workers on the East Bank Demerara also went on strike at the same time of the Georgetown strikes. On the 3 April, they marched

towards Georgetown to ask Critchlow to represent them in their struggle for higher wages. However, they were stopped by the police at Ruimveldt, on the south of the city. In the disorder that broke out, the police opened fire and killed 13 persons and injured many others. The strike ended almost immediately and sugar workers returned to their jobs the next day. (See Chapter 100).

Throughout this period, the BGLU expanded its international links. Critchlow represented the union at the British Commonwealth Labour Conference in 1924, 1925 and 1930 in England. The British Caribbean and West Indian Labour Conference was inaugurated in Georgetown in 1926, and Critchlow was a leading representative at this, and at subsequent conferences. (In 1938, he was elected to the position of Assistant Secretary of the Conference).

Based on his experience in the workers' struggle, Critchlow recognised that the established capitalist system was not bringing benefits to the working class. In December 1930, he addressed members of the union and called for workers to fight against capitalism, as practised by the employers, and to struggle for the establishment of socialism.

In 1931, he travelled to Germany to represent the union at the International Committee of Trade Union Workers Conference. The following year, on an invitation from the trade union movement of the Soviet Union, he visited Russia in 1932. On his return to Guyana, he spoke of the benefits Russian workers were receiving, and immediately, the local press attacked him and called him a "Red, a Communist and a Bolshevik."

With the formation of unions to represent workers in various areas, the British Guiana Trades' Union Council (TUC) was established in 1941, and Critchlow became its first General Secretary. By 1943, there were 14 affiliate unions in this umbrella body which, shortly after, joined the World Federation of Trades Unions (WFTU).

In 1948, with the advent of the Cold War, the WFTU was split, and the TUC withdrew from it and joined the pro-West break-away group, the International Confederation of Free Trades Unions (ICFTU). Critchlow represented the TUC at the ICFTU conference in London in 1949, and was elected as a "substitute" member of the Executive Council to represent the

West Indian group. Later in the year he attended an International Confederation of Workers meeting in Havana, Cuba.

He also championed demands for the extension of the right to vote so that all workers could participate in national elections. Some leaders of other unions which were also formed by this time, also agitated for this cause. In 1943, he and Ayube Edun, of the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA), which was formed a few years before, were nominated by the Governor to represent workers in the Legislative Council. In the following year, Critchlow was appointed to the Executive Council (the Governor's Cabinet), and he served in this position until 1947. He also served as the Government's nominee on the Georgetown City Council from December 1945 to December 1950.

In the 1947 elections, Critchlow contested and won the South Georgetown constituency. But as a result of an election petition, his election was declared null and void, and he was barred from contesting for a seat in the Legislative Council for the five years. It was during these elections that Dr. Cheddi Jagan was first elected to the Legislative Council.

Despite his increased administrative and official Government duties, Critchlow continued to actively represent workers in various parts of the country. He intervened in a bauxite workers' strike at Mackenzie in 1944, but the workers, most of whom were members of the BGLU, felt that he did not represent them adequately when he agreed to a resumption of work after discussions with the management of the Demerara Bauxite Company.

In 1950, the Government appointed an Advisory Committee to examine cost of living issues and to make recommendations. These included a minimum wage of \$1.52 per day, but Critchlow, who was a member of the Committee, issued a minority report calling for a minimum wage of \$2.00 per day.

For his outstanding public service, he was awarded the medal of Officer of the British Empire (OBE) by King George VI in 1951. On the following year, he resigned as General Secretary of both the BGLU and the TUC, but he served on the Arbitration Panel that examined the wage dispute for waterfront workers in Grenada. After this period, he was generally not invited to activities organised by the TUC. During the 1957 May Day parade, a contingent of workers led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan saw Critchlow

standing by his gate to watch the parade. Dr. Jagan broke ranks and walked over to the gate and took him to march at the head of the parade. Later, at the demands of the workers, he was allowed to address the May Day rally.

While Critchlow served as General Secretary of the TUC, May Day (1 May) was observed annually by unionised workers with marches and rallies. He made regular demands during his annual address to workers for the day to be declared a public holiday, but this was not achieved until 1958.

This outstanding working class leader died on the 10 May 1958 at the age of 74 years. In 1963, at the request of Dr. Jagan, who was then the Premier, the famous Guyanese artist E.R. Burrows sculpted a statue of Critchlow. This statue was later placed on the grounds of Parliament Buildings.

## GANDHI AND THE IMMIGRATION PROPOSALS

From around 1912, members of the Indian legislature, the Imperial Council of India, increased their demands for an end to Indian emigration. As a result of this agitation, the Council, after consulting with the British Government, sent two of its members, Lala Chimman and Lall Mc Neal to British Guiana to examine the working and living conditions of Indians. Their report, made in 1915, described these conditions as favourable. This encouraged a member of the British Guiana Court of Policy, A. P. Sherlock, to suggest the establishment of a committee to examine how the immigration of Indians to British Guiana could be expanded. This committee was formally established, but before it could begin its work, the British Government announced that emigration from India would come to an end in September 1917.

During 1916-1917, 824 indentured Indians arrived in British Guiana, and despite the official ending of emigration in 1917, over 400 Indians arrived in 1921-1922 under contracts of service. In addition there were some others who came as ordinary settlers.

With the end of officially supported Indian migration to British Guiana, and the subsequent rapid phasing out of the indenture system, the owners of sugar planters had a genuine fear that there would be a severe shortage of



labour in the fields. As a result, they urged the colonial Government in British Guiana to make efforts to restart immigration, especially after an influenza epidemic killed over 12,000 Indians in 1918. The supporters of immigration into British Guiana wanted people to be brought not only from India, but from Africa as well.

It was because of the labour concern that the Attorney General, Sir Joseph Nunan, departed in June 1919, at the head of a seven-member team to hold meetings with the Colonial Office in London. The team planned to travel later to India and some British colonies in Africa to discuss migration proposals with their Governments. The other members of the delegation were Dr. Hewley Wharton, Parbhu Sawh and Joseph A. Luckhoo (representing East Indians); and A. B. Brown, Mc Farlane Corry and Eric Robinson (representing Africans). The plan of this delegation was for the Indian delegates to travel to India and the African delegates to West Africa where they would try to explain the advantages British Guiana would provide to immigrants from those countries.

In London, the delegation was joined by Thomas Greenwood of the West India Committee, (the body looking after the interests of the sugar planters), and he made it clear to the Colonial Office that the planters wanted immigrants only from India, and not from Africa. The African members of the delegation, unable to win any support from the West India Committee for immigrants from Africa, decided to abandon their plans, and they returned to British Guiana. The others journeyed in November to India where they met with influential Indians, including the Indian leader, Mohandas Gandhi, and urged them to allow the revival of emigration to British Guiana.

Gandhi himself was not initially in favour of the continuation of Indian emigration to British Guiana. Nunan and Luckhoo met with him in Delhi on 11 December and again in Amritsar on 26 December. Wharton and Sawh also met with him at his home in Ahmedabad on 5 January 1920, but he continued to express his opposition to the emigration proposals of the team.

But then on the 10 January Gandhi met with two recently repatriated Indian labourers who had been indentured in British Guiana, and who claimed that their living and economic condition there was satisfactory. After his conversation with them, he changed his opposition to the renewal of

emigration and stated that he would not publicly oppose the scheme put forward by the delegation. On 1 February he signed a statement indicating that even though he was not prepared to give his personal encouragement to Indians to leave India, he was at the same time not in favour of using legislative action to prevent Indians from leaving for other lands, including British Guiana. In this document, he added that his views were not shared by everyone. But he was satisfied that British Guiana had a liberal constitution and that Indians could be represented in the legislature, and that equality of rights with other races existed. He was therefore willing to allow a test of the emigration scheme for a period of six months.

While this was happening, two reports from East Africa and South Africa gave poor descriptions of the conditions of Indians there. An unexpected visit of a deputation from Fiji, comprising Government and Church officials, also reported on a similar situation in that colony. These reports helped to spur opposition to the emigration scheme and did not aid in any way the effort of the Guyanese delegation.

Shortly after, at a meeting of the Indian Imperial Council, the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, stated that if the British colonies offered Indians more prosperity, they should not be prevented from going there. Subsequently, the Indian Legislative Council appointed a committee to examine the proposals of the British Guiana delegation. Among these proposals were: (1) a grant of five acres of empoldered land for each emigrant family serving a period of three years of indenture; and (2) the provision of free passages from India for those who wanted to cultivate land as independent farmers.

On the recommendation of the Committee, the Indian Legislative Council passed a motion which took a favourable view of the Guyanese proposals. However, opinions against emigration from India were strong and no official agreement to restart migration could be reached. The delegation could only obtain an agreement that a three-member mission organised by the Indian Government would be sent to British Guiana to examine the living and working conditions of the Indians.

While this was happening, the campaign against emigration was stepped up by those who claimed that indenture was a system of quasi-slavery. It was probably because of this campaign that the original plan to enrol

prospective emigrants was suspended until the three-member committee reported to the Indian Legislative Council on their findings in British Guiana.

## CONTINUING EFFORTS TO REVIVE INDIAN IMMIGRATION

The three-man delegation from India arrived in British Guiana in February 1922. It comprised of Dewan Pillai, Deputy President of the Madras Legislative Assembly, Venketesh Tivary of the Servants of India Society, and an Englishman, G. F. Keatinge, who was Director of Agriculture of Bombay.

During their initial discussions, the Governor, Sir Wilfred Collet, informed the committee that the scheme proposed by Nunan and Luckhoo in India was not authorised by the British Guiana Government. However, both Nunan and Luckhoo firmly disputed this, and insisted to the Indian delegation that they were indeed authorised to make proposals for the Government. In the end, a new scheme, with much fewer benefits than were made in the Nunan-Luckhoo plan, was proposed by the Governor to the delegation.

The committee, after visiting a number of sugar plantations and meeting with Indian workers and professionals, departed in April 1922 for India and shortly after presented a report to the Indian Legislative Council. The report was not unanimous since the two Indian members expressed no support for any further movement of people from India to British Guiana on account of the falling export price of sugar. They felt that with such an existing situation would not promote improved living conditions for new Indian settlers. On the other hand, Keatinge stated that if there was not a restart of Indian immigration, the labour supply would be seriously affected and this could cause some sugar plantation to close down, thus affecting the livelihood of the Indians in British Guiana.

The sugar planters in British Guiana felt that this report was very damaging to their hopes of importing a new wave of labourers from India. By 1923, the price of sugar began to improve, and in May 1923, the Sugar Planters Association, alarmed at the shortage of workers when sugar export prices were rising, unanimously gave support to the Nunan-Luckhoo scheme. The Association wrote to the new Governor, Sir Graeme Thompson, asking for

the introduction of 1500 families from India under the terms put forward by Nunan and Luckhoo.

In an effort to win support, they encouraged the Government to send Nunan and Luckhoo again to India in early 1924 to explain to Indian leaders the positive sides of emigration to British Guiana. For this mission, Nunan and Luckhoo were joined by two members of the British Guiana East Indian Association, Mahedoe Panday and Caramat Ally McDoom, and together they were able to get the Indian Government to re-examine the situation in British Guiana and to consider reopening migration. (The EIA was formed eight years before in Berbice by Joseph Ruhoman). The delegation had the backing of the Negro Progress Convention (NPC), founded in 1921 by E. F. Fredericks, a lawyer from Buxton. The NPC stated that it would support the re-opening of immigration from India providing that immigration from Africa was also opened up.

The British Guiana delegation visited Bombay and Madras during the initial stage of their mission. Strongest opposition to emigration was expressed in Madras where the media spread misinformation and exaggerated problems existing in British Guiana. Nunan met on 22 and 24 January in Delhi with the Viceroy who expressed support for the emigration scheme. Both Nunan and Luckhoo also met with the special Committee of the Legislative Council.

On 8 April, news of the killing of 13 persons, most of whom were Indian sugar workers, five days before at Ruimveldt reached India and this helped to spur the anti-emigration advocates to rally more opposition to the emigration scheme. However, by then the special Committee had already agreed to send a Government representative to British Guiana to again examine the level of progress of Indians.

In response to the visit of this delegation, the Indian Government in October 1925 sent Kunwar Maharaj Singh, a Deputy Commissioner in the United Provinces, to examine the economic and political conditions of the Indians in British Guiana. In describing the economic and political conditions of the Indians in British Guiana, he stated that:

1. Educational and medical facilities in British Guiana were superior to those in rural India.

2. There were no caste restrictions or purdah, and that Indians in British Guiana had a somewhat higher standard of living than those living in rural India.

3. There were no political or economic inequalities such as existed, for instance, in South Africa, no segregation, and no restrictions against the acquisition of land.

4. The general prosperity was below the level reached in Mauritius, where Indians owned over 40 percent of the sugar cultivation, or as in Trinidad, where 100,000 acres of land were in the hands of Indian proprietors. This difference was caused by the natural difficulties of the coastlands, involving considerable expenditure on sea defence, drainage and irrigation as well as the lack of cooperative effort.

5. Nevertheless, the presence of many Indian landowners, substantial cultivators, legal and medical practitioners, merchants, shopkeepers and Government servants, showed that the community was making progress which was due to the qualities of industry and thrift shown by the Indians.

Singh's report was not supportive of a labour scheme, even though he felt that Indians had made progress. He was not opposed to emigration for settlement and he proposed an experiment involving the settlement of 500 Indian families (amounting to roughly 1500 persons) in British Guiana.

In March 1926, the Governor of British Guiana was informed by telegram by the Viceroy of India that limited migration of indentured labourers was approved on certain strict conditions, a list of which was forwarded at the same time. The sugar planters desperately needed additional labour on their plantations, and they quickly accepted the conditions. With their encouragement, the draft conditions were rapidly approved by the British Guiana legislature. The Indian Government was informed of the approval of the list of conditions, and the Indian Imperial Council finally approved the emigration proposals late in the same month.

Only 173 Indians (amounting to about 50 families) arrived in British Guiana under this new scheme in 1926. During the following year, the British Guiana Government found that the cost of transportation was too high, and this did not encourage further transport of settlers from India. Emigration from India officially ended in 1928.

## THE RUIIMVELDT SHOOTING IN 1924

As a result of the labour unrest and the subsequent riots in Georgetown in March 1924, a proclamation was issued on 1 April banning all assemblies in the city. This proclamation was extended to the entire country on the following day when it was believed that sugar workers on the East Bank would support the strikes in Georgetown. Many of those on strike in Georgetown were at the time urging the sugar workers of four estates of Peter's Hall, Farm, Providence and Diamond to strike in solidarity. These estates were under one management, and a number of African workers employed there were also members of the BG Labour Union which had called the strikes in Georgetown.

Indeed, it was on the morning of 2 April that strikes began on the four sugar estates. The workers made no demand for increased wages, and it was believed that the strikes were really a show of solidarity with those who were on strike in Georgetown. However, the cane cutters and punt loaders returned to work after they were spoken to by management personnel.

Later in the day a large number of East Indian and African labourers from Farm marched to Providence, and then later to Diamond armed with shovels and forks. They forced the workers there, in many cases through threats of violence, to cease working and to gather with them on the public road.

Armed police along with soldiers were dispatched to the scene. Not too long after, the magistrate, C. H. E. Legge arrived and urged the workers to return to work. Only the factory workers heeded him. The others, accompanied by women and children, decided to march to Georgetown to meet with Hubert Critchlow, the leader of the BG Labour Union.. They were accompanied by drummers and, as they marched, chanted that they wanted more money. When they were nearing Providence, the police stopped them and they dispersed and returned to their homes.

The situation deteriorated when more sugar workers were incited and cased threatened with violence if they did not stop working. Mobs of strikers " both Indian and African " moved from estate to estate to enforce a general strike.

Rowdy persons, many of them young unemployed African men and women, including criminal elements, some of whom were transported from Georgetown, gathered on the public road intimidating people. They even forcibly entered private homes owned by Europeans and helped themselves to food, as was being done in Georgetown by riotous crowds. These groups of rowdy unemployed Africans were referred to as "centipedes".

Meanwhile, the estates' management personnel made attempts to find out what were the workers' demands, but they were unable to obtain any clear information from those who were on strike.

At the same time, the police warned the striking workers to avoid gathering in large groups, but his warning was disregarded. On the 3 April, hundreds of workers, gathered at Providence, four miles south of Georgetown. They carried flags, sticks, shovels, hoes and forks and decided to march to the city to join up with the strikers there and to meet with the leaders of the BG Labour Union. They were joined by strikers and unemployed persons from Georgetown, and by the time they were within sight of the city, their numbers had swollen to over 5,000.

The police, led by Sergeant-Major Billyeald, stopped them at Ruimveldt, just a mile south of the city. The Black Watch Regiment of British soldiers, led by Captain Ramsay, also came out to stop the march. Ramsay and the Magistrate, C.H.E. Legge, along with some civic leaders, tried to urge the crowd to disband and return home, but they were unable to influence them in doing so.

There were reports that the police offered to allow representatives of workers from the various estates to enter Georgetown to meet with whomsoever they wanted to discuss their issues. The noisy, rowdy crowd, which was now apparently led by some Barbadian workers from Diamond, shouted down this offer.

The president of the East Indian Association, Francis Kawall, was then called in by the police to speak to the Indian workers in the crowd. Both he and a Hindu priest addressed them urging all to disperse and return home, but their pleas were ignored.

The policemen and soldiers attempted to disperse the crowd, but the sheer numbers of the large and noisy mob forced them to retreat.

About 40 mounted policemen were then deployed to push back the crowd. However, this action failed when the crowd became riotous threw bricks and bottles at them.

Magistrate Legge then read the proclamation which announced that the gathering was illegal. This proclamation was also translated in Hindi for the benefit of the Indian sugar workers in the crowd. Despite this, the crowd pressed forward and continued to attack the police.

The Riot Act was then read and the police was ordered to open fire. Forty-two rounds were fired in less than a minute, and 13 persons, including 12 Indians, were shot dead and 18 others wounded. The dead included two women who were not on the scene; one of them was in her house when a shot penetrated the wall and killed her. General pandemonium broke out, and in the stampede to escape from the scene, others were injured.

By the next day, the East Bank Demerara area was relatively quiet and most workers had returned to their jobs.



## THE START OF THE BAUXITE INDUSTRY

Up to the end of the nineteenth century the area around Mackenzie was sparsely populated. Settlement can be traced back to 1759 when a land survey was carried out for the establishment of a township which later became known as Three Friends. This township, settled some time after the survey, was named for three friends, Messrs. Spencer, Blount and John Dalglish Patterson who settled there in the late eighteenth century. They were former naval officers who had fought against the French in the Caribbean during the Napoleonic War.

Patterson, a contractor for the Dutch colony of Essequibo-Demerara at the time, owned plantation Christianburg which was a choice place for retirement of British naval officers after 1803. At Three Friends, he built a great house which became a guest house for visitors of the early settlement. When Patterson died in 1842, the British Guiana Government took over his plantation and the great house was later used as a magistrate court. A portion of the plantation was later sold to Sproston's, a prominent company of the period. The company was interested in the establishment of a railway to Rockstone on the eastern bank of the Essequibo River where there were valuable resources in stone and timber. There it hoped to establish a stone quarry at Rockstone and to cut timber in the area.

Wismar, on the western bank of the Demerara River, was formed by the influx of immigrants from various European countries, mainly Germany. It became a larger settlement following emancipation when many former African slaves, who refused to work on the sugar plantations, migrated to live there. Some of the Germans who settled there were originally recruited by the British Guiana Government as part of an alternative labour supply for the sugar plantations, after most of the freed Africans refused to work there. The German settlers named the settlement Wismar after a German town of the same name.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, bauxite was discovered in Guyana in a belt stretching across the country from the North West District to the Corentyne River, with large deposits identified in the Pomeroon, the Essequibo around Bartica, Mackenzie, Ituni, Canje, and Orealla.

In 1913 a Scottish geologist, George Bain Mackenzie, visited the area about 60 miles up the Demerara River and bought lands for mining on the

eastern bank of the Demerara River. According to some stories, he was able to purchase unoccupied lands at very cheap prices from the owners, because he claimed he would cultivate oranges there. Very few persons at that time knew about bauxite and its potential. In 1915 Mackenzie died and his lands passed into the control of Winthrop C. Nelson.

A paper presented in London in 1916 on the occurrence of bauxite in Guyana generated such interest in the USA that the Aluminium Company of America (Alcoa) in the same year incorporated the Demerara Bauxite Company (DEMBA). Shortly after, DEMBA secured leases on large areas of bauxite-bearing land in the vicinity of the area purchased by Mackenzie.

In 1916 mining of bauxite commenced and hundreds of people from the coastal areas migrated there in search of employment. A settlement known as Cockatar, which grew up in the bauxite mining area, joined up with the Christianburg plantation and became known as Mackenzie. When a village administration was formed in 1918, Wismar, for local government purposes, was linked up to Mackenzie.

DEMBA started production at Akyma on the Demerara River, south of Mackenzie. In 1922 the operation was expanded and processing and shipping facilities were established at Mackenzie, the head of ocean navigation in the Demerara River. In 1929 Alcoa handed over the operations to its Canadian associate, Alcan, and production continued at a steady rate over the next decade, during which Guyana became the world's third largest bauxite producer after the USA and Surinam.

By 1922 the population of the Mackenzie area was less than one thousand persons. Employment was dependent on not only bauxite mining, but also the timber industry and some independent gold prospecting. The timber was located along the Essequibo River and transported by railway to the Demerara River.

A slump in the bauxite industry between 1930 and 1936 caused much hardship. Trade picked up just before 1939 and particularly during the World War of 1939-1945 when the demand for aluminium was high.

The Berbice Bauxite Company, a subsidiary of American Cyanamid, started production of chemical grade bauxite for the manufacture of alum at Kwakwani up the Berbice River in 1942. In 1943 DEMBA extended its

operations to Ituni, about 35 miles south of Mackenzie, and by the end of the decade Guyana was the world's second largest producer, accounting for 17 percent of world production. With the expansion of mining, the working population grew and most of the workers settled permanently in the area.

Despite the high profits made by DEMBA during the early 1940s, the workers in the bauxite industry toiled under very harsh working conditions. In 1943, each working day was of 10 hours duration, and each worker had to work six days a week. By 1947 the working week was reduced to 48 hours.

The company did not support the formation of trade unions, but members of the BG Labour Union from Georgetown were able to recruit bauxite workers as members during meetings at Wismar, away from the mining district. The union also helped them to organise a strike in 1944 for better working conditions. But the strike collapsed after just three days, and the workers were unable to win any concessions from the bauxite company.

In 1952 Reynolds Metals acquired the Berbice Bauxite Company and started production of metallurgical bauxite at Kwakwani where a small settlement of workers developed. At around the same time DEMBA expanded production of refractory grade and abrasive grade bauxite at Mackenzie, making Guyana the world's most diversified bauxite producer. In 1956 DEMBA started construction of the alumina refinery which began production in 1961.

Most of British Guiana's bauxite was shipped as raw ore to the parent companies' plants in Canada and the United States, but a small proportion was calcined. With the opening of the alumina plant, a quantity of alumina was extracted and exported. The royalties and export duties paid to the Government were extremely low, being 25 and 45 cents per long ton respectively.

For the workers, the company established facilities which provided for workers' accommodation, education, health, and recreation. But these amenities were somewhat diminished by the existence of a virtual colour bar between the mainly White expatriate supervisory staff and the Guyanese workers.

The scale of operations grew considerably over the years, with a rapid increase during the Second World War. By 1957 production totalled 2,200,000 tons. Most of this was produced by DEMBA from its mines at Mackenzie.

Although several companies had concessions and exploration licences, the only other company producing bauxite was the Reynolds Metals Company operating at Kwakwani, where production reached 225,023 long tons in 1957. In 1958-59 production by both companies dropped to 1,675,000 tons because of the United States recession and a local strike.

## **The Boundary with Suriname: The Tri-junction Point**

In 1929 information circulated about the possibility of oil existing in Suriname and British Guiana in the vicinity of the Corentyne River. This led to proposals, set out in a letter, dated 7 August 1929, from the Dutch Minister to the British Foreign Office for the conclusion of a border treaty between the two countries. The Dutch Minister said that there was a special reason for concluding such a treaty since the Brazilian Government then wished to demarcate its boundaries with British Guiana and Suriname and this could not be done unless the point at which the frontiers of the three countries met was determined. The reference here was to a treaty signed in 1926 by Britain and Brazil for the demarcation of the frontier between Brazil and British Guiana. Article 2 of that Treaty stated that: "The British Guiana/Brazil frontier shall lie along the watershed between the Amazon basin and the basins of the Essequibo and Corentyne Rivers as far as the point of junction or convergence of the frontier of the two countries with Dutch Guiana. . . ."

The treaty also provided for the setting up of a Commission to demarcate the frontier. The Netherlands Government was notified of the proposed work of the Commission and invited to participate. In fact, the method of determining the point at which the boundaries of the three countries met was suggested by the Netherlands Government, who, in their Note to the British Government of 27 February 1933, proposed that the boundary between Suriname and British Guiana should follow ". . . . the path Trombetas-Kutari from its extremity on the Kutari leading over a rock, by Farabee called 'Farogle', till its point of contact with the Brazilian frontier. This point of contact will be the tri-junction point. . . ."

To this Note the British Government replied by letter on 27 June 1933 that they were prepared "in certain circumstances" to adopt the proposals put forward by the Netherlands Government for the demarcation of this boundary near to the Brazilian frontier. The "certain circumstances" were explained to be the following: "If, therefore, the source of the River Kutari should prove not to lie on the watershed separating the basin of the River Amazon from the basins of the rivers Essequibo and Corantyne, or, alternatively if the determination of the source of this river should prove a matter of great practical difficulty, considerable time and expense might be saved were the Boundary Commissioners themselves left free to adopt the line of boundary as suggested by the Netherlands Government. . . ."

In response, the Netherlands Legation in London "noted with great satisfaction that His Majesty's Government agree to the proposals put forward . . . regarding the demarcation of the Surinam-British Guiana Boundary". The tri-junction point was eventually fixed at the point indicated in the Dutch Note of 27 February 1933.

On 25 April 1935, the Dutch themselves submitted to the British Foreign Office a draft of instructions which the Dutch Government suggested should be issued to "the Respective Commissions for the defining of the tri-junction of the boundaries of Surinam, British Guiana and Brazil".

In accordance with these instructions and with the deliberate concurrence of the representatives of all three countries, the tri-junction point was duly fixed in 1936 at the source of the Kutari River, the point suggested by the Dutch in their Note of 27 February 1933. The Dutch representative on the Commission was Admiral Kayser who signed the map together with the Brazilian and British Commissioners.

#### The boundary with Suriname: The draft treaty

The proposal made by the Dutch Government in 1929 for a boundary treaty was taken up by the British, and negotiations began shortly after. On the question of sovereignty over the New River Triangle the British position was clear. The statements that were made in the Dutch Parliament during the 1920s on behalf of the Netherlands Government had conceded that Britain had been exercising acts of sovereignty over the area. They had also acknowledged that "it would be difficult to speak of the existence of a dispute" over the Kutari as the line of the boundary in the upper reaches of the Corentyne.

By 1930 it was indisputable that the New River Triangle should be formally recognised as forming part of British Guiana - recognition which was in fact later given by the Netherlands Government in connection with the fixing of the tri-junction point. Accordingly, on August 4, 1930, the Dutch Government informed the British Foreign Office that they were willing to sign such a Treaty and proposed the following delimitation of the frontier to be included: "The frontier between Surinam and British Guiana is formed by

the left bank of the Corentyne and the Cutari up to its source, which rivers are Netherland territory."

In their reply to this on February 6, 1932, the British Government stated its pleasure to learn that the Dutch Government was prepared "to recognise the left banks of the Corentyne and Kutari Rivers as forming the boundary, provided that His Majesty's Government recognise the rivers themselves as belonging to the Netherlands Government."

### Sovereignty of the Corentyne River

In the agreement which was made between the two Governors, Van Battenburg and Frederici in the nineteenth century, it was specifically provided not only that the territory west of the Corentyne River be regarded as British territory but also that the islands in the river should be regarded as belonging to Suriname. Nothing was said about the sovereignty of the river as this was not the particular question occupying the minds of the Governors. They envisaged that a formal agreement would be made by the competent metropolitan authorities for the purpose of settling the boundaries between the two colonies. Nevertheless, in the 1930s the Dutch sought to claim on the basis of this Agreement that the boundary between Suriname and British Guiana lay along the western bank of the Corentyne River.

The situation which the Dutch thereby sought to create was not only unusual in international law and practice but contrary to the understanding of both parties before the 1930s when both sides agreed that the boundary lay along the mid-line of the river.

Indeed in February 1913, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies in a despatch to the Governor of British Guiana stated: ". . . Generally speaking the Corentyne is the boundary of British Guiana on the Dutch side with the usual attributes of a river boundary, namely, that the line of mid-stream is to be taken as the boundary from the source downwards."

A similar view on the Dutch side was reflected by the statement of the Netherlands Minister for Foreign Affairs who, also in February 1913, declared in the Dutch Parliament that the boundary was formed by the Corentyne and the Kutari-Curuni, and added: ". . . to this water course the

ordinary rules of international law obtaining in respect of joint boundary rivers are wholly applicable".

In keeping with the thinking of both sides, the maps published in British Guiana in 1913 and in 1924 showed the boundary between the two colonies along the thalweg (deepest channel) of the Corentyne and Kutari rivers and bore the following note: "The Eastern boundary of the Colony is the middle of the deepest channel (thalweg) of the river Courantyne and when an Island is passed the middle of the deepest channel (thalweg) between the island and the West Bank of the River."

This was the accepted position up to 1929. The position then was that the Dutch had clearly recognised the title of the British not only to the New River Triangle, but also to a frontier on the mid-line of the Corentyne-Kutari.

Around this period, there were reports that oil had been discovered in the region around the mouth of the Corentyne River. It was then that the Dutch proposed that the boundary should be settled by treaty and, in the context of that proposal, they asserted that the boundary should lie not along the Kutari but along the New River, and that its precise position should be not along the thalweg but along the left bank of the Corentyne.

In the resulting negotiations they abandoned this unsupportable claim to the New River as the southern-most line of the boundary. At the same time, the British expressed their willingness, provided that existing British rights of user of the river were safeguarded, to accept a boundary on the left bank of the river. This formed the consensus on which the final draft of the Boundary Treaty was prepared in the 1930s - a treaty which was all but signed when the Second World War intervened. Although agreement had been reached, the actual signing was postponed and, in fact, it never took place.

## The maritime boundary with Suriname

In 1927 the Dutch Government proposed to the British Government the holding of discussions on a treaty to mark the maritime boundary between Guyana and Suriname. The discussions commenced in 1931, but following the custom of the time the first draft of the treaty was forwarded by the United Kingdom to the Netherlands in 1935. The Dutch in their original draft



of 1931 proposed a 28-degree line, but this was changed to 10 degrees in 1936. Subsequent drafts were submitted by the two sides up to 1939 when work on the final draft of the treaty was interrupted by the outbreak of the war in Europe.

Based on international norms, Guyana's maritime boundary currently follows a line of 33 degrees east of true north which confirms with the principle of equidistance established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea when there is no agreed maritime boundary. In contrast, Suriname adheres to the line 10 degrees east of true north, that is, west of the Guyana line, proposed by the draft treaty which was prepared in 1939.

The principle of equidistance in the continental shelf attracted international attention since the 1950s. The Convention on the Continental Shelf reached in Geneva in April 1958 established in Article 6(2) that when the continental shelf is adjacent to the territories of two states, and in the absence of agreement, the boundary should be determined by the application of the principle of equidistance from the nearest points of the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea of each state is measured. (This principle is also enshrined in the Convention on the Law of the Sea which became open for signature from December 1982). Where there is no agreement or where there has been failure to reach agreement, the equidistance principle becomes automatically applicable unless one side can prove there is historic title or other special circumstance. In the case of the continental shelf, there is no proviso for historic title, for the simple reason that the concept of continental shelf is relatively new as it developed after World War II.

After the end of World War II, negotiations resumed in 1949 on the basis of another draft treaty which was almost identical with the first draft of 1939. This second draft was then revised to produce a third draft which was divided into three parts to define the agreed principle of equidistance.

On 6 August 1958, at the request of Suriname, the Dutch Government proposed that the division of the territorial seas and continental shelf should be defined in accordance with this principle of equidistance. The British accepted this proposal.

Part Two (of the draft), containing two articles (VII and VIII), provided the definition of the dividing line between the territorial seas and contiguous

zone as being formed by "the prolongation seawards of the line drawn on a bearing of 010 degrees referred to in article 1(2) to a distance of 6 miles from the seaward of the concrete marks referred to, (that is, those outside No. 61 Village) thence on a bearing of 033 degrees for a distance of 35 miles, thence on a bearing of 038 degrees for a distance of 28 miles, thence on a bearing of 028 degrees to the point of intersection with the edge of the continental shelves as defined by international law."

The British were prepared to concede the 10-degree line (to a distance of 6 miles) so far as the territorial sea was concerned as it was not considered to represent the median line.

This draft, the third, was forwarded to the Netherlands in October 1961. In June 1962, the Netherlands submitted a counter draft comprising a package which included the first official claims to the New River Triangle and located the boundary in the Corentyne in the thalweg rather than on the left bank as in the first draft. The Netherlands also proposed an alternative method of dividing the territorial waters and continental shelf by prolonging the 10-degree line seawards along the end of the thalweg, rather than the British 33-degree line which was slightly eastward. These Dutch proposals were rejected in totality by the British.

Significantly, this counter position of 1962, including a new claim to Guyana's territory, coincided with the reopening by Venezuela of its claim to the Essequibo at the United Nations in February 1962 and at a time of considerable domestic upheaval in British Guiana.

In 1965, the British Government after consultation with the British Guiana Government proposed a new draft restating the 1961 British draft and suggested a sea boundary following the median line from the left bank of the Corentyne River drawn according to the equidistance principle. This proposal elicited no response from the Dutch.

On 3 February 1966, a fortnight prior to the convening in Geneva of the critical meeting on the Guyana-Venezuela boundary, the Netherlands forwarded a substantial note rejecting the third draft treaty (which it had drawn up) and, among other things, reverted to the 10-degree maritime line as the sea boundary.

Since the 10-degree line of the first draft was related to the direction of the left bank of the Corentyne, and not to any median rule, that line would be open to negotiation as it would lose whatever validity was accorded if the frontier were to be shifted to the thalweg and the median line seaward commenced from that point.

After independence, the Guyana Government delivered a modified draft treaty in 1971 following the lines of the 1965 British draft. This drew no response from the Dutch Government. Suriname itself made no proposal for a settlement of the issue since that date or especially since that country became independent in 1975.

## **NEW CONSTITUTION OF 1928**

By the early 1920s, the legislature (the Combined Court) comprised of persons mainly from the middle class and the legal and medical profession. By that time most of the elected members were non-White (African, Indian, Portuguese and Mixed); there was only one member drawn from the sugar plantation owners who were seen as representatives of the White segment of the population.

Most of the elected members were in regular conflict with the Governor and his Executive Council over the allocation of finance for development projects. The Governor and the Executive Council, on the other hand, claimed that they were restricted by financial restraints placed on them by the colonial constitution which placed distribution of funds in the hands of the British Government in London.

Elections took place in 1926, and the electorate of mainly Africans voted solidly for the Popular Party led by Nelson Canon, a Guyana-born White. Among those elected were two Indians, Edward Alfred Luckhoo (to the Court of Policy) and Arnold Seeram (as a Financial Representative). Joseph Alexander Luckhoo, who served as a member of the Combined Court since 1916, failed to win re-election.

Shortly after, the British Government sent a Parliamentary Commission to examine the economic conditions of Guyana and to make recommendations for improvements. This Commission subsequently reported that the lack of control over finance by the Government was hampering development. It made a number of recommendations, but did not suggest any change to the existing constitution. However, it proposed the setting up of a local commission to work out constitutional changes that might be needed. It also expressed concern over the non-involvement (or non-inclusion) of Whites in the legislature.

The local commission was eventually appointed but it had only one Guyanese member, Eustace Woolford, who was also an elected representative in the Combined Court. This commission, after hearing evidence from the public, recommended by majority opinion that a unicameral legislature should be established to replace the bicameral system of the Combined Court and the Court of Policy. The composition of this suggested Legislative Council should be the Governor, Colonial

Secretary, Attorney General, eight nominated officials, five nominated unofficial members, and fourteen elected members.

This recommendation on the composition of the proposed Legislative Council gave total power to the Governor who, with his team of nominated and non-elected members, would have a majority in the Legislative Council.

According to the proposals, the Governor was also to be given special powers to carry out any measure in the Legislative Council against the wishes of the majority.

The final report of this local commission did not receive the support of Woolford who argued that the new recommendations would remove constitutional privileges to elected members granted by the old constitution. Nevertheless, the British Government accepted the report, even after Woolford and a delegation of elected members went to England to argue their case against the recommended proposals.

Eventually, the British Government approved the British Guiana Act when King George V signed an Order in Council on 18 July 1928. This Act abolished the old Dutch-influenced constitution, and a British Crown Colony constitution, which followed in great part the recommendations made by the commission, was introduced.

The new constitution was generally regarded as a backward step since it took away the powers from the electorate to elect a majority to govern the country. Of significance, it gave back power to the planter class, who had lost their influence in 1891, since their representatives could now be appointed to the Legislative Council by the Governor.

But a minority of elected members (of all ethnic groups), because of their close orientation with pro-British values, expressed support for the changes.

Despite the setbacks in constitutional change, the new constitution gave voting rights to women, provided they qualified through property ownership of earnings. It also provided for elected members to become part of the Executive Council.

Elections under this new constitution was held in 1930 and among those re-elected were both Edward A. Luckhoo, who was appointed to the Executive Council, and Arnold E. Seeram. A new Indian candidate, Dr. Jung Bahadur Singh was also elected. In a by-election, a fourth Indian, Peer Bacchus, won a seat which became vacant after the death of its holder, A. R. F. Webber, a "Coloured" journalist. In elections held in 1935, the four Indians were re-elected, and a fifth, Charles Ramkisson Jacob won a seat in a by-election. Seeram, shortly after, resigned his seat and left Guyana.

Despite the constitutional changes, Guyana continued to experience economic difficulties. This was mainly due to the fact that despite huge profits made by the sugar industry, there was no accumulation of capital since most of the profits were kept in England. As a result, loans had to be obtained to meet capital expenses for sea-defence, drainage and irrigation, water supply and other essential public works.

To meet financial demands, the Government imposed heavy taxation on the citizens. The economic situation and the standard of living of the people further worsened with the drop in prices for export products and a serious floods in 1934. Unemployment was also rampant and there were numerous strikes and disturbances after 1935.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE MPCA

A serious economic crisis affected Guyana between 1930 and 1935. This was part of the worldwide crisis which followed the stock market crash in the USA in 1929. Hundreds of rural people moved to Georgetown to search for jobs and were willing to work for very low wages. Many of them displaced the regular workers on the docks, and this often led to clashes between the displaced workers and those who took their place.

Unemployment continued to grow in both the rural and urban areas. In the sugar estates there were numerous strikes to protest the low wages, the long working hours and the poor living conditions provided for the workers. In explaining this situation, the chairman of Bookers, the main sugar company, reported to his directors in London that the strikes were organised by "communist agitators".

Out of this labour situation, a second trade union, the British Guiana Workers' League, was formed in 1931. It was led by A. A. Thorne, a Barbadian by birth, who had earlier participated in the work of the British Guiana Labour Union. In 1933, Dr. Jung B. Singh, a member of the Legislative Council, became the union's senior vice-president. The union concentrated its activities mainly in representing the interests of factory workers of the sugar estates, municipal workers in Georgetown, and ward-maids at the Georgetown Hospital.

By October 1938, seven more unions were established. Among them was the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA) led by Ayube Mohamed Edun. This union, registered in 1937, provided, for the first time, organised leadership for the sugar workers, but its popularity did not grow until after the Leonora sugar workers' strike in 1939. There was a steady flow of sugar workers into its ranks, and by 1943 it became the largest trade union with more than 20,000 members.

In addition to Edun, prominent members of the union included Charles R. Jacob, a member of the Legislative Council, and Eleanor Sewdin who was vice-president in 1939 and treasurer in 1940. Sewdin was the first woman to hold such a high position in a national labour organisation.

Even before the formation of the MPCA, Edun was already well known nationally through his very critical newspaper articles in which he championed the interests of the sugar workers. These articles were published in his newspaper, the Guiana Review. He continued his writing after he founded the union, and most of his articles were also published in the Labour Advocate, which became the official organ of the MPCA.

Edun's work on behalf of sugar workers was readily recognised by the Government. In 1943, the Governor, Sir Gordon Lethem, nominated him to the Legislative Council as an unofficial member to represent the interests of the Indian workers in the rural areas.

Despite the MPCA's popularity and membership strength, the sugar companies at first refused to grant it recognition as the bargaining union for the sugar workers. Usually, the Immigration Agent General was involved in settling labour disputes on the sugar estates, but by 1938 this task became the responsibility of the Local Government Department headed by a Commissioner of Labour. It was not until March 1939, after the Leonora

disturbances, that the Sugar Producers' Association (SPA) gave official recognition to MPCA when it signed an agreement with the union for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

## THE LEONORA DISTURBANCES

The pressing economic conditions continued throughout the 1930s, and from time to time workers went on strike to protest their working conditions. The sugar workers in various parts of the country were most active in their strike actions.

On 13 February 1939 the firemen at the Leonora sugar factory called a half-day strike to demand a shorter working day. Their working day was eleven and a half hours. At that time, other factory workers usually worked between 9 to 12 hours a day.

The news of the firemen strike encouraged field workers of the shovel gang to strike over insufficient pay. After efforts by the manager and the District Commissioner to encourage them to resume work failed, the workers asked for the MPCA president Ayube Edun to intervene on their behalf.

Meanwhile, the strike spread to other sections of Leonora estate, and by 15 February, all the workers, including the cane-cutters who make up the great majority of the workers, were on strike. A large group of workers, armed with their agricultural tools, attempted to join the train to travel to Georgetown to meet with Edun, but the police prevented them from boarding. These workers then decided to walk along the railway line to Vreed-en-Hoop where they were stopped by the police from boarding the ferry boat to cross them over to Georgetown

However, a smaller group of field workers travelled separately to Georgetown and discussed their grievances with Edun, who then sent them to meet with the Commissioner of Labour. But this meeting between the workers and the Commissioner failed to bring about an agreement.

While that meeting was taking place, Charles Jacob, another leader of the MPCA, crossed over the Demerara River from Georgetown and addressed the large group of workers who had walked from Leonora. He listened to their grievances after which they travelled back to Leonora on the train late in the afternoon.



Jacob and Edun, that same afternoon, presented a list of the issues affecting the workers to the Sugar Producers' Association, and demanded that the MPCA should be granted official recognition to represent the sugar workers.

All factory workers joined the strike on 16 February, and in the morning many of them gathered in the vicinity of the factory and made a noisy protest. A police contingent under the command of Superintendent Weber arrived on the scene later in the morning. The policemen, armed with rifles and long, heavy greenheart batons, attempted to arrest a leader of the strikers, but were pelted with bottles and bricks by sections of the crowd. A clash between the crowd and the police followed, and some persons were injured. The police arrested five workers, but after protests outside of the police station by a crowd of other workers, they were later released on bail.

Meanwhile, the large group of workers protesting outside the factory, moved away and gathered outside the manager's home. The manager attempted to speak to them, but was pelted with bottles and bricks and he hurried retreated into his house. As the situation worsened, the District Commissioner sent an appeal to the MPCA president to intervene. However, Edun refused to go to Leonora unless the estate management granted recognition to the union.

Shortly after the manager was attacked, the crowd surrounded a police car and assaulted the two persons in it. Superintendent Weber threatened to shoot at the unruly strikers, but they still refused to disperse and threatened to burn down the factory. A policeman, in attempting to take away a stick from a striker, was then set up by the crowd. He managed to escape but was chased by the mob, and he ran inside of a nearby house. Some of the strikers ran behind him and severely attacked him with sticks. Three other policemen moved into the house to rescue their injured companion, and as other section of the crowd moved towards the house, the other policemen opened fire. The crowd then hastily dispersed and scattered in all directions. As a result of the shooting, four workers were killed and 12 others were injured. Some policemen received minor injuries..

A few days after the shooting, the Governor appointed a three-man commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the disturbances. The commission heard evidence from 58 witnesses and lawyers representing

the interests of the deceased, the management of Leonora Estate, the police and the British Guiana East Indian Association. The MPCA did not participate in the proceedings.

During March 1939, while the commission was preparing its report, the Sugar Producers' Association granted official recognition to the MPCA when it signed an agreement with the union for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The commission of inquiry issued its report later in the month. It pointed to the fact that the workers had no other way open to them for settling their grievances except by going to the manager of the estate. The commission also was of the view that the union was unable to effectively represent the workers since its representatives were not given jobs on the estate. The report blamed the SPA for not recognising the union as the bargaining agent, but it also felt that the union should have sought permission to enter the estate to control the crowd. The commission felt that a stronger force of police should have been dispatched earlier to Leonora to disperse the crowd and to prevent any further build-up of strikers.

The police was cleared of all blame for the shooting. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of the MPCA was seriously hampered when it was discovered that one of its leaders was receiving substantial payments every month from the SPA. The union leader was expelled, but it did not dispel suspicions among sugar workers that other leaders were being "bought out" by the sugar producers.

## THE MOYNE COMMISSION

Throughout the 1930s there were disturbances in the British territories in the Caribbean. As a result, the British Government appointed the West Indian Royal Commission on 5 August 1938 to investigate and to make recommendations on the social and economic conditions in the various territories. The Commission was led by Lord Moyne (the former Walter Edward Guinness) and among its members was Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the British Trades Union Congress.

The Royal Commission, popularly referred to as the Moyne Commission, visited Guyana during the period 27 January to 20 February, 1939, and it

was in session at the time of the Leonora disturbances. Among the organisations presenting opinions to the Commissions were the nine registered trade unions, the Civil Service Association and the Sugar Producers' Association. A number of individuals, including sugar workers, also gave evidence at meetings of the Commission. Workers who appeared before the Commission complained of fear and victimisation at their workplaces. A total of 43 persons presented evidence at sittings before the Commission.

Even though the Commission completed its report in 1940, the British Government did not release it to the public until July 1945 after World War II ended. Despite this, some of its recommendations were acted upon immediately after the report was submitted to the British Government.

It was felt that because of the Commission's sharp criticisms of colonial policy in the Caribbean, the British Government thought that if the report was released, the German Government would have used it for war propaganda.

The Moyne Commission exposed the horrible conditions under which people of the British Caribbean lived. It pointed to the deficiencies in the education system, and economic and social problems of unemployment and juvenile delinquency. It also sharply criticised the poor health conditions and expressed concern over the high infant mortality rate.

It was especially critical of the plight of sugar workers and small farmers, and condemned unsafe conditions at workplaces. It was also very concerned over the use of child labour and the discrimination against women at workplaces, especially since they worked long hours for less pay than men received. It found, too, that the interests of the workers were virtually unprotected since there were no collective labour agreements, while only the employers decided on what wages should be.

About drainage and irrigation, the Commission stated that almost all the well drained land was owned by the sugar producers. It noted: "The areas devoted to rice and pastures are badly drained and abound in large swampy areas where almost amphibious cattle, sheep and pigs eke out an unusual existence."

The Commission also looked at the political system operating in all the territories. It recommended the expansion of the franchise, and extending the opportunities for people other than the financially influential to stand for election. To do this, it recommended the reduction of the margin between the qualifications for registration as a voter and those for membership of the Legislative Council. This eventually led to the establishment of a Franchise Commission which in 1944 recommended the lowering of qualifications voting and for membership of the Legislative Council. These qualifications were in the areas of land ownership, value of land owned, property occupation, income, and literacy in any language.

Overall, the Commission felt that the root of the disturbances was a demand for better living conditions by the people.

Many of its recommendations were aimed at alleviating the conditions affecting workers. It felt that there should be compulsory registration of trade unions and audit of their funds. With regard to the fixing of wages, it stated that in each territory a wages board should be established to carry out this process. The Commission also proposed the establishment of unemployment insurance and adequate and regular factory inspections to reduce accidents. Its recommendation for the establishment of a Labour Department was acted upon in 1942 and a Commissioner of Labour was appointed.

Another very important proposal was for the Government to consult with the sugar producers for the imposition of a welfare levy on every ton of sugar produced. This recommendation resulted in the establishment in 1947 of a Labour Welfare Fund and money paid into this fund was allocated generally for the building of housing schemes for sugar workers.

## THE EARLY YEARS OF AVIATION

The first airplane flight took place in Guyana in March 1913, when George Schmidt, a German, flew a mono-plane over Georgetown, taking off from the Bel Air Park race course. However, the development of air transport in Guyana owes much to Arthur James Williams, a pilot and mechanic from the United States. He arrived in Guyana in 1924, and using an amphibian airplane (generally referred to as a flying boat) he started an air service transporting people and goods to the country's interior from Georgetown.

Williams' plane took off from the Rowing Club on the Demerara River just south of the Stabroek Market.

Some other American plane owners established Georgetown as their base, and Guyanese gold miners hired them to transport them and their supplies to interior locations. These pilots and their small planes were thus instrumental in helping to open up the interior of Guyana. One of these pilots was James Angel who in 1935, on a chartered flight from Georgetown for a Venezuelan gold miner, "discovered" the Venezuelan waterfall named for him.

By the late 1920s amphibian planes were flying passengers between Trinidad and Guyana. In September 1929, the first airmail service to Guyana began. And the country gained attention when the famous American pilot, Colonel Charles Lindbergh, landed in the Demerara River with his flying boat on the 22 September 1929.

Arthur Williams developed his air service throughout the 1930s, and in May 1938 he and his partner, John Henry Hunterm, established the British Guiana Airways Ltd. During the period of World War II, he left to serve in the United States Air Force, but immediately returned to Guyana as soon as the war ended.

The first regular flights to the interior by the newly established British Guiana Airways Ltd. started in 1939. Amphibian aircraft were mainly used since they were able to land both on airstrips and on the interior rivers. In 1944, regular flights carrying passengers, mail and freight serviced the Mazaruni and Rupununi districts. The following year, the company acquired a Grumman amphibian aircraft which was used for a shuttle service from an airstrip in Ruimveldt to Mackenzie aerodrome and for charter flights to the Eastern Caribbean.

The increasing demand for flights encouraged the company in 1946 to obtain another Grumman and two Douglas Dakota DC3 aircraft which were based at the newly constructed Atkinson Field airport. Regular shipments of beef from the Rupununi to Georgetown by air began in July 1948.

The Atkinson Field airport was named after Major Atkinson, the commander of the air-base facilities which the American government built in 1942 during World War II. Atkinson Airport occupied 68 acres of Hyde

Park on the Demerara River, 26 miles south of Georgetown. It was part of an area leased to the United States of America by the United Kingdom in 1941 for a period of 99 years. (The lease was terminated on 26 May 1966, Guyana's Independence Day. Because the lease was terminated 74 years before its due end, a new agreement was arrived at giving certain specified rights to the Americans in relation to the air base for the next 17 years.)

In 1950 the airport facilities were restructured for civil aviation purposes. Another more up-to-date terminal building was built and opened on 15 March 1952. When the new building was destroyed by fire in 1959 the old terminal building was renovated and used again until the destroyed building was replaced. After independence, Atkinson Airport became the Timehri International Airport.

In July 1955, the Government bought the British Guiana Airways Ltd. from Williams who shortly after returned to the USA. The company was renamed the British Guiana Airways (Government). Its assets which included a fleet of three Dakota DC3, three Grumman and one Cessna aircraft were in 1963 acquired a new company, the Guyana Airways Corporation (GAC).

## THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS STAMP



The 1856 one-cent "Black on Magenta" of British Guiana is regarded as the rarest stamp in the world, and until recently the most expensive. It is a rectangular stamp of black ink printed on magenta paper with the corners snipped off. With the corners clipped off, the stamp actually has an octagonal shape. British Guiana One Cent Magenta

In the nineteenth century, the stamps of British Guiana were printed by a British printer, Waterlow & Sons. In early 1856, the stock of stamps was sold out before the fresh shipment from England arrived. The postmaster of British Guiana E.T.E. Dalton, needed stamps in a hurry so he asked the firm of Joseph Baum and William Dallas, publishers of the Official Gazette in Georgetown, to print an emergency issue. Dalton printed one-cent and four-cent stamps; the one-cent stamps were for newspapers and the four-cent stamps were for letters. On these stamps were printed the existing designs "the name British Guiana, the seal of the colony" a ship, and the Latin motto of the colony, "Damus Petimus que Vicissim", (translated as "We give and we seek in return"). Usually, stamps of different values of the same design were printed in different colours, but the printing firm did both values in black ink on coloured or "magenta" paper. Since the quality was very poor the postmaster, to prevent forgery, asked the post office workers to initial each stamp before selling it. Thus, as a security measure each stamp was initialed by a post office employee. (Known initials are "E.T.E.D." for Dalton, "E.D.W" for Wight, "W.H.L." for Lortimer and "C.A.W."for Watson).

In 1873, Vernon Vaughan, a 12-year-old Scottish schoolboy collector living in Georgetown, discovered the octagon-shaped one-cent "Black on Magenta", postmarked April 4, 1856, among some family papers. It was in poor condition, ink-smudged and slightly damaged and bore the initials "E.D.W". He soaked out the stamp and kept it in his album with his other stamps.

Shortly thereafter, Vaughn decided to sell it in order to purchase foreign stamps. He sold it to N. R. McKinnon, a local collector, for six shillings, which at that time was less than one US dollar. Five years later, McKinnon sold his entire collection to his friend Wylie Hill who lived in Glasgow, Scotland. Some time later, a London stamp dealer, Edward Pemberton, studied the collection and identified the one-cent Black on Magenta as a rare stamp. Hill later sold it to Thomas Ridpath, a dealer in Liverpool, England, for 120 British pounds.

In the early 1900s this dealer then sold it to the Frenchman Count Philip La Renotiere Von Ferrari, the most well-known stamp collector at that period, for 150 pounds. After Ferrari's death in 1917, his collection was auctioned in Paris between 1921 and 1925. In one of these auctions, the stamp was purchased in 1922 by millionaire Arthur Hind of Utica, New York, for 7,343 British pounds. Around that time, rumours circulated that because Hind was obsessed with the stamp, he had bought a second one-cent Black on Magenta and destroyed it so that his remaining one-cent Black on Magenta would remain as the only one in the world.

Arthur Hind died in 1933 and left his stamp-collection as a part of his estate. His widow, however, claimed that the one-cent British Guiana stamp had been given to her by her husband. The court upheld her claim and in 1940 the stamp was sold to Frederick Small, an Australian living in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for a price ranging between US\$40,000 to US\$75,000.

In an auction held by Robert Siegel Galleries in 1970, the stamp was sold for \$240,000 to Irwin Weinberg and a group of investors from Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania. The one-cent Black on Magenta remained in their collection for ten years when John E. du Pont of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, bought it at an auction for \$935,000.

Meanwhile, the four-cent British Guiana magenta stamp, printed in the same batch in 1856, ranges in value from \$7,500 to \$60,000.



## GUYANA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, Guyana, like other British West Indian colonies, gave full support to the war effort. Some Guyanese men volunteered to fight and they formed part of the British Caribbean Forces. In addition, Guyanese volunteered to serve overseas with the British Navy, Royal Air Force, and the Women's Corps. Some also travelled to Britain to work in the munitions factories.

In Guyana, for the purpose of defence, the Government organised two militia companies and a garrison. A Voluntary Civil Defence Organisation was also established.

The United States at first remained neutral but agreed in September 1940 to provide 50 old World War I destroyers to Britain. In return, Britain leased to the United States a number of sites stretching from Newfoundland in the north to Guyana in the south. These locations, to be used as American military bases, were leased for a period of 99 years.

In Guyana itself, the war resulted in a shortage of imported goods from Britain and North America since many merchant ships were utilised for military transport. Some which ventured out to sail from those parts of the world faced the danger of being attacked by German submarines.

The effects of the shortage of imported goods were felt throughout the country. For example, there were no new bicycle tyres and inner tubes, so owners of bicycles had to improvise by using discarded pieces of rubber to patch holes in existing tyres. There was also a severe scarcity of flour, and petrol for vehicles and kerosene for domestic use were rationed. The Government controlled the prices of goods, especially food items, and provided subsidies for necessary imports. However, the people quickly readjusted to the situation and there was no serious lack of food since Guyanese farmers produced large quantities of food crops including rice, cassava, plantains, sweet potatoes and eddoes, as well as vegetables.

The decrease in trading activities initially led to a rise in unemployment and caused economic hardships throughout the country during the early period of the war. Despite this, the Government agreed to allow some Jewish refugees displaced by the war to stay in Guyana during the war years. In July 1942, the Government agreed to house 50 Jewish refugees who came

from Spain but who had moved first to Curacao to seek refuge from the Germans. They lived in Mazaruni on the site of the prison and were maintained through funds provided by the British Government.

Even before the United States entered the war in December 1941, the Americans commenced the building of an air base at Hyde Park on the east bank of the Demerara River, 25 miles south of Georgetown. The forest was cleared and hills were levelled and a long concrete runway was constructed in 1941. This air base was soon after named Atkinson Field after the base commander Major Atkinson. Later in the year, the 44th Reconnaissance Squadron of the US Air Force was stationed there to protect the base, and to make regular air patrols between Panama and Guyana.

Soon after, American planes began arriving with munitions and other goods which were ferried by other planes across the Atlantic to West Africa. From there these supplies were transported to north Africa for the British forces fighting against the Germans. War planes purchased by the British from the Americans were also ferried to North Africa through Atkinson Field.

From around the same time, a huge cigar-shaped American airship, a Zeppelin, passed along the coast of Guyana daily to keep a lookout for German submarines.

By the end of 1941, 95 Guyanese had joined the British forces, of whom 22 were in the Royal Air Force and 42 were in the navy. The remaining 31 were recruited for other specialised work. Scores of Guyanese were also working in the merchant navy. In 1943, 32 Guyanese enlisted in the British armed forces, 20 travelled to the United Kingdom to serve as munitions workers in factories, and 48 joined the Trinidad Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve.

Although the first batch of Guyanese had received training in Britain, others were sent to be trained in Canada. Six men were sent to Canada between 1942 and 1943, followed by five others in September 1943. Some Guyanese students in Britain also volunteered for military service. Among them was E. R. Braithwaite, who later wrote the classic *To Sir, With Love*; he served as crew member in the Royal Air Force.

The local newspapers reported on the Guyanese casualties. Mention was made of Stanley Roza who died when a torpedo struck his ship in 1943. Mohamed Hosein was disabled during the war and had to return home. T.R.R. Wood received the posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross for services rendered as a pilot. Sergeant Pat Nobrega sent a letter to his family from the Japanese camp where he was imprisoned. He was captured by the Japanese during the Battle of the Malay Peninsula, but was finally released in 1945.

A Rose Hall, Corentyne, resident, Private Clarence Trim of the Canadian Army Corps, died in a battle in Germany on April 27, 1945. And a Berbician, Leslie Augustus James of the Royal Air Force, died in a hospital in England on May 19, 1945. These were just a few examples of Guyanese casualties during the war.

When the war ended in 1945, some Guyanese in the military forces decided to return home, but many decided to remain in Britain.

Despite the economic constraints caused by the war, infrastructural works were carried out in various parts of the country. From 1940, for example, drainage and irrigation projects valued \$8 million began on the East Coast and West Coast Demerara, in West Berbice, and on the Corentyne coast. Large-scale rice production by the Government also began at Burma in the Mahaicony-Abary area. The use of farm machinery was introduced at this location, and work began on the building of a modern central rice mill in the area.

Planning for a census also began during the war years. This census was eventually conducted in 1946 and the count showed a population of 375,819 persons living in the country.

Politically, the Legislative Council elected in 1935 continued in office since there were no elections during the war years. Elections did not take place until 1947; as a result the Legislative Council of 1935-1947 was dubbed the "Long Parliament." In the meantime, Sir Gordon Lethem arrived as the new Governor in December 1941.

Significantly, British Guiana was a major supplier of high-grade bauxite to America during the war years, when there was an increased demand for bauxite. The aluminium produced from this bauxite was used by the military

in the United States. Significantly, roughly two-thirds of all allied aircraft manufactured during the war years used aluminium made from Guyanese bauxite. As a result of the demand for Guyana's bauxite, exports increased from 476,000 tons in 1939 to 1,902,000 tons in 1943. This enabled the Guyanese economy to benefit greatly from the revenue obtained through these exports. The monetary worth of bauxite exports rose from approximately \$2.9 million in the early 1940s to \$6.7 million in 1947. This resulted from the developments in the Demerara Bauxite Company when it opened two mines at Mackenzie, thus creating from around 1943 more jobs in that sector for the Guyanese people. At the end of the war, the Treasury had a surplus of more than \$6 million mainly due to the revenues earned by the bauxite industry.

## THE BOOKERS EMPIRE

The business firm, Booker Brothers, McConnell & Company, popularly known as Bookers, played a leading role in the economic history of Guyana, especially from the beginning of the twentieth century. By the middle of the century, the company, headquartered in London, owned large holdings in Britain, Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica, Nigeria, Canada, India, Belgium, East Africa as well as Guyana.

The Booker family owned sugar plantations in Guyana since the early nineteenth century. The firm gradually expanded its holdings by purchasing other plantations that ran into economic problems late in the century. Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, Bookers owned most of the sugar plantations in Guyana.

The firm had also by this time branched out, both in Guyana and in its other international locations, to form separate companies involved in shipping, import and export trade, and wholesale and retail sale of consumer goods, among other businesses. Bookers' impact on the economy of the country was so great, that Guyana, then known as the colony of British Guiana, was often humorously referred to as "Bookers Guiana".

Through the wealth Bookers generated in Guyana, and its role as the largest employer, it was able to wield much political influence during successive periods in the country's history.

By 1950, the Booker companies were involved in all sectors of the Guyanese economy. Bookers Agricultural Holdings owned 15 of the existing 18 sugar estates and a large cattle ranch located at Kabawer on the upper Abary River. Another offshoot company known as the Campbell Booker group owned a large number of wholesale and retail stores selling food items, furniture, household appliances, clothing, hardware, building supplies, sports goods, farm machinery and equipment, and motor vehicles. It also owned the largest taxi service in the country.

Another branch of the group was the Bookers Engineering and Industrial Holdings which manufactured and sold pharmaceuticals. It also manufactured boxes and was involved in printing and publishing.

Bookers Merchants, in addition to conducting a lucrative advertising business, performed the role of producers and distributors of rum, stockfeed, balata, lumber, and petroleum products.

The international shipping business was provided by Bookers Brothers (Liverpool) which also controlled the sugar terminals in Georgetown. This company was also involved in various types of insurance. Two other branches of the Bookers business cartel, the Guiana Industrial and Commercial Investments and Bookers Central Properties, carried out investments in real estate and other property.

The management sector of the Bookers group of companies in Guyana comprised mostly expatriate Englishmen who served for a few years before returning to Britain. They included the managers of the sugar estates which employed thousands of persons of Indian and African ancestry as cane cutters and factory workers. Urban middle class Guyanese made up a lower tier in Bookers' management team.

## DR. GIGLIOLI AND THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

Guyana's development was seriously hampered by the prevalence of numerous tropical diseases, among which malaria was the worst. The Italian physician, [Dr. George Giglioli](#), was in great part responsible for fighting this disease for more than four decades and drastically reducing its effects on the population.

Born in 1897 in Pisa, Italy, to an Italian father and an English mother, George Giglioli grew up speaking both parents' languages, as well as French. In 1915, during his last year of high school in his hometown of Pisa, Italy, he was encouraged to study medicine by a physician friend of his father.

During his first year of medical training at the University of Pisa, World War I had already started, and he was called up for military duty in 1916. Shortly after, his squad was captured and he was imprisoned in an Austrian prison camp for the remaining 18 months of the war. He used his period of imprisonment to read all the medical textbooks he could find, and assisted at the prison hospital in the treatment of other prisoners. When the war ended, Giglioli returned to Italy and immediately resumed his studies. Through great determination, he was able to catch up on studies he had missed during the past two academic years. He wrote his final examinations and received his medical degree in July 1921.

Giglioli then enrolled at the London School of Tropical Medicine, with the hope of eventually obtaining a job in one of the British colonies. Soon after completing his London studies, he learned that the Demerara Bauxite Company at Mackenzie in the interior of Guyana was looking for a medical officer. His application was accepted and after agreeing to a three-year contract, he and his wife travelled by ship to Guyana in 1922.

The Demerara Bauxite Company offered medical services to its 1000 employees and the population in the area through a hospital in Mackenzie. When Giglioli arrived, he found that the hospital facilities were grossly inadequate with an untrained staff, and was seriously in need of supplies and equipment. Improvements came about in May 1925, a new 60-bed hospital which opened. It had X-ray and laboratory facilities, a sterile operating theater, and a trained staff that included professional nurses, and, later, a surgeon.

The health conditions of the people of Mackenzie challenged Giglioli to treat and study the diseases which were rampant. Many patients were affected with malaria and hookworm, the latter affecting 80 percent of the population. He decided to treat the hookworm problem as his first priority, and instituted preventive measures. These included improvements in sewage disposal methods and providing the miners with army surplus boots, purchased at cost. Infection dropped to 6 percent and worker productivity increased dramatically.

Malaria proved a more serious problem. Between 50 to 75 percent of all those who sought treatment at the hospital were suffering from this disease. The mosquitoes that carried the disease bred profusely following the rainy season in the large numbers of ponds formed in the bauxite mining areas. At that time, the only way to control the disease was through a prolonged course of quinine, an unpopular, bitter-tasting drug.

This health situation at Mackenzie forced Giglioli to begin a study of the malaria problem, and as the country's first permanent medical research scientist, he discovered that the mosquito could not breed successfully in acidic waters. This finding would lay the foundation for his work in fighting the disease.

The period after 1929, which was marked by the "Great Depression" in the United States, saw a reduction in the demand for bauxite in North America. This resulted in a cut back on bauxite production, and the company laid off many of its workers, including Dr. Giglioli. He and his family returned to Italy in 1932, where he hoped to teach at a university. But he was not comfortable with the political situation which was seeing the rapid growth of fascism. He yearned to return to the peace and comforts of Guyana.

His wishes were fulfilled when shortly after, the sugar company, Davson, which owned three sugar estates in Berbice, offered him the post of medical officer. The company was facing stiff competition from Bookers, which produced 90 percent of Guyana's sugar at that time. Davson felt that it had to modernize and improve public health conditions to prevent its workers from leaving to work on other estates.

Giglioli's first challenge was to rebuild the run-down estate hospitals. Most of his patients were suffering from malaria, anemia, and malnutrition. He

therefore applied a programme to improve not just diet, but general living standards such as improved housing, water supply, and refuse and sewage disposal.

His work on the estates encouraged him to continue his studies on malaria that he had started at Mackenzie. He was able to identify the *Anopheles darlingi* mosquito as the main malaria carrier in Guyana. This discovery, along with the information that this mosquito bred in rainwater collections, irrigation canals, trenches, and rice and sugarcane fields in flood fallow, enabled him to predict how widespread malaria would be in any given area.

In 1936, Booker's, the country's largest sugar producer, asked him to move to Georgetown to head the firm's laboratory, and to conduct systematic medical surveys aimed at improving health conditions on all the sugar estates in the country. Three years later, he was placed in charge of a Malaria Research Unit which was established with funds from the Colonial Government, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the British Guiana Sugar Producers' Association. But the work of this Unit was interrupted in June 1940 when Italy entered World War II on the side of Germany. As an Italian citizen, Dr. Giglioli was immediately placed under house arrest as an "enemy alien." He and other Italian and German residents of Guyana were kept as prisoners of war at the Mazaruni Penal Settlement.

But the Colonial Government of Guyana, faced with the increasing havoc caused by malaria, felt that Giglioli was too valuable as a scientist to be imprisoned. In August 1942 he was released and he was given a job as Government Malariologist.

The following year, three distinguished British scientists met with Giglioli in Guyana. One of the scientists, Dr. Alexander King, told him about the new insecticide DDT, which the Allies were using as a "secret weapon" to protect their troops from malaria. Unlike other insecticides, it was applied to the surfaces where adult mosquitoes came to rest, and a single spraying continued to be fatal to the insects for months. Giglioli asked the scientists for assistance to obtain a quantity of DDT to conduct an experiment in malaria eradication, which would be the first in the Western Hemisphere. He was confident that this insecticide would be effective since his own research showed that the *Anopheles darlingi* mosquitoes were prevalent in people's houses. He believed it would be better to attack the adult



mosquitoes by spraying the houses instead of trying to destroy the mosquito larvae.

Within a month, the first 500-pound consignment of DDT was on its way to Guyana. The trial spraying of the insecticide began as soon as it arrived. A large-scale control programme commenced in 1946 on the sugar estates, and this became a countrywide campaign in 1947. It involved a house to house spraying of the insecticide by a Mosquito Control Service which was established for that purpose.

So effective was the DDT that by 1951, malaria and its principal carrier, the *Anopheles darlingi* mosquito, had been completely eliminated from the coastal areas. The situation was more difficult in the interior because the disease bearing mosquitoes lived in the forest. In addition, settlements were far apart and it was not easy to get to them.

When there were intermittent outbreaks of malaria in the North-West District and the Rupununi savannahs, Giglioli applied a new technique. In 1961, with financial and technical assistance from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and UNICEF, he distributed salt treated with the anti-malaria drug chloroquine to the populations of those remote areas. Despite the remoteness of many areas, this programme eliminated falciparum malaria (the most dangerous type) in the North-West District. By the mid-1960s, most cases of malaria were wiped out.

As a result of Giglioli's achievements in fighting malaria, Guyana saw its overall health situation improve dramatically in the 1950s and 1960s. The most striking change, particularly on the sugar estates, was the reduction in deaths of women of child-bearing age and the increased survival of their children. Thus, a relatively rapid population growth was experienced during that period.

Giglioli's research on malaria in Guyana won him great respect internationally. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) sought his advice for anti-malaria work conducted in Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico and Jamaica. He also worked with PAHO specialists in Ghana, Nigeria, Somalia and Afghanistan. Giglioli died in 1975.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the use of DDT was discouraged by international health and environmental authorities. Unfortunately, with the reduction of the use of this insecticide, malaria began to make a comeback in the 1980s. In 1986 it reappeared in the North-West District and in the Rupununi. Since then, cases of malaria infection continue to be reported in the interior and also on the coastal districts of the country.

## CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES (1941-1947)

As a means of introducing political reforms, proposed by the West India Royal Commission, the Government in May 1941 appointed a Franchise Commission of 23 persons to determine the qualifications of electors and members of the Legislative Council. The Commission was also asked to make recommendations as to whether or not there should be any changes to the boundaries of the existing electoral districts.

Up to then, the 1928 constitution was still in effect. Under this constitution, the Legislative Council was made up of the Governor, as President, 10 official members, five nominated members, and 14 elected members. The Executive Committee consisted of 12 official, nominated and elected members.

The Popular Party led by Nelson Cannon and A. R. F. Webber had made inroads by winning seats in elections before 1928. This alarmed the British Government which feared that legislative powers could pass into the hands of Guyanese nationalists. This was one of the main reasons why the 1928 constitution was imposed. It introduced a Crown Colony system which kept away legislative power from the elected representatives.

The representatives of the Popular Party who won seats in the 1935 elections, continued to protest against the terms of the constitution which denied power to the elected members of the Legislative Council. But it was not until March 1943 that new constitutional changes were introduced in Guyana. The intention of the British authorities was to give some satisfaction to those who were clamouring for reform. It was also aimed at correcting "the balance of representation" in the Legislative Council.

The constitutional amendment reduced the number of official members in both the Legislative and Executive Councils. In the "new" Executive Council, the official members were now the Governor, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney General and the Colonial Treasurer, while the other members were three elected and two nominated members of the Legislative Council.

The "new" Legislative Council comprised the four official members of the Executive Council. It also continued to have 14 elected members, but the nominated members were increased to seven. The Governor nominated

Ayube Edun and Hubert Critchlow to fill the two new nominated positions in the Legislative Council as the representatives of workers.

This change in the composition of the Legislative Council placed the elected members in the majority. However, since the elected members subscribed to varied interests, and in rare cases ever representing the interests of the poor majority of the population, the Government faced no fear of defeat for its legislative program in the Legislative Council. Both the Executive and Legislative Councils continued to be dominated by individuals and groups which were opposed to labour unions and strongly pro-colonialist.

It was not until 29 February 1944 that the Franchise Commission issued its report. Regarding the qualifications for members of the Legislative Council, it recommended that:

1. Women were to be eligible on equal terms with men.
2. Ministers of religion were no longer disqualified from being members of the Legislative Council if they possessed the other qualifications, including earnings and property.
3. The financial qualification for a member of the Legislative Council was to be reduced from an income of \$2,400 annually to \$1,200 or over annually. The member must also possess property valued more than \$1,000. (Previously, a member had to own property valued more than \$5,000).
4. All members of the Legislative Council must pass a literacy test in English, and must have residence of one continuous year before nomination.

The Commission recommended that to qualify to vote, a person must have one of the following:

1. Ownership, occupation or tenancy of at least 3 acres of land. (This was reduced from 6 acres).
2. Ownership of land to the value of \$150. (The previous value required was \$350).

3. Rental of property to the value of \$48 per year. (This was reduced from \$96). In addition, the voter must pass a literacy test in any language, and show proof of possession of an annual income of \$120. (This was reduced from \$300).

In general, these recommendations were accepted by the Government for the 1947 elections, which brought an end to the "Long Parliament" which existed since 1935.

Many organisations were also concerned over the manner in which the Governor exercised his power in nominating persons to the Legislative Council. This issue was on the agenda of the newly organised Labour Party which contested the 1947 elections. The party sent a resolution in December 1947 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies asking that "no person who had presented himself for election and had been defeated at the polls should be selected for nomination to the Legislative Council." This appeal was made after the Governor, Sir Charles Woolley, decided to nominate S. J. Seaford, an executive of the Sugar Producers' Association (SPA) to the Executive and Legislative Council even though he was defeated in the elections. The Labour Party's position was supported by the TUC and the East Indian Association. The Governor stated that he was re-nominating Seaford because he believed that the SPA executive was the person best qualified to represent the sugar industry, and also that he had considerable experience in "certain specialised subjects."

## CHEDDI JAGAN'S ENTRY INTO POLITICS

In the early 1940s, the history of Guyana moved into a new era with the entry of Dr. Cheddi Jagan on the political stage. Cheddi Jagan was born at Port Mourant, Berbice, on March 22, 1918. His parents were indentured Indians, who, despite their humble economic means, were determined to have their children receive a good education.

Cheddi Jagan was an able student. After attending primary school in his home village, he began at the age of 15 years to attend Queen's College, the leading boys' school in the capital, Georgetown. Leaving two years later, having passed the school certificate examinations, his father wanted him to study law but the expense of studying in England put this beyond his reach. His father therefore opted to send him in 1936 to Howard University, Washington DC, to study dentistry.

Cheddi Jagan's two years in Washington DC doing his pre-med studies opened his eyes to the condition of African Americans and the realities of legally enforced segregation in the south. He moved to Chicago, where he studied dentistry at Northwestern University and social sciences during evenings at the YMCA college where the writings of socialist thinkers broadened his education.

He also followed closely the struggle of the Indian independence movement and the work of Gandhi which had an influence on his political thought. He qualified as a dentist in 1942 by which time he met his wife, Janet Rosenberg, a student-nurse living in Chicago. Neither of their families approved of their marriage in August 1943. He returned to Guyana in October 1943 and Janet followed him a few months later.

In Guyana, Dr. Jagan, now 25 years of age, set up his dental practice in Georgetown with his wife as his assistant. While practising dentistry he felt that he must identify himself with a socio-political group aimed at uplifting the welfare of the ordinary people. At first he associated himself with the British Guiana East Indian Association which had among its leaders Charles Ramkisson Jacob and Ayube Edun. These two men were at the time very active in the Legislative Council where they demanded adult suffrage among other constitutional changes. However, he soon left this organisation which he realised looked after the interests of Indian businessmen and landlords and was not interested in dealing with problems of the ordinary Indians.

In 1945, Dr. Jagan joined the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA), which as representative of sugar workers, was the largest trade union in the country. Soon after, he became its treasurer. But because he objected to the high allowances paid to union leaders from the union funds, the leadership was not friendly towards him. He also objected to the tendency of union leaders to collaborate with the sugar planters, and openly voiced the opinion that the union leaders were not interested in properly representing the interests of the workers. He tried to encourage the MPCA leadership to change its pro-employer attitude and to assist in the struggle for political change for the benefit of the workers, but when he failed to bring about this, he resigned from the union.

The period of World War II brought food shortages to Guyana, but as the people adapted to the situation, they also developed a new awareness of local and international problems. People were openly discussing political ideas that were sweeping the world. Both Cheddi and Janet Jagan participated in the weekly discussion circle at the Carnegie Library (now the Public Library) where intense political debates occurred. They also began writing frequent letters to the local newspapers on varying issues. Janet Jagan sparked early controversy when she openly advocated birth control, and for this she was severely criticised by the Catholics.

West Indian politics also played a role in influencing Cheddi Jagan. In 1945, the West Indian Conference was held in Georgetown, and it was attended by leaders he admired. They included Grantley Adams of Barbados, Norman Manley and Richard Hart of Jamaica, Albert Gomes of Trinidad and Hubert Critchlow of Guyana. This meeting established the Caribbean Labour Congress, the work of which Jagan followed with great interest.

Jagan's desire to develop a deeper understanding of the problems affecting the ordinary people caused him to pay a visit to Trinidad later in 1945 to meet with progressive leaders of the trade union and political movements.

By 1946, the Jagans had completely identified themselves with the working class. They were infused with new ideas stimulated by World War II. The rule of the British over its empire was being challenged, and the Indian liberation struggle led by Mahatma Gandhi had an influencing role on their world outlook. At that period, too, the Soviet Union, which had played a major role in defeating fascism during the World War, was rapidly rebuilding itself, and the Chinese revolution led by Mao Tse Tung was winning greater support all over the world.

Other progressive thinkers in the labour movement and in middle class social circles were influenced by the same factors, and from time to time the Jagans exchanged ideas with them. These persons included Ashton Chase, a young lawyer, and Jocelyn Makepeace Hubbard, both of whom were very active in the trade union movement.

At the same time, Janet Jagan was also discussing a number of social and economic issues affecting women, and she found allies in Winifred Gaskin and Frances Stafford to launch the Women Political and Economic

Organisation (WPEO) on 12 July 1945. Janet Jagan was named as general secretary of this organisation aimed at developing the political consciousness of women and encouraging their political education.

The launching of the WPEO took place at the Town Hall in Georgetown which was filled to capacity with an enthusiastic audience. In addressing the meeting, Janet Jagan explained that the WPEO would be an "organisation of working class women, housewives, trade unionists, shop girls, domestics, civil servants, social workers and all others."

The meeting called on the Government to implement the following demands:

1. Improved housing in rural and urban districts, and for electricity to rural districts.
2. Establishment of Government hospitals and improved medical services in rural areas.
3. Passing a minimum wage law for women workers.
4. Continuation of price control and educating women about price control and intelligent buying.
5. Subsidisation of essential foodstuffs.
6. Establishing an excess profits tax.
7. Improving education facilities throughout the country, and starting a system of adult education sponsored by the Government.
8. Setting up Government libraries in rural and urban districts.
9. Educating women to enable them to set up consumers and producers cooperatives.
10. Improving roads.
11. Organising a system through which radios could be made available in various communities.



12. Extension of the voting rights to housewives through the implementation of universal adult suffrage.

## THE POLITICAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

Ever since Dr. Jagan resigned from the MPCA in 1945, he, more than anyone else, saw the need for a political organisation to represent the interests of the workers. As a result, he and his wife along with Ashton Chase and Jocelyn Hubbard decided to establish the Political Affairs Committee on the 6 November 1946.

The formation of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) ushered in a new and dynamic period in the history of Guyana. It marked the beginning of the intense struggle against British colonialism and for the establishment of programmes to improve the economic, social and political conditions of the people of Guyana.

The leaders of the PAC had already acquired some experience in the areas of trade union and political activities. Dr. Jagan had gained trade union experience and his writings in local journals on political and Caribbean issues were already well known in Guyana and the English-speaking Caribbean. Ashton Chase was Secretary of the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU), Hubbard was General Secretary of the Trades Union Council (TUC), and Janet Jagan, while involved in co-ordinating political research with Dr. Jagan, had already established herself as a leader of the Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO).

Up to the period of the formation of this small political organisation, the great majority of the people of Guyana, comprising mainly of workers and poor farmers, had no political leadership to champion their cause and to demand better living conditions from the colonial Government which represented the interests of the big-business community. The main established trade unions such as the British Guiana Labour Union (BGLU) and the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA) had a limited amount of political clout, and thus, they themselves could do very little to bring better benefits for the workers they represented. Further, since the suffrage was limited to those who owned property or income above a certain amount, the great majority of the people could not participate in choosing a Government

to represent their interest. Even among people who were interested to maintain the status quo, small political groupings sprang up just before elections to represent various business or property interests, but they dissolved as soon as the elections were over.

In this second half of the 1940s the people of the world were still rejoicing over the defeat of Hitlerite fascism. The defeat of this ideology of suppression gave encouragement to anti-colonial movements particularly in Asia and Africa to step up their struggle for self-government and political power. Young members of the intelligentsia in colonial territories began to demand that the principles of self-determination as set out in the Atlantic Charter signed in 1941 by Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt should apply to their countries also. The successes of the struggle in India provided a big morale booster for the anti-colonial struggle and helped in greatly influencing the eventual formation of the PAC in Guyana.

In the first issue of the mimeographed PAC Bulletin of the 6 November 1946, the Committee stated that it aimed "to assist the growth and development of labour and progressive movements of British Guiana to the end of establishing a strong, disciplined and enlightened Party, equipped with the theory of scientific socialism". It also announced that it intended "to provide information and to present scientific political analyses on current affairs both local and international" and to "foster and assist discussion groups through the circulation of bulletins, booklets, and other printed matter".

Only 60 copies of this first issue of the PAC Bulletin were printed, and they were distributed to a small group of prominent persons who, however, were not very influential politically. Many of these persons were attracted to the socialist ideology which, in the 1940s, was very popular among workers and the middle class. This was no doubt due to the war-time alliance between the Soviet Union and the USA and Great Britain. Even some leading Christian priests were openly advocating socialism and closer relations with the Soviet Union.

The PAC immediately commenced its task of educating the Guyanese people about the existing political, economic and social issues in the country. At first, the original leaders of the PAC organised discussion groups of young members of the intelligentsia in Georgetown, and soon

some of the country's most brilliant intellectuals became members of this small but increasingly popular organisation.

With the expansion of the circulation to workers in Georgetown and the sugar estates of the now much-demanded PAC Bulletin which analysed many pressing issues, a number of trade union leaders and rank-and-file workers also were attracted to the PAC and became involved in its agitation activities. The PAC, in the course of its public education work, distributed tens of thousands of booklets which it received as donation from political parties and various progressive groups all over the world. Leading personalities who became members included Ram Karran, Sydney King, Brindley Benn, Rory Westmaas and Martin Carter.

The PAC made full use of the Moyne Commission Report of 1939, which described the atrocious economic and social conditions in Guyana, to propagate its demands for change. It proposed that conditions could only improve with the "establishment of a well-planned collective industrial economy" to replace the colonialist-imposed capitalist economy which was providing "a very low standard of living for the majority of the inhabitants of British Guiana".

The PAC also began the demand for the participation of all the people in the choice of the Government and urged the speedy implementation of universal adult suffrage without literacy qualifications, and for the establishment of self-government for Guyana.

The PAC analyses and programmes from the beginning were attractive to workers of all ethnic groups; hence working people, and also members of the young intelligentsia, of all ethnic groups, were attracted to the organisation.

By the time the PAC was just a year old, its influence was already being feared by the ruling class, and in an effort to undermine the support this revolutionary organisation was attracting, the pro-colonialist press began to label it as a "communist" front, and translated the acronym "PAC" to mean "Push All Communism".

## THE PAC AND THE 1947 ELECTIONS

The first issue of the PAC Bulletin was published on Wednesday 6 November 1946. In subsequent issues, published once or twice a month, the duplicated Bulletin examined numerous domestic issues such as the municipal franchise, fair wage rules, mining policy, municipal elections, youth problems, taxation, general elections, wages and profits, workmen compensation, cost of living, price control, landlord-tenant relations, the right to employment, subsidisation, land reform, nominated members of the Legislative Council, Amerindian welfare, education and health.

The Bulletin also publicised international issues, among which were the Palestinian problem, racial discrimination in the United States, the Marshall Plan, the West Indies Federation, and the post-war crisis in Great Britain.

In the beginning, the PAC did not have the organizational capacity to reach out to the working class whose cause it was championing. It was based in Georgetown, and its four-page Bulletin "increased later to eight pages" was limited to just a few hundred copies produced on a manual duplicating machine.

But what boosted its image in early 1947 was when leading members of the Government and the big-business community, no doubt irked by articles in the publication, called for the Bulletin to be suppressed. They viewed it as subversive literature, but this only helped to increase its popularity of the PAC among the rest of the population.

With the expansion of the circulation to workers in Georgetown and the sugar estates of the now much-demanded Bulletin, a number of trade union leaders and rank-and-file workers also were attracted to the PAC and became involved in its agitation activities. As more and more persons, including some from rural areas, joined the movement, PAC members began visiting rural villages and the sugar estates to hold political meetings with the residents.

In the course of its public education work, the PAC distributed thousands of booklets which it received as donation from political parties and various progressive groups all over the world.

By this time, there was a clear understanding that general elections would be held towards the end of the year. The PAC therefore increased its political work by urging persons who met the education, property and salary qualifications to register to vote. Dr. Jagan and other members of the PAC

also visited rural and urban communities to discuss political and ideological issues with the people.

The PAC felt that the Legislative Council must have genuine representatives to look after the interests of the working class and farmers. As a result, the organization decided that Dr. Jagan, Mrs. Jagan and Jocelyn Hubbard should contest the elections as independent candidates. At that time, the leading political party was the Labour Party which banded together a group of individuals in early 1947 to contest the elections. These individuals had varied interests, but they were not closely linked with the struggles of the working class and farmers.

When Dr. Jagan announced his candidacy, he listed four qualifications which he felt a candidate must possess in order to give proper representation to the electorate. These were: a full awareness of working class conditions and problems; a thorough knowledge of the theory and practice of comparative governments with special emphasis on labour legislation; open and continuous identification with labour's grievances and aspirations; and sincerity and honesty of purpose.

While claiming these qualifications, he also presented a manifesto which dealt with issues affecting constitutional change, agriculture, education, housing, medical service and labour legislation. His position on labour legislation, in particular, was very advanced. He called for a 40-hour week without reduction in pay, a minimum wage law for all working people, two weeks holiday with pay; time and a half for overtime and double time for Sundays and holidays; equal pay for equal work; and improvement of working conditions with regards to health standards. In the course of his campaign he also championed the demand for universal adult suffrage.

In the 1947 elections, a large section of the employed was granted the right to vote on the recommendation of the Moyne Commission that had enquired into the social and economic conditions in the British West Indies following disturbances of the late 1930s. The franchise was still limited to property owners and wage earners, but it was extended to those persons who earned at least \$10 per month. However, candidates for elections had to earn at least \$100 per month.

To his advantage, Dr. Jagan had his youthful eagerness and optimism as well as a determined group of dedicated campaign assistants, all of whom

supported the ideals of the PAC. Among them was Sydney King who helped to organize the house- to-house campaign in Buxton and surrounding villages.

By this time, people had become generally disappointed with many of the legislators since they tended to represent the interests of big business and not those of the ordinary people. Following the end of the Second World War, the colonial Government had promised to implement projects for the development of the social and industrial infrastructure and the expansion of more job opportunities for the people. However, these promises did not materialise, and the legislators in the "Long Parliament" of 1939-1947 did almost nothing to remedy the social and economic problems affecting the people. Some of these legislators did not even bother to attend important sessions of the Legislature. Dr. Jagan was well aware of the people's feelings of disgust with the legislators and he capitalised on this mood among the people in the Central Demerara constituency to win support for his campaign.

He also openly challenged men of influence and power. His opponents were John D'Aguiar, H.L. Palmer and Frank Jacob. D'Aguiar himself was the representative of the district in the Legislative Council. In addition to being a member of the Executive Council (the Governor's "Cabinet") and Chairman of the Rice Marketing Board, he was also a leading member of the big-business community. Further, he was heavily backed by the print media and by the Catholic Church, which at that time was one of the biggest supporters of British colonialism. Palmer and Jacob were relatively popular in the district because of their involvement in local government affairs (in the case of the former) and legal affairs (in the case of the latter). However, Palmer, supported by the League of Coloured People, and the Labour Party candidate Jacob, who was backed by the East Indian Association, did not have the zeal in campaigning among the grassroots as did Cheddi Jagan and his team of purposeful campaign assistants.

Mrs. Jagan contested the Central Georgetown constituency against the incumbent representative Percy Wight, the owner of the Daily Argosy who had served on a number of occasions as mayor of Georgetown. Mrs. Jagan was firmly supported by a number of trade unions including the Transport Workers' Union and the British Guiana Clerks Union of which she was secretary. It was clear very early that her campaign was making inroads and that Wight would lose. As a result, members of the big-business

community persuaded John Fernandes, a businessman with close connection to the Catholic Church to enter the race. His campaign, heavily funded by big-business and supported by the Catholic Church, was directed against Mrs. Jagan who was described as a communist threat.

In the North Georgetown constituency, the LCP mounted a very unpleasant racist campaign against Hubbard who was of European descent. His opponent was Dr. J. A. Nicholson, one of the leaders of the LCP.

The elections were held on the 24 November 1947 in the 14 constituencies. Of the 59,193 registered voters, 71 percent went to the polls. In the Central Demerara constituency with 5,454 votes, Dr. Jagan won with 1,592 or 31 percent. D'Aguiar obtained 1,299, Palmer 1,471 and Jacob 802. After the results were announced, Dr. Jagan, in a brief speech, declared, "We, the people have won. Now the struggle will begin."

In the Central Georgetown constituency, Fernandes won with 1,193 votes while Mrs. Jagan came second with 724 votes. It was clear that property and literacy qualifications prevented hundreds of persons in that constituency to vote. This, no doubt, prevented her from winning since most of these persons were PAC supporters.

In the North Georgetown constituency, the racist campaign against Hubbard enabled Nicholson to be elected despite the former's enviable record as General Secretary of the TUC.

## THE FORMATION OF THE GIWU

The elections in the fourteen constituencies were contested by two political parties, the MPCA Party and the Labour Party made up of trade union leaders outside of the MPCA, and thirty-one independent candidates, including the three from the PAC. It was clear that the voters, most of whom were wage earners, voted for candidates who represented labour interests. As a result the two political parties together won six seats, while most of the eight victorious independent candidates, including Dr. Jagan, appealed to workers during their campaign.

On December 18, 1947, Dr. Jagan, at the age of 29 years, entered the Legislative Council to take his seat. It was a red-letter day in Guyanese

history since it marked the beginning of the era of political enlightenment for the Guyanese people.

In Dr. Jagan, the working people of Guyana found an outstanding champion of their rights. He seized every opportunity to advocate the cause of the workers very vigorously in the previously austere Legislative Council. To the largely conservative elements who felt that only they had the right to be members there, Cheddi Jagan was seen as a rude upstart who was raising "down to earth" issues which were never before brought to the attention of this highest forum of the land. By then, he had already developed a passion for statistics which he used in his forceful arguments, inside and outside the Council, to expose to the workers the vicious economic and political system that exploited them. On numerous occasions, singlehandedly, he carried out a struggle for workers' rights.

In the new Legislature, many of the elected members did not live up to their promise of championing the rights of workers and voted against a number of progressive proposals introduced by Dr. Jagan. Actually, in a very short while both the Labour Party and the MPCA Party disintegrated because of poor leadership, and their legislators performed as individuals without any particular commitment to a political cause. Dr. Jagan had initiated an alliance with the members of Labour Party, but he soon after moved away from them after they took anti-worker positions in the Legislative Council.

Some of the legislators were concerned over the Governor's appointment of defeated candidates as unofficial members in the Legislative Council and also in the municipal and village councils. In answer to a question on this matter by Dr. Jagan in the Legislative Council, the Colonial Secretary stated that such appointments were made in the "public interest."

With many progressive trade unionists involved in agitation work for the PAC, it was important for them also to play influential roles in their own unions to influence the rank-and-file members to support the political role of the PAC. Also, it became clear that some of the unions were abandoning their responsibility to fight for workers' interests, and that it was necessary for those betrayed workers to have PAC-influenced unions to represent them.

By 1946, sugar workers had become very disillusioned with their unions, the MPCA and the smaller British Guiana Workers' League (BGWL), which



were offering no fight to the Sugar Producers Association (SPA), the umbrella organization of the sugar estate owners. They, therefore, appealed to the PAC to assist them. Dr. Jagan, by this time, was already very popular among sugar workers, so he and Dr. Joseph P. Lachmarsingh, a physician and pharmacist who was also well-known among sugar workers, formed the Guiana Industrial Workers Union (GIWU). Dr. Lachmarsingh was at that time the President of the British Guiana East Indian Association, and was not a member of the PAC. He became the President of the new union, which was registered in April 1948. The Senior Vice-President was Amos Rangela, while Jane Philips-Gay, a member of the PAC, was the General Secretary.

The aim of the GIWU was to replace the MPCA as the bargaining union to represent field and factory workers. But despite becoming a member of the TUC, it was unable to win recognition even though the vast majority of sugar workers formed its membership. The SPA was not yet willing to dispose of their "company-unions", particularly the MPCA, which were helping to keep the workers under subjection. However, by 1948, the GIWU was without any doubt had the support of the great majority of sugar workers throughout the country.

## THE ENMORE MARTYRS

By 1948, most sugar workers in Guyana were giving support to the Guyana Industrial Workers Union (GIWU). On 22 April 1948, cane cutters, backed by the union, went on strike demanding the abolishment of the existing "cut and load" system in the fields. This reaping system which forced cane cutters had to load the sugar punts with the cane they cut, was not popular among cane cutters. It was introduced in 1945, and from time to time workers had gone on strike to demand that it should be changed. As part of the demands of the 1948 strike, the cane cutters called for the replacement of "cut and load" with a "cut and drop" system by which the cane cutters should cut the cane, but other workers would load the cut cane into the punts for shipment to the factory.

In addition to this particular issue, the workers demanded higher wages and improved living conditions on the sugar estates. However, the real aim of the strike was to demand recognition of the GIWU as the bargaining union for the field and factory workers on all the sugar estates in the country.

The strike obtained political support from the Political Affairs Committee (PAC), and the workers were addressed at numerous public meetings by Dr. Cheddi Jagan, Janet Jagan and leaders of the GIWU. The PAC bulletins were widely distributed at these meetings. Dr. Jagan himself was personally involved in the organization of the strike, and helped to raise funds across the country to it. Janet Jagan was also in the forefront in operating soup kitchens for the striking workers and their families on the sugar estates.

As the strike continued, the recognized union, the MPCA, urged the workers to return to work saying that they demand for higher pay would be taken up with the Sugar Producers Association (SPA). But the workers, who had no confidence in the MPCA, refused to heed this call and stated that in any discussions with the SPA they wanted only the GIWU to represent them. However, the SPA was adamant that negotiations would be conducted only with the MPCA, the recognized union.

With sugar production seriously affected by the ongoing strike, the sugar estates hired scab labour and enticed some workers to return to work. In

retaliation, strikers went to the fields and chased them away, and in some cases physically attacked them.

On 14 June the SPA and the MPCA met to discuss the issues, but no satisfactory agreement was reached. In any case, the workers were not prepared to accept any agreement that the MPCA was negotiating, since they felt very strongly that the union was betraying their interests. On the following day, some strikers attacked overseers and some strike-breakers at Nonpariel, and in the evening there were reports of vandalism, including the cutting of telephone lines between Georgetown and Enmore.

Early on the morning of June 16 a crowd of about 400 workers gathered outside the factory at Enmore for a protest and picketing exercise. The management of Enmore Estate was expecting this protest action, and the evening before had requested assistance from the Police. Lance Corporal James and six policemen, each armed with a rifle and six rounds of ammunition, were earlier sent from Georgetown early on the morning of June 16 and they reported to the management of Enmore estate at 4.00 a.m. Two hours later, they and took up positions in the factory compound which was protected by a fence 15 feet high with rows of barbed wire running along the outward struts at the top.

By 10.00 a.m. the crowd had grown to between 500 and 600 persons and was led by one of the workers carrying a red flag. They attempted to enter the factory compound through the gates and through two trench gaps at the rear by which punts entered the factory. But they were prevented from doing so because the locked gates and the punt gaps were protected by policemen. A section of the crowd then hurled bricks and sticks at the policemen, and several persons managed to enter the compound on the rear of the factory. The policemen tried to push back the crowd, but after this effort failed, they opened fire and five workers were killed and fourteen others were injured.

Lallabagee Kissoon, 30 years old, was shot in the back; 19-year-old Pooran was shot in the leg and pelvis; Rambarran died from bullet wounds in his leg; Dookhie died in hospital later that day; and Harry died the following day from severe spinal injuries. These men, through the years, became known as the Enmore Martyrs.

On June 17, the funeral of the slain men saw a massive crowd of people marching behind their coffins from Enmore to La Repentir Cemetery in Georgetown, a distance of more than 16 miles. This procession of thousands was led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan and PAC and GIWU leaders. The tragedy and the ultimate sacrifice of these sugar workers greatly influenced Dr. Jagan political philosophy and outlook. On the grave side of the Enmore Martyrs surrounded by thousands of mourners, he made a silent pledge that he would dedicate his entire life to the cause of the struggle of the Guyanese people against bondage and exploitation.

To investigate the shooting, the Governor, Sir Charles Wooley, appointed a commission of enquiry headed by Frederick Boland, a Supreme Court judge. The two other members of the commission were S. L. Van Batenburg Stafford and R. S. Persaud. Evidence was collected from 64 persons and a report was presented in August 1948. Dr. Jagan, Janet Jagan and Dr. Lachmansingh refused to testify before the commission because they felt it was a waste of time owing to the fact that the commission chairman and members were openly showing a bias towards the Police and the management of Enmore Estate.

In their testimony to the Commission, policemen involved in the shooting claimed that they were forced to shoot to protect the factory from destruction or damage and to protect the lives of workers who were on the premises.

The report, as widely expected, justified the shooting. But it criticised the Police for not applying measures, such as the use of tear gas, to keep the crowd away from the factory compound. The members of the commission also felt that the shooting period went beyond what was reasonable when they stated: "We are, therefore, of the opinion that the evidence has established that after the first few shots, there was firing which went beyond the requirements of the situation, with the result that Pooran notably and some others received shots when in actual flight."

## THE VENN COMMISSION

The strike in the sugar industry and the shooting of sugar workers at Enmore forced the Colonial Office in England to agree that the sugar industry in Guyana was facing a crisis, and that urgent action was needed

to improve the social conditions of the sugar workers. As a result, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in October 1948 appointed a three-member Commission to examine and report on the problems affecting the industry. The Commission was headed by Dr. J. A. Venn, a professor of Cambridge University, while the other members were R. Sudell, an agricultural journalist, and B. G. Smallman of the Colonial Office as secretary.

The Commission arrived in Guyana in late December and during the next six weeks visited the main sugar plantations. The team also took evidence from 192 persons at meetings held in Georgetown and New Amsterdam.

The Commission's final report, submitted in July 1949, paid special attention to problems affecting women in the sugar industry. It noted that in 1948, 28 percent of the sugar workers were women, and spoke of the strenuous labour they had to perform in weeding, moulding cane and jumping over canals. The women were forced into this situation to supplement the poor wages earned by their husbands. Many of them, the report stated, had to be up by 3.00 a.m. in order to prepare meals and to leave for work, and they would not return home until the evening. As a result, their children's care was neglected since there was no parent at home to care for them. The Commission was concerned, too, that female workers were supervised by male drivers.

Among the recommendations of the Venn Commission were the following:

1. Each estate must provide crèches to care for young children, while tasks should be arranged to allow women workers to return home to prepare meals and look after their children.
2. Women must not work in water (canals and flooded fields), and gangs of women workers should be supervised by women overseers.
3. All workers must be supplied with fresh drinking water, and sheltered areas must be erected for protection against rain and to provide places for workers to have their meals.
4. Roads must be constructed so that workers could travel in comfort to the fields.

5. For factory workers, social amenities such as proper toilet facilities, bath rooms and canteens must be provided.
6. There must be proper inspection and care of machinery on the estates.
7. The Workmen's Compensation Ordinance must be amended to give recognition to the claims made by common-law wives and their children. This was necessary since most marriages among sugar workers were not official.
8. Measures should be taken to halt the use of child labour in the sugar industry.
9. The title of "drivers" should be changed to "headmen".
10. The Medical Department should institute regular inspection of housing, water supply and sanitation on the sugar estates.
11. Plots of lands must be provided to regular workers to cultivate rice, root crops and vegetables.
12. The British Government should provide a subsidy of one pound sterling for each ton of sugar produced in Guyana for at least the next 15 years.
13. All the "ranges" in which sugar workers lived must be torn down and replaced with proper weatherproof housing by 1953.
14. The "cut and load" system which influenced the 1948 strike should remain in force, but the "cut and drop" system should operate when there was not an adequate supply of punts.
15. A wages board, to fix wages, should be established for the entire sugar industry. It should be made up of an equal number of representatives from the employer and the unions, and two neutral members appointed by the Government.

The Venn Commission also stated that a contributory pension scheme should be established. It recommended that male adult workers should

contribute 2.5 percent and the employers 5 percent of the weekly earning of the workers. But this scheme was not implemented mainly because the SPA was not supportive of it, and also because the MPCA, the recognized union, was not willing to struggle for its implementation.

The Commission examined the demands for recognition by the GIWU as the bargaining union for sugar workers instead of the MPCA. It disagreed with the immediate claim made by GIWU saying that if workers maintained their membership of the union for about three years, the union would then have grounds to make its demand for recognition.

### SOME EVENTS OF 1947-1949

During the 1940s Caribbean unity began to be discussed with some seriousness. In September 1947, representatives of the Government of British Guiana joined others from the British Caribbean at a conference in Montego Bay, Jamaica, to examine the proposal of a West Indian federation. After intense discussions, the conference established a committee to look at various proposals and to present a report by June 1949. The report that was subsequently issued expressed strong support for a federation with independent dominion status in which each member country would have internal self-government.

Meanwhile, the Government was expanding its relations internationally, and was establishing friendly relations with a number of countries. As a result, by 1949, the United States, China, Netherlands, Portugal, Haiti, Panama, Venezuela, France Belgium and Sweden had already set up consulates in Georgetown.

Throughout Guyana, the social conditions were deplorable. The Ten Year Planning Report of 1948 showed that 25 percent of all school children suffered from nutritional deficiencies. The infant mortality rate was as high as 86 per 1000, as compared with 32 per 1000 in the United Kingdom.

Housing conditions were extremely poor. Slums were widespread in Georgetown which, at the end of the 1940s, accounted for 20 percent of the country's population. On the sugar estates, where 18 percent of the people lived, most of the residents were housed in barrack ranges, many of which dated back to the days of slavery. In addition, the level of sanitation

in both the urban and rural areas was sub-standard, and contaminated water flooded housing areas for many days after periods of heavy rainfall.

Education was also undergoing a crisis. In 1947, Guyana had a literacy rate of 30 percent, and to combat this problem, the Government instituted a literacy campaign with the assistance of volunteer organisations in various parts of the country.

Primary and secondary education was almost totally controlled by the Christian Church which itself was a staunch supporter of the existing colonial Government. Primary education was free, but almost every school was understaffed, overcrowded and under-equipped. Further, thousands of children of school age were not accounted for in schools. The Ten Year Planning Report revealed that about 13,000 children between the ages of six and fourteen years were not registered in schools. This problem was emphasised by the Venn Commission of Inquiry in the sugar industry in 1949 which pointed to severe overcrowding in existing primary schools, the prevalence of child labour, and of the obvious need for more schools to be constructed in various communities.

The sugar industry continued to dominate the economic and social life of the country. The Venn Commission reported that the then 21 sugar estates covered an area of 155,000 acres of which 25,000 acres were covered by buildings, foreshore, bush, water, and swamp. Another 20,000 acres was being fallowed at any one time, 18,000 acres were under rice, ground provisions, coconuts, and other crops, and 30,000 acres were used for grazing. At any one time the area under cane was no more than 60,000 acres and the yield was about 180,000 tons of sugar.

After the elections in November 1947, the legislators (who began to receive monthly payments from January 1948) were of the general view that improvements in the constitution were necessary. Eventually, in 1949 Governor Woolley announced that an independent commission would be appointed by the British Government to examine the constitution and to make recommendations for reform.

But it was apparent that Governor Woolley himself had no intention of promoting democracy. He attempted to reverse the results of the November 1947 elections by nominating defeated candidates to serve in the Executive and Legislative Councils, and even to the chair of advisory



committees. Among the defeated candidates the Governor appointed to the Legislative and Executive Councils were Frederick Seaforth, the head of the Booker Group of Companies, and the attorney Lionel Luckhoo, a staunch supporter of British colonialism.

The country also had its share of political scandal and racial politics during the period. In January 1948, Eustace Williams, a supporter of a defeated candidate, Mrs. Frances Stafford, filed an election petition against Hubert Nathaniel Critchlow accusing him of illegal practices in the 1947 elections. Critchlow had defeated Frances Stafford, who was of European ethnicity. Williams claimed that Critchlow, during the campaign, repeated false statements slandering the character of Mrs. Stafford. One of Critchlow's campaign managers, R. B. O. Hart, had claimed openly that Mrs. Stafford kicked an African child and had been convicted and fined five dollars by a magistrate for this offence. However, this incident never occurred, but Critchlow, during the campaign, frequently used this misinformation in his campaign against Mrs. Stafford. The petitioner argued that Mrs. Stafford was a victim of racial politics, since many Afro-Guyanese who might have supported her decided not to do so because they genuinely believed what Critchlow told them.

The election petition was upheld and Critchlow's election was declared null and void. In the subsequent by-election for the vacant seat, John Carter defeated Mrs. Stafford.

In the period up to mid-1948, Dr. Jagan allied himself with the six Labour Party legislators. Like them, he firmly opposed the Governor's nominations of defeated candidates to the Executive Council and also to municipal and village councils. The TUC and the East Indian Association also opposed these nominations, as did the PAC which championed this position throughout the country.

But Dr. Jagan broke away from the alliance with the Labour Party members after they refused to give support to demands for adult suffrage. In June 1948, he moved a motion for the introduction of adult suffrage in local government elections. A member of the Labour Party seconded this motion, but when the vote was taken, only Dr. Jagan supported it. In another instance, Dr. Jagan introduced a motion to allow electors to recall a legislator who was not giving honest representation. The motion was

seconded by Daniel Debedin, but when the vote was taken, only Dr. Jagan voted for it; Debedin voted against it!

These unprincipled positions taken by some legislators were common. Even though some of them were elected as part of a political party, they showed little loyalty to their party once they took their seats in the Legislative Council. Frequently, they voted against each other and even opposed some the programmes they championed during the election campaign.

Despite these setbacks, Dr. Jagan waged a strong battle in the Legislative Council on behalf of the workers and the disenfranchised people of the country. He raised issues relating to employment, housing, drainage and irrigation, wages, education and health, among others, after meeting with the people in various parts of the country to listen to their problems.

Dr. Jagan was also especially concerned over the aftermath of the Enmore shootings. On 29 April 1949 he enquired in the Legislative Council whether or not the Government would take action against those who were responsible for the shootings the year before. To this, the Colonial Secretary replied that the Government had no intention of doing so. On the first anniversary of the Enmore shooting, a massive rally organised by the PAC was held in Georgetown, and Dr. Jagan was one of the main speakers.

During this period, industrial relations were somewhat unsettled. In April 1947 bauxite workers at Mackenzie and Ituni went on strike for 64 days. Among their grievances were racial discrimination and segregation practised by the European and Canadian management staff of the Demerara Bauxite Company. The workers, represented by the MPCA, also demanded increased wages and the right to have union meetings. When the strike finally ended in June, the Government appointed a committee headed by C. W. Burrowes to enquire into its causes and to make recommendations. As part of the settlement, the workers were granted a small wage increase, in addition to the right to hold union meetings. Nevertheless, staff segregation continued in the following years, and accusations of racial discrimination continued to be made by the bauxite workers against the management staff.

In Georgetown, there were some strikes, but the most significant work stoppage occurred at the Transport and Harbours Department (T&HD) in late February 1948. This action seriously disrupted steamer and railway services along the coastland area of the country. The four-day strike by railway and steamer workers and sailors protested acts of victimisation against workers by the general manager of the T&HD, Colonel Robert Teare, an Englishman. Teare behaved like a tyrant, showed no respect for the workers' trade union, and imposed harsh discipline on the employees. He also dismissed a number of workers, including Boysie Ramkarran, a railway worker, who was to later become a leading member of the PAC.

A commission appointed by Governor Woolley investigated the causes of the strike, but while it did little to admonish Teare, it recommended that the dismissed workers must be reinstated. Teare, shortly after, departed for Bermuda where he was offered a job to manage that island's railway service.

The effects of the Cold War were felt very early in Guyana. The first Guyanese to feel the effects were Dr. and Mrs. Jagan while they were on a holiday visit to St. Vincent in December 1948. Dr. Jagan's passport was seized by the immigration authorities, while Mrs. Jagan was declared a prohibited immigrant. However, she was allowed to stay provided that she did not address any public meetings. This act was bitterly condemned throughout the Caribbean, particularly by the Caribbean Labour Congress led by Grantley Adams and Richard Hart. From the responses to queries about the action by the St. Vincent authorities, the Colonial Secretary of the British Guiana Government gave an indication that the latter urged the former to carry out such an action. No doubt this behaviour by the St. Vincent Government came about because of the strong anti-colonial and socialist stance of both Dr. and Mrs. Jagan.

But this act of victimisation only helped to increase the local and international stature of the Jagans and other persons associated with them. The Sawmill and Forest Workers' Union, which represented workers in the sawmills, stone quarries and forest grants, made Dr. Jagan its president in 1949. Meanwhile, Forbes Burnham, who returned from England later in the year, became president of the British Guiana Labour Union.

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PPP

The 1948 sugar strike provided invaluable organisational experience for the PAC. By holding meetings with workers of different ethnic backgrounds in various parts of the country, it saw the increasing need to bring and keep all the ethnic groups together under its umbrella. The membership also decided to step up the plans to organise a disciplined political party to champion the cause of all the people of Guyana. Thus, in 1949, the PAC which was now much expanded in terms of membership, but which no longer included Jocelyn Hubbard, began serious discussions for the formation of the political party which would champion the cause of the Guyanese masses at all times.

By mid-1949, the members agreed that Dr. Jagan would be the leader of the Party to be named the People's Progressive Party (PPP). The pro-worker militant Progressive Party formed by Henry Wallace and Paul Robeson in the United States influenced the selection of the name. Dr. Jagan and his colleagues also decided to pattern the new party's constitution, organisation and structure after that of the People's National Party (PNP) of Jamaica. It was also the general consensus that Ashton Chase would be the Chairman.

Towards the end of the year while discussions were going on, Forbes Burnham returned to Guyana after completing his law studies in England. Based on his reputation as president of the West Indian Students Union in London - which had a close association with the British Communist Party - he was invited to become an executive member of the new political party. It was felt that his charisma, which was attracting attention among the Afro-Guyanese, would help to win greater support for the PPP.

At that period, many educated young Afro Guyanese were still looking to the racially oriented League of Coloured Peoples for leadership, and it was felt that Burnham would draw them to the PPP. Despite not being a member of the PAC, Burnham himself was eager to participate in the work of the new Party. Late in 1949, he was sent by the PAC leadership to Jamaica to study the operations of the PNP, since it was expected that the PPP would pattern its work after that of the Jamaican party.

The members of the PAC were of the opinion that Dr. Jagan and Burnham, working together, would be able to mobilise more than 80 percent of the

people, in the form of Indo- and Afro-Guyanese multi racial unity, to support the policies of the new party. It was therefore decided that, instead of Chase, Burnham would be offered the chairmanship, a position he readily accepted. Janet Jagan was named Secretary of the Party.

The final edition of the *PAC Bulletin* came out on 26 December 1949. On the 1 January 1950, the PAC dissolved itself and formally announced the establishment of the People's Progressive Party. Among the members of the new party were some of the members of the now defunct Labour Party. The first headquarters of the Party was Dr. Jagan's dental surgery at 199 Charlotte Street, Georgetown. The initial issue of the Party's organ, the *Thunder*, was published shortly after the Party's launching.

The aims of the Party were clear. It stood for self-government, economic development, and the creation of a socialist society. The party also pledged itself to the task of winning total independence for Guyana.

The Party set out its programme as follows:

## **A. Constitutional reform**

### **1. Self Government**

- a) Universal adult suffrage.
- b) Wholly elected Legislative Council.
- c) Increase in the number of electoral districts to 21, having due regard to population and territory.
- d) Executive Council elected by the Legislative Council with full ministerial powers.

### **2. Acceptance of Federation under these conditions:**

- a) Dominion status
- b) Internal self-government.

### **3. Local Government Reform**

- a) Universal adult suffrage
- b) Wholly elected Village and City Councils.
- c) Development of County and Area Council system.

## **B. Economic development**

1. Effective and democratic control of all major industries.
2. Land reform and land settlement.
3. Adequate compensation for exploitation of natural resources.
4. Reduction of indirect tax and increase in direct tax.
5. Planned development of industries to provide work for all.  
Establishment of secondary and minor industries.
6. More economic export price for primary products.
7. Elimination of waste in public expenditure.

## **First employment opportunities to be given to Guianese**

### **C. Social services**

1. Housing rent control, slum clearance, Government housing schemes.
2. Education free and adequate primary, secondary and technical education for all.
  - a) Removal of dual control.
  - b) Better trained teachers.
3. Medical improvement of public hospitals, sanatoriums, health clinics.
4. More emphasis on preventive medicine.
5. Social security in old age and sickness.
6. Unemployment insurance.

### **D. Labour legislation**

1. Improvement in trade union laws.
2. Improved minimum wage legislation.
3. Equal pay for equal work.
4. Industrial injuries insurance.

From the beginning the Party was labelled as "communist" by the conservative press in Guyana and the Caribbean. This was no doubt due to the anti-colonialist policies outlined by the party and also to the fact that many of the leaders, including Cheddi and Janet Jagan and Forbes Burnham, openly expressed pro-socialist views in their writings and speeches. Indeed, Cheddi Jagan, as a legislator, had already become well known throughout the Caribbean region for his anti-colonial and socialist views.

With the establishment of this political movement, the showdown to bring an end to colonialism now entered a new and decisive stage.

## APPOINTMENT OF THE WADDINGTON COMMISSION

The formation of the PPP in 1950 coincided with the anticipated appointment of the Constitutional Commission. On the 25 August 1948 the Legislative Council had debated the question of adult suffrage. Dr. Jagan, the only member of the Political Affairs Committee in the Council, took up the cudgel of the struggle for the vote for all citizens and spoke vigorously in support of it. However, the vote was defeated and his was the only vote of support for the motion. The representatives of the privileged plus leading lights in the League of Coloured Peoples - John Carter, Dr. Gonzales, Dr. Nicholson and Rudy Kendall - all voted against.

On the 16 December 1948, the Governor in his address to the Legislative Council announced that a Commission would be appointed "shortly" to examine the possibility of granting greater participation of Guyanese in governing the country. Even earlier, in 1941, the Franchise Commission which visited the colony had come close to granting universal adult suffrage after it had received a number of petitions which called for the removal of all property, income and literacy qualifications for the voting population.

Public meetings by the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) promoting constitutional change hastened the appointment of the Commission. The PAC Bulletin of the 17 December 1948 carried a strong appeal to "change the constitution" and calling for the introduction of universal adult suffrage. The Women's Political and Economic Organisation (WPEO) also took up the call for adult suffrage with special reference to women's exclusion from the vote. Then in April 1950, the PPP, as a new political party, issued its first call for constitutional reform and self-government.

On the 8 October 1950, the Commission comprising of Sir E.J. Waddington as Chairman and Dr. Rita Hinden and Professor Vincent Harlow as Members, was finally appointed "to review the franchise, the composition of the legislature and of the Executive Council . . . and to make recommendations".

In December 1950, two months after the Waddington Commission was appointed, the PPP began circulating a petition for a "Free Constitution". The December 1950 issue of Thunder declared that a new spirit was sweeping the country, and added: "In all parts of this country of ours, men and women, students and young people are struggling to free themselves



of the chains that bind them, and of the cultural tyranny that stunts their growth."

This petition was circulating and gathering thousands of signatures when the members of the Commission arrived in Guyana on the 15 December 1950.

The PPP presented both written and oral evidence to the Commission. Oral submission was made on the 2 February 1951 by a delegation made up of Cheddi Jagan, Forbes Burnham, Aubrey Fraser, Clinton Wong and Janet Jagan. Some other individuals and political, trade unions and community groups also made recommendations orally and in writing.

A number of pro-colonialist individuals and groups also submitted evidence to the Commission, and proposed measures which were in total support of colonial rule. These organizations included the political arm of the Roman Catholic Church, The Sword of the Spirit, which vehemently opposed the introduction of universal adult suffrage

In its memorandum submitted earlier to the Commission, the PPP proposed that the Guyanese people should be allowed to frame their own constitution by the election of a constituent assembly on the basis of adult suffrage. It demanded that any future constitution must allow full internal self-government with a unicameral legislature fully elected under universal adult suffrage without any literacy qualifications. The Executive Council, the PPP insisted, must be presided over by the Prime Minister and should consist of eight other Ministers. The Governor's position was to be that of a titular head of state with no veto, and he should act on the advice of the elected Ministers. However, he was to hold reserve powers limited to defence and external affairs.

Among other demands by the PPP were that the Speaker should be elected by and from the Legislative Council which should also have the right to change the constitution by a two-thirds majority; there must be fully elected local authorities based on universal adult suffrage; there must be no nominated seats in the Legislature or local authorities; and that all checks on the work of the elected Government were unnecessary and offensive.

The PPP objected to a bi-cameral legislature unless the second chamber was also elected. The Party saw no need for a State Council (or nominated Upper House) and insisted that such a body could only serve the reactionary and undemocratic purpose of curbing the will of the people.

## THE REPORT OF THE WADDINGTON COMMISSION

At the end of its sittings, the Commission departed for Britain to prepare its final report. The Chairman, Sir E. J. Waddington, recommended to the body that they should agree to the introduction of a unicameral legislature with 18 elected, 6 nominated and 3 official members appointed by the Colonial Office. However, the two other Members, Harlow and Hinden, argued against nominated members in the unicameral legislature since they felt that such a body would be packed "with the Governor's friends". They made recommendations which formed the basis of the final constitution that was subsequently handed down. These proposals suggested a bicameral legislature with a State Council or Upper House which would be totally nominated.

In its Report presented on 29 June 1951 to the Labour Government in Britain, the Waddington Commission made the following proposals for British Guiana's new constitution:

1. Universal adult suffrage would be introduced in the forthcoming elections. All persons 21 years and over would have the right to vote. The literacy qualification would be abolished.

2. There would be a bi-cameral legislature with a life of four years. This would be made up of:

- (a) A House of Assembly of 24 elected members and 3 other official members appointed by the Colonial Office. These three members would be the Chief Secretary, the Financial Secretary and the Attorney General. This House would be presided over by a Speaker appointed by the Governor from outside the Legislature, but he would have no vote.

- (b) A State Council comprising of nine members to be appointed by the Governor. Six of these were to be appointed by the Governor at his discretion, two on the recommendation of the six elected Ministers, and one appointed after consultation with the independent and minority party members of the House of Assembly. One of these nine was to be chosen by the others as president of the Council.

3. There would be an Executive Council consisting of the Governor as Chairman with a casting vote, the six elected Ministers, the three Colonial

Office appointees in the House of Assembly, and a member of the State Council, to be designated Minister without Portfolio.

4. The Governor would hold reserve veto powers for use at his discretion in the interests of "public order, public faith and good government", but he would be bound automatically to act in accordance with the advice of the Executive Council.

5. Certain money bills could be delayed in the State Council for up to three months and other bills for up to one year.

6. The three official members would hold the important portfolios of Foreign Affairs, Police, Law and Order, Defence and Finance. The Commission was adamant that these portfolios could not yet be transferred with confidence to elected Ministers.

The Commission also declared that Guyana was not yet ready for internal self-government, and that checks to be carried out by the nominated State Council would "form an integral part of democratic government".

According to the Commission's proposals, the Leader of the House - the title of the chief of the elected Ministers - would be devoid of any power.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies of the British Labour Party Government felt that the Waddington Commission was too liberal in its recommendations, and he suggested that the number of Ministers should be reduced to five, with the right of selecting those Ministers granted to the three Colonial Office nominated members!

The PPP raised strong objection to this backward proposal. However, the Labour Party was voted out of power in the British elections, and the new Conservative Party Government upheld the recommendations of the Waddington Commission. Towards the end of 1951, the Waddington Constitution was officially declared to be that under which a new Government would be elected and formed in 1953.

Despite the limitations of the new Constitution, it was much more advanced than that under which the 1947-1953 Government operated. The election of the 14 members of that Legislature was based on a restricted franchise with property, income and literacy qualifications. A smaller number of other

members nominated by the Governor and the Colonial Office also made up the legislature, over which the Governor and the Colonial Office had total authority. There was no ministerial system and the Governor could veto any bill.

The Report of the Waddington Commission immediately came under attack from the PPP, which by then had become even more organised following its first Congress just a few months before. Writing in the *Thunder* of November 1951, Forbes Burnham, the Chairman of the Party, said that the Report succeeded "in illustrating that indeed the State is an instrument designed to maintain the dominance of the ruling class and that there is no advance to be gained except by relentless and determined struggle." And in the Legislative Council in January 1952, Dr. Jagan attacked the Waddington Constitution as being merely a fake and another tactic of the British colonialists to perpetrate exploitation and maintain the old order. He urged the struggle for immediate self-government.

An official statement of the program of the PPP issued in January 1952 described the Waddington Constitution as a "new formula for the continued subjugation of our people".

The *Thunder* of September 1952 predicted the dictatorial use of the veto powers by the Governor under the new Constitution. It added: "Our Party will never rest until these checks and veto powers are completely removed."

## THE PPP IN 1951-1952

The PPP, shortly after its formal establishment, decided to challenge the status quo by contesting for positions in decision making bodies. As its forerunner, the PAC, had done, it participated in the Georgetown Town Council elections in December 1950 by contesting for seats in three wards. The elections were conducted under a limited franchise which excluded thousands of persons who did not meet the property and financial requirements. The three candidates were Dr. Jagan, Mrs. Jagan and Forbes Burnham. However, only Mrs. Jagan was successful when she won the Wortmanville-Werk-en-Rust ward from three other candidates. Dr. Jagan, who was on behalf of the Legislative Council attending the West Indian Conference in Curacao at the time, lost to the incumbent Mayor, C. Vibert Wight, while Burnham lost by only seven votes in the Bourda ward.

The first Congress of the PPP held in 1951 established a disciplined and organised approach to the political struggle in Guyana. A programme published by the party in April 1950 was adopted by this Congress. It showed that the Party was organising itself to wrest concessions for the people from the colonial rulers. The organisation of its propaganda work, its campaign among trade unions, and its influential work in rural communities, in particular, would eventually win it more support within the next two years - even more than it actually estimated. The programme enunciated that the main objective was the winning of independence for Guyana.

The Party instituted a programme of mass political education for the people of Guyana by holding public meetings all over the country. In the capital, Georgetown, and in New Amsterdam, the main centres of business and government, it launched public demonstrations to highlight local and international issues. Many of its protest activities opposed the rising cost of living and the growing unemployment rate. These activities were stepped

up from September 1951 and were very successful. Large numbers of workers participated, and leaders of important trade unions spoke from the PPP platform. These unions included the British Guiana Labour Union, the Transport Workers Union and the Federation of Unions of Government Employees. The PPP and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) also mounted joint protests exercises in Georgetown.

The struggle for self-government and a progressive constitution had become reinforced just before the holding of the Party's first Congress, and this was intensified following that historic event. The Congress which was held in Georgetown on 31 March and 1 April 1951, adopted the Party's constitution, and the delegates who travelled from all over the coast of Guyana, elected the following officers: Leader - Cheddi Jagan, Chairman - Forbes Burnham, First Vice-Chairman - H. Aubrey Fraser, Second Vice-Chairman - Clinton Wong, General Secretary - Janet Jagan, Assistant General Secretary - Sydney King, Treasurer - Ramkarran; and General Council Members - Ashton Chase, Rudy Luck, Frank O. Van Sertima, Ivan Cendrecourt, May Thompson, Hubert Critchlow, E. Kennard, Theo Lee, Ulric Fingall, Jainarine Singh, Sheila La Taste, Joseph P. Lachmansingh, Cecil Cambridge, Fred Bowman and Pandit S. Misir.

By the time this Congress was held, the Party had already set its aim, according to its declaration, "at dislodging the older style political movements which appeared and disappeared equally quickly before and after each election." The Party also emerged after this Congress as "a different kind of political party with a strong organisational apparatus, a guiding ideology and grass roots support, . . . the first mass party to appear in Guyana".

Forbes Burnham, in opening remarks at the Congress stated: "This is not a Party of big shots. It's a Party of the working class people of British Guiana. It is a Party that has come to stay as a permanent institution."

From the early days, the party was challenged to enforce a disciplined approach in its work. Just three months after the Congress, Dr. Joseph P. Lachmarsingh who was elected to the General Council, was expelled for anti-party activities. He was, despite being a leader of the PPP, heading a steering committee to establish a Labour Party made up of trade unionists. However, during 1952, Lachmarsingh was readmitted to the PPP.

In 1951 Dr. Jagan made his first trip to Britain where he met with Secretary of State for the Colonies Alan Lennox-Boyd and other officials at the Colonial Office to discuss independence for Guyana. From London, he sent a petition to the UN Human Rights Commission setting out the PPP's demands for Guyana's independence. He also spoke at a public meeting in London where he called for immediate independence for Guyana and the other British colonies in the West Indies. He then went to Berlin, the capital of the German Democratic Republic, to attend the World Youth Festival. There he also participated with thousands of internationalists in clearing World War II rubble in sections of the city.

In February 1952, shortly after Dr. and Mrs. Jagan announced their intention of visiting Trinidad, the Government of that island announced that they would not be allowed to enter the island. Strong protests erupted across the Caribbean over this ban and similar bans against other pro-socialist Caribbean politicians. These were seen as violations against the fundamental rights and civil liberties of these persons and the organisations that invited them.



Throughout 1952, the PPP carried out a political campaign across Guyana to inform the population of the new constitution expected to come into force in 1953. It also educated the masses about adult suffrage, and by establishing groups in villages, it began to make preparations to get its supporters registered to vote. In the meantime, Dr. Jagan continued to champion popular issues in the Legislative Council.

The second Party congress was held at the Auditorium in Charlotte Street, Georgetown on 29-30 March 1952. A wide range of issues was discussed, and the delegates passed resolutions condemning, inter alia, apartheid in South Africa, the ban on Dr. and Mrs. Jagan by the colonial authorities of Trinidad and Grenada, and the unpopular Undesirable Publications Bill introduced by Lionel Luckhoo in the legislature.

The party again contested the Georgetown municipal elections in December 1952. Burnham won the Bourda ward but Mrs. Jagan failed to win re-election when she lost to Claude Merriman as a result of a strong campaigning against her by some Christian denominations.

With the anticipation of the general elections in 1953, the PPP, more than any group, was prepared for the contest. It had organisational preparedness, and with its strong teams of campaign workers, it worked assiduously to win the support of the people of the country. Both the major ethnic groups, the Indo- and Afro-Guyanese, were united under the leadership of the Party which they saw as their only salvation for the future.

## THE DUNCE MOTION

The PPP, as part of its ideological education campaign from 1950, distributed thousands of publications (books and pamphlets) which were produced mainly in England. Almost all were anti-imperialist, while some were socialist and communist in their content. By 1952, at least half a million books and pamphlets were bought into the country and sold by the PPP, which by this process, initiated one of the greatest onrushes on intellectual life Guyana ever experienced.

It was natural for those who opposed the PPP to call for the banning for what they called the "subversive" literature of the Party. In 1951, as a result of the anti-communist hysteria whipped up by these elements, nine crates of books imported by Dr. Jagan from England were seized and burned on the pretext that he had not obtained an import licence.

Eventually, a motion calling for the prohibition of subversive literature was presented in the Legislative Council on 13 March 1952 by the arch-rival of the PPP, Lionel Luckhoo, a nominated member who failed to win an elected seat in 1947. It was obvious that this motion, part of the anti-communist hysteria, was aimed at containing the growing popularity of the Party. It called for preventing the "entry into the colony of literature, publications, propaganda or films which are subversive or contrary to the public interest."

Luckhoo's motion became popularly known throughout the country as the "Dunce Motion" for obvious reasons. During the debate, Luckhoo was the chief supporter of his motion. He expressed the opinion that "communism is consumingly attractive" and therefore it must be curbed. Strong support for Luckhoo's "Dunce Motion" came from John Fernandes and George H. Smellie, a spokesman for big business who stated that "socialism is evil when it destroys private enterprise"

Dr. Jagan who carried the attack on the "Dunce Motion" questioned the ability of Luckhoo and his supporters to speak for the "public", as they had claimed. He declared that it was apparent that through his motion, Luckhoo Adoes not want the people of this Colony to change their ideas at all; they must keep the millstone of capitalist ideas tied around their necks as long as they live; they must not imbibe any new ideas and thereby try to change the system of Government which they have. . . We in this Colony - the PPP - want to educate the people of this Colony - to make them politically conscious after evaluating all the facts from all sides - the sides of the capitalist, the socialist, the liberal and the communist. That is the way in which we are building the foundation of our Party."

Also opposing the motion were John Carter, Rudy Kendall and Theo Lee, and they along with Dr. Jagan voted against it on the following day. However, it was carried when 16 other members voted for it.

Throughout 1952, the police continued to seize literature distributed by the PPP. In December of that year, books and pamphlets imported from Britain by Dr. Jagan and deemed "undesirable" by the colonial authorities, were confiscated by the authorities and destroyed.

As a result of Luckhoo's motion, the Undesirable Publications (Prohibition and Importation) Bill was presented to the Legislative Council on the 27 February 1953. In a six-hour speech opposing it, Dr. Jagan asked whose freedom the supporters of the Bill were considering when they spoke of it being in the "public interest." He demanded that Guyanese must be allowed to read what anyone could buy in Britain. He also made several attempts to amend the Bill but these did not win support from the other members.

In the end, this Bill was passed when 11 members voted for it; only Dr. Jagan and Kendall voted against it. John Carter also opposed the initial motion the year before, was absent at voting time, and Lee abstained. By passing this law, Undesirable Publications Ordinance, the British colonial authorities legally allowed the violation of a basic human liberty as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the UN.

Ironically, at the same time the ban was implemented, the British Government declared in London that it was extending to all its colonies the rights enshrined in the UN Convention of Human Rights, which particularly affirmed the right to receive and impart ideas through any medium!

The Undesirable Publications Ordinance specified that anyone who sold or distributed material that the Governor-in Council felt was "subversive" could be fined up to 500 dollars and/or imprisoned up to one year. Anyone who already owned and kept such work in his possession was subjected to a fine of 250 dollars and /or imprisoned up to six months. Banned material, all of which circulated freely in Britain, was to be surrendered to the police.

Through this spiteful piece of legislation, thousands of books by progressive writers, some of whom were not even socialists, were seized and burned by the authorities.

## THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN 1953

During 1952, the PPP continued a country-wide campaign to educate the expanded electorate of its political programme aimed at improving conditions in the country. Simultaneously, the leader of the Party continued

his efforts in the Legislative Council to fight for the interests of the workers and farmers in Guyana and of oppressed people in other countries.

The Legislative Council was due to be dissolved on 29 November 1952, but its life was extended to 2 April 1953 by the colonial authorities. The extension was to enable the authorities to put into effect the arrangements of the new Waddington constitution to enable the holding of the new general election.

By the beginning of 1953 political parties were making themselves ready for the election. Only the PPP and the National Democratic Party (NDP), recently formed, were organised on a national basis. The NDP included personalities such as John Carter, Rudy Kendall and J.A. Nicholson, one of the leaders of the League of Coloured People (LCP). It was supported by the capitalist class, and was actively backed by the news media, the LCP, the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA) and some other unions generally regarded as "company unions". It was also supported by middle class Africans, but despite its overt appeal to African racism, it also received support from groups of persons from other ethnic groups. Among its members were middle-class East Indians, Lionel Luckhoo and Balram Singh Rai. Even though he was a supporter of Dr. Jagan in 1947, Rai refused to join the PPP after qualifying in England a lawyer, but instead joined the NDP and stood as one of its candidates.

Another party which emerged was the United Workers and Farmers Party (UWFP), formed by Daniel Debedin. It was expected that Debedin would have joined the PPP, but he decided against this because he felt that the Party would not win the election. His party was really a loose group of individuals, and it had no support from workers and farmers. It was supported by the British Guiana East Indian Association (BGEIA), and it claimed to represent the interests of middle class Indians.

Sugar planter interests in Berbice helped to put together the People's National Party (PNP) with the aim of opposing the PPP in that county. Another small grouping which arose called itself the United Guiana Party (UGP). Both of these were splinter groups of individuals with varying interests who broke away from the NDP.

The parties opposing the PPP had no concrete programme to present to the electorate except expressing strong opposition to communism which they claimed to be their platform. They accused the PPP of receiving money from the Soviet Union, and the media, including the weekly newspaper of the MPCA, carried sustained vicious attacks on the PPP and its leaders.

As the election campaign swung into high gear, the Anglican and Catholic Churches came out openly in opposing the PPP. One of their main grouses was that the Party had stated that it intended to end "dual control" of schools. In 1953, there were 297 schools, of which 19 were Government schools, 9 Government-aided, and the remaining 269 under control of Christian denominations, even though almost all were built with Government funds. The Anglican and Catholic Churches, the largest and most influential denominations, felt that if the schools were removed from their management, their influence on the education system would be severely restricted. They were not concerned that nearly half of the population of the country belonged to non-Christian religions.

Interestingly, some sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities also opposed the PPP on the misguided belief that the Party was anti-religion, and they formed a queer alliance with the Anglican and Catholic Churches. These groups included some of the leaders of the Sad'r Islamic Anjuman, the Muslim League, the Maha Sabha and the Pandits' Council.

Racists in the NDP and the LCP also attacked the PPP claiming that Indians dominated it and that Burnham and other African leaders were being used to win African votes. On the other hand, racists in the UFWP and the British Guiana East Indian Association claimed that Dr. Jagan, by having Africans in the PPP, was selling out the interests of the Indians. They added that the PPP, by supporting the proposed West Indian Federation, would open Guyana to a flood of Africans from the West Indian territories. Calling on Indians not to support the PPP, Daniel Debedin of the UFWP urged them to "vote for your own", thus giving origin to the racist Hindi slogan of "Apan Jhaat".

The PPP, with widespread support from workers and farmers of all races, and also from the TUC, presented its election manifesto which outlined its programme. In education, the party called for state-controlled, secular education, and the provision of more secondary and nursery schools. In relation to agriculture, the PPP proposed measures to include land reform, land settlement, security of tenure for farmers and provision for agricultural loans. The implementation of drainage and irrigation schemes was also planned. For housing, the party intended to develop low-rental housing schemes, while for economic growth, it saw the necessity of establishing new manufacturing industries. The first steps towards free health care for the people were also included in the programme. An additional intent of the PPP was to amend all existing laws and regulations which restricted the civil liberties of the people. It also announced that it would democratise all public institutions and would continue to wage the struggle for self-government and independence.

Despite its optimism, the PPP in early 1953 was not sure that it would win a clear majority of the seats. It felt, however, that it would win enough to at least form a strong opposition force in the legislature to enable it to champion the cause of the people. But by mid-April the Party, through its

effective house to house campaign, was confident that it would win 17 seats.

There was some cause for concern in March 1953 when signs of division were demonstrated in the PPP ranks. At the third congress of the Party, Forbes Burnham and some of his supporters moved a motion calling for the leader of the Party to be elected by the General Council and not by the delegates to the congress. Burnham felt that his supporters would form the majority in the General Council and they would eventually elect him as leader of the Party. However, the congress rejected the motion and also elected members to the General Council who opposed Burnham's plan.

Nomination day was on 16 April and the PPP named candidates for 22 of the 24 constituencies. It did not contest in two interior areas due to a shortage of funds. The NDP contested in 15 constituencies, the PNP in 8 and the UGP in 4. The UFWP failed to contest as a party, and its leader presented himself as one of the 81 other independent candidates.

## THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1953

The general election, held under the "first past the post" system, took place on 27 April 1953. The total number of voters registered in a house to house enumeration was 208,939. Almost 150,000 were newly qualified because of the extended franchise resulting from the granting of universal adult suffrage. Of this number, an estimated 40,000 were illiterate, and special arrangements had to be made to enable them to vote. These included the introduction of symbols for political parties and independent candidates, and separate ballot boxes for each candidate. Each ballot box was marked with the name and photograph and symbol of the candidate. The symbols



were chosen long before nomination day, and all voters knew whom they represented. The PPP, as a political party, adopted the cup as its symbol and all its candidates used it during their campaign to educate voters, particularly the illiterate, on how to mark their ballots.

On election day, the ballot boxes were placed behind a screen and the voter, after marking his ballot in secret, folded it and placed it in the box of his chosen candidate. By the time the polls closed at 6.00 p.m., 156,226 persons or 75 percent had voted; the final tally showed that the valid votes were 152,231 or 73 percent of the electorate.

There was great excitement over the election, and most persons voted very early. The results were declared by the following morning and they showed that the PPP won 18 seats while obtaining 51 percent of the overall votes. The NDP won two seats, while independent candidates won four. Among the electoral casualties of the NDP was Lionel Luckhoo, the president of the MPCA, who lost badly to a PPP candidate in a district with a large sugar worker population.

Among the successful PPP candidates were three women - Janet Jagan, Jane Philips-Gay and Jesse Burnham. They became the first women elected to the Guyanese legislature.

The spectacular victory of the PPP caused much concern among the colonial authorities since they had not expected an outright victory by the PPP. They anticipated that no party would win a clear majority and that the new government would be made up of a diverse group of members of political parties and independents and, thus, could be easily manipulated. It was apparent that the colonial authorities based their analysis on the

opinions expressed by the media which claimed that the PPP would be soundly defeated.

Winston Churchill, the British Prime Minister, was very critical of the Colonial Office which had predicted in a briefing to him that the PPP could not win a majority. The United States government was also concerned over the new situation and felt that the PPP victory presented a strong threat to British colonialism.

In a statement on the results, the PPP in the May 1953 issue of *Thunder* declared: "The victory of our democratic movement was a great shock and surprise to the ruling class, who, consequent upon their thirst for maximum profit, have isolated themselves from the people."

The party immediately set about during the week after the election to select its six Ministers and to submit their names to the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage. But new internal problems arose when Burnham, the chairman of the party, refused at a joint meeting of the general council and the parliamentary group to agree to the selection of Ministers unless he was named as the leader of the party. His demand was to be "leader or nothing!" Even though the members of the general council explained to him that the issue of the leader was settled in March at the third Party congress (when he made his first attempt to become the leader), he refused to budge.

For almost the entire week the party was plunged into a crisis. The PPP supporters who were very excited over the electoral victory could not understand what was happening.

On Thursday 7 May, Burnham had one of his close supporters call a mass meeting of PPP supporters in Georgetown. His plan was to get the crowd to demand that Dr. Jagan should surrender the leadership of the party to him. But his scheme backfired when Rudy Luck, a member of the general council, attended the meeting and told the audience the real reason for the crisis brought about by Burnham's action. The meeting broke up in disorder, and Burnham, realising that he had no support, was forced to drop his demand, and he finally agreed to discuss the selection of the Ministers.

But he did not give in without making other demands. The original six names for ministerial appointments were Forbes Burnham, Ashton Chase, Cheddi Jagan, Janet Jagan, Sydney King and Dr. Hanoman-Singh. Burnham insisted that Jai Narine Singh, who joined the party only in 1953, and Dr. Joseph Lachmarsingh, two of his close supporters, must be named as Ministers. He also wanted a change in the proposed nominees for the State Council, George Robertson and Herbert Thomas. In the end a compromise was reached. Jai Narine Singh and Dr. Lachmarsingh were included on the ministerial list in place of Janet Jagan, who was nominated as Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly, and Dr. Hanoman-Singh. For the State Council, Herbert Thomas was replaced by Ulric Fingal, one of Burnham's nominees.

With these matters finally settled, the PPP was ready to take up its seats in the House of Assembly which was inaugurated on 18 May 1953.

## THE PPP GOVERNMENT OF 1953

The new House of Assembly was inaugurated on the 18 May 1953, and the Speaker, Sir Eustace Woolford, an appointee of the Governor, commended "the exemplary behaviour shown by the electors during the conduct of the elections." He agreed that this behaviour was "contrary to all expectations". By this he was expressing the view of the colonial authorities that they had expected the PPP to foment strife and violence during the campaign.

It was also clear that the colonial authorities were already pursuing plans for intervention in Guyana even before the April elections. The Commissioner of Police had advised the Governor on the 10 April that the growing political strength of the PPP "may soon constitute a serious threat to the internal security of the Colony. . . ." He was subsequently requested by the Governor to evaluate the readiness of the Police and the Volunteer Forces to deal with riots expected to break out on the event of a PPP victory. At about the same time, the British Colonial Office set about to plan how fast and effective would British troops in the Caribbean be dispatched to Guyana if disturbances should ever break out. And interestingly, on the 3 June, when the PPP Government was only two weeks in office, the Colonial Office requested that Governor Savage should inform the British military headquarters in the Caribbean on a regular basis of developments taking place in Guyana under the new Government.

A joint meeting of the legislature, (the House of Assembly and the State Council), took place on the 30 May 1953 when the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, read the message from the Queen. Shortly after, he presented his own policy message to the joint session. In commenting on the positive manner in which the recent elections were conducted, he noted that "a most heartening feature . . . . was the absence of racialism."

No doubt, the Governor and officials of the British Colonial Office were taken by surprise by the overwhelming success of the PPP at the April

elections. They had hoped that no party would have been able to win a majority of the seats, and that the elected Ministers would have been drawn from a number of parties. This would have enabled the Governor to maintain full control over the Executive Council (of Ministers).

During the election campaign, the PPP had published its programme, and as soon as the legislature began its work, the Party decided to implement it. This, of course, did not go down well with the colonial authorities and the opposition forces, which tried their best to delay or oppose this programme. For these forces arrayed against the PPP, the programme was seen as "communist" and therefore it must be firmly opposed.

The House of Assembly passed a Bill to repeal the Undesirable Publications Ordinance. However, it was held up in the nominated State Council where the PPP was in the minority, and it eventually lapsed after the Government was overthrown in October. The House also passed a bill to lift the ban on the entry of certain West Indian trade unionists and politicians.

The PPP then set about to bring relief to rice farmers who were renting lands from large landlords. The House passed an amendment to the existing Rice Farmers (Security of Tenure) Bill to assist rice farmers during droughts. The amendment also sought to protect and secure the rights of tenant rice farmers. In the original legislation passed in 1945, landlords were not penalised if they did not maintain the infrastructure - dams, drains and canals - in good condition. The amendment gave the landlords time to do the work. If they did not comply, the Government would do the work and recover the cost from them. However, the State Council rejected this bill with Lionel Luckhoo, one of its members, describing it as "totalitarian dictatorship".

The PPP Government campaigned to remove Church control of schools, as it had stated in its election manifesto. It did not propose an end to religious instruction, but proposed that the schools should be directly supervised by the Government and local education committees. This system was more democratic than was then existing, since schools run by a particular Christian denomination did not allow other Christian groups to give religious instructions in their schools. And none of the Church controlled schools allowed Muslim and Hindu groups to offer their religious instructions to children, even though a very large proportion of Hindu and Muslim children attended these schools.

The Government also tightened on the expenditure of the Public Works Department which was known for its wasteful spending. This cutback included heavy spending on the building of large houses for senior Government officials. It also set up committees to investigate problems of domestic workers and to make proposals for the revision of the Workers' Compensation Ordinance. And for the first time, ordinary people were appointed to Government boards and committees.

Another action of the PPP Government aimed at helping the poor was to commence a revision of the fees for doctors under its employment. It also instituted a policy of refusing additional leases of State owned lands - or Crown lands - to landlords who already had large landholdings.

There was also a cut-back on unnecessary expenditure of public funds. The House of Assembly refused to approve payments to members of the State Council. This action was not taken well by the majority non-PPP members, even though this was a recommendation of the Waddington constitutional commission.

As part of this cut-back, the Government also decided in July not to send delegates to meet Queen Elizabeth II on her November visit to Jamaica. The Government felt that this was unnecessary since it had already sent a four-member delegation in June, just a few weeks before, to attend the Queen's coronation in June in London at a cost of \$100,000.

The refusal of the Government to send a delegation to greet the Queen in Jamaica was also described by Alexander Bustamante, the Chief Minister of Jamaica, as "an insult to the Crown". The Guyanese press also used this statement to expand its hostility to the Government

The press, which was owned by persons opposing the PPP, carried out a vicious anti-communist campaign against the Government. This campaign was even waged by some religious denominations, particularly the Anglican and Catholic Churches. The Chronicle and the Argosy newspapers, fiercely anti-PPP, deliberately distorted a statement by Forbes Burnham, the Minister of Education, who proposed that the Government intended "to revise the curriculum and text books of schools to give them a true Guianese socialist and realistic outlook." The two newspapers removed the words "Guianese" and "realistic" from the statement so it read "a true socialist outlook", which the anti-PPP forces used to their advantage in attacking the Government.

The press also attacked the PPP Government for passing a resolution in the House appealing to US President Eisenhower to grant clemency to Julius and Ethel Rosenberg who were sentenced to death for allegedly passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. This resolution was interpreted by the opponents of the PPP as being motivated by political (pro-communist) rather than humanitarian consideration. Officials in the US Government saw this as another piece of evidence that the PPP Government was "red" and thus posed a threat to US security in the region.

As such, it was their opinion that the Government had to be removed, and the US authorities, who have been following the political situation in Guyana very closely, certainly expressed this view to the British Government.

## THE OVERTHROW OF THE PPP GOVERNMENT IN 1953

While the anti-PPP campaign was stepped up, the Guiana Industrial Workers Union (GIWU) called a strike on 30 August 1953 demanding wage increases and better working conditions for sugar workers. The strike was in reality one for recognition as the bargaining union for workers in the sugar industry. From 1948, the GIWU had been calling "recognition" strikes to replace the Man Power Citizens Association (MPCA) since it felt that it had majority support among sugar workers. (This strike gave the British an excuse for their military intervention in October).

Shortly after the strike began, Dr. Jagan went to Suriname (in September) to secure rights for Guyanese fishermen in Surinamese waters. Guyanese fishermen from the Corentyne area were from time to time arrested by the Surinamese police on the Corentyne River, and Dr. Jagan's discussion with the Government of Suriname helped to bring some relief to the existing problem.

The Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, was by this time openly siding with the anti-PPP forces which were already agitating for the forcible removal of the elected Government. Just four days before the strike began Savage had reported to the Colonial Office in London that the PPP members of the Government were using their positions to undermine the entire Government. Even as early as 3 September, a secret report from the



British Forces Commander in the Caribbean to the British War Office proposed a military intervention in Guyana.

By 13 September, Savage was reporting that the political situation was deteriorating. Anti-PPP members on 21 September persuaded the State Council, in which the PPP was in the minority, to pass a resolution accusing the PPP Ministers of promoting actions which were a threat to security and "responsible democratic governance". The resolution requested the British Secretary of State for the Colonies to take any action deemed necessary.

The GIWU strike won widespread support among trade unions. Many of them called a sympathy strike on September 22. On the following day, the colonial authorities, acting on the presumption that a general strike in support of the GIWU was planned for the 24 September, made the decision to dispatch troops to intervene in Guyana.

However, there was no general strike on September 24. On the morning of that very day, after discussions with the Minister of Labour, the GIWU called off the strike after he promised that the Government would enact legislation for the compulsory recognition of majority unions after a secret poll.

At about the same time, the PPP Government announced its intention of repealing the Trade Disputes (Essential Services) Ordinance of 1942. This was a war-time legislation that prevented strikes in the essential services. The colonial authorities saw this announcement as a move by the PPP to disrupt services in water supplies, electricity, transport, food supplies and public health. The motion for the repeal was eventually introduced in the

House of Assembly. However, it was awaiting debate when the Governor dissolved the Government after the landing of British troops.

When the House of Assembly met on 24 September, the Speaker refused to suspend the standing orders of the House of Assembly to allow the Minister of Labour, Ashton Chase, to move the Labour Relations Bill through all its stages to enable its passage. The PPP legislators, in protest, walked out of the House and there were angry demonstrations against the Speaker by GIWU members outside the House of Assembly.

The actual general debate on the Labour Relations Bill began on 29 September. Finally, on 8 October, the House of Assembly passed the Bill which stipulated that employers must recognise unions enjoying support of more than 65 percent of employees in particular industries. However, like many other bills, it lapsed after the suspension of the constitution. The Labour Relations Bill was similar to those existing in the United States and Canada, but it was also branded by the anti-PPP forces as "communist".

The Sugar Producers Association and the Man Power Citizens Association (MPCA) vehemently opposed the Labour Relations Bill. But it was strongly supported by the TUC and the Guiana Industrial Workers Union (GIWU).

British troops landed in Guyana on 8 October and were amazed to find no signs of revolt. There was total peace throughout the country, and a cricket match between Guiana and Trinidad was being played in Georgetown.

On the same day, three orders of the British Government, first issued on 4 October, were implemented. First, the British Guiana (Emergency) Order in Council gave the Governor emergency powers to deal with any situation

that would result from the suspension of the constitution. Second, the British Guiana (Constitution) (Amendment) Order in Council granted powers to the Governor not to consult with the Executive Council in implementing policy. The Executive Council was to continue in existence, but the Governor was not obligated to seek its advice.

Third, the Additional Royal Instructions required the Governor to consult with the Executive Council except in sensitive cases prejudicial to imperial interests. This gave the Governor additional arbitral powers.

Later that day, the Governor withdrew the appointments of the PPP Ministers and stripped them of their portfolios. This action effectively removed them from the Executive Council which was to be later reconstituted with persons nominated by the Governor.

On the following day, 9 October, the Governor prorogued the House of Assembly and the State Council, and by this process, effectively suspended the constitution. The PPP Government, in office for only 133 days, was effectively overthrown by a combination of British emergency orders and heavily armed British troops.

## THE BRITISH "CASE" FOR SUSPENDING THE CONSTITUTION

It was obvious that the PPP Government fell victim to the Cold War mentality that prevailed the time. The rabid anti-communist ideology and policies practised by the United States Government could not tolerate any Government which it perceived as working contrary to such ideology and practices. The PPP from its inception was regarded by its opponents as

"communist", especially since the Party openly stated that it was working towards the building of a society based on the principles of socialism.

The PPP's ideology of socialism and its contacts with socialist parties internationally were carefully documented. Governor Charles Wooley in a letter to the Colonial Office on 18 March 1953, sent details of what he claimed was the PPP's relationship with international communist organisations.

With the growing influence of the PPP, the Sugar Producers' Association agitated for the removal of the PPP from the scene even before the 1953 elections. It sent many reports to London complaining that the Governor (Wooley) was unable to deal firmly with the PPP to eradicate its influence. The Association even demanded his removal claiming that he was too tolerant. Anti-PPP persons also petitioned the British Government to prevent the PPP from taking office even after the party won the elections.

The PPP Government's programme of socio-economic reform was aimed at improving the lot of the working class. All of these actions were keeping with its pre-election manifesto, so it was hypocritical for the British colonial authorities to place barriers in the way of the proposed reform policies. No doubt, because these policies seriously challenged the control of the society by the privileged class, the British Government, fully supported by the US administration, decided to suspend the constitution and remove the Government from office.

The British Government's reasons for its actions were given by John Gutch, the Chief Secretary, in a radio broadcast on 9 October. Most of the reasons he gave pointed to the Government's alleged "communist" policies. He claimed that the British action was aimed at preventing "communist

subversion of the Government and a dangerous crisis both in public order and economic affairs." The main points of his statements were:

1. The "faction in power" showed by their acts and speeches that they were prepared to use violence to turn Guyana into a communist state which would be used to extend communist influence in the Western Hemisphere.
2. The elected Ministers and the PPP were under the control of a communist clique who included Dr. and Mrs. Jagan, Sydney King and Rory Westmaas. These leaders participated in the work of the World Federation of Trade Unions, the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the World Peace Council and the Women's International Democratic Federation, which the British Government claimed were communist organisations.
3. Ministers used their positions as trade unionists to encourage strikes in the sugar industry and attempted to introduce legislation to control the trade union movement.
4. The Ministers used their supporters to intimidate the opposition and they tried to undermine the loyalty of the Police by planning to establish a People's Police.
5. The Ministers wanted to bring the public service under their political control.
6. The Ministers established the Pioneer Youth League to undermine the established youth movements such as the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides.
7. The Minister of Education (Burnham) announced that he intended to remove the Churches from controlling the education system and to revise text books with the objective of indoctrinating children with PPP political views.
8. The Ministers established a Guyana branch of the "communist inspired" Peace Committee. They were also "disseminating

communist subversive propaganda" and were directing "subversive activities." They were also supporting "communist terrorists in Malaya," and were deliberately fomenting "racial hatred."

9. The policy actions of the PPP Government were harmful and alarmed "moderate opinion."

10. The Ministers had no intention of making the constitution work, and their sole plan was to seize the whole country and run it as a totalitarian state.

At the end of his statement, Gutch announced that the British Government would appoint a Commission of Inquiry "to enquire into events . . . which have led to this check in the political advance of the Colony and to make recommendations for a revised constitution."

Later that day, the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, made a statement on the radio in which he repeated the "reasons" advanced by Gutch. Then on the 20 October, the British Government published a White Paper which was aimed at justifying the action of removing the PPP Government from office. It listed the "reasons" outlined in Gutch's statement and added the "accusations" that the PPP Ministers removed the ban on the entry of West Indian communists; introduced a bill to repeal the Undesirable Publications Ordinance in order to flood the country with communist literature; neglected their administrative duties; and misused their rights to appoint persons to boards and committees. [The Commission of Inquiry appointed subsequently in December 1953 detailed these presumptions as its findings in its report issued in September 1954.]

## THE PPP REBUTTAL OF THE BRITISH ACCUSATIONS

The pressure of the United States on Great Britain played a significant role in the decision to remove the PPP Government from office. The United States, heavily influenced by the anti-communism doctrine of Senator Joseph McCarthy, felt that the PPP Government's programme and policies were communist, and was convinced that Guyana could form a base for Soviet expansionism in the Americas. The United States was of the opinion that a "communist" Guyana could threaten the supply of bauxite, then a strategic military resource, from Guyana and Suriname to the United States. At that period these two countries supplied roughly 66 percent of American bauxite imports. A Soviet base in Guyana, according to the anti-communist ideologues in the USA, could also threaten the Panama Canal.

Thus, the PPP Government posed a threat to American interests and it had to be removed. The British Government willingly complied by attacking the PPP's programme and legislative actions as communist, even though these were proposed before the 1953 elections, and fully supported by an overwhelming majority of the electorate.

In a number of statements, the PPP responded to the accusations in the British White Paper which detailed the reasons for the suspension of the constitution, the removal of the Government and the military occupation of the country:

- (1) On the accusation that the Party encouraged strikes and attempted to introduce legislation to remove established trade unions: The PPP pointed to the large majority of seats it won in the elections, and particularly to the 11 it won with overwhelming majorities in the areas with sugar estates. This itself was a reflection that the people in those areas wanted a trade union which was supportive of the PPP Government. The PPP stated that the membership figures of the two sugar unions, the MPCA and the GIWU, were not a true reflection of their support. Workers who supported the GIWU did not generally enrol themselves as members because members of that union were usually intimidated by the management of the sugar estates.
- (2) On the Labour Relations Bill which authorised a poll to settle a dispute between trade unions to be the representative of workers, and which the British claimed the PPP intended to use to control trade unions: The

PPP defended the Bill by explaining that the union winning recognition had to secure at least 65 percent of the votes, instead of only 51 percent in the United States under the US National Labor Relations Act.

- (3) On attempting to seize control of the public service: The PPP explained that most of the senior positions in the public service were occupied by British expatriates. During the election campaign the Party argued that qualified Guyanese should be given priority for senior public service positions. The expatriates in the public service openly opposed the PPP before the elections, and after the elections, they continued to control the administration of the Ministries, and two of them were even placed in the Cabinet by the colonial authorities. The PPP stated that by demanding that the Ministers should have the right to appoint some public servants, it was attempting to blend the good qualities of the British civil service system with the party civil service system of the USA.
- (4) On undermining loyalty of the Police Force by planning to set up a People=s Police: The PPP explained that it wanted a neutral police to maintain law and order. Since the Police Force was not under an elected Minister but under the Chief Secretary, an expatriate senior civil servant, it was not possible to consider the setting up of a People=s Police.
- (5) On instigating racial hatred, violence and arson: The PPP challenged the colonial authorities to place its leadership and members before the courts. The Party also showed that there was not a single case of arson in Georgetown, and pointed to the fact that the colonial authorities were even surprised that there was no violence during the 1953 election campaign. Also the PPP could not be accused of fomenting racial hatred, since even the colonial authorities declared that the election campaign was free of any racialism.
- (6) On acting to repeal the Undesirable Publications Ordinance: The PPP referred to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights which stated: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This includes freedom to hold opinions without interference, to seek, and to receive information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".



- (7) On lifting the ban on West Indian political and trade union leaders: The Party defended this by pointing to the Article in freedom of movement in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.
- (8) On the charge that PPP leaders were associated with international communist organisations: The Party said that this was a pointless accusation since people from Britain regularly visited socialist countries. With regards to the PPP=s participation at meetings of the World Peace Council, the Party explained that many non-communists from all parts of the world belonged to the Council.
- (9) On the accusation that it was a communist party: The PPP denied that it was a communist party and described itself as Aa broad alliance of all progressive forces that are struggling for the freedom and independence of British Guiana. @ It added that it did question the ideologies of the members, so long as they supported the Party=s programme.
- (10) On introducing "political bias" in the education system: The Party stated that it had no apologies for wanting to reorient the education system away from the European influences and concepts. This desire by Guyanese existed long before the PPP won the elections in 1953, and the plan to reorient the system was included in the Party's election manifesto.
- (11) On appointing ordinary people to boards and committees: The PPP stated that by objecting to such appointments, the colonial authorities exposed their class bias. It argued that the colonial authorities opposed these appointments because in the past only non-working class people filled these positions. The colonial authorities could not expect the PPP Government to appoint people who opposed it to boards and committees to advise its elected members.
- (12) On the establishment of a youth organization associated with the PPP: This accusation the PPP felt was ludicrous since many political parties all over the world did the same.

## AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN GUYANA IN 1953

The political policies of the United States administration played a decisive role in influencing the British Government to remove the PPP Government from power in Guyana. The British Government acted under pressure from the US administration which, by then, had given itself the "right" to oppose any policy which it felt was not supportive of imperialist interests.

Since 1940, the United States had established a firm political and military interest in Guyana, and during the Second World War, the British Government allowed the USA to set up a naval base on the Essequibo River and an air base at Atkinson Field at Timehri (which after the war was transformed into an international airport). The United States continued to maintain its military facilities at this airport even after the war ended. (It was not until the 1970s that the military "rights" the USA held regarding the use of this airport were finally rescinded).

The early 1950s was the period of the communist witch hunt initiated by Joseph McCarthy and his political supporters in the USA. Any progressive tendency was labelled by them as communist, and this label was soon plastered on the progressive policies of the PPP. Locally, the label already existed, and the Party and its leaders were always attacked since its inception by local anti communists.

In the United States concerns began to be voiced as soon as the PPP won the general election in April 1953. The American press, in particular, began to show deep interest in Guyana. Time magazine wrote that a Communist Government was being established in the British Empire, thus warning Britain of the "danger". And Americans were warned that a Communist Government was being set up at America's back door. Communism, they were told, was the opposite of democracy. Around the same time, an American journalist of international repute, Drew Pearson, expressed alarm that while the US Government was trying to preserve democracy in the Far East and elsewhere, it was allowing a communist government to be established in its neighbourhood.

The US State Department also began to take a strong interest in Guyanese affairs. The US Vice Consul stationed in Trinidad made repeated visits to Guyana after April 1953. No doubt, the US Government was also worried that if Guyana became communist, it may pose a security threat for the

Panama Canal, since in their estimation, Russia would be able to obtain port facilities in Guyana.

In September 1953, a US Congressman, Mr. Jackson, was a guest of the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage. When he finally departed, he stated that Guyana was within the strategic zone of the USA.

American officials were also busy in London. Just before the announcement of the suspension of the constitution, the British Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, and other leading members of the British Government, met with US officials in London. The representatives of the US Government, no doubt, pressured the British to remove the PPP Government from office.

On the 4 October, British Secretary of State for the Colonies Oliver Lyttelton, Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, and Senior Legal Assistant to the Commonwealth Relations Office, Sir Sydney Abrahams, journeyed to Balmoral Castle in Scotland to confer with Queen Elizabeth. It was on their return to London that the Order in-Council on the suspension of the constitution bearing the Queen's signature was announced. Lyttelton had, shortly after his return to London, denied that the visit to the Queen had anything to do with the possibility of the removal of the PPP Government of Guyana. He claimed that the visit was normal for one of the members of the Queen's Privy Council!

On 9 October, 1953, the New York Herald Tribune stated: "The British Guiana affair is of vital interest to the United States - not because of the internal events within that colony but because of its strategic juxtaposition. Venezuela is the synonym for the two very important items to the United States - oil and iron ore."

The English journal, Church Times, on the 16 October, 1953 stated that the Venezuela Guyana frontier where new iron deposits were discovered was in dispute and declared, "This is one reason for the American interest in the deterioration of the situation." (No doubt, the US was interested in having "friendly" governments both in Guyana and Venezuela which would give the Americans a free hand in exploiting the wealth of the two countries).

The US investors were also worried that the PPP Government would interfere with their business in Guyana. The American interests in the

country then were the Demerara Bauxite Company and Sprostons Ltd. and were both subsidiaries of the Aluminium Company of Canada, which itself was tied up with the giant monopoly, the Aluminium Company of America. Other American interests were the Reynolds Metal Company which was mining bauxite at Kwakwani, and the Kennecot Corporation and Harvey Aluminium Inc. which were prospecting for bauxite. The London Daily Mail correspondent reported from Georgetown on the 9 October, 1953: "It is reported here reliably that the anxieties of the US Government played a not inconsiderable part in Britain's decision to send troops to British Guiana. For the Americans have installations built during the war at the Atkinson airfield near here."

Following the suspension of the constitution, the Washington Post admitted that the election of the PPP caused alarm in US Government circles. It stated that the overthrow of the PPP was necessary and suggested that real authoritative power for the Governor must be established by Britain. (Actually, the Governor always held authoritative power during the period of the PPP Government in 1953. He used this power in attempts to restrict the PPP from carrying out its progressive policies. The PPP felt that the Governor had both too much power under the Constitution, but it had no power to take it away).

At about the same time, the New York Times on the 13 October, 1953 made the following comment:

"Ever since President Monroe, in December 1823, proclaimed the Doctrine that bears his name, in the name of the United States alone instead of jointly with Great Britain (as has been suggested by British Foreign Secretary Canning, its basic originator), the United States has been pledged to resist every threat of force made by a Power of the Eastern Hemisphere against an established local regime in the Americas. Now for the first time since the Monroe Doctrine was announced, the United States has approved the forceful overthrow of such a local regime by an Eastern Hemisphere Power - in this instance, Great Britain - moreover of local Government chosen in free elections and operating under a constitution."

Despite the statement (See Chapter 134) by Colonial Secretary Lyttelton during a debate in the British Parliament on 22 October, 1953 that ". . . No representations of any kind were received from the US Government before Her Majesty's Government made their decision," the US State Department

quickly expressed satisfaction over the actions of the British Government. The US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs, Henry Byroade, issued a statement on the 31 October, 1953 in which he warned about the rate at which colonial people must be granted their independence - thus implying that Britain must make sure that the colony had a pro imperialist Government. On the 2 November, 1953 the Times of London reported: "It is significant that it should have been an American who . . . . felt compelled to issue a warning against the hasty shedding of their responsibilities by the Imperial powers. . . . Mr. Henry Byroade, the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs. . . . adds a clear declaration of the perils of "premature independence."

The removal of the PPP by the British Government, by both constitutional and military means, and the setting up subsequently of a puppet nominated Interim Government were, therefore, very much welcomed by the US administration.

## VISIT BY JAGAN AND BURNHAM TO ENGLAND AND INDIA -- 1953

The removal of the PPP Government by the British Government was welcomed with glee by some anti-PPP groups in Guyana. The main supporters of the British actions were drawn from the National Democratic Party (NDP) which formed the main opposition in the legislature. The League of Coloured People, led by John Carter, who was also a leader of the NDP, and the anti-democratic British Guiana Village Chairmen's Conference hurriedly dispatched telegrams of support for the British actions to the British Colonial Office in London.

In the Caribbean, Grantley Adams, Chief Minister of Barbados, Alexander Bustamante, Chief Minister of Jamaica, and Norman Manley, the Jamaican opposition leader, also sent telegrams to thank the British Government for overthrowing the PPP Government. Their telegrams threw abuse on Dr. Jagan and hypocritically condemned him and his party for not practising democracy. These three Caribbean leaders were heavily influenced by the prevailing anti-communist propaganda which was also reflected in their messages of support to the British Government.

Despite the intense anti-communist campaign against the PPP by the British Government and its supporters in the USA and the Caribbean, strong criticisms all over the world against the British action in suspending the constitution forced the British Government to debate the issue in Parliament. As already stated, the British Government also issued a White Paper which tried to build the case for the suspension of the constitution, but this document was filled with suppositions and distortions.

The Parliamentary debate was fixed for 22 October 1953, and the PPP decided to send Dr. Jagan and Forbes Burnham to London to provide information to the opposition and also to put the Party's case to the British public. But all impediments were placed in their way to prevent them from reaching London. The Governments of Trinidad, Barbados, Jamaica and the United States stated that they would refuse them to transit through their ports. As a result the major American, British and French airlines refused to take them as passengers. They managed to obtain seats on the Dutch airline (KLM) from Suriname, but because the Suriname Government refused to allow them to overnight, they had to charter a special plane, at very high costs, to take them directly from Guyana to the airport in Suriname on the day of their departure.

On the other hand members of the opposition groups found no problems to get to London to thank the British Government for removing the PPP Government. These persons included John Carter, Lionel Luckhoo, John Fernandes, and Rudy Kendall - all of the National Democratic Party - and John Dare of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce.

In London, the two PPP leaders found little support from among the leadership of the opposition Labour Party who apparently believed the anti-communist propaganda peddled against the PPP.

During the debate on the motion to support the British Government for its action in Guyana, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, launched a tirade of attacks on the PPP and its leaders for promoting communist policies, stating that "Her Majesty's Government is not willing to allow a communist state to be organised within the British Commonwealth." He read out telegrams of support for British actions from Grantley Adams of Barbados, Alexander Bustamante and Norman Manley of Jamaica, and also from the League of Coloured People, which was closely associated with the NDP, and the British Guiana Village Chairmen's Conference. Apparently referring to media editorials that the US Government pressured Britain to remove the PPP Government, Lyttelton insisted that " . . . No representations of any kind were received from the US Government before Her Majesty's Government made their decision."

The motion was eventually approved. Lyttelton had tried hard to expose a "communist" plot by the PPP, but he failed in this. After the debate was completed, the Economist admitted that the British White Paper had not cleared up many people's doubts.

The PPP leaders held a number of public meetings throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland with support from student and leftist organisations. At these meetings they presented the PPP case and were able to win sympathy from members of workers' organisations and from sections of the media. The Labour Party, which the PPP had seen as its ally, refused to associate itself with Jagan and Burnham and threatened action against its affiliates if they offered assistance. The British TUC also refused to provide support having also been influenced by the prevailing anti-communist propaganda.

From Britain, Dr. Jagan and Burnham travelled to India to present their case to the Indian public. They arrived there on 21 November, and during their two-week visit, they held public meetings in a number of cities to inform the people of the situation in Guyana. The highlight of the Indian tour was when Dr. Jagan and Burnham addressed an informal assembly of the both Houses of Parliament. This meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. However, the visit to India did not manage to ensure official Indian support for the cause of the deposed PPP Government, since the Indian Government itself was depending on British support over problems it was facing from Pakistan. In addition, the Indian Government faced "communist" problems in some states, and most likely believed the British anti-communist propaganda against the PPP.



## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

With the freely elected PPP Government removed from office by the British Government, the Governor assumed full powers to manage the day to day affairs of Guyana until arrangements for the setting up of an Interim Government were put in place. Such a Government was needed to administer the country until another constitution was framed.

In planning for the establishment of the Interim Government, the British Government was confronted with a dilemma. Could it establish an Interim Government which was favourable to the people without including members of the majority People's Progressive Party which it had condemned as communist? It was the view of the British that the only way PPP members could be included was either if a split occurred in the Party, or if those regarded as non-communist would cooperate.

Clearly, the British had already set into motion plans to split the PPP since they felt that having some "safe" members of the PPP in the planned Interim government would add some respectability to it. They hoped that the inclusion such persons would enable the colonial authorities to win the confidence of the people. Apparently, however, the time period was too short to bring such plans to fruition.

But the Colonial Office found it extremely difficult to get people with popular support on its Interim Government which it eventually scraped together and named on the 27 December, 1953. The seven-man Executive Council including three businessmen, two persons who were defeated in the 1953 elections (one had lost his deposit), the former Financial Secretary and the leader of the opposition of the deposed House of Assembly. The twenty-four members of the Legislative Council included the head of the Sugar Producer's Association, the director of several companies, five defeated candidates (four of whom had lost their deposits), two civil servants and the members of the opposition of the deposed House. Sitting on the Executive Council and the Legislative Council were the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General and the Financial Secretary.

The members of this puppet Interim Government were mainly elite and middle-class elements drawn from the National Democratic Party which had won only two seats in the 1953 election. This party later merged with other reactionary factions to form the United Democratic Party (UDP).

Thus, the puppet administration replaced back into power the same social and political forces which controlled the country prior to the PPP victory in April 1953.

Shortly after the announcement of the formation of the Interim Government, the PPP expressed its firm opposition to it. The party declared: "It is a decadent and bad form of government which is formed without the consent or choice of the people. It is a reflection on the ability of any people to choose rightly and well. Consequently, ever since our policy and programme were formulated, we have gone on record against the nominated system. . . . To this principle, as indeed to all our principles, we shall always firmly adhere."

On its establishment, the Interim Government publicised big plans and promises to improve economic and social conditions in the country. But among its first actions was its confirmation of the declaration of the existing state of emergency. Under the direction of the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, who assumed dictatorial powers, it detained in prison large numbers of PPP militants. It also placed Dr. Jagan under restriction in February 1954 just after his return from India. He was later imprisoned when he broke the restriction order. Janet Jagan was also imprisoned on trumped up charges.

The Interim Government also re-enforced the Undesirable Publications Ordinance which placed a ban on progressive literature and films. Through the emergency regulations and this Ordinance, hundreds of people were arrested, intimidated and threatened. The youth arm of the PPP, established in 1952, and the British Guiana Peace Committee were banned in December 1953, and in May 1954, the Governor ordered the Police to close down the PPP headquarters in Regent Street, Georgetown. Meanwhile, British soldiers kept up steady patrols throughout the countries to prevent any protests by PPP supporters. They were assisted by many anti-PPP individuals, particularly by the soft-drinks and rum manufacturer, Peter D'Aguiar, who made available his trucks for their regular transport.

However, terror tactics by the Governor and the Interim Government could not force the people to give their support to them, since in addition to their leaders being harassed, social and economic conditions were deteriorating. The housing situation, especially on the sugar estates, was not improving. Unemployment was also increasing as a result of factory closures and technological innovations. The pro-British Daily Chronicle in April 1954

complained: "Unemployment ranks are swelling. People are getting restless. The Government must find work now. They want action today, not merely promises of big things in the future."

Hoping to offset these problems, the Interim Government went on a spending spree. A sum of \$44 million was voted for developmental expenditure for 1954-55. (The Colonial Office had previously agreed to a \$26 million expenditure for the ten-year period, 1949-59. A World Bank mission in 1952 had recommended an expenditure of \$66 million for a five-year development plan.) Thus, the sum voted to be spent by the Interim Government for just one year exceeded by far the previous plans of both the Colonial Office and the World Bank.

The puppet administration went on a propaganda blitz with wild claims and promises as to its proposed development plans. A great deal of wastage occurred and money was wildly spent on planning a number of projects. For example, \$30,000 was spent just to design a seven-storey hospital and one-third of a million dollars was paid to a British consulting firm to plan a 70-mile highway between Georgetown and Rosignol. One important project, the new western wing of the New Amsterdam Hospital which was completed in 1954, could not be utilised by the population since it was used to house British troops stationed in Berbice.

There was also evidence of corruption and nepotism. Lord Lloyd, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, commented in March 1955: "I also hope that efforts will be made to tackle all the causes of discontent, oppression, failure to respond to justified complaint and outright dishonesty and greed."

The PPP described the economic policies of the Interim Government as "national bribery" and "national sell-out". The Party attacked the development plan for its inadequate size and for its lack of emphasis on industrial and agricultural development. The Party also warned the workers that the objective of the Interim Government, in its plan to indulge in heavy expenditure, was an attempt to bribe them away from the PPP.

The promises and lavish spending of the Interim Government were not successful in drawing away support from the PPP. Actually, the strength of the Party grew; the Interim Government was met with such disfavour that it threw into the camp of the PPP persons who were hitherto neutral or

against it. And despite the many efforts to restrict and destroy the PPP, the Party won a majority of seats in most of the Village Councils in Local Government elections held during the beginning of 1954.

## THE SPLIT IN THE TUC

The British White Paper, which cooked up "reasons" for the suspension of the constitution, was also very critical of the Trades Union Council (TUC) for supporting the deposed PPP Government. This attack on the TUC encouraged some leading anti-communist politicians and trade unionists to brand the TUC as being influenced by communists, and they immediately began to make efforts for its disbandment. The prevailing political situation, in the period following the removal of the PPP Government, aided in this process.

Shortly after the PPP won the elections in April 1953, a frequent visitor to Guyana was Serafino Romauldi, a principal agent of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Inter-American Regional Organisation of Workers (ORIT). He worked very closely with the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA) and a number of unions which were under the influence of anti-PPP political parties which formed the political opposition. The anti-communist ICFTU was formed to counter the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), to which the TUC was affiliated.

In November 1953, Romauldi influenced the unions which were under the control of the anti-PPP political parties to seize control of the leadership of the TUC. These unions - the MPCA, the Headmen's Union, the Sugar Boilers' Union, the BG Amalgamated Workers' League, the BG Federation of Moulders and Mechanics, and the BG Mine Workers' Union - called a special meeting of the TUC to which other affiliates were not invited. The meeting was convened by A.T. Gibson, the past president of the TUC, at a time when some of the officers of the Council were travelling abroad.

Significantly, the MPCA, led by Lionel Luckhoo, was not even an affiliate of the TUC having withdrawn its membership in 1952. Also, the BG Amalgamated Workers' League and the BG Federation of Moulders and Mechanics had not paid up their membership dues and were regarded as paper unions (with very few members). They were both being headed by

Winston Glenn, a supporter of the National Democratic Party (NDP) which supported the undemocratic removal of the PPP Government. The MPCA, the Headmen's Union and the Sugar Boilers' Union were widely regarded as company unions under the control of the large sugar planters.

The chief organisers of the special meeting were Lionel Luckhoo, who was also a leading member of the NDP, and Rupert Tello, another leading member of the MPCA. Luckhoo did not contest the 1953 election, but was nominated by the Governor to the State Council, and after the PPP Government was removed, he became an executive member on the Interim Government. Tello was also appointed as a member of the Interim Government even though he was a badly defeated NDP candidate in the 1953 election. In 1955, he succeeded Luckhoo as president of the MPCA

This meeting disbanded the original TUC and elected officers who were antagonistic to the PPP. Rupert Tello was chosen as the general secretary, a post he held for the next seven years. It also established a rule which prevented membership to any union which was associated with the WFTU and the Caribbean Labour Congress. (In 1954, at the annual meeting of the TUC, 17 affiliates called for a discussion of this rule, but this was disallowed by the executive committee).

The "new" TUC immediately applied for membership of the ICFTU which soon controlled all its policies and activities. In the period of the Interim Government, it played a subservient role and meekly supported policies detrimental to workers' interests, and never raised any protests when, under the order of the Governor, militant trade unionists were detained without trial. This also marked the beginning of the period when the leadership of the TUC took a decisive anti-progressive position, preferring to stand in outright opposition to the PPP and its pro-socialist policies.

## THE ROBERTSON COMMISSION

Two months after the suspension of the constitution, the British Government on 2 December 1953 appointed a three-man Commission headed by Sir James Robertson to rationalise the reasons already given by the Colonial Office for removing the PPP Government from office. The members of the Commission arrived in Guyana in early January and examined oral and written evidence from members of the public and various officials.

The PPP decided to boycott the Commission on the grounds that the three-man body was precluded from enquiring into the circumstances which led to the suspension of the constitution. The Party also felt that the Commission itself was weak, uninspiring and unlikely to report objectively. The Chairman of the Commission wrote to Ashton Chase, then Acting Leader of the PPP in the absence of Jagan and Burnham, to persuade him to call off the boycott, but Chase replied that the Party Executive Committee was sticking to its decision.

The Commission's Report, issued in September 1954, justified the British actions, as was expected, but came to a decision that so long as no other party was able to take the place of the PPP, the constitutional advance in Guyana must be halted. It declared: "We are, therefore, driven to the conclusion that so long as the present leadership and policies of the People's Progressive Party continue, there is no way in which any real measure of self-government can be restored in British Guiana." This statement itself was a clear encouragement to opportunistic elements in the PPP to try to change its leadership and policies to suit British interests.

The Commission also proposed that there must be an indefinite period of "marking-time". In the mind of the Commission, this "marking-time" period was to be one in which the PPP would either lose support or change its leadership and policies. Election which would follow this period, hopefully, would bring into power a Government which would support the interests of British colonialism.

The Commission could not estimate the length of the period of "marking-time", declaring that: "Everything will depend upon the extent to which the people of British Guiana, including the leaders of the PPP themselves, can be brought to the realisation that the futile and deliberately disruptive

policies for which the PPP at present stands are no basis for the future constitutional progress of their country."

The British colonialists had a two-fold plan to weaken the PPP. First, the Interim Government would be supplied with loans and grants so that the people would be bribed away from supporting the PPP in its fight against colonialism.

But just in case the people were not willing to stop supporting the PPP, the second part of the plan was to carry out the old policy of divide and rule - to split the Party by giving encouragement to the "moderates" to separate from the "radicals". The Commission was unambiguous about this. It encouraged the road to opportunism and betrayal when it stated: "The extremist leaders of the PPP and the policies for which they stand are the sole barriers to constitutional progress." It then openly suggested that the people and even some of the leaders must get rid of the "extremist" leadership and change the policy of the Party. The general idea was that the right-wing must get rid of the left-wing and the "moderates" must bring the Party's policy in line with the British Government's colonialist plans. Only when this was achieved would there be general election.

The Commission also sowed the seeds of racism by attacking the Indian support in the PPP. It raised the distinction between the Indian "extremist" leader of the Party (Jagan) and the African "democratic socialist" deputy leader (Burnham). It categorically stated that Indian educational and commercial success was a threat to other races, particularly the Africans. It also tried to create the impression that the Indians were not patriotic by stating that "Guianese of African extraction were not afraid to tell us that many Indians in British Guiana looked forward to the day when British Guiana would be part, not of the British Commonwealth, but of an East Indian Empire."

## REPRESSION AGAINST THE PPP - 1953-1955

On the suspension of the constitution and the ousting of the PPP Government, the Governor, Sir Alfred Savage, declared a state of emergency throughout the country. The officer ranks of the police force were doubled in very quick time, and a detention centre was prepared at the Atkinson Field Air Base. Five PPP leaders - Sydney King, Rory Westmaas, Martin Carter, Ajodha Singh and Bally Lachmansingh - were on 24 October 1953 arrested and locked up in this detention camp. Lachmansingh was released not too long after due to ill health, but the others remained in detention without trial for 81 days and they were finally released on 12 January 1954. But they were restricted to their residential districts and had to report to the police two times a week.

Meanwhile, the PPP launched a campaign of civil disobedience, even though some leading members felt that such a campaign was non-revolutionary. The British authorities on the other hand were determined to crush the Party, and the police and the British army carried out raids on the homes of its leaders, many of whom had to obtain police permission to travel out from their areas of residence. Brindley Benn, an executive member of the PPP was restricted to New Amsterdam, while Ram Karran, treasurer of the PPP, was restricted to Bel Air. Cheddi and Janet Jagan were restricted to Georgetown from 1 April 1954. Others placed under residential restriction at the same time were Chrisna Ramsarran, and Eric Huntley. Many other party activists were under permanent observation by the police, while others had to report daily to police stations. Numerous Party members were charged with varying offences ostensibly for breaching the emergency regulations, and some who refused to pay the fines were sentenced to prison terms.

In Berbice, Nazrudeen and Fred Bowman were charged with sedition, but they won their cases through the efforts of their brilliant defence consul, the British lawyer D.N. Pritt. Nazrudeen himself and 74 other persons were also arrested for participating in a May Day procession at Skeldon.

Under the state of emergency, public meetings and gatherings were banned, but this applied only to the PPP, since pro-British political groups were granted permission to hold meetings. PPP leaders were harassed and even their presence at religious ceremonies was regarded by the police as political activity.



This repression by the British colonial authorities and the Interim Government was condemned by the weekly newspaper, the Clarion, a bitter critic of the PPP, when in July 1954 it accused the police and the magistrates of abusing their powers. The newspaper condemned the police for its "campaign of naked brutality against private citizens", and the magistracy for abusing its power "by giving ample support to these police outrages."

Senior civil servants who had showed loyalty to the ousted PPP Government also felt the iron hand of the Interim Government. They were removed from key posts or were refused promotion.

Organisations such as the Demerara Youth Rally, the Pioneer Youth League and the British Guiana Peace Committee were banned on 15 December 1953. And in May 1954, the police, in the effort to clamp down on PPP political activities, closed down the Party's Regent Street headquarters.

In keeping with the Party's policy of civil disobedience, Dr. Jagan broke the restriction order on 3 April by travelling to Mahaicony where he had a branch dental surgery. He was arrested and taken to Georgetown where he was charged and brought before a magistrate. After a preliminary hearing, he was placed on bail and released. As he was walking back to his dental clinic, a crowd of supporters gathered behind him, and immediately the police re-arrested him and 15 others and locked up them in a small cell at the Brickdam Police Station in Georgetown. Others who were eventually charged for demonstrating (or following Dr. Jagan) were Janet Jagan, Rory Westmaas, Martin Carter, Eustace Sam, Eric Braithwaite, P. Sampson, and three others.

Dr. Jagan appeared before Magistrate Guy Sharples the next morning and refused to put up a defence saying that he should not be the one on trial. He told the magistrate that the Governor and the British Government were the ones who should be facing judgement in the court.

The magistrate sentenced him to six months imprisonment with hard labour. This sentence was roundly condemned even by the supporters of the Interim Government and the British Government. The London Tribune

stated: "This is one of the most cowardly and miserable acts of British imperialism since the war."

Dr. Jagan began his prison term at the Camp Street jail in Georgetown, but because of his persistence in holding group discussions on social and political issues with other prisoners, he and other PPP political prisoners, including Ram Karran, (who was jailed in July for four months for breaking his restrictions), were kept in a separate section of the prison. But because there were constant demonstrations by PPP supporters on the streets outside the jail, Dr. Jagan, Ram Karran and two other PPP political prisoners were later transferred to the Mazaruni prison in Essequibo.

After spending five months in prison, Dr. Jagan was released having obtained one month off for good behaviour. His initial release date was 11 September 1954, but since he refused to ready himself for a 4.00 a.m. release instead of the normal 6.00 a.m. release time, he was kept an extra day in prison. The authorities wanted him to leave the jail before daybreak to frustrate the large crowd that was building up to greet him. Nevertheless, on the 12 September a large crowd was on hand to greet him as he walked out from the Camp Street jail.

A few days before Dr. Jagan was released, Janet Jagan was charged by the police for being in possession of a secret Police Riot Manual and for holding a public meeting. The Manual was planted in her house by the police, and the "public meeting" was actually a Hindu religious ceremony which she attended in West Demerara. She was sentenced to prison for six months with hard labour. She served a difficult period of five months and was released almost half-starved on 18 January 1955.

During 1954, the police also charged PPP leaders and supporters under the Undesirable Publications Ordinance. Those charged in June included Dr. Joseph Lachmansingh, Jane Phillips Gay, Ashton Chase, Janet Jagan, Mohamed Khan, Nazrudeen, Brindley Benn, Lancelot Benn, Pat Philips, Vernon Thomas and his grandmother Caroline Azore.

At Vreed-en-hoop, Pandit Misir, Lloyd Duncan, Vincent George, Lawrence Vincent and Edwin Mercurius were charged with violating the emergency regulations. In July 1954, Rory Westmaas, Martin Carter and Fred Bowman were jailed for three months, and in September, Eric Huntley was

sentenced to eight months in prison - all on charges for breaching the emergency regulations.

In August 1954, eight PPP activists were held in detention without trial for periods up to nine months. Those detained were Neville Annibourne, Oudit Jagan, Sookdeo Kawal, Sydney Kuttain, Isaac Etwaru, Bisoon Persaud, Pooran Goolcharran and Eddie Goolcharran.

## THE SPLIT IN THE PPP

Shortly after the ousting of the PPP Government, numerous reactionary elements in Guyana and from abroad spent a considerable amount of time and energy working on the so called "moderates" to seize control of the Party. Open appeals were made to Burnham in the press to take the leadership of the PPP from Dr. Jagan and the "extremists". Apparently, those who made the appeals saw Burnham as an opportunist who would follow the suggestions made by the Robertson Commission.

The British were already viewing Burnham as an outright opportunist. Patrick Gordon Walker who led a British Parliamentary fact-finding trip to Guyana in 1954 declared that Burnham's whole political approach was opportunistic, and that he would "tack and turn as advantage seems to dictate."

By the end of 1954, it was clear that some party leaders had been influenced by the British authorities to seize control of the PPP from Dr. Jagan and his supporters. At a meeting of the Party's Executive Committee held at that time, Burnham, as Chairman, used his casting vote to approve a motion for the holding of a congress on 12-13 February 1955. Five members could not attend the meeting because they were in prison and three others were restricted to their home districts. At a next meeting when only 6 of the 16 members were present, a decision was taken to hold the congress in Georgetown, instead of Berbice, as was agreed upon at the previous congress. Dr. Jagan objected that this decision was unconstitutional since seven members were required for a quorum of the Executive Committee.

In mid-January, Burnham announced that the congress would be held on 12-13 February in Georgetown. Meanwhile attempts to convene meetings of the Party's General Council to discuss the issue failed for lack of a quorum. The General Secretary, Mrs. Jagan, then announced that there would be no congress unless the General Council ratified it. The majority of the members of the Executive Committee, shortly after, decided to hold a series of meetings to resolve the differences over this issue. However, some members were still in prison and others were restricted from moving out from their residential districts and therefore could not attend.

The majority of the members of the Executive Committee felt that the proposed congress should be cancelled because the situation in the country had worsened. However, Burnham argued that members would abandon the Party if the congress was called off, and suggested that the Executive Committee should agree on the persons to be elected at the congress. The majority disagreed indicating that such a process was undemocratic. However, there was no doubt that Burnham and his supporters were intent on getting rid of the so-called extremists. One of his supporters on the Executive Committee, Ulric Fingal, along with Jessie Burnham, was actually enrolling new members into the party free of charge and supplying them with membership cards which were not issued officially by the Party.

At one of the meetings, Dr. Jagan suggested that instead of a congress, the Executive Committee should hold a special conference with a fixed agenda. However, discussions on this suggestion broke down.

Finally, on 5 February, the General Secretary issued a statement indicating that no annual congress would be held in February since it had already been agreed by the Party at its congress in 1953, that the next congress would be held in Berbice during the month of March.

Later on the same day, Burnham circulated a handbill insisting that the congress would be held on 12-13 February. By the following day, a leaflet circulated by the assistant secretary of the Party, Sydney King, called on party members to struggle for the lifting of the state of Emergency saying that only after this was done could a genuine congress be held.

On 7 February, the General Council of the Party issued a statement declaring that according to the Party's constitution the holding of a congress in February was illegal and unconstitutional. Fourteen members signed the statement; five others (Burnham, his wife Sheila and sister Jessie, Dr. Lachmaningh and Ulric Fingal) refused to sign. Three members were absent - Ashton Chase was in London, Eric Huntley was in prison and Clinton Wong had resigned in 1953.

A meeting of the Executive Committee in 8 February decided that Dr. Jagan and Burnham should meet to work out a solution to the impasse. Following these discussions, the Party issued a statement on 11 February signed by Burnham, as Chairman, and Janet Jagan, as General Secretary,

declaring that the meeting to be convened on 12-13 February would be a special conference and not a congress.

Despite this clear statement, two of Burnham's close supporters, Dr. Lachmarsingh and Jai Narine Singh, circulated a leaflet on the evening of 11 February urging people to attend the "congress" to be held at the Auditorium on Charlotte Street on 12 February and at the Metropole Cinema on 13 February. Burnham claimed he was not associated with this leaflet, even though his supporters were openly distributing them. These persons were openly urging party members to disregard the statement issued by Burnham and Mrs. Jagan and were announcing that elections would be held at the "congress". As a result of these developments, seven of the thirteen available members of the Executive Committee, including Dr. Jagan, boycotted the first day of the conference. They, however, attended the sessions on second day at the Metropole Cinema.

Shortly after the meeting started on the second day, Burnham's close associate Clinton Wong, who had resigned from the Party in 1953, requested the suspension of the standing orders on the grounds that he wanted to move a motion of no confidence in the Executive Committee and for the holding of new elections. Even though the majority of the members of the Executive Committee disagreed, Burnham allowed the motion. Immediately, the majority of the Executive Committee (Dr. Jagan, Janet Jagan, Rory Westmaas, Fred Bowman, Martin Carter, George Robertson, Naipaul Jagan and Lionel Jeffrey) and 200 other members - the majority - walked out from the meeting.

Burnham's action, which breached the decision he agreed to only two days before, decisively split the PPP. The splitters "elected" a new "leadership" which comprised of Forbes Burnham as leader, Dr. Lachmarsingh , chairman; Cheddi Jagan, senior vice-chairman; Clinton Wong, junior vice-chairman; Jai Narine Singh, secretary; Jessie Burnham, assistant secretary; Janet Jagan, treasurer; and as general council members Sydney King, Rudy Luck, Ulric Fingal, E. Bobb, A.P Alleyne, R. Mitchell, Surajballi, H. Sargeant, Pandit Misir, Pandit Ramoutar, Jagnarine, Mohamed Khan, R. Fields, Jane Phillips-Gay and M. Edinboro.

Some of these persons "elected" were not part of the Burnham faction, but Burnham and his followers wanted to create an impression that they were in control of the united PPP. However, since the great majority of the PPP

membership refused to follow the splitters, Burnham's group was clearly another entity.

Burnham's group also called itself the People's Progressive Party which also began publishing a newspaper - also given the name Thunder. (This situation was to continue until 1957 when the Burnham group merged with the UDP and named itself the People's National Congress and changing its paper's name to the New Nation).

## THE AFTERMATH OF THE SPLIT

On 15 February 1955, two days after the split, the Executive Committee of the PPP met and expelled Burnham, Jainarine Singh and Dr. Lachmarsingh. Burnham was expelled for "conducting a special conference in a manner which violated the Party's constitution and a decision of the Executive Committee." Singh and Lachmarsingh were expelled for publishing a leaflet on the day before the conference, thus violating a decision of the Executive Committee and calculated to disrupt the unity of the Party. Burnham's sister Jessie and Ulric Fingal were suspended from the Party for issuing membership cards for two weeks before the conference without being authorised to do so by the Executive Committee. (Jessie Burnham, who was assistant secretary on the splitters' group, in 1958 denounced her brother as a racist and opportunist and later rejoined the PPP. Fingal also rejoined the PPP around the same time).

The pro-colonial daily *Argosy* of the 16 February, 1955 wrote about the disciplinary actions of the PPP: "Last night's decision indicates that the Jagan's claim on the unconstitutionality of the elections has been accepted and that the moves by the Party's 'moderates' to oust the 'Reds' from power has failed."

In April 1955, the PPP (led by Dr. Jagan) held a congress at Buxton. It was chaired by Sydney King who moved a motion to declare the elections held at the February conference null and void. This motion was approved as well as another expelling Burnham and his faction from the Party. The delegates at this congress came mainly from the rural areas and it was heavily attended by the Party's African membership. This congress convinced the majority of Africans in the rural areas that Burnham's actions in February showed that his aim was to achieve personal power.

No doubt, the basis of the "right-wing" opportunistic split was the prospect of new election and the calculation that the splitters would take away majority support from the PPP. Burnham felt that he would carry with him the five seats in Georgetown and Lachmarsingh the 8 seats in the sugar belt, thus gaining between them a majority of 13 seats out of the 24 seats in the Legislature.

After the events of February 1955, Burnham and his lieutenants tried desperately to pull the rank and file supporters of the PPP over to his side.



Dr. Lachmarsingh attempted to woo sugar workers who shunned him whenever he tried to meet with them. It was clear that Burnham's hopes to win support from sugar workers had backfired.

Burnham, having failed to pull the PPP membership over to his side, was thus forced to call a congress of his supporters in March 1956. This congress elected Burnham as leader, Dr. Lachmarsingh as chairman, and Jai Narine Singh as secretary. Other officers elected were Clinton Wong, senior vice-chairman; Ulric Fingal, junior vice-chairman; Jessie Burnham, assistant-secretary, M. Edinboro, treasurer; and general council members, Surajballi, Robert Mitchell, H. Sargeant, Mc Greggor, Jagnarine, Shepherd (from Corentyne), Shepherd (from Essequibo), Mohammed Nazir, Evelyn Bobb, R. Fields, Kamal, Jane Phillips-Gay, A.P. Alleyne, Mc Almont and Paul Tennessee.

By its own admission, Burnham's party declared that the split was rightist. At its Congress in March 1956, in reviewing "Party tactics" and "mistakes of the past", it openly expressed that members were anti-communist and that was why they split the PPP.

Jainarine Singh, Secretary of Burnham's Party, declared in the Argosy of the 22 January, 1957 that "...we told the truth about the reason why there has been this split in the PPP. We told the people that Communism was the basis of it all. We, not being Communists, could not support a Communist policy, and that is why we parted company at that time."

Burnham emerged from the split as a racial leader in the urban areas. The PPP under the leadership of Cheddi Jagan continued to have a large following in the rural areas especially on the East Coast of Demerara. A majority of the African members of the General Council and the Executive Committee remained in the Party. It was not until Sydney King left the Party to join Burnham in 1957 did the African support on the East Coast Demerara, where King was very popular, gravitate towards Burnham.

Burnham's close supporter, R.B.O. Hart, writing in the Guiana Graphic on 20 February 1955 - one week after the split- stated: "Burnham now emerges as a racial and sectional leader. He leads the African section of the population, rather more than less. Jagan has greater claims to being called a national leader, since in any show-down, Jagan will get ten times as many Africans following him, as Burnham will get Indians."



## THE ALL-PARTY CONFERENCES

After the split in the PPP, Burnham on the one hand and the Interim Government on the other made many efforts to win over the supporters of Dr. Jagan and the PPP to their side. The Interim Government led by the new Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, tried its best to destroy the leadership of the people by restricting and imprisoning leaders of the PPP. The authorities also prevented the Party from holding public meetings to bring the people up-to-date with the events happening in the country. Despite these drawbacks, the PPP did not lose the support of the Guyanese people. The supporters of colonial rule realised that the Party's strength was not being diminished, and this fact urged the Chairman of Bookers, Jock Campbell, to call early in 1956 for all political parties and groupings to form a common front against the PPP.

To attempt to fulfil this aim, W.J.Raatgever, Sugrim Singh and Rev. D.C. Bobb, members of the interim legislature, sponsored an All-Party Conference when they called a meeting of political parties and social groups at the Auditorium in Georgetown on the 5 April, 1956. The PPP also attended the meeting even though the general objective was to organise all the groupings into an anti-PPP coalition. But the meeting did not achieve this objective since most of those attending agreed with Dr. Jagan's view that there should be united action against the state of emergency, and also for the holding of a free general election. Dr. Jagan tried to get this moved as a motion but the sponsors of the Conference opposed it, and Raatgever, the chairman of the meeting, ruled against any discussion.

Despite this, the meeting agreed to a compromise motion moved by Dr. Jagan for the Conference to prepare a new agenda to discuss ways and means of achieving the aim of struggling for a free general election and for united action against the emergency. The next meeting of the Conference was fixed for the 26 April, but the announcement by the Governor of the new constitutional proposals [See Chapter 142] on the 25 April frightened the sponsors into calling off the meeting.

Recognising the urgent need for unity, Dr. Jagan took the initiative and urged three other members of the legislature, Dr. J.B. Singh, Hugh Wharton and Leslie Davis to set up another All-Party Conference. The PPP, the UDP, Burnham's group, and a few independents participated. The

National Labour Front, formed by Lionel Luckhoo after the UDP was split, refused to attend.

The objective of this meeting was to put joint pressure on the Governor and the Colonial Office to bring about an end to the emergency, the removal of restrictions and the restoration of the suspended constitution. There was also a general understanding that later, the parties, by agreement, would face the general election jointly and form a broad-based government.

The All-Party Conference wrote the Governor to request a large measure of self-government and an end to the restrictions under the emergency. The PPP also wrote separately asking for a meeting with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd. The Secretary of State, in an arrogant reply through the Governor, stated that he was not prepared to discuss with the leaders of the PPP, or any other political leaders in British Guiana, the issues which they were championing or any amendments to the constitutional proposals which had recently been announced.

With some form of unity now showing in the All-Party Conference, the Governor attempted to get some anti-PPP elements to split the Conference. In a calculated plan he announced in the Legislative Council on the 26 July, 1956 that "the question of British Guiana's participation in Federation would not be raised for decision or be brought before the next legislature by the Governor or the official members."

This statement was made because the constitutional proposals had also been attacked by the anti-federationists who were also supporters of the Interim Government. However, since these persons felt that the new legislature would commit Guyana to the West Indies Federation, they joined the All-Party Conference in attacking the constitutional proposals. The Governor's plan, thus, backfired.

After some delay, Governor Renison eventually met with a delegation of the All-Party Conference on the 28 July, 1956, but he was very uncooperative and was not prepared to engage in any discussion. This meeting was thus a total failure.

The All-Party Conference disbanded later in 1956. This was due to the apathy of the convenors and the "bad blood" which the 1956 city election in Georgetown had brought about between the contestants, the UDP and

Burnham's group. The latter having won two seats, declared that it would be contesting all the seats in the general election under the Renison constitution. The UDP also made a similar announcement.

With the collapse of the All-Party conference and country gearing for another general election, Dr. Jagan made a last effort to achieve national unity. This happened in Ghana in March 1957 where both he and Burnham were invited to attend the independence celebrations. There Dr. Jagan suggested to the other West Indian leaders - Grantley Adams of Barbados, Norman Manley of Jamaica and Patrick Solomon of Trinidad and Tobago - that the presence of both Guyanese leaders in Ghana afforded them the opportunity to discuss common problems with the West Indian leaders acting as convenors of a meeting. Dr. Jagan hoped that the West Indian leaders would assist in forcing Burnham to reunite with the PPP or join in a united front government. He also spoke with Kwame Nkrumah, the Prime Minister of Ghana, to exert his influence on Burnham.

However, Dr. Jagan's efforts failed and no meeting was held between the West Indian and the two Guyanese leaders. But later, when Patrick Solomon returned to Trinidad, he announced that the West Indian leaders met with Burnham on three occasions in Ghana, but that Dr. Jagan was not present. This was the first time Dr. Jagan heard about these meetings and he immediately corrected the impression given by the Trinidad leader that he was uncooperative. It was obvious that Burnham had convinced the West Indian leaders and Dr. Nkrumah that he would not only win the elections but that under his leadership, Guyana would join the West Indian Federation.

On his return from Ghana, Burnham then issued a letter calling for the defeat of Dr. Jagan. Commenting on this letter, Sydney King, in a message to the Fifth Annual Congress of the PPP in April 1957 declared that the campaign of the All-Party Conference and efforts towards national unity were "stabbed in the back" by Burnham's letter which called for the defeat of Dr. Jagan.

## FAILURE OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

When efforts failed to deplete the strength of the PPP, the Colonial Office, for psychological reasons replaced the principal personalities involved in the suspension of the 1953 constitution with hope that the new appointees would do a better job in undermining PPP support. Sir Patrick Renison replaced Sir Alfred Savage as Governor, Derek Jakeway succeeded John Gutch as Chief Secretary and Attorney General, Frank Holder, was promoted to Chief Justice. But the changing of these officials made no impact on the people. Attempts at national bribery were proving very expensive; corruption was widespread and the Interim Government came under attack from every quarter. Further, the cost of living was rapidly rising and rice farmers suffered a drop in prices in 1956.

The UDP, whose members and supporters comprised the majority in the interim Legislative Council, was worried that the policies of the puppet Government were not winning support away from the PPP. The PPP, with widespread national support, continued to maintain that only the restoration of democracy and national determination would improve the social and economic conditions in the country. A desperate UDP, therefore, wrote to the Chief Secretary, on the 20 December, 1954 complaining that the Interim Government could not win the confidence of the people unless independent Ministries of Industry and Commerce, Education and Labour were established.

As a result of poor performance of the Interim Government, even its mouthpiece, the Daily Chronicle on the 27 November, 1955 complained in an editorial: "Two years have gone by and we are no better off than we were before the political debacle. We have had more houses built, we have had self-aided schemes, a little of this and a little of that, but the population is increasing faster than ever, unemployment is increasing and the cost of living continues to rise. We submit to marking time politically, and even here we expect the time has come for some closure to that, but must we submit to marking time where the economic development of the country is concerned? Must we continue to live as we are living, or should we say existing? Let there be an end to this nonsense."

W.J. Raatgever, President of the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Interim Government, during a debate in the Legislative Council in November 1955 declared: "So far as I have seen - and I have

gone around quite fairly - there has been no developmental work done in this country." Even Jock Campbell, Chairman of Bookers and champion of British colonialism, had been forced to admit in August 1955 that there was "a very unsatisfactory state of affairs" existing in the country and that there could be no progress in a "political vacuum."

The UDP saw their participation in the puppet Interim Government as a chance to be in "power", and many of their members who held leading positions in the administration (such as John Carter, Lionel Luckhoo and W.O.R. Kendall) were fearful of any forthcoming election. On the 26 October, 1956, during discussions in the Executive Council on the issue of a date for general election under the Renison Constitution (announced earlier in June), Kendall, the Minister of Communications and Works, called for a delay in the election to allow the Interim Government to win some support. Kendall stated that the Interim Government needed more time to allow its projects to have some impact on a large part of the population.

W.T. Lord, another nominee to the Legislative Council, complained on the 21 December, 1956 that the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Mines, Frank Mc David, had failed to formulate a policy with regard to either land or agriculture and that "not one constructive idea has been produced."

Clearly, the Interim Government was suffering from inertia. Money available for development in 1954-55 was under-spent because the members of the government could not come to an agreement on how to use it. Of the \$44 million earmarked for that period, only \$26 million was actually spent.

Faced with a deteriorating economic situation, the British Government sought an electoral solution after it felt that the PPP would lose if the electoral boundaries were manipulated. The British Government probably also developed the opinion that PPP supporters were either disillusioned because of many of their leaders being imprisoned, or had moved away to join with the Burnham group after the split in the Party in February 1955. The British Government was apparently convinced that the Burnham group would win the election, or would join with the UDP in a coalition government, thus forcing the PPP in opposition.

The colonial authorities also wanted a commitment by an elected government on the issue of the West Indian Federation. In a statement, Governor Renison explained: "If British Guiana was still without any form of

representative government which would decide whether not to join the Caribbean Federation, it would be a disappointment."

The leaders of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad also influenced the British Government to reach the decision to hold a general election since they were convinced by Burnham's propaganda line that he would win any forthcoming election and lead Guyana into the West Indian Federation. (The West Indian leaders, Grantley Adams, Norman Manley and Patrick Solomon of Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad respectively, apparently gave Burnham their unilateral support when they later met with him in Ghana in March 1957.)

The Governor admitted that the period of the Interim Government was a "frustrating period of marking time". This was not strange since dictatorial and non-democratic rule by puppets appointed by the British Government could not generate any form of progress.

Finally, a new constitution drawn up by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, was announced on the 25 April, 1956. It was even more backward than the one proposed by the Robertson Commission (which met in 1954 to rationalise the overthrow of the PPP Government). It provided for a single chamber Legislative Council of 12 elected members counterbalanced by 8 nominated and 4 ex-officio members, and an Executive Council of 5 elected members counterbalanced by 4 ex-officio members and one nominated. The Robertson Commission, though providing for similar control of the Executive Council by the Governor, had recommended that the legislature should have, as in 1953, an elected majority. For the House of Assembly, it had proposed 25 elected seats, one more (for Rupununi) than in 1953.

Opposition to these constitutional proposals were immediately registered by the PPP and other political parties. The PPP demanded that the new constitution must introduce a large measure of self-government.

Shortly after the announcement of the proposals was made, the Governor left for London for consultations and on his return in October 1956, he announced modification in the original plan - that the legislature would have 14 elected seats instead of 12, three ex-officio members and as much as 11 other nominated members.



Even before general elections were announced for August 1957, Burnham declared that his group would contest all 14 seats. The UDP also made a similar announcement. On the other hand the PPP continued to agitate for changes in the proposed constitution and finally decided to contest 13 of the seats after it was unable to get the other political parties and groupings to form a united front to contest the election.

At the general election, the PPP convincingly won 9 seats, while Burnham's group won 3, the UDP 1 and the NLF 1. After the election, Burnham's group merged with the UDP to form the People's National Congress (PNC). With the formation of the PPP Government (even though with limited powers) the period of the Interim Government came to an unlamented end.

## THE SHOOTING AT SKELDON, 1957

Even as the political situation in the country was taking centre stage, workers in the industrial sector continued to raise their voices against existing working conditions. At Skeldon sugar a labour dispute in January 1957 resulted in police violence against the sugar workers. The dispute started when shovel-men were given the task to dig drains to a depth of six inches in the field. The workers complained that the supervisors used faulty measuring devices thus forcing them to do more work than was required. In addition, they protested against the low payment they received for the work they completed.

This problem was brought to the attention of the Sugar Producers' Association (SPA) by the secretary of the MPCA, the recognised trade union. The SPA then referred the matter to the management of the Skeldon estate which did not, at that time, regard it as a matter of emergency, and refused to meet with representatives of the union unless five day's notice for a meeting was given.

The shovel-men, in an effort to press their case, called a strike on 13 February with the support of the union. Two of the workers, Salim and Mendonca, organised the others in a protest demonstration, and other sugar workers joined the strike in solidarity. Throughout the day, a large crowd gathered in the vicinity of the factory with the intention of halting all operations there, and some factory workers who did not join them were verbally abused and assaulted.

Early in the evening a police contingent arrived and attempted to disperse the crowd. After this effort failed, police reinforcements, equipped with rifles, tear smoke and grenades, were summoned to the scene. The crowd was ordered to disperse and leave the scene, but this request was not obeyed. The police then fired tear gas which caused people in the crowd to stampede and scatter. One policeman, manning a machine-gun near the entrance of the factory, opened fire on the stampeding workers and injured 13 of them. The police, shortly after, arrested 13 persons, including Mendonca whom they claimed was inciting the other workers.

After peace was restored, the Governor appointed a commission of enquiry comprising Justice Kenneth Stoby and W. G. Carmichael. This commission

heard evidence from 43 witnesses, 18 of whom were called by the MPCA which presented evidence on the workers' behalf.

In evidence presented by the police, a claim was made that when the policemen arrived on the scene, they found the workers disturbing the peace by cursing and pelting bricks and pieces of sugar cane. In countering this accusation, the MPCA's witnesses claimed that the workers who had gathered outside the factory were singing and enjoying themselves.

The commission found that the policeman who opened fire made an error of judgement since the nearest person to him was more than 75 yards away from the entrance to the factory and he was not threatened in any way whatsoever. The commission also refused to accept the police contention that they were pelted with stones and pieces of sugar cane since the evidence showed that the police moved freely among the crowd. As a result it concluded that the crowd did not present any danger to other persons and property and thus violent police actions was unnecessary.

Regarding the cause of the strike, the commission stated that the management of the estate should be aware that when shovel-men dug six inches of drain, such a task actually involved more than half of the work needed to excavate twelve-inch drains. It, however, did not make any ruling on the demand for extra pay by the shovel-men.

The management of Skeldon estate did not hesitate to victimise some of the workers who went on strike. One of those who was penalised was Mendonca who was dismissed from his job during the period when the Commission was holding its meetings.

## THE "ULTRA-LEFTIST" SPLIT - 1956

About eighteen months after Burnham led the right-wing elements in splitting the PPP (in February 1955), the Party was affected by another split, this time from a small group which was headed by Martin Carter, Lionel Jeffrey, Rory Westmass, and Keith Carter. Their political position from time to time received support from Sydney King.

The members of this faction held leading positions in the Demerara Youth League (the front-name of the PYO) and the British Guiana Peace Committee where they took what the Party leadership regarded as some "ultra-left" positions. These exposed the Party to heavy attacks and criticisms from both the anti-PPP forces and the "right-wing" of the Party itself. During the 1953 May Day parade in Georgetown, this group displayed a huge banner of Stalin, even though the Party had decided not to display any banners showing support for the Soviet leader.

Clearly a rift was brewing, and from 1954 they began to attack the party on two issues. First, they stated that the party line of non-violence and civil disobedience against the Interim Government was anti-Marxist and non-revolutionary. Second, they demanded the abandonment of the Party's stand on the Federation issue and wanted unconditional support of the planned West Indian Federation. Their attacks were directed against Dr. Jagan for his support for non-violence and civil disobedience, and for his and the Party's view that the electorate should decide by referendum if Guyana should enter the West Indian Federation.

At the 1956 Congress of the PPP, Dr. Jagan sharply criticised the position of this faction in a paper submitted to the Congress. In this paper, Dr. Jagan described their pro-federation line as "adventurist". He explained that the 1955 split had weakened the national movement and it would be unwise not to consider the views and weaknesses of the masses. He suggested that because of the existing political conditions, the leadership could not move too far ahead of the followers. He also argued that the PPP, as a broad national movement, led by Marxists but appealing to all sections, including local patriotic capitalists who were prepared to oppose colonialism and imperialism, "must guard against right and left opportunism".

In a direct ideological debate with the group who accused the Party of taking anti-Marxist positions - (the members of this faction were also fond of quoting from the works of Marxist ideologies in attempts to back their positions) - Dr. Jagan used the occasion to answer them by also heavily referring to the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, among others, to expose the dogmatic views of this faction.

Dr. Jagan stated: ". . . . up to October 1953, we committed deviations to the left. We definitely overrated the revolutionary possibilities of our Party . . . . We became bombastic. . . . We were attacking everybody at the same time." Since Carter and Westmass, and also King, were regarded as the most "bombastic" Marxists in the Party, they felt that Dr. Jagan's statement attacked them personally and was aimed at blaming the "left-wingers" for the suspension of the constitution in 1953.

The faction finally seceded when the Party took disciplinary action against Keith Carter for refusing to obey Party instructions. Significantly, Sydney King attempted to defend the position of this faction at the congress, but he refused to join them in their secession from the Party.

## THE 1957 GENERAL ELECTION

In October 1956, the Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, announced that the constitutional proposals made public in April had been modified and that the new legislature would be made up of 14 elected members, three ex-officio nominated members and up to 11 other nominated members. The 14 constituencies (for the elected members) would be the same as for the 1947 election, before the introduction of adult suffrage.

The PPP accused the Governor of "gerrymandering" since the constituencies did not reflect a balanced distribution of the voting population in 1956. Dr. Jagan, in a protest to the Chief Secretary, Derek Jakeway, pointed out that the unfair division of the constituencies was aimed at helping those who opposed the PPP. It showed that in Georgetown, Burnham's area of strength, five constituencies (for the 1953 elections) were made into three, while in the Corentyne (East Berbice), a stronghold of the PPP, three and a half constituencies (for 1953) were made into one. The East Berbice constituency had 31,947 voters compared to the anti-PPP area of New Amsterdam which had 5,879.

Jakeway dismissed the protest of the PPP and admitted that the object of the manipulation of the constituencies was to bring about a defeat of the Party.

The general election was fixed for 12 August 1957, and in preparation for it, the PPP attempted to form a united front, particularly with Burnham's group. As was stated earlier (in Chapter 141), efforts were made by Dr. Jagan in Ghana to forge an understanding with Burnham, but this failed. Through the All-Party Conference, Dr. Jagan had also hoped that a broad united front would have been formed to contest the election on a joint slate and to form a national government aimed at winning independence for the country. After these efforts failed, the PPP decided to contest against four other parties: the United Democratic Party (UDP), the National Labour Front (NLF), the PPP (Burnham), and the tiny recently-formed Guiana National Party.

Early in 1957, an attempt was made by leading supporters of Burnham to unite the UDP and PPP (Burnham) but this failed. Burnham was very upset about this and he attacked the leaders of the UDP as "collaborators", "traitors" and "loyal Kikuyus". He also labelled the PPP as "communist", as did the NLF and the UDP in their election campaign against the PPP. The

NLF, in an effort to win over Indians, also added anti-federation to its platform.

The PPP faced a number of disadvantages during this period. The 1955 split had divided its mass support and during the 1953-57 period many leading members were detained, restricted or jailed. However, the Party was able to win sympathy and support due to the fact that it did not succumb to colonial repression and the detention and imprisonment of its leaders, particularly Cheddi and Janet Jagan, during the period of the Interim Government.

British officials and foreign big business also joined in the campaign against the PPP. They claimed that a PPP Government, because of its socialist policies, would not attract foreign investors and that it would receive no cooperation from the British Government. They were able to influence all the West Indian Governments, which also expressed opposition to the PPP.

On 16 February 1957, the PPP received an indication of its support among rice farmers in the country. In the Rice Producers' Association election, its candidates won almost every position that was contested. These results apparently encouraged the Party to contest the general election after it failed to win support for an all-party alliance.

But the PPP felt a severe blow just before nomination day (in early July) when Sydney King refused to be one of its candidates. Dr. Jagan and other leaders pleaded with him to accept nomination for the East Demerara constituency, but he adamantly refused. No doubt, King was still bitter over Dr. Jagan's criticisms of his close friends at the Party's 1956 congress, but he, at least up to the time of the Party's fifth congress in April 1957, firmly opposed those who tried to bring about a rift between himself and Dr. Jagan.

When King refused to be a PPP candidate, the Party nominated Balram Singh Rai to contest the East Demerara constituency. Rai, who had opposed the PPP in 1953, joined the Party after the suspension of the constitution when it faced repression from the British authorities. The PPP also named candidates for 12 other constituencies; it did not contest the North West District constituency because of lack of resources,

With an open rift now existing between the PPP and King, Burnham immediately began to express support for him. The two men soon formed an alliance even though King had always been a strong critic of Burnham. King then entered the election race against Rai as an independent candidate with strong support from Burnham whose party did not nominate a candidate for that constituency. Burnham campaigned heavily in the constituency and urged his supporters to vote for King.

During the election campaign, the PPP appealed to the electorate to give it an overall majority which would allow it to select the five ministers and the one of the two nominated members of the Executive Council. The Party argued that by winning a majority of the seats it would be able to win advanced constitutional concessions like those recently granted to Trinidad, Malaya and Mauritius.

The PPP also presented its manifesto which outlined its planned programme for labour, trade and industry, communications, the interior, health and housing, agriculture, social services, local government, education, art, culture and sports. With regards to the West Indian Federation, the Party stated that it would join if the Federation was granted dominion status with internal self-government for each unit territory. It added that Guyana would enter the Federation only after the people vote for it in a national referendum.

The PPP contested 13 constituencies, the PPP (Burnham) 13, the UDP 8, and the Guyana National Party 1. Only the NLF, which was heavily backed by big business, contested all 14 constituencies. There were six independent candidates.

On election day, there was an obvious lack of interest among the electorate. One of the reasons was because many of the Indian and African voters, who had solidly supported the united PPP in 1953, were disappointed that the rift was not healed. Also, on the East Coast Demerara, voters were also confused over the alliance between Burnham and King. At the end of the day, only 56 percent of the voters cast their votes. When the results were declared, the PPP had won nine of the 13 constituencies it contested, acquiring 48 percent of the total votes; PPP (Burnham) won three (all in Georgetown), the UDP 1 (New Amsterdam) and the NLF 1 (North West District).



Sydney King, even though he received more than 6,000 votes, was defeated by Rai. The results of the election for that seat saw a clear division of the voters along ethnic lines since much of the African supporters of the PPP in East Demerara deserted and voted for King.

Dr. Jagan himself won a huge majority in East Berbice, and the amount of votes he received was more than the total votes received by the five opposition members. Among others who lost badly were Dr. Joseph Lachmansingh, Burnham's lieutenant, and Lionel Luckhoo, the leader of the NLF.

## THE PROGRAMME OF THE NEW PPP GOVERNMENT

Shortly after the PPP won the 1957 general election, Dr. Jagan announced his list of ministers. They included himself as Minister of Trade and Industry, Brindley Benn (for Education and Social Development), Edward Beharry (for Agriculture), Janet Jagan (for Labour, Health and Housing) and Ram Karran (for Works). Under the constitution, the Governor remained responsible for defence and external affairs.

It was obvious that all the plans of the Governor and the colonial authorities to prevent a PPP victory had failed. They, therefore, had no choice but to work in cooperation with the new government. As part of this cooperation, the Governor appointed only six nominated members to the new Legislative Council, instead of the maximum eleven for which he was empowered. Four of these nominees were selected on the advice of the new PPP government. Thus, with the PPP holding nine elected seats and with support from at least four of the nominated members, the party was guaranteed a majority over the total votes of the five opposition elected members, the three ex-officio members and the other two nominated members.

The new Government immediately began to implement its development programme. It was dissatisfied with the plan handed down by the Interim Government and argued for one with a larger scope in order to push development and reduce unemployment. The original programme called for an expenditure of \$90 million over the 1956-1960 period. The PPP agitated for a more feasible plan which called for an expenditure of \$200 million over the four-year period. The Government stated that its emphasis would be on agriculture and industrial development in order to encourage diversification and sustained growth.

The British Government refused to support this expanded plan, and Dr. Jagan began an attempt to raise capital resources to meet the needs. The British immediately launched a campaign to frustrate this process and refused to guarantee a loan of eight million pounds sterling from the Swiss Bank in London. Efforts by Dr. Jagan in Washington also failed, no doubt because of British intervention to the US Government and the World Bank.

Faced with such opposition from the colonial authorities, the Government could not proceed with an expanded industrialisation programme, which

would have benefited the urban communities immensely, and so it shifted its emphasis to agricultural development to the benefit of the rural communities.

The political opponents of the PPP seized on this development to accuse the Government of racial discrimination, claiming that agricultural development would benefit Indians who predominated in rural areas. By not giving much emphasis to industrialisation, the political opposition claimed that Africans who resided mainly in the urban areas would not receive similar benefits, particularly in the area of employment. Interestingly, these politicians did not attack the colonial authorities for frustrating the Government's efforts to secure loans for industrial development.

Nevertheless, the Government gave tangible encouragement to private enterprise to boost industrialisation. Thus, by 1958 the Demerara Bauxite Company had already started on the construction of an alumina plant at Mackenzie, and Banks Breweries had enjoyed a successful first year of production. The Government also enacted legislation which allowed the duty free importation of machinery and equipment for private industry.

Major works carried out included the construction of extension roads, a new telephone system, new schools, hospitals and housing schemes, and the rehabilitation of steamer, railway and harbour services. The new large drainage and irrigation scheme covering 27,000 acres and aimed at settling 1,500 families, was started at Black Bush Polder on the Corentyne. A flood control and irrigation scheme at Boerasiri in the West Demerara area for the improvement of 130,000 acres of land also was on stream. And engineering works for a drainage and irrigation project at Tapakuma in Essequibo had already begun.

With agriculture being emphasised, there was a steady increase in the acreage of land under rice, which resulted in rice production increasing from 137,000 tons in 1957 to more than 175,000 tons the following year.

The early years of the government also saw improvements in the labour conditions of workers. Legislation was enacted to allow for holidays with pay and benefits under the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance. In 1958, the first day of May, Labour Day, was declared a public holiday after a motion was passed in the Legislative Council.

In the area of education, the government by the end of 1958 constructed four new primary schools and extended the size of a few others, thus providing 2,271 additional places for students. The Government Training College for teachers expanded its intake by 30, and a series of refresher courses for primary and secondary teachers was instituted by the Ministry of Education throughout the country.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE, 1958

The PPP government set out with determination to press the demand for independence for Guyana. To encourage the people's awareness and to whip up support for the cause, PPP leaders held public meetings throughout the country. This issue was eventually raised in the Legislative Council on 6 June 1958 when opposition representative Jai Narine Singh—now sitting as an "independent" member—introduced a motion urging the British government to discuss constitutional reform for Guyana.

In the discussion that followed, Jagan introduced a resolution which called on the British government to grant Guyana the status of a "fully self-governing territory" within the Commonwealth. Forbes Burnham moved an amendment to the resolution suggesting that Guyana should be granted only "full internal self-government." However, this amendment was defeated and on 11 June, the resolution presented by Jagan was passed unanimously. The resolution called on the British government to receive a representative delegation approved by the Legislative Council to discuss:

1. Constitutional reform with the view to the granting to British Guiana of the status of a fully self-governing territory within the Commonwealth; and
2. The working out of an agreement between the British Guiana government and the United Kingdom government for a transitional period whereby the United Kingdom government would exercise control over defense and give guidance in foreign relations other than trade and commerce.

After this resolution was passed, Jagan urged the British government, as was already done for Trinidad and Jamaica, to grant his government cabinet status which would allow the Chief Minister to replace the Governor as chairman of the Executive Council. The British government refused to do so, but in September 1958, the Secretary of State for the Colonies instructed Governor Renison to establish a constitutional committee to consider proposals for a new constitution. This committee, set up on 5 November, included the Speaker as chairman, and all the elected and nominated members of the Legislative Council. The official members of the legislature served on the committee as advisers without voting rights.

During the meetings of the commission, the PPP members called for total independence, a fully elected unicameral legislature, and voting at the age of 18 under the first-past-the-post system. The PNC on the other hand argued for internal self-government, a bicameral legislature, and voting at the age of 21 under the system of proportional representation (PR).

The proposal for proportional representation was first suggested by nominated member Anthony Tasker who was later to become head of the Booker companies in Guyana.

The committee held 19 meetings and finally presented its report to the Governor on 6 August 1959. Its main recommendation was that Guyana should become an independent state within the Commonwealth with the British Queen as head of state to be represented by the Governor, and a cabinet and parliamentary system of government.

The committee also suggested that the legislature should be unicameral with elections held every four years under a block-vote modification of the first-past-the-post system. Under this system, two members would be elected in each constituency with each voter having two votes through which they would make their "first" and "second" choices from among the candidates. There would be, thus, 48 members elected in the 24 constituencies, as were demarcated in 1953. The Speaker should also be elected from among the 48 members, and the power to dissolve the legislature should reside in the hand of the Governor on the advice of the Prime Minister.

The Committee, based on a majority vote, recommended that elected ministers should take over the responsibilities of the Chief Secretary, Attorney General and Financial Secretary. Internal security, including control of the police, should also be handled by an elected minister. And a Defense and External Affairs Council, with an equal number of members appointed by the Governor and the Prime Minister, with the former as Chairman, should be responsible for defense and external affairs.

Another recommendation was that a Council of Ministers comprising nine to twelve members of the legislature should be appointed. The Governor should appoint a Prime Minister on whose advice other ministers would be named.

A proposal by Jagan that the new constitution should include a "fundamental rights" section based on the UN Declaration on Human Rights won unanimous approval.

## THE ORGANISATION OF THE PNC

The results of the 1957 elections came as a severe shock to Burnham and his followers. Sydney King, who was unsuccessful as an independent candidate, shortly after, joined Burnham's party which renamed itself the People's National Congress (PNC).

At a special congress held on the 5-6 October 1957 at the Astor Cinema in Georgetown, the following officers were elected: Forbes Burnham, leader; Dr. Lachmarsingh, chairman; Francis Da Silva, first vice-chairman; Jai Narine Singh, general secretary; Andrew Jackson and Jessie Burnham, assistant secretaries; Stanley Hugh, treasurer. The executive council also included Dr. J.A. Nicholson, George Young, Mrs. Mentore, Curtis Charles, Brentol Blackman, M. Edinboro, Sydney King and Jane Phillips-Gay. (Jessie Burnham resigned from the PNC in 1958 and two years later rejoined the PPP).

The election of King, who was regarded as a "black nationalist" did not seem to win the support of Jai Narine Singh, one of the few Indians in the party's leadership structure. Early in 1958, Singh resigned from the PNC and organized his own party which he called the Guiana Independence Movement. Sydney King was then named general secretary. By his inclusion in the top leadership, the PNC was able to win the support of the great majority of Africans on the East Coast Demerara, and this certainly helped to polarize party politics along racial lines.

The PPP, in the meantime, continued to command the support of a significant proportion of the African population. This proved to be worrisome for Burnham who decided to form an alliance with the African middle class from whom he had previously received little support. His plan was to organize the influential anti-PPP African politicians under his banner with the hope that they would attract all the Africans in the country to the PNC.

The African middle class was represented by the United Democratic Party (UDP), led by John Carter. Late in 1958, Burnham started negotiations with the UDP, and finally, in March 1959 the two parties held a joint congress in Georgetown. The UDP disbanded itself and merged with the PNC and the joint membership elected a new executive committee. Burnham was elected leader, and the executive committee included his close supporters,



Sydney King and Andrew Jackson. Prominent members of the disbanded UDP such as John Carter, Eugene Correia and Neville Bissember were also elected.

The leaders of the PNC believed in different ideologies. Some were socialists while others, particularly the former UDP members, were strongly conservative and pro-capitalist. Their conflicting views were often expressed at public meetings and obviously generated confusion among their rank and file supporters. The party, therefore, had great difficulty in formulating an official policy statement. An agreement on a policy statement was not arrived at until early 1961 when Burnham invited Rawle Farley, a Guyanese economist at the University of the West Indies, to mediate with the members of the executive committee.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED FORCE

During 1959, the PNC became interested in organising a united front to include not only Africans, but also Portuguese, Chinese and hopefully the Amerindians to combat the PPP which it regarded as pro-Indian. But this plan was later abandoned after the financially prosperous Portuguese section of the population refused to give support to Burnham and the PNC.

Towards the end of the year, a group of Portuguese businessmen and a handful of East Indian trade unionists and senior civil servants who opposed the PPP began a series of private meetings to work out a strategy on how to stop the PPP from winning the elections to be held in 1961. Peter D'Aguiar, a leading businessman, eventually became the leader of this "third force".

The members of this "third force" gave full support to a group of persons calling themselves "Defenders of Freedom". The "Defenders of Freedom", affiliated to the Catholic Church, received financial backing from the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade of the United States, and was widely seen as a CIA front organisation aimed at toppling the PPP Government which it labelled as "communist". The group openly opposed the PPP Government in protest exercises and strongly opposed the demand for political independence from Britain, and at times attempted to violently break up pro-independence public rallies.

Realising their political weakness, the members of the "third force" asked D'Aguiar to negotiate a unification agreement with the PNC. The discussions between D'Aguiar and Burnham began in late 1959 and continued throughout most of the following year. In the end the talks collapsed because the PNC was not prepared to accept the demand that D'Aguiar presented.

D'Aguiar's proposal was that his group would join the PNC and provide financial support for the campaign against the PPP. For this support, the PNC was requested to give nine of the fifteen seats on the executive committee to D'Aguiar's group. Burnham would remain as leader of the party, and in the event of a PNC victory in 1961, he would become the Prime Minister and D'Aguiar the Minister of Trade and Industry.

The leaders of the PNC felt insulted by D'Aguiar's offer, and Burnham stated that the Portuguese businessman "wanted to buy the party." Regardless of this, Burnham, in a response, offered to give D'Aguiar's group six seats on the executive committee with four of them to be filled by D'Aguiar's Indian supporters in the Rice Producers' Association (RPA). D'Aguiar immediately accepted this offer, but when he finally presented his list to Burnham, it included himself, three Portuguese businessmen and only two non-influential Indian members of the RPA. The PNC rejected this list and felt that the party could not engage D'Aguiar's group in any merger unless he could obtain the support of popular Indians who could help in drawing Indian support away from the PPP.

With the collapse of the unification talks, D'Aguiar announced on 4 October 1960 that all connection with the PNC no longer existed and that the only alternative left was to form a new party. On the following day, the new party, the United Force, was launched with about 50 Portuguese businessmen and three Indian leaders of the Man Power Citizens' Association (MPCA) offering their support to it. The establishment of this new party presented a problem to the PNC which saw the disappearance of a source of funding in addition to any plans of organising a united non-Indian front against the PPP.

Some bad feelings between the PNC and D'Aguiar's group were also interjected during the period. Even while the negotiations were taking place, D'Aguiar's supporters spread a rumour through a newspaper article that John Carter and other PNC members who once belonged to the UDP would secede and join with D'Aguiar's group. Even though there was no truth in this, the PNC regarded it as a serious matter. At a party meeting in October, shortly after the formation of the UF, the PNC executive committee requested the former UDP members to reaffirm their loyalty. John Carter complied with this request and firmly stated that he and the former UDP members had no intention of abandoning the PNC for the United Force.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES (1958-61)

After the British Government refused to expand the development plan, the PPP Government in early 1959 was faced with a situation where it needed more money to expand works programmes to increase employment and to provide increased payment to workers. This was compounded by a drop in revenues as a result of a decrease in bauxite exports and a drought the previous year which affected sugar and rice production.

To raise the money required, the Government proposed in its budget an excise tax of half a cent on a bottle of beer, and a duty of three cents on each pound of imported potatoes aimed at protecting the local ground provision industry. While these new taxes were placed on consumers, the Government also taxed the wealthy sugar producers, land owners and rum manufacturers. The taxes on sugar and rum production and on land acreage — which had been abolished in 1951 — were strongly opposed by the Governor, Sir Patrick Renison. However, he agreed to the taxes when Dr. Jagan presented evidence that the Colonial Treasurer at that time had stated that the measures should be re-introduced if economic conditions were not improved.

The tax on beer received vehement opposition from Peter D'Aguiar, the owner of Banks Breweries. He organised a country-wide "axe the tax" signature campaign and led protest demonstrations in Georgetown. This campaign collapsed after the budget was passed, and as Dr. Jagan had predicted during the budget debate, Banks Breweries and its parent company, D'Aguiar Brothers Limited, made huge profits and shared large dividends in 1959 and in succeeding years.

Early in 1959, the Governor appointed the Gorsuch Commission to consider claims by the Civil Service Association (CSA) for increased salaries for its members. The Commission reported in April 1959 and recommended an increase in the minimum wage for unskilled workers from \$2.52 to \$2.70 per day. It proposed no increases for middle grade civil servants, but on the other hand recommended large increases for the upper grade civil servants who had the highest salaries.

The Government had difficulty in accepting these proposals. It could not agree to the substantial increases for only the upper level civil servants. In commenting on the Gorsuch Commission recommendations, Dr. Jagan

categorically stated that he would “not give a cent more” to the upper level civil servants unless consideration was given to the other levels.

Clearly, Dr. Jagan statement was in support of civil servants at the lower and middle levels. But it was later taken out of context and mischievously distorted by his political opponents to demonstrate that he was determined not to give a cent more to all workers. Unfortunately, the continuous repetition of this distortion caused some people to believe this concocted fiction as fact!

This mischief originated from the leaders of the Civil Service Association, most of whom at that time were drawn from the upper levels of the civil service. This group was heavily backed by the leadership of the TUC, which later teamed up with the political opposition to carry out acts of destabilisation to remove the PPP Government in the 1960s.

Despite these difficulties, the Government managed to complete most of its projects. These included surveys on soil, a forest inventory, telecommunications, transport, petroleum, an aluminium smelter, fisheries and the Canje Reservoir Scheme. Funding of \$6 million for these surveys came from the United Nations which also began work in the areas of health, preventive medicine, and the training of personnel in public administration.

The big success of the Government was the purchase of the Demerara Electric Company for \$18 million from its private Canadian owners. This nationalisation ended the constant blackouts in Georgetown and gave a boost to industrial development. To encourage industrialisation, the Government began the establishment of the Ruimveldt industrial estate on abandoned sugar estate land it purchased from the Demerara Company which demanded the very high price of \$12,000 per acre.

For the expansion of agricultural production, a drainage and irrigation and land distribution programme was started at Black Bush Polder and Tapakuma. At the same time work began on an engineering design for the Mahaica?Mahaicony?Abari agriculture project aimed at developing a quarter of a million acres of land.

In the field of trade, the Government obtained a market for surplus rice in Cuba at a price which was almost two cents higher than other markets in

the Caribbean. These higher prices helped to bring improved prosperity for rice farmers all over the country.

Health services rapidly improved in the 1957-61 period. Mrs. Janet Jagan, the Minister of Labour, Health and Housing, obtained UN assistance in fighting malaria in the interior districts. An anti-polio and anti-typhoid scheme went into full operation, and a pure water system with new wells, overhead tanks and new pipe lines was established. The Government also embarked on the construction of rural health centres which formed the basis of free medical care in all parts of the country.

Just before the end of its term, the Legislative Council passed legislation for the Government to take full control of 51 primary schools which were under the control of Christian denominations. These schools were built by the Government but had been given to these denominations to manage. Much opposition to this take over came from the Christian Social Council, an organisation formed to represent the interests of the Christian denominations.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE (1960)

Acting on the resolution of June 1958, the British Government called a Constitutional Conference which was held in London on 7 March 1960 under the chairmanship of Ian Macleod, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. This conference was originally scheduled for the last quarter of 1959, but was delayed to allow the new Governor, Sir Ralph Grey to familiarise himself with the local situation. The British Government also used this delaying approach because it was biased towards the PNC's position of support for internal self government rather than full independence, as demanded by the PPP.

At the London conference, the PPP was represented by Dr. Jagan, Brindley Benn and Balram Singh Rai. The delegates from the elected opposition were Forbes Burnham and W.O. Rudy Kendall of the PNC, and Jai Narine Singh of the Guiana Independence Movement. Rahman B. Gajraj and R.E. Davis represented the nominated section of the Legislative Council.

All the delegates supported the principle of independence, but were divided on the process to achieve it. The PPP asked for independence to be granted by August 1961, and Jai Narine Singh called for immediate independence outside of the Commonwealth. Burnham limited his demand to "full internal self government", saying that the country would achieve full independence as a unit within an independent West Indies Federation. The PPP insisted that on this issue an independent Guyana could not be prevented from joining the Federation if it wanted to do so at a later date.

There was much disagreement on whether the new legislature should be unicameral or bicameral, and if the electoral system should continue as one of plurality within the district constituencies, or proportional representation based on the countrywide vote. Macleod's suggestion of an elected lower house of 35 members and a nominated senate comprising 13 members — 8 to be nominated by the ruling party, 3 by the opposition and 2 by the Governor — was accepted by all the delegates as a compromise.

The PPP's demand for the voting age to be reduced to 18 years was denied, and Macleod sided with Burnham who wanted the voting age to be retained at 21 years. The British support for Burnham and the PNC was clearly demonstrated when Macleod announced that Guyana would not be granted full independence as the majority of the delegates requested, but

only internal self government, with the Governor placed in charge of defence and external affairs.

In a statement issued at the conclusion of the conference, the PPP delegates stated that they were "far from satisfied with the result of the conference". They added: "We came here with a mandate for independence. We are going back still as colonials with Crown Colony status." They added that the decision imposed by the British Government did not measure up to the aspiration and democratic rights of the people of Guyana. This statement received full support from Jai Narine Singh who stated that the conclusions were "impositions" and were "not in accordance with equity and justice under a democratic system."

As a result of the conclusions of this constitutional conference, the British Government later issued an Order in Council which set out the new constitution for Guyana to come into effect in August 1961. An Electoral Boundary Commission, with a single Commissioner, was also established to demarcate the electoral boundaries for the elections to be held in 1961.



## Political Developments in 1959-60

In 1959, the Government introduced measures to tax the sugar companies but these were opposed by the Governor who won support from Edward Beharry, the Minister of Natural Resources. Clearly, this was creating a political crisis when a member of the Government was now openly opposing the same Government. Shortly after this situation developed, Beharry's business firm was given a contract as the sole distributor of a particular brand of cigarettes manufactured by Demerara Tobacco Company, a subsidiary of the British-American Tobacco Company. This was widely viewed as a conflict of interest, especially as Beharry was a Minister. As Beharry continued to express views against the Government's policies, Dr. Jagan asked the Governor to request his resignation from the Council of Ministers. Beharry's resignation was subsequently announced by the Speaker in the Legislative Council on 14 May 1959.

Beharry immediately crossed the floor to sit on the opposition side of the Legislative Council. His removal from the Ministry was opposed by another PPP member of the legislature, Fred Bowman, who defected from the party and also crossed the floor. In August 1959 Bowman declared that he was the organising secretary of a new party known as the Progressive Liberal Party.

Meanwhile as the date for new elections approached, an attempt was made to establish unity between the PPP and the PNC. Two Guyanese residing in New York, Felix Cummings and Ramjohn Holder, with the support of the Ambassador of Ghana to the United Nations, wrote identical letters to Dr. Jagan and Burnham suggesting that the two leaders should meet as early as possible. The letters indicated that the Government of Ghana would convene the meeting should they agree. Dr. Jagan immediately replied expressing his willingness to participate, but Burnham refused to do so. But in statements he made in his party newspaper, he vehemently attacked the suggestion by the two Guyanese whom he described as "rats" and "vermin".

In promoting social change, the Government established rules allowing non-Christian teachers to be eligible for administrative positions in primary schools. Previously, non-Christians had to convert to Christianity in order to obtain teaching jobs in the primary schools which were largely controlled by

Christian denominations, even though the teachers were paid by the Government.

Meanwhile, the influence of the Cold War was increasingly felt in Guyana, particularly within the trade union movement. Some of the unions were affiliated to the pro-American International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and other American international organisations. These unions included the MPCA, the Post Office Workers Union, the Mineworkers Unions and the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union. By 1959, some leading members of these unions were sent to the United States to attend training courses arranged by the American Institute of Free Labour Development (AIFLD), an organisation headed by powerful and influential American businessmen. As part of their training they were indoctrinated in anti-communism and were even trained in methods of political subversion with the ultimate aim of destabilising the PPP Government. Shortly after, there began a steady stream of American trade unionists to Guyana, and some of them were openly involved with trade unions and political parties which opposed the PPP Government. At least two of these persons were later named as agents of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

With the formation of the pro-capitalist United Force (UF), the country also saw an increase in visits by American anti-communist provocateurs who also funded opponents of the PPP Government. Some of these persons were members of the US-based Christian Anti-Communist Crusade who travelled all over Guyana to hold meetings and to distribute their anti-PPP propaganda. The members of this organisation also provided support in different forms to the pro-UF group calling themselves the Defenders of Freedom who attempted from time to time to break up PPP political meetings and who agitated for the retention of the control of primary schools by Christian denominations.

## The Elections in 1961

The campaign for the general elections to be held in August 1961 began early in the year. The issue of independence for Guyana featured prominently since the 1960 Constitutional Conference in London had reached an understanding that colonial rule would end after the new elections, and that the victorious party would lead the country to independence.

Ethnic polarisation which was already having an impact on Guyanese politics became even stronger with the entry of the pro-capitalist, anti-communist United Force (UF) in the election race. Already most Indians were supporting the PPP while the PNC was drawing most of the Africans to its camp. The UF appealed to wealthy Portuguese and people of mixed race, as well as Amerindians and some wealthy Indians in Georgetown.

The PNC and the UF had earlier failed in a plan to form a united front against the PPP, but they, nevertheless, worked with some anti-PPP trade union leaders to foment strikes and spread anti-government rumours during the 1959-61 period. Interestingly, this campaign was not directed at the big business community which exploited workers all over the country.

For the 1961 elections, the British Government appointed Sir Hugh Hallet, a retired British judge as the commissioner to demarcate the electoral boundaries of the constituencies. Hallet divided the country into 35 electoral districts in a very unfair manner, since some had much larger numbers of voters than others. The PPP protested the unfair division, pointing out that in its areas of political support, particularly in the Corentyne region, the constituencies were very large with the list of voters much higher than the average list for areas of opposition support. This "gerrymandering" gave the opposition parties an unfair advantage which would allow them to pick up more seats.

The PPP noted that at the 1960 Constitutional Conference Dr. Jagan had proposed an electoral boundary commission made up of three representatives - one each from India, Ghana and the United Nations - but this was rejected by the British Government in favour of the one-man commission.

Despite Hallet's actions, the PPP expressed its readiness to contest the elections. The PNC fielded candidates in all 35 constituencies while the UF contested in 34. The PPP nominated candidates for only 29 districts; it did not nominate candidates for the Rupununi, New Amsterdam and four districts in Georgetown, all areas where it knew it had no chances of winning. The party's strategy was to concentrate on the rural areas and not to expend its resources in areas where it felt it had little political support.

The PNC and the UF waged a bitter anti-communist campaign against the PPP. At around the same time, the Government had introduced legislation for the take-over of 51 primary schools which were administered by Christian churches. Some leading Christians saw this move as communist-inspired and they formed the Christian Social Council to oppose it. (The legislation was passed just before the Legislative Council was dissolved). This group also joined in the election campaign by openly urging church congregations to vote against the PPP which it claimed was against religion.

A political arm of the Catholic Church, the Sword of the Spirit, and its affiliate, the newly formed Defenders of Freedom, also joined in the attack on the PPP Government. Significantly, many of the leaders of the Defenders of Freedom were also leading members of the UF. All of these anti-PPP groups were heavily backed by the US-based Christian Anti-Communist Crusade which spent US\$45,000 in the election campaign, in addition to providing the UF and its support groups with large quantities of anti-communist propaganda materials for distribution all over the country.

Bishop Lester Guilly, head of the Catholic Church in Guyana, entered the campaign by calling on Catholics to vote against the PPP, claiming that the nationalisation of the 51 schools, previously controlled by Christian denominations, amounted to an act of "godlessness" by the PPP Government.

American opposition to a PPP victory was also clearly expressed in the US media and even within the US Government. One American Senator went so far as to state that the United States must take imminent and aggressive action to keep Guyana from "going communist". And in a speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on 20 April 1961, President John Kennedy warned that "the forces of communism" must not be underestimated "in Cuba or anywhere in the world." For the Americans,

"anywhere in the world" also included Guyana where they already regarded the PPP, which had close relations with Cuba, as "communist" and could give the Soviet Union permission to establish another military base in the Americas. Kennedy said that he wanted it to be clearly understood that the United States would "not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations which are to the security of our nation."

Kennedy's statement was eagerly utilised by the opposition parties and groups in their anti-communist campaign against the PPP.

The British were also hoping for an opposition victory. A section of the British press suggested that the British Government should suspend the Guyana constitution should the PPP win.

There were a few outbreaks of violence when PPP public meetings in areas of PNC support were broken up and the speakers violently attacked. PNC supporters armed themselves with coconut brooms, the party's election symbol, and lashed out at persons whom they felt were PPP supporters. Such actions worked to the detriment of the PNC since in some marginal constituencies, they caused some voters to change any positive opinions they might have had of the PNC.

The campaign of the UF promoted "people's capitalism" and "economic dynamism". Its manifesto, entitled Highway to Happiness, promised US\$500 million in American private investment and an additional US\$500 million American loans for government projects. While it attacked the PPP for being "communist", it also denounced the "socialism" of the PNC.

The promise of American support by the UF for development projects in Guyana was dismissed by most Guyanese as mere "election propaganda" since no American investment firm announced any intention of giving support to such plans. And with regard to the proposed loans, when pressed by the PPP to explain their terms, including interest rates and time periods for pay back, the UF could not provide answers.

In its campaign, the PNC came out in support of independence for Guyana. This change in policy was an about-face since the party had refused to support immediate independence during the 1960 Constitutional Conference. This new position was no doubt due to the pressures placed on the party by African students from Guyana, the Caribbean and Africa in

London who had sharply criticised Burnham and the PNC for opposing independence.

Burnham on 27 March categorically stated that "Guyana will be independent in 1962." Then on 15 July, in an interview with the Guiana Graphic, he declared, "Which ever party is returned in a majority, either directly or indirectly, has got the right to lead the country to independence." With the support of the executive committee of the PNC, Burnham said that if the PPP should win, he would go with Jagan to London to get independence for Guyana. Burnham himself was very confident that the PNC would win the elections, and he openly boasted that he would be the first Premier of the country.

But Burnham's declaration found strong opposition from Sydney King, the Party's general secretary who on 19 July resigned from the PNC in protest and withdrew his name as a PNC candidate for the general elections. In a widely circulated statement, King declared: "I am sure that Burnham's statement is dangerous to the African people - I cannot be any part of Burnham's plan. His plan is to help Jagan win independence. A seat is reserved for him on Jagan's plane, he boasts."

The PNC responded on 30 July by expelling King. In an accompanying statement, the PNC said it was "unequivocally committed to independence for British Guiana and will not swerve from its present plan which has been accepted by the Congress and the executive of the Party of which Mr. King was a part."

The PPP presented a manifesto which, in addition to outlining its achievements during the 1957-61 period, listed its plans for further development of the country. Among the objectives it set was to expand agriculture through research and new techniques, expanding land settlement schemes, and the increase in labour productivity through education and training.

The main objective, however, was the attainment of independence for Guyana. The PPP stated that on winning independence, the Government would pursue a neutralist policy of friendship and cooperation with all countries and would not allow Guyana to be used as a military base by any nation.

The Legislative Council was dissolved by the Governor on 14 June 1961, and elections were held on 21 August. After an incident-free day of voting, the PPP was declared the winner with 20 seats. The PNC won 11 and the UF the remaining 4. The UF was able to win the Amerindian districts of the Rupununi and the North West District where Catholic and Anglican missionaries were very influential. The party also won two marginal seats in Georgetown where PPP supporters, angered by the PNC supporters' campaign of violence, decided in the absence of PPP candidates in their districts, to cast their votes for the UF which they saw as the "lesser of two evils".

The overall results of the elections showed that the PPP won 42.6 percent of the total votes cast while the PNC obtained 41 percent and the UF 16.3 percent. The attainment of this low percentage by the PPP was not unusual in countries which had "first-past-the-post" or constituency systems of elections. A similar situation existed at the very time of the Guyana elections in Great Britain where that Government held a majority of seats but with a minority of the votes cast.

In the Guyana elections, what must be taken into consideration was the fact that the PPP's total number of votes would have been higher if it had contested in all 35 constituencies, instead of only 29. Further, the party's interest in the elections was in winning a majority of seats and not a majority of the total votes.

## BREWING ANTI-PPP CHALLENGES IN 1961

The PPP victory was greeted with great jubilation in many parts of the country. In the PPP strongholds throughout Berbice and the East Coast Demerara huge crowds lined the main highway to greet the gigantic motorcade that accompanied Dr. Jagan as he made his way from his own constituency on the Corentyne coast (in Berbice) to Georgetown. The motorcade brought some animosity among PNC supporters, mainly in villages with large African populations, since many of vehicles dragged brooms, the symbol of the defeated PNC.

Immediately after the results of the elections were announced, the Governor, Sir Ralph Grey, appointed Dr. Jagan as Premier and asked him to form a Government. Dr. Jagan shortly after named a Council of Ministers (which replaced the Executive Council under the previous Constitution). The Ministers were Dr. Jagan himself as Minister of Development and Planning, Brindley Benn (responsible for Natural Resources), Ram Karran (Works and Hydraulics), Balram Singh Rai (Home Affairs), Cedric Nunes (Education) Jocelyn Hubbard (Trade and Industry), Ranji Chandisingh (Labour, Health and Housing), Dr. Charles Jacob, Jnr. (Finance), Earle Gladstone Wilson (Communications) and Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye (Attorney General).

Under the new 1961 Constitution, Guyana achieved internal self government, and the new PPP Government began to make plans for the final achievement of the status of independence. But these plans were seriously hampered from the beginning when the PNC, despite its support for independence in the run-up to the August elections, began to raise objections to this attainment under the PPP Government. It was clear that Burnham, ever so confident that the PNC would win the elections, was tremendously dismayed when the PPP won re-election. He was a sore loser and, in a very unprincipled manner, backtracked on all his promises to support immediate independence for Guyana. The PNC also launched some strong anti-PPP activities not too long after the election results were announced. It presented six election petitions against PPP winners, and subsequently succeeded in one in which the PPP winner in the Houston constituency was unseated.

The PNC also claimed all three opposition seats in the nominated Senate, and objected when the Governor gave one to the United Force. Based on



the constitution, three of the eight Senate seats were to be allocated to the opposition, but Burnham refused to accept the two given to his party. At a public meeting in Georgetown, he used crude and vulgar language to attack the Governor, and his party passed a resolution demanding the Governor's recall by the British Government. On the 6 October 1961, the day of the formal opening of the House of Assembly, the PNC legislators, led by Burnham, squatted in front of the gates of the Public Buildings to block the Governor from entering. The police had to lift them bodily to remove them from the entrance before the Governor could enter.

The PPP victory also brought a feeling of racial distrust in some African communities. Two of their most prominent leaders, Sydney King and H. H. Nicholson, formed the Society for Racial Equality (SRE) which claimed it was aimed at protecting the African people. (Earlier, King had formed a pro-African organisation which he named the African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA). Despite its name, the SRE was not interested in an integrated society based on racial equality. It vehemently opposed independence under the PPP claiming that Guyana would become a "country with Africans as slaves to East Indians." In propagating this viewpoint, the SRE sent petitions to the governments of the United States, Great Britain, the USSR, India, Ghana and Nigeria, urging them to form an international commission to partition Guyana into three separate but equal zones. These zones would be an African Zone, an East Indian Zone, and a Free Zone which would have those who wanted to live with other races. The SRE was not taken seriously by these governments nor by most Guyanese; nevertheless, the leaders of the organisation continued to advocate their "partition" views throughout the term of the PPP government.

## THE JAGAN-KENNEDY MEETING

As part of the Government's attempt to speed up the country's economic development, Dr. Jagan visited Canada and the United States in October 1961. He held discussions with officials of the governments of both countries and impressed on them the importance of their economic support for Guyana's development programme.

In Washington, some American political leaders were already describing Dr. Jagan as a communist, and they were worried that even though he was the most popular Guyanese leader he would not follow the democratic path. As such, the US administration had already implemented plans to undermine the PPP Government, even though the British Government had insisted that Dr. Jagan was a more responsible leader than Forbes Burnham. The British had communicated their feelings to the Americans at the highest level, explaining that both governments should give Dr. Jagan economic support to prevent him from making approaches for support from the communist bloc.

Dr. Jagan arrived in Washington on late October 1961. He appeared on the popular "Meet the Press" television programme, and because he made no critical remarks of the Soviet Union, the Kennedy administration immediately felt less enthusiastic towards providing any economic assistance to him. President Kennedy, who watched part of the "Meet the Press" show, told his advisers that he would make no commitment until he met with Dr. Jagan.

That meeting between President Kennedy and Dr. Jagan took place at the White House on the 25 October. At this meeting, Kennedy was accompanied by his special assistant Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and George Ball, the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs at the State Department. Dr. Jagan outlined the economic issues affecting Guyana and explained that as a socialist he believed that state planning would be most instrumental in overcoming the economic and developmental problems facing the country. Kennedy replied that the United States was not interested in forcing private enterprise in countries where it was not relevant. He added that the primary purpose of American aid was to support national independence and to encourage individual and political freedoms. For the United States, he said, it was important for a country to maintain its national independence. "So long as you do that, we don't care

whether you are socialist, capitalist, pragmatist or whatever," Kennedy declared. "We regard ourselves as pragmatists."

The two leaders then discussed the issue of nationalisation. Kennedy said that the US had no problem with this but would expect compensation to be given. A lively exchange on Dr. Jagan's political ideas followed, and the Guyanese premier spoke of his commitment to parliamentary democracy. Kennedy said that the United States would be supportive of genuine non-alignment, but would be opposed to a total commitment by Guyana to the communist bloc. He then questioned Dr. Jagan about his views regarding relations with that group. The Guyanese leader retorted by asking him if the US would view a trade agreement between Guyana and the USSR as an unfriendly act. Kennedy responded by saying that it would be a matter of concern if such an agreement compromised the economic independence of the (weaker) country.

In terms of aid to Guyana, Kennedy did not raise any discussion as to specific amounts, leaving that matter to be dealt with by Schlesinger, Ball and other officials at follow-up meetings.

In preliminary meetings with US officials, before meeting with the President, Dr. Jagan had requested US\$40 million in aid. This amount, the Americans felt, was out of proportion for such a small country as Guyana, and especially since Latin American countries with larger populations and more politically friendly to the US were also competing for American economic assistance. The Americans, after the discussions with the President, decided finally not to give any specific commitment to Dr. Jagan and told him that they would have to examine the relative merits of each project.

Dr. Jagan was clearly disappointed over this development and requested another meeting with Kennedy. However, Kennedy did not agree to this, but he instructed Schlesinger to meet with Dr. Jagan, especially since the British Government was concerned that the Guyanese Premier should not return home disappointed. Kennedy suggested to Schlesinger that a satisfactory statement could be drawn up which did not commit the United States to any immediate dispensation of funds. Kennedy himself was convinced that Dr. Jagan would cease being a parliamentary democrat. He told Schlesinger, "I have a feeling that in a couple of years he will find ways to suspend his constitutional provisions and will cut his opposition off at the knees. . . . With all political jockeying and all the racial tensions, it's going to

be almost impossible for Jagan to concentrate the energies of his country on development through a parliamentary system."

On the 26 October at the Dupont Plaza Hotel in Washington, Schlesinger met with Dr. Jagan who expressed disappointment that the United States was not prepared to announce an immediate commitment to Guyana's development program. But he was satisfied that the US side was willing to work out a joint statement on the meetings. This document, finalised on the following day, stated that the United States "looked forward to closer association between a free and democratic British Guiana and the nations and organisations of the Hemisphere." It committed Dr. Jagan "to uphold the political freedoms and defend the parliamentary democracy which is his country's political heritage" and indicated that the United States would send a mission to Guyana to examine what forms of economic assistance could be provided for the development programme.

## THE 1962 BUDGET

Shortly after Dr. Jagan's return from the USA and Canada where he tried to obtain loans to be used as developmental capital, anti-government forces, particularly the UF, openly urged owners of businesses and the upper class section of the society to withdraw their savings from local banks and send them abroad. This happened because these people believed the UF propaganda that the "communist" PPP would seize all their property and savings.

To halt the flow of money out of the country, the PPP Government was forced to enact a law prohibiting the export of liquid assets, and controls were established over the changing of the Eastern Caribbean dollar, used in Guyana, into foreign currency. The political opposition and its press immediately denounced this action as dictatorial.

The financial problems brought about a crisis between the Government and the civil service employees. Most civil servants were generally conservative in outlook and they were easily influenced by the anti-communist propaganda and, therefore, were not sympathetic to the financial problems that the Government was encountering.

The Civil Service Association (CSA), which organised the higher paid civil servants, had asked for salary increases even before the 1961 elections. In response, the British Government had appointed the Guillebaud Commission to investigate their demands; it shortly afterwards recommended substantial salary increases amounting over \$2.5 million. The Government delayed its acceptance of these recommendations because it did not have the money to pay. However, after negotiations with the CSA which threatened strike action, the Government conceded but modified some of the proposed increases. This naturally caused resentment in the ranks of the unsympathetic CSA.

The Federation of Unions of Government Employees (FUGE), representing the lower paid Government employees, also demanded wage increases to which the Government agreed, but the FUGE and the Government could not reach an agreement on the date to which the increases would be retroactive.

Both the CSA and the FUGE were members of the TUC whose President was Richard Ishmael, a rabid anti-communist. The TUC was bitterly opposed to the PPP Government since many of its leaders were closely connected to the PNC and the UF. Shortly after the 1961 electoral victory, a TUC leader had travelled to New York to meet with AFL-CIO leaders, including Serafino Romualdi of the AFC-CIO International Department and George Meany, to plan attacks on and to overthrow the PPP Government. (It was revealed later that both Romualdi and Meany were associated with the covert operations of the CIA to destabilise the PPP Government in the early 1960s).

On the 31 January, 1962 the Government introduced in the House of Assembly a budget to provide the money needed to meet the wage agreements with the CSA and the FUGE (amounting to about \$4 million). The budget was also aimed at strengthening the country's financial position. The Government announced that no action would be taken on the budget until 12 February so that the public would have enough time to study it.

In addition, the budget planned to raise money to finance an industrialisation programme to help solve the urban unemployment problem. Roughly, the Government needed to raise about \$110 million to help meet this need.

The budget proposals were based on the recommendations of the Cambridge-educated economist and tax consultant, Nicolas Kaldor, whose services had been obtained by the United Nations. Kaldor had advised the Governments of India and Ghana, among other developing countries, on the restructuring of their tax systems. The proposals of the budget were aimed at preventing the unnecessary outflow of capital; blocking loopholes in the tax system; preventing the evasion of tax payments; and improving the balance of payment position.

The tax proposals included:

1. A net wealth tax at the rate of 0.5 percent of net wealth above \$50,000;
2. A gift tax to prevent evasion of death duties;

3. Introduction of a scheme on compulsory savings on earnings in excess of \$100 per month, or 10 percent of incomes and profits made by self-employed persons and companies, respectively. The money was to be invested in Government bonds bearing 3.75 percent interest annually and was to be tax-free and redeemable after 7 years;

4. A direct tax on luxuries and semi-luxuries which were mainly imported, and also on tobacco, alcoholic drinks and beverages.

In addition to these main proposals, a law was enacted which assumed a minimum profit of 2 percent on total sales turnover. This was aimed at those persons who evaded income tax by making false accounts and perpetually showing losses.

The budget won approval in many circles. The New York Times said in an editorial that the budget was courageous and economically sound. The London Times in a leading article observed: "The immediate problem for the Prime Minister, Dr. Jagan, is how to win some acceptance for his economic proposals which are courageous and certainly not far from what Guiana must have."

Despite such praise for the budget, it was immediately attacked by the opposition which claimed that it was "anti-working class" and "communistic" and would place a heavy tax burden on the working class. However, the increase in the cost of living as a result of the proposals would have been very minimal. This would have been offset by far by the benefits the development programme would have granted to the people.

But what really caused alarm was when the merchants and other businessmen raised their prices for commodities and blaming the price increases on the proposed taxes. Many of these merchants and businessmen were supporters of the UF and they planned to oppose the capital taxes by determining not to pay them.

## STREET PROTESTS BY THE OPPOSITION

From the beginning of February, the local press, particularly the Chronicle, which backed the UF, whipped up hostility against the government. The paper urged Burnham and D'Aguiar, PNC and UF leaders respectively, to unite and called for a general uprising to force the Government to either withdraw the budget or resign. Soon the paper was printing letters from persons calling for the violent overthrow of the government.

There were large PNC-UF demonstrations in Georgetown of mainly Afro-Guyanese during the first week in February. A large fleet of trucks owned by D'Aguiar's soft-drinks, beer and rum firm was used to ferry demonstrators from one point of the city to another. The demonstrators were also fed liberal amounts of free beer and rum provided by D'Aguiar.

On the 9 February, the Minister of Finance, Dr. Charles Jacobs, announced in the House of Assembly that discussions on the budget would be further deferred until representations on it made by various organisations were considered. Immediately after, Burnham and D'Aguiar led their members out of the chamber to join with a large crowd of their supporters in and around the Public Buildings.

After the walkout, Dr. Jagan, the Premier, made this prophetic statement to the House. It was later broadcast on national radio:

"It has come to the knowledge of the Government that violence is actually being planned on a general scale by certain elements acting for a minority group. In addition, it is understood, that attempts against the Premier's life and the lives of certain of his Ministers and supporters are contemplated. These acts of violence are intended to secure the overthrow of the legally elected Government by force and the tax proposals in the budget are being used as a screen for the general strike for Monday, February 12. Since there is no likelihood of this strike call being widely supported by the workers, certain elements of the business community plan to shut down their business houses. The intention is in effect to stage a general lockout on the excuse that the strike has created conditions which prevent continued business operations. Every step possible is being taken to bring the civil service in on this strike and if these designs are successful, the total result will be to cause wide-spread dislocation of the colony's economy. Such a course of action will be very likely to end in riot and



violence. The people who plan this operation must be aware of this. It seems that they are seeking to cause turmoil and unrest in order to halt our march to independence and the economic well-being for all. This small clique is determined to preserve their positions of privilege. They want to create another Congo here. They talk about freedom and democracy but are determined to use unconstitutional means to achieve these ends. They feel that they can depend on foreign support. In the circumstances, the Government intends to take energetic steps to forestall this plan and I am now appealing to all reasonable public-minded citizens not to allow themselves to be persuaded or fooled into taking part in what can only be a disastrous and futile effort on the part of a small misguided and selfish element in the community to turn back the clock of history."

### PNC-UF Action

The walkout of the opposition gave the signal for demonstrations and hooliganism in and around the Public Buildings. A large crowd of PNC supporters was led by Ptolomy Reid, then a director of Bookers. The entrance of the Public Buildings was blocked by the crowd and as Government legislators departed they were violently threatened. Dr. Jagan had difficulty in leaving by car; demonstrators with pickets blocked the passage and Reid himself pushed a picket stave through the car window.

Clearly, the PNC wanted to gain power by any means. The PNC propaganda that the PPP's policy was intended to benefit only the Indians was nullified by the fact that the African working class would have benefited more since the revenues from the proposed taxes were intended to finance industrialisation in the urban areas where the Africans were heavily concentrated.

By opposing the budget, D'Aguiar and his UF were no doubt claiming that they were protecting the interest of the business community. The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, many of whose members were backers of the UF, called a meeting in which it urged its members to encourage their employees to strike. Kit Nascimento, D'Aguiar's personal assistant and general manager of the Chronicle, suggested that employers should pay their employees who would go on strike. And M.B. Gajraj, brother of Rahman Gajraj, Speaker of the House, called on businessmen to stop selling non-taxable commodities such as sugar, flour and oil, and to halt credit to their customers. He reasoned that this would cripple the

people and put tremendous pressures on the Government. Economic chaos would result and people would withdraw their money from the banks thus forcing the Government to reduce the tax on savings.

The UF and the PNC capitalised on the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh who visited the country during the first week in February. They mounted large demonstrations in Georgetown and strung banners with anti-Government slogans in order to catch the eye of the British press pool accompanying the Duke.

The TUC played a leading role in aggravating the situation. It claimed that it was not consulted on the budget proposals. Because of this, the Minister of Finance had postponed considerations of the budget in the House and arranged a meeting with the TUC for the 15 February. However, the TUC leadership was so tied up in joining with the PNC and the UF in political demonstrations, that even before the discussions could be held, it called a general strike to begin on the 13 February, no doubt to assist the opposition to remove the Government by force.

On 11 February, a large crowd demonstrated on Bourda Green and on the Parade Ground with slogans such as "Axe the Tax", "Choke and Rob Budget", and "Slavery if Jagan Gets Independence". On the following day, a large crowd gathered near the business office of D'Aguiar who seized the opportunity to make an inciting speech. The PNC also held a meeting in Georgetown and urged support for a TUC demonstration planned for the 13 February when the general strike was due to begin, even though workers were already locked out from their working places on the 12 February.

On the 13 February, gangs of PNC and UF supporters openly went about the streets threatening, intimidating and molesting workers, particularly Indians, in stores and other business places. The TUC by then had called its general strike, but it failed to get support from the majority of the workers, especially the sugar workers who stood steadfastly behind the Government. Whatever support the strike had was concentrated mainly in Georgetown.

There was a partial shut-down of the electricity plant which led to temporary shortage of water. Later that day, the Civil Service Association (CSA) called a strike even though negotiations relating to salaries and leave conditions were going on between the union and the Government. Despite the fact

that the CSA could present no grievances against the budget, its President W.G. Stoll felt "it was in the fitness of the things that the CSA and the TUC should make common cause against the common adversary". The TUC demonstration followed and a rally was held at the Parade Ground.

## THE DISTURBANCES

With open threats of violence being made on Ministers and civil servants who refused to join the strike, the Governor, Sir Ralph Grey, issued a proclamation on the 14 February banning public meetings and demonstrations in the area around the Public Buildings which also housed the House of Assembly. However, demonstrations and meetings were not banned in other parts of the city.

On the afternoon of the same day, the Minister of Home Affairs, Balram Singh Rai, asked the Governor to move British troops into Georgetown from Atkinson Field, 25 miles away, where they were stationed. But the Governor refused this request. On the following day, Dr. Jagan met with the Governor to inform him of a report that certain police and prison officials were planning to join the strike. He also repeated the requests that the troops should be brought into Georgetown and handed over a letter from the Commissioner of Police supporting his requests and those of Minister of Home Affairs.

Despite the evidence presented to the Governor to show that opposition elements were planning wholesale violence, he responded that "the armed forces of the United Kingdom would not be used to maintain PPP Ministers in power regardless of what they might say or do, and that British troops would only be used to restore and maintain law and order if all Guianese resources proved or were likely to prove inadequate".

Meanwhile, the Government was also trying to reach a compromise with the TUC and the PNC. Interestingly, on the 14 February because the PNC claimed that it opposed only the indirect taxes, the Government decided to withdraw tax increases on all imported commodities except motor-cars, spirits, tobacco, coffee extracts and concentrates. And after discussions with the TUC, the Government also declared that the compulsory savings scheme would be adjusted to apply to earnings above \$3,600 per annum instead of \$1,200 as was originally proposed. The PPP had hoped that these concessions would have moved the PNC and the TUC away from the UF, but this failed to occur.

But the PNC, UF and TUC were aiming for the complete removal of the Government and were not merely interested in gaining concessions on the budget. On the morning of the 15 February, Burnham and D'Aguiar linked

arms and led their followers, who had become a rowdy mob, into the proclaimed area. They then proceeded to the PNC headquarters where they congratulated themselves after having defied the Government and the authorities of law and order. Later that evening, the UF leader demanded that since the Government had made concessions, it had lost confidence in itself and, therefore, must resign.

Opposition activity began very early on the morning of Friday 16 February in Water Street. Leaders and supporters of the UF encouraged people gathered there to go to the Parade Ground where D'Aguiar would address them. While that meeting was going on a small crowd gathered outside the electricity plant in Kingston and they threw stones and bottles at the windows of the building. The plant was being manned by supervisory staff after the TUC President, Richard Ishmael, had refused the manager's plea that a skeleton staff should be left on duty. The TUC President had demanded that the electricity plant be completely shut down even though fire control in Georgetown depended on water pumped through the mains by electricity.

The unruly behaviour of the crowd was actively encouraged by certain TUC leaders present. Light poles in front of the plant were then set on fire. The Police riot squad arrived on the scene and used tear gas to disperse the crowd which had now grown to over 3,000. A child in a nearby yard was overcome by the fumes and had to be taken to hospital for treatment. It was at this point that D'Aguiar arrived on the scene and after passing through the police line, he urged the crowd to follow him to his office. There he used the incident of the injured child to incite the crowd by announcing that the child had died. The unruly large and hostile mob then rushed to congregate outside Freedom House, the PPP headquarters on Robb Street. The Police urged them to disperse but they refused. Tear gas was then used, but this did not help much. Shots were fired from the crowd and Superintendent Mc Leod and Assistant Commissioner of Police Phoenix were hit. Mc Leod died later that day in hospital.

Meanwhile, because of threats on the lives of the skeleton crew at the electricity plant, the members of the supervisory staff were forced to close it down, thus leaving the city without water. During that morning, small fires were already being set by opposition elements in various parts of the city and the Fire Brigade, hampered by the lack of water, was experiencing difficulty in putting them out.

From about 1.00 p.m. the unruly mob, after failing in their attack on Freedom House, went on a rampage burning and looting business places owned mainly by Indians in Robb, Regent, High, Camp and Water Streets and the Stabroek Market. The fires went out of control because there was no water in the mains; the mob also interfered with the work of the Fire Brigade, even sabotaging its work by cutting the hoses. Water was restored after 5.00 p.m. when the electricity plant was put back into operation.

The police seemed helpless and made little effort to arrest looters and arsonists. The Governor finally agreed to a request from the Commissioner of Police to bring in the British troops, and it was not until they arrived late in the afternoon that the situation was brought under control. A regiment of British troops also arrived as reinforcements during the night from Jamaica.

The toll was 56 buildings destroyed by fire, 21 damaged and 66 both damaged and looted; 29 market stalls were damaged and looted and 5 vehicles burned and 5 other Police vehicles severely damaged. One police officer died, 4 looters were killed and 41 others injured.

Only a section of Georgetown was affected by the disturbances; the rest of the country experienced no marches or demonstrations.

In the aftermath of the February disturbances, the Government in April 1962 amended many provisions of the budget in keeping with the earlier demands of the PNC and the TUC, but even these amendments were not accepted by the Opposition. During its third reading of the budget bill, in the absence of 7 PPP legislators, the Deputy Speaker, PNC Assemblyman, W.O.R. Kendall, used his casting vote to defeat it. The Government, as a result, had to withdraw the budget, and was forced to present a modified one the following month.

## THE WYNN-PARRY COMMISSION

With the destructions of "Black Friday" (16 February 1962) completed, the TUC and the Civil Service Association (CSA) called off their strike. An investigation into the death of Superintendent McLeod was severely hampered when the examining pathologist claimed that the bullet recovered from the body mysteriously disappeared. (The pathologist himself was the President of the CSA that had participated in the strike against the Government).

Dr. Jagan immediately requested the British Government to appoint a commission to investigate the causes of the disturbances and suggested that the chairman should be appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations with two additional members appointed by India and Ghana respectively. However, the British Government did not completely agree with his proposal for the composition of the Commission. It appointed a Commonwealth Commission of Enquiry on 11 May 1962 which held its hearings on from 21 May to 28 June in Georgetown. The Commission consisted of Sir Henry Wynn-Parry, a British high court judge, as Chairman, and Sir E.O. Asafu-Adjaye of Ghana and Justice G. Khosla of India. It examined the evidence of scores of people including the leaders of the PPP, PNC, UF and the TUC. In publicly handing down its findings in early October 1962, it laid full blame for the disturbances on the PNC, UF and the TUC.

The Commission declared that the Opposition used the budget "to form a veritable torrent of abuse, recrimination and vicious hostility, directed against Dr. Jagan and his Government and each day gave fresh vigour to the agitation". The TUC decision to call a general strike was criticised as "a breach of faith and a display of irresponsibility". The Commission further stated: "The story put forward before us was that the unbending and indeed the provocative attitude of the Government was the sole reason for the decision to call a general strike or at any rate of precipitating that decision. We find it difficult to believe this version and we are of the opinion that the facts have been greatly distorted by the trade union leaders for the purpose of placing responsibility of arousing the workers' hostility upon the government. . . .

"There is very little doubt that, despite the loud protestations of the trade union leaders to the contrary, political affinities and aspirations played a

large part in shaping their policy and formulating their programme of offering resistance to the budget and making a determined effort to change the government in office."

It also pointed out that the TUC leaders were deeply involved in politics and that some of them, such as Richard Ishmael, had personal grievances against Dr. Jagan and his Ministers.

About the budget itself, the Commission commented: "The budget provoked fierce opposition from several quarters and was made the excuse for sustained and increasingly hostile demonstrations against Dr. Jagan and his government. It will be seen that there is nothing deeply vicious or destructive of economic security in the budget. It had been drawn up on the advice of an experienced economist, who could not be said to have any Communist prepossessions. The budget won approval from many persons. The New York Times said in an editorial that the budget was courageous and economically sound. The London Times in a leading article observed, 'The immediate problem for the Prime Minister, Dr. Jagan, is how to win some acceptance for his economic proposals which are courageous and certainly not far from what Guiana must have'."

The Georgetown Chamber of Commerce was also heavily criticised for its impotence and lack of responsibility.

D'Aguiar's grievances against the PPP were described as "little more than a narrative of personal frustration". On his role on inciting the crowd over the incident of the injured child, the Commission reported: "A number of witnesses appearing before us stated what Mr. D'Aguiar told the crowd was that the child had in fact died. We are inclined to the view that Mr. D'Aguiar did not exercise any restraint upon himself and that he, in fact, announced the death of the child to the crowd and not its mere illness. We are constrained to observe that his being wedded to the truth did not impose so stern a cloistral isolation upon him as not to permit an occasional illicit sortie, in order to taste the seductive and politically rewarding adventure of flirting with half-truths."

The Commission also noted that as the situation grew ugly, the UF leader could think of nothing more than to ask the Governor to give protection to his wife and family, and that in a telephone conversation with the Governor,



he said that "he could not see his way to making an appeal for peace to the riotous crowds".

The Commission dealt at length with Burnham's role in the disturbances. It observed: "The real motive behind Mr. Burnham's assault was a desire to assert himself in public life and establish a more important and more rewarding position for himself by bringing about Dr. Jagan's downfall." The Commission stated that on the evening of 15 February, Burnham at a public meeting worked up his audience into a "state of frenzy". It declared: "He began by congratulating his listeners on the splendid performance of the morning when there had been a wholesale breach of the proclamation. In his peroration he declared that "Government could not be got rid of by merely saying 'Resign' or 'Down with Jagan'. Those are useful slogans, but more than slogans are required in the present circumstances."

The PNC leader was describes as "callous and remorseless". The Commission revealed that the Governor had appealed to Burnham to use his influence to advise the crowd to refrain from violence and to use his public address system to ask the people to leave the streets. Burnham, however, declared that he could not assist. In his evidence before the Commission, Burnham gave this explanation: "We could not help. There were two main obstacles; one was that we were very short of petrol and we felt that if we went all round Georgetown using up this petrol at the Governor's request, we would have no petrol for the vehicles to carry out Party work. We also considered it ill-advised to go and tell the people to desist from what they were doing when we had nothing to do with the starting of it. The man who calls off the dog owns the dog."

The Commission declared that the refusal of both Burnham and D'Aguiar to appeal to the crowd to desist from violence was a "strangely unfeeling attitude of the political leaders when passions aroused by them had been let loose on the town".

Despite these findings, the Commission made no recommendations to the British Government as to what actions should be taken against those political leaders who incited the disturbances. By refusing to pronounce on this, the Opposition political leaders were given the licence to continue the attack on the PPP Government. The PNC-UF-TUC inspired riots of February 1962 failed to overthrow the PPP Government but this did not deter these forces from trying again.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE IN 1962

Shortly after winning the 1961 election, the House of Assembly passed a resolution urging the British Government to fix a date in 1962 for independence. In December 1961, Dr. Jagan met in London with Reginald Maudling, the Colonial Secretary, and asked him to announce the date for the independence conference, and to propose a date for the granting of independence. Maudling refused to do either, and shortly after, Dr. Jagan went to New York where he addressed the UN Fourth Committee on 18 December. He used the occasion to appeal to the world body to support Guyana's demand for independence from Britain. Both Britain and the United States tried to block him from addressing the UN Committee, but they were unsuccessful and a draft resolution supporting Guyana's independence was due to be presented to the Committee when it reconvened in January. However, just before the Committee was expected to meet, the British Government announced that it would hold the conference in May 1962 to fix the date for independence.

In preparation for this conference, Dr. Jagan proposed in the House of Assembly on 9 February 1962 the appointment of a 16-member constitutional committee - 8 from the PPP, 6 from the PNC and 2 from the UF, with the Speaker as Chairman - to examine a draft independence constitution. The Opposition members refused to discuss this proposal, and using their opposition to the budget as a pretext, they staged a walk-out from the House.

The British Government, after the disturbances of 16 February, announced the postponement of the independence conference from May to 16 July on the grounds that the report of the Commonwealth Commission of Inquiry would not be ready until then. But the report was still not ready by July, so the conference was not held until 23 October.

Two months after the February disturbances, Dr. Jagan requested the Governor to revoke the appointment of Balram Singh Rai as Minister of Home Affairs. Rai was expelled from the PPP after its April 1962 Congress for "anti-Party activities". He had challenged Brindley Benn in the Party elections for the post of PPP Chairman, but after he lost, he and some of his supporters claimed that the elections were rigged, a charge stoutly

denied by the Party leadership. Claude Christian was subsequently appointed as Minister of Home Affairs, but Rai refused to resign as a member of the House of Assembly where he sat as an independent member.

Meanwhile, the PPP Government, optimistically expecting independence during 1962, initiated important preparations for such an event. Through its initiative, the House of Assembly appointed a "select committee" to choose a new name for the independent nation. Eventually, in June 1962 the committee submitted a report recommending the choice of the name "Guyana", and it was quickly approved by the Assembly. During the same period the Government held an international competition for the design of national flag; a design submitted by an American, Whitney Smith, was chosen from a large number of entries.

At the constitutional conference in London chaired by Duncan Sandys, the new Colonial Secretary, Dr. Jagan called on the British Government to grant early independence noting that Trinidad and Jamaica, whose political advancement was at the same level as that of Guyana, had already achieved independent status.

Both Burnham and D'Aguiar, the leaders of the PNC and the UF respectively, opposed independence and demanded new elections under a system of proportional representation. The opposition leaders argued that the PPP was not elected by a majority of the electorate, but Dr. Jagan countered by pointing to the fact that the 1961 election was contested on the basis of the amount of seats, and not on the amount of votes, and that was the reason the party contested in only 29 of the 35 constituencies. Dr. Jagan pointed out that the electoral system was already agreed upon in 1960 and that the boundaries of the constituencies were drawn up by an appointee of the British Government.

The opposition leaders had not objected to the system of voting agreed to by the 1960 constitutional conference; it was only after their parties failed to win in 1961 that they renewed their demand for proportional representation, which had been rejected in 1960. The PPP in opposing the opposition's demands, called for the retention of the existing electoral system, no new election before independence and for the voting age to be reduced from 21 to 18 years. The opposition vehemently opposed this proposal for the reduction of the voting age.

The PPP objected to new elections since it had already been agreed that whichever Party won the 1961 election would lead the country to independence in 1962. The Party argued that it was unfair to force a new election, especially when the controversial budget was given a skewed analysis by the press and the opposition parties. But in order to prevent a collapse of the conference, the PPP agreed to the holding of new elections but under the existing first-past-the-post constituency system. However, the opposition rejected this offer.

The PPP also presented some compromise proposals. These included the establishment of two inter-party committees on social and economic issues, with equal representation from the government and the opposition. The Party added that it was willing to agree to a bicameral legislature. And in a private meeting with PNC member Neville Bissember, the PPP offered to the PNC 4 of the 10 ministerial posts and the Head of State with veto powers on vital national questions in a coalition government. This offer was rejected by the PNC.

With no agreement in sight, the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, suggested arbitration by the British Government. The PPP opposed this and told him that he should make proposals to the conference on ending the deadlock. When he refused to do so, the PPP stated that it would agree to arbitration provided that the British Government would impose a constitution given to any other territory recently granted independence. Sandys bluntly refused to accept this suggestion.

The conference thus failed to reach an agreement and it was clear that the British Government had allied itself to the opposition. And despite delaying the conference on the grounds that it was awaiting the report of the Commission of Inquiry, the British Government did not introduce that report for discussion at the conference. No doubt, the decision not to introduce the report was because the report blamed both the PNC and the UF for instigating the February disturbances. At the end of the conference, Sandys asked the parties to carry out further consultations in Guyana, and he announced that if the political situation worsened in Guyana, the British Government would consider "imposing a settlement". This statement was seen as giving the opposition forces in Guyana the green light to mount violent actions against the Government.

The British Government's decision not to grant independence and to side with the opposition in this conference came about as a result of decisions reached between the British and American Governments. Senior administration officials from both governments had met in London and Washington throughout the year to plan a political strategy to remove the PPP Government from power.

## ATTEMPTS TO REACH A POLITICAL SOLUTION IN 1963

On returning to Guyana, Jagan and Burnham, met in Georgetown on 29 November 1962 under the chairmanship of the Governor, Sir Ralph Grey. D'Aguiar could not attend as he was away from the country. At this meeting Burnham rejected all the proposals made by Jagan. He even refused to accept new elections based on the first-past-the post system with the voting age remaining at 21 years. He disagreed with the formation of a constituent assembly to draft an independence constitution, and was very much opposed to the proposal of a bi-cameral legislature with the lower house being elected under the constituency system and the upper house elected by proportional representation. Burnham demanded a referendum by a simple majority vote to decide on the electoral system, but Jagan disagreed with this, and counter-proposed the offer of a coalition government made to Neville Bissemer in London. Burnham bluntly refused to discuss this offer.

Since these discussions failed to reach any agreement, Jagan wrote to Burnham on 11 December 1962 inviting the PNC to join the PPP in a coalition government. Seven days later he again wrote to Burnham requesting a direct answer but a non-committal reply was not sent by Burnham until nearly a month after. In a brief meeting between the two leaders in late February 1963, Burnham indicated that his party was in favour of a coalition with the PPP, but he was unwilling to make suggestions on the way forward.

Then on 26 February 1963, Jagan again wrote, suggesting that three members from each party should meet to plan the discussions. Not obtaining a reply, Jagan again wrote on 2 April naming the PPP's three representatives and inviting Burnham to name the PNC's representatives. Burnham again did not respond, and Jagan on 3 July 1963 sent him a reminder.

During the period from April to July, the country was rocked by a general strike which was called by the TUC backed by the PNC and the UF. The strike was called to oppose the Labour Relations Bill introduced by the government in the legislature to allow workers to determine democratically by a free and fair vote which trade union should represent them. A state of emergency was declared by the Government in order to maintain the proper distribution through price control of consumer goods and scarce

supplies of fuel. This was a period of intense anti-government activity involving overt and covert assistance from anti-communist American trade unions, including the AFL-CIO, the American Institute for Free Labour Development and the Inter-American Labour Organisation (ORIT), the Latin American arm of the anti-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Many representatives from these organisations visited Guyana to render financial and other support to the anti-government TUC and to the opposition political parties. Some of them also acted as agents of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

The intense anti-PPP activities during the period of the general strike included riots, demonstrations, arson and violence including communal ethnic strife and murder, and were aimed at bringing down the government. It was obvious that Burnham was playing for time knowing that he was receiving full support from the local and foreign opponents of the PPP.

On 3 July, Burnham finally sent a letter to Jagan in which he demanded a referendum to determine the electoral system and for the resignation of the Government and the holding of fresh elections. He claimed that these demands formed the "sole means of restoring normalcy to Guyana" and insisted that he wanted an answer within 48 hours.

The deteriorating political situation forced the Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys to visit Guyana for meetings with the political leaders. On 18 July, at a meeting he brokered, PPP and PNC representatives discussed measures for a political solution. Sandys had proposed the establishment of a national government before a date for independence could be fixed by the British government. The PPP representatives disagreed with this formula stating that because of strong differences in views with the UF, they would prefer to work in a coalition government with the PNC.

But Burnham was still non-committal on the issue of a coalition, and when he finally met with Jagan shortly after, he immediately raised issues aimed at blocking progress. During the second meeting, he demanded that unless the emergency regulations were lifted he would not continue the discussions. The government could not agree to this demand, and so the talks collapsed.

While these matters were gaining attention in Guyana, Dr. Jagan continued to press the issue of independence at the UN. Burnham himself addressed

the Committee handling issues of de-colonialisation, but did not deal directly with the question of independence. He concentrated on attacking the first-past-the-post electoral system stating that such a system would lead to the establishment of "an authoritarian regime through the legislative process."

Government representatives also addressed this committee on separate occasions and drew attention to the belligerent attitude of the British government towards the democratically elected government of Guyana. The deputy Premier, Brindley Benn told the committee on 17 June that the British government should deal honestly with the Guyana government and provide it with the authority to govern in order to maintain law and order. He also asked the committee to demand that the British government set a date for independence and invited it to send a mission observe the situation in Guyana.

But the British government refused to permit the UN Mission to visit Guyana. As a result, the committee invited Jagan and Burnham for a meeting at UN headquarters in New York to meet with a sub-committee of its members. The sub-committee supported the formation of a coalition government, to which Jagan agreed. Burnham was hesitant, but finally decided that the PNC would join if the 10 ministerial posts were divided on an equal basis, and with his party holding the key posts of Finance and Home Affairs. In the negotiations that followed, with the assistance of members of the UN sub-committee, Jagan agreed that the PNC could have Home Affairs if the PPP would have the Ministry of Defence. He was willing to concede the Ministry of Finance to the PNC, but was of the opinion that there should be 11 ministries with the PNC holding 5. The members of the sub-committee felt this was a very reasonable proposal coming from a party that won the election, but Burnham, after being urged to accept it, stated that he must first consult with his executive. It was clear that Burnham was not willing to come to an agreement.

Meanwhile, Dr. Jagan had earlier written to Prime Minister Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana seeking his assistance in brokering an agreement between the PPP and the PNC. The Foreign Minister of Ghana who was at the meeting with the two Guyanese leaders invited them to a meeting in his hotel suite and after discussions in the presence of the Ambassadors of Guinea and Ghana it was agreed that a Commonwealth mission would visit



Guyana to work out a settlement. On the day after this meeting, Dr. Jagan reported the results of this meeting to the UN sub-committee.

Dr. Jagan then departed for London to attend the constitutional conference which was due to open on 22 November. On his arrival, the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, told him that Burnham, after he returned to Guyana from New York and Washington, had stated that he never agreed to the visit of a Commonwealth Mission to Guyana. This display of a lack of principles by Burnham clearly showed that he was not interested in national unity in Guyana.

## THE 80-DAY STRIKE

The opposition forces launched a renewed drive in 1963 to overthrow the Government. This came about after the Government on 25 March published a draft of a Labour Relations Bill to be introduced in the House of Assembly. This Bill was almost similar to the one which was introduced in 1953 but which could not be enacted because of the suspension of the constitution. The Bill which was similar to existing American legislation was aimed at allowing workers to choose, by secret ballot, which trade union should represent them. If a union would be able to win the support of 60 percent of the workers in a particular industry it was to be empowered by the Commissioner of Labour to represent them. Other objectives of this proposed legislation were to end "company unions" and to establish democracy in the trade union movement.

From the inception, the TUC, which was now heavily anti-Government, opposed the Bill. The main reason for this was because the President of the TUC was also the President of the MPCA which was challenged by the PPP-backed GAWU for the right to represent sugar workers and was thus afraid to face a poll.

The TUC argued that the Bill would give too much power to the Government which would use it to control and destroy the trade union movement. It complained that it was only after the Bill was published that the Government sought its opinions. And despite the fact that the Bill was patterned after existing US legislation, the TUC and the PNC and UF branded it as "communist"! This anti-communism was now used as a pretext to oppose and overthrow the Government.

The ensuing protest demonstrations in Georgetown by the opposition parties led to violent attacks on Indians, seen as PPP supporters. The TUC joined in these protests even though its leaders were holding consultative meetings with the Government to amend some clauses of the draft Bill. At a number of PNC public meetings, TUC leaders untruthfully claimed that there was no consultation on the Bill.

However, in the period between the publishing of the Bill on 25 March to 17 April when the debate began in the House of Assembly, the Minister of Labour held meetings with the TUC and the employers' association, the Consultative Association of Guianese Industries (CAGI). As a result, the

Government made 7 changes to the 13 clauses in the Bill. The Government also agreed to the TUC proposal for a Labour Relations Board to be established. Another TUC proposal for the enactment of a Labour Code was accepted by the Government.

During the debate in the Assembly on 17 April, Dr. Jagan stated that discussions with the TUC would continue; that additional proposals from the TUC would be incorporated in the Bill; and that the proposed legislation would not go to the Senate for final approval until all discussions with the TUC and the employers' association were completed. Despite this, the TUC announced that it was calling a general strike to begin on the following day.

On the same day, the Civil Service Association (CSA), led by Dr. Balwant Singh, announced that it would join the general strike. Dr. Jagan met with Dr. Singh and pointed out to him that the CSA had no grievances and that there was no need for that union to strike. Singh responded that the CSA was joining to express solidarity with the TUC.

The strike began on 18 April and, at first, the TUC refused to discuss its grievances with the Government. By this time, the TUC had established a close political connection with the PNC which was continuing to organise violent anti-Government demonstrations in Georgetown. On 26 April, Dr. Jagan asked the TUC to list its views on the amended Bill. It was not until a week later that the TUC submitted a paper with some new proposals, and in a meeting with the TUC on 7 May, the Government agreed to 13 of these. But it disagreed with three other proposals and in discussions, the TUC refused to compromise causing the talks to collapse.

By this time, too, the covert action of the CIA was very much in evidence, and strong support was given to the TUC by CIA-backed American unions which sent representatives and funds to buttress the opposition to the Bill.

During this strike which was to last for 80 days, the TUC obtained financial support from questionable trade union sources in the United States, from the British TUC and from the ICFTU. From the American sources, the TUC received over one million US dollars.

The Government then proposed that a tri-partite committee of Government, the TUC and the employers' association should work out recommendations on breaking the deadlock on the three crucial issues: appointments to the

Labour Relations Board; the method of securing a poll; and the majority needed to certify a challenging union. The committee, after nine meetings, presented its recommendations to the Premier on 23 May. In subsequent meetings with the TUC and the CAGI on 24 May and 27 May, the Government declared that it was ready to accept the recommendations providing that in submitting names for the composition of the Board the Government can also submit names for consideration. When Dr. Jagan appealed for an end of the strike, the TUC bluntly refused saying that a number of issues still had not been resolved.

Dr. Jagan also met with Burnham to discuss the Bill. Burnham admitted that the strike was politically motivated, and even though he supported a similar Bill in 1953, he declared that the current Bill was not the cause of, but the occasion for war!

Even the British Government was aware that the strike was a political effort to dislodge the Government. Nigel Fisher, a Junior Minister in the British Government, visited Guyana in May and obtained a first hand impression that this was the case. Charges of "communism" were thrown at the PPP Government and open calls were made in the opposition media and at public meetings by leaders of the PNC and the UF, as well as the TUC, for the overthrow of the Government.

The Government suffered a set back when the Bill was allowed to lapse in the Assembly because of the open opposition to the Government by the Speaker, Rahman Gajraj. He allowed a motion on the extension of the state of emergency to be affected by a "filibuster", thus allowing it to be talked out by the opposition. Every opposition member was allowed to speak, and he studiously disallowed many Government members to make their presentations and refused to call for a vote on the motion.

Government members, during a break in the debate, told Gajraj that he was being unfair, and on the resumption of the session, he immediately ruled that he was suspending four Government members including Dr. Jagan from participation in the Assembly. The Government was thus robbed of its majority, and to prevent defeat if the Speaker should call for a vote on the Bill, the Government was forced to prorogue the Assembly.

The Labour Relations Bill thus lapsed but, despite this, the TUC refused to call off the strike. The TUC began to raise new issues; it demanded that the

Bill should not be re-introduced and that those on strike must be paid for the period they stayed away from work. The Government opposed these demands and, to help bring about a solution, the British TUC, which had backed the strike, sent Robert Willis, a secretary of one of its affiliate unions, to Guyana to meet with Dr. Jagan and the TUC leaders. After intense negotiations, Dr. Jagan agreed that the Bill would not be re-introduced until at least four months had elapsed. He also agreed that the striking workers would be given a loan of two week's pay to be repaid over a six-month period.

The TUC, instigated by Howard McCabe, one of the TUC American unionist advisers, widely regarded as a CIA agent, refused these offers. Willis was highly annoyed and threatened to expose the TUC and to cut off funds from the ICFTU. Immediately, the TUC decided to end the strike.

The strike finally ended on 8 July. The TUC maintained that it was an industrial strike even though there was overwhelming evidence of its close links with the PNC and the UF in perpetrating acts of violence in the attempt to overthrow the Government. Ironically, the TUC claimed, when the strike ended, that it was not against the principles set out in the Labour Relations Bill, but what it opposed was the fact that the Bill would give unlimited powers to the Government on trade union matters.

The agreement reached on the intervention of Willis was that the Labour Relations Bill would not be reintroduced in its original or amended form until a tripartite committee made up of representatives of the Government, the TUC and a group representing Guyanese business community examine existing labour laws and make recommendations. The TUC demands for the ending of the state of emergency and for full payment for workers who took strike action were rejected by the Government.

Although this strike failed in its political objective of removing the Government from power, it gave the British a convenient excuse to further delay the granting of independence to the country. On the day before the strike ended, Duncan Sandys, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, arrived in Guyana for a nine-day visit to hold meetings with the Government and the political parties on the independence issue. But by then, he had apparently already made up his mind to delay independence. In a report he made earlier to the British Cabinet on 4 July he stated that independence should be withheld because the PPP was communist; the PPP

Government was unable on its own to maintain civil order; and that the US administration's opposition to the PPP Government should be taken into account.

## ANTI-GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE IN 1963

The Labour Relations Bill was presented by the government to the House of Assembly in March 1963. Almost immediately, the PNC and the UF mounted a series of protest demonstrations in Georgetown, mainly around the Public Buildings when the House of Assembly was meeting. In his addresses during these demonstrations, Burnham incited the crowd with language that encouraged violence and hatred.

On March 17, a joint march by the PNC and TUC against unemployment occurred, and included in that demonstration were hooligans who attacked PPP and PYO members who held a counter demonstration outside the Governor's residence demanding independence for Guyana. Burnham, speaking at a PNC rally during the afternoon, congratulated his supporters for their violent attacks on the pro-independence supporters.

Then on March 24, Burnham again incited his supporters by telling them that the PPP was planning violence and that they the PNC supporters must be ready to "apply the remedy." This led to PNC and UF demonstrations around the Public Buildings on 27-28 March. The crowd broke through the police cordons and physically attacked PPP legislators.

The situation worsened on Friday 5 April when PNC demonstrations led to violent attacks on workers at the Rice Marketing Board and the looting of 10 stores in Georgetown. One looter was shot dead by the police.

On 18 April, the Civil Service Association (CSA) joined the strike despite having no grievances against the government; but it claimed it took the action to express solidarity with the TUC. However, many civil servants refused to stay away from work, but they were threatened and in some cases physically attacked by those on strike.

From the beginning of the strike, the political motives were clearly shown. Owners of large business places, generally supporters of the UF, openly supported the strike and locked up their offices and factories to prevent access to those who wanted to work. The sugar workers refused to strike, but the sugar companies refused to operate the sugar factories in the effort to keep sugar workers off their jobs. The bauxite companies also urged their workers to stay away from work while the Shipping Association refused to allow ships already in the harbour to be unloaded. This led to

shortages of consumer food products, which resulted in hoarding and black-marketing. However, the shortage was temporary as locally produced items from mainly the rural areas were supplied to the population.

Clearly, the action of big-business was aimed at overthrowing the government since it was unusual for such entities to encourage their employees not to work!

International travel was seriously affected because airlines ceased operations. The Trinidad-owned British West Indian Airways was prepared to break this air blockade but the Trinidad government ordered that the flights must be cancelled. Dr. Jagan sent his private secretary, Jack Kelshall, a Trinidadian, to Port of Spain urge the Prime Minister, Dr. Eric Williams, to re-consider this issue, but Williams refused to meet with him.

Oil supplies were also cut off from Trinidad and, as a result, fuel for rice farmers was very limited resulting in the loss of nearly one-third of the expected rice crop. Oil companies willing to ship oil were threatened with sabotage, and this forced Dr. Jagan to ask the Governor to seek the assistance of the British navy to protect oil shipments. When the Governor refused to comply with this request for naval assistance, Dr. Jagan appealed to the Cuban government for help. The Cuban government immediately sent shipments of oil which greatly alleviated the situation. The American oil companies operating in Guyana refused the government's request to use their empty storage tanks at East Bank Demerara, but Shell and the Electricity Corporation provided their facilities for this purpose.

The local newspapers, which openly supported the opposition, shamelessly incited violence and racial hatred and almost daily called for the overthrow of the government. The government was accused of being "communist" and the media carried stories that children would be taken away from their parents to be indoctrinated to work in factories built by the communists!

The opposition political parties also distributed handbills urging people to use violence against PPP supporters and instigating a violent coup d'etat. And after a series of violent attacks on peaceful citizens and bombing of some business places, the police in early May raided Congress Place, the headquarters of the PNC where a large cache of arms and ammunition, chemicals for bomb-making, and documents detailing assassination plans were found.



One of the documents gave details of a PNC terrorist organization working under a plan called "X-13" aimed at causing violence and overthrowing the government. The document stated that the head of the terrorist organization was "Comrade Van Genderen" who was "responsible directly to the leader Comrade L. F. S. Burnham for project, plans, etc., of this organization." The head of the terrorist organization was subsequently identified by the police as Edward Van Genderen, a leading member of the PNC.

The police, shortly after, prepared a research paper on 14 August 1963 for the Governor, Sir Ralph Grey, on the PNC terrorist organization. The paper documented that on 31 May 1963, "Edward Van Genderen left British Guiana for Paramaribo. L. F. S. Burnham later told a trusted party member that Van Genderen had left for New York via Paramaribo for the purpose of learning to make bombs to be used by the party." It also listed the names of the 50 members, including one American "trade unionist," Gerald O'Keefe, who was advising the TUC during the strike. This "unionist" was subsequently identified as a CIA agent.

This research paper on the PNC terrorist organization proved to be very embarrassing to the political opponents of the PPP, including the British and American governments which were giving covert assistance to them. As a result the Governor prevented the release of the report to the general public and did not even make it available to the Premier. (It was not until early 1964 information of the existence of this report was exposed after Janet Jagan, the Minister of Home Affairs, managed to obtain a clandestine copy. But after the PPP printed copies of it for public circulation, the Governor immediately declared it illegal for anyone to have possession of a copy of the document.)

Even opposition supporters were shocked when the information of the discovery at Congress Place was announced by the police. This caused a temporary lull in the violence and the TUC tried to disassociate itself from the PNC plot by claiming that its campaign during the strike was based on "passive resistance."

But towards the end of May, opposition instigated violence erupted again. It began after Burnham addressed a large crowd of his supporters on 24 May in Georgetown and telling them that agitation must move away from the

legislature to "places where they grow rice." This was clearly a reference to PPP areas of support and, soon after, violent attacks were made on people in East Coast Demerara, an area of PPP strength.

With the arrival of oil from Cuba, the TUC's stranglehold on the government was loosened and more and more workers were breaking the strike. The PNC then openly took over the leadership of the TUC and there followed increased attacks on individuals - mainly Indians - homes and government buildings. Even a mosque in East Demerara was destroyed by a bomb blast.

On 30 May a serious outbreak of violence occurred at the funeral of Claude Christian, the Minister of Home Affairs, who died suddenly of a heart attack. The funeral service at the Brickdam Cathedral was interrupted constantly by a hostile noisy crowd of anti-government supporters outside on the street. At the graveside at the La Repentir cemetery in Georgetown the hostile mob stoned the mourners who included members of the government. This mob then rampaged through the streets of the city beating Indians and damaging stores and other business places. People of other races who tried to stop this assault were also subjected to beatings. The violence continued throughout the night, and became a daily pattern in Georgetown when Indians were beaten and robbed often in full view of the police. Some PPP legislators were also physically attacked on leaving the House of Assembly.

As expected, these acts of violence led to retaliation in some rural areas where Africans were attacked by Indians. The onslaught led by the PNC caused distress even among supporters of the opposition, and it caused Dr. Donald Jabez Taitt, a founder-member of the PNC, to accuse Burnham of leading his followers "into a blind alley of improvised tribalism," and appealed to him to "change his course and lead in the right direction."

In a letter published in the Daily Chronicle of 15 June 1963, Taitt pointed out that "while Burnham rejected Sydney King's boldly stated racialism . . . at the same time he failed to restrain a scarcely disguised use of the very same appeal to race on the part of his constituency candidates."

Taitt remarked that as Burnham himself rejected the verdict of the 1961 polls he thus persuaded his own followers to do likewise. The rejection was expressed by a continuance of public meetings involving an appeal similar

to that of the pre election meetings and calculated to maintain and even heighten discontent with the verdict at the polls.

Dr. Taitt added:

He [Burnham] took pains to eschew violence while at the same time sedulously fanning the embers of hate and fear among his followers, which he should have known would erupt into violence directed against their fellow Guianese who had done them no wrong.

In his country's legislature he led his opposition members in adopting a role such as one would expect from a communist group bent not on ensuring that the government in power use its interest of the country as a whole during the term for which it is elected, but rather on making it impossible for it to govern at all.

In continuance of his rejection of the country's will as expressed at the elections, he allied himself, his party in the legislature, and his followers outside, with the activities of any special interest group hostile to the recently elected Government so much so as to appear disregarding of the interests of the community as a whole and of his own responsibility for those interests as the leader of a democratic opposition.

Dr. Taitt accused Burnham of turning his back on national unity, unlike leaders of emergent territories. He concluded:

Mr. Burnham has led his followers away from this road into a blind alley of improvised tribalism at variance with the economic and social realities of the two major ethnic groups in our country for they were already well on their way to national integration. . . It is not too late for Mr. Burnham to change his course and lead in the right direction.

But Dr. Taitt's appeal went unheeded. On 10 June, the PNC had already begun a campaign of using women and children supporters to squat in front and inside government buildings and utilizing gangs of young men on foot or on bicycles to attack Indians on the streets of Georgetown. The situation worsened on the following day and when Dr. Jagan told the Commissioner of Police that the mobs were breaching the emergency proclamation, he disagreed and refused to act. Looting broke out shortly at the Stabroek

Market and several Indians were again beaten on the street in the full view of the police.

Dr. Jagan then asked the Governor to call a meeting to include the Commissioner of Police and the Commander of the British troops stationed in Guyana. At the meeting Dr. Jagan asked the Governor to order the use of British troops to help stem the disorder since the police seemed incapable of doing so. A further meeting took place the following morning and the Commander of the troops declared that he would not deploy the army, even though the Commissioner of Police supported Dr. Jagan's request. Dr. Jagan again appealed to the Governor to make an official request for the troops, but the Governor refused.

That morning the mobs on the street became even more violent. They laid siege to the Public Buildings which also housed the Premier's office. Dr. Jagan made efforts to get the Governor and the Police Commissioner to visit the scene but they refused to budge. It was as if they had received other instructions to allow the mob to cause as much violence as possible and to overthrow the government. In the meantime, the Minister of Education, Cedric Nunes, was beaten and stoned in the presence of the police as he tried to reach his office just across the street from the Public Buildings.

At around mid-afternoon, Dr. Jagan, accompanied by two body guards and Superintendent Carl Austin, was leaving the Public Buildings when his car was stoned and then surrounded by a hostile crowd armed with bottles, iron bars, stones and pieces of wood. The car windows were smashed, but as some in the mob tried to get at Dr. Jagan, Superintendent Carl Austin and the two bodyguards fired their pistols and the driver managed to manoeuvre the car away from the scene. This action of the mob was clearly an attempt to assassinate Dr. Jagan.

This incident was followed by a greater spate of violence. Mobs invaded the Law Courts and the office of the United Nations. Some government buildings were dynamited and an attempt was made to destroy the Rice Marketing Board wharf where workers were loading rice on a Cuban ship. A large quantity of dynamite planted by saboteurs was found attached to the woodwork under the wharf.

Violence continued throughout the month until early June when, through the intervention of the British TUC, the strike came to an end. (See Chapter 162). By that time, 9 persons were murdered, 2 others were killed by police gunfire, 40 persons were injured and 3 women raped. In addition, 19 buildings in Georgetown and 5, including a mosque, in the countryside were bombed. There were also 53 cases of arson and attempted arson.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE IN 1963

The 1963 constitutional conference was called by the British government to work out plans on a date for the independence of Guyana. It was held at Lancaster House on 22 October 1963, under the chairmanship of Duncan Sandys, the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Sandys opened the meeting by enquiring whether the three political parties had made any progress towards reaching an agreement. The leaders of the three delegations replied that they had had a number of meetings but were unable to resolve the pending issues, including the voting age, the electoral system and the date for independence.

### Government and opposition proposals

In the discussions that followed, Dr. Jagan, as Premier and leader of the PPP, insisted that Guyana should have immediate independence; that in future elections, the voting age should be reduced to 18 years; and that the electoral system of separate constituencies, as existing then, must be retained.

However, Burnham and D'Aguiar, the PNC and UF leaders respectively, counter-proposed that there should not be immediate independence; there should be elections before independence; the voting age must not be reduced from 21 years; and the electoral system must be Proportional Representation (PR), by which the entire country would become one constituency, and seats in Parliament allocated on the proportion of votes obtained by each contesting political party.

It was clear from the outset that the opposition was not willing to compromise and was definitely not interested in pursuing independence for Guyana. Faced with this situation, Dr. Jagan called for mediation by a Commonwealth team, but Sandys said that would just prolong the issue and that there might not be a satisfactory solution. Jagan then proposed that the Trinidad constitution should be adopted but this was also rejected by the opposition. During informal discussions, the PPP delegation proposed a consultation machinery, or good offices commission, as existed in the United Kingdom, and a Senate with government-opposition parity. But these proposals, too, were not accepted.

Dr. Jagan then proposed the election of an upper house by proportional representation, but the opposition declared that it was no longer interested in an upper house. He then suggested that a unicameral legislature should be elected by a mixed first-past-the post and proportional representation system as existed in Suriname - a system which the PNC supported up to the eve of the conference. This would involve 24 seats elected in separate district constituencies by plurality, and 12 seats by proportional representation. Again, the opposition rejected this proposal and stuck to their demand for the Israeli list system of proportional representation. In discussions on the system of proportional representation, both the PNC and UF declared that a party securing less than 10 percent of the votes should not qualify to obtain seats under this system.

Burnham and D'Aguiar refused to budge from their hard-line position, and the conference was on the verge of collapse. The two opposition leaders were willing to sacrifice Guyana's independence than to shift from their position. Actually, this was one of their aims because their campaign slogan during the early 1960s was "No Independence under Jagan". They had already succeeded in delaying independence in 1962 and 1963 by inspiring violent disturbances in an effort to bring down the PPP Government.

### Devious role of the British and American governments

The British government also played a devious role by showing a bias towards the opposition and thus eventually stacking the cards against the PPP at this conference. Two security reports (for June and September 1963) on "The PNC Terrorist Organisation" were never given to the Minister of Home Affairs or to Dr. Jagan, the Premier, and were kept secret by the British authorities. The first report named Burnham and 49 others for being responsible for violence and the second report called for the arrest of Burnham and 24 others. These reports were withheld from the PPP government since they would have been very damaging to the opposition at the 1963 constitutional conference. The people of Guyana did not know of the existence of these reports until early 1964.

Indeed, the entire plan to delay independence under the PPP government saw its genesis the year before - in May 1962 - when Burnham journeyed to Washington to meet with Kennedy's special assistant, Arthur Schlesinger. There a US-PNC deal was concocted. About the same time,

US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk sent a strongly worded letter to the British to indicate that the US was backing Burnham and that it wanted Jagan out of the government.

The American government saw Jagan as a "communist threat", and proposed proportional representation as the electoral system which could fulfil that objective of ousting him and the PPP from the government.

Further, direct pressure from President Kennedy on the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, also resulted in the British government finally adopting a position to oust the PPP from power. On 30 June 1963, at a meeting at Birch Grove, Macmillan's country residence, Kennedy issued an ultimatum to the British Prime Minister that if Guyana achieved independence under Jagan it would become a major political issue in the United States, he (Kennedy) would be defeated at the presidential election, and there would be new fears of nuclear confrontation.

Faced with this ultimatum from its ally, the British were forced to cooperate. Finally, in September, Macmillan wrote Kennedy saying that the British would impose a political solution in Guyana to ensure Jagan's removal.

At the same time, British Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys quietly encouraged Burnham not to make any compromise with Jagan at the constitutional conference.

Actually, the British government was planning for the failure of the conference. This was decided at a meeting held in the office of the Colonial Secretary on 7 October 1963. The notes of that meeting expressed the following:

"It was important to ensure that the conference and, in the meantime, that Dr. Jagan and Mr. Burnham fail to agree either on the terms of reference on the composition of any good offices commission. It was agreed when the conference ended in deadlock, the British government would announce the suspension of the constitution and the resumption of direct rule."

This document clearly showed that the British government was deliberately setting out to scuttle its own conference in the deliberate plan to delay independence under the PPP government.



## The "Sandys Solution"

With the opposition parties, as expected, refusing to compromise on any of the issues, Sandys decided to postpone the plenary sessions for a few days, during which he held separate discussions with each of the leaders, who also had further private talks with each other.

With the conference reaching a deadlock, the three leaders finally agreed to ask the British Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, as chairman of the conference, to arbitrate a solution based on the objective of the conference - i.e., the final independence of Guyana. The request was made in the following joint letter, originally drafted by Sandys:

"At your request we have made further efforts to resolve the differences between us on the constitutional issues which require to be settled before British Guiana secures independence, in particular, the electoral system, the voting age and the question whether fresh elections should be held before independence. We regret to have to report to you that we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that there is no prospect of an agreed solution. Another adjournment of the conference for further discussions between ourselves would therefore serve no useful purpose and would result only in further delaying British Guiana's independence and in continued uncertainty in the country. In these circumstances we agreed to ask the British government to settle on their authority all outstanding constitutional issues and we undertake to accept their decisions."

On the morning of 25 October, when the signature ceremony was due to be held, Sandys telephoned Jagan inviting him to his office alone to meet with him. Sandys was adamant that the PPP leader should not be accompanied by his advisers, and undoubtedly Jagan felt that he was being invited to private consultations with the Colonial Secretary.

But in a devious act, Sandys also invited Burnham and D'Aguiar, along with their advisers, to the same meeting. Thus, when Jagan arrived, without his advisers, Burnham and D'Aguiar with their full teams were already there. Nevertheless, he joined the two opposition leaders in examining the text of the draft joint letter and finally agreed with the two opposition leaders to sign it and was the first one to place his signature on the document. It was apparent that he felt that at least the British government would agree to granting independence which was the main aim of the conference as well

as the main outstanding matter left over from the constitutional conference of the year before.

But this was not to be. After further meetings with the three leaders, Sandys, at a final plenary session on 31 October 1963, announced his decision by which he agreed to everything the opposition wanted, and nothing the democratically elected PPP government had requested. This decision was immediately condemned by democratic forces internationally.

Through this "Sandys solution", Guyana was not to obtain immediate independence; the voting age was not reduced and the list system of proportional representation was made the electoral system for elections to be held in December 1964, a full year before the PPP government's term was due to expire. Sandys also refused to fix an elimination percentage figure to disqualify a party from securing seats, a situation which deliberately allowed for the formation of splinter parties to contest the elections.

In his statement to the plenary meeting, he said that he was satisfied that the root cause of Guyana's troubles was the development of party politics along racial lines. He declared that the system of proportional representation should be introduced, since this would tend to encourage coalitions between parties and would make it easier for new political groupings to form on a multi-racial basis, thus insinuating that proportional representation would solve the racial problems in Guyana!

He added that preparations for elections under this system would begin without delay, after which the British government would convene a conference to fix a date for independence. He emphasised that his government did not want to delay Guyana's independence any longer than was absolutely necessary to enable power to be transferred in conditions of peace and stability.

Undoubtedly, the decision of the British government to give total backing to the opposition was by no means a compromise since it took no consideration of the demands of the PPP. By deciding not to be an honest broker in supporting all the opposition demands, the British government showed that it was willing to betray democratic principles in order to remove a freely elected democratic government in Guyana.

Without a doubt, the British decision was also based on the agreement worked out between the British and the American governments to remove the PPP from power.

In the aftermath of the conference, Dr. Jagan was sharply criticised by Indian racists and by some of his own supporters for signing the joint letter to Sandys. However, it was apparent that the British government had already decided on its course of action and had already worked out its "solution" for Guyana even before the conference convened. The Colonial Office was also already privy to information that the PNC and UF would ensure a deadlock to the conference, and it knew that it would be in the right position to impose its "solution" in the way the two opposition parties wanted it.

The British government was highly elated over the results of the conference. This was revealed in the minutes of a meeting on 26 November 1963 between the new Prime Minister Douglas Hume and US Secretary of State Dean Rusk which stated: "The Prime Minister said that the conference had gone on better than as hoped. It was even slightly awkward that Dr. Jagan had given us so little trouble."

There were joyous celebrations among PNC and UF supporters in Guyana when they learned of the British decision. They openly expressed delight that independence was not granted to Guyana, even though Burnham had joined Dr. Jagan at the end of the conference to condemn Sandys for not fixing a date for independence.

The PPP government strongly condemned the British decision, and the government formally rejected it in a White Paper issued a few days after the conference ended. The government stated that the British formula was a "breach of faith" and violated agreements already reached and that it would serve to multiply the problems in the country. It added:

"By introducing the conditions for parties to appeal for communal rather than inter-racial support, they will accentuate sectional differences, and by rewarding, or appearing to reward, looting, violence and irresponsibility, Her Majesty's Government has implicitly accepted the thesis that violent disagreement with the measures proposed to be enacted by an elected government must over-ride the constitutional authority of that government."

## PROTESTS AGAINST THE SANDYS' "FORMULA"

The Sandys "formula" was welcomed by the US Government which was confident that the new electoral system would ensure that Jagan and the PPP would be pushed out of power. The Americans felt that it would also remove the fears of another "communist" regime being established in the region. The US Government had already expressed its preference for Burnham and had intimated to the British Government that independence should only be granted if he held the reins of power. But the British Government was not too sure about the outcome of elections under the proportional representation system, and this might have been the main reason why Sandys refused to announce a date for independence.

In announcing his decision at the end of the constitutional conference, Sandys observed that party politics along racial lines was the main cause of Guyana's problems. He then stated that he had to consider whether the electoral system of proportional representation would improve the situation. Apparently convinced that this would happen, he declared: "I am satisfied that there is validity in the argument that in the present circumstances, where no party commands an overall majority of votes, proportional representation would be likely to result in the formation of a coalition government of parties supported by different races, and thus would go in some way towards reducing the present tension."

Sandys stated that it was his duty "to choose the electoral system which would be most likely to encourage inter-party coalitions, and multi-racial groupings and which would make it easy for new parties to form."

The PPP Government detailed its objection to the Sandys' "formula" in a memorandum set out in a "White Paper" in late November 1963. Accusing the British Government of a "breach of faith", it stated that the decisions "are a flagrant violation of decisions arrived at, and solemn undertakings give, at the 1960 Constitutional Conference." At that conference, a draft constitution for an independent Guyana was agreed upon, and that the only matter of substance that had to be decided upon at a subsequent conference was the fixing of a date for independence. As such, the PPP argued, the decision imposed by Sandys violated agreements already reached and would not help in resolving disagreements between different sections of the population. "The British Guiana Government cannot accept

the constitutional proposals of Her Majesty's Government," the memorandum stated, and added that Sandys' imposition was "a device that must inevitably produce anarchy in the country."

In the course of announcing his "formula", Sandys alleged that as of October 31, the Government of British Guiana was "insolvent". He also insinuated that those responsible for the registration of voters for the 1961 elections were guilty of misconduct. He obviously used these allegations as an excuse to rationalise the British Government's backtracking on decisions that were already agreed upon at previous constitutional conferences.

The PPP Government denounced these statements as totally false. The Minister of Finance, Dr. Charles Jacob, challenged Sandys to prove his allegation of insolvency, and showed that the Secretary of State had based his allegations on a report by a British Government auditor, K.C. Jacobs dated 12 August 1963. Jacobs' report predicted that by 30 September there would be a deficiency of \$2.3 million in the cash balance, and that by 31 October the short-fall would \$1.7 million. The PPP Government showed that contrary to these predictions, which Sandys converted to fact, the cash balance on 30 September was \$2.7 million, or \$5 million above the British forecast, while on 31 October the balance was \$4.66 million, or \$6.36 million higher than the British forecast. These figures were confirmed during the budget presentation in the House of Assembly in January 1964. A tax-free budget, as in the previous year, was presented and a surplus of \$0.3 million was projected.

With regard to charges that there was misconduct in the registration of voters for the 1961 elections, the PPP Government felt that it was unfairly maligned even though it had no direct control of those elections. It pointed out that the registration was conducted under the authority of a British official. This official was supervised by a Chief Election Officer, an Englishman, who reported directly to the Governor.

But the British decision also was a big setback in the struggle for Guyana's independence. The PPP tried to reach an agreement with the PNC to make a joint demand to the British Government to fix a date for independence, but the latter was uncooperative.

In mid-January 1964, Dr. Jagan took his protest against the British imposition to the meeting of the Heads of the Commonwealth Caribbean in Jamaica. There he highlighted the intrigues of the British Government against the PPP.

At the end of the month, the PPP organised mammoth marches of its supporters from Crabwood Creek on the Corentyne River and from Charity on the Pomeroon River in Essequibo. Both of these converged in Georgetown on 31 January for a demonstration of thousands against the Sandys' decision, and to demand independence for Guyana. These marches were even larger than the "freedom marches" which the PPP had held in 1962. The January 1964 marches were very peaceful and very successful in whipping up support for the PPP's position. But some of the marchers were physically attacked by PNC supporters in Georgetown after the mass public rally addressed by Dr. Jagan had concluded.

Meanwhile, Dr. Jagan continued his efforts to bring about national unity and, at his request after the November 1963 constitutional conference, President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana sent a mission to mediate between the PPP and the PNC. Despite numerous concessions by the PPP, Burnham and his party did not seem to want a national unity government and the mission departed after failing to bring about an agreement.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN 1963

The political problems in the country brought about by the 80-day strike, and the continued efforts on the part of the political opposition and the TUC to destabilise the Government, caused a decline in production in the main sectors of the economy. Sugar and bauxite failed to reach their production targets set at the beginning of the year. Despite the shortfall, favourable development objectives were achieved in some other areas. Significantly, even though opposition propaganda warned foreign investors against the "communist" PPP Government, 21 new foreign companies were registered during 1963.

The Government continued its programme of improving the quality of life of the people, and to this effect new health centres were built in rural communities, and 76 artesian wells were sunk in order to make pure potable water available. Overhead water storage tanks were also constructed to serve large villages all over the country.

The 80-day strike had minimal negative effects on the rural population, and farmers in various areas took advantage of the shortage of imported foodstuffs to produce more local farm products to meet the need of the urban population. With large surpluses of agricultural commodities available, and to better manage the purchase and sale of farm produce locally and for export to the Caribbean, the Guyana Marketing Corporation (GMC) was established. The GMC also began operations to process agricultural products, and the Government granted incentives to private enterprises involved in such activities. Agricultural production - particularly of root crops and milk - expanded to such an extent, that in 1964 Forbes Burnham announced that if his party won the elections everyone would be given "free milk and cassava".

The Government also continued its drive to make agricultural land available to farmers. Thousands of acres of land for rice cultivation were given to small farmers in various parts of the country. Then on 30 November 1963, the Tapakuma drainage and irrigation scheme in Essequibo was declared open. This scheme opened up more than 30,000 acres of land for the cultivation of rice, and after the available land was distributed mainly to landless farmers, rice production increased rapidly during the following year in that part of the country.

In 1963, rice exports to the English-speaking Caribbean countries and to Cuba expanded, and with better prices received from these purchasers, rice farmers were able to obtain an increase for the rice they sold to the Rice Marketing Board. Trade with Cuba further improved also when the Government of that country began purchasing a large quantity of wallaba poles for running electrical and telephone lines. This helped to spur an expansion in the timber industry, particularly in areas near to Amerindian communities in the river bank areas. As part of a barter agreement, Guyana purchased Cuban cement to help sustain its building industry.

The Industrial Development Corporation, which was established in 1962, expanded its activities and more manufacturing companies were set up along the East Bank Demerara and at the newly opened Ruimveldt Industrial Estate in southern Georgetown.

Air transport took on a new dimension with the setting up of the Guyana Airways Corporation (GAC). Air strips in some parts of the interior were upgraded, and there began a larger flow of goods and passengers from the coastal areas to the interior districts. Beef from the Rupununi district was shipped by GAC planes to Georgetown, and even to Trinidad and Barbados.

Some of the biggest achievements of the Government were seen in the education sector. Many new primary schools were built and there was also an increase in admission of students to secondary schools. However, there was a severe shortage of trained teachers in both the primary and secondary schools, and the Government, seeing teacher-training as a priority, instituted a comprehensive training programme in various parts of the country.

A UNESCO Mission which visited Guyana in 1962-63 had recommended a scheme for teacher-training by which every teacher would be trained within 12 years. This was this plan that the PPP Government implemented in 1963.

To carry out this programme, the PPP expanded the intake of students at the pre-service Government Training College in Georgetown and also opened another pre-service teacher college at Belvedere on the Corentyne. The programme in the Georgetown and the Belvedere centres involved intensive one-year courses. In-service teacher-training centres were also



established in Georgetown, Mackenzie, Buxton, Vreed-en-Hoop, Bush Lot (West Berbice), New Amsterdam, Skeldon and Anna Regina. However, the Buxton centre had to be closed down after the PNC discouraged its teacher-supporters in that area from attending. Nevertheless, this training programme resulted in a rapid expansion of the numbers of trained teachers throughout the country.

There was also a severe shortage of Guyanese specialists, and while plans were being instituted for the establishment of a university in Guyana, the PPP Government was able to obtain scholarships to foreign universities for many students - mainly in the fields of medicine, engineering, agriculture, economics, arts, natural and social sciences, teacher-training and textbook production.

The PPP had also sent a number of young people to study in socialist countries, such as the USSR, the GDR and Cuba, either on Party or Government scholarships. It was expected that on their return to Guyana at the completion of their studies, they would be employed in specialist fields which were then the domain of many non-Guyanese. (Unfortunately, on return to Guyana after 1965, these graduates from socialist countries faced severe harassment from the PNC-UF Government who either refused to employ them, or appointed them to very junior positions in the Government institutions despite their high qualifications in medicine, technology, arts and natural and social sciences. It was not until after 1973, following continuous demands by the PPP, that their qualifications were officially recognised).

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA

Undoubtedly, the most important event in the field of education during the PPP administration was the establishment of the University of Guyana (UG). The groundwork planning for the founding of the UG actually began in late 1959, and much work was put into this process. This was noted by the UNESCO Mission which visited Guyana from late 1962 and early 1963 to conduct an educational survey on the invitation of the Government. The members expressed to the Premier, Dr. Cheddi Jagan, their great surprise that so much planning could have been completed in a mere three years.

The university was established and incorporated by an Ordinance enacted in the House of Assembly in April 1963. The policy of the PPP Government in setting up this institution was aimed at creating an intellectual nucleus in Guyana, partly as a centre around which some systematic definition of the national goals could take place, and partly as a defence against the persistent battering from external colonialist and reactionary ideas which were seriously undermining colonial and developing societies.

The policy was also aimed at training middle-range technical cadres in large numbers; to train an adequate number of high level professionals to exercise intellectual leadership in Guyana and to man positions of high responsibility; and to undertake active research.

The University Ordinance specified that "no religious, political or racial test shall be imposed on or be required of any person in order to entitle him to be a student or member of staff of the University. . . ."

The first Chancellor of the UG was the distinguished Guyanese scholar, Edgar Mortimer Duke, while the first Principal and Vice-Chancellor was the world-famous British mathematician, scientist and educator, Dr. Lancelot Hogben.

With the commencement of classes, it was hoped that the university would produce teachers, highly qualified personnel for the public service, and the scientists, technologists and technicians needed for the national programme of agricultural and industrial development. In addition, it was expected that it would provide a focus for the intellectual life of the community and a place where the merits of particular solutions to Guyana's problems might be tested by arguments and experiments.

On establishment, the UG consisted of the Faculties of Arts, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. It was the proposal of the PPP Government to associate the research sections of the Geological Surveys and Forestry Department with the UG as research institutes. It was also intended that the Government Training College for teachers would become the proposed Institute of Education of the university. Close relations were also to be established with the Guyana School of Agriculture, founded also in 1963, and with the Government Technical Institute which had been expanded and reorganised in 1959.

The eager response of Guyanese to the new opportunities for higher education was demonstrated by the large numbers who applied from all over the country for the limited number of places available. Out of the 680 applicants, 179 were admitted.

The university commenced classes on the 1 October 1963 and used the Queen's College building and other rented buildings in Georgetown as teaching centres. (The large tract of land at Turkeyen, where the university campus is located today, was in 1963 handed to the PPP Government by the Booker Group of Companies, the British multinational which at that time owned most of the sugar estates, among other businesses, in Guyana.)

In order to make it easier for those Guyanese who normally would not have been able to afford the time and money for higher studies abroad, the UG had some special features. Classes were held between 18:00 and 22:00 hours, five evenings per week, thus ensuring that working people could attend. Tuition fees were a token 100 dollars per year - a figure well within the reach of all income groups.

While steps were being taken to bring university education within the range of all, there was no lowering of standards. Visiting assessors from well-established universities abroad were appointed and they held discussions with the staff and reported on standards. They also examined question papers and advised on syllabuses. In addition, Guyanese lecturers such as Dr. Harold Drayton, with their qualitative teaching, played an instrumental role in laying a strong academic foundation for the new university.

Clearly, the establishment of the UG was aimed at providing higher education for a large number of Guyanese who could not have afforded to

study in foreign universities. It was even felt that the University of the West Indies (UWI), to which Guyana was subscribing large sums of money annually, was not providing enough service to the country since only a small number of Guyanese could afford to attend classes at that institution which had campuses in Jamaica and Trinidad. Between 1948 and 1963, Guyana sent 1.8 million Eastern Caribbean dollars to the UWI, but during this period there were only 97 graduates from Guyana. Of this total, 57 did not return home to benefit their country with their skills.

When the PPP Government compared the needs of the country with the costs of the UWI and its results, it decided to withdraw its financial support for the UWI as soon as Guyanese students then enrolled were graduated. The money would instead be channelled into the University of Guyana. However, following consultations between a number of Caribbean Governments and the Government of Guyana, this decision to withdraw from the funding of the UWI was revoked.

The establishment of the university met with opposition at the political level. It was obvious from the beginning that pro-imperialist interests were being trampled upon with the setting up of the university since it was aimed at expanding skills and knowledge to a greater section of Guyanese, and also because the training of more skilled people would put the nation in a position to intensify the stiff struggle for total independence. In these circumstances both the PNC and UF opposed the establishment of the university, even claiming that Guyana was too small to have such an institution, and the PNC even insultingly referred to the university as "Jagan Night School". However, by 1964 the institution had already become firmly established and had also gained international recognition. Later, even the PNC and UF were to accept the university as an important asset in the development of Guyana.

## RENEWAL OF VENEZUELAN CLAIM TO ESSEQUIBO

From the beginning of the 1960s, as the movement towards independence gathered momentum in Guyana, some politicians and sections of the media in Venezuela demanded that their Government should officially resurrect its claim to the western Essequibo. This move to reopen the claim by Venezuela to the area west of the Essequibo River had actually recommenced in 1949 following the publication of a memorandum written by Severo Mallet-Prevost, a lawyer in the team that conducted the Venezuelan case before the arbitral tribunal in 1899. The memorandum written in 1944 claimed that the award which settled the boundary between Venezuela and Guyana in 1899 was a result of a "political deal" between Great Britain and Russia. A Russian judge was the chairman of the five-member arbitral tribunal.

In February 1962, when the United Nations Fourth Committee was discussing the issue of independence for British Guiana, Venezuela, basing its case on the Mallet Prevost memorandum, officially made its contention through a memorandum presented to the Secretary General of the United Nations. The memorandum alleged that the Arbitral Award of 1899 was invalid, and put forward the claim that the region west of the Essequibo River was Venezuelan territory. While Venezuela did not object to the forthcoming independence of Guyana, it objected to the western Essequibo being included as Guyanese territory.

In reply to the Venezuelan contention, Sir Patrick Dean, a special British representative to the UN, on 19 September 1962, took the position that the border dispute had been settled by the 1899 Award, and that the question could not be reopened on the posthumous word of an aged lawyer who had nursed grievances against the Tribunal for the whole of his life. In his lengthy address to the Special Political Committee of the UN, Dean repudiated all Venezuelan claims to Guyanese territory.

The border issue was further discussed at another meeting of the UN Special Committee on the 12 November 1962. At that meeting, Dr. Marcos Falcon Briceno, Minister of External Relations of Venezuela, said that his country was not asking the UN to pass judgement on the substance of his country's claim, and that he was merely putting on record the reasons why Venezuela could not recognise the 1899 Award as valid.

The British Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN, Colin Crowe, replied that the British Government did not accept that there was any frontier dispute to discuss. He added that British experts conducted a very thorough examination of the records and were completely satisfied that there was no justification whatsoever for reopening this frontier question.

Crowe announced that the British Government, with the concurrence of the Government of British Guiana, was prepared to discuss with the Venezuelan Government, through diplomatic channels, arrangements for a tripartite, Venezuela British Guiana United Kingdom examination of the voluminous documentary material relevant to this question. He added that this was not an offer to engage in substantive talks about the revision of the frontier but to dispel any doubts which the Venezuelan Government had about the validity or propriety of the Arbitral Award.

After an agreement to this effect was reached between the British and Venezuelan Governments, Venezuelan experts examined British documents in London from 30 July to 11 September, 1963. Sir Geoffrey Meade, retired Foreign Service Officer, who was appointed to represent the United Kingdom, also represented the Government of British Guiana at the latter's request.

On the 5-7 November 1963, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Venezuela met the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom to review the progress in the examination of the documents. The Foreign Ministers agreed that the British expert, Sir Geoffrey Meade, should go to Caracas to examine any documents which the Venezuelan Government might wish to produce to support their allegation that the Award was improperly arrived at. Meade was in Caracas from 3 to 12 December 1963, and examined the relevant documents produced by the Venezuelan Government. (The examination of documents in the two capitals by both sides continued in 1964 and into 1965 and the reports of the experts appointed by each side were exchanged. Nevertheless, Venezuela refused to be convinced even though it could not produce any document to support its contention).

The Venezuelan claim to the western Essequibo was strongly rejected by the Guyana Government which set out its main policy statement on the issue on 28 February 1964 when Dr. Cheddi Jagan, the Premier, addressed the Legislative Assembly. He was adamant that his Government had no intention of reopening the boundary issue and forcefully declared:

"The Government of British Guiana is not prepared to yield to Venezuela or any other country a single rivulet or creek; we are not prepared to surrender a single inch of soil of this country."

The renewal of the Venezuelan claim was regarded as one of the techniques of destabilisation aimed at blocking independence for Guyana under Dr. Jagan's leadership. The thought of an independent Guyana under a socialist PPP Government created fear in imperialist circles, and as a result, the American Government pressured Venezuela, then a pro American state, to reopen the claim to the western Essequibo, while at the same time instigating disturbances in Guyana with the aid of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and local anti PPP forces from 1962 to 1964.

Further, the threat from Venezuela was aimed at generating fear among Guyanese so that they would be influenced to choose a Government which would win the support of an American-British alliance against any aggression by Venezuela. Since the American Government, in particular, had no liking for Dr. Jagan and the PPP, it was obvious that the Guyanese people were being indirectly told that Burnham and the PNC were preferred, and that under a Burnham-led Government, an American-British alliance could be depended upon to prevent any aggressive designs by Venezuela.

## THE OUTBREAK OF RACIAL DISTURBANCES IN 1964

On 17 February 1964, the Guiana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) called a country-wide strike to demand recognition as the bargaining agent for the country's sugar workers. The union, backed by the PPP, was the successor of the GIWU of the early 1950s, and when it was resuscitated in 1960, it was known as the Sugar Workers' Union before its name was officially changed. The established recognised union was the MPCA which was strongly anti-Government, but which had very little support among the sugar workers who were fiercely supportive of the PPP.

Throughout 1961, 1962 and 1963, GAWU demanded that a poll should be taken among sugar workers to determine which union should represent them, but the employers' organisation, the Sugar Producers' Association (SPA), in close alliance with the MPCA, firmly opposed any such action. The MPCA leadership was part and parcel of the leadership of the TUC which naturally opposed a poll among sugar workers.

The strike actually started after cane-cutters at Leonora were told on 6 February by the management of the estate that there was work for only half of them. The workers begged for work to be provided for all of them, but the management refused their request. As a result, all the workers called a strike on the following day, and by the 17 February cane cutters on all the estates decided to join the strike in solidarity. They called on GAWU to act on their behalf saying that they had no confidence in the MPCA.

The strike received overwhelming support from sugar workers and all the sugar estates were seriously affected. The workers showed their total disdain for the MPCA and bluntly refused the pleas of the leaders of that union to return to work. Dr. Jagan, the Premier, requested the Governor, Sir Ralph Grey, to order a poll among sugar workers, but he refused to do so. However, on further advice from Dr. Jagan, he appointed a commission of enquiry headed by a respected Supreme Court judge, Guya Persaud, to determine which union should represent the sugar workers. Immediately, the MPCA filed an injunction in the Supreme Court to block this enquiry. As a result, the chairman of the commission decided that the enquiry could not begin until the Supreme Court made a ruling. The enquiry was thus suspended and was finally abandoned when the PPP Government was removed from power.



Faced with the serious problem of no production of sugar, the SPA began to hire scabs in the effort to break the strike. In doing so, the employers' organisation disregarded the existing political and racial sensitivities in the sugar estates. At that period, the overwhelming majority of sugar workers were Indians, and were supporters of the PPP. What the SPA did was to hire mainly inexperienced African cane-cutters who were generally supporters of the PNC. In strike situations, it was natural for workers on strike to try to prevent strike-breakers to get to the workplace; in the case of this strike, Indian workers attempted to block the entry of African and also some regular Indian cane-cutters (who refused to strike) from reaching the fields or factories.

Many of the African recruited to break the strike were also employed by the management of the sugar estates as "vigilantes" to protect the property of the estates from sabotage. Inevitably, violent racial clashes took place between these "vigilantes" and the Indian population residing on or near to the sugar estates. Soon after, these clashes extended to other areas as well. On 4 March, at Tain on the Corentyne, a bomb was thrown at a bus transporting scabs to Albion estate and two persons Gunraj, an Indian, and Edgar Munroe, an African, died.

Violent attacks involving beatings and murders occurred mainly on the East Coast Demerara, Mahaicony, West Demerara, Wismar-Mackenzie and Georgetown, and the entire country was in a state of tension. In Georgetown, Indians were brutally beaten on the streets, and some business places were looted and set on fire.

Reprisal beatings, destruction of property and killings occurred with great frequency. Indians attacked Africans and Africans attacked Indians in some communities, houses and business places were looted were burnt down and Government and privately owned buildings were bombed. In some villages, where Indians or Africans formed the minority, they abandoned their homes and resettled in villages where their respective group had dominance. A dusk to dawn curfew in the affected communities did little to prevent the violence.

But despite the violent attacks and killings, most of the country remained relatively peaceful even though Africans and Indians regarded each other with suspicion. And even in the areas where racial violence occurred almost daily, there were numerous cases where Indians were protected by

Africans, and where Africans were protected by Indians. In many instances, Indians and Africans, on abandoning their home communities, obtained the assistance of friends from the opposite race group to temporarily occupy their homes in order to prevent them from being destroyed by arsonists.

In most communities, residents organized "vigilante groups" and "home guards" to patrol in groups during the night. Some of these communities also set up imaginative alarm systems to warn of suspicious intruders. While these groups provided some protection, in the absence of regular police patrols, there occurred some incidents in which they attacked and killed innocent persons passing through some areas on foot or in motor vehicles.

While the violence was escalating, the sugar industry strike continued. One very notable incident occurred at Leonora Estate on 6 March when a female sugar worker, Kowsilia, was run over and her body severed in two by a tractor driven by an African strike breaker. She and other women workers on strike were squatting on a bridge near to the factory to prevent strike breakers from crossing when the incident occurred. Fourteen other women were seriously injured. In the ensuing fracas, the police arrived on the scene and used tear gas to break up the demonstration. Kowsilia became an immediate martyr for the cause of sugar workers in their struggle for democracy in the trade union movement in Guyana.

Meanwhile, a new Governor, Sir Richard Luyt, arrived in Guyana to succeed Sir Ralph Grey and he was sworn in on 7 March. The PPP Government objected to his appointment, saying that Grey's successor should be a Guyanese and the PPP Ministers refused to attend the swearing-in ceremony. No doubt, this objection to Luyt's appointment was one of the reasons the new Governor was to display a bias against the PPP Government for the remainder of 1964.

## THE ESCALATION OF THE RACIAL DISTURBANCES

After the death of Kowsilia, the situation worsened in all the sugar estates with those on strike even shooting at strike breakers. As violence and terror continued, the new Governor, Sir Richard Luyt, declared a state of emergency on 23 May and British troops were brought in to assist in security. By this time, the Government had continuously expressed its concerns to the Governor that the Police Force and the Volunteer Force were acting in a partisan way and were showing open loyalty to the political opposition and doing very little to protect Indians from being attacked. The Government also accused the opposition PNC of supporting the violence through a central organisation which conducted operations through central planning and execution with military precision.

Critics of the PPP Government saw the strike as being used by the PPP to protest the imposition of proportional representation as the new electoral system for Guyana. They felt that the leadership and members of GAWU were essentially PPP members and supporters, and by prolonging the strike, the PPP, through the union, was flexing its muscles against the British Government. However, this argument could not be sustained, for it was obvious that the PPP could not gain political benefit from any violence in the country since such violence was destabilising the Government itself.

The Minister of Home Affairs, Janet Jagan, openly accused the police of not taking action to prevent the racial attacks, and even the Commissioner of Police, Peter Owen, failed to keep the Minister informed. This was clearly shown when the Commissioner refused to take the advice of the Minister in requesting the early assistance of British troops and police reinforcement on 24 May to prevent the attacks on Indians at Mackenzie and Wismar. Beatings, rapes, looting and arson were being committed in broad daylight and it was not until late in the afternoon that the Commissioner agreed to ask for a contingent of British troops to go to the area. In the aftermath of the attacks on Indians there, five persons were killed, hundreds were injured, many females were raped and brutalised, and over 200 houses and business places owned by Indians were burnt to the ground. The British troops from the following day assisted with the evacuation to Georgetown of Indians in the area. In all, 744 families comprising 3,399 persons (1,249 adults and 2,150 children) were evacuated.

In protest against the partiality displayed by the Police and the Volunteer Force, Janet Jagan resigned as Minister of Home Affairs on 1 June 1964.

On 6 July, a passenger launch, the "Sun Chapman", was blown up in an explosion on the Demerara River not far from the Wismar-Mackenzie area. The launch was returning from Georgetown and at least 38 persons, all African residents of the Wismar-Mackenzie area, died in the mishap. When the news of the explosion reached the community, Indians who had returned to work at Mackenzie were brutally attacked with the result that five of them died.

There were counter accusations as to what caused the explosion. PNC supporters claimed that a bomb was placed by PPP agents on the launch when it was in Georgetown; while PPP supporters claimed that the launch was transporting explosives to make bombs to attack Indians and their property. A subsequent police investigation could not determine what device caused the explosion and who was to blame.

From early in 1964, the British Government began a process to reduce the powers of the Guyana Government. In the first instance, on 26 February, by a special order signed by the Queen, a military force styled the Special Service Unit, under direct control of the Governor, was established. Then on 26 March, an Order in Council signed by the Queen gave the Governor full powers to make regulations for registration of voters for the elections under proportional representation. The Government was relieved of any authority on this matter. Then on 29 May, the British Government vastly extended the emergency powers of the Governor. The constitution was also amended by the British Government to prevent the Council of Ministers to have any control over the Governor's new powers. The constitution was further amended by the British Government on 23 June to allow for the new electoral system of proportional representation and for the election of a unicameral House of Assembly comprising of 53 members.

In effect, these acts reduced the constitutional authority of the Guyana Government since they removed the powers held by the Ministers and placed them in the hands of the Governor, who by mid-1964 had become a virtual dictator.

Armed with these dictatorial powers, Luyt on 13 June ordered the detention of 32 members of the PPP, including some legislators and Deputy Premier

Brindley Benn, after accusing them of instigating the racial disturbances. Only two PNC members were put into detention, even though there was clear evidence of PNC involvement in the reign of terror, as was clearly indicated in the secret police report on the PNC Terrorist Organisation which Luyt had in his possession.

The detention of the PPP legislators caused the PPP to become a "minority" in the legislature. According to Dr. Jagan, this "amounted to a suspension of the constitution".

The Governor also ordered the seizure of all shotguns and rifles, but not automatic pistols and revolvers. This was evidently aimed at disarming PPP supporters (mainly rural dwellers) and while allowing dangerous weapons to be retained by the PNC and UF supporters who lived mainly in the urban areas.

The British troops were also involved in acts of repression against the PPP supporters in rural communities. The soldiers uprooted the red "jhandi" flags planted in the yards of homes owned by Hindus who displayed these flags as part of a religious rite. The soldiers, being ignorant of the Hindu culture, believed these were "communist" flags, and they proceeded to ransack the homes in the search for guns, and the occupants were assaulted and arrested. The Governor, no doubt aware of this situation, issued a special order granting legal immunity to the British troops, and this immediately drew a strong protest from the Premier, Dr. Jagan.

The GAWU finally called off the strike on 25 July without the recognition issue being resolved. Nevertheless, the terror and violence continued. In Georgetown, a senior civil servant, Arthur Abraham, and his seven children were killed when their home was set on fire. A cinema in the city was bombed and persons killed. Earlier in the month, the Guiana Import-Export Ltd. (GIMPEX) building on Regent Street and Freedom House, the PPP headquarters, on Robb Street were simultaneously bombed on 17 July. In the Freedom House bombing, aimed at assassinating the Party leadership, Michael Forde, an employee of the PPP bookshop on the ground floor, was killed.

The terror and violence in most of the affected areas came to a sudden end when the police in Georgetown on 9 August 1964 accidentally raided the hotel room of Emmanuel Fairbain, a PNC activist, and discovered a large

collection of arms, ammunition and explosives. Fairbain was charged for being in possession of illegal weapons and explosives and was detained in prison where he died shortly after under mysterious circumstances.

According to the police records, the disturbances resulted in 176 persons killed and more than 900 persons seriously injured. More than 1,425 buildings were destroyed by arson, and about 15,000 persons (from 2,600 families) were displaced and they subsequently re-settled in areas where their race group was in the majority. The long-term result of these disturbances was that they increased racial polarisation in the country.

Ever since the violence, killings and terror escalated, the Commissioner of Police announced that investigations were going on to find those responsible for these deeds. Finally on 17 August 1964, he stated that the police were in the process of conducting enquiries into more than 100 murders including 22 in Georgetown. He declared: "Enquiries so far have revealed that there exists an organised thuggery which is centrally directed. A great effort is being made to bring those responsible for the deaths to justice but it is in the public interest that law abiding citizens should know now what they and the police are faced with in this country today."

On the same day, the Commissioner also swore to an affidavit in which he mentioned "the subversive and criminal activities of a criminal gang attached to a political party known as the People's National Congress."

After this revelation, more violence broke out during late August in the Mahaicony area where a number of Indian homes were attacked by gunmen and more than 13 persons, including children, shot dead. Eye witnesses named the killers, who included a policeman, but no charges were brought against them.

## MEDIATION BY GHANA AND TRINIDAD IN 1964

Despite the political setback brought about by the British-imposed decision at the November 1963 constitutional conference, Dr. Jagan continued his efforts to find a political solution in Guyana. Shortly after the conference concluded, he wrote to Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, President of Ghana, urging him to mediate a settlement between the PPP and the PNC. Dr. Nkrumah immediately responded by sending a mission headed by one of his close advisers, Professor W.E. Abraham. This mission arrived on the 9 February 1964, but sections of the opposition press immediately launched an attack on it and also on the Ghana Government. While in public the PNC welcomed the mission, in private it opposed the visit and failed to criticise the UF which organised hooligan elements to disrupt its work.

At the meetings with the mission, the PPP made many concessions. It agreed to parity on the Council of Ministers, a single chamber legislature, the Surinam mixed system of voting (a combination of proportional representation and constituency voting), and the voting age to remain at 21. The PNC demanded the Home Affairs Ministry but the PPP could not agree to this. Abraham suggested a compromise that the PNC should have the Ministry of Home Affairs with a junior PPP Minister and the PPP should have the Ministry of Defence with a junior PNC Minister. The PPP agreed to this compromise but the PNC refused and so the talks reached a deadlock.

The Ghana mission decided to leave on the 19 February, with Abraham hoping that the talks between the two parties would continue afterwards in an effort to break the impasse. On the evening before the mission's departure, Dr. Jagan asked Abraham to make a final effort to bring about a settlement since it was felt that the PNC would pull out of the talks as soon as the mission departed. He suggested that Abraham should find out from Burnham whether he would agree to the mission's compromise proposals on the Defence and Home Affairs Ministries. On the next morning Dr. Jagan telephoned Abraham at the airport and he was told that Burnham did not agree. Abraham urged Dr. Jagan to concede the Ministry of Home Affairs; to this Dr. Jagan agreed provisionally on the condition that the PNC should agree that a party which failed to obtain 12 percent of the votes at the general election should not be allocated seats.

Abraham immediately contacted Burnham by telephone about these matters and then told Dr. Jagan that the PNC leader had agreed. Abraham wanted to know whether he could make an announcement at the airport about this agreement, but Dr. Jagan told him that this could be done after his meeting with Burnham. This was a mistake because Burnham used the departure of the mission to place obstacles in the efforts to make a settlement. When Dr. Jagan and Burnham finally met nearly two weeks later after many postponements requested by the latter, Dr. Jagan began to summarise points of agreement for a settlement. Immediately, Burnham interrupted and said that Abraham had misunderstood him. He said he had not indicated to Abraham that he had agreed with the 12 percent exclusionary figure. It turned out also the PNC delegation was now no longer in favour of the mixed Suriname system of voting, which that party had constantly promoted, but the German system of proportional representation. The talks thus collapsed.

A month later, in the background of racial clashes in 1964 when the new Governor, Sir Richard Luyt, was given dictatorial powers (and with many constitutional powers taken away from the PPP Government), the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, invited Dr. Jagan to meet with him in Trinidad. At the meeting Dr. Jagan agreed to the mediation of Dr. Williams and briefed him on the possible areas of agreement for a settlement. Burnham and D'Aguiar (the UF leader) were then invited to Trinidad but they were very uncooperative. D'Aguiar felt that "the only alternative to Dr. Jagan was partition". And Burnham, speaking to university students at the UWI campus, declared that he did not think that Dr. Williams could help bring about any settlement.

Unfortunately, Dr. Williams refused to provide Dr. Jagan with the views of the PNC, UF and the TUC leaders with whom he also met separately.

(He was to publish them in detail after the discussions broke down). Dr. Williams himself was annoyed that Dr. Jagan did not return to Trinidad to meet with him on a second occasion, even though the Guyanese Premier explained that the deteriorating situation in Guyana did not make it possible for him to leave the country. He suggested instead a visit by the Attorney General, Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye, to find out the view points of the PNC and UF to determine whether there was any possibility of a settlement, but Dr. Williams did not agree. Dr. Jagan then suggested that Dr. Williams could



brief his country's representative in Guyana to bring him up to date, but the Trinidad Prime Minister also refused to accept this proposal.

The situation had now reached an impasse. Finally, towards the end of May 1964, Dr. Williams issued a statement in which he blamed the Guyanese leaders, including Dr. Jagan, for being uncooperative and irresponsible.

## JAGAN'S COALITION PROPOSALS

Following the failure of Dr. Williams to bring about a settlement, Dr. Jagan wrote Burnham on the 6 June, 1964 and made comprehensive proposals to the PNC for the achievement of national unity. The letter stated:

". . . . You would be aware that it has been my wish since the split of the People's Progressive Party in 1955 that a merger or a coalition of the two parties representing the majority of the working people should take place. Unfortunately my previous efforts have failed to bring about a merger or a coalition government. I know you will agree with me when I say that the situation has now deteriorated to such a point that something dramatic must be done to prevent further racial strife between the two major ethnic groups, to unite the working class and to create a stable and strong government.

"I propose, therefore, to invite you to join me in the formation of a coalition government between the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress on the following terms:

"Council of Ministers: The PPP and the PNC to have an equal number of Ministries - 5 to each party - with the Leader of the PPP being Premier and the Leader of the PNC being Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier shall be the Leader of the Legislative Assembly. The term of office of the coalition government is to be two, three or four years with the minimum period until August 1965, the life of the present Government.

"It is my considered view that in the charged atmosphere of today, a holding government for a short period until the proposed general elections later this year will not suffice to create unity, peace and harmony which are so necessary today at all levels. It is my view that the coalition should continue after the next general elections on an agreed basis and that the party Leader of the majority party should be the Prime Minister and the other Leader the Deputy Prime Minister.

"On Independence, the Ministry of Home Affairs should go to one Party and a Junior Minister to the other Party; the Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministry should go to the Party which does not hold the Home Affairs Ministry, and the Junior Minister to the other Party.

"Head of State: On Independence the Head of State should be mutually agreed upon by all Parties.

"House of Assembly: The future House of Assembly is to be made up on the Surinam model of a combination of a first-past-the-post and proportional representation system. I suggest the existing 35 constituencies to be the basis of new general elections at a time to be mutually agreed upon. In addition there should be 17 seats allocated to each party on the basis of the votes polled with the proviso that no party would share in the allocation of these seats unless it polled a minimum of 15 percent of total valid votes cast. This proviso is in keeping with your proposals to the Constitutional Committee of 1959 for the prevention of fragmentation and the formation of multiplicity of parties. It is also in keeping with our present electoral laws which cause a candidate to forfeit his deposit if he or she does not obtain 15 percent of the total votes cast in the constituency.

"Senate: I suggest that the Senate be reconstituted as follows: 6 PPP, 4 PNC, 1 UF and 2 others.

"United Nations Presence: Between now and Independence there should be a United Nations Presence in British Guiana. During this interim period all preparatory steps must be taken to create with the help of the United Nations and British Commonwealth territories, Security, Police and Defence Forces, and institutions in which there is public confidence.

"Agreed Programme: The PNC and the PPP should immediately set to work to produce an agreed programme based on a domestic policy of democracy and socialism, and a foreign policy of non-alignment. A central committee and various sub-committees should be established to produce a detailed domestic programme within two months.

"British Government: Immediate representation should be made to the British Government for the latter's agreement to electoral reform and other arrangements proposed above.

"In view of the obvious urgency of this matter, I should be very grateful if you would give my proposal your early attention. I look forward to hearing from you in a day or two. . . ."

Through these proposals, Dr. Jagan offered the PNC parity in the Council of Ministers. In the interest of establishing nation and racial unity, he was also willing for the PPP to accept a minority position in the Senate. On 13 June, in a nation-wide radio broadcast, Dr. Jagan informed the Guyanese people of his coalition proposals to Burnham. However, these proposals did not meet with any positive response from the PNC leader.

### **Proposal to Commonwealth leaders**

On the 24 June, 1964, Dr. Jagan made yet another offer for a PPP-PNC coalition when he wrote to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers whose conference was commencing the following day in London. In his letter, he recommended that until the December 1964 elections there should be a UN presence in Guyana. He also suggested that a Commonwealth team should be appointed to help bring about a compromise to include "the achievement of a coalition Government of the two major parties, the PPP and the PNC." Dr. Jagan stated that such an achievement would assure the US Government on the issue of security within the region. However, the British Government was unwilling to agree to this proposal.

At this Conference, Dr. Eric Williams proposed that Guyana should be administered by a Commonwealth Commission which would be manned by a staff appointed by the United Nations. This suggestion was also rejected by the British Government.

In the final communiqué of the Conference, the Prime Ministers "expressed the hope that the political leaders of British Guiana would seek urgently a basis of collaboration in the interest of their fellow countrymen of all races to strengthen a spirit of national purpose and unity."

### **Mediation of Chaman Lal**

This was exactly what Dr. Jagan was doing, but despite all efforts to reach an agreement with the PNC, nothing was being achieved. In August 1964 the famous Indian Buddhist monk, Bhikku Chaman Lal, visited Guyana in an effort to secure a coalition agreement. He received maximum cooperation from the PPP but was attacked in sections of the opposition press. After holding separate meetings with Dr. Jagan and Burnham, Chaman Lal stated that he had worked out an eight-page coalition agreement.

The Buddhist monk also stated that the four important points on which the two leaders agreed were parity for the two parties in the Cabinet and on the boards and corporations; readjustment of the number of Ministries after the election according to Assembly seats; racial balance in the police force; and the commitment that one party would have the Premiership and the other would have the Home Affairs Ministry. Burnham had accepted Dr. Jagan's proposal that a coalition be formed immediately and should continue for four years after the December 1964 general election, but after putting this matter to his party's executive, he informed Chaman Lal that the PNC wanted the coalition to last only until the election "when the whole thing would be revised".

As a result, a meeting with Dr. Jagan and Burnham to confirm the agreement fell through and no agreement could be reached. In great disappointment, Chaman Lal departed from Guyana.

## BETRAYAL BY THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY GOVERNMENT

When the British Government imposed the "Sandys' formula", which agreed to all the opposition demands, the opposition Labour Party in Britain firmly condemned this decision. Harold Wilson, the leader of the Labour Party and Leader of the Opposition, in reply to a letter from the secretary of the Progressive Youth Organisation (PYO) in December 1963, wrote that his party's representatives had "strongly criticised the Colonial Secretary's decision to impose proportional representation in British Guiana."

The spokesman for colonial affairs in the British Labour Party, Anthony Greenwood, wrote to Dr. Jagan on 16 April 1964 stating that the party had condemned Sandys' decision to impose proportional representation as the new electoral system in Guyana. He added that the Labour Party would voice its strong opposition to the British imposition when the issue would come up for debate in the British Parliament in June 1964.

When the debate in the House of Commons took place in June, Wilson stated that the imposition of proportional representation was "a fiddled constitutional arrangement". He suggested that a Commonwealth team should be appointed to review the decision of the British government.

Another leading Labour Party member, Arthur Bottomley, described the Sandys' formula as "riddled with disadvantages" and that such an imposition was unknown in any Commonwealth country. He added that those who supported Sandys did so "not because they think this will reduce racialism but because they think they will put someone in power whom they prefer to Dr. Jagan."

The Labour Party won the general election in Britain in October 1964 and Wilson became the new Prime Minister. Greenwood was appointed the new Secretary of State for the Colonies. There was hope in PPP circles in Guyana that the new Labour Party government would reverse the decision of the previous Conservative Party government since Wilson himself and Greenwood had firmly objected to the Sandys' imposition.

The American government was well aware of this new situation, and urgent talks on Guyana were held between the British and American governments. During the last week in October 1964, the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and British Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker met in

Washington. Rusk convinced Walker that the United States would oppose the establishment of an independent state led by Dr. Jagan since the Americans were convinced he would set up a "Castro-type" regime. As a result, the Labour Party government, in an act of betrayal of its own principles, agreed with the American Government that the Sandys' formula should not be changed; that there should be no early independence for Guyana; and elections under proportional representation should take place on 7 December.

As a result of these developments, Dr. Jagan met with Greenwood in London during the last week of October 1964. He requested that the elections should be postponed and that a Commonwealth mission should be sent to Guyana to help work out a political solution. He reminded Greenwood that only a few months earlier, Harold Wilson, as Leader of the Opposition, had suggested that a Commonwealth mission should review the Sandys' formula.

Dr. Jagan also asked for financial help from the British Government to help expand the police and security forces and for the correction of the existing racial imbalance.

During his meeting with Greenwood, Dr. Jagan gave him copies of two secret police reports on the PNC terrorist organisation, and the Senate statement by Janet Jagan before her resignation as Minister of Home Affairs. The police reports implicated more than 50 persons associated with the PNC and the TUC and an American citizen as being involved in planning and carrying out the 1963 disturbances. Dr. Jagan explained that these secret police reports were not made available to the November 1963 constitutional conference by the Governor, Sir Richard Luyt. He pointed out that Luyt had deliberately withheld these reports from him (as Premier) and from the Minister of Home Affairs, and explained that if these reports were brought to the attention of the constitutional conference the outcome might have been different.

But Greenwood brushed aside the security reports saying that their validity was questionable, and stated that the elections would be held as planned.

Shortly after, Dr. Jagan met with Prime Minister Wilson, who also stuck to the decision, but offered to send a Commonwealth team to observe the elections. To this, Dr. Jagan reminded Wilson that what was needed was

not a Commonwealth observation team but for the "fiddled" constitutional arrangements to be corrected.

It was clear that the Labour Party government had been influenced by the American Government and was not willing to change the decision made by the previous administration. The PPP was therefore forced, under protest, to contest the 1964 election.

## THE 1964 ELECTION CAMPAIGN

In early 1964, the Governor, Sir Richard Luyt, began making preparations for the elections to be held in December 1964 under the new system of proportional representation. This system converted the entire country into a single constituency with the contesting parties each submitting a list of candidates in order of preference. Votes, therefore, were to be cast for the party and not an individual candidate within a political party. Whatever proportion of votes a party won, that party would be entitled to receive that proportion of seats in the new 53-member National Assembly.

In April, under regulations that he made, Luyt appointed an Elections Commission made up of three British expatriates under the chairmanship of G.W.Y. Hucks. The regulations declared that the Commission was to take orders and direction only from the Governor.

The registration of voters was fixed for a period of four weeks (from May 8 to June 6). Many persons displaced as a result of the on-going racial conflict occurring at that time faced a serious disadvantage as a result of the limited time for registration.

Despite the fact that the House of Assembly on 30 April 1964 passed a motion by 17 votes to 14 that the house-to-house system of registration should be retained, the Governor overruled this decision and ordered that a system of voluntary or personal registration must be carried out. This was what the combined opposition wanted and which had been rejected by the House of Assembly.

According to the new registration system, the onus was not on the Elections Commission to register the voters, but on the people themselves to apply personally to the Commission for registration within the given



period. This new process prevented many voters from registering. The PPP estimated that this arrangement prevented about 30,000 persons from the rural areas to be registered as voters. In retrospect, the PPP's argument was on sound footing because for the 1964 elections, 247,604 voters were registered, compared to 246,120 registered for the 1961 elections.

The PPP had also requested that photographs should be affixed on voters' identity cards as a safeguard against fraud. The PNC had earlier made the same proposal, but did not press for it. The House of Assembly on 14 May 1964 discussed this matter and passed a motion by 17 votes to 9 requesting that photographs should be affixed on voters' identity cards. The Governor contemptuously disregarded this decision of the National Assembly and ruled that the voters' identity cards would not have photographs. He also issued orders extending the facility of proxy voting.

The Governor's actions also openly helped the opposition. Duplicated copies of the "Police Research Paper on the PNC Terrorist Organisation" were confiscated under the pretext it was a confidential document. The Governor made an offence punishable by a fine and six months imprisonment to be in possession of a copy of this document. At the same time the Commissioner of Police refused to bring charges against the persons named in the research paper for conspiracy and "organised thuggery".

On 24 November 1964, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Anthony Greenwood, appointed a Commonwealth Team of Observers to observe the upcoming elections. The terms of reference for this Commission stipulated that it should examine whether the administrative arrangements were conducted in a fair and proper manner; if there was freedom of expression through the media and public meetings; and to consider if other factors affected the free and fair conduct of the election.

The team was led by Mr. Tek Chand, an Indian judge, and was made up of two members from Canada, two from Ghana, two from Malta, one from Nigeria, one from India, and two from Trinidad and Tobago.

For the elections, the ruling PPP was opposed by the PNC and the UF, as well as by four splinter parties formed solely to contest the election. There were strong allegations that two of these splinter parties, the Justice Party (JP) led by Balram Singh Rai and Jai Narine Singh, both Hindus, and the

Guiana United Muslim Party (GUMP), led by Hussain Ghanie, received lavish funding from sources in the United States and from local Indo-Guyanese big business opposed to the PPP. Their platform, like the PNC and the UF, was anti-communism, but they added race and religion in their campaign.

Actually, the GUMP also received direct funding from the British government. As early as 25 February 1964, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Anthony Greenwood, instructed that funding should be given to Hussain Ghanie to assist in his party's election campaign. This was clear evidence that the British government was involved in manipulating the election.

Interestingly, those who helped organise the formation of the GUMP included leading Muslims associated with the UF and the PNC. Obviously, their aim was to push the GUMP to try to pull away Muslims who overwhelmingly supported the PPP. The GUMP conducted a heavy campaign among Muslims, the great majority of whom were Indians, but it failed to win any significant support.

The other splinter parties were the National Labour Front, led by Cecil Grey, and the Peace, Equality and Prosperity Party, led by Kelvin De Freitas. Their campaign was very low-key and was concentrated mainly in Georgetown.

In the campaign, the PNC's propaganda to its African supporters was that the PPP was anti-African. The UF, on the other hand, told Indians that the PPP was anti-Indian. The GUMP, composed totally of Indians, claimed that the PPP was anti-Indian and anti-Muslim. The Justice Party, with its Hindu leaders, urged Indians not to vote for the PPP which they claimed was anti-Indian and anti-Hindu.

For its election campaign, the Justice Party used a fleet of American-made motor vehicles equipped with public address systems, which the PPP claimed were obtained through American funding. Its public meetings were held totally in Indian-populated areas, but despite its lavish spending, it failed miserably to get Indians to believe its propaganda.

Not to be outdone, the UF also received substantial financial support from American sources, including the Christian anti-Communist Crusade.

(In terms of foreign sources of funding for the election campaign, the New York Times of 28 April 1966 stated in an editorial that the CIA "has poured money into Latin American election campaigns in support of moderate candidates and against leftist leaders such as Cheddi Jagan of British Guiana.")

The PNC and the UF also received funds covertly from the United States Government and some of these were utilised for the election campaign. The US State Department in its publication Foreign Relations, 1964-1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana, published in 2005, stated that the Special Group/303 Committee of the National Security Council approved approximately \$2.08 million for covert action programmes after 1962 in Guyana. A good proportion of this covert funding was given to the PNC and the UF in 1963 and 1964 when they were trying their best to overthrow the PPP government.

By this time, most Guyanese were aware of the covert and overt role of the CIA, working in alliance with the PNC, UF and the TUC, in trying to overthrow the PPP Government. The Indian population saw the Justice Party and the GUMP as part of that connection aimed at undermining Indian support for the PPP. It was, therefore, not surprising that in almost every Indian community these two splinter parties were labelled as "CIA agents".

During the election campaign, the PNC and the UF also launched attacks on each other. Burnham was emphatic that the PNC would never join with the UF in any coalition since the PNC was "socialist" and the UF was "capitalist".

Overall, all the opposition parties attacked the PPP claiming it was communist, anti-religion, anti-Indian and anti-African. The PPP, on the other hand, defended its political, social and economic programme showing how it was providing land to the landless, creating new jobs, and expanding agriculture and industrial development. The PPP also, in public meetings throughout the country, attacked the PNC, UF, JP and GUMP for opposing immediate independence for Guyana, and for joining up with "imperialist" forces, including the CIA, in the effort to destabilise the country.

The PPP asserted that in the event of a PNC or UF victory, the US government would pressure the new government to abandon the lucrative Cuban rice market. This brought a quick denial from Delmar Carlson, the US Consul-General in Guyana, who said that at no time had the American government suggested that rice exports to Cuba should be stopped.

The Elections Commission allocated radio time to the political parties to make political statements. The print media was also heavily involved in the campaign, with the main daily newspapers, the Daily Chronicle, owned by Peter D'Aguiar, the leader of the UF, and the privately-owned Guiana Graphic, fiercely championing the views of the opposition parties and openly carrying an anti-PPP campaign. The PPP itself could only express its views through its newspaper, the Mirror, which was published just two times a week.

In its manifesto, issued about a month before the elections, the PPP placed its focus on the struggle for independence and the development of the economy. In a separate statement, Dr. Jagan stated that the PPP would contest "under strong protest" the premature 1964 general election which he said was rigged in favour of the opposition parties under a "fiddled" constitution.

On 2 December, just five days before the elections, Governor Luyt openly interfered in the electoral process when he issued a statement in which he expressed his views as to how he would exercise his discretionary powers in the appointment of a Premier after the elections were concluded. He declared to a shocked country that he would not necessarily appoint the leader of a party with the highest number of votes as Premier.

The Premier, Dr. Jagan, sharply criticised Luyt for his statement. He questioned the propriety of the Governor, as Head of State, for making this statement on the eve of the elections. In a statement on 4 December, Dr. Jagan declared:

"The question could influence the electorate, and the Governor has apparently entered the political arena to help the opposition. Such action would never be contemplated by a British sovereign. . . ."

He further complained that the Governor "has confused many persons into believing that even if a party polled more than 50 percent of the votes, the leader of that party need not be asked to form the Government."

## THE DECEMBER 1964 ELECTIONS

The general elections were held on Monday 7 December 1964. There was a massive turn-out of voters, and 97 percent of those registered voted by the time the polls closed at 6.00 p.m. Most Guyanese stayed up during the night to listen to the results as they were broadcast on radio, and it was clear by the following morning that the PPP would win the highest number of votes. The final results announced by the Elections Commission on the evening of 8 December, showed the PPP winning 109,352 votes, the PNC 96,567 and the UF 26,612. The splinter parties did not do well; GUMP managed to obtain only 1,194 votes, the JP 1,334, PEPP 224 and NLF 177.

Since the elections were conducted under the new system of proportional representation, the amount of votes acquired by each party was also very significant. Despite winning the elections with the highest amount of votes, the PPP's proportion was 45.8 percent. The PNC won 40.5 percent while the UF obtained 12.4 percent. When compared with the 1961 elections, the PPP was the only party which actually increased its overall proportion of the votes, and under the previous constituency system, the PPP would have easily retained its majority of seats. The despondent PPP supporters naturally felt that their party was cheated, and in all areas of PPP support in the country the slogan "cheated but not defeated" was loudly voiced.

In the new 53-member legislature, the PPP was allocated 24 seats, the PNC 22 and the UF 7 based on the proportion of votes they won. With just under 46 per cent of the votes, the PPP fell short of the required majority of seats by three. On the other hand, the opposition parties together had a clear majority of seats.

Immediately after the official results were announced, Dr. Jagan tried to obtain the support of Burnham and the PNC to form a coalition government. He showed that the PPP and the PNC together polled 87 percent of the votes and that the Guyanese people would overwhelmingly support such a coalition. At the same time, such a coalition would be a giant step in the efforts to build national unity. Dr. Jagan even offered Burnham the position of Premier, but the PNC leader refused to budge from his fixed position that he would not cooperate with the PPP.

Since the PPP actually won the elections with the highest amount of votes, the party felt that it had received a vote of confidence, particularly since it was the only one that actually increased its percentage of votes since the 1961 elections. As a result Dr. Jagan refused to tender his resignation as Premier and told Governor Luyt that because the PPP had contested the elections under protest, the party would not participate in the arrangements for the setting up of a new government.

Luyt had all intention of excluding the PPP from such arrangements and he refused to follow the established convention of asking Dr. Jagan, the leader of the party with the highest amount of votes, to continue in the government. Instead, he met with Burnham who had informed him that he would obtain the support of the UF with which he was trying to work out a coalition agreement.

However, Luyt and the British Government faced a dilemma; they knew that Dr. Jagan was not obliged to resign as Premier since his party had not actually lost the elections. At a meeting with Luyt, soon after the results were announced, Dr. Jagan emphasised this position and reminded him that British parliamentary norms required that the leader of the party that won the highest number of votes should be called upon to form the new government. But the British government was determined to get rid of Dr. Jagan, and Luyt, on instructions from London, refused bluntly to comply with the constitutional norms since this would upset the plan to install Burnham in power.

Confronted with this impasse, Anthony Greenwood, the British Colonial Secretary, dispatched an urgent letter to Dr. Jagan pleading with him to resign and insisting that if he did not, the situation could lead to "further bloodshed" in the country. Greenwood's letter stated: "The Governor has told me that in the course of discussions about the election result, you have expressed serious doubts about whether you and your Government should resign forthwith. I do not think that you can seriously maintain that you could get a majority in the new Assembly and I want desperately-as I am sure you do-to see stability in British Guiana. Apart from anything else I am afraid that continued uncertainty may lead to further bloodshed and unhappiness. I do ask you most earnestly to take this into account and to enable the new government to be formed. We have no wish to resort to constitutional amendment. But we should have no alternative if you

obstructed the formation of a new government. This is very urgent. That is why I am making this personal approach. . ."

However, after his plea was rejected, Greenwood, immediately rushed an amendment of the Guyana constitution through the British Parliament to empower the Governor to dismiss Dr. Jagan and his Government. This amendment would thus open the way for Luyt to call upon Burnham, who had not yet received the formal support of the UF, to form a new government.

The British Government, as soon as the constitution change was made, got Queen Elizabeth to sign an Order in Council dismissing Dr. Jagan and his government. Shortly after, Luyt swore in Burnham as the new Premier and asked him to form a minority government with the promised support of the UF. Contrary to his pre-election statements, Burnham negotiated with D'Aguiar for two weeks after the elections, and just before Christmas Day, the UF finally agreed to join in a coalition government with the PNC.

The British Government had to resort to changing the Guyana constitution because it was of the view that if the PPP was asked to continue in government, a political situation would have arisen to weaken Burnham and the opposition. By not having a majority in the legislature, a PPP Government could lose a no-confidence vote brought by the opposition, and would then be forced to resign and call new elections. The British Government, as well as the American Government, feared that in such a case, new registration of voters would favour the PPP. Also, many persons who disagreed with an alliance of the PNC and the UF would have swung their votes to the PPP which might easily win over 50 percent of the votes.

The Commonwealth observers raised a number of concerns over the conduct of the December elections. They felt that the proxy voting "seemed open to manipulation" and said it was their "duty to point out that the proxy system is liable to abuse." There were 6,665 proxy votes and the PPP, even though it won 46 percent of the votes, obtained only 8.6 percent of them.

The observers also sharply castigated Luyt for disclosing just before the elections his interpretation of the constitution as to how he would proceed to call a political leader to form the government. He had stated that he would not necessarily call on the leader of the party with the highest votes.



The observers felt that stating "such an intention just before the poll could influence voters against casting their votes for a party of their choice."

One member, Bakar Ali Mirza of India, in a separate memorandum, expressed concern over the state of fear that existed at the time of the elections. He wrote that most of the parties, except the PNC, complained to the observer mission about threats of violence in which the PPP said the police force was involved. Mirza stated that it was hinted that the PNC did not complain about threats because of the large proportion of Africans, generally PNC supporters, in the police force.

In the aftermath of the elections, the splinter parties disappeared from the scene, giving credence to the view that the Justice Party and the GUMP had been formed and funded by external sources, with the specific aim of helping to remove the PPP from the government.

## THE PNC-UF COALITION GOVERNMENT IN CONTROL

With the UF joining the PNC in a coalition just before Christmas 1964, the British Government further amended the Guyana constitution on 22 December allowing the Premier to appoint more than nine Ministers. Immediately after, Burnham re-designated himself as Prime Minister and appointed a cabinet of 12 Ministers, including four from the UF. The UF leader, Peter D'Aguiar was named as Minister of Finance. (Two others, including Shridath Ramphal, as Attorney General, were added to the cabinet by May 1965).

The new House of Assembly held its first meeting in early January 1965 and A.P. Alleyne was elected as Speaker. The PPP members did not attend the session; the Party had earlier announced that as a form of protest over the way it was removed from office, it would boycott of the sittings of the House of Assembly.

In a statement in the House of Assembly, Burnham revealed that the government planned to send special missions abroad to recruit skilled Guyanese to help in the country's development. He also announced that his government would ask the British Government to grant independence to Guyana before the end of the year.

On 10 January 1965, Burnham paid a two-day visit to Venezuela where he held discussions with President Raul Leoni and other Venezuelan officials. Part of the discussions centred on the on-going examination of the document pertaining to the 1899 Arbitral Award on the Guyana-Venezuela boundary.

At the end of January, Burnham went to London to attend the funeral of Sir Winston Churchill. There he also held discussions with Greenwood and later met with Guyanese nationals whom he asked to return to Guyana to assist in the task of nation building.

Around the same time, the British Government announced that it would make available \$12 million (Eastern Caribbean) to Guyana for on-going development projects. One month later, the US Government announced a grant of US\$4.7 million for the road works programme in Guyana and a US\$2.6 million for the building of a new international airport terminal and improved runway at Atkinson Field.

Meanwhile, parts of East and West Demerara were affected by acts of sabotage which damaged bridges, aqueducts and railway and telephone infrastructure. Bombing incidents occurred at frequent intervals throughout the first half of the year and they were blamed on PPP supporters expressing their opposition to the new government. As a result of these occurrences, additional British troops arrived in Guyana to help maintain security.

Sections of the Indian population also expressed their displeasure with the new PNC-UF coalition. The Union of Indian Organisations, claiming to represent Hindu and Muslim organisations, issued a statement on 16 January 1965 warning that it would press its demand for the partition of the country since it had no confidence in the government.

On 10 February 1965, the Maha Sabha and the United Sad'r Islamic Anjuman, representing Hindus and Muslims, protested publicly against what they termed the political erosion of the civil service and the victimisation of Indian civil servants.

Shortly after, the Guiana United Muslim party stated that it was against partition since this was inimical to the interests of Muslims. But if a decision was in favour of partition, the party said it would want a separate state for Muslims.

The PPP also condemned the demands for partition and so did its youth arm, the Progressive Youth Organisation.

Faced with this state of affairs, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Anthony Greenwood, arrived in Guyana on 12 February 1965 for discussions with the new Government and to have a first-hand look at the situation in the country. During his three-day visit, he was greeted by huge pro-PPP rallies all over the country. At these rallies, the PPP demanded an end to the existing state of emergency, the release of PPP detainees, new elections under the first-past-the-post or constituency system, the reduction of the voting age of 18 years, and a racial balance in the police force. The PPP also demanded that Governor Luyt should be dismissed because of his obvious partiality in the December 1964 elections.

Greenwood rejected outright all the PPP demands. When Dr. Jagan and a PPP delegation met with him in Georgetown, he asked the PPP to

abandon its boycott of the House of Assembly. But when he was requested to end the state of emergency and release the detainees, he erroneously said that such decisions were under the control of the PNC-UF Government. Dr. Jagan had to remind him that the Governor was in control of the state of emergency. It was not until 14 April 1965, by another constitutional amendment in the British Parliament, did the British Government hand over powers to the coalition Government to take control of the state of emergency.

Dr. Jagan also asked Greenwood to appoint a commission to examine the racial imbalance in the police force, but the Colonial Secretary said he would have to first consult with the PNC-UF Government. He apparently did so, and later in the year, the government invited the International Commission of Jurists, without consulting the PPP on its terms of reference, to examine the issue.

The PPP, now in opposition, suffered from opportunism within its ranks. Sheik Mohammed Saffee, named by the Party as one of its 24 members of House of Assembly, broke the Party's parliamentary boycott in early April and was sworn in as a member of the House. He was immediately expelled from the PPP, but he continued to sit on the opposition side until later in the year when he crossed the floor on becoming a member of the PNC.

On the political front, the PPP launched a "Freedom March" across the coast of Guyana on 5 April 1965 demanding the release of the political prisoners held at Sibley Hall on the Mazaruni River. The massive march ended on 17 April at Zeeburg, West Demerara, where the party held its annual two-day congress. The congress analysed the political situation in the country and decided to end the Party's boycott of the House of Assembly. In an address to the congress, Dr. Jagan said that the PPP must use the legislative forum, not only to launch direct attacks on the coalition government's policies, but also to represent the interests of the people in that body. The Party finally took up its remaining 23 seats in the House on 18 May 1965.

At Mackenzie, the PNC also held its annual congress on the Easter weekend of 17-18 April. Burnham, in his address to the delegates, urged them to ensure that the PPP must never be allowed to regain power in Guyana. Burnham had already been delivering this message to his supporters in his "meet the people" tours started earlier in the month. He

also visited PPP strongholds and areas marked by deep racial divisions. One of these areas included the neighbouring "Indian" village of Clonbrook and the "African" village of Ann's Grove, separated from each other by a high barbed wire fence termed the "Berlin Wall". Burnham urged the villagers on both sides to remove the fence, but they decided to open only a small part to allow access to the villages by pedestrians.

In terms of trade, some early successes were achieved. The Cuban Government signed an agreement with the Rice Marketing Board to purchase 3,500 tons of rice, valued one million Eastern Caribbean (EC) dollars. Cuba also signed a separate agreement with the Guyana Import Export Company (GIMPEX) for the purchase of 30,000 railway sleepers valued EC\$200,000.

The Government also signed a 25-year agreement with the American-owned Reynolds Mining Company operating at Kwakwani with the aim of boosting production and annual revenues.

During May, the inquest by a five-member coroner jury into the Sun Chapman launch tragedy of July 1964 returned a unanimous verdict that there was not sufficient evidence to prove that any one was criminally responsible for the death of 34 persons who died in the mishap.

Also in May, in a measure which pleased the American Government, the Government removed the ban on American citizens, Dr. Joost Sluis and Fred Schwartz, who had been declared prohibitive immigrants in 1964 due to their open involvement in plans to overthrow the PPP Government.

The coalition Government faced its first major political test when Burnham announced plans to re-organise the rice industry by making changes to the Rice Marketing Board, removing its control from the rice farmers and placing it in the hands of the government. This plan was widely regarded as anti-democratic since it was intended to remove the rice producers' influence in the management of their own industry. As expected, this move was opposed by the rice farmers, most of whom were PPP supporters. On 20 May 1965 hundreds of rice farmers protested on the street in front of the House of Assembly where the bill to reconstitute the Rice Marketing Board was being debated. In a severe act of repression, mounted police and armed policemen with police dogs violently broke up the peaceful demonstration and many persons were seriously injured. Two days later,

the controversial bill was passed by the PNC-UF majority and the PPP legislators walked out in protest.

## THE ICJ MISSION

Dr. Cheddi Jagan, when he was Premier, raised from time to time with the British authorities the problem of the racial imbalance in the police and security forces in Guyana. On those occasions he asked for the setting up of a commission of inquiry to examine this situation and to make recommendations to allow for more Indians to be accepted into the Police Force. The British Government apparently agreed that the racial imbalance in the police and security forces acted to increase racial insecurity in the country. When the PNC-UF coalition came to power, the Colonial Office offered in January 1965 to appoint a commission of inquiry to examine this matter, but Burnham, the new Premier, opposed it on the ground that such a commission would undermine the self-governing status of British Guiana

When the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Anthony Greenwood, visited Guyana in February 1964, Dr. Jagan again raised with him the question of the racial imbalances in the security forces and insisted that a commission should be set up to examine the matter and propose solutions to this problem. Burnham, on the other hand, stated that he did not recognise racial imbalances in the police and security forces and he opposed the setting up of a committee by the British Government to address this issue. He later submitted a memorandum to the Greenwood emphatically denying the existence of any such racial imbalance in those bodies.

Nevertheless, the British government continued to consult with Burnham on this matter and he finally agreed to an investigation by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). Subsequently, on 6 April 1965 he invited that organisation to send a team to Guyana to investigate the racial imbalances, and on 17 June 1965, the ICJ indicated its willingness to send a three-member commission to carry out this task. Shortly after, Sean MacBride, Secretary-General of the ICJ, visited Guyana and discussed with Burnham and members of the Government the plans for the setting up of the commission of inquiry. He also met with Dr. Jagan (the Leader of the Opposition), the Chief Justice, the President of the Bar Association and representatives of the Trades Union Council.

The PNC-UF Government immediately set out, without consulting with the opposition, the commission's terms of reference. These did not concentrate on the imbalances in the police and security forces but were expanded to include the civil service, government agencies, the allocation of lands on land development schemes, and other areas of Government responsibility. The commission was instructed "to consider whether existing procedures relating to the selection, appointment, promotion, dismissal and conditions of service of personnel are such as to encourage or lead to racial discrimination in the areas concerned; to make such recommendations as are considered necessary to correct any such procedures with a view to the elimination of imbalance based on racial discrimination having regard to the need to maintain the efficiency of the services concerned and the public interest."

The PPP felt that these terms of references were very unsatisfactory since they failed to deal with the crucial issue of correcting the existing imbalances, and they did not even give recognition that there were imbalances in the police and security forces. What was to be examined was only discrimination which could lead to imbalances in the future and which could affect the efficiency of the public service. The PPP also felt that the ICJ commission should have concentrated on the issue of racial imbalance in the police and security forces since this was of greater urgency. By making the commission examine other areas, such as the public service and the distribution of land on land development schemes, the commission's attention was diverted away from the real issue that required urgent attention.

The PPP protested these terms of references to the British government, but to no avail. The Party, therefore, decided to boycott the meetings of the ICJ commission.

The commission was headed by Justice Seamus Henchy of Ireland, and its other members were law professors Felix Ermacora of Austria and Peter Papadatos of Greece.

The Registrar to the commission, David Sagar, an Australian solicitor on the ICJ staff, arrived in Guyana on 15 July 1965 and immediately began making the administrative arrangements for the holding of the inquiry. During July 1965, the ICJ, by way of newspaper advertisements, invited

interested individuals or groups to submit written memoranda setting forth their views on the matters to be investigated by the commission. The Registrar to the commission, by the end of July, received written submissions from 65 individuals and 17 organisations.

The members of the commission arrived on 4 August and began the public sessions at Bishop's High School in Georgetown on the following day. The commission intended at first to hold only public sessions, but because some individuals stated that they wished to give evidence in private, a few private sessions were held to accommodate them. Public and private sessions were held on 12 days and the final public session took place on 20 August 1965.

During the public and private sessions, the commission received evidence or submissions from the Attorney-General, numerous public organisations, holders of public offices, private organisations and groups, and many individuals. Many of these groups and individuals gave evidence in support of memoranda which they had previously submitted, while others gave evidence without having submitted a memorandum.

On leaving Guyana, the members of the commission returned to the headquarters of the ICJ in Geneva, Switzerland, where they worked on the preparation of their report. This was finally submitted to the Guyana Government in October 1965.

The commission expressed its regrets over the non-participation of the PPP in the inquiry. Despite this, it stated it had obtained the views of the Party from its newspaper the Mirror which carried articles setting forth the party's views on topics the commission was investigating.

It found that in the combined security forces, civil service and government agencies, primary schools and development schemes, African were in the majority with 51 percent, while Indians accounted for 40 percent.

With regard to the police force, the commission refrained from making any judgement as to whether or not there was discrimination in recruitment. But it recommended that for every year for a period of five years, 75 percent of new recruits should be Indian and 25 percent from other races. A proposal for a crash programme to recruit large numbers of Indians within one year was rejected by the commission.



In dealing with the Volunteer Force, it noted that companies of the Volunteer Force were established in predominantly African areas and agreed that this amounted to racial discrimination. It, therefore, recommended that companies should be set up in areas where there would be large numbers of Indian volunteers.

The PNC, when it formed the opposition, had always accused the PPP government of discriminating against Africans in the field of agriculture. It was for this reason that the PNC-UF government fashioned the commission's terms of reference to enable it to investigate land allocations on land development schemes during the period of the PPP government. However, the commission found that despite the presence of many more Indians than Africans on land development schemes, no discriminatory practices were employed in the selection process.

Burnham expressed his disagreements with some of the findings of the commission, in particular with the issue of land allocations, but he finally agreed to accept the recommendations. However, these recommendations, particularly those related to the police and the Volunteer Force, were never implemented by the Government.

## EMERGENCY RULE IN 1965

Meanwhile, the state of emergency was extended again in May 1965. In rationalising the need for the state of emergency, Burnham, in particular, utilised the media to create the impression that the PPP was solely responsible for the acts of sabotage occurring in various parts of the country.

At around this time, with plans for an independence conference in London being discussed, Burnham invited the PPP to meet with him and a Government delegation towards the end of June to discuss differences on outstanding issues related to the independence constitution. But just a few days before this meeting was due to be held, the Government ordered the detention of the PPP chairman, Cedric Nunes, and three other senior PPP members at the Mazaruni prison where twelve other PPP members were already being held. In protest against this latest round of detentions, the PPP called off the meeting with Burnham and his delegation.

Voicing its opposition to the latest round of detentions, the PPP accused the Government and the police of not taking preventive action against PNC members publicly known to be members of the of the PNC terrorist organisation. In response, Burnham said that the detentions would be halted only when acts of sabotage and the use of explosives for illegal purposes had come to an end. Two of the detainees, held since the previous year, were eventually released in July.

The PPP also had cause to complain about the independence of the judiciary claiming that many magistrates and judges were intimidated by the PNC. Actually, most of the PNC members and supporters charged with terrorism, arson and murder in 1964 were found not guilty when their cases came up for trial in 1965.

Through political pressure, Governor Luyt retired Police Superintendent Lambert, who along with some other police officers, were found not guilty by the Supreme Court for beating Emmanuel Batson, a leader of the PNC terrorist organisation, after he was found with a cache of arms and ammunition in August 1964.

At the same time, the Public Service Commission, packed with PNC supporters, refused to appoint Kassim Bacchus as Chief Education Officer

even though he had acted in that position and also in the position as Deputy Chief Education Officer, being the most qualified officer in the Ministry of Education. Instead, the PSC appointed a person above him who was his junior at the Ministry. The government also removed Khemraj Bhagwandin, the officer in charge of the Guyana Office in London, and replaced him with the brother of the Minister of Education. These actions of the Public Service Commission (PSC), done through political pressure, apparently caused some concern within the United Force, the junior coalition partner, for even its leader Peter D'Aguiar, complained in October 1965 that he was not consulted about appointments to the PSC.

Meanwhile, the Government set about its task of improving the infrastructure within the country. Road-building was its main priority, and during June 1965, it received a EC\$2 million grant from the United States for its road projects. One month later, the United States pitched in another US\$2.5 million grant to build a new terminal at the Atkinson Field international airport.

In the political arena, the PPP was faced with more dissent within its ranks. In April, Sheik Mohammed Saffee had broken the PPP boycott of the National Assembly and continued as an independent member of the Assembly. At the end of June, Moses Bhagwan, the Chairman of the PYO, who was also a member of the National Assembly, made public remarks which were widely regarded as racist in tone. As a result, the PPP on 3 July 1965 suspended him from the Party for a period of six months. Bhagwan and 11 of his supporters in the PPP and the PYO subsequently tendered their resignations on 6 August stating that they felt the PPP could not achieve national unity, independence and socialism for Guyana. Bhagwan, like Saffee, did not resign from the National Assembly where he functioned as an independent member.

Acts of sabotage continued to occur in various parts of the country. A section of the West Coast railway was set on fire at Boerasiri and an empty Government building at Port Mourant on the Corentyne was destroyed by fire. The American consulate was bombed on 24 June and the entire ground floor housing the John F. Kennedy Library was extensively damaged. Three employees were seriously injured. One of them was Shakira Baksh who, two years later, won third place in the Miss World beauty pageant.

Strikes were called by the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) on the sugar estates and there were incidents of cane burning throughout the year. British troops and the Volunteer Force patrolled certain parts of the country and many PPP members and supporters were routinely arrested or harassed. To maintain these acts of repression, the emergency order was extended in July and again in October for another three months.

In September, seven young men who returned to Guyana from Cuba on a Cuban ship, after completing studies on PPP scholarships, were served with a seven-day detention order by the security police. On the expiration of their seven-day detention, six of them were released while the other was placed in detention at the Mazaruni prison. Two of those released stated that they were deported from Cuba and announced they were no longer associated with the PPP.

Both the American and British governments continued to provide more economic support to Guyana. The British government in June announced the approval of EC\$1.6 million grant to assist in the building of the University of Guyana campus at Turkeyen. Then in July 1965 the United States made available US\$9.3 million for the proposed Mackenzie-Atkinson highway. This was a welcome boon to the government and the building of the 40-mile highway commenced towards the end of the year. In August, the United States provided an additional sum of US\$1.7 to assist in the building of sea defence.

In July, the government removed the restrictions on the movement of money out of the country. This control was implemented by the PPP government in late 1961. During the same month, the Government approved the increase in salaries of civil servants in the "super scale" claiming that this would attract highly qualified persons to enter the civil service. This increase was sharply criticised by the PPP and also by many trade unions who complained that the Government was increasing payment for persons earning high salaries when the national minimum wage stood at less than \$4 a day. In October, the minimum wage was increased to \$4 a day.

Meantime, the Government started its preparations for the up-coming conference in London to decide on a date for Guyana's independence. By this time, many organisations that vehemently opposed independence when the PPP was in Government suddenly became strong proponents

with the PNC-UF now in power. Even the youth arm of the United Force, rabid opponents of independence up to December 1964, issued a call for the early independence of Guyana.

The leadership of the coalition partners, the PNC and the UF, met to discuss the form of the independence constitution. The PNC wanted Guyana to become a republic on independence but the UF favoured independence with the Queen of England as head of state. An agreement was finally reached when the two parties agreed that Guyana would become a monarchy on the achievement of independence but would change to republican status a few years later. After this agreement was announced, the Government on 13 October released its draft of the constitution of an independent Guyana.

By the last quarter of 1965, there were signs that the economy was expanding. The Canadian-owned Demerara Bauxite Company (DEMBA) announced that it would build a \$2.5 million bridge across the Demerara River at Mackenzie to be used for the extension of the bauxite railroad as well as for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The company also announced that it would be investing EC\$15 million in the production of calcined bauxite.

In October 1965, the National Assembly approved the establishment of the Bank of Guyana as the central bank of the country. Among those appointed to manage the Bank of Guyana were German economist Horst Bockelmann as Governor, and W.P. D'Andrade as its manager. One month later, the Bank issued its first Guyana notes in \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20 denominations. These replaced the Eastern Caribbean (EC) notes which were gradually withdrawn from circulation.

International banking also experienced a boost when the Chase Manhattan Bank began operation in Guyana in October.

In the area of international relations, the British and Venezuelan experts in early November 1965 met in both London and Caracas to examine the records of the arbitration tribunal which settled the boundary between Guyana and Venezuela in 1899. On the eve of the experts' final examination for the year, Dr. Jagan in late October suggested that the United Nations should set up a commission to deal with the issue of the examination of the documents.

It was during November, too, that 33 men, formerly members of the Special Service Unit established the year before, became the first full-time soldiers in the newly formed Guyana Defence Force.

Meanwhile, in efforts to expand Caribbean unity, discussions on a free trade area involving Guyana, Antigua and Barbuda and Barbados began in Georgetown in October 1965. The three Governments agreed that the negotiated agreement would form the basis of a Caribbean Free Trade Area. This agreement was finally reached at a subsequent meeting in Antigua in December, and it was signed by the heads of the respective Governments.

## THE 1965 INDEPENDENCE CONFERENCE

On 15 July 1965, Greenwood announced in the British Parliament that the conference to fix the date for independence would begin in London on 2 November. Ironically, Duncan Sandys, who vehemently opposed independence when he was Colonial Secretary, suddenly as a member of the opposition in the British Parliament, began to press the British government to grant independence to Guyana as early as possible.

The leaders of both the PNC and UF, erstwhile opponents of independence when they were in opposition, also now changed into strong proponents, and presented themselves to audiences at home and abroad as long-time freedom fighters. They even told their audiences that the PPP opposed independence, and this caused Jagan to issue a statement on 17 July that the PPP continued to be in complete support for Guyana's freedom from colonial rule. However, Jagan stated, the British government should resolve some outstanding problems before the beginning of the independence conference. These included the lifting of the state of emergency and the release of all political detainees. He explained that the state of emergency suspended all fundamental constitutional rights of the people, and that even members of the National Assembly were being held in detention. He also called for a political settlement involving the PPP which he said represented the views of the majority of the population.

At the beginning of October 1965, Burnham and Jagan met to discuss the agenda for the independence conference. Little progress was made at this meeting because Burnham refused Jagan's request to end the emergency and release the political detainees. As a result, Jagan issued a statement on 5 October 1965 announcing that the PPP could not attend the independence conference unless the emergency was lifted and the detainees released. He added that a Constituent Assembly should be set up to fashion a constitution for an independent Guyana. This, he said, would ensure the inclusion of fundamental rights of citizens in the independence constitution, and would also help in the achievement of a "broad political settlement."

Jagan also called upon the government to inform the Guyanese people as to what plans it had to protect the borders and the territorial integrity of Guyana. This crucial issue was one of the matters he felt should be settled even before the beginning of the independence conference.

The PNC-UF government as well as the British government refused to budge on any of Dr. Jagan's demands, with the latter in particular adamantly refusing to help resolve the differences between the Guyanese political parties. As a consequence, the PPP decided to boycott the independence conference. In a letter to Greenwood refusing his invitation to attend the conference, Dr. Jagan pointed out that agreements reached at the 1963 constitutional talks were not upheld, and that the British government had provided all assistance to the coalition government to oppress the majority of the Guyanese people.

In response, Greenwood appealed personally to Dr. Jagan to attend saying that he should not "throw away the chance of sharing in the vital decision affecting the future of the country."

Dr. Jagan again declined, and reminded Greenwood in a letter on 29 October that he was discharging his duty to the people of Guyana by not lending support "to the formal promulgation of decisions already taken and which are gravely inimical to the interests of the Guyanese people". Dr. Jagan in a prophetic statement warned Greenwood that the British government had "a grave responsibility in deciding whether this country moves towards a dictatorship of the Latin American type."

With the PPP not attending, Greenwood tried disparately to obtain some form of opposition participation. At the last minute, he invited the two PPP defectors in the legislature, Sheik Mohammed Saffee and Moses Bhagwan, to attend the conference, but they also declined.

Just a few days before the conference began, a draft constitution prepared by the coalition government without any input from the people, was published in Guyana. Absent from it were many of the reservations and safeguards Burnham had forcefully argued for at the 1962 independence conference when he was Leader of the Opposition.

The independence conference began on 2 November and by the 7 November agreed that independence would be granted on 26 May 1966. The British government quickly agreed to the draft constitution which was adopted after very little discussion. Independence was, thus, handed over to the PNC-UF government without any reservations by the British government, which only up to a year before had stubbornly resisted



granting independence when the PPP was in power. In doing so, it complied with the wishes of the American government not to grant independence until a pro-western "friendly" administration was in power in Guyana.

Shortly after the conference ended, Burnham returned to Guyana and received a grand welcome by his supporters who, only a year before, had stoutly opposed independence.

The PPP immediately welcomed the granting of independence, and in a statement issued on 19 November, expressed concern over the British government's failure to work out a real and lasting solution to Guyana's political problems. While it greeted the announcement, the Party declared it had no misconceptions as to the type of independence being ushered in - independence subservient to American imperialism - and declared that it would intensify the struggle "for a political settlement and genuine independence of the country."

## GOVERNMENT-OPPOSITION DISCUSSIONS ON THE BORDER ISSUE

At the conclusion of the constitutional conference, which fixed the date for Guyana's independence, another ministerial meeting occurred on the 9 and 10 December 1965 between Foreign Minister Ignacio Iribarren Borges of Venezuela on the one side and Michael Stewart, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom, and the Premier of British Guiana, Forbes Burnham, on the other. At this meeting the stand taken by Great Britain and Guyana was that there was no dispute as regards the frontier, but that the only dispute was that arising out of Venezuela's contention that the 1899 Award was invalid.

Great Britain and Guyana also stated that the examination of the documentary material had produced no evidence whatever in support of the Venezuelan allegation that the Award was the result of a deal or was otherwise invalid. The discussions, however, were inconclusive and the participants decided that the representatives of the three Governments should meet again in Geneva, Switzerland, on 16-17 February 1966.

A joint communiqué issued at the end of the meeting said that the Geneva conference would "seek satisfactory solutions for the practical settlement of the controversy which has arisen as a result of the Venezuelan contention that the 1899 Award is null and void." The meeting would also examine plans for the collaboration in the development of Guyana.

Meanwhile, in Venezuela, sections of the media, on learning of the date of British Guiana's independence had been fixed, launched a strong emotional campaign at home and abroad in support of their country's territorial claims, while at the same time purporting to welcome the independence of their colonial neighbour.

In Guyana, the decision to hold a further meeting in Geneva was strongly criticised by Dr. Jagan. He sharply denounced the PNC UF for not consulting with the opposition before making this decision on the vital issue of Venezuela's claim to the Guyana's territory. Burnham shortly after issued a public statement that the PPP would in fact be consulted. He warned that the British Government appeared to be letting the Geneva talks take a

dangerous trend since it was allowing a spurious claim to be listed on the agenda as a "controversy" needing a solution.

Throughout December 1965 and January 1966, the Government's time was taken up in making plans for the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Guyana, and found it inconvenient to carry out consultations with the opposition on the Guyana-Venezuela border issue. The Queen eventually visited Guyana on 2-3 February 1966, and participated in a packed programme of activities, including the official opening of the National Park which was named in her honour. The PPP boycotted all the official functions for the Queen in protest against the continued detention of 16 of its members by the Government.

Burnham waited until a few days before the Geneva conference was due to be convened, before inviting the deputy leader of the PPP, Ashton Chase, in the absence of Dr. Jagan who was out of the country, to discuss the Venezuelan contention and hear the PPP's views on the issue.

Chase, accompanied by Jocelyn Hubbard, acting Chairman of the Party, subsequently met Burnham at his office on Friday 11 February 1966. The PPP delegation emphasised that the border issue was one of national importance and suggested that the delegation going to Geneva should include two representatives from the PPP, namely, either Dr. Jagan or Chase and Dr. Fenton Ramsahoye who served as Attorney General in the PPP government. They insisted, however, that if only one representative could be accommodated, then that representative should be Dr. Jagan, the PPP leader, or Chase, the deputy leader. Burnham said he would have to consult with his cabinet before responding to this proposal.

The PPP members also expressed the view that there should be no special arrangements with Venezuela over the development of the Essequibo area since such special arrangements might compromise the Guyana government in regard to the Venezuelan claim.

On the following day, Burnham informed Chase that he could not agree to the PPP's request for representation at the Geneva Conference. However, he offered to include Ramsahoye in the Government delegation.

Later that same day, Ashton Chase, on behalf of the PPP, wrote to Burnham rejecting the offer. He stated that the Party had made it clear to

Burnham the day before that the best way to deal with the border issue with Venezuela was "to present a national front in order to cement opinion at home and to influence public opinion". He added that the PPP felt it was unprincipled for Burnham to decide which member of the PPP should be part of the delegation. As a result, the PPP refused Burnham's request for Ramsahoye to join the delegation to Geneva.

In his letter, Chase told Burnham that by refusing to include the PPP leader or his deputy on the delegation, the government lost a significant opportunity to demonstrate to the world that all Guyanese were determined not to yield any part of Guyanese territory to Venezuela.

No further correspondence or discussion was exchanged between the Government and the opposition. Subsequently, a PNC UF Government delegation, led by Burnham, departed for Geneva on 13 February to attend the conference. In great contrast to the Guyana delegation, the Venezuelan delegation that proceeded to Geneva included representatives from their main opposition parties, thus presenting a strong united front at the conference.

## THE GENEVA AGREEMENT

The two day Geneva conference on the Guyana-Venezuela border issue was held on the 16 and 17 February 1966. The Guyana team at the conference, which joined up with the British delegation, included Burnham, Minister of State Shridath Ramphal and a group of advisers. On the first day of the conference, opening speeches were delivered by the British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart and Venezuelan Foreign Minister Ignacio Iribarren Borges. Following them, Burnham delivered an exceptionally strong speech in which he told the delegates that colonial Guyana (and ultimately the new independent state of Guyana) was not prepared to yield even a square inch of soil to Venezuela.

Further discussions continued on the following day with speeches made by the Foreign Ministers of both Great Britain and Venezuela who exchanged numerous suggestions for solving the controversy. Intense discussions took place on a draft agreement, which a team of British and Venezuelan officials, as well as Ramphal, had drawn up in the days preceding the conference, and by late afternoon, a consensus was reached. Shortly after,

the British and Venezuelan Foreign Ministers, Michael Stewart and Ignacio Iribarren Borges, as well as Burnham, signed the document which became known as the Geneva Agreement.

The Agreement specified that a "Mixed Commission" of Guyanese and Venezuelan representatives would be established to seeking "satisfactory solutions for the practical settlement of the controversy between Venezuela and the United Kingdom which has arisen as the result of the Venezuelan contention that the Arbitral Award of 1899 about the frontier between British Guiana and Venezuela is null and void".

The Agreement also provided that "no new claim or enlargement of an existing claim to territorial sovereignty in these territories (of Venezuela and British Guiana) shall be asserted while this Agreement is in force, nor shall any claim whatsoever be asserted otherwise than in the Mixed Commission while that Commission is in being".

The British Government, as stipulated in the Agreement, would remain as a party to it even after Guyana achieved independence.

In the days after the conference concluded, there were intense discussions in the media in Venezuela, the United Kingdom and Guyana on the significance of the Geneva Agreement. Venezuela, for its part, saw the Geneva Agreement as the "reopening" of the border dispute, and Foreign Minister Iribarren Borges said that the agreement actually meant that the 1899 decision would be reconsidered. This position was rebutted by both the British and Guyana Governments who insisted that the controversy was really over the Venezuelan contention that the 1899 Award was null and void, and the Agreement was not aimed at cancelling the Award or revising the boundary.

In Guyana, the PPP was critical of the agreement claiming that it provided Venezuela with a legal base to continue to press its claim to Guyana's territory. It stated that the Guyana Government yielded ground at the conference on vital issues with the result that Guyana was committed to joint action with Venezuela in seeking a solution to a dispute which had no legal basis but which was now given international status. In addition to this, the Party claimed that Venezuela appeared to have been given special consideration with regard to the exploitation of the natural resources of what that country calls Guyana Essequibo.

The PNC UF coalition Government, on the other hand, welcomed the Agreement, and on the 5 March 1966, Prime Minister Burnham insisted that there was no question of the Geneva Agreement being regarded by his Government as a compromise on Guyana's territorial integrity. Interestingly, in a separate comment, Attorney General Shridath Ramphal admitted that the Agreement became a pre-requisite for Guyana achieving its independence.

A resolution to approve the Geneva Agreement was tabled in the British Guiana House of Assembly during April. In a general debate on the 28 April 1966, the Government and the PPP disagreed strongly, but it was finally approved with the PPP voting against.

The aim of the Geneva Agreement was to afford Venezuela an opportunity in essentially a bilateral context to have examined its contention of nullity of the 1899 Award. However, Venezuela never showed an inclination to have this examination done.

In the maintenance by Venezuela of its claim, the Geneva Agreement was seen as a logical part of the process of examination of documentary material to establish nullity, the onus being on Venezuela to produce such evidence. But there was an important difference. The Geneva Agreement unlike "an offer" was now an international treaty which was legally binding. Thus the Geneva Agreement provided an agreed legal mechanism for continuing the process started in 1963, that is, of examining the Venezuelan contention of nullity of the 1899 Award.

The provisions of the Geneva Agreement also maintained the position taken by the British in 1962, that is, the Agreement was in no way related to substantive talks about the revision of the frontier. The Geneva Agreement was therefore a legal basis for dealing with the political situation caused by Venezuela asserting and maintaining a claim to two thirds of Guyana's territory.

From the beginning, Venezuela ignored the main role of the Agreement. The Mixed Commission attempted to deal with the Venezuelan contention of nullity of the 1899 Award, and at its very first meeting later in 1966, the Guyanese Commissioners invited by their Venezuelan counterparts to produce evidence to support their contention of nullity. However, the

Venezuelans took the position that the Commission should not be concerned with such a question but rather with the revision of the frontier. But the Geneva Agreement never allowed for such a demand. The Mixed Commission in subsequent meetings in the post-1966 period was unable to fulfil its mandate largely because Venezuela declined to deal with the question of their contention of the nullity of the 1899 Award.

In citing the Geneva Agreement, the Government of Venezuela attempted at subsequent meetings of the Mixed Commission to limit its scope and application. Venezuelan officials emphasised on the words "the practical settlement of the controversy" to the exclusion of all other phrases in the relevant provisions. Shortly after, they began to describe the issue as a "territorial controversy". However, Guyana stated that there was no "territorial controversy" - only a controversy over the contention by Venezuela of the invalidity of that the Arbitral Award of 1899.

## INDEPENDENCE GRANTED TO GUYANA

Throughout the early part of 1966, preparations for Guyana's independence celebrations went in full swing. A special committee appointed by the Government designed the new coat of arms and selected the Canje pheasant as the national bird.

The design and colours of the new flag, appropriately called "The Golden Arrowhead", had already been chosen during the period of the PPP Government from entries submitted through an international competition. The winning five-coloured design was submitted by an American, Whitney Smith. The name chosen for the independent nation - Guyana - was also chosen since 1962 by a select committee appointed by the House of Assembly.

The flag of Guyana, was designed with a golden arrowhead along its middle to signify Guyana's journey into the future. The golden arrowhead, with narrow white and black strips along its sides, was set on a green and red background with narrow white and black strips along the sides of the arrowhead. The five colours were also seen as symbolic to the country various assets: green for the agriculture and forests; gold representing the country's mineral wealth; red for the zeal of nation-building; black border,

depicting the people's endurance; and white symbolising the natural water potential of the country.

A nation-wide competition, sponsored by the National History and Arts Council, also helped to select the words of the new National Anthem. The winning entry, "Green Land of Guyana", was written by Reverend Archibald Luker, and the words were set to music by Cyril G. Potter, a prominent Guyanese educator and musician.

Guyana became an independent nation on Thursday, 26 May 1966, but the independence celebrations began four days before and continued until 29 May. Public buildings and business places were brightly decorated with streamers and buntings bearing the colours of the Guyana flag. On the evening of 25 May, a grand cultural performance took place at the Queen Elizabeth Park (later to be renamed the National Park). Dignitaries in the audience of thousands included the Duke and Duchess of Kent, representing Queen Elizabeth, and representatives of foreign governments. Then at midnight, the Union Jack, the symbol of British colonial rule for 163 years, was lowered and the new flag of Guyana, the Golden Arrowhead, was raised to the top of the mast. Just before the flag raising ceremony before a huge crowd, Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and Opposition Leader Cheddi Jagan publicly embraced each other, indicating their satisfaction that Guyana had finally won its political independence.

With the raising of the new flag, fireworks burst across the sky in various parts of the country. Then around mid-morning, the State opening of the Parliament of Guyana took place. It was preceded by a military parade accompanied by much pomp and pageantry. Significantly, for this occasion, a portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh decorating the wall of the Parliament chamber was removed and replaced with a portrait of Prime Minister Burnham.

The meeting of Parliament was chaired by the Speaker, Aubrey Alleyne. The Duke of Kent read a throne speech on behalf of the Queen, after which on behalf of the sovereign, Queen Elizabeth, he handed over to Prime Minister Burnham the constitutional instruments designating Guyana an independent nation. Immediately after, there were speeches by Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and Leader of the Opposition Cheddi Jagan.



Burnham, in an appeal to Guyanese nationalism, declared: "The days ahead are going to be difficult. Tomorrow, no doubt, we as Guyanese will indulge in the usual political conflicts and differences in ideology. But today, to my mind, is above such petty matters. For today Guyana is free."

In welcoming independence, Dr. Jagan seized the opportunity to point out that the Burnham Government was abusing its powers through the extension of the state of emergency beyond the date of independence. This, he said, was generating fear throughout the country and was detrimental to the struggle for peace and security.

He also highlighted the view that his party was "the victim of repeated constitutional manipulations designed to keep it out of office." He added, "We are confident that despite these manipulations the People's Progressive Party can be triumphant at future elections if these are fairly held."

Later that afternoon, Sir Richard Luyt was sworn in by the Duke of Kent as Guyana's first Governor General at a ceremony in the ballroom of Guyana House, the official residence of the Governor General.

During the period of the independence celebrations, many public events were also held. These included carnival-style parties, exhibitions, float parades and public rallies addressed by Burnham and his Ministers.

On achieving independence, Guyana became the 23rd member of the British Commonwealth. The new state received instant recognition internationally. However, in its note of recognition signed by Foreign Minister Iribarren Borges, the Venezuelan Government stated that it "recognises as territory of the new State the one which is located on the east of the right bank of the Essequibo River". The Venezuelan note claimed that the boundary between Guyana and Venezuela ran "through the middle line of the Essequibo River, beginning from its source and on to its mouth in the Atlantic Ocean".

In a response to the Venezuelan Government (sent on 18 August 1966), Burnham rejected this assertion and expressly stated that the "Guyana constitution stipulates that the territory of Guyana embraces all that area, which immediately before the 26th May, 1966, comprised the old Colony of British Guiana, together with the area which by Act of Parliament may be

declared as part of the territory of Guyana." He added: "The territory which extends between the middle line of the Essequibo on the east and the boundary of the old Colony of British Guiana all along the rivers Cuyuni and Wanamo on the west, was already included on the 26th May, 1966, judicially and administratively, within the old Colony of British Guiana and forms part of the State of Guyana."

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