

September 13, 1951

Letter from Cheddi Jagan to International Department of Czechoslovak Communist Party

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Summary:

Letter of introduction from Cheddi Jagan, leader of the People's Progressive Party of British Guiana. Jagan requests assistance from the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

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Praha, C.S.R

Sept 13th, 1951

International Dept
Czechoslovak Communist Party
Praha, C.S.R.

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Dear Comrade,

Enclosed please find typed letter for your information and action. A copy of this letter is being forwarded to the Minister of Information and Culture, Praha.

I shall be grateful for whatever assistance you can render in this matter.

Yours truly
Cheddi Jagan.

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I am a member of the Legislative Council of British Guiana since 1947 and the leader of the Peoples Progressive Party, President of the Saw mill workers Union and Vice-President of the British Guiana Trades Union Council /T.U.C. By profession, I am a doctor of dental surgery/D.D.S. I have been in the German Democratic Republic for nearly five weeks as a guest of the Berlin Youth Festival Committee and then as a guest of the free German Youth F.D.J. and the Free German Democratic Trade Unions. /F.D.G.B. /visiting factories and other places of interest in the German Democratic Republic.

The purpose of this letter is to outline the political situation in British Guiana and the role of the Peoples Progressive Party, and to solicit some aid on behalf of the Party.

British Guiana is a large country with approx. 83,000 square miles of territory. British imperialism has held complete sway here for nearly 150 years. Sugar has always been and still is the chief export crop. The imperialist policy has always been to concentrate on a few export crops/ sugar and now also rice/ and raw material and mineral resources/ Timber, gold diamond bauxite/ Other mineral ores are known to exist, but not yet exploited. Iron and uranium ores are said to exist in small quantities. The American imperialists are now actively engaged in exploring the potential mineral resources. The British plan to federate most of the British West-Indian islands and British Guiana into a glorified Crown Colony. Most of the West Indian Colonies are poor and overpopulated. British Guiana will therefore most likely play the leading role in any future development of the Caribbean Area and in the future federation. As such a strong militant party in British Guiana is vitally necessary.

The Peoples Progressive Party was started in January 1950. It grew out of the Political Affairs Committee, a small marxist group, which was organized some four years before, with a small circulation of a monthly mimeographed bulletin. The political organ of the party is a monthly called "Thunder"! Membership is now about 4,000 out of a population of about 400,000, but potential following is much greater than present membership. It is the most militant and presently the strongest party. Weakness is on the organizational side. Because of lack of funds there is no rented office, no paid secretarial staff or salaried officials. All work is voluntary. Party has its official office address at my dental surgery, which is also used as a bookshop. Balance of power in Executive Committee of the party is with the communists. The secretary of the party and editor of the "thunder" is my wife, Janet Jagan, who is also correspondent for Telepress, secretary of the Womens Political and Economic Organisation/W.P.E.O./ and a member of the Georgetown /Capital city/ Town council. Thunder was named after Willie Gallachers "Rolling of the Thunder". It started out in January 1950 with 2000 copies now has a circulation of 12,000 copies per month. It is printed on a small antiquated foot operated treadle platen press. Other printers would not undertake the printing. Type setting is done by hand, taking about two weeks to put out one issue of the paper. We can sell about 10,000 copies of a tabloid size weekly with a good press and staff. This is about the average Sunday circulation of each of the three capitalist dailies. A good weekly tabloid printed by us, could easily displace one of the dailies. The capitalist dailies are continuously attacking the Peoples Democracies, China and the USSR. They consistently oppose our party and try to discredit us by calling us "communist" because of "Thunders support of the Peoples Democracies, Soviet Union and China against the Anglo-American bloc.

And also because of sale by me of communist literature such as British C.P. pamphlets, Lawrence and Wishart Books, Soviet Union Foreign Languages Publications, New Times, Soviet weekly, Daily Worker, W.F.T.U. bulletin etc. obtained from Central Books in London. In March 1951, another party, the National Democratic Party of Catholics, Right wing labour and capitalists, has been formed to oppose us. They are also receiving the active support of the capitalist press. To build a strong Party in the shortest possible time is therefore urgent and necessary for two reasons. Firstly to fight for the cause of peace. It is difficult to win support from most West Indians colonials for the cause of peace by using peace slogans. They have generally not experienced the horrors of war. By constructing military bases in war-time and making preparations for war in peacetime the imperialist have succeeded in bribing the workers in support of war. War is associated with jobs and prosperity. The anglo-american imperialists are now rearming by intensifying their exploitation of the colonial peoples. To fight for and to preserve peace is also to fight the imperialist at their weak points—the colonies. The second reason for urgency is the fact that our party will face a general election in 1952/53. To strengthen the party, however, however some financial assistance is required. A small printing press with the barest essentials / a small cylinder press a guillotine cutting machine, and a linotypemachane/ and a income of about £/80 pounds per month would be of inestimable help to the party. The financial assistance can be rendered in the form of newsprint, books, pamphlets and other communist literature printed in English. The sale of these would provide the funds for our party and in the same time popularize what is taking place in the Peoples Democracies, in China and the Soviet Union. Films will also be of great help. The newsprint can be used for our newspaper and pamphlets. I therefore request that if possible bulk quantities of literature be forwarded to my address, which is 199, Charlotte Street, Georgetown, British Guiana, South America. Another avenue to be explored for the raising of funds for the party is the establishment of a trading or Commission Agency Business. For instance, the C.S.R. does trade with B.G., but the commission agents are all capitalists. A sole agency could provide us with income—this of course, provided that we can arrange an agency not openly connected with us and not likely to cause a drop in trade.

For references about me and the Peoples Progressive Party please communicate with the C.P. in London. Should you wish to communicate to me confidential information, please address letter to C.P. in London or Mr. Bridjbadur in care of Fraser's Radio Store, Hobbs a. Wellington Streets, Georgetown, British Guiana, enclosing letter for me under name of Robert Hunter,

Dr. Cheddi Jagan
199, Charlotte street
Georgetown
British Guiana
South America