

*"From every hut village and town,  
Where those who live and suffer, moan  
For others' misery and their own."*

The United Nations Commission on race discrimination has called upon the peoples of this country to get together and resolve their differences. They will call in vain on the Malan Government to do any such thing; if they did convene such a conference we might expect the non-whites perhaps to be represented by the "Bantu National Congress" and the "Kleurling Volksbond," seated of course in a separate hall— or two halls — and notified in due course what the baases had decided! Nor can we expect any fruitful results from the proposed conference of the Institute of Race Relations, heavily weighted as it would be bound to be in favour of the dominant minority.

But what the Government will not and the Institute cannot do, the Congresses can and should do, in company with the Trade Unions, the Liberal and Labour Parties, and every other major body that is prepared to join with them. It could be a wonderful venture, mobilising and inspiring the whole of the democratic forces of our country, uplifting and educating vast masses of the people.

*'Let a great assembly be  
Of the fearless and the free....'*

(The verses in this article are quoted from Shelley's "The Masque of Anarchy," published in 1832)

## **BRITISH GUIANA -- A PRELUDE TO MASSACRE**

By A. M. KATHRADA

Speaking at the Conservative Party Conference at Margate recently the British Colonial Secretary, Mr. Oliver Lyttleton, said that their "thoughts must be with those men and women of every race under the Crown who were living in the two territories where law and order was menaced by wicked men...."

He was referring of course to the events in Malaya, Kenya and now in British Guiana. And while these words were uttered at Margate, more than 600 British troops (500 men of the Royal Welch Fusiliers and 120 from Jamaica) landed on the soil of British Guiana. Many more had already sailed.

He was thinking of Booker Bros., McConnel and Co. Ltd. and of Demerara & Co. Ltd. — the sugar barons — who were faced with the militant demands of their under-fed, under-paid workers for improved conditions and for the recognition of their trade union

rights. So much is this influence that "King Sugar" wields on every aspect of life there that "B.G." is often referred to as "Booker's Guiana."

It has a budget of about £5,000,000 (five million) and its annual exports and imports amount to £11,000,000 (eleven million) each. To get an idea of the importance of sugar in this economy we take a report of the 52nd Annual Meeting of Booker Bros. and McConnell & Co. as published in the London Times on July 16th, 1952. Consolidated accounts for the group for the year ending December 31st, 1951 show a combined net profit of £660,677, after deducting tax (£686,443) and minority interests (£16,628) and after setting aside replacement reserves, £505,642). If we add up the amounts set aside for taxation, reserves etc. to profit we get a total figure of £2,237,904.

### **"King Sugar"**

The sugar interests have always had their representatives in the highest governing councils of the country.

Aside from direct representation in the Legislative Council the sugar interests have their representatives in strategic positions in various statutory Boards and Committees; e.g. the Drainage Board, Central Board of Health, Transport and Harbours etc.; the Govt. Marketing Committee which fixes the minimum guaranteed prices for farmers produce; the Chamber of Commerce; the Rice Marketing Board which determines for how much and to whom exports are to be sold.

The sugar imperialists control 170,000 acres of the best land in the country. And in order to ensure a constant supply of labour their representatives in the Government and other industries have consistently fought against and succeeded in preventing a minimum wage law, so that the labourers are not veered away by more attractive wages outside the sugar estates.

—While the average wage is not much higher, some workers on the sugar estates earn as little as 60 cents to one dollar a week.

—The average farmer has about  $3\frac{1}{4}$  acres of land, generally badly drained and irrigated. Experts maintain that at least 15 to 20 acres of well drained and irrigated land is necessary for a decent livelihood.

—In 1948 the Government appointed Nutrition Committee reported:—

"As a result of sampling surveys in widely scattered areas in the colony, we can affirm that at least 25% of the school-children are necessitous."

### **The New Constitution**

In 1950 the British Government appointed a Commission to formulate a new Constitution for British Guiana and in April of 1953 the first elections under this Constitution were held.

71 per cent. of the people voted and 51 per cent. of these voted for the People's Progressive Party, led by Dr. Cheddi Jagan. (Star, 14-10-53) There are 208,000 eligible voters.

The Constitution provides for a State Council to which six members are nominated by the Governor and three are appointed on the recommendations of the Assembly.

The Assembly has 24 elected members and 3 official members appointed by the Governor.

The Executive Council consists of the Governor and 10 members.

The Governor appoints the Speaker of the House.

The Governor has the power to veto the decisions of the Government.

The present crisis came about amidst circumstances which proved beyond all doubt, if such proof was necessary, the complete disregard of the British imperialists for the expressed wishes and desires of the colonial people. Indeed the arbitrary action in British Guiana is perhaps unprecedented in the long and bloody history of imperialism. Here you have a Government, elected under the guarded and restrictive provisions of the much-boasted so-called British Democracy. It has been elected into power by virtue of the feeling of the overwhelming masses of the people of that country, a fact that cannot be disputed even by Whitehall. And then, just because the Government, acting on a clear mandate of the people, takes certain decisions that are not popular with the moneyed men who control the country, the elected representatives of the people are unashamedly dismissed and the whole country is handed over to the unrestricted control of one individual, Sir Alfred Savage, Governor of British Guiana, in the appointment of whom the masses of the people of the Colony have had no say.

After all, colonial people have no right to think. And if they dare to think or decide in any way that is different to the policies of the rulers, then the "experiment" has failed and the colonial people are once again "backward illiterates" and "savages" etc.

That is the tragic story of British Guiana. It all started when the workers on the sugar estates went out on strike for 25 days demanding higher pay and the recognition of their trade union. Towards the end of this strike practically all the workers of B.G. came out on a 36-hour sympathy strike. And when the workers decided to return to work, the Government introduced a Bill to recognise their legitimate trade unions. But the Speaker of the House flagrantly overruled certain requests of the Minister of Labour in connection with the Bill. The Members of the P.P.P. thereupon walked out of the House and announced that they would boycott the House until the Speaker's decision was reversed. The people of British Guiana, under the banner of the P.P.P. immediately renewed their demands for Constitutional reforms and widespread campaigns were launched ... For the imperialists the crisis had begun.

## Violence and Slander

Troops are sent to British Guiana.

The British Government suspends the Constitution of Guiana.

A State of Emergency is declared and Governor Savage under the dictatorial powers vested in him dismisses the Ministers.

A series of provocations begin.

The Colonial Office in London issues a statement, devoid of facts, containing allegations, slanders and statements which are contradictory and cannot be substantiated.

The statement accused the "faction" of even attempting violence "to turn British Guiana into a Communist State."

But the truth is that even up to the time of writing (over two weeks after the troops had landed) there has been no outbreak of violence.

In a telephonic interview with Guiana's deputy Police Commissioner, Don Iddon reported on 7th October:—"Mr. Whittingham said, "There are no demonstrations, there is no general strike; there is nothing abnormal happening here whatsoever."

The newspapers all reported that calm prevailed, even during the general strike. The Colony's deposed Prime Minister said:—"I don't know what all the excitement is about."

The Colonial Office Statement accused that the P.P.P. Ministers' sole object is to ~~seize~~ control of the whole life of the territory and run it on totalitarian lines .... "They have shown clearly that they are prepared to use violence and to plunge the State into economic and social chaos ...."

Now take an excerpt from the speech made by Dr. Jagan on 17th June, 1953 in reply to the Governor's address on the opening of the new House:—

"The House is fully conscious of the role which private capital is playing and will play in the development of British Guiana. We will take such steps as will encourage and attract private capital for the development of the country and above all will guarantee that the Govt. will honour and fulfill all its obligations and undertakings.

The accusation in the Colonial Offices statement is that the "Ministers attempted to gain their political ends in the trade unions by legislation ...." and "they (the Ministers) are seeking to turn the workers into the political tool of an extremist clique."

Let us read an extract from Dr. Jagan's speech to the Assembly on this subject:—

"The House notes Your Excellency's observations on the need for the development of a spirit of co-operation between capital and labour. The relation of capital and labour must not be based as hitherto on the whims of the capitalist but on the recognised rights of the workers to organise and bargain through the trade unions of their choice and to take an active part in the running of the industries in which they are engaged."

Such then is the tragic story of British Guiana; the flouting of the wishes of the people, the deposition of an elected Prime Minister, the attempts to subdue the progress of a people by armed might, the lies and baseless accusations, the silencing of truth to the outside world.

They are familiar, all. They were heard oft before and they point towards one sure direction, one sure end — a prelude to massacre.

Let honest people everywhere raise their protests as never before!

Let them call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops!

Withdraw the dictatorial powers from Savage and hand the country back to its elected rulers! Act now and prevent the massacre!

Don't let the words of Dr. Eric Williams be repeated again:—

*Strange that an article like sugar, so sweet and necessary to human existence should have occasioned such crimes and bloodshed."*

## THE "CONSTITUTIONAL" FALLACY

By RUTH FIRST

**P**ROFESSOR PRICE of the Liberal Party has done his party little good in his reply in the September issue of *Liberation* to Mr. Mandela's criticism of Liberal policy. It is not to be wondered at that some Liberals have hastened to assert that Mr. Price was not speaking officially for his party.

Perhaps his patronising, supercilious and condescending tone should be ignored — as his derisive allusions to Mr. Mandela as the Tramp walking down the road to the Big Rock Candy Mountains Utopia achieved after "one real good mass struggle." It's a nice little jingle but nothing damages Mr. Price's case more heavily than his treatment of the Non-European political struggles of today and the Defiance Campaign, and nothing shows more revealingly his abysmal ignorance of the aims and methods of the Non-European national movement.

Mr. Price lets his indignation at criticism of Liberal Party policy rather blur his logic and perception. In his article he answers