

Chapter XIII

Breach of Faith

The Tory Party . . . the party of the rich against the poor; of the classes and their dependents against the masses; of the lucky, the wealthy, the happy, and the strong, against the left-out millions of the weak and poor.

Winston Churchill

January 30, 1909

One of the first acts after our third consecutive electoral victory in 1961 was to move straight ahead to our next objective — independence. Soon after the legislature had passed a resolution calling on the British government to fix a date in 1962 for independence, I seized the opportunity on my return from the Tanganyika (now Tanzania) Independence Celebrations to see Reginald Maudling, Colonial Secretary at the Colonial Office, on December 13, 1961. He refused to fix either a date for independence or a date for a conference to decide on a date for independence. I appealed to the United Nations and was invited to address the Fourth Committee on December 18.

The U.K. and U.S. governments were perturbed about my appearance there. They raised procedural objections and pointed out that it was *ultra vires* the UN Charter for petitioners to address the United Nations on political questions. This had been the tactic in earlier years when the United States had a virtual monopoly. But this time they failed because by 1961 the world had changed substantially. Many Afro-Asian states had attained their independence and were influential members. Their influence had been felt on many questions, notably the resolution condemning Britain, France and Israel for their attack against Egypt in 1956. And in 1960, a strongly worded declaration, Resolution 1514 (XV), on independence for colonial

countries and peoples had been passed; paragraph 5 provided:

Immediate steps shall be taken, in Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories or all other territories which have not yet attained independence, to transfer all powers to the peoples of those territories, without any conditions or reservations, in accordance with their freely expressed will and desire, without any distinction as to race, creed or colour, in order to enable them to enjoy complete independence and freedom.

Besides, at the very time I was about to address the Committee, the U.S. government had failed to gain support at the United Nations. It was angry with the Indian government for its action in liberating by force, Goa, the Portuguese-held colony, particularly because it strengthened the position of those who advocated wars of national liberation.

The British delegation then tried another manoeuvre; it suggested that I should address the Committee from its chair. I refused, pointing out that it would be improper for me to do so when I was going to expose the British government; another reason was my wish to establish a precedent so that other delegates from non-self-governing countries would have the right to address the UN as petitioners.

After my address, the Committee debated a resolution designed to force action on Great Britain to grant early independence, but deferred consideration until after the Christmas adjournment.

The U.K. government at last moved quickly. On January 14, 1962, just before the reconvening of the Committee, it announced that it had agreed to hold a conference in May 1962, "to discuss the date and arrangements to be made for the attainment of independence by British Guiana." Before the scheduled May conference, however, the 1962 riots occurred.

On February 9, 1962, when I intended to propose the appointment of a Constitutional Committee to consider a draft constitution composed of 16 members — 8 PPP, 6 PNC and 2 UF with the Speaker as chairman, the two opposition parties walked out of the House of Assembly.

The disturbances failed to force us to resign or to bring

accept; theirs was not a demand based on principle but merely a manoeuvre to remove us from office. We argued that even advocates of PR regarded the list system as unsatisfactory and that we knew that senior Colonial Office officials shared our view that this system would merely tend, in our circumstances, to emphasize, harden and crystallize whatever reactionary religious and racial tendencies existed.

We objected to the demand for new elections on the ground that the opposition had made clear and categorical statements that independence would follow "within a matter of months" and that whichever party won the 1961 election would be leading the country into independence. On April 7, 1961, the *New Nation*, the PNC organ, published the following excerpt of a broadcast made by Burnham on March 27: "The forthcoming elections are of tremendous importance. They usher in a new constitution under which elected ministers will have absolute power and responsibility for all internal affairs, and which is but a prelude to full untrammelled independence within a matter of months. Yes, Guiana will be independent by 1962."

The *Sunday Chronicle* of June 25, in a report of a PNC meeting, stated: "Mr. Burnham the next speaker said that as soon as the party won he would be agitating for Independence and when the West Indies was celebrating their Independence in May next year, British Guiana would be celebrating hers too. He said his party was after the reality of Independence which would bring new life to British Guiana."

At another meeting, John Carter suggested May 31, 1962 as Independence Day. "PNC To Stand Alone", headlined the *Daily Chronicle* on July 12, and went on to say: "'The People's National Congress would not form any Government on the results of the August 1961 General Elections unless it gained an overall majority' said Mr. Burnham on Monday night at Queen's and Hope Streets. He was replying to the questions whether there would be a PNC-UF merger if neither got a majority at the Elections. He also said that the PNC would never merge with the PPP as the two parties had nothing in common. Mr. Burnham stressed that the people had to

down the government. But they succeeded in postponing the constitutional conference. The Secretary of State for the Colonies used the appointment of the Commonwealth Commission as a pretext for the postponement of the Conference from May to July 16; the House of Commons was told that the report of the Commission would not be available before July. The July deadline, however, was not met and a tentative date was fixed "after the meeting of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in September." Finally, the conference was summoned for October 23.

In my opening address, I stated that independence had been achieved by many countries, including Trinidad and Jamaica, and that by any standard Guiana qualified for the transfer of the residual responsibilities held by the U.K. government. But the two opposition parties opposed independence. They found common ground and introduced demands for new elections under the system of proportional representation; the pre-conference PNC slogan had been "No PR, No Independence." Thus the conference summoned to fix a date and make arrangements for the independence of Guiana degenerated into a squabble over the electoral system.

We argued that the issue of the electoral system had already been settled in 1960. The opposition, however, based its case on the point that we had not been elected by a majority of the electorate. I said that this was spurious, that as in other countries like the United Kingdom, it was immaterial whether we had over 50 per cent of the vote or not; we had concentrated on winning a majority of seats, not votes. Indeed, that was why we had contested only 29 of the 35 seats. Moreover, the constituencies had been delimited not by our government, but by a retired High Court Judge appointed by the British government. No objection had been raised by the opposition parties with regard to the elimination of the boundaries by the Commissioner and to the system of voting either at the end of the Constitutional Conference in 1960 or at the time of the elections in 1961. It was only after the opposition failed to win a majority of seats that they resurrected their early 1960 demand for the Israeli list-system of PR. We were not prepared to

make up their minds as to which party they wanted to lead them to independence.”

On July 18, the *Guiana Graphic* headlined “*Burnham Calls PPP Bandits*”, and then reported: “Guiana must get Independence immediately after the General Elections in August, immediately after the Party gets into power. He (Burnham) added, however, that if things turned out differently and another Party got into power (which he doubted) he would still agitate for immediate independence.”

On Saturday, July 15, the *Guiana Graphic* carried a headline “*PNC Will Give Support Only For Independence*”, and then wrote: “Mr. Forbes Burnham told the *Guiana Graphic* that his party will support any other party in their demand for Independence after August 21. ‘My support is limited to the demand for Independence and has nothing to do with the ideology or programme of any party. Whichever party is returned in a majority, either directly or indirectly, has got the right to lead the country to Independence’.”

And then there was the Sydney King issue. King, PNC general secretary, resigned from the party on the eve of the election because of Burnham’s categorical statement about Independence.

The *Daily Chronicle* on July 20, under its banner “*King Drops Election Bombshell*,” wrote: “Mr. Sydney King, still named Secretary of the PNC, threw a bombshell into the General Elections scene yesterday. Copies of a publication over his signature stated that he withdrew as a candidate for the PNC in protest against Mr. Forbes Burnham’s statement on immediate Independence for British Guiana and his support for Dr. Jagan on this issue, if Dr. Jagan wins. The People’s National Congress leader, apparently with the consent of the Executive Committee decided that if Jagan won, he Burnham would go with Jagan to London to help Jagan get Independence. King said: ‘I am sure that Burnham’s statement is dangerous to the African people — I cannot be any part of Burnham’s plans. His plan is to help Jagan win Independence. A seat is reserved for him on Jagan’s plane, he boasts’.”

So shattering was King’s resignation that the PNC issued a

statement which was headlined in the *Guiana Graphic* of July 31: "*Sydney King Is Expelled.*"

After expelling Sydney King, the PNC released a statement which read in part: "With respect to the grounds upon which Mr. King has declared his intention to run as a candidate for the People's National Congress, the Executive Committee declares that it is unequivocally committed to Independence for British Guiana and will not swerve from its present policy which has been accepted by the Congress and the Executive Committee of the Party of which Mr. King was a part. It was advocated by the Party's representatives at the London Constitutional Talks in 1960. Independence is the inalienable right of Guiana, and the People's National Congress. Though it will always strive to protect the interests of all groups it will never stand in the way of Independence regardless of the party in office."

We also argued that it was manifestly unfair to force us to face the electorate prematurely, especially at a time when the controversial budget proposals had so recently been falsely pictured by the press and political opposition as being inimical to the interest of the people. But in an effort to arrive at agreement, we agreed to new elections, albeit reluctantly, if they were to be conducted under the traditional first-past-the-post system of voting. This was rejected by the opposition.

At this point, to prevent the conference from breaking down, we put forward a variety of compromise proposals. We suggested that two inter-party consultative committees should be set up on economic and social questions on which the government and opposition parties would be equally represented. Further, to ensure adequate consultation, we said that we would be prepared to accept a bicameral legislature with a second Chamber constituted as in Trinidad. We also offered privately to the PNC, through Neville Bissember, 4 out of the 10 ministers in the Council of Ministers and the post of Head of State with powers of veto on vital questions pertaining to the importation of military equipment, the establishment of foreign bases and the declaration of war. These proposals, we were informed, had been discussed by the PNC delegation but

rejected.

Towards the end when the conference was definitely heading for a breakdown, the Colonial Secretary, Duncan Sandys, asked whether we would agree to arbitration by the British government. We opposed this and suggested that he, like his predecessor at the 1960 Constitutional Conference, make proposals with the aim of breaking the deadlock. This he refused to do. We then suggested that we would accept arbitration provided the British government would undertake to impose only such a constitution as had been adopted by the Colonial Office for any other British territory recently given independence; Sandys retorted that if he was to arbitrate, he must not be bound by conditions.

The talks thus broke down, principally because of the common interests of the British government and our opposition not to transfer residual powers in accordance with U.S. dictation. The intransigence of the opposition and the insistence of the British government on the principle of unanimity were two sides of the same coin. Small wonder that the Commonwealth Commission's report, which had been used as a pretext for the deferment of the Conference, was not even discussed. (The Commission had blamed the opposition for the February riots.)

On the adjournment of the Conference, Sandys declared that if the political parties could not come to an agreement, and if economic and social conditions deteriorated, Her Majesty's Government might have to consider "imposing a settlement". This was simply giving the green light to the opposition for further obstruction and violence, and the justification to impose a settlement to their liking. This is exactly what followed in 1963.

As the Attorney General, Fenton Ramsahoye, aptly put it, the British government, by acceding to the wishes of the opposition and insisting on the principle of unanimity had "placed a premium on violence, looting, arson and murder."

The breakup of the 1962 Conference was the signal for the violence of 1963. But before this was unleashed, we went through the farce of "further discussions between the parties in British Guiana". Duncan Sandys had ended the Conference

on that note, knowing that his government would be attacked at the United Nations.

The talks took place at Government House Annexe on November 29, 1962, with the Governor as chairman. Burnham and I attended; d'Aguiar was absent from the country. As I anticipated, no proposal was acceptable to Burnham. He rejected fresh elections on the first-past-the-post system with voting at 21; he was opposed to the election of a Constituent Assembly on the same basis; and he did not favour a bicameral legislature with the lower chamber elected from single-member constituencies and the upper by proportional representation. He said that if the second chamber were to be more than a mere rubber stamp, it would have to have such effective delaying powers as would make it, in his opinion, quite inappropriate in an emergent territory. All that Burnham was interested in was a referendum on the electoral system to be decided by a simple majority vote. To this I could not agree, because it was tantamount to new elections under the list system of PR. I then repeated the coalition proposals which had been made to the PNC at the Constitutional Conference through Neville Bissember. This was done because Burnham had intimated after the break-up of the conference that we had made no proposals or concessions. But my proposals were again rejected.

Shortly after the breakdown of the talks on December 11, 1962, I wrote Burnham formally inviting him to join us in a coalition government. I felt it was necessary to put my offer in writing and make it public. This was the beginning of a seemingly interminable period of correspondence that lasted for nearly seven months. On December 18, I again wrote requesting a straightforward answer from the PNC to my invitation to coalition talks. It took Burnham nearly a month to send an equivocal reply. On February 26, 1963, I suggested that three members from each party should meet to make arrangements for the discussions. There was no reply. Subsequently, on April 2, shortly before the "general" strike began, I again wrote nominating my party's three representatives and inviting him to nominate three representatives of his party. This also evoked no reply. On July 3, 1963, I sent him a reminder; this crossed

with a letter of the same date from him calling upon me to hold a referendum to determine the electoral system, to dissolve the legislature and hold new elections. He demanded a reply within 48 hours to his proposals, which were, in fact, a repudiation of what he had agreed to before and a rejection of a coalition in particular; in February, when we had met briefly, he had indicated that his party was favourably disposed to a coalition government of the PNC and PPP. Now he regarded his new proposals "as the sole means of restoring normalcy to Guyana."

Later on July 18, a meeting was held between representatives of my party and the PNC. This materialized after the visit of Duncan Sandys to Guiana in July. He had suggested the formation of a national government in answer to our request that the British government fix a firm date for independence and transfer residual powers to our government, but we rejected the suggestion because of the great divergence in outlook between us and the United Force. I suggested instead a coalition government with the PNC.

At first Burnham hedged but finally agreed to meet. Deadlock was reached, however, at the second formal meeting when Burnham used the revocation of the emergency regulations as an excuse for discontinuing the talks — at that stage, the emergency regulations were vitally necessary for the maintenance of price control and the distribution of foodstuffs and fuel which were still in short supply.

Meanwhile, our campaign at the UN continued. Since my first appearance in 1961, various petitioners appeared before the Committee of Seventeen, later the Committee of Twenty-four. Burnham, who had at first criticized my appearance as an indication of my "colonial mentality", appeared before the Committee on March 7, 1963. In his address, full of slick doubletalk and lacking in sincerity, he side-stepped the major issue that independence was to have followed soon after the 1961 election and indicated that our first-past-the-post system of voting would lead to "an authoritarian regime through the legislative process", precisely what the 1964 PR election was to set up later. He took up this defensive position because I had

fully briefed the Committee on the stand he had taken at the 1961 general election on independence.

A little later, Andrew Jackson, a PNC and TUC executive member, told the Committee that the Labour Relations Bill was opposed by the majority of workers. Yet in 1953, he had been one of the principal supporters of its predecessor which he defended, before and after the suspension of the constitution, at the WFTU Congress in Austria and at meetings in London and Wales.

Because of the distortions by PNC leaders and others who addressed the Committee, members of the government also appeared before the Committee. On April 30, Senator Nunes, the Minister of Education, addressed the Committee pointing out the inconsistency of the British government's position on Guiana in comparison with her attitude toward other colonial territories.

Later, the Deputy Premier, the Honourable B. H. Benn addressed the Committee on June 17. He urged the Committee to request the British government to discharge its constitutional obligations to Guiana honestly and sufficiently, so as to provide us with the authority to govern; to cooperate with us so as to restore and maintain law and order in Georgetown and eliminate the violence which then dominated the politics of the city; and to fix a date for independence and the transfer of residual powers still in its hands to us. Finally, he invited the Committee to send a Mission to Guiana to observe the situation at first hand.

But the visit of the Mission did not materialize because the British government refused to grant permission. After efforts to meet in London or in one of the British Caribbean territories failed, the Committee invited Burnham and me to meet a special sub-committee at UN headquarters in New York.

The sub-committee members were of the view that a coalition of the PPP and PNC was the best way forward. With this view I agreed; Burnham, however, at first hedged and then later insisted that the allocation in the Council of Ministers should be 5-5, with his party holding the two key ministries of Finance and Home Affairs.

Since control of the police was something with which we were greatly concerned in view of our experience in 1962 and 1963, I was reluctant to agree. However, I was prepared to accept the compromise which was suggested by the chairman of the sub-committee; that is, to concede control of the police to the PNC on the understanding that our party would have the Ministry of Defence. On the question of parity in the Council of Ministers with the Ministry of Finance in the hands of the PNC, our party felt that since the PNC was essentially conservative, an equal share of ministers would act as a brake on the progressive programme and policies to which the PPP was committed. I was therefore mandated to offer the PNC 5 ministries out of a total of 11. This was regarded as reasonable by most of the delegations; as one delegate put it: "After all you won the elections." Burnham, though urged to agree, declared that he would have to consult his executive. It was clear that he did not wish to join us in a coalition.

When it seemed that no settlement would be reached, Kojo Botsio, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, intervened. This intervention was a result of my communications with President Nkrumah; my last letter to him had been written on June 15, 1963. At a meeting in the minister's hotel suite, at which were present also the Ambassadors of Guinea to the United Nations and to Washington, the Ambassador of Ghana to the United Nations, Burnham and I, it was agreed that a Commonwealth team should visit Guiana to try to work out a settlement. This course was suggested because of the British government's refusal to allow the UN teams to enter Guiana. On the next day, before my departure for London and Burnham's departure for Washington, I formally reported this agreement to the UN sub-committee.

However, soon after my arrival in London, I was greatly shocked when Duncan Sandys told me that Burnham had made a public statement at home denying that he had agreed to a Commonwealth Mission and therefore he would have no alternative but to go ahead with the conference scheduled to resume in London.

At the opening of the conference at Lancaster House on

November 22, 1963, I restated my view that the best way out was to have mediation by a Commonwealth team. Sandys felt this would merely prolong the issue and that it was unlikely any satisfactory solution would result from such a visit. I then proposed that we should adopt the Trinidad constitution because of the many similarities between Guiana and Trinidad. This proposal was also rejected. During the informal talks, the PPP delegates made several other earnest attempts to resolve differences. Because the opposition had repeatedly stated that we were governing without adequate consultation, I proposed the setting up of all the consultative machinery that existed in the United Kingdom and the reconstitution of the Senate on the basis of parity between government and opposition; these proposals were also not accepted.

I then suggested that the Upper House could be elected on the basis of proportional representation. To this proposal the opposition replied that it was no longer interested in an Upper House. My suggestion for the adoption of the mixed first-past-the-post *cum* proportional representation system of Surinam (24 first-past-the-post elected seats plus 12 proportional representation seats), which at one time the PNC had lauded, was also rejected. The PNC and UF stuck to their demand for the Israeli list system of proportional representation alone, although at one stage Burnham suggested a modification in accordance with the West German system. This was, however, not acceptable to us as it was merely a disguised form of the list system of proportional representation with the difference that some of the members elected were returned for certain specific constituencies.

The conference thus reached deadlock and I was confronted with the alternative of either getting a decision on independence or returning home without any. Faced with this dilemma, I agreed to let the British government arbitrate.

In handing down his decision, Duncan Sandys refused to fix a date for independence, imposed the Israeli list system of PR, and proposed new elections in 1964, nearly one year before the end of our term of office. He rejected our demand for the lowering of the voting age to 18 and refused to place a

percentage elimination figure (a party failing to reach such a figure would be disqualified from sharing in the distribution of seats) although at the 1960 Constitutional Conference, when PR was rejected, the PNC delegation had advocated a figure of 15 percent, and at the 1962 and 1963 Conferences, both the PNC and UF had agreed to a figure of 10 per cent. This was deliberately done to facilitate the development of new parties to splinter our support.

Opinion from every quarter was emphatic that the British government had set a premium on violence, that it was intensifying its efforts to overthrow our government, and aggravating still further the seemingly irreversible pattern of racial antagonism for which it was responsible.

An editorial in the independent *London Observer* pointed out that certain aspects of the Sandys plan would "in effect load the dice against Dr. Jagan"; it also added that the suspicion that Sandys had introduced certain aspects of his plan deliberately in an attempt to weaken our position "is further heightened by the encouragement the new constitution would give to further splinter parties by not fixing a minimum percentage of a total poll to qualify for seats."

Subsequently, I was attacked by our opponents for asking the British government to arbitrate. This kind of hypocrisy did not trouble me for they did everything to frustrate the attainment of independence. For those, however, who sincerely felt that I had made a mistake I wish to set out some of the considerations which then influenced me.

Our position as a government had become untenable and humiliating. In actual fact, although we were in office we were without any of the real power which a government ordinarily has, as had been shown, especially during the 1963 disturbances when our government was under siege. What is more, the Colonial Office, in reply to our request for financial assistance to meet a possible shortage of money for the payment of salaries to civil servants, had insisted on a financial inspection by its appointee, K. C. Jacobs, and had later stated that direct assistance from the British Treasury to meet the anticipated budgetary deficit of about \$5 million in 1964 (as forecast by

Jacobs) would have to mean Treasury control. This would have meant going backward not forward, and an indefinite delay of independence. It was, to me, the last straw; life was already unbearable and difficult under existing conditions. In this situation, my attitude was, "Do your damndest; we cannot carry on under existing conditions plus United Kingdom Treasury control."

In addition, it was my firm belief that had we returned home without a decision on independence, the opposition would have found some new pretext to stir up riots and disturbances, as it had done in 1962 with the budget and in 1963 with the Labour Relations Bill, and bloodshed would have continued. I have no doubt that the British government would have imposed its will in any event. And its will, in accordance with the wishes of the U.S. government, was to unseat us and install the opposition in power either by suspending the constitution or by calling for a referendum on proportional representation.

The Sandys decision was an imposition but not a solution. Above all, it was a breach of faith and a complete surrender to the United States. As the *Scotsman* put it: "It is certainly true that the Americans have made no secret of their antipathy to Dr. Jagan and his Marxist views . . . their views must certainly have been in Mr. Sandys's mind when he made his decision."

Pinpointing dollar diplomacy, H. Hassal wrote of its motivation in the *Guardian*: ". . . the hatred of Jagan, the fear of any brand of Socialism and the safeguarding of the Hemisphere economically for Standard Oil, International Telephone, the United Fruit Co. and others, and not for much flaunted and oft-abused democracy."

In a letter to the then Prime Minister on November 7, 1963, I stated that the imposition by Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Colonies, was "a breach of faith" and "a betrayal of trust". It was a flagrant violation of principles and of decisions arrived at, and solemn undertakings given, at the 1960 Constitutional Conference, which had narrowed down the issues to be discussed at the next conference, and had by implication defined its terms of reference. Paragraph 59 of the

1960 Command Paper set this out in the following terms:

The revision in 1961, resulting from the deliberations of the Conference formed, in the views of Her Majesty's Government a comprehensive and carefully balanced whole, naturally leading to the expectation that, when another Conference between Her Majesty's Government and a Delegation from British Guiana was held, there should be no question of substance for discussion save that of independence, the principle of which had been accepted in the terms of the formula set out in paragraph 12 of this Report.

The issues to be determined by the next conference were thus clear. All parties agreed, and the British government fully accepted, that the "comprehensive and carefully balanced" constitution worked out at the 1960 Conference, was to be, not a temporary or transitional one, but, with the appropriate consequential changes, the final one for an independent Guyana and that the only "question of substance" to be resolved at the ensuing conference was the date on which the residual powers retained by the British government under this constitution were to be transferred to the government of Guyana; that is, control over external affairs and defence, the power to amend the constitution and a few minor modifications. There was only one exception to this — in respect of the franchise. At the 1960 Conference I suggested that the voting age should be reduced from 21 to 18 years. The Secretary of State decided that it should be left at 21, but stated that he was willing to consider the question if it was raised again by the legislature. This is recorded in *Conference Paper B.G.C. (60) 11* of March 10, 1960, which stated:

DR. JAGAN said that, as suggested by Mr. Benn at an earlier meeting and in keeping with modern trends, he would like to see the voting age in British Guiana reduced from 21 to 18 years.

MR. MACLEOD said that he did not think that the trend towards a lowering of the voting age to 18 was as widespread as had been suggested. For the new constitution the age should be left at 21 years, but it was entirely open to the Legislature to consider this proposal and to make recommendations.

Here again, Sandys acceded to the wishes of the opposition although our legislature had agreed that the voting age should be reduced from 21 to 18 years. By so doing, the British government denied a large proportion of the population the right to participate in the democratic process — 55 per cent of our population, as compared with only 28 per cent in the United Kingdom, is below the voting age of 21.

As regards the electoral system, this was, as I have already pointed out, one of the major questions discussed and firmly decided on at the 1960 Conference. Paragraph 39 of the Command Paper 998 records that “it was accepted that election to the Legislative Assembly should be by the ‘first-past-the-post’ system in single-member constituencies”. The various delegations to the 1960 Conference had reserved their positions on certain issues, but the electoral system was not one of these.

The 1960 London Conference was not the only occasion on which the demand for proportional representation was rejected. As long ago as 1954, even the Robertson Commission, which had whitewashed the suspension of the 1953 Constitution and bitterly attacked the PPP, rejected a similar request. In Command Paper 9274 the Robertson Commission stated:

If some system of proportional representation was now introduced, it could hardly be represented as other than a device to mitigate the present dominance of the People’s Progressive Party. To enshrine in the constitution such a device would in our view be wrong and we therefore recommend no change in the present electoral system.

The British Parliament had itself repeatedly rejected the demand made from time to time, particularly by the Liberal Party, for proportional representation in Britain. In the case of Zanzibar, Duncan Sandys himself rejected a demand of the opposition for a Senate to be elected under proportional representation. This was done because the Afro-Shirazi Party, which won 54 per cent of the votes but only 13 out of the 31 seats, was the most revolutionary organization.

Iain Macleod, in the presence of Sandys, at the latter’s

home in 1962 described the system of proportional representation as "rotten and abominable". And Edward Gardiner, a Conservative M.P., in a BBC broadcast suggested, prior to the 1963 Constitutional Conference, that to impose proportional representation would, by implication, be tantamount to rigging the election against the People's Progressive Party.

The failure to fix a date for independence was also a breach of faith. When the 1963 Independence Conference reached deadlock, I stated clearly that we could not go back home without a date for independence. It was this, more than anything else, that prompted me to ask Sandys to arbitrate. In fact, in the letter prepared by Sandys which Burnham, d'Aguiar and I signed, it was specifically stated that "another adjournment of the Conference . . . would result only in further delaying British Guiana's independence."

So blatant was the betrayal that even Burnham half-heartedly joined me in condemning Sandys at the end of the conference for not fixing a date. Of course, no date was fixed because the British government, uncertain whether we would poll over 50 per cent of the votes at a PR election, was not willing to take any chances!

Duncan Sandys also made a number of damaging allegations and insinuations, no doubt to justify the violation of previous declarations and pledges. Of these, three perhaps deserve serious attention:

1. The allegation in the House of Commons that "the Government (of British Guiana) is insolvent";
2. The insinuation that those responsible for the registration of electors and the conduct of elections were guilty of misconduct;
3. The statement that "the root of the trouble (in British Guiana) lies almost entirely in the development of party politics along racial lines."

The statements were not only false but also calculated to bring discredit on our government and to do damage to the country.

The statement that the government was insolvent was made

to the British Parliament on October 31, 1963. Our Ministry of Finance issued a statement showing that on that date the government had a cash balance of \$4.66 million; at the end of the previous month, that is, on September 30, there had been a cash balance of \$2.7 million. In fact, ever since we assumed office in September 1961, we had been able to meet our financial obligations; we had done so on the date on which Sandys made his allegation. This result was achieved in spite of artificially created difficulties and the rising burden of debt charges based on high interest rates on U.K. exchequer loans.

That Sandys's false statement did, in fact, damage the reputation and credit of the territory was revealed on December 31, 1963, in the 1964 Budget Speech of Dr. Charles Jacob, Jr., the Minister of Finance: ". . . I have already received information which indicates that what was feared because of the insolvency allegation has already happened. A British firm of contractors that recently completed work in this country reported that although they have faith in the territory and realize it is not insolvent, they found it difficult to raise money in the world's capital markets to help finance additional development work. The contractors wish to remain and do more work here because they have confidence in Guiana and its future. However, a British Government Minister has made this impossible . . ."

Previously, on November 21, in the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Jacob had challenged Sandys to prove his allegation or admit that he had misled the British Parliament; the Tory Colonial Secretary did neither.

Sandys's insinuation against the government in connection with the registration of voters and the conduct of elections was contained in the following statement: "In order to prevent impersonation and other forms of cheating, about which complaints have been made, there should be a fresh registration of electors who should be issued with reliable identity cards. The work of registration and the responsibility for preparing and conducting the first elections under the new system should be entrusted to a special Commissioner appointed by the British Government from outside British Guiana."

The insinuation was unjustifiable and was clearly another

effort to malign the government. We had no direct responsibility for the conduct of the 1961 election; it was conducted under the authority of a British official holding the office of Chief Secretary and under the direct supervision of an Electoral Officer who was an Englishman. As regards the registration of voters, the Chief Electoral Officer took every care to ensure scrupulous fairness in registration. It was the PPP which called in the police when it became known that attempts were being made to pad the list for the Houston Constituency, for which a by-election was pending. A statement made by the Attorney General on March 27, 1963, in connection with the registration of voters pointed out: "The investigations which are being made by the police into the Supplementary Voter's List for the Houston constituency are not complete but an interim report concerning 686 names already investigated discloses the following: 'The number of voters seen out of the total of 686 so far investigated amounts to 294. Of the latter number, 15 persons are under the voting age. Of the remaining names 79 were never heard of at all and 204 are alleged to have left the constituency'."

The police also stated that of the 686 claims investigated out of the total of 1,507 registered names, 109 (including 2 believed dead) could not be found at all.

We did not object to changes in the arrangements for the registration of voters and the conduct of the election but we deplored the attempt of the British government to impute misconduct by insinuations and falsehoods in order to discredit us.

Our government formally rejected the Sandys formula and set out in November 1963 its views in a White Paper (Sessional Paper No. 3/1963). In the concluding paragraph, it stated:

In the light of the foregoing the British Guiana government cannot accept the constitutional proposals of Her Majesty's Government. The new proposals violate agreements already reached, and hold no prospect of resolving disagreements between the different elements of the population. They will indeed serve to multiply the

problems of the country. 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 override the constitutional authority of that government. The government denounces the Secretary of State's imposition as a breach of faith to the government and people of British Guiana and as a device that must inevitably produce anarchy in the country.

That there were hypocrisy, breach of faith and fraud, was recognized widely. Reproving the British government, Tom McKitterick of the *Economist* (London) wrote:

On October 25, the leaders of the three parties in British Guiana acknowledging their failure to reach agreement between [*sic*] themselves, requested the British government to settle all outstanding issues. For all that, the solution imposed on Thursday by the Colonial Secretary appears to be a breach of faith, since the leaders had accepted intervention in the belief that he would attempt to reconcile their differences and not delay the independence of the country. He has met neither of these requirements.

The Colonial Secretary has imposed a system of proportional representation considerably more extreme than even the main opposition party has recently been demanding. This is a reversal of the practice in almost every British colony which has become independent, and it cannot be justified merely on the grounds that the British Guiana government holds a majority of seats in the Legislature on a minority of the total votes in 1961. The same has been true of each British government since the war except the present one. A number of other serious objections can be made to it. First, it is likely to lead to more directly racial voting than the present system, since members of the Legislature will have no connections with local constituencies, no support on grounds of local service, but will simply be names on a party list. Secondly, it will encourage the fragmentation of the parties without destroying their racial basis. Thirdly, it can hardly result in a clear victory for any party, and it appears remarkably like a

device for ensuring the defeat of Dr. Jagan's government without providing for a firmly based alternative. Fourthly, its imposition suggests that the policy of obstruction and sometimes of violence followed by certain opposition groups in the last two years has secured for them a vastly more favourable solution than could have been obtained had the forms of democracy been observed.

It was on its pronouncements on race that the British government showed the highest degree of hypocrisy. With this complex question, I shall now deal in the hope of setting out the position more fully.