

Peoples Temple
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April 18, 1978

F O R I M M E D I A T E R E L E A S E

The following is a transcript of the message read to members of the press by Harriet Tropp, member of Peoples Temple Agricultural Project at Jonestown, Guyana, South America. She read the statement via amateur radio phone patch at Charles Garry's office:

"I am speaking on behalf of Peoples Temple in response to the grossly false and malicious statements that continue to be made about our community here in Guyana. Individuals participating in a self-styled group of "Concerned Relatives" have now threatened publicly to hire mercenaries to illegally enter Guyana and use whatever means necessary, including armed attack and kidnap, to capture relatives in the Peoples Temple community. These threats were made public in a California newspaper. Peoples Temple has already alerted the President, the U.S. State Department, and appropriate government officials in Guyana. This group of "Concerned Relatives is a cruel hoax. If they have to send mercenaries -- hired guns who will violate laws and resort to killing and mayhem to fulfill their contract -- then they reveal the real nature of their efforts.

"We demand to know where the money is coming from to allow them to hire killers. We also demand that the media, which has shown such eagerness to attack our organization, show equal vehemence in condemning this criminal effort and its perpetrators. Actually, this is not a new tactic in the move against the Guyana community; armed agents have already been sent in illegally and have tried to assassinate Rev. Jim Jones and others, as well as kidnap people. Those attempts have been successfully thwarted. We hope that the public will see the cruelty and evil

behind the base, nasty motives of these public liars. The people involved have been brought together and have been given assurances that they would be backed up in whatever they were trying to do against Peoples Temple. Their number is very small compared to the many relatives and parents who are coming here to visit the project.

"Our community is a dramatic expression of our deep desire to build a meaningful future for mankind through cooperation and sharing and eradication of class division. Our contribution has been recognized by many, many people who have come to visit this democratic cooperative. Teachers, workers, government officials -- people from all walks of life in Guyana, as well as representatives from nations the world over have come and congratulated us for what is being accomplished. They have praised us for the example of cooperative living and diligent development of this beautiful region.

"The chairman of the Guyanese Livestock Corporation, a man who is a member of one of the most important business families in Guyana, called this project the purest egalitarian society he had ever seen, a community without elitism. Just this week 35 educators from an attending school district, together with a delegation of the most outstanding students in the entire nation, visited us unannounced and spent the entire day. They were overwhelmed with what we are doing. We are making tons of friends here. We are building good will. Providing a constructive presence, we can only enhance cooperation and counteract the negative stereotype of North American people.

"Our medical department is known far and wide for its excellent services, and many lives have been saved. We have programs in agriculture, livestock development, a complete school system and a host of community projects. Just a few days ago, representatives from one

of the largest news agencies in the world spent several days with us. Representatives from other news agencies have been to the project as well, and have pronounced it a remarkable, impressive achievement. Within three to four weeks, several relatives and parents who are not members will be visiting here. They are coming even with a degree of cynicism because they have been approached by this committee. We do not ask that people who come agree with us; however, these relatives are not coming with an intention to harass, and so they are very welcome. One is the leader of another church denomination. We object to this small committee of "concerned relatives" because we have firm proof that all involved in that group have talked about kidnapping and mercenaries. That type of element is not welcome by ourselves nor by people of Guyana.

"Young people here are finding productive, new lives, free from the pitfalls of inner city environment that would have caused a large percentage of them to become involved in one form of anti-social behavior or another -- behavior which would have cost the U.S. taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars. We are tired of seeing people and organizations that are trying to develop constructive alternatives, to build cooperative lifestyles, being harassed unmercifully, lied about, falsely accused of crimes, and, in many cases, brought down. In recent months alone, there have been several examples of this in the Bay Area.

"Here in Guyana, we have come to build a community for a significant number of people, well over a thousand, who have been hurt, angered, alienated and victimized by adverse conditions that prevail in the declining inner cities of advanced western society. Many who were not in such desperate circumstances have also come to join us and build because of the peaceful, natural environment, ideal weather, and the chance to

serve. The vast majority of our members remain in the U.S.

"Finally, we would like to address ourselves to a point that has been raised, it seems, about some statement supposedly issued officially by Peoples Temple whose contents we here are unaware of. It is supposed to have been to the effect that we prefer to resist this harassment and persecution even if it means death. Those who are lying and slandering our work here, it appears, are trying to use this statement against us. We are not surprised. However, it seems that any person with any integrity or courage would have no trouble understanding such a position. Since it is clear that the persons who are plotting so actively to destroy our organization have neither integrity or courage, we are not at all surprised that they would find it offensive. Dr. Martin Luther King reaffirmed the validity of ultimate commitment when he told his Freedom Riders: "We must develop the courage of dying for a cause." He later said that he hoped no one had to die as a result of the struggle, but, "If anyone has to, let it be me." And we, likewise, affirm that before we will submit quietly to the interminable plotting and persecution of this politically motivated conspiracy, we will resist actively, putting our lives on the line, if it comes to that. This has been the unanimous vote of the collective community here in Guyana. We choose as our motto: not like those who marched submissively into gas ovens, but like the valiant heroes who resisted in the Warsaw ghettos. Patrick Henry captured it when he said, simply: "Give me liberty, or give me death."

"If people cannot appreciate that willingness to die, if necessary, rather than to compromise the right to exist free from harassment and the kind of indignities that we have been subjected to, then they can never understand the integrity, honesty, and bravery of Peoples Temple nor the type of commitment of Jim Jones and the principles he has

struggled for all his life.

"It is not our purpose to die; we believe deeply in the celebration of life. It is the intention of Jim Jones, and always has been, to light candles rather than curse the darkness, to find and implement constructive solutions rather than merely complain about problems. But under these outrageous attacks, we have decided to defend the integrity of our community and our pledge to do this. We are confident that people of conscience and principle understand our position. We make no apologies for it.

** QUOTES **

Charles Garry, Attorney: "I have been to Paradise. It's there for anybody to see....I saw a community where there is no such thing as racism....There is no such thing as age-ism....I have never seen so many happy faces in my life as I did in Jonestown the three days I was there....Why are those people so happy? They are learning a new social order. They are learning an answer to a better life. When I returned to the States, I told my partners in the office that I had seen paradise. From what I saw there, I would say that the society that is being built in Jonestown is a credit to humanity."

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Dr. Peter Fernandes, Chairman of the Guyana Livestock Corporation and world traveler: "Jonestown is the purest egalitarian society I have ever seen."

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Dr. Ng-a-Fook, Guyanese Dental Surgeon: "The Peoples Temple Agricultural and Medical Mission is a first-class example of community life. I have never before seen so many people of varying races working happily side-by-side....I could not help but be impressed."