



PEOPLES TEMPLE AGRICULTURAL and MEDICAL INSTITUTION
P. O. Box 893, Georgetown, Guyana (South America)

Jonestown, North America
GUYANA

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST PEOPLES TEMPLE IN PERSPECTIVE
(A Background Sketch)

For twenty-five years in the U.S.A., Jim Jones and Peoples Temple have worked tirelessly for equality, justice, and humanitarian service. We have organized around issues of civil and human rights, inhuman conditions, and the crying need for world peace and international co-operation. We have a solid record of achievement in drug rehabilitation, in providing opportunities for jobs and education for thousands of young people, in helping untold numbers of persons who were destitute, despondent, in need of medical help, counseling, food, clothing, and shelter. One can well understand how a man like Rev. Jones would be the subject of malicious gossip, lies, hate-campaigns, and even conspiracies orchestrating government agencies, the intelligence establishment, the media, and various individuals who may or may not be duped by these schemes. We have been the object of constant, organized harassment, vandalism, violence, smear campaigns, arsonists, racists, even hired assassins.

Political frame-ups are not unfamiliar to us, and truthfully, we are not surprised that there is today an organized effort to destroy us. But the reality of it is no less offensive, just because it was anticipated, even expected. We cannot stand idly by and endure injustice without protest. In fact, Peoples Temple has earned its unpopularity with certain elements in the United States precisely because it has fought actively against injustice for so many years. We do remember history, and we prefer not to repeat it. The efforts that have been mounted against us are indeed part of a shameful heritage of subterfuge that has

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claimed many victims over the years: individuals and groups that were pursuing progressive directions in American life, to bring together oppressed people, overcome racism, and for economic and social justice.

Though we have not gotten to the bottom of the conspiracy to destroy Peoples Temple, we are certain of enough facts to alarm just-minded individuals, and those who wish the democratic system in the United States to survive. Some of these facts have been presented to the press. However, the mass media has been distinguished by its reluctance (if not refusal) to publish any reports that would point to what is really happening. An exception to this is the black press, which has recognized the attempts to destroy us, and has been most supportive of our work.

The story began years ago when certain individuals joined Peoples Temple who had prior experience working with U.S. intelligence establishment and ultra-right wing organizations. The hard facts came to light beginning in late 1976 when two military officers connected with an influential U.S. Senator were caught trespassing near our church while a black woman mayor from Mississippi was speaking to our congregation about her trip to the Peoples Republic of China (We have always attempted to keep informed about alternative forms of government and their accomplishments). The very fact that we pursued these agents and published our startling findings about their spying mission no doubt intensified the determination of those wishing to harm us. Would it have been proper, or more to remain silent about this threat to our rights? We think not. Democracy depends upon the people knowing what is happening to them. What happens to Peoples Temple is only an example, in some instances a harbinger, of what is planned for other minority groups.

The full picture includes a group of people who specifically organized over the last year and a half, at least. They first met secretly to plot a smear and slander campaign in the sensationalist press (they even hired a prominent, expensive public relations firm to help), then conspired to pressure and recruit people who would join them in lies and subterfuges, then went further to harm innocent people, using government officials of the United States.

Some of the devices that have been used in the attempt to destroy us include the following:

--Government agents who have conspired directly with members of the group of 'concerned relatives' (aka Human Freedom Center, Inc.) that have pushed the campaign have offered bribes and blackmail to various people to lie about and denounce Jim Jones and Peoples Temple. American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks was pressured to do this and was offered help with his own serious legal problems as an enticement.

--Our mail and other communications have been monitored and regularly sabotaged. One large batch of mail, including important legal documents, was doused with a wine-smelling substance. There have been many similar instances.

--Shipments of vital medical supplies and food have been interfered with by U.S. Customs agents. Some have never been delivered.

--News articles, letters, and other communications designed to slander our organization and sow confusion have been planted in various publications on the 'left' and circulated widely in Guyana in the modus operandi that COINTELPRO has used against progressive and civil rights groups in the United States.

--Other 'dirty tricks' have included making phone calls to law-enforcement officials and media representatives of an harassing nature, impersonating members of Peoples Temple to create hostility against the Temple. There have been numerous innuendoes and charges to the effect that Peoples Temple has been guilty of break-ins, bomb threats, vandalism, rape, and even murder...without a shred of evidence.

Thus, the people in the so-called "Human Freedom Center" are only the front line of a conspiracy. They have spend tens of thousands of dollars to pursue their schemes. We are currently investigating the source of their funding. They have brazenly masqueraded as pious, outraged, morally-offended people who are seeking honest redress of grievances. But what lies behind that mask?

Most of the people who have decided to collaborate in these maneuvers (some, evidently, after much pressure), are operating out of personal resentments against Peoples Temple and Jim Jones.

They did not want to follow the path of human service, except on a very superficial level. While they fancied themselves humanitarians, they were only posturing. Eventually, they couldn't go on in the contradiction, yet they could not simply leave goodness alone. They became eager to destroy Jim Jones, who represented to them the kind of human commitment that they were incapable of.

This is a familiar syndrome, and made many of these people susceptible to being used by others who were interested in destroying Peoples Temple for many years: people with strong right-wing, reactionary impulses, who could not stand to see persons of all races and backgrounds co-operating and pursuing their rightful share of rights and opportunities in life. Such people are typified by the followers of McCarthy in the 1950's and the neo-McCarthyites gathering prominence on the current American political scene.

Another group of individuals, not part of Peoples Temple, were furious that their (grown) relatives chose to spend their lives in service to humanitarian goals and the ideals of Peoples Temple rather than to fulfill others' expectations of them. They, too, have a personal grudge against Jim Jones and Peoples Temple, and have joined the efforts to harm us.

Thousands of people all over California and the nation -- progressive leaders, civil rights and community activists, government officials, private citizens, people who have worked with Jim Jones and who have seen his consistent devotion to justice and the struggle for human liberation, are quite aware that we are just another target in a long history of what amounts to a form of treason against ordinary people trying to secure a life for themselves. We are unusual, perhaps, because we are actively demonstrating (in Jonestown) a successful alternative for people oppressed by racism, and we sense a deep responsibility to keep alive the hope and opportunity we express to others.

Among us there are people who would have been dead, in prison, in street gangs, in organized crime, involved in drugs, prostitution; who would today be swelling the welfare rolls, who would be a drain on an already overburdened economy, who would have had nowhere to turn, who would have been abandoned in their later years in squalid hotel rooms, who would have been victimized by rapists, thieves, and muggers -- and would have victimized others -- had it not been for Peoples Temple and Jim Jones. Many were caught in that vicious cycle of poverty, crime, and despair. We are predominantly people who have had very little, if anything of our own: lousy neighborhoods to live in, terrible educational facilities, unsafe working conditions. Many of us are children of broken homes, and some of us have even been sold into human slavery, right in the twentieth century, in the United States. Today, thanks to our people's collective and our community organizations, built on care and concern for the individual, as exemplified by a most principled and self-sacrificing leader of men, we have been able to achieve a measure of security and well being that we never before have had.

We have painstakingly built this community, this movement, and it has not been easy. We have gone through all kinds of harassment; our buildings have been burned, our animals killed, our children's lives threatened. We have carved out of the virgin forests here a model of human co-operation and love, where people who were once at each others' throats in an environment that fostered violence and gave people no creative outlet for their feelings, are now working together, building a solid foundation and a bright future for our children.

We are determined that it will not be taken away from us.