



PEOPLES TEMPLE

OF THE
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

Jim Jones,
Pastor

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*"For I was an hungered
and ye gave me meat:
I was thirsty
and ye gave me drink;
I was a stranger
and ye took me in;
Naked, and ye clothed me;
I was sick and ye visited me;
I was in prison,
and ye came unto me.*

*Then shall the righteous
Answer him, saying,
When saw we thee an hungered
And fed thee?
Or thirsty,
And gave thee drink?
When saw we thee a stranger
And took thee in?
Or naked, and clothed thee
Or when saw we thee sick?
Or in prison,
And came unto thee?*

*"Verily I say unto you,
Inasmuch as ye have done it
Unto one of the least of these...
...Ye have done it unto me"*

Matthew 25: 35-40

STATEMENT

WHAT'S BEHIND THE ATTACKS ON PEOPLES TEMPLE?

During the last few weeks there have been concrete efforts to launch a massive smear campaign against the humanitarian and especially progressive activities of Peoples Temple. The explicit purpose of this campaign is to destroy the work of an organization dedicated to eradicating inequality, racism, and want -- and working for peace and an end to oppression and exploitation.

There is no question at all but that this smear campaign is directed towards diverting attention from the real aims of those who are behind the attacks. A perfect example was the manner in which the smear campaign was launched: with an accusation, made in the form of an innuendo, that the Peoples Temple was in some way connected with a break-in of a magazine office. Within a matter of days this charge was proven to be completely false by the police department itself.

We are not really surprised at the charges that have been made against us. Movements for fundamental social change have always been subjected to sophisticated

HH-1-01

and well-coordinated attempts to discredit their goals and destroy their leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King was the object of an unrelenting campaign to discredit the civil rights movement. Before his assassination, his wife received communications detailing her husband's supposed "sexual affairs." It has been made evident that there was an effort, originating within the intelligence community, to persuade him to commit suicide. The point of it was to disrupt and discredit the civil rights movement at the very juncture where it was engendering a new dimension of efforts for social justice on a broader scale. The charges made against Jim Jones and Peoples Temple need to be seen in this context.

The Temple is targeted for destruction because it represents a determined effort to deal with the most fundamental problem of our society: oppression of the poor. Our approach has been the development of an alternative structure which would meet the needs left by the fragmentation of families, and the declining influence of churches, schools, and a coherent moral philosophy. We have proven that people from various backgrounds can indeed get together, eradicate "class" distinctions and, without a dime of government funding, build an egalitarian, communalistic "family" where nobody lives in want. In a world where a small percentage of the population lives in relative luxury at the expense of millions who live at the margin of existence, we see the alternative that the Temple has developed as an answer to social breakdown. We are pacifists, and our belief in economic as well as social equality we find totally

HH-1-C2

consonant with our Christian faith.

However, the challenge of building a truly just society calls for a high level of activist involvement from individuals who care about their fellow human beings. Some persons who have at one time participated in this revolutionary effort discovered that their principles and commitment to bringing about social justice were not something they could apply to their everyday lives. When the needs of the poor, the oppressed, and the alienated were put first, people from comfortable, even privileged backgrounds, have walked away from us, often leaving behind the responsibilities they had taken on. Their psychological and moral failure has caused some of them to harbor deep resentment against the church, and to attack us, instead of facing their own inability to confront the demands and responsibilities involved. Some have acted in such a manner that we think they were working deliberately to frustrate our work, precisely because we have been successful in mobilizing and giving direction to those who had no voice and no hope.

We note that some of those persons who are now coming forward with their charges against our movement include persons who constantly pressed us to take extremist actions totally incompatible with our principles. Some were even involved in manufacturing weapons and advocating that the church use them to advance a program of terrorism to achieve its social aims. Among those who are now inveighing so piously against the church have even said that IF THEY COULDN'T PRE-EMPT US INTO VIOLENT REVO-

HH-1-C3

LUTION, THEY WOULD LEAVE THE CHURCH AND USE WHATEVER METHODS THEY COULD TO FORCE US INTO VIOLENT ACTION. They finally did leave when their efforts at promoting outright terrorism met with no success.

We are now persuaded that a few of these individuals were provocateurs from the beginning. We have been fully aware that other activist organizations belatedly discovered that those in their ranks who advocated particularly "radical" positions had actually been sent to destroy them.

Other malcontented people who have levelled charges against us have attempted to blackmail the church, were guilty of grossly mistreating people in their charge, stole money from the church, and even sexually molested their children. We wonder if they are as eager to take polygraph tests on their behavior as they are to attack the church. It would take many pages to print even a portion of the affidavits we have attesting to the character of those who have co-operated in this effort to destroy Peoples Temple. Their charges against us sound bizarre, but it is much more outlandish to try to make the public believe that an institution that has been open to the community and has championed so many unpopular causes, would be foolish enough to think that it could hide anything illegal or immoral.

Neither the pastor of Peoples Temple nor any of its officials are getting rich off of anyone. We do not brutalize or exploit people. We do not force or coerce people, though we

HH-1-24

expect those who make commitments to keep them. Someone would have to be inhumane to want to destroy an organization that provides an active program and a caring environment for senior citizens and helps to reconstruct the lives of people already headed for a lifetime of trouble with the law. Peoples Temple's efforts have helped to unburden our community of some critical social problems by caring for persons who were involved in crime, drugs, and other socially deviant behavior. At the same time, such persons have found a genuine opportunity to make their lives productive and worthwhile, and more importantly have been imbued with a sense of self-pride and worth which they never had before.

Our program in Guyana is everything that it has been represented to be, both as an agricultural mission, and as a model co-operative community that has successfully rehabilitated many young people from lives filled with serious problems. All of these individuals enjoy a state of health, well-being, and happiness that they would never have had the chance to experience in their former environments.

AGAIN, THE CHARGES MADE AGAINST US ARE AN INEVITABLE RESULT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE WORK THE TEMPLE IS ENGAGED IN. WE REPRESENT THE POWER OF ORDINARY PEOPLE TO COME TOGETHER AND "DO FOR SELF." WE REPRESENT THE ANTITHESIS OF THE PROFIT/GREED SYSTEM THAT THRIVES ON RUTHLESS EXPLOITATION OF THE POOR. WE REPRESENT AN ANSWER THAT THE REAL POWER-BROKERS DO NOT WANT, BECAUSE IF IT SUCCEEDS, THEY FEAR THAT THEIR POWER WILL BE

HH-1-C5

TAKEN OUT OF THEIR HANDS AND RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE. Our church represents the heart of Christian social-gospel teaching, taking for our text the Acts of the Apostles, in which the disciples of Christ formed a totally just society based on the sharing of all wealth, in contradiction to the selfish materialism of prevailing society. These revolutionary Christian teachings are still ahead of the times, and we know that those who advocate them, and try to put them into practice, will be persecuted.

Our concern is to find a way out of some of the toughest social problems that America faces -- those that don't seem to have any solutions. We have attempted to take them on by building a community-like structure that functions like an extended family, and which offers real support and vital services for many individuals which society is either unwilling or unable to care for. We realize that, of course, we have made some poor decisions. But we have taken on the task, we have tried, and we have had some remarkable successes. And this is why we are being attacked.

In attempting to build this cause of justice and equality into a reality for thousands of people, we have been harassed and persecuted mercilessly. We have been shot at, lied about, burned down, fire-bombed, threatened a thousand times, called all hours of the day and night. We are not the first progressive organization that has been attacked in seeking workable solutions and alternatives to social breakdown, and we certainly won't be

AH-1-C4

the last. We expect the attempt to destroy Peoples Temple to continue.

But in the face of it all, we plan only one course of action: to proceed with our work.

HH-1-07