

ORIGIN/ACTION

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

# AIRGRAM

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FILE DESIGNATION

Routine

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HANDLING INDICATOR

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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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DEPT PASS:

**RYMUR**

Rec 6/26/79  
Lad

FROM : AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

DATE: June 6, 1979

SUBJECT : Press Coverage of Congressional Staff's Report on "Jonestown."

REF : Georgetown 2498 ARA

FBI  
ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 9/16/93 BY 9803RDD/MLA

**FBI-1**  
SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

Attached are copies of press articles concerning the House Foreign Affairs Committee Staff report on Peoples Temple and Jonestown, per ref tel.

(JC)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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FADRC/DA/WC.

BURKE

Enclosures:

As stated.

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5 JUN 29 1979

**DLX**

1-ENCLOSURE

1-5/28/79  
6/28/79  
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Clearances:

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George TOWN #7-15

THE recently published report of the Staff Investigative Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the United States House of Representatives, on the Peoples Temple tragedy is an interesting document for a number of reasons — but for two in particular.

To begin with, the 782-page document highlights how attempts are often made to trample on the dignity of small developing countries like Guyana.

And, secondly, it brings to the fore, the well-founded maxim that it is much easier to be wise after the event.

Like everyone else, before November 18 last year, the investigators were hardly in a position to accurately assess what was taking place or whether anything was really going wrong at the Peoples Temple agricultural settlement in the North West Region of Guyana.

**OBJECTIVE**

As the investigators pointed out in their report when dealing with the role and performance of the U.S. Department of State, personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Guyana were faced "with the challenge of trying to remain objective in the face of two opposing groups of Americans often presenting contradictory stories; a factor reinforced by numerous letters, articles and documents reflecting equally pro and con dimensions on [Jim] Jones and the Peoples Temple.

"Out of that balance, the embassy concluded only that the Peoples Temple prior to November 18, 1978, was a 'controversial' or 'unusual' group".

In addition, the investigators said it was "proven beyond doubt" that Jones staged a show for selective visitors to Jonestown which made it difficult to get a realistic and

# The Peoples Temple tragedy



THE LATE REV. JIM JONES

accurate picture of what was actually happening there.

Add to that fact that, as the investigators reported, "Jones was first and foremost a master of mind control", and that he practised "with engineered precision" a number of recognised brainwashing strategies, and one begins to understand what a complicated matrix one was dealing with.

Since November 18, however, everybody is bubbling over with hindsight.

However, an important question which all those who have been very vociferous in their condemnation should ask themselves now in the abundance of their new wisdoms is this: "Taking all the given circumstances into consideration, had I been told one week before November 18 that 1,000 people together would commit suicide, would I have believed?"

It is to the eternal credit of the investigators that they were frank and honest enough to admit that in rendering their findings they were conscious that they were "the beneficiaries of retrospect on the events which preceded November 18, 1978."

According to the investigators, their findings as they related to the Peoples Temple involvement with the Guyana Government, were "incomplete". They pointed out, however, that the evidence suggested that the support extended to the Temple by Deputy Prime Minister, Cde. Ptolemy Reid was "born of an ideological compatibility with and agreement of the Temple's socialist philosophy."

**IMPORTANT**

The Guyana Government has, of course, been stressing this all along. It has maintained that its working relationships with the Temple must be viewed in the light of its perception of the agricultural community from the time it was launched to the time tragedy struck.

This is another important aspect that those who have been prolific in their condemnation have tended to overlook — seemingly deliberately.

On this same question of "ideological compatibility", it must also be remembered that representatives of a number of governments

by the Peoples Temple.

In their "incomplete findings", the investigators said it seemed likely that large sums of money and guns might have been slipped past the local customs officials. The interesting feature here though, is that the guns and money could have been illegally smuggled out of the United States, a country whose level of sophistication in terms of surveillance technology is far more advanced than Guyana's.

Another aspect of the report is a complaint by the investigators that their inability to interrogate Guyanese Government officials had left their report with "a conspicuous void".

It is important that Guyanese understand why the investigators were not granted permission to interview Guyanese Government officials. Basically, there are two main reasons: Guyana has decided to conduct its own inquiry into the circumstances which led to the November 18 tragedy; and there was a serious breach of protocol on the part of Chairman of Committee on Foreign Affairs, Clement Zablocki.

In the first place, Zablocki as chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee is the equivalent of the chairman of any parliamentary committee in Guyana. However, in his correspondence seeking permission for the investigators to interrogate Guyanese officials, he breached protocol by writing Prime Minister Burnham directly.

Zablocki's letter was passed to Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Cde. Harry Dyett for him to reply. And, in his reply Cde. Dyett explained that the Guyana Government had decided to conduct its own judicial inquiry.

He added: "First, and altogether apart from questions of protocol, some of those whom your staff may wish to interview, are very likely to be also required to testify before our own judicial inquiry. Secondly, a matter and possibly more convenient way for your committee to be supplied with their evidence would be through the report and findings of our own inquiry to be provided on the basis of reciprocity."

**COMMENT**

"May I add that as far as our inquiry is concerned, no overlooking is likely to occur because it is not contemplated that our inquiry will be seeking to interview governmental witnesses in the United States".

Mr. Zablocki, in his reply again chose to write directly to the Prime Minister. And, again Cde. Dyett was given the letter for reply. In that reply Cde. Dyett again had cause to dwell on the question of protocol.

He explained: "... we have difficulty in resolving the question of protocol ... concerning senior officials of this Government (we understand from your ambassador that even our Prime Minister is not to be excluded) being in effect interrogated by investigators of an external governmental authority".

Those who know anything about how international diplomacy is conducted would verify that Guyana's stand was the correct one. It was a question of protecting the country's national dignity. And, it is to the credit of those concerned that permission was not granted for the country's dignity to be trampled on.

MSB

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89-4286- ENCLOSURE

Probe committee findings reveal....

# US Embassy felt Peoples Temple was 'unusual' group

SUPPORT extended to the Peoples Temple by Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Ptolemy Reid, was apparently not generated for illegal reasons.

That was one of the "incomplete findings" of the Staff Investigative Group to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives.

The report criticized the role of the United States Embassy in Georgetown in its dealings with the Peoples Temple but noted that it had been very difficult to get a realistic and accurate picture of what was happening at Jonestown.

However, in their report copies of which are still very difficult to obtain both in Washington and Georgetown, the investigators admitted that they were "the beneficiaries of retrospect on the events which preceded November 18, 1978".

The staff investigative group was mandated to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the international relations aspects of the activities of the Peoples Temple, the events that led to the murder of United States Congressman, Leo J. Ryan and the mass suicide/murder of over 900 members of the Peoples Temple in the North West Region of Guyana last November.

Dealing with the support extended to the Peoples Temple by Dr. Reid, the investigators contended that while this support was "exploited" in the sense that "it had the ultimate effect of furthering Peoples Temple objectives, it did not appear to be generated for illegal reasons" but was born out of "an ideological compatibility with, and endorsement of the Temple's socialist philosophy".

Committee chairman, Clement Zablocki, had requested permission for a number of Guyanese officials to be interviewed. However, this was turned down because the government had decided to set up its own inquiry into the disaster and it would be necessary for the same officials to give evidence.

And, in an exchange of diplomatic correspondence published in the Zablocki report, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Harry Dyett, had reiterated and pointed to examples of Guyana Government's willingness to cooperate.

He had, however, alluded to the impropriety of Guyanese leaders being "in effect interrogated by investigators of an external governmental authority". An exchange of findings was therefore suggested.

In their report, the investigators said there was evidence of a strong working

procedures under which items consigned to the Peoples Temple were allowed into Guyana after only cursory inspection or no inspection at all.

In such circumstances, the investigators felt, the Peoples Temple could have brought large sums of money and guns into Guyana in suitcases and false-bottom crates. However, in their investigations they were apparently unable to discover how these items might have been shipped out of the United States in the first place.

### ALLEGATIONS

They explained that the U.S. Customs Service, acting on allegations that weapons might have been shipped to Jonestown, launched an investigation in February, 1977 but this investigation was compromised one month after it began.

They alleged that a Guyanese Police Officer contributed to the compromising of these investigations by showing a copy of a Customs Service report which was sent the Guyanese Police by Interpol, to either Paula Adams or Carolyn Layton of the Peoples Temple and one of them passed on the information to Temple leader Jim Jones.

The investigators also reported that the U.S. Customs Service investigations were concluded in August 1977 after a shipment of crates destined for Jonestown was opened and inspected by the Customs Service in Miami in August 1977. "Shortly thereafter, a report on the investigations was filed with negative results", they explained.

But they added: "Nonetheless, investigators apparently felt enough residual suspicion to send copies of the report to the U.S. Department of State because the investigation disclosed allegations that Jones intends to establish a political party in Guyana which would be controlled by him and his family."

### CUSTOMS SERVICE

They also explained that while the standard routing procedures provided that a copy of the Customs Service report be sent to the U.S. Embassy in Guyana, there was no indication that a copy was ever sent.

Concerning their report on the Peoples Temple involvement with the Government of Guyana, the staff group investigators said their incomplete findings indicated that Guyanese immigration procedures were also compromised to the advantage of the Peoples Temple on several occasions.

In addition, they said, there were repeated charges of "a sexual liaison" bet-

of her sexual encounters with the official and transcripts of these recordings were apparently made for Jim Jones who periodically turned them over to "high officials in the Guyana Government."

The report said that allegations that "unknown officials" of the Guyanese Government may have taken action to influence the outcome of the Stoen custody case proceedings in the Guyanese court system were "incomplete and inconclusive".

In their 782-page document, the staff investigators also dealt with a number of other aspects related to the Jonestown disaster. These included the role and performance of the U.S. State Department, allegations about a conspiracy against Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple; Jones' tactics, the motivation of his followers, the intimidation of opponents and the media, the using of public officials, and the

slaying of the U.S. Congressman, Leo Ryan.

And, in their sharp criticisms of the U.S. Embassy's dealings with the Peoples Temple, they contended that "the vital elements of common sense, and an honest and healthy skepticism" were absent from these dealings.

The embassy, they contended further, "could have exerted sounder overall judgment and a more aggressive posture" despite the acknowledged handicaps under which it worked.

"The U.S. Embassy in Guyana did not demonstrate adequate initiative, sensitive reaction to, and appreciation of progressively mounting indications of highly irregular and illegal activities in Jonestown", the investigators said. They noted too that there was "a lamentable breakdown in communication" between

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Guyana Chronicle, Friday, June 1, 1979

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the embassy and the State Department.

They noted however, that there were a number of mitigating factors such as the fact that the embassy did not have an investigative and judicial function and the fact that its personnel were faced with the challenge "of trying to remain objective in the face of two opposing groups of Americans often presenting contradictory stories."

The latter factor, they said, was re-inforced by numerous letters, articles, and documents reflecting equally, pro and con dimensions on Jones and the Peoples Temple.

"Out of that balance, the embassy concluded only that Peoples Temple prior to November 18, 1978, was a 'controversial' or 'unusual' group," they pointed out.

Another mitigating factor, they said, was the fact that "it was 'proven beyond doubt' that Jim Jones staged a show for selective visitors to Jonestown. This made it difficult to get a realistic and accurate picture of what was happening at Jonestown.

They noted, however, that in the area of "crisis management" following the

# PEOPLES TEMPLE

tragedy on November 18, the State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Guyana "performed with distinction."

And, dealing with allegations that a female member of the Peoples Temple in Guyana had engaged in a sexual liaison with former U.S. Consul, Richard McCoy, and had made tape recordings of their sexual activities in an attempt to compromise him, they said that based on their findings, these allegations were false.

The investigators also noted that there seemed to be considerable misunderstanding in the minds of American officials about their country's Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act.

"Among the embassy officials interviewed, there is almost unanimous agreement that the Privacy Act is complex, difficult to understand, and confusing. Accordingly, they believe that regular guidance is required to guarantee proper implementation", they reported.

And, in their recom-

mendations to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives, the investigators suggested that the exemption provisions under the U.S. Privacy Act and Freedom of Information Act be reviewed and that the country's Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations regarding churches be reviewed.

In addition, they recommended that the

present system governing the dissemination of documents and information in the U.S. be revised; that deficiencies in the interaction and co-ordination between the State Department's consular and political sections be corrected; and that every consideration should be given to increasing the availability of legal assistance to embassy staffs. Other recommendations included the need for a concentrated programme of research and training cults, and the need for the subject of cults to be included on the agenda of the White House Conference on the Family