

## Jonestown: An International Story of Diplomacy, Détente, and Neglect, 1973–1978\*

On April 13, 1978, Bishop Jim Jones of the Peoples Temple of the Disciples of Christ addressed his congregation in the hinterlands of Guyana, where five years earlier he and his parishioners negotiated the establishment of a remote jungle commune. Jones, who moved to Guyana permanently in the summer of 1977, did not take well to life in the wilderness and his health suffered. He was no longer the handsome and robust preacher who had entertained vice presidential nominee Walter Mondale in 1976; his face was pale and bloated, he was feverish and exhausted, and he spoke with a slight slur.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, Jones chose to address his health when he began his speech. “I don’t even recall having one blackout,” he stated plainly. “Didn’t get dizzy, just shook my head from the pain, but I did not [pass out], so don’t get nervous with your blood pressure. Some of you folk worry about blood pressure? Shit, you ain’t got blood pressure.”<sup>2</sup>

A murmur of sympathetic voices echoed through the jungle. Jones took a long, deep sip from his drink and added, “A lot of determination can carry you through, children.”<sup>3</sup> The topic of discussion turned to foreign affairs. Jones’s congregation asked eagerly about the Soviet Union, where Temple officials had been contemplating a potential migration. The Soviet Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana’s capital city, had even arranged for a journalist from the Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union (TASS) to visit the commune in three days. But to his parishioners’ surprise, Jones was hesitant about the move, and instead favored the jungle even though it was claiming his health. “I like Guyana, in the terms we can be our own independent government,” he remarked. “For all matters and purposes, we are our own independent sovereign existence. That’s something you won’t have any place in the world.”<sup>4</sup>

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\*The views expressed here are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of State or the U.S. government.

1. Tim Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven: The Untold Story of the Rev. Jim Jones and His People* (New York, 2008), 302, 426.

2. Audiotape Q591 part 1, MP3, 31:08, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed October 26, 2016, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=27476](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=27476).

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

Although the deaths in Jonestown occurred nearly forty years ago, they remain ensconced in American popular culture. The phrase “drinking the Kool-Aid” has entered the popular lexicon and is used to warn about blindly accepting an idea. Jonestown continues to be a common source for dark humor. While the mass murder and suicide of more than 900 Americans on November 18, 1978, was an extraordinary and horrific event, a narrow focus on the denouement of the Peoples Temple obscures other historically significant narratives involving Jonestown. Most notably, the exodus of the Peoples Temple to Guyana and its presence in the small nation is a story of diplomatic intrigue. Jones was able to build a large settlement in Guyana only because of unique conditions created by the policies of détente, the Carter administration’s lack of a strategy for the Caribbean, and the departure of the British from the region.

Inside Guyana, the Peoples Temple was influential. Although most of Jim Jones’s followers lived in the jungle commune, a handful resided in a house near the ocean in Georgetown.<sup>5</sup> There, two of Jones’s top lieutenants, Sharon Amos and Paula Adams, formed a makeshift diplomatic corps, making regular visits to the Soviet and American embassies, speaking frequently with embassy personnel, and typing accounts of their conversations. The Soviets provided support for the Temple and used Jonestown for propaganda purposes. Adams and Amos also spoke with cabinet-level Guyanese officials who shared national secrets and allowed Temple members to attend high-level meetings. While Jones had established himself as an American political figure who, as late as the spring of 1977, was held in high enough esteem to receive a personal reply from First Lady Rosalynn Carter regarding a query about foreign policy, Jones’s actions in Guyana reveal that he had growing international ambitions, some of which were realized.<sup>6</sup>

This article has two arguments, one local to Guyana, the other revealing of global attitudes toward the Caribbean during the late 1970s. Locally Jim Jones and his aides manipulated a border dispute between Guyana and Venezuela with the aim of setting up a *de facto* buffer state in the form of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Project. In 1973 the Peoples Temple capitalized on Guyanese fears of a Venezuelan invasion to receive a lease near Port Kaituma in the North West District of Guyana, twenty miles from the Venezuelan border. Guyana and Venezuela had been embroiled in a border dispute that dated back to a seventeenth-century conflict between the Spanish and the Dutch. The dispute, over a segment of land known as the Essequibo region, was especially significant to the Guyanese because the Venezuelans were claiming nearly half of Guyana as their own. Relations between Guyana and Venezuela were tense.

5. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 274.

6. Jones to Rosalynn Carter, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, Mexico, Cuba, and the Caribbean, ed. Alexander Poster (Washington, DC, 2016), doc. 10.

In 1965 Prime Minister Forbes Burnham declared that his government “would not yield one square inch of British Guiana territory.”<sup>7</sup> Burnham had good reason not to be flexible. Though underdeveloped, the Essequibo region was home to bauxite and diamond mines and was “the site of a significant oil exploration.”<sup>8</sup> The land represented a future of prosperity for Guyana.

While scholars Gordon Lewis and Raymond Crist have speculated about the motives surrounding the siting of Jonestown, this article reveals precisely how Jones was able to convince the Guyanese of the value of an American settlement near the Venezuelan border.<sup>9</sup> I argue that the followers of the Peoples Temple held a privileged status in Guyana mainly because they were American nationals, and that this privileged status made the Peoples Temple an ideal group to live in disputed territory. The idea of settling Americans on Guyana’s northwest border appealed to the People’s National Congress, the dominant political party in Guyana, because the presence of U.S. citizens in the region, even those in opposition to the U.S. government, limited the possibility of a Venezuelan incursion because it placed the citizens of a superpower in the line of fire. While scholars such as Jeremi Suri, Akira Iriye, Thomas Davies, Erica Chenoweth, and Adria Lawrence have compiled strong studies that examine how non-state actors (NSAs) represent a growing transnational civil society unfettered by traditional borders, the front line of liberal developmentalism, and the erosion of the legitimacy of the state, the Peoples Temple experiment demonstrates that nationality and membership in a non-state organization are intersecting social identities that can enhance and detract from each other.<sup>10</sup>

More broadly, this article examines how the conditions of the Cold War played a role in destabilizing the Caribbean. The Peoples Temple experiment could have taken place only during the 1970s, when policymakers in the United States generally sought to avoid conflict within the Western Hemisphere—for instance, normalizing relations with Cuba. During the early 1960s, concerns over the spread of communism led the United States to adopt an interventionist course, leading to conflicts with Cuba and Vietnam, for example.<sup>11</sup> Guyana was also affected by American interventionism. The Central Intelligence Agency

7. James Nelson Goodsell, “British Guiana Rebuffs Venezuela,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 19, 1965, 1.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Gordon Lewis, “*Gather with the Saints at the River*,” *The Jonestown Guyana Holocaust of 1978: A Descriptive and Interpretative Essay on Its Ultimate Meaning from a Caribbean Viewpoint* (Río Piedras, PR, 1979); Raymond E. Crist, “Jungle Geopolitics in Guyana: How a Communist Utopia That Ended in Massacre Came to Be Sited,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 40, no. 2 (1981): 107–14.

10. Jeremi Suri, “Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-State Actors,” *Palgrave Advances in International History*, ed. Patrick Finney (London, 2009); Akira Iriye, “A Century of NGOs,” *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 3 (1999): 421–35; Thomas Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (New York, 2014); Erica Chenoweth and Adria Lawrence, eds., *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

11. Stephen G. Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana: A Cold War Story* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005), 101–31.

(CIA) instigated riots in pre-independence Guyana and changed electoral processes to ensure the defeat of socialist Indo-Caribbean politician Cheddi Jagan in favor of the more moderate policies of Forbes Burnham.<sup>12</sup> Voting in Guyana took place largely along ethnic lines, but a convoluted system of proportional representation relying on both popular vote and geographic constituencies allowed Burnham to serve his country as prime minister in 1964, when Guyana achieved independence. Thus, Burnham became the leader of a nation controlled by a black *minority* population.<sup>13</sup>

By the 1970s, however, détente had altered the American approach to the Caribbean. British power in the region waned and U.S. policymakers were reluctant to fill in the vacuum, at least while U.S.-Soviet tensions remained low. In 1973 British policymakers concluded that “continuous consideration be given to measures by which our military involvement [in the Caribbean] can be kept to a minimum,” and that the British should “be willing to confer independence on any of the small [Caribbean] groups if they desire it.”<sup>14</sup> Presidents Nixon and Ford were chagrined by British efforts to leave the Caribbean and tried to keep the British involved in the region. In 1973 the Nixon administration pressed the British to delay the independence of Grenada because the territory was “a 133 square mile island with less than 100,000 citizens and little visible means of support,” but the British did not alter their plans and the Nixon administration did not provide any considerable support to the Grenadians when they became independent.<sup>15</sup> The next administration was not eager to spend the money or the manpower to replace the British either, creating a power vacuum that, in retrospect, made the Peoples Temple experiment in Guyana neither surprising nor extraordinary. In 1979, during a meeting with his advisers, President Carter stated, “whenever there is a problem [in the Caribbean], all the recommendations seem to focus on sending more money.” Carter instead suggested an “extra-governmental” approach to the region—ironic, because the aftermath of Jones’s “extragovernmental” approach to Guyana was already known.<sup>16</sup> Odeen Ishmael, former Guyanese ambassador to the United States and supporter of Cheddi Jagan, stated that the Guyanese officials believed Americans were disconnected from the region and were frustrated that “the

12. *Ibid.*, 91–121.

13. Lawrence A. Joseph, “Proportional Representation and the Guyana Recent Elections,” *NOW Grenada*, May 18, 2015; Stephen G. Rabe, *U.S. Intervention in British Guiana*; Jason Parker, *Brother’s Keeper: The United States, Race, and Empire in the British Caribbean, 1937–1962* (New York, 2008); Cary Fraser, *Ambivalent Anti-Colonialism: The United States and the Genesis of West Indian Independence, 1940–1964* (Westport, CT, 1994).

14. Visit of the Chairman United Kingdom Commanders-in-Chief Committee (Overseas) to the Caribbean, DEFE 4-278-1, The National Archives of the UK (hereafter TNA); Paper Prepared in the Ministry of Defence, DEFE 5-194-6, TNA.

15. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Barbados, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume E-11, Part 1, Documents on Mexico; Central America; and the Caribbean, 1973–1976, ed. Halbert Jones (Washington, DC, 2016), doc. 441.

16. Summary of Conclusions of a Presidential Meeting, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 368.

United States would not intervene” should the government of Venezuela invade the Essequibo region.<sup>17</sup>

The Soviets were equally indifferent to the Eastern Caribbean. Although Burnham had transformed his nation into the Co-operative Republic of Guyana in 1970 and took steps to implement “cooperative socialist” policies, his decision did not result in a bonanza of assistance from the Eastern bloc. Ishmael noted that “the USSR, except for scholarships offered to Guyanese students, provided very little aid to Guyana. Most likely, they did not regard Burnham as a ‘Marxist-Leninist’; also, they were more occupied in supporting Cuba’s economy rather than giving support to Guyana’s.”<sup>18</sup> Guyana instead received most of its assistance from loans from multinational organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the Inter-American Development Bank, rather than from government-to-government grants.<sup>19</sup> Philip Duncan, who served as a minister in Burnham’s government, stated that Burnham’s preoccupation with socialism originated from his desire to escape the yoke of international banks; if the government could intervene in the economy to produce exports desirable to the global community, Guyana could achieve economic stability and independence.<sup>20</sup>

While the lack of an American strategy for the Eastern Caribbean allowed states such as Jamaica to determine their political destinies without U.S. government interference, smaller states, with populations in the tens and hundreds of thousands, were left vulnerable to intrusions by individuals and groups with ill intentions. In 1974 Grenadians elected eccentric politician Eric Gairy, whose preoccupation with UFOs and conspiracy theories made him vulnerable to a 1979 domestically led Marxist coup. In 1981 white supremacists attempted to overthrow Eugenia Charles’s government in Dominica, hoping to install former Prime Minister Patrick John as a puppet head of state. Arms smuggler Sydney Burnett-Alleyne employed various schemes, all unsuccessful, to seize power in Barbados, but he was a perpetual source of concern for democratically elected Barbadian leaders. In the late 1970s, Guyana was home to only 750,000 people, and the Guyanese were indeed grateful to receive the assistance of a foreign actor that took Guyana seriously and did not demand much in return. Viewed together with these episodes, Jim Jones emerges as idiosyncratic, but not unique; his intrigues and quest for quasi-sovereignty were a variation on a theme running through the diplomatic history of that region and time. Jones, who provided millions of dollars as well as political support to Guyana, served as a stopgap for this neglect. As a wealthy American agent, Jones deduced correctly that Guyana, in serious economic trouble, would cater to his whims, so long as

17. Odeen Ishmael, e-mail and phone interview with author, September 8, 2017.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*

20. Philip Duncan, phone interview with author, September 19, 2017.

his American congregation provided security against Venezuelan incursion, and provided he assist the PNC in consolidating power within the state.

Although Jonestown received extensive media coverage in 1978, this article relies on a variety of primary sources not available in the late 1970s. While most of the Guyanese records regarding Jonestown were destroyed in a 1980 fire, a government publication in the National Library of Guyana provides details about the Jonestown settlement and its aftermath.<sup>21</sup> Aside from archival information from the United States, Great Britain, and Guyana, I draw upon an interview with Tim Stoen, who was once Jones's right-hand man until Stoen left the Temple in 1977 and initiated legal action against it. While Stoen was crucial to the establishment of Jonestown, one of the deaths at Jonestown was of Stoen's son. Stoen's reminiscences provide a unique look into Jones's mind, as he is the only remaining witness to many of the conversations between Jones and the Guyanese. Stoen, who has spent most of his career as a prosecutor, has described his efforts to recover his son as a war with the "devil of Jonestown," and he was not hesitant to talk about the criminality of Jim Jones and the abuses at the Peoples Temple.<sup>22</sup> Drawn to the Temple because of injustices in the wider world, Stoen found himself pulled deeper into an abyss of oppression.

Ultimately, this study aims to look beyond the events of November 18, 1978, to uncover a story involving unusual, complex, and significant diplomacy initiated by the unlikeliest of actors.

#### EVERY COURTESY AND CONSIDERATION: BUILDING A BUFFER STATE, 1973–1976

It was September 4, 1973, and Jim Jones was a very unhappy man. Eight college students, who dubbed themselves "The Eight Revolutionaries," had quit the Peoples Temple and left an open letter explaining their decision. They complained about sexual improprieties in the church, the male chauvinism of the staff members, a culture of homophobia, and the fact that while the membership of the Peoples Temple was predominantly black, most of the group's leadership was white. They asked Jones, "Does it mean anything or warrant respect and camaraderie if a black person proves loyal to the Peoples Temple as long as 7, 8, 9, 10 years?"<sup>23</sup>

In response, Jones went "ballistic."<sup>24</sup> Deeply afraid of being abandoned and furious at the students' defiance, Jones began to conceptualize a "retreat" where

21. The Jonestown Institute's collection of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) releases overlaps considerably with the FBI releases. In each instance, I have cited which version was used. Fielding McGehee, interview with the author, October 6, 2016.

22. Tim Stoen, *Marked for Death: My War With Jim Jones the Devil of Jonestown* (North Charleston, SC, 2015).

23. *The Jonestown Institute*, "The Eight Revolutionaries," accessed October 27, 2016, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=14077](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=14077).

24. Tim Stoen, e-mail interview with the author, September 23, 2016.

no further defections could occur.<sup>25</sup> He asked Temple leaders to draw up plans for leaving the United States, should the Temple find itself under media or police scrutiny. Tim Stoen, a San Francisco assistant district attorney, suggested that a Caribbean outpost was preferable.<sup>26</sup> The idea appealed to Jones. In 1962 Jones, who was terrified of nuclear war, had read an article in *Esquire* magazine that presented Belo Horizonte, Brazil, as one of the safest places to live should a nuclear holocaust occur.<sup>27</sup> Within months, Jones had relocated to Brazil, where he spent most of the next two years.<sup>28</sup>

During his travels, Jones had visited British Guiana, and noted it was English-speaking, largely ignored on the global scene, embraced leftist and socialist politics, and had since shed its Indo-Caribbean government in favor of a government led by black officials—who more closely represented the demographics of the Peoples Temple.<sup>29</sup> Where else, in 1973, did a minority of English-speaking black citizens rule over a mixed and non-black population? As Tim Stoen recalls, “The Guyanese were not initially reluctant. They knew we were mainly black and socialistic and had money. They probably thought we were too good to be true.”<sup>30</sup> On October 8, 1973, the Temple’s Board of Directors voted in favor of establishing a branch church and an agricultural and rural development mission in the Cooperative Republic of Guyana.<sup>31</sup>

Jones and his followers then embarked on the task of convincing a foreign government to cede land and resources to a group of expatriates that numbered potentially in the thousands. Stoen noted that Guyana was suffering from economic difficulties. The small jungle nation was in default on its debts to the IMF. In response the PNC had adopted a policy of austerity, banning the importation of flour, butter, and cooking oil, and urged Guyanese citizens to produce these items themselves so Guyanese industry and agriculture could focus on producing exports. Deputy Prime Minister Ptolemy Reid insisted, “The only way to contain the population explosion is to produce more food and you have an inescapable duty to do your part as part of this objective.”<sup>32</sup> The agricultural development initiative, known as the “Feed, Clothe, and House” (FCH) program, was to involve the participation of every Guyanese citizen.<sup>33</sup> Stoen suggested that “the food element of the FCH program would be our

25. Ibid.

26. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 237.

27. “9 Places in the World to Hide,” *Esquire*, January 1962, front cover.

28. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 88.

29. Ibid., 237.

30. Tim Stoen, e-mail interview with the author, September 23, 2016.

31. “Resolution to Establish Agricultural Mission,” *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed October 27, 2016, <http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AgriculturalMission.pdf>.

32. “The Survival of Guyana Depends on Agriculture: Dr. Reid,” *Guyana Graphic*, September 22, 1974, 1.

33. “All Citizens Must Be Involved in FCH Drive,” *Guyana Graphic*, September 16, 1974, 4.



conceptual key to approaching the government,” because the Peoples Temple desired to establish an agricultural commune.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, Reid’s FCH initiative had been formed out of desperation. In 1972 British policymakers determined “to persevere in efforts to get the Americans (and Canadians) more directly involved in the creation and maintenance of economic and political stability in the area,” a goal that remained unaccomplished.<sup>35</sup> The Nixon and Ford administrations provided little assistance to Guyana and emphasized the importance of “fostering self-reliance and a sense of destiny” in Caribbean countries. During the mid-1970s, the Canadians decreased the number of nations receiving bilateral aid from seventy to forty, focusing on regional assistance and multinational loans instead.<sup>36</sup> Since 1973 Guyanese leaders had urged their citizens to “use more of what we produce,” so the government could spend less on imports, and develop the western jungle to grow export crops and mine for valuable minerals.<sup>37</sup> A 1974 row about sugar prices with the British further cemented Guyanese attitudes. The price of sugar had increased, but the British were holding Third World nations to their existing sugar contracts. Although the Guyanese were able to renegotiate terms with the British, Prime Minister Burnham declared the prices of sugar “unrealistic in light of current world trends” and added that if the British were “sympathetic to [Guyana’s] plight that they would pay substantially more.”<sup>38</sup> On the same day the Guyanese government announced its agreement with Great Britain, Guyanese officials told their citizens that “our only salvation is to expand our Agriculture Production and expand in such a way that we have sizeable surpluses both for processes and export,” and stressed the need for self-sufficiency in food so that agricultural exports could be grown that would bring the nation more income.<sup>39</sup> In July 1978 alone, the largely undeveloped region of Mazaruni produced 7,401 diamonds.<sup>40</sup> A co-operative farm of one thousand foreigners in a nation of only 750,000 would thus appeal to the Guyanese.

Jones observed that Guyana had other problems, in particular with its neighbors, and that the United States was not assisting with any sort of resolution.<sup>41</sup> Guyana and Venezuela remained embroiled in their border dispute over the Essequibo region. Although the British established a commission to discuss the

34. Stoen, *Marked for Death*, 10.

35. Paper Prepared in the Ministry of Defence, DEFE-5-194-6, TNA.

36. Paper Prepared in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973–1976, eds., Kristin Ahlberg and Alexander Wieland (Washington, DC, 2012), doc. 18; Clyde Sanger, “Canada Switches Her Aid Policy,” *Guyana Graphic*, November 26, 1975.

37. “Use More of What we Produce: Reid,” *Guyana Graphic*, July 8, 1974, 3.

38. “Guyana and UK in Hard Sugar Price Bargaining,” *Guyana Graphic*, September 10, 1974.

39. “Expansion of our Agric. Production is Only Salvation,” *Guyana Graphic*, September 10, 1974, 6.

40. “Mazaruni Still top Mineral Producer,” *Guyana Chronicle*, August 19, 1978.

41. Tim Stoen, e-mail interview with the author, September 23, 2016.



disputed territory, events on the ground overtook diplomatic negotiations.<sup>42</sup> In fall 1966, less than half a year after Guyana achieved independence from the British, the Venezuelan military established a presence on the island of Ankoko, which was part of the disputed territory.<sup>43</sup> In 1968 Burnham expressed concern that Guyana and Venezuela were in competition not only over the land, but over the land's resources. Burnham told John Carter, the American ambassador, that Venezuelan aggression in the region was scaring off firms who wanted to invest with Guyana in the bauxite- and diamond-rich region.<sup>44</sup> To Burnham, the Venezuelans threatened the territory that promised future Guyanese economic prosperity. PNC documents emphasized that "the government expects to net millions of dollars of revenue" from the Essequibo, and compared the region to the fabled city of El Dorado.<sup>45</sup> The United States took a position of neutrality in the dispute, which meant the most powerful nation in the hemisphere would not intervene on Guyana's behalf. A report from the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown in 1973 stressed the PNC's commitment to "grandiose plans" to "develop and populate the interior, especially the Essequibo."<sup>46</sup> After a series of negotiations in mid-1970, the two nations agreed to the Protocol of Port of Spain, which placed a twelve-year moratorium on Guyanese-Venezuelan border competition, but the government of Guyana remained concerned that if the Essequibo region were not sufficiently developed by 1982, Venezuela could once again encroach on Guyanese territory.<sup>47</sup> Tim Stoen recalled that Jones stressed repeatedly that Jonestown "would be an asset should Venezuela ever attack."<sup>48</sup>

The Guyanese were indeed terrified of Venezuela. PNC officials consistently fretted over the threat of invasion despite the Protocol of Port of Spain. Prime Minister Burnham even considered moving the nation's capital from Georgetown and building a new city in the Essequibo region in order to better protect the western regions of Guyana that were key to his economic strategy.<sup>49</sup> Guyanese leaders observed the continuing border dispute between Guatemala and the former British colony of Belize and wished not to be in a similar situation with Venezuela. Although Guyana was a socialist nation, its diplomats asked the United States to serve as a greater presence in the region. In a

42. Circular Telegram From the Department of State to all American Posts, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, Dominican Republic; Cuba; Haiti; Guyana, eds. Daniel Lawler and Carolyn Yee (Washington, DC, 2005), doc. 436.

43. Odeen Ishmael, *The Trail of Diplomacy: A Documentary History of the Guyana-Venezuela Border Issue, Volume Two* (Bloomington, IN, 2015).

44. Memorandum for the Files, *FRUS*, 1964–1968, Volume XXXII, doc. 437.

45. Nestor P. Campbell, "The ABC of Guyana's Essequibo Territory: History Law Justice," Ministry of Information, PNC box, National Archives of Guyana.

46. Draft Country Analysis and Strategy Paper for Fiscal Year 1974–1975, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume E-11, Part 1, doc. 360.

47. *Ibid.*

48. Tim Stoen, e-mail interview with the author, September 23, 2016.

49. Odeen Ishmael, e-mail and phone interview with author, September 8, 2017.

meeting with U.S. Embassy officials, Foreign Minister Fred Wills pleaded that “the U.S. should consider the Caribbean an area of special responsibility,” and expressed concern about “Cuban efforts to extend their influence in the area,” as well as “increased Venezuelan influence . . . primarily because of the implications this might have for the Guyana-Venezuela territorial dispute.”<sup>50</sup> American policymakers, however, remained committed to neutrality.

Additionally, the Guyanese sought assistance from their Caribbean neighbors for territorial security. In 1973 Guyana was a founder of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a union of Caribbean nations that allowed the mini-states to present a larger and more united front to the world. Through CARICOM, Caribbean states were able to ease travel restrictions between nations, cooperate on research, lower trade barriers, discuss mutual security arrangements, and collaborate as a bloc in order to sell their exports at higher prices.<sup>51</sup> Unlike the failed West Indies Federation, CARICOM was an international organization of states rather than a single state itself. In 1974 the PNC aimed to use CARICOM as leverage against Venezuela. Guyanese foreign minister Sonny Ramphal sought to “sound out other governments” in the Caribbean, “promote further the concept of ‘Caribbean identity,’” and “by this means engage Venezuela in constructive Caribbean role which will act to inhibit GOV from pursuing its Essequibo territorial claim.”<sup>52</sup> The Guyanese were particularly intrigued by the idea of a multinational Caribbean defense force, where mini-states could pool their forces and fight a more powerful aggressor. In 1974 an editorial from the *Guyana Graphic*, which largely reflected the view of the PNC, discussed the possibility of creating such a defense force, citing the “recent events in Grenada [that] show that there are human elements in the area which have a tendency to collude with other forces to disturb the peace.”<sup>53</sup> The editorial reflected the views of Prime Minister Burnham who, in an address to CARICOM, stated, “As a result of our comparatively small sizes the Region can present a temptation to larger, outside powers to use it as a happy hunting ground for exercising influence and control.”<sup>54</sup> The Eastern Caribbean states, however, would not develop a system for regional security until 1982, and socialist Guyana would be at odds with its neighbors after the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983 and would not join. An ad-hoc security system on the border with Venezuela, consisting of American citizens using the land as a happy hunting ground, was thus a temptation.

50. Telegram 1217 from Georgetown, June 8, 1977, D770205-0325, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

51. “Big Agenda for First CARICOM Summit,” *Guyana Graphic*, July 3, 1974, 1.

52. Telegram 1469 from Georgetown, August 20, 1974, D740229-0286, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

53. “Caribbean Defence Force Idea Urged,” *Guyana Graphic*, August 12, 1974, 4. The *Guyana Graphic* was formally purchased by the government of Guyana one month later.

54. Address by Forbes Burnham to the Third Biennial Congress of the People’s National Congress, PNC box, National Archives of Guyana.

Furthermore, the Peoples Temple was a growing political force and wielded influence in California, which Jones exploited to win credibility with the Guyanese. In Northern California, Temple supporters voted as a bloc. Temple members wrote letters to celebrities and regional politicians, and built rapport with local law enforcement officers who may not have been aware of the Temple's socialist philosophy. The Temple earned recognition in the *Congressional Record* for a public campaign promoting freedom of the press.<sup>55</sup> Before Jones made his initial trip to Guyana, he obtained letters of support from Congressman Don H. Clausen (R-CA), who stated "Reverend Jones has for years carried on an exceptionally effective ministry of human service."<sup>56</sup> Congressman George E. Brown, Jr. (D-CA) wrote, "This inter-racial church is well known for a host of splendid and effective projects."<sup>57</sup> Jones brought these letters with him and showed them to Guyanese officials. On December 16, 1973, Jones and a ten-member entourage made the voyage to Guyana. Temple members quickly made contact with officials at every level of the government of Guyana. Joyce Parks, a nurse, and Marceline Jones, wife of Jim Jones, visited hospitals and spoke with health officials.<sup>58</sup> Don Beck—a graduate of MIT, a former Peace Corps volunteer, and a father of a mixed-race adopted child—served as a showpiece to impress any Guyanese bureaucrat he encountered.<sup>59</sup>

In high-level negotiations conducted by Jones and his two top advisers, Archie Ijames and Tim Stoen, Temple officials made sure to emphasize race. In their initial meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Ptolemy Reid on December 18, 1973, Jones discussed the problems of racism in the United States, an issue that Reid, a veterinarian who had studied at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, had experienced firsthand. Jones listened sympathetically, and stressed that he was an ardent integrationist. The two quickly became friends and Reid emerged as one of the Temple's most ardent supporters in the Guyanese government.<sup>60</sup>

Without the backing of a major foreign power, the PNC had previously protected its rule with U.S. citizens. Most notably, The House of Israel, led by Rabbi David Hill, an American black power leader, had several hundred members who maintained a presence in Georgetown, working as strikebreakers and inciting violence against supporters of Cheddi Jagan.<sup>61</sup> Although Jones was not

55. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 167.

56. Clausen to Burnham, November 20, 1973, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, D-2 Guyana Contacts, Part 133, 52, accessed October 26, 2016, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-133-134-135-of/view>.

57. Brown to Burnham, November 26, 1973, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, D-2 Guyana Contacts, Part 133, 53, accessed October 26, 2016, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-133-134-135-of/view>.

58. *Ibid.*, 9.

59. Don Beck, e-mail interview with the author, October 7, 2016.

60. Tim Stoen, e-mail interview with the author, September 23, 2016.

61. Nishani Frazier, "The 'Other' Jim Jones, Rabbi David Hill, House of Israel, and Black American Religion in the Age of Peoples Temple," *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed May 25, 2017, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=34259](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=34259).

black, the majority of his congregation was, and they appeared to express a great deal of support for the PNC. Stoen broached the issue of Guyana's FCH program and stressed how an agricultural settlement would contribute to the nation's development. Reid was sold on the idea and suggested that the Temple settle nearby a road that led through the bauxite mining town of Mackenzie.<sup>62</sup> Jones rejected Reid's suggestion. Reid's site "was too centrally located in the country where Temple members would have met the local gentry," and Jones desired that the Temple's settlement be remote.<sup>63</sup> Instead, Jones proposed a settlement of U.S. citizens in the jungle near the Venezuelan border because placing Americans in the line of fire would upset the Western Hemisphere's greatest power.<sup>64</sup> According to former Temple member Deborah Layton, "Jim had initially told the Guyanese Prime Minister that we would be a bulwark against possible infringements on the border."<sup>65</sup> The plan was approved by Prime Minister Burnham. Jones himself bragged about using his congregation members' status as U.S. citizens to site Jonestown in the Essequibo region: "We're in the best place we can be in the world, on disputed territory, where Venezuela will not invade because they have to go through U.S. citizens."<sup>66</sup> Richard McCoy, who served as chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Guyana from 1976 through 1978, remarked, "The Guyanese were also very happy that this American group moved in where they did because they were very concerned about Venezuelan territorial claims against that part of Guyana. They felt that this would create a buffer zone for them in that regard."<sup>67</sup> Jones completed the arrangement with a verbal agreement to support Burnham's PNC government, defend the border against Venezuelan aggression, and invest \$2 million in the nation of Guyana.<sup>68</sup> Given that Guyana owed \$292 million in disbursed and outstanding debt by 1976, Jones's money was needed and welcome.<sup>69</sup> Since the United States had offered approximately \$1 million yearly in unconditional aid in 1974, Jones's contributions were arguably more generous than those of his home nation and made his Temple one of the largest benefactors of cash-based assistance to the nation of Guyana.<sup>70</sup>

62. George Jackson, *Cuname, Curare, and Cool Aid* (New York, 1986), 51.

63. *Ibid.*, 52.; Tim Stoen, e-mail interview with the author, September 23, 2016.

64. *Ibid.*

65. Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison: A Jonestown Survivor's Story of Life and Death in the Peoples Temple* (New York, 1998), 127.

66. Audiotape Q430, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed October 27, 2016, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=27457](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=27457).

67. Morgan D. William and Richard McCoy, Interview with Richard McCoy, 1989, Manuscript/Mixed Material, Retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib000789>.

68. Jones promised to invest \$7 million in Guyanese dollars, approximately \$2 million in U.S. dollars. Jackson, *Cuname, Curare, and Cool-Aid*, 54.

69. C. Y. Thomas, "Guyana: The IMF-World Bank Group and the General Crisis," *Social and Economic Studies* 31, no. 4 (1982): 30.

70. Memorandum from Robert Pastor of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Deputy Assistant for National Security Affairs (Aaron), *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Volume

Jones and his entourage then flew to the North West District of Guyana to choose a site for their commune. They met Claude St. Romain, the government official in charge of settling the region. The thick jungle of the hinterlands was not easy to develop; members of the Guyanese Youth Corps had tried and failed in 1972.<sup>71</sup> St. Romain, however, greeted the Americans enthusiastically; he had received orders from Guyanese officials to ensure that Jones was comfortably accommodated.<sup>72</sup> He also took an immediate liking to Jones.

The Temple leader spoke often about civil rights and integration and used the rhetorical style of Father Divine, a famed radio preacher with more than ten thousand followers, who St. Romain had learned of when he had lived in a black neighborhood in Chicago during the 1940s.<sup>73</sup> This was no accident. Early in Jones's career, the Temple leader visited the preacher and self-proclaimed "Dean of the Universe," hoping to win Divine's endorsement as his successor. Divine did not name Jones as his heir, but he admired the young man and provided audiotapes of his sermons, which Jones studied intently, appropriating Divine's cadence and speech patterns. Although Jones took advantage of the dispute between Guyana and Venezuela to ensure his settlement was remote, his attempts to win the trust of PNC officials also relied on imitating a preaching style known to many in Guyana's black community. Although he was white, Jones did his utmost to sound like Divine, so much so that St. Romain quietly asked Jones's entourage if the Temple leader had "a touch of the tar brush in him."<sup>74</sup> Despite IJames's insistence that Jones was Caucasian, St. Romain remained skeptical, perhaps because Jones on occasion would even go so far as to refer to himself as black.<sup>75</sup>

St. Romain showed Jones two possible locations for an agricultural settlement and Jones selected the site farthest from the neighboring town, Port Kaituma.<sup>76</sup> Jones agreed to a provisional lease of 27,000 acres and returned to the United States on December 28.<sup>77</sup> Archie IJames remained behind to initiate the settlement, which until April 1977 numbered fewer than fifty people.

Venezuelan officials were not pleased about the new neighbors on their eastern border. On May 29, 1974, Harold Horan, a member of the Information Section at the Venezuelan Embassy in the United States, met with Frank

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XXIII, doc. 366; *USAID Greenbook* (Washington, DC, 2013), Excel spreadsheet, accessed October 27, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/developer/greenbookapi>.

71. Stoen, *Marked for Death*, 10–11; Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 238. St. Romain used the alias "Emerson Mitchell" in Reiterman and Jacobs's account.

72. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 239.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 59, 240.

75. Brooke Agee, "Jim Jones and His Peoples Temple: Dual Racial Identities, Dual Results," *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed May 25, 2017, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=31327](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=31327).

76. Stoen, *Marked for Death*, 12.

77. After much of the land was determined not to be arable, the lease was adjusted to 3,852 acres in 1976. *The Jonestown Institute*, "Guyana Land Lease," accessed October 27, 2016, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13131](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13131); Don Beck, e-mail interview with the author, October 7, 2016.

Devine, the director of North Coast Affairs in the Department of State's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs. Horan mischaracterized the citizenship of the Jonestown settlers by labeling them as "Cubans" (though he did mention some were "black" American citizens), stated that 4,000 people were planning to relocate to the Guyana-Venezuelan border, and reported that they were all loyal to Cheddi Jagan.<sup>78</sup> In response to Horan's concerns, the U.S. Embassy in Guyana prepared a cable about the Peoples Temple, in which they assured Devine that "Members of the Peoples Temple are favorably known to embassy and have told consular officers that they expect additional twenty to twenty-five settlers in next two months," adding there was "no threat to Venezuelan security in their activities nor is there evidence they are involved in Guyanese politics."<sup>79</sup> State Department officials reaffirmed the status of the migrants as U.S. citizens and did not further pursue the issue, maintaining their policy of neutrality on the border dispute.

Jones continued to use the issues of race, socialism, and nationalism to cement his relationship with Guyana, while a small crew of Temple members began clearing the jungle for agricultural purposes. Members of the Temple established and maintained good relations with the indigenous peoples of the region.<sup>80</sup> Since Guyana remained largely overlooked by the United States and the Soviet Union, Jones often relied on unabashed flattery, urging his parishioners to write letters to Guyanese officials that stressed that Guyana was a phenomenal nation, and emphasized Guyanese exceptionalism, a tactic similar to Jones's correspondence campaigns in the United States that yielded endorsements from congressmen and governors. Temple leaders drafted a series of letters that varied in style and tone, and distributed them to the congregation to mail to Prime Minister Burnham.<sup>81</sup> One parishioner wrote, "Guyana's future is a concern close to all our hearts, and it is gratifying to see the type of leadership that will make Guyana secure in years to come."<sup>82</sup> In sum, Temple members wrote seventy-four letters to Prime Minister Burnham, fifty-one to Deputy Prime Minister Reid, forty-two to Foreign Minister Fred Wills, and forty-two to Minister of Home Affairs and Immigration Vibert Mingo.<sup>83</sup> A December 1974 article in the *Guyana Graphic*, which was state-owned, praised the Temple

78. Memorandum of Conversation, P740065-1160, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

79. Telegram 977 from Georgetown, June 13, 1974, D740153-1112, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

80. Leonard Downie, "Jonestown Story Grew Uglier With Each Chapter," *Washington Post*, November 26, 1978, A20.

81. Letters to Forbes Burnham, box 4, folder 52, MS3800 (Peoples Temple Records), California Historical Society.

82. *Ibid.*

83. Laurie Efrein-Kahalas to Jim Jones, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, O-1 Letters to Jim Jones, Part 162, 234, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-162-163-of/view>.



for its commitment to development in the Essequibo region and mentioned the group's financial investment in Guyana.<sup>84</sup>

By 1976 Guyanese officials viewed Jones with enough favor to finalize his lease. The terms of the lease reflected Guyana's concerns with development and Jones's suggestion that his settlement be placed as a buffer near the Venezuelan border. The lease bound the Peoples Temple to "cultivate and maintain in a husbandlike manner all or any crops or pastures," and provide reports on agricultural production, under penalty of fine. The lease also required the Temple to mark clearly the boundary lines of its land, thus unmistakably distinguishing the territory as inhabited by Guyanese proxies.<sup>85</sup> While not yet populated, the foundations for a buffer state were in place.

#### A FREE STATE OF JONES: THE PEOPLES TEMPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA COALESCE, 1976–1978

During the period between 1974 and 1977, Jim Jones attained celebrity status within the United States. His use of temple volunteers to canvass neighborhoods, and his bus fleet that transported voters to the polls played a critical role in the victory of George Moscone, the Democratic candidate for mayor of San Francisco. Moscone won by a margin of a few thousand votes against his opponent, John Barbagelata, a conservative Catholic.<sup>86</sup> Moscone subsequently appointed Jones to the San Francisco Human Rights Commission in March 1976 and the San Francisco Housing Authority that autumn.<sup>87</sup> Jones was no longer a politically influential pastor—he was a kingmaker who held public office, and Democratic politicians took notice. Moscone invited Jones to a meeting with vice presidential nominee Walter Mondale in the autumn of 1976, and Jones held a rally with future First Lady Rosalynn Carter shortly before the election and attended a private meeting with her afterwards.<sup>88</sup> "I am grateful for the work of the Peoples Temple Christian Church in defending the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of the press," Mondale wrote in a public statement. "Knowing of your deep involvement in the major social and constitutional issues of our country is a great inspiration to me."<sup>89</sup>

Jones used these political connections and his status as an American interlocutor to assist the government of Guyana. Jones visited Guyana on Christmas 1976. The lieutenant governor of California, Mervyn Dymally, traveled from California to Guyana, two days after Jones made the same

84. "Temple Group Commits 1m To Agri Project," *Guyana Graphic*, December 31, 1974.

85. "Guyana Land Lease," *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed October 28, 2016, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=18377](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=18377).

86. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 266–67.

87. Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 105.

88. *Ibid.*; Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 303–4.

89. Mondale statement, 153.L.17.1B, Guyana Matter, Jim Jones 1976–1978, Walter Mondale Vice Presidential Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

voyage.<sup>90</sup> Dymally, who was born in Trinidad and Tobago and had previously served as the chairman of the California Legislative Black Caucus, was a mutual friend of Jones and Prime Minister Burnham. Dymally traveled to the Peoples Temple Agricultural Settlement on December 28 and wrote, "I was amazed by what I saw: Here, in the heart of the jungle, were people of all races and ages working together to build a better life for themselves."<sup>91</sup> The next day, Dymally met with chargé d'affaires Richard McCoy at the U.S. Embassy and spoke briefly about the necessity for goodwill between the United States and the Caribbean. Dymally had brought Jones along with him, and Jones acted as an unofficial representative of the government of Guyana.<sup>92</sup> Jones stated that Guyanese leaders were afraid of a CIA destabilization campaign, much like the one that had occurred in Chile three years earlier. McCoy replied that there was no covert campaign against Guyana and attributed the difficult relations between the two countries to Burnham's harsh rhetoric to the United States, especially after the bombing of Air Cubana Flight 455 on October 6.<sup>93</sup> Jones asserted he had received assurances from Walter Mondale and Rosalynn Carter that the United States would not meddle in the domestic affairs of Guyana, and agreed to relay the embassy's concerns to Burnham.<sup>94</sup> Burnham later remarked that he would never have given the Peoples Temple such a broad base of support if not for the Dymally visit.<sup>95</sup>

American officials had indeed decided to not to meddle in the internal politics of Guyana, whether Jones had received assurances from the Carter administration or not. In fact, U.S. policymakers took the opposite course and neglected the Eastern Caribbean. In November 1976, months before Carter took office, Assistant Secretary of State Harry Shlaudeman wrote a memorandum pleading for strategy for the Caribbean that included financial U.S. assistance and covert action but the memorandum was returned with a note that read "No action taken. No longer relevant for this administration."<sup>96</sup> President

90. Dymally schedule, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, LL-1 California State Departments – Congress, Part 245, 41, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-245-of/view>.

91. Dymally letter, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, LL-2 California State Departments – Governor, Part 245, 51, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-245-of/view>.

92. Telegram 2637 from Georgetown, December 29, 1976, D760475-0460, National Archives at College Park, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

93. For more information about Burnham's reaction to the crash, see Telegram From the Embassy in Guyana to the Department of State, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 272.

94. Telegram 2637 from Georgetown, December 29, 1976, D760475-0460, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

95. Charles Stuart Kennedy and John R. Burke, interview with John R. Burke, 1989, manuscript/mixed material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mfdipbib000169>.

96. Action Memorandum From the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Shlaudeman) to Secretary of State Kissinger, *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume E-11, Part 1, doc. 471.

Carter himself continued this policy of neglect. When National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski forwarded a paper prepared in the Department of State to Carter which stressed the need for “quick-dispersing, flexible development funds” for the Caribbean along with “economic assistance programs for middle-income countries,” Carter responded, “Cy, Zbig, this is a narrowly focused and inadequate approach. More federal gov’t money and staff.”<sup>97</sup> That same year, Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Richard Cooper quashed a plan to increase assistance to the Caribbean from \$65 million to \$153 million, arguing that the extra money would not stop economic problems in the region and would only increase “pleas for additional help.”<sup>98</sup> In 1977 Barbadian officials complained that Caribbean nations only received U.S. funding when “they are causing the U.S. enough trouble.”<sup>99</sup> During the same year, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Philip Habib told British officials that the United States had limited resources and that “we have very little to offer Caribbean leaders,” while the British told Habib they planned to change how foreign aid was disbursed in the Caribbean, but did not intend to increase it.<sup>100</sup> Similarly, in a 1978 cable, Frank Ortiz, the U.S. ambassador to Barbados, wrote, “It seems clear HMG is now implementing a policy decision to cast off the last remnants of empire” and that “since the breakup of the West Indian Federation there is a notable and I believe censurable absence of serious British efforts to meld these small political entities into larger, more viable ones.”<sup>101</sup>

As such, Jones continued to work for the PNC, using his large congregation as foreign political muscle. On July 10, 1978, the PNC held a referendum that, if approved, would re-write the Guyanese constitution, affirm the nation’s devotion to socialism, delay elections, and advance the authority of the executive branch of the government. The Peoples Temple, which by this time had settled one thousand members in Guyana, played an important role in the referendum’s success. Members of the Temple frequently marched in rallies in support of the PNC and the constitutional changes.<sup>102</sup> The Temple attended government functions *en masse* and also canvassed door-to-door, just as they had done in San Francisco for George Moscone.<sup>103</sup> The

97. Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski) to Secretary of State Vance, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 372.

98. Memorandum From the Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs (Cooper) to Secretary of State Vance, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 352.

99. Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 298.

100. Memorandum of Conversation, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 349.

101. Telegram From the Embassy in Barbados to the Department of State, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 309.

102. See section “The Search for a New Promised Land” for an explanation of Jones’s motives for relocating, “Cult Had Ties With Guyana Government,” *The Montreal Gazette*, December 4, 1978, 64.

103. Karen DeYoung, “Temple Cult, Guyana Made Odd Couple,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1978, A1.

PNC encouraged Temple members to vote in the referendum, even though they were not citizens of Guyana.<sup>104</sup> The referendum passed by an overwhelming margin.

In a July 1978 meeting, Mingo praised the Temple for its development of the jungle, which had occurred free of charge and without a loan from a multinational bank. Government official and former Foreign Minister Fred Wills shared Mingo's opinion and often engaged in long talks with Amos and other Temple officials.<sup>105</sup> When Amos mentioned an American newspaper article had hinted that the Peoples Temple was influencing the government of Guyana, Wills replied by stating that the influence and expertise introduced by Jones was "beautiful."<sup>106</sup> During the same conversation, he "got teary eyed" and contemplated moving to the borderland commune and joining the Peoples Temple.<sup>107</sup>

Because Jonestown provided aid that could not be found elsewhere, Wills warned the Temple about potential threats, such as Guyanese cabinet members he thought had been compromised by the CIA, and showed Sharon Amos correspondence he had received from Burnham.<sup>108</sup> Wills also reported on the actions of other government ministers, many of whom had grown concerned with Jonestown's autonomy. On February 20, 1978, Wills informed Amos that Vincent Teekah, the minister of education tasked with certifying the schools at Jonestown, noted that the settlement was so remote that "no police officer can come right in" and referred to Jonestown as a "state within a state."<sup>109</sup> Teekah was not alone in his view. In February 1978, Wills informed Amos that five cabinet members had discussed the Peoples Temple as a "government within a government."<sup>110</sup> In an April 3 conversation with Temple officials, Minister of Information Shirley Field-Ridley likened the relationship between the government of Guyana and the Peoples Temple to "a man and a woman getting

104. "Jones' Papers Show Cult Probe Stopped," *Lawrence Journal-World*, December 3, 1978, 2A.

105. Wills was dismissed from his position as Foreign Minister in February 1978, but remained on the government's payroll and was promised a new assignment. He subsequently aided Prime Minister Burnham in the drafting of a new constitution. Memoranda of Conversation, February 13–15, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 130, D-1 Guyana Contacts, 218, accessed January 23, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-130-131-132-of/view>.

106. Memorandum of Conversation, July 17, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 130, D-1 Guyana Contacts, 203, accessed January 23, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-130-131-132-of/view>.

107. *Ibid.*, 201.

108. *Ibid.*, 226–30.

109. Memorandum of Conversation, February 20, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 134, D-1 Guyana Contacts, 201, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-133-134-135-of-1/view>.

110. Memorandum of Conversation, February 18, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 130, D-1 Guyana Contacts, 227, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-130-131-132-of/view>.

married.”<sup>111</sup> In 1978 Wills, in the position of foreign minister, met with Amos and stated that the government of Guyana was happy to populate the border area near Venezuela, stating, “Venezuela is not about to argue, kill, or hurt anybody of U.S. descent.”<sup>112</sup> He remarked that “every society needs a Jim Jones,” adding that “Jim Jones is the kind of person that when you make a decision you want to consult with him to see what he would do in that instance.”<sup>113</sup> The Guyanese ambassador to the United States, Laurence “Bonny” Mann, also acted as an asset to the Peoples Temple. Paula Adams, an influential adviser to Jones, had initiated an affair with Mann in 1974, and the ambassador placed a great deal of trust in his new partner.<sup>114</sup> Adams took notes for Mann at official government meetings that discussed the border conflict with Venezuela as well as relations with the United States, the Caribbean Community, North Korea, and the Soviet Union.<sup>115</sup>

Because Jim Jones had promised assistance to the Burnham government when the Eastern Caribbean remained largely ignored by wealthy states, admiration for the Peoples Temple persisted among Guyanese officials even after the deaths of November 18, 1978. A Guyanese government publication titled *Findings, Analysis, and Inventory of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Settlement* remarked that “The settlement under the direction of its late leader, the Rev. Jim Jones, has gone a long way into transforming the dense forest into productive crop land. . . . The settlement, by its very existence, is profound evidence of the application and triumph of human will, ingenuity, and determination over the forces of nature.”<sup>116</sup> The report added, “Jonestown was fast becoming a mirror for communal living, co-operation, order, discipline, production of creative work of an order and scale imaginable and understandable only by those who are aware of the extent the human will can go, supported by creative genius and a relentless application to goals.”<sup>117</sup> As former protectors of the Essequibo region and supporters of the incumbent PNC, the Peoples Temple, to some, still evoked feelings of affection.

111. Memorandum of Conversation, April 4, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 180, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

112. Memorandum of Conversation, February 18, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 130, D-1 Guyana Contacts, 232, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-130-131-132-of/view>.

113. *Ibid.*, 232–33.

114. During a 1983 quarrel about visitation rights, Mann shot and killed Adams, their eighteen-month-old son, and himself. Nancy Lewis and Joanne Ostrow, “Slain Bethesda Woman Linked To Cult Chief, Guyana Envoy,” *Washington Post*, October 26, 1983, C1.

115. Notes from meetings taken by Paula Adams, April 13, 1977, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 109, BB-1, Paula Adams, 113–16, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

116. *Findings, Analysis, and Inventory of the Peoples Temple Agricultural Settlement* (Government of Guyana: Georgetown), 12, National Library of Guyana.

117. *Ibid.*, 13.

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW PROMISED LAND: SUSPICION AND  
TERROR IN SAN FRANCISCO AND GUYANA, 1977–1978

While the PNC was as protective of the Peoples Temple as possible, Jones never trusted the Guyanese and embarked on an endless search for a new home for the Peoples Temple. Reasons for Jones's distrust were myriad. Jones's mental state had deteriorated from 1974 to 1977, and his sermons featured a degree of paranoia that would make any objective listener doubt that Jones could trust anyone. In a spring 1977 speech, he warned his congregation "to get ready for riots and to get ready for martial law and to get ready for concentration camps."<sup>118</sup>

Jones's paranoia, ironically, led him to begin the Temple's exodus to Guyana, the nation he would later try to leave. Fearing persecution from the FBI, Jones moved 380 of his followers to Jonestown in early 1977; small groups continued to arrive throughout the summer.<sup>119</sup> Jones's rhetoric about persecution frightened Wills, who was apprehensive to accept a "colony of expatriates who may be hostile toward USG and publish literature attacking [the United States]."<sup>120</sup> Once Jones's status and standing as an American citizen came into question, the Guyanese began to express hesitancy about the Peoples Temple experiment. Jones, however, deposited \$500,000 in the Bank of Guyana.<sup>121</sup> When U.S. officials did not act on Wills's "oft-expressed theme that the U.S. has responsibility in the Caribbean area," Jones again provided financial assistance that mollified the Guyanese.<sup>122</sup>

With Jones's celebrity came additional scrutiny. Marshall Kilduff, a journalist for *New West* magazine, began an exposé of the Peoples Temple in 1975 that was printed on August 1, 1977.<sup>123</sup> Kilduff described physical abuse within the Temple and called for a formal investigation.<sup>124</sup> In the weeks that preceded the article's publication, *New West* received up to fifty phone calls a day, some from powerful figures such as Lieutenant Governor Dymally, urging the magazine not to print the story. Kilduff discussed the harassment campaign in the article, and the disclosure attracted publicity to Kilduff's allegations.<sup>125</sup> Rosalie Wright, editor of *New West*, called Jones to read him the article shortly before the

118. Audiotape Q987, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed November 1, 2016. [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=27635](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=27635).

119. Memorandum From the Deputy Political Counselor of the Mission to the United Nations (Blacken) to the Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs (Hewitt), *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 295.

120. Telegram From the Embassy in Guyana to the Department of State; Blacken to Hewitt; *FRUS*, 1977–1980, docs. 276 and 295.

121. Telegram From the Embassy in Guyana to the Department of State, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 276.

122. Telegram 1600 from Georgetown, July 21, 1977, D770260-0807, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

123. Marshall Kilduff, "Inside Peoples Temple," *New West*, August 1, 1977, 30–38.

124. *Ibid.*

125. *Ibid.*



exposé's publication. This courtesy was not common policy for *New West*, but Wright extended it "because of all the support letters" they had received for the Peoples Temple.<sup>126</sup> As Jones listened on the phone in his San Francisco headquarters, he wrote messages on scraps of paper and held them in the air for his congregation to read. When Wright read the section about the Temple's harassment of the magazine, Jones wrote "guess we didn't scare them enough," to the amusement of his followers.<sup>127</sup> By the time Wright finished the article, Jones's mood was less sanguine. He wrote, "We leave tonight. Notify Georgetown."<sup>128</sup> By the end of August 1977, nearly one thousand members of the Peoples Temple, including Jones, had relocated to Guyana.<sup>129</sup>

Jones's physical and mental decline accelerated upon moving to the Guyanese jungle. The issue that made Jones most paranoid was the Stoen custody case. Tim Stoen had accompanied Jones on the Temple's first trip to Guyana and was likely one of the few Temple members who could disagree openly with Jones. Stoen's wife, Grace, had walked away from the Temple in July 1976, leaving her son, John Victor, in the care of Stoen and Jones. Both Stoen and Jones had been intimate with Grace and both claimed parentage of the child. Stoen was listed as the father on John Victor's birth certificate, but under pressure from the Temple he signed a "paternity statement" declaring Jones the father.<sup>130</sup> Stoen remained a member of the Temple and traveled to Guyana in February 1977, but he changed his mind and fled in March. He was unable to take his son with him.<sup>131</sup> Neither Tim Stoen nor Grace Stoen wanted their child raised by Jones in a foreign country. On August 26, 1977, the Stoens sued Jones in California court and won temporary custody; Jones, however, was in Guyana.<sup>132</sup> Their lawyer, Jeff Haas, traveled to Georgetown in early September in an attempt to get a Guyanese court to enforce the custody order.<sup>133</sup>

Haas was either very lucky or very smart because his court date, September 6, coincided with the signing ceremony for the Panama Canal Treaties, which Fred Wills and Ptolemy Reid both attended and were thus unable to influence the legal proceedings.<sup>134</sup> The Panama Canal Treaties were a top priority for Carter policymakers, who negotiated an agreement that would protect U.S.

126. Ibid.

127. Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 113.

128. Ibid., 115.

129. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 340.

130. Jones had convinced Tim Stoen that if his wife were intimate with Jones, she might hesitate to leave the Temple: Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 287–94.

131. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 318.

132. Stoen, *Marked for Death*, unnumbered page; Briefing Memorandum From Vaky to Newsom, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 292.

133. Telegram From the Embassy in Guyana to the Department of State, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 280.

134. Telegram 2116 from Georgetown, D770321-0456, September 4, 1977, Central Foreign Policy File, RG 59, USNA.

defense and shipping interests while shielding the United States from charges of imperialism. Panama's strategic prominence earned it attention from a superpower, but many of the Caribbean leaders who were in the room with Jimmy Carter and Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos were not the victims of imperialism, but instead the victims of neglect. While Panama celebrated, a Guyanese judge summoned Jones and John Victor Stoen to appear in court.

Jones did not take the news well. He claimed that "The Guyanese government has turned against us, violated our sovereignty and on September 7 declared a state of siege at Jonestown."<sup>135</sup> On September 10, a bench warrant was issued for Jones, who never complied with the court order. In response, Jones declared, "we've been lied to and deceived. The foreign minister of this country promised us we'd have complete sanctuary."<sup>136</sup> Although Burnham intervened personally to prevent Jones's arrest, on September 30, just weeks after his arrival in Guyana, Jones ordered his followers to look for a new location for the Peoples Temple.<sup>137</sup>

Although Jones viewed Guyana as the center of his universe and the United States as an enemy to be feared, U.S. policymakers did not exhibit any of the conspiratorial attitudes toward the Temple that Jones had assumed. When Stoen continued to press the custody issue, Embassy chargé d'affaires Richard McCoy told Stoen "there is no case" and encouraged Stoen to leave Guyana.<sup>138</sup> McCoy also phoned Temple officials and told them that he had warned Stoen not to attempt to kidnap the child.<sup>139</sup> Nonetheless, the U.S. Embassy remained concerned about John Victor Stoen and the culture at Jonestown. Deputy Chief of Mission John Blacken observed that when he visited the Temple, many people responded to his questions in a manner that seemed rehearsed.<sup>140</sup> Embassy officials prepared an emergency passport for John Victor Stoen on September 14.<sup>141</sup>

While the Soviet Union and Guyana both expressed interest in Jonestown, the nature and degree of each nation's interest varied greatly, largely because Guyana was a mini-state and the Soviet Union was a metropole. The Soviets were interested in Jonestown solely because of the U.S. citizenship of the Temple's members. Amos opened a dialog with the Soviet Embassy, in line with Jones's belief that the Soviet Union was the "spiritual motherland" of the

135. Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 127.

136. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 360–67.

137. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 371.

138. Memorandum of Conversation, January 19, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 164, P-1 State Department Contacts, 38, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-164-of/view>.

139. Dick McCoy telephone call, January 19, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 164, P-1 State Department Contacts, 40, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-164-of/view>.

140. Roundtable talk with John Blacken, April 1, 2015.

141. Telegram From the Embassy in Guyana to the Department of State, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 280.

Peoples Temple.<sup>142</sup> She met frequently with Embassy Third Secretary Fedor Timofeyev, who took an interest in the group. Timofeyev considered the Temple a “unique phenomenon” and understood the propaganda value of accepting one thousand American citizens as political refugees “because of the claim the U.S. has of human rights,” adding “the US never starts with its own situation.”<sup>143</sup> Timofeyev asked the Temple to prepare a short paper explaining why they sought refuge in his country and stated that the next step would be to prepare a small delegation to visit the Soviet Union.<sup>144</sup>

Temple officials prepared the letter, which stated that the situation in Guyana was “very unstable” and that they wanted their “children to be safe and grow up in a socialist environment.” Timofeyev worked closely with the Temple to revise the letter.<sup>145</sup> Timofeyev forwarded the Temple’s concerns to Moscow, but cautioned that bureaucracy in the Soviet Union was slow, and a long wait did not necessarily mean a rejection.<sup>146</sup> Timofeyev stated that there was concern in Moscow for the children of Jonestown, whose exodus would be a propaganda coup.<sup>147</sup> After all, the Soviets had resettled orphaned German children after the Second World War, and they had invited black intellectuals to move to their nation during the 1930s.<sup>148</sup> In September 1978, Timofeyev requested that the Temple prepare a small delegation to visit the Soviet Union.<sup>149</sup>

But the Soviet Union did not need the assistance of the Peoples Temple in the way that tiny and overlooked Guyana did and was not interested in providing the Temple with the same kind of autonomy. Timofeyev stated that he

142. Audiotape Q352, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed November 3, 2016. [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=27428](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=27428).

143. Memorandum of Conversation, February 25, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 192, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

144. Memorandum of Conversation, August, 20, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 30, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

145. Memorandum of Conversation, undated, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 240, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

146. Memorandum of Conversation, October 24, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 126, 135, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

147. Memorandum of Conversation, undated, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 165, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

148. DeNeel L. Brown, “What Would Compel a Black American to Move to Stalinist Russia?” *Washington Post*, August 16, 2013, accessed January 25, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/what-would-compel-a-black-american-to-move-to-stalinist-russia/2013/08/15/dbee6a72-f3c1-11e2-a2f1-a7acf9bd5d3a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.793efdfed4d4b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/what-would-compel-a-black-american-to-move-to-stalinist-russia/2013/08/15/dbee6a72-f3c1-11e2-a2f1-a7acf9bd5d3a_story.html?utm_term=.793efdfed4d4b).

149. Memorandum of Conversation, September 20, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 52, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

might not be able to offer refuge to everyone in the community, and the settlement might not be able to stay together.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, Timofeyev offered no guarantees that Jones would be able to continue to lead his parishioners. Jones began to ignore Timofeyev's requests, and backed away from the idea of resettling in the Soviet Union. On October 2, 1978, Jones told his congregation, "I would say we would have to offer, to see that this—if we wanted asylum in Russia, that I agree not to be the leader, and that we assimilate if you go to Russia."<sup>151</sup>

Nonetheless, the Soviet Embassy provided assistance to the Peoples Temple. Embassy officials dispatched a doctor to Jonestown to perform regular checkups on the residents and to tend to Jones's health, and provided the settlement with supplies, such as books for its library.<sup>152</sup> The Soviets also provided the commune with fifty-two Soviet films.<sup>153</sup> Timofeyev arranged for a TASS journalist to visit the settlement and write an article about it. On April 16, 1978, correspondent Alexander S. Voropaev traveled to Jonestown and provided a glowing description of Jones and his followers.<sup>154</sup> Voropaev chronicled, "There is a lot of popularity among citizens [of Jonestown] of literature and films showing respect for the Soviet Union and life there as well as other socialist countries. 'Only socialism,' says Jones, can stop the exploitation of man by man."<sup>155</sup> Timofeyev himself visited Jonestown on October 2, 1978, and gave a short speech.<sup>156</sup>

In 1978 Guyana became a nation of importance to the United States only because Jones and his group of U.S. citizens had moved there. While Amos plotted and Jones fretted, Tim and Grace Stoen organized. Tim joined forces with Steve Katsaris, whose daughter, Maria, had left for Guyana with the

150. Memorandum of Conversation, undated, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 84, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

151. Audiotape Q591, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed October 26, 2016. [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=28182](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=28182).

152. Ibid.; Memorandum of Conversation, April 10, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 83, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761); Memorandum of Conversation, August 20, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 30, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

153. Soviet Films (16mm), *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 131, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

154. Guestbook entry, April 16, 1978, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 074, C-6 Guestbook, 16, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

155. Article translated by Alexander Voropaev, undated, *The Jonestown Institute*, Peoples Temple Records Recovered by FBI (2009 release), section 139, GG-1, to Russia, Cuba, Other Countries, 150, accessed January 25, 2018, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13761](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13761).

156. Audiotape Q352, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed November 3, 2016. [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=27428](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=27428).

Temple. Katsaris knew a former member of Walter Mondale's staff, who connected Katsaris to John Matheny, military adviser to Vice President Mondale.<sup>157</sup> Matheny alerted personnel on President Carter's National Security Council staff about the issue in Guyana.<sup>158</sup> Stoen wrote to Vice President Mondale, stating "I desperately seek your help in helping my wife and I get our six year old son, John Victor Stoen, now being held in violation of a California court order in Guyana, South America." Stoen pleaded, "Please, please help us before something dreadful happens."<sup>159</sup> A group known as the Concerned Relatives began to press the Department of State, Congress, and the government of Guyana about Jonestown. They earned the support of Senator Mark Hatfield (R-OR), Senator Edward Brooke (R-MA), Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), Representative Tim Wirth (D-CO), Representative Don Edwards (D-CA), Representative Pete McCloskey (R-CA), Representative Norman Mineta (D-CA), Representative George Miller (D-CA), and Representative Leo Ryan (D-CA).<sup>160</sup> Leo Ryan resolved to visit Jonestown personally.

Jones's privileged status as a U.S. citizen in Guyana was challenged only when other U.S. citizens attempted to undermine his position. Faced with choosing between two well-connected groups of American citizens, Guyanese officials pondered what to do. Wills, acting as foreign minister, complained to Temple officials about the Stoen case, noting "there is a debate now as to whether Guyana should be given [U.S.] aid," and asserting "California is the chief area of dissent."<sup>161</sup> Nonetheless, the Guyanese remained loyal to Jones until the very end. When Congressman Ryan and a team of journalists (including Jonestown chronicler Tim Reiterman) arrived in Guyana in the early hours of November 15, they encountered unfriendly customs officials. The party's stay in Guyana was reduced from five days to twenty-four hours. The U.S. Embassy intervened and eventually won Ryan the promise of his full five days.<sup>162</sup> When Ryan's party flew to Port Kaituma, their pilot informed them that "Georgetown said [the landing strip] is unserviceable."<sup>163</sup> Indeed, a dump truck that belonged to the Peoples Temple sat in the middle of the runway. The pilot eventually succeeded in landing the plane.<sup>164</sup> After a few hours of negotiating with local

157. John Matheny, Memorandum for the Record, November 30, 1978, 153.L.17.1B, Guyana Matter, Jim Jones 1976–1978, Walter Mondale Vice Presidential Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

158. Memorandum From the Military Adviser to the Vice President (Matheny) to Robert Pastor of the National Security Council Staff, *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XXIII, doc. 282.

159. Stoen to Mondale, February 1, 1978, 153.L.17.1B, Guyana Matter, Jim Jones 1976–1978, Walter Mondale Vice Presidential Papers, Minnesota Historical Society.

160. Stoen, *Marked for Death*, unnumbered page.

161. Memorandum of Conversation, January 1, 1978, Federal Bureau of Investigation, RYMUR investigation, Part 130, D-1 Guyana Contacts, 237, accessed January 25, 2018, <https://vault.fbi.gov/jonestown/jonestown-part-130-131-132-of-view>.

162. Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 481–83.

163. Reiterman and Jacobs assert that Jonestown called Guyanese officials in Georgetown and told them that the runway was unserviceable: *Raven*, 489.

164. *Ibid.*, 487–88

officials and Jones's lawyers, Congressman Ryan and his party boarded a farm tractor to Jonestown.<sup>165</sup>

The citizens of Guyana did not learn about the November 18 deaths of Leo Ryan, Jim Jones, John Victor Stoen, Maria Katsaris, and 914 others for three days. When they did, the headline in the state-owned newspaper read "Peoples Temple head dies from gunshot wounds." A large drawing of Jones accompanied the article. A sub-headline mentioned the death toll.<sup>166</sup> A short article on page eight mentioned the death of Leo Ryan.<sup>167</sup> The government's explanation for the tragedy was left to Ptolemy Reid, who in his ten columns of text did not mention directly Jones's culpability. While Jim Jones's culpability was undeniable, Reid stated only that the presence of Jonestown was "consistent with Guyana's policy of hinterland development," failing to explain adequately what one thousand Americans were doing in Guyana in the first place, or why Jonestown received such vast autonomy.<sup>168</sup> While photos of the dead and audiotape of the killings at Jonestown are horrifying, the larger story of why a thousand Americans were allowed to migrate to a remote settlement in a socialist country remained untold.<sup>169</sup>

The combination of détente, British flight, and American stinginess created a vacuum that placed the tiny nation of Guyana in a position where they were eager to accept any form of assistance. Jones's eagerness to develop the Essequibo region, his appeals to race, his willingness to help the Guyanese with a border dispute, and his status as an American citizen made the Peoples Temple an ideal group to assist the PNC, especially since such assistance could not be found elsewhere. While the nations of the Eastern Caribbean had been freed from the fetters of British imperialism, they quickly found themselves bound by the limits of international neglect, and actors like Jones exploited that neglect for personal gain.

In the years to come, U.S. officials developed a more coherent strategy toward the Caribbean that, at times, was successful. The Reagan administration's Caribbean Basin Initiative was a mixed blessing for the region. While the initiative provided \$350 million in much-needed aid, sugar quotas in the United States defanged the initiative of many of its trade benefits. The 1983 invasion of Grenada conferred unity among the mini-states that joined in the effort, but it did little to resolve long-standing issues with Haiti, Cuba, the Dominican

165. Journalist Gordon Lindsay of the *National Enquirer* was not permitted to enter the settlement; Reiterman and Jacobs, *Raven*, 490.

166. "Peoples Temple Head Dies From Gunshot Wounds," *Guyana Chronicle*, November 21, 1978.

167. "Complaints Led Ryan to Death," *Guyana Chronicle*, November 21, 1978, 8.

168. "Dr. Reid Reports to Nation on Jonestown Disaster," *Guyana Chronicle*, November 25, 1978, 1, 5.

169. David Hume Kennerly, *Getty Images*, November 18, 1978; Audiotape Q042, *The Jonestown Institute*, accessed December 8, 2017, [http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=29081](http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=29081).



Republic, the Bahamas, and Guyana. The debate about the United States and its obligation to the world community is ongoing. The story of the Peoples Temple in Guyana remains a valuable lesson for people who debate America's global role, a story that should not be occluded by its grim denouement.

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