

CUNAME, CURARE & COOL AID

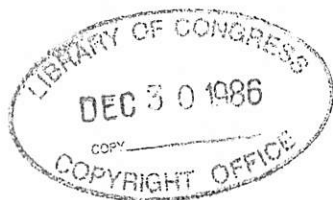
The Politics that Spawned and Nurtured Jonestown

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DEDICATED TO
GENE ALLISON SABRINA AHWAH
WHOSE FAITH
AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE
HAS BEEN MY INSPIRATION

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my parents, Peter & Irena Jackson who must number among the best in the world; my brothers and sisters for our shared love; the hundreds of Guyanese who wanted to see a return to democracy and who gave time, information and assistance with this work yet whom I can not name individually for fear of reprisals and to about a dozen members of the People's Temple of Jonestown with whom I spoke before the tragedy that brought Guyana its blackest weekend in history. Most of these wonderful human beings from the cult must have made the unexpected crossing of the River Styx.

To their bereaved families in the United States:—You couldn't have known the hell they lived in. The 'silent' majority of Guyanese suffered through your bereavement with the eternal shame caused by a handful of evil leaders who have consistently raped and plundered the young nation.

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Introduction

In the little South American nation of Guyana any Friday 13th was always looked upon with dread by most of the nationals. In years past there had been several disastrous fires, that gutted large areas, to mark the date but in some interior regions some people believed that Friday was a bad day to travel or start any trips.

On Friday November 18, 1978 a small party of Americans, led by US Congressman Leo Ryan, flew from the capital city of Georgetown to a little clearing in the North West District to visit with hundreds of fellow Americans in a new settlement sponsored by the People's Temple church of San Francisco and sanctioned by the Prime Minister of Guyana.

By Saturday evening more than 900 people had died by murder and suicide at the jungle commune in the most bizarre historical event to visit on this peacefully idyllic country.

At the outbreak of the macabre news shortly after the massacre on that historical weekend millions of people in many countries around the world heard the reports but the half-million

nationals in the host country had to wait two days to get an official release that there was trouble in the land.

The country's Prime Minister, Forbes Burnham, kept a still tongue as though he had something to hide and when he did speak it was to call on the United States government to remove the remains of the unfortunate souls.

The truth was that Guyana had already become an autocratic kingdom in which Forbes Burnham ruled with his plantation colonialist mentality from a rattan throne and wearing his calabash crown.

The Reverend Jim Jones paid for and was granted an agricultural lease over a large tract of land which he used as his private American state with the express consent of the government.

Congressman Ryan and his party stumbled onto a dehumanizing situation that was destined to lead back to, and end the rule of, an insensitive despot who had made life increasingly unbearable for nationals.

In a country where people were beaten and killed for their political views and where the Prime Minister declared openly that he would eradicate all opposition it was easy to understand how Jones was able to dump more than a thousand people in a rugged jungle and treat them in an inhuman manner.

Many people have claimed that such a catastrophe could never befall them but who do they kid? Radio and television programming affects our everyday lives and more often than not we absorb the bad influences because it comes so much easier. Take a look at the people who tote radios and those who drive around with the volume blasting the wild sounds yet we hear disc jockeys advising listeners to turn the volume up.

Then we jump for the latest fads, wild and outlandish as they may be and enter the alcohol, smoke and drug scene yet we are not in a controlled society.

The Jonestown cult was nurtured in their own controlled society under Jim Jones while Burnham was programming the

Guyanese people to think, speak, act and even eat in the manner he dictated.

The blame was not Jones' but should be laid squarely on the shoulders of the incompetent leader of the Guyanese society whose greed for material wealth and vindictiveness to his fellow man led indirectly to the Jonestown massacre.

But the end of Jonestown is yet to come. There are Guyanese who were involved with the establishment of the commune and as the truth surfaces the toll is likely to rise.

Jonestown was a good idea but the method was atrocious and in Burnham's Guyana where starvation, murder, robbery, corruption, graft and every other evil starts on the highest rung of the ladder the project was doomed from the start. In fact, any major project undertaken while Burnham and any socialist group holds office would never get off the ground.

CHAPTER 1

Day of Horror

There was nothing special about the dawning of the mid-November Saturday of 1978 in the little rice republic of Guyana on the northern coast of the South American continent. On the country's eastern border with Surinam the sun had begun to warm the earth on the bank of the Corentyne River but clear across the country in the northwestern region, a distance of about three hundred miles, the thick mist which engulfed the small grass-topped airstrip and surrounding forest was somewhat normal for most parts of the continent's sprawling Orinocco-Amazon Basin.

The landing field for small aircraft in the middle of the evergreen forest area, only fifty miles east of the Venezuelan border, was just about one hundred and fifty crow's miles from the country's decaying and putrid capital of Georgetown at the mouth of the Demerara River situate halfway along the full length of the nation's Atlantic Coast.

Mother Nature continued her unending paced cycle as the earth rotated in its orbit. Over to the east of the airfield and

some forty miles northward the sun's rays brought daylight close on the heels of the receding night on the crests of billowing breakers in the turbulent Atlantic Ocean, yet could not penetrate the dense fog to warm the earth or even the massive treetops of the impenetrable jungle on the edge of the great water mass. With the mist hanging motionless the atmosphere was somewhat damp and chilly, even bleak.

Nocturnal creatures, like the labba, tapir and coatamundi, sensing the arrival of yet another day, scurried to their lairs in an attempt to beat Mother Nature's curfew and make way for those species with daylight prowling habits.

The cicada, commonly labeled the 'six o'clock beetle' for its habit of heralding the dawn and dusk hours, welcomed the new day in customary manner. Their harsh raspy, undulating hisses and chirps broke the relative stillness of the forest floor while producing a continuous melody of ear-splitting magnitude that belied the inch-long size of the insect.

Several species of tropical fauna, waking to the blast of the cicada, began their daily routine. Large flocks of parrots gamboled in the treetops to the east where the sun was already shining through and added to the clamor with their raucous calls. Either because of their voracious appetites or a natural aversion to darkness and fog, the noisy birds continued to stay well behind the receding shadow line demarcating the spent night and the new day. The colorful birds alighted frequently in the treetops to feed on fruits in the bright morning sunshine as they took their westward flight.

Under this heavy blanket of atmospheric wonderment, which reduced visibility to a mere twenty feet, a small Cessna airplane stood at the southwestern end of the little airfield. The matt-black craft, bearing yellow Guyana Defence Force markings, had been grounded because of a mechanical malfunction which developed the previous day while in flight to the capital. There

was no ground service nor control tower but the pilot managed to land without mishap.

Beside the plane an army regulation tent was pitched for the comfort of four of the nation's soldiers who had been stranded but unhurt from the unscheduled landing. The four men slept through the night without posting guard and with little regard for the mosquitoes and sandflies that buzzed irritatingly about stopping on occasions to draw blood, with their minusculous needles, from the supine men.

As the day progressed hot sunshine fragmented then totally dissipated the fog to reach the silvery residue of dewdrops on the grass and parch the earth below. The clamor of the larger birds and scampering monkeys increased with the arrival of shrill whistling canaries and a variety of other warblers. This cacophony served as reveille for the little encampment and the soldiers rose from their tiny cots, tidied themselves and ate a sparse breakfast. With nothing to do other than basic natural functions the men lolled about and grew listless with anticipation for an early withdrawal from the area. There appeared to be no other form of human habitation in the immediate vicinity and definitely nothing of interest to anyone but hardy naturalists who might want to chance looking for a wide species of birds and those with a penchant for exotic tropical orchids.

By midmorning the land was bone-dry and the leaves crackled as the branches swayed in the gentle breezes from the north-east that caressed the land. Then, on a waft of air, the droning sound of an aircraft floated to the ears of the jovial soldiers as they poked fun at each other to pass the time away. A few minutes later a small privately-owned Cessna airplane dipped over the treetops and touched down on the bumpy surface of the runway. The soldiers moved about hurriedly to gather their few belongings and prepared to strike camp as the little craft came to a halt at the far end. The pilot turned the single-engined Cessna around and taxied back to a position on

the edge and about halfway along the length of the field where he shut down the engine.

A couple of soldiers crossed to the plane just as the pilot shut down the engine. Both men lost their welcoming grins as they spoke to the pilot who had slid the cockpit window open. They learned that the plane had arrived to ferry out a party of Americans who had been brought in the previous day on an overnight inspection tour. The pilot explained that some 'big shot' American had heard of the little settlement which had been established by a religious group from the United States of America and wanted to see conditions in the camp. The disappointed soldiers retraced their steps with the news and continued their wait for evacuation back to barracks and the bright lights or black out of the capital.

During the afternoon period a heavier motor sound signaled the approach of another aircraft. Then a few minutes later a DeHavilland Twin Otter airplane, registered to the Guyana Airways Corporation soared over the kakaralli trees on its approach then made a smooth descent and touchdown. The plane raced along the rough grass-covered runway to the north-western end where the pilot turned the eighteen-seater about and shut down the engines. Indeed, this was a strange sight on any airstrip in this totally undeveloped country which, over the past ten years, had lost the services of nearly a dozen airlines to the advancement of communism and the greed of the country's dogmatic leader.

Nationals of this economically strangled and politically harassed country had little recall of the day when three or more airplanes of any size or description stood on the tarmac at Atkinson Airport at any one time let alone some outback, makeshift field without a shard of pretentious prosperity. Atkinson Airport as the official port of entry to the nation and located about twenty-nine miles outside the capital had served the country adequately right up to Independence of 1966. Since

then just about everything in Guyana turned sour and in recent years the airport underwent a facelift and had a name change to Timehri International to meet the capriciousness of Forbes Burnham and his government.

The aircraft movement, in an area in the jungle where people lived in little pockets or cluster communities in unison with vegetation and other elements of nature, created a somewhat inquisitive and yet festive occasion for the residents of a little 'bush' settlement not too far off at Port Kaituma on the bank of the Waini River.

'The Port' as it was commonly called by the regional population decades ago was never ever a port of any sort. Actually, some seventy miles up the swamp and mosquito infested Waini River of the North West District, Port Kaituma was a small left-over settlement from better days when stability governed the slow but orderly growth and prosperity of the old British crown colony.

Since the pre-World War II era local pioneers (porkknockers) faced the dense jungle with dread. Typhoid, malaria and tuberculosis diseases and the deadly bushmaster and labaria snakes made life a challenge that only the rugged dare attempt.

Then, in post-war years, came the manganese mines that put some life into the area's economy and drew more nationals to the region. At the peak of its existence, however, the little outpost of the African Manganese Mines was no more than a one-wharf, man-made canal with a dozen clapboard and zinc sheet houses developed off the main river.

The wharf served as a terminal for both the narrow-gaged rail-wagons with their little locomotives that hauled ore from the company town of Matthew's Ridge, some twenty-two miles inland and the cargo vessel 'Ambrosia' which transhipped the ore to Trinidad in the West Indies for stockpiling.

But the region's prosperity dried up shortly after the Burnham government took responsibility for the nation and strangled the

progressive minds who had developed the country to that stage. Capital and brain rushed for safer shores and left the Burnham government choking on its hefty bite. The little locomotives no longer hauled ore and the Ambrosia was consigned to anchorage two hundred miles away to rust with every wave that caressed her hull. The houses have since fallen into disrepair and serve as a grim reminder of a decadent society.

The small stagnant population of about forty people had learned of the new settlement which had sprung up about five miles away sponsored by an American religious group named the People's Temple. A mere five miles but as isolated as if the swamps were infested with piranhas (pirai), caimans and huge boa constrictors (camoudies). The Reverend Jim Jones, leader of the new settlers had warned, in no uncertain manner, that Guyanese were not welcomed anywhere near the group's premises and discouraged any sort of fraternizing between locals and those few trustees who had cause to move about outside the area that he settled.

With three airplanes on the runway friendly, inquisitive eyes beamed at the scene from the edge of the jungle but the Amerindians did not move any closer for fear of upsetting the leadership of the foreigners in their midst.

The midafternoon sun continued to scorch the region and proved quite uncomfortable for the soldiers and pilots alike. The high humidity caused the men to perspire profusely and a lull descended slowly as most of the birds stopped warbling and the sakiwinkis kept a quiet, impish vigil from the lower branches of the trees at the edge of the runway while feeding and preening each other. Dragonflies and butterflies with brilliant variegated colors were content to wing their way across the open area, in and out the forest with graceful loops and sweeps.

Faintly at first, coming from somewhere distant, the whine of a motor at labor floated to the ears of the half-dozen men on the airfield and before much time had elapsed a five-ton truck

emerged from the jungle by way of a narrow opening at the western end of the field. The sturdily-built high-framed vehicle bobbed onto the runway somewhere near the decrepit Air Force plane and ran off to the far end where the DeHavilland stood. The driver pulled the heavy truck into a U-turn to face the direction from which he had come and braked the vehicle beside the Twin Otter.

About thirty travel-tossed, bone-aching but somewhat relieved riders scrambled down from the tray of the truck and stretched sore muscles while they engaged in a hurried discussion on the possibility of how they would all be evacuated with the limited seating available on the two airworthy planes. Under normal airline practice this miscalculation of passengers for available seating could have been termed a very minor problem and a slight case of overbooking. Certainly, there were more passengers than the planes could have carried comfortably and it seemed obvious that overseating was in order if they were all to travel out of the district together.

Just about half of the men and women in the group had come into the jungle on a short investigative trip to gather information and a first-hand look at conditions under which several hundred Americans were living in the religious commune that had developed the name of Jonestown in the forest. Named for its founder the Reverend Jim Jones the little commune surprised the visitors with its large population living in much too small a number of buildings with inadequate services. The others were unhappy settlers from the commune who had seized what appeared to be a golden opportunity to leave the confines of this strange, harsh jungle and return to the life of ease and freedom in the United States of America, the land of their birth.

These modern-day pioneers who had traveled to South America with a leader who promised a utopian community that enjoyed the principles of peace, freedom and a natural coexistence as decent human beings, became discouraged, disgusted and

disenchanted after living under extremely abominable conditions at the settlement in particular and within the host nation as a whole.

As the travelers huddled in discussion the hum of another motor reached their ears and all eyes turned to stare fixedly in the general direction of the opening in the forest where the trail started, in anxious anticipation of yet more passengers for the flight to the nation's capital. Soon enough a big Bedford truck wobbled into view and the driver grated gears as he downshifted then gunned the truck along the bumpy airstrip closely followed by a farm tractor which hauled a flatbed trailer.

For some unexplainable reason, that inner self pointing the way, trepidation stung the hearts of some of the Americans who had lived for 'too long' in the jungle village. Fear was manifest in their eyes and they all thought their chances of returning to the United States were being reduced considerably with every yard the vehicles advanced. These alarmed migrants rushed to the planes while attempting to warn the visitors of the possibility of treacherous intentions of the drivers in the vehicles.

However, as visitors, these tourists could see nothing wrong or even suspicious about the approach of the vehicles. So ignorant were they of the economic and political pressures in the nation and the really deplorable conditions at the religious center that they paid no heed to the agitated church members in their presence.

When the two vehicles drew quite near, several men rose from the trays with semi-automatic weapons leveled and started shooting directly at the stunned and totally terrified people standing near the plane.

With the first sharp burst of submachine gun fire the startled birds and normally inquisitive monkeys raced away from the scene. Bullets tore into the group, punctured holes in the plane and scattered those who were still unharmed.

Across the few hundred yards of low grassland four trained

soldiers, dressed in battle fatigues and bearing weapons, ducked with reflex action and fear. They rose stealthily from cover with simple minds indoctrinated by the political process of the nation's government, and watched the spectacle unfold before their eyes as innocent bystanders witnessing a movie scene being shot on location. Maybe it was fear that held them rooted to the spot for these soldiers had never faced the cold reality of deadly bullets whizzing through the air in search of lodgings in the human flesh. They were the products of a society that never knew war or even a large scale public disturbance. Like all modern Guyanese they waited for someone to give an order.

As the barrage of bullets flew at the panicked crowd some of the men and women dodged, some ran, a few continued to shout warnings and yet others remained transfixed. The area was transformed into a mini war zone with one side having all the weapons. Bodies fell crumpled to the ground some in agony others in death. One very brave man stood with a television camera and recorded the merciless attack as it took place in the sweltering afternoon sunlight. Without much concern for personal safety, as the bullets whizzed by, he stood his ground as a standard bearer on a battlefield until he drew a fusillade of shots and went down mortally wounded. One of the gunmen, not quite satisfied with the marksmanship, crossed to the side of the fallen man and, with a dazed calm, cruelly stuck the nozzle of his rifle to the dying man's face, squeezed the trigger, and brought a messy end to the life of another human being.

What began as a somewhat pleasant, though rough, visit by a US Congressman and his entourage, concerned about the welfare of their fellow Americans, turned into a blood-drenched farewell that later rocked the world.

During the several minutes of gunfighting not one weapon was shared between those peaceful souls who were attacked. Not a knife or machete, not even a slingshot to defend them-

selves from the crazed attackers. Of course, it would have taken a lot more than simple weapons to stem the attack launched by the men armed with automatic rifles and who used them with deadly intent. Yet, just a few hundred meters away, four soldiers stood almost complacently with comparable weapons but did nothing to stop the massacre. They just stood there noncommittantly and watched as if giving life to the old English poem of the little boy who ran away to Scotland, "... He stood there and wondered."

As more bodies fell in agony and death, some twisted in grotesque postures, a few still unharmed people, clutching to every moment of good fortune to still be alive, dashed for the confines of the bordering jungle and others scrambled aboard the small single-engined Cessna in hopes of escaping the lethal attack. At first, the plane did not prove to be such a sanctuary as one of the very defectors hastily pulled a concealed firearm and set off a few rounds at the others in the aircraft. He succeeded in killing one young woman before he was grabbed and overpowered by a few men in a do or die effort.

In this maiden jungle, serene and at peace with the world, Nature seemed to have balanced everything including the noise level where a .22 sounded like a cannon on a battlefield. The noise created by the semi-automatic weapons reverberated through the forest with a roar and an echo that choked the natural sounds and drove the animals even further away. Some of the natives from the riverside settlement who were drawn to the edge of the forest remained hidden among the trees and gazed on the horror.

Meanwhile, the soldiers continued to witness the murders with selfish regard for their own safety and, like clones of the Prime Minister for whom they sang 'Burnham Fever, they waited for someone to issue an order. They avoided the squirmish in just as cowardly a fashion as those years past when Forbes Burnham sped to Surinam as acts of sabotage were committed. The soldiers made no attempt to defend the unarmed people and

showed no keenness to stop the perpetrators of such a cowardly and heinous crime.

As the gunplay continued several bullets sprayed the DeHavilland and one or two of the lead missiles pierced the shell of the little five-seater Cessna. The Twin Otter was too seriously damaged to fly but the little plane loaded with a full complement of passengers and a pilot who seemed energized by equal doses of fear and shock, taxied down the runway at an angle and at full throttle. Needing only a short run for takeoff, the aircraft climbed from the besieged airstrip without further damage and turned on a compass bearing bound for the nation's capital, Georgetown. A very relieved and grateful pilot guided his plane out of the range of the wild gunmen, as his passengers slowly relaxed their tensions.

The barbaric slaughter continued at the airfield for several minutes without any form of retaliation or defence. Those helpless victims of the bullet barrage who were still lucky to be alive, unharmed and capable, scattered wildly seeking various points of refuge. Other than those who had succeeded in leaving aboard the small plane and the few who had taken cover in the nearby forest with its lesser evils of snakes, tarantulas and tiger cats, there didn't appear much of a chance of anyone else living through the one-sided war. Not one person remained upright when the demented, gun-bearing attackers ceased spraying the deadly missiles and climbed back onto their transport. The two vehicles, driven recklessly by the operators, raced past the stupefied soldiers and entered the rutted road from where they had first appeared.

The four trained men from the nation's Defence Force watched as the motor vehicles bobbed and swayed along the track until they disappeared around a bend in the folds of greenery. The noninvolvement attitude of the soldiers was typical of men following a direct order not to interfere in the affairs of the People's Temple organization because the members were all

religious Americans. It appeared that Jim Jones must have been granted license to make his own laws to govern his personal American state established in the interior of Guyana.

Meanwhile the few survivors suffering from bullet wounds and broken limbs had scrambled and dragged until they reached the underbrush beside the airfield then they squirmed through the forest to hide from any likely return of the killers.

Turning their gazes to the ghastly scene from across the intervening space the defenders of the people's freedom and rights were sure that there could be no survivors on the sundrenched airstrip with bodies strewn around in ragdoll manner. Soldiers they were and trained they might have been but the ruthless attack the soldiers had witnessed was the first real sight of hot lead snuffing lives out of fellow beings and the fear of being on the receiving end of modern weaponry far outweighed the heroism and glory of defending the unarmed people who had attempted to leave the region.

The stillness of death and the acrid smell of gunpowder hung over the area for long minutes after the last hum of the fleeing vehicles died in the distance. But even with the disappearance of the killers the lethargic soldiers did not cross the open space to seek out the hidden people, render assistance to those who were wounded, if there were any, nor even to count the unfortunate souls who had been so tragically murdered.

Out on the warm airfield, thousands of miles from their home and loved ones, and with vulture-like crows that circled high in the sky, the bodies crumpled and cold in death were those of United States Congressman Leo Ryan, the valiant television cameraman Bob Brown who had clung steadfastly to his job right up to the very end and probably hoped that the film would someday help to bring the perpetrators to justice, two newsmen from American media, Greg Morris and Ron Harris and pretty Patricia Parks a member and trustee of the People's Temple.

As the last rays of sunlight disappeared and the silky softness

of dusk blanketed the region the flocks of parrots that had flown west at daybreak reversed their flight to go east to roost for the night. A few settlers from the nearby settlement who had been present to watch the planes depart with the passengers but had quietly witnessed the massacre from the safety of the jungle, timidly offered to help with the wounded. They even shared their meager substandard dinner with those who were willing to partake. As these good samaritans worked to alleviate human sufferings other area residents swooped in like common carrion crows to purloin rings, watches, radios and other valuable articles. This vulture-like activity started a trend that became prevalent during the ensuing weeks.

Eventually, still very much worried that the gunmen would return to make sure there were no survivors, two American men who were fortunate to still be alive approached the army personnel to request protection and aid particularly in the use of the tent to shelter the critically wounded while they awaited rescue and eventual evacuation. The Americans hoped and prayed that a plane would come in by early evening and certainly before a second attack.

The soldiers, while assisting halfheartedly, expressed their regrets at not being able to stop the slaughter for fear of hitting the victims rather than the killers. It was a very lame excuse as the gunmen rode past the soldiers to get onto the road which led off into the forest yet they did nothing to stop the brutal men.

The vehicles carrying the killers had raced through the winding trail bouncing from one tree trunk to the other as the operators maneuvered them around the sharp bends that occasioned a rough ride for the men in the trays. They entered the gates at the end of the lateritic road where a barbwire enclosure surrounded a small farming area and about forty buildings constructed of wood and galvanized sheets.

In these rough dwellings more than one thousand Americans had started a new life in the community they had carved out of

the forest. Most of the Americans at the settlement had gathered at the main community hall when the vehicles jerked to a halt and the gunmen stormed into the door to report to the leader.

Shortly thereafter the agitated voice of the Reverend Jones boomed over the public address system urging the members to follow every instruction as they normally did. A container of beverage was to be placed in the hallway where everyone would drink. The members of the church had heard and followed those orders repeatedly for several years. It was a ritual that had become known to them as 'white night' when they would gather and drink of a poisoned liquid in an exercise for the right to die for their religion and peace. Jones shouted and coerced his followers to do his bidding and prove their faith, loyalty and love for him. The minister of religion continued to extol the virtue of dying for their cause and reminded the cultists that there was no way out of the jungle. To cap it off Jones informed his people that the congressman and all who left with him had been killed on the airfield and the Guyanese army would come to persecute the members of the commune. If anyone ran away the wild animals would get them or the 'bush' people and the soldiers would track them down, torture then kill everybody.

There were many in the commune who were willing to go through the motion of drinking the potion once more. They had done this ritual on a weekly basis ever since they were living in San Francisco and no one had died. Again, nobody even suffered from any serious repercussions. But on this occasion most of the followers balked at the order and had to be forced at gunpoint to drink of the innocent-looking Kool Aid. Resignedly they queued and quaffed of the sugared brew.

Mothers of the younger infants and nurses who assisted the doctor in daily duties fed the liquid to the younger children and injected the poisonous drink into the mouths of the babes who were yet too young to drink from the paper cups. Only a small number of the cultists raced off into the jungle and managed to

survive the unpleasant experience of living in that horrible commune. The others willingly, and under the threat of being gunned down on the spot, drew of the poisoned brew and drank.

They hoped that things would go right as had been the case on countless occasions. Once more, as they labored under a false sense of security, the cultists placed their faith in the man who had led them to the jungle and who had so thoroughly brainwashed them into believing that he was the Messiah.

It was doubtful that the results would have been any different had the members of the strange cult known that drinking the poisoned beverage would be their last act here on earth. While they drank the Kool Aid someone moved around behind the bullying leader as he harangued and shouted then brought a gun up with cold calculated directness and fired a few rounds into Jim Jones' body. This act of murder closed the book on the leader's life and two others of the upper echelon of The People's Temple of Jonestown. That eventful day more than 900 people made the unexpected crossing of the River styx.

The medical doctor of the jungle community, Dr. Larry Schacht, who served the people's needs with perhaps a wider variety of drugs than was readily available in any of the host nation's hospitals or pharmacies, had mixed a potent brew of nerve deadening drugs, several bottles of potassium cyanide and a large quantity of Kool Aid beverage in an old galvanized washtub which had been placed in the hall for all to partake. Even if Dr. Schacht did not have the patent drugs the result could have been just as devastating by turning to the jungle for the oxygen-robbing drug, cuname, and the world renowned curare poison to mix with the Kool Aid. Both of these ingredients were available in the near reaches of the commune.

While people the world over have learned of the uses to which curare has been put, particularly in poison arrows and blowdarts primarily for hunting, the Amerindians of South

America have used cuname to make fishing in small creeks and streams a simple exercise with alarmingly bountiful results.

The natives pounded the shrub into splinters over a running stream and, as these little bits and pieces soaked, they oozed a liquid that robbed the water of life-supporting oxygen. The fish then floated to the surface where the eager hands of the nomadic tribes collected them for food.

CHAPTER 2

The Media In Guyana

When the tragic deaths of United States Congressman Leo Ryan and four other Americans were reported to the American public more than two hours had elapsed since the cowardly gunplay had erupted on the little grass-covered airstrip in the peaceful jungle of the English-speaking South American country. The item might have seemed to listeners as just another international terrorist incident that plagued the world and particularly involving American citizens traveling or residing abroad.

The little Cessna, which ferried out those nerve-wracked individuals who had managed to escape during the opening moments of the attack, had made an uneventful flight to dingy Georgetown with its limited services. With large sectors of the country constantly without electricity and water for long periods at a time very few things or happenings were instantaneous in this little nation and although some things are planned and even scheduled to time absolutely nothing was ever done on time.

In its few years of independence Prime Minister Forbes Burnham had managed to push the nation right back into the

eighteenth century. So it was that a mere phone call from this weather-worn, sanitation-poor capital to the United States took time to materialize. In fact, ancient talking drums of the jungle would have been a lot faster in spreading the news had the system been employed. Nevertheless, as long as it took, the news still spanned the thousands of miles across the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea to make 'flash' reports on several radio and television stations in North America and several countries around the world. Of course, this was what the media was all about. The fearless reporting of the news. But there were people in Guyana who chose not to have the news spread quite as fast and as accurately to the nationals of the so-called socialist state which Prime Minister Burnham had turned into a family empire.

There were no television stations in Guyana to bring the news in a graphic display of what had taken place in the jungle but two radio stations and the only daily, a tabloid, all owned, controlled and operated by the government disseminated all the propaganda the ruling party thought fit and wanted the people to hear and know.

The government muzzle could hardly have been more effective and for anyone to go contrary to the dictates of those who directed the pattern in the giant quest for mind control of the people was to court instant dismissal. In reality, there was a thin line between having a job and being out of one. The key factor in this chaotic society seemed to be having a job and not necessarily doing a job. Actually, not too many people worked in the labor force that was entirely government controlled.

No newsperson dared exhibit the necessary qualities of independence and tenacity to unearth information, uncover flagrant breaches of constitutional rights nor expose corruption, bribery, graft and nepotism in the upper echelon of the 'selected' political representatives in the country's Legislature. As a matter of fact the media never exposed the sham for elections that

were held in recent years. The members of the House of Assembly were never elected by the voters but were really chosen by the leaders of the two recognized parties, Mr. Forbes Burnham of the People's National Congress and Dr. Cheddi Jagan of the People's Progressive Party.

Because of a very tight grip on the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press, matters of interest to the nationals that would prove inimical to the interest of the government or more precisely to Forbes Burnham, were kept secret for as long as possible. For this reason there was no report in the local media about the trouble at the Port Kaituma airstrip which culminated with the killing of the visiting American congressman and four of his traveling companions.

Strikingly enough, one of the two radio stations had been known to return to the air long after its scheduled sign-off at midnight to bring coverage of incidents of fire with as much fanfare as a pyromania could quietly enjoy. On other occasions the same station returned to the air after its broadcast day was over to welcome sports personalities who arrived at the nation's only airport in the small hours of the morning. Yet on an occasion when the news was shockingly horrifying and of prime import to all, not one item was reported to the nation even though that particular day there were still some six hours of programming available in the schedule. Meanwhile the world outside of the country where this terrible incident occurred had learned of the attack and was being kept informed as more details filtered out of Georgetown.

The night passed with nationals just as ignorant of the facts as the day had started and again on Sunday the local media had no reports about the shootout for the nation. The media in Guyana was kept in the dark and the news tucked away under wraps of government harness. The Sunday Chronicle carried no story and the stations continued their poor programming and mediocre newscasting along with the religious broadcasts that were stan-

dard for the solemnity of the day. Then by midmorning more devastating news hit the outside world with immeasurable gravity. In many languages the bizarre news criss-crossed the world and yet nothing was released inside Guyana.

A platoon of soldiers which was sent into the jungle to rescue the people at the airfield had eventually moved in on the People's Temple community and found what they estimated to be just over four hundred bodies of settlers dead from apparent poisoning and the leader dead from gunshot wounds. While the gory details of multiple murders and mass suicides continued to build up in countries far removed from the scene the Guyanese public was kept in the dark.

The Press in foreign countries found it quite difficult to get enough of the truth to feed to their public but there was still enough facts to stir the imagination of people in North America and as far away as the Soviet Union.

Guyanese domiciled in America were confused at the reports but they hoped that it meant the end of Forbes Burnham's dictatorial rule. Many of these people lived in self-exile and had fled from the tyranny of communism that had raised its ugly head in the once peaceful South American nation. There were others who had done several dirty acts to help ensconce Forbes Burnham's rule which they found too harsh to bear so they ran from the horrors they imposed on the nation.

From late Saturday night the twenty-odd international lines at Telecoms House in Georgetown were constantly busy. The switchboard lit up and shook the operators out of their usual lethargic manner and crude creolese speech. Guyanese in North America and Europe, media personnel and State Department officials vied for the use of the only connecting links to Guyana.

While the American government officials and the Press from several countries were asking salient questions on the status of the Jonestown massacre Guyanese domiciled in the United States who got through to families and friends who were

fortunate to have the services of a telephone in their homes, were more concerned with the political state of the country. The question on most lips was if the notorious Prime Minister had been assassinated during what they hoped was a coup d'etat. The ears wanted to hear what the mind conjured up in the reports of the shooting incident that claimed Congressman Leo Ryan's life.

In Guyana, residents were more doubtful than surprised at the news they heard from overseas relatives. No 'big' news event ever happened in the country since Sir Walter Raleigh saw the 'city of gold' back at the turn of the fifteenth century. In fact big news items were more likely to have been the visit of a Khaddafi, Castro or Amin. The public was not too aware of a US Congressman in their midst and they certainly had not heard of the gunslaying at the airfield in the far northwestern corner of the nation. The news was even ludicrous in the society where almost everyone had given up on removing the government which had thoroughly raped the constitution to suit its own narrowminded and crooked aims.

Since there was no report on local radio the whole idea seemed unbelievable. It was one of those cases where the media in Guyana did not offer too much publicity to a western dignitary. If Leo Ryan had come from a communist state or even been a member of the American Communist Party the local press would have laid it on buttery thick.

It was no longer strange for Guyanese to learn of a local incident of such magnitude after it was released and reported in the foreign press. Hardly a week was spent without some national news item making the overseas media and never being reported in Guyana. The local journalists were either not sharp enough to catch the newsmaking events or maybe, as in a few instances, they were frustrated by editors who were concerned with protecting the image of the lame-brained government.

The local press was so out of touch with investigative journalism that matters of national interest were hardly ever raised. There was no query on the rights and morality of Guyanese soldiers going to Grenada to train those people nor did anyone investigate the truth of Guyana Defence Force members being in Angola, at least one of whom was killed in a skirmish.

Somehow, no one took time to investigate the whereabouts of Guyanese after they were sent to Cuba. Were they being shipped over to Africa? Another case of media cover-up was the incident of GDF enlisted men who went awol across the Brazilian border with weapons and equipment never to return. The Press just wouldn't get involved with controversial matters and it showed once more in the historical People's Temple affair. How could anyone have hoped to keep such a horrifying debacle quiet? It was shocking to find that all the world knew so much details yet the people of the nation that hosted the commune were kept in the dark and the media never tried to make up for its long lapse in journalistic credibility.

Because Prime Minister Burnham had lost his popularity several years ago and became the most notorious politician in the country's history the government decided to keep the nationals in blissful ignorance for as long as possible rather than fan the tragedy into a coup d'état with blood spilling faster than the city's water supply. Even though the nation's half-million people continued to suffer through that day searching for necessary basic food items and water without too much care for the sufferings of friends and neighbors the ruler of the little nation kept a callous silence of which only he was capable. But foreign factors played a hand in what was to be the education of a people voluntarily harnessed to slavery and idolatry.

The years of blackout of the news based on truth in the country of both national and international significance had taken some effect on a people seeking knowledge and the right

to remain free. The public had taken to listening to foreign radio stations in recent years as a source of legitimate information on events in the only English-speaking country on the South American continent. Once more the dwindling populace learned of a devastating national event through an international agency.

The Sunday evening news broadcast from Radio Antilles, the powerful broadcasting station in Monserrat, West Indies, touted as the 'gentle giant', was received by thousands of Guyanese tuned to the station for the big English newscast at seven o'clock. More than twenty-four hours after the first incident at Port Kaituma, an unbelieving public got their first news of trouble in the land.

The magnitude of the catastrophic events did not register immediately as Guyanese could not envisage four hundred deaths in any given day in their peaceful paradise. No, it was hard to accept, that many people just don't die in Guyana. Maybe in three months at the regular mortality rate but not even during the bygone days of malaria and tuberculosis was a death toll that high ever been recorded in a day. The item of horrendous news, while quite unbelievable to the nationals, assured the nation a place in the annals of world history, howbeit inimical.

As early as it was and with several more broadcast hours still in the day before sign-off at the local stations no mention or reference was made of the biggest news event ever to come out of the little lethargic state. Nationals of the host country could not believe nor even understand that several hundred Americans had entered the country with all its sufferings from shortages and political mayhem and taken up residence in the jungle of all places. Then to have died in the jungle from self-administered poisoning was very far-fetched for these hospitable nationals.

Life for the nationals living in the capital and other scattered communities along the country's coastal strip had become one of steeply increasing hardships and hard as it was the locals

were not yet driven to mass suicide though they were into mass migration. It was quite incomprehensible why the local media did not present the truth about the religious cult that was founded by the Reverend Jones. The name Jonestown added to the confusion in that there were three coastal villages bearing that name and many people wondered which one of these local neighborhoods was host to the Temple followers. Even people of each Jonestown felt that one of the other areas hosted the group.

Still there were others who felt that the reports actually pertained to the House of Israel with its American leader, Rabbi Washington (a.k.a., David Hill). Somehow it didn't quite seem true or, they felt, the local stations would have broadcast the news too and for that matter the Prime Minister or some other government official would have issued a statement.

But the pattern had evolved over the years of independence. Every significant news item of national interest was first heard through foreign sources, particularly Radio Antilles. The Prime Minister had always expressed concern about the news reaching the people and even charged that fifth columnists were discrediting the society. In fact shortly after the government declared that it would take appropriate action when the 'culprit or culprits' were exposed, a *Catholic Standard* news journalist was stabbed to death while covering a public event.

Whatever the reason for the blanket on the devastating news from the jungle settlement it was evident that the country no longer boasted high-caliber columnists as old stagers, Freddie Sealcoon and Richard Decorum or even the last of the defiant newspapermen, Rickey Singh, who was run out of his country for being too aggressive. Of course, the nation no longer had the services of competitive newspapers such as the *Guyana Graphic* and the *Daily Argosy*. Both papers became casualties of the advancement of communism and the rise of a political leader bent on the destruction of the free society.

While there were also a few newsletters being published these were all party organs and they depended totally on the government for newsprint. As a result these little organs had to 'play ball' or go out of business.

Finally on Monday, more than thirty-six hours after the mind-shattering murders and suicides the media in Guyana opened a crack. As if coerced into face-saving action, though probably because the Ministry of Information had issued a statement, the one public newspaper and the broadcasting services reported secondhand information based on the government's press release. While the *Daily Chronicle* reported the horrors of the shooting at the airfield and the collective poisoning of members of the cult at Jonestown the news was not presented with the sort of publicity or spread that international media employed.

No banner headlines greeted the eyes of the readership as was the case on occasions when dignitaries of socialist states made official visits or even when American boxer Muhammad Ali flew into the country hopefully to boost the lost respect of the Prime Minister. Of course, nothing could have been as blatantly erroneous as when outgoing President Andres-Perez of Venezuela paid an official visit and the paper carried a centerpage spread that made it, and the country, the laughing stock of all the foreign pressmen covering the tour. That banner headline read, "100,000 Guyanese Welcome . . ." when in all truth the government had only been able to gather some five thousand school children and bus them to the airport for the welcoming ceremony. Misleading information of this sort was used by the government propaganda machinery to impress those nationals who saw no progress in the Burnham regime.

Nationals, faced with shortages of every kind, had withdrawn their support from the oppressive government of Forbes Burnham which had driven the country into bankruptcy and the people to stand in queues for much-needed basic food items which drib-

bled into the country whenever the government could afford to pay for importation.

The radio stations were no better at presenting the news. Almost two days had gone by, more than four hundred human beings had lost their lives under very mysterious circumstances and yet the local media was as lukewarm as a preheated jar of baby's food.

These very stations which had been so adequately managed by experienced personnel in pre-Independence days and had covered several noteworthy events with pomp or solemnity as the occasion warranted, were quite insensitive to the gravity of the tragedy that was Jonestown. Nobody showed any eagerness to do a documentary on the religious cult that had occupied state lands for a price and with the blessings of the Prime Minister. Nor did anyone query the Prime Minister's wife on her visit to the commune and what she had done with the suitcase of American currency which she removed from Jim Jones' bungalow for safe keeping.

Yet on the fall of Grenada's Prime Minister, Eric Gairy, when Maurice Bishop staged a successful coup, one station carried an hour-long expose by narrators who seemed exuberant to enlighten the public on the sordid truths of the leader of the 'mongoose brigade' and his seeming preoccupation with the supernatural.

Again, when the Cubana Airlines Flight #11 was bombed out of the sky after it departed Barbados in the Eastern Caribbean, the media was quick to boost the Burnham claim that the aircraft fell inside Barbadian waters. Eleven Guyanese were on board the ill-fated flight and the Prime Minister used the incident to summon the sympathy of the public when he deemed his Barbadian counterpart, Mr. Tom Adams, a liar for having stated that the plane disintegrated in international waters.

Burnham called the 11 Guyanese who perished martyrs and called for swift justice but members of the public remembered

the 120 nationals who were blown out of the water during the Burnham-Jagan war days without the benefit of crocodile tears.

At the time of the Cubana explosion Forbes Burnham was relaxing on the verandah of his Hope Estate home on the Atlantic Coast of Guyana, some 800 miles from the Cubana crash site.

The media in Guyana was not just slanted or biased to the government but totally hung in its favor. It was swamped with personnel who made sure that only glowing remarks and praises were heaped on Forbes Burnham and in cases where the public expressed concern about the Prime Minister's wrong-doings and general incompetence on 'call-in' programs no discussion was entertained. Of course, as in all other work situations in this corrupt country no qualification counted as much as the party membership card and this was the primary cause for the breakdown in the high standards set by predecessors. The media staff proved that they certainly knew which side of the bread was buttered and who shared in the crumbs that fell from the master's table. While it was staggering to see the length to which some people had gone to hide the truth under the excuse that they deemed sensationalistic reporting it would have been interesting to have the details properly documented and presented.

Bowing to the dictates of a group of totally incompetent leaders and boosting their ego at the expense of the suffering people did not really help the cause of the media staff nor could they have expected to hang on to their jobs forever. As with every other government-run business the economy worsened to the level where more and more staff were fired with no chance of returning to the labor force.

The management at media offices were more concerned with carrying out the government's de-educating program by fostering improper English grammar or Creolese and garbage music with smutty lyrics that was geared to dehumanize the society. Even indecent language which was part of the Burnham vocabulary

was channeled into people's homes through radio broadcasts. Because the Prime Minister lacked class he flashed indecent words in a most uncouth manner every once in a while to amuse his vile supporters.

As the days passed and more updated news spread to all corners of the earth it was still difficult to get full coverage of the almost total annihilation of the religious commune at Jonestown. News-hungry Guyanese were robbed of professional journalism and the keen minds of loquacious reporters delving into the whys and hows of the tragic end of a people who had set out on a project that was quite feasible and could have worked admirably under different circumstances. Had the media and/or government scrutinized or even monitored the organization those beautiful people at Jonestown would have been able to move in and out the country freely and the torture which led to the murders and suicides of most of the Americans would have been avoided.

The simple statement released by the Minister of Information, Shirley Field-Ridley, gave no details about the cult and how the organization was able to settle in that region. It was an established fact that the government had been encouraging both local and foreign settlers to utilize land along the McKenzie-Atkinson roadway while discouraging the leasing of lands considered to be too remote for transportation of produce to the market.

The short release merely related that government forces had been dispatched to the Port Kaituma area to put down a disturbance which had broken out there. The soldiers had discovered 409 Americans at a religious commune dead of apparent poisoning. The paper added that there were no Guyanese in the Jonestown settlement and no survivors had been found.

The sketchy information proved that the Education Minister knew very little about the People's Temple and even less about the mass murders and mass suicides that had turned the nation

into one huge morgue. She had been turned into a scapegoat by Forbes Burnham.

The media took the release at face value and used it without question. Nobody seemed concerned about why more than four hundred Americans had taken their lives in quiet little Guyana. No journalist spent time delving through records to find an inkling as to the reasons why the group had settled in the jungle. That sort of sensational news was not a part of the new image that the media had projected. If it could be helped the press avoided the truths on local events though they would give prime coverage to foreign disasters.

There was no great rush to get on-the-spot coverage because the authorities barred the press and public from traveling to the region. Though it was extremely difficult to get to the commune the government was more concerned with keeping a tight lid on the truth which was inimical to the best interest of the Prime Minister.

The level of intelligence of the local media staff was generally low because most of the trained and well-educated journalists had left the country as fast as they were able to acquire immigrant status in foreign countries. Too much time was spent with daily political indoctrination and there were instances when one editor, Albert Alstrom, threatened to report members of the staff to the political committee because they served the public rather than attend the brainwashing sessions.

This willingness to serve Forbes Burnham above self and the welfare of the masses was restricted to party sycophants and selfish persons who were intent on using the government to acquire status and wealth at the expense of the taxpayers. It would have made little difference if press persons had tried to delve into the circumstances surrounding the visit to the commune by Mr. Leo Ryan and relatives of the cultists and why it culminated in death for so many.

The lack of ability, knowledge and preparedness by the media

personnel was evident at a Press Conference in 1978 with the visiting President of Venezuela. Members of the local press corps asked the Spanish Head of State if his country would purchase electricity from the hydro-power project which the Guyana government had started. The question was ludicrous. Guyana didn't have power to supply its needs and there was no expectation that the hydro-power system could ever be finished during the Burnham dynasty. The \$82M foreign loan was misappropriated and a further loan for the same figure was treated in like manner so that the project, which was to have cost \$82M initially, was doomed from the start. Here was a project that had already seemingly utilized twice as much as its estimated cost and had not reached quarter way into construction. Like most major projects it started, the government didn't seem capable of finishing the work even though it couldn't account for the finances. At the jungle site the scene was repetitive of Dr. Jagan's Delconte Highway where machinery was left to rust. If the pressmen had investigated the Upper Mazaruni Development Authority which was responsible for the power project that question, in a reverse form, would have been apt for the Guyanese Prime Minister.

Another columnist asked President Andrez-Perez if his government would be interested in purchasing any of the prefabricated houses which he had been shown during a visit to one of the housing projects. Maybe it was the tendency that Guyanese have of thinking of themselves as West Indians which made it impossible for the media personnel to understand the higher development of their South American neighbors. Somehow it seemed that the press was doing a sales pitch to bring Venezuelan petrodollars and much-needed foreign currency into Guyana rather than delving into areas where forging stronger social links and relationships with the government and people of the neighboring country would have enhanced Guyana's continental destiny. It was obvious that these reporters and journalists had

not taken the time to research the giant spanish nation. As a matter of fact there were so many avenues to be explored to the benefit of both nations that any decent question could have upgraded the flat conference.

At the Governor-General's reception for the august visitor Prime Minister Burnham grasped an opportunity for a confidential talk with the Venezuelan President. In a sly attempt to pry information from Carlos Andrez-Perez Burnham asked the Spanish leader if his government had geophysical maps of Guyana bearing oil deposits.

The Venezuelan President subtly steered the subject from oil to bauxite as the two men strolled on the lawn. Dr. Andrez-Perez suggested that the ore-producing nations of the hemisphere form a viable organization to become "... the OPEC of bauxite." The idea was certainly worthwhile.

What remained questionable after the results of the national tragedy was made known was that the local newshounds still did not attempt to investigate the operations of the other American-led cult that had mushroomed and expanded rapidly in the nation.

American fugitive David Hill or Rabbi Washington, as he had come to be known in Guyana, founded his communal House of Israel organization among the low-class, unintelligent Afro-Guyanese to foment consciousness on skin color and whip up support for the very unpopular Forbes Burnham.

It was the Burnham government which had made it possible for Hill, Jones, Omawalli and a few other Americans with criminal tendencies to live in the South American country. The local press never seemed to want to delve into why all these men had taken up residence in this poor nation.

The media never once made mention of the practice of Minister of Labor Hamilton Green's constant entourage of twenty roughnecks posing as his personal bodyguards. In fact, the press didn't seem to mind that the nation's Ministers traveled around with criminals for protection.

House of Israel members were encouraged to break up political meetings held by opposition parties and beat the speakers at such street-corner rallies. The Reverend Father Bernard Darke, S.J., a Roman Catholic priest and photojournalist for the *Catholic Standard* was stabbed to death at one of these meetings in full view of David Hill and several eyewitnesses who stood nearby. Even though there were photographs of the actual crime there was no real outcry from the media and no one was ever convicted for the killing.

Again, Guyanese poet and communist sympathizer Martin Carter was beaten to within an inch of his lifeline and there was no media condemnation. These incidents of brutal attacks on persons of higher intellect and social level, among several other cases of brutality, must have been a causative factor why media representatives never tried to investigate this local cult.

By 1978 Hill's House of Israel group had multiplied and spread into several communities in the country with a combined membership of 7,000 Guyanese who gave a tithe to the church and made Hill one of the wealthiest men in the nation. Calculated to a minimum if each member subscribed only one dollar each week to David Hill that would have given the American \$7,000 a week and as high an annual income as Prime Minister Burnham.

Several of Hill's members reported that they contributed huge sums of money regularly to the Israelites. One young woman related how she made and sold \$2,500 of plantain chips and turned the cash over to the Rabbi. Many followers of this group became so hostile in the defence of the Rabbi that it appeared as if they knew the Afro-American for all of his life. In fact, some even believed he was a Guyanese prophet. The Rabbi's teachings that all Europeans will be destroyed off the face of the earth and only Africans left seemed to appeal to the minds of the unschooled poor who kept the man living in luxury while they lived through every hardship imposed by the Burnham government, including the lack of food and medicines to treat their sick.

The local media never informed the nation of the government's stockpiling of munitions nor did they attempt to investigate the reason for the top secret importation. Immediately after Grenada's Prime Minister Eric Gairy was deposed by a coup in the Caribbean island Burnham imported tons of military equipment to forestall any such activity in Guyana. The weapons were spirited up the McKenzie roadway by the Defence Force in the dark hours of the night.

Somehow the Guyana media was not doing a terribly good job if it was doing any job. It never exposed the fact that the term for the 1973 legislature came to an end in 1977 yet the government led by Forbes Burnham remained in office illegally to write a Constitution that would eventually give Forbes Burnham the new Executive Presidency for life.

Newspersons were so afraid of losing their jobs, not to mention their lives, that they just wouldn't investigate the glaring misconduct of top politicians. It cost the taxpayer more than \$500,000 for a Burnham European tour on which he took some fifty hangers-on, from Ambassadors to batmen.

Knowing that all these elements of human destruction were present in the community and that the Prime Minister exercised a right to appoint criminal minds or mindless persons to the higher posts in the services to ensure his continued rule, the press corps avoided investigations into anything that would awaken the wrath of the nation's supercilious leader who had gained another alias in ridicule for his ugly treatment of the people, 'the Kabaka.' By not bringing the truth to the public they may have gained an unwritten guarantee of personal safety but there was no guarantee that there would always be a job to hold.

With economic, political, educational and social conditions being as terrible as the country was experiencing and encouraged by the socialist doctrine it was apparent that the media staff chose to live with the proverbial 'knife in the back' rather than

be found with the real weapon wedged in the body right up to its hilt.

An unnatural fear had taken the country by storm and the Jonestown affair only served to reinforce the feeling. From President to pauper all were afraid for some reason or other. The President didn't want to lose his post, the Prime Minister didn't want to be shackled by the people for the sufferings he caused and the public were scared of dying if they stood up to the government.

The media helped considerably by not exercising the necessary courage to stand up to the forces of evil let loose on the nation by the incompetent Prime Minister. That fear that was sown widely in the nation and exported by emigres had made it practically impossible to force nationals domiciled in foreign lands to discuss the ramifications of a one-man government and 'rule for life' that Burnham established with the distinct expectation of a family dynasty.

CHAPTER 3

From British to Burnham

The days have gone though not really so long but the memories of British Guiana lingered on for those who enjoyed the era before the Burnham regime. Just half a generation ago this country enjoyed an overall high standard of living. A strong influence of the British government and society permeated every area of the little crown colony and, in all probability, a much more peaceful existence was possible here than in the Mother country.

There were people who argued heatedly about the economic and social standards of the British era and claimed steadfastly that the country was exploited by the old colonialist masters but in the main, these were the ignorant quasi-politicians who had the British to thank for the language they so adeptly used to expound their ideals and spread their communist propaganda as they brainwashed their fellowmen who were gullible enough to fall for the misleading statements of those greedy individuals on a self-aggrandisement course. On the other hand the general public were equally as vociferous about the good old days when

everything, from a pin to a ship, was easily available. In those happier and progressive years when everyone moved about without fear of being mugged, robbed, raped or killed the development of the nation kept pace with the population growth. Basic services and utilities were provided at reasonable cost to the householders. Potable water, electricity, medical services, communications, transportation and education were available to some degree in most of the built-up communities and ran as trouble-free as could be expected.

Because of the high standards engendered in this colony on the outskirts of the British Empire it was ready for nationhood as early as the 1940s. Self-rule was an accomplished fact though not recognized by the few young political upstarts whose arrival on the scene during the later half of that decade signaled the darkest hour for the striving people of the nation. While there were Englishmen holding such strategic posts as Governor, Secretary of State, Financial Secretary, Attorney-General and a few others, the legislative body, freely elected under strict supervision and regulations, was wholly local with representatives of a high standard of decorum.

The electoral system then was based on the ownership of property and a certain income level. Enfranchised registered voters elected representatives in electoral districts where voters and candidates resided. Since the ownership of property was a source of great pride and the general welfare of the communities were of paramountcy the electorate chose the candidates of integrity and moral rectitude most suited to mold the future of the country.

With judicious and painstaking care the legislature carried out programs that helped set the pace for the development of the country along a stable road. While the budget of the day was extremely modest, by the 1950s it was still below the \$10 million mark, those early dollars were worth a great deal more and stretched farther. Of course stealing, embezzlement and

misappropriation of funds was on a much smaller scale if not altogether nonexistent. Then, there was no need to spend large sums on defence other than in the area of sea defence where the threat to life and property was always great. The nine- through eighteen-year-olds never had to learn to use weapons against each other.

Schools, the cradle of higher intelligence and human decorum, brought education to the youths and developed the minds of the people to a very high caliber which made it possible for Guyanese to take their places in the society of world education. The academic principle seemed to have been tailored to prepare the people to rise to the challenge of forging their own destiny and it certainly worked well. The education system was adequate for a small country with an even smaller population. It served its purpose in that the students of bygone years entered the labor market with a well-rounded education based both on theory and practicality. This education was responsible for maintaining the high level of honesty and integrity and the orderly development of the country.

Then the Police Force and the Judiciary were above reproach. The men who headed these branches of the service were dedicated to keeping their respective departments to the high standards of their British counterparts. There were highly trained career officers at every level who took great pride in their service to the public. Magistrates and judges performed their functions without fear or favor and proved that the court was indeed a place where the scales of justice weighed evenly. The public had faith in the autonomy and integrity of the arm of the law.

In the area of housing development pre-Independence governments introduced and constructed several projects for low and middle-income families for both rental and hire-purchase at very low rates. Most of those buildings were erected about thirty years ago and remained in good structural condition through the

years. Because of a desire for ownership and a basic pride in cleanliness and appearance the people kept their surroundings clean and elected city, town and village councils saw to it that drainage, sidewalks, roadways and parapets were tended properly to enhance the values and as a result the entire coastal strip had a healthy, airy cosmetic appearance. Beautifully painted homes and well manicured lawns coupled to exotic private and public gardens encouraged the nationals to strive for even higher goals and this helped to establish the capital, Georgetown, as the 'garden city' and the entire country as one of the most hospitable in the world.

While the roads were not of the very best and certainly not wide enough they were adequate for the 10,000 total vehicles that were registered throughout the years. One could understand the slow progress in their development by reason of the country's annual budget being quite low. Nevertheless, it was quite easy to get from one point to the other with the normal scheduled passenger services.

In fact, even a trip to the North West District was much more pleasant and easier to take with the ships of the day being kept in good mechanical condition and thoroughly sanitized. With trained captain and crew who dressed and appeared professional while on board ship travel throughout the nation was a pleasure. Services to all the riverain areas or communities were met by the government's fleet of motor vessels that plied the many rivers and brought some measure of relief to the farmers and miners who made their homes in hinterland Guyana and fed the rest of the nation.

Through free enterprise the country had also developed a ship-building industry which served both local and foreign accounts and seemed destined to corner the Caribbean area shipbuilding with the excellent craftsmanship exhibited.

Every Guyanese took pride in being somebody, doing something and climbing to somewhere with honesty, sincerity and

integrity. There was a great pride that all seemed to share in the development of a talented people under a meaningful national motto, "United we stand, divided we fall."

Servicing two parts of the entire coastal strip were the East Coast Demerara and the West Coast Demerara railway divisions of government's Transport and Harbours Department. The stock and rolling equipment of this cheaper means of transport were always kept in good repair and from time to time new equipment and locomotives arrived to complement the fleet. Several trains hauled cargo and passengers along the eighty miles of tracks daily on schedule to the satisfaction of the general public.

While there were several independent electricity generating plants scattered around the nation from the very small private entrepreneur with limited evening hours service to neighbors to the large corporation which supplied Georgetown with its power there were odd occasions when some small area had to be without electricity for a few hours due to a burnt out transformer but that was the extent of outages and again this seemed to prove that free enterprise served the needs and interest of the people a lot better than any government agency. Even with the development and expansion of villages and towns there was always an adequate supply of power.

The potable water services around the country were not of the best. In the capital and New Amsterdam the respective councils supplied water into the homes but in every other community where shallow wells existed roadside standpipes served the residents. In most areas however, rain and river water was in daily use.

In the field of education the child's right to an education was guaranteed by the government and in every little community there was some type of school to shape or mold the minds of the young for the role they were to play in the developing nation. The curriculum saw to the needs of the spiritual, physical, social and educational aspects of each child and at the primary level

this was free. However, at the high school and college or university levels private enterprise covered the major portion and thanks to those responsible parents who found a way to finance their children's education the literacy level in the country was extremely high.

The pride of the people took a mighty dive in the early days of independence with the ascendance of hooliganism to the highest seat of government under the banner of the People's Political Party and the introduction of party politics. Ever since Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham arrived on the scene in the early 1950s the country had never been the same and it would take total free enterprise to swing it back on the road to prosperity. These two men along with some very crass followers set about tearing down the tenets and standards set by much more experienced leaders and trading off the good for the bad. Gaining popularity while whipping up support for the party system of government and the advancement of communism this untrained duo put the nation through all of its troubles for more than thirty years.

It was late in 1953 when the British government suspended the constitution which granted self-rule to the crown colony, just six months after the People's Progressive Party took office after winning the general elections. Then, too, Dr. Jagan and several of his legislators were incarcerated as political detainees because of their communist ideology and subversive activities. But Forbes Burnham, always a scheming and conniving coward, slipped the dragnet and sold his political brother to the British. As legal counsel, Burnham advised Jagan that he was following in Mahatma Gandhi's footsteps. The slick lawyer suggested that it would be in the party's interest if he remained in a position to defend the political prisoners.

In those early days the more intelligent people recognized the fickle-mindedness of Forbes Burnham whom the Wynn-Parry Commission later sparingly referred to with "This callous and

remorseless attitude is reminiscent of Mark Anthony." With this in mind and the subsequent release of Jessica Burnham's book in which his fiesty sister ridiculed Burnham for his deceit, greed and bullying attitudes the public watched the rift in the PPP turn into two parties with the same goal. Sister Jessica, long deceased, gave all the praises that was due Forbes Burnham.

While opposing members of the two parties bickered and held grudges the two leaders, one an avowed marxist communist the other nothing more than a selfish egoist who climbed all over Dr. Jagan and everyone else to reach his goal, continued to embrace each other and the hammer and sickle.

During the suspension period a hand-picked Interim government returned the colony to normal development, peace and calm before the British government thought it a fit and proper time and political climate to reintroduce Adult Suffrage. Dr. Jagan was again at the helm of government during the renewed years of self-rule and life for the people and the orderly development of the nation continued somewhat smoothly as the dentist-Premier tried a more subtle maneuver to introduce communism. Then came the general strike of 1963 which lasted eighty days and crippled the economy of the country. Using the harsh fiscal regulations which was designed to raise prices from 50 to 100% as a lever and under the cover of the striking workers Burnham had his party sycophants launch attacks on the PPP.

As small sections of the lower-class party members exercised their ignorance, animosity built up and hostilities became an everyday curse. In a country where neighbors lived quite happily looking out for each other's interests fires, lootings, rapes, bombings and murders with political overtones became an unhealthy pasttime for the few so engaged. Dirty politics had descended on virgin territory and the two overseas-trained and educated politicians used their more stupid followers to full advantage.

Memories of the bombing of the seven members of the Abraham family, the motor vessel 'Sun Chapman' with one hundred and twenty nationals on board and a sugar estate truck at Tain, reminded the nationals of the devious ways of these unscrupulous men and their hardcore followers. There had been so many dirty acts committed by the rank and file members of both Jagan's PPP and Burnham's PNC that between them they have accounted for several hundred political murders and the leaders should have been held accountable. Every national groped about the country and hoped that they would not meet such a cruel end and the spark of fear started to blaze.

Bombings, rape, lootings, the burning of cane and rice fields, beatings and deaths by other means for political purposes were quite rampant in the early sixties and as Burnham said then of his bosom-buddy Cheddi Jagan, "Cheddi is like a school bully who runs to the teacher when someone hits back." Then, when asked to exercise his influence to bring about a cessation of the political riots this egotistical fop, using his smooth lawyer's diatribe, countered with "He who calls the dog, owns the dog."

By 1964, after a lot of gerrymandering and slick maneuvering under a new Constitution granted by the British Government for the rise to nationhood, Forbes Burnham closed the gap with Cheddi Jagan in the election results.

With neither of the two big parties having a clear majority Burnham compromised with Mr. Peter D'Aguiar's United Force and formed a coalition government with Peter D'Aguiar responsible for the Ministry of Finance. But again Burnham showed that unprincipled demeanor that his sister had warned about. It was not too long after the new government was installed that Burnham had his hand in the Treasury and dictating to the eminently qualified Finance Minister who had built a family business into a multi-million corporation.

It certainly was most unfortunate for the nation that the cunning and avarice of Prime Minister Burnham prevailed and

D'Aguiar was hounded out of office and eventually the political scene. The power-crazed Prime Minister begun padding the electoral register to ensure his party's return to the Legislature with a clear majority in 1968.

Since then, the country has never had another free, fair and popular election nor did it continue to progress. Rather, it slipped into retrogression unlike anything that the nation had ever seen.

Gallup could have taken a lesson on projections from the Burnham camp. Two weeks prior to the 'riggerendum' word had filtered down from the top to the peons that the government would receive 96% of the votes cast. On referendum day the streets around the country were bare of voters. The people stayed indoors for fear that they would be beaten by hooligan gangs and government vehicles rushed from polling booth to polling booth with pro-Burnham followers who cast ballots by the handful. Had the electorate turned out in reasonable numbers on that day chances were that the total votes would have outnumbered the total population of the country.

Electioneering and results aside the real trouble in the country had always been Burnham's lack of business acumen. Flowery speeches and all, the Prime minister wallowed in a track record of failures. He had proven his incompetence and those who would have argued that he reduced the prejudices he fanned earlier have not really been a part of the modern community. The lives of the majority had been wrecked by the acts of a few individuals who followed blindly after those who would tear down the years of peaceful neighborly togetherness.

Quite ignorant of the true wealth of the country and its potential for being a model nation in a modern world, Burnham exhibited a penchant for building his personal empire in which he strutted peacocklike while the nation suffered one decline after another. At first, with subtle and systematic moves the

Prime Minister shunted the cream of the political society into mundane corners and overseas service to neutralize their popularity.

Stalwarts like Rudyard Kendall, John Carter, Andrew Jackson, Stanley Hugh and the lone woman Winifred Gaskin, all suffered in some manner or other. There were those who stepped down voluntarily while some were given ambassadorial positions and banished overseas, and others were shunted to backbench and eventually ousted from political favor.

Replacing the seasoned politicians with untrained, untried, unseasoned and even unskilled persons became a habit with the demagogue and this overflowed to the lower levels of the administration. Like his predecessor, Forbes Burnham brought into the Legislature calypso singers, stevedores, nonproductive farmers, and the usual slew of crooked lawyers, because he could count on their votes for every dehumanizing bill he introduced.

In this period the Chinese proved an excellent political barometer. Having known the pains of communism those who were fortunate to live and develop in the young country during the freedom of pre-independent Guyana, moved swiftly on to other western countries to escape the march of communism. This started the brain drain that left the country stripped of capable personnel and by early 1970 the wheels of progress had come to a halt and deterioration followed closely.

There have been many instances of Burnham's ruthless inhuman behavior which he flashed because the underlings were expendable and the numerous security and bodyguards were ever-present to do his bidding. The man had always been a coward as was evidenced during the 1963 riots when he skipped the country to Surinam with each sound of a bomb tearing up another part of the country. Hiding behind the acts of the hooligan class is the closest thing to standing boldly for his convictions that the Prime Minister had ever accomplished. Burnham's greatest ambition to be the Prime Minister of a

federated West Indian community fell by the wayside after that organization faltered and folded and he learned that he was not as popular in the Caribbean as his ego projected.

In establishing what he termed his brand of socialism which was nothing more than selfish greed fanned by his plantation colonialist mentality and an obsessive desire to subjugate the people to a substandard level while he enjoyed the monarchical role of ruling the serfs, Burnham supplanted the capable administration, which he inherited with the rise to statehood, with appointees more incompetent than himself. People who had done quite a lot of dirty work and political murders found favor because they would continue to do his bidding being too ignorant to understand the ridicule the Prime Minister heaped on them.

The country continued its rapid decline and Prime Minister Burnham continued to usurp power. He was certainly the busiest man on paper having first been elected to the honorary presidencies of some twenty-three workers' and professional organizations from the Guyana Bar Association to the Guyana Labor Union. All these groups granted a leave of absence that was extended for life.

The character and integrity that his father tried to instill in him was a wasted effort. The young lawyer sunk even lower to gain control of poor people's lives. Although he was never a stevedore he inveigled the top office in the GLU. The same was said of Dr. Jagan who, as a dentist, became the president of the Guyana Agricultural Workers Union which catered to rice and sugar workers.

There were dozens of these people who were involved in clandestine nefarious acts that left a trail of death across the country and they in turn had to flee the country after the rise to power of the man who used and abused them.

During Burnham's early regime there was a cessation to all local elections and all councillors to the various Local Authori-

ties were appointed thereafter by the all-important leader of the new Burnham nation. Even in the autonomous Amerindian tribes Burnham had the temerity to place his hand-picked non-Amerindian party diehards as leaders of some of these communities. Actually, he even named a woman as headperson of one Amerindian reserve which caused a stir in the male dominated society.

By centralizing all government business and services the Prime Minister made the capital the hub of everything great or small. A simple thing like obtaining a copy of a Birth Certificate became a costly and time-consuming exercise for the applicant. Since all applications were taken at the registry in Georgetown applicants had to collect the forms at the office there. That meant that a resident of the far south savannahs in the Rupununi District who wanted a copy of a Birth Certificate had to spend more than a hundred dollars to travel to the city and queue up early in the morning to collect an application form. Only thirty such forms were distributed every workday between 8 and 8:30 a.m.

The end result of all this power maneuvering was that Burnham set himself up to be the absolute ruler and everyone else, with the necessary gall to use the dumb leader, embarked on 'get as can get' positioning to grab the crumbs that fell from the leader's table. This set in motion graft, corruption and bribery. The precedent was set, of course, by the incompetent Prime Minister and like monkeys they aped and mimicked his leadership.

As the economy died so too did the services and everything else. The country had nothing to show for the Burnham years other than an empty treasury. The old railway had been shut down and the rails and sleepers torn out and sold or stolen. In creating a Greater Georgetown a greater demand was placed on the electricity and water supplies which couldn't be met. Although additional machinery and stations were commissioned

the load was just too much and no householder received a constant supply. Four hours of service was a lot for any homeowner to expect from either of these utilities and that left a lot of insanitary bathrooms which helped to make Georgetown the putrid dump it had become.

The vessels that plied the country's rivers had been depleted and made it impractical to serve all the areas that at one time had some transportation. Besides the loss of equipment there was the general condition of those boats that were still serviceable. Too poor to overhaul, paint or sanitize the fleet the government hardly expected the ships to stay afloat for any lengthy period. Even the captains and crews looked disheveled in personal attire and indistinguishable from passengers.

In the Police Force there was widespread bribery and corruption with senior officers who have condoned dope peddling and smuggling. The nation lacked high-principled and morally upright officials. Such personalities were much too straight-laced to work with, and for, the Burnham government or they were in the lower categories of the labor force. The government also used the Police to peddle the party newspaper to taxi drivers as a fund-raising measure since very few people bothered to support the socialists.

The Fire Services were lamentable. It took twenty minutes for a unit to respond to an alarm obliquely opposite the Alberrtown station and then no one knew where to find the standpipe. Then units were dispatched from Georgetown to a fire forty-five miles away. That was one hour of driving while the Mahaicony-Abary Rice storage facilities burned.

CHAPTER 4

The Cult in Guyana

Reverend Jim Jones chose Guyana as host nation for his religious sect because he was totally aware of the pauperized conditions that had become evident during the Burnham regime. Jones had visited the country on occasions before dating back to the mid-sixties and gathered salient information on the degrading social standards and the moral and political prostitution that would serve his objectives. Any reasonably smart person could have seen the potential in this country with its wide variety of valuable resources but unfortunately the Prime Minister and his hand-picked government lacked the intelligence, ability and openmindedness that was necessary for the proper development of the nation.

The leader of the American-based religious organization had done some research on the country and probably knew more about the general conditions there than all of the politicians in the Legislature. Not that Jones was brilliant but the level of intelligence at the highest posts in the administration was so low that any half-educated or street-wise person could look artful in

comparison. Jones was swift to learn that government officials were self-centered and corrupt and could be bought and sold in just the same manner as their ancestors. Greed was evident everywhere and corruption flowed generously from the top to all levels of the services and even into the private sector, whatever there was left of free enterprise.

The charismatic minister of religion found a nation living in fear. A people too afraid to speak out against the government irrespective of what harsh measures were forced on them. This fear had even spread as far and wide as there were Guyanese domiciled around the world who worried about their rights to return on visits or that their families would be exterminated. Jones recognized the possibilities here and found a haven conducive to his unorthodox religious practices. It appeared to him that Burnham ruled like a king and what better idea than to have a kingdom within a kingdom? Of course, Jones' brain and capital was pitted against Burnham's incompetence but wealth-gathering propensity and it was greed that assured Jones' success.

By the time Jones had decided to resettle the members of the church he headed in San Francisco he was sure he could find some suitable area in this little South American country where Prime Minister Forbes Burnham had already established his oppressive one-man rule. With the sort of human conditioning existing in the country, too, Jones was positive that he could completely control the minds of his followers in just the same manner. Burnham had total charge of the lives of government officials in his inner circle and eventually all those appointees who held executive offices and particularly those at ambassadorial level. Jones learned that Forbes Burnham would never willingly relinquish his strangle hold on the nation irrespective of how the economic conditions worsened.

The choice of a site was next on the religious leader's mind and he had a few criteria which guided the selection. There was land almost anywhere and everywhere in the sprawling country

though the government would not encourage its development. He could have opted for the rich soils in the Canje Creek or on the Corentyne River or any other area for that matter but Jim Jones was a blue-blooded Euro-American who wanted to be as close as possible to the good old USA. But at the same time the minister of religion did not want his followers to be able to travel about freely to and from America. The area therefore had to be remote with the minimum of transportation and contact with natives and no possibility of his members leaving without his knowledge and consent. That was not so hard to accomplish in Guyana as even the nationals found transportation a problem.

The Guyana government over recent years, had encouraged settlement of lands in a sand-belt region along the all-weather roadway stretching from the airport to the bauxite mining town of McKenzie. After the bauxite industry was nationalized it slumped into decline and the burgeoning township was renamed Linden in honor of the country's Prime Minister. The American church leader recognized the vanity behind the change because Burnham never actually developed that community nor did he ever work one day of his life there. In fact, he never did anything noteworthy for any region of the country. What the Prime Minister accomplished with his takeover of the bauxite industry from the Canadian and American owners was a vast reduction in ore sales and a resulting hike in national unemployment due to layoffs. However, the administration's hand-picked town councillors of the area agreed to remove the name of the man who made the bauxite industry and the community possible and play on the ego of a vain Prime Minister. The nation would have to remember McKenzie as a thriving community that meant quite a lot to the overall economy of the country whereas Linden had suffered drastically like every other community in the nation which suffered under the Burnham dogmatic dynasty. It seemed that everything Forbes Burnham put his mind on or

dabbled in just wilted and the country kept sliding into total economic morass.

But Jones was not interested in the problems of the locals nor in land where the soil was white sand and lacked nutrients for his planned farm. With hundreds of workers losing jobs every month he was definitely not interested in any area where every thief in the nation could make the commune a target for their illegal activity. That area was too centrally located in the country where Temple members would have met the local gentry and that didn't meet with Jones' plans.

When the area in the North West District was selected it was with careful deliberation. Not many nationals could give a fair account of the country let alone discuss the vast potential of this victorian Eldorado but Jones knew how well the region could have served his purposes. For one thing it was the shortest distance between Florida and Guyana and could have been covered by a small ocean-going vessel or plane. With his own yacht the religionist would not have had to acquaint the authorities of his trips to and from the United States. During the pre-Independence era the African Manganese Mines shipped ore from this area to the little Caribbean island of Trinidad for stockpiling and eventual transshipment to countries further afield.

With gold and diamonds present in just the same way as in every region of the country, working the precious stones and shipping them back to the States without the knowledge of the politicians, and career officials who were too busy feathernesting to be bothered, was just as simple as keeping unwanted people out of the commune. Smuggling was nothing new to Guyana as many nationals will recall the Tesarik scandal which came to light only after the pilot of the small plane crashed on one of his unscheduled flights with contraband diamonds across the Brazilian border. There were incidents too of balata and timber smuggling across the Surinam border and present-day operations with the importation of cooking oil, potatoes and flour into Guyana.

Another strong point in favor of the choice was its proximity to Venezuela. Just about one hundred miles from the nearest border town, Jones knew he could have escaped the country if anything serious happened to thwart his development project for a commune in the strange country. The best reason for this choice of site was definitely its remoteness. Only one hundred and fifty miles in a direct line from the country's capital and about eighteen miles from the nearest concentration of people at Matthew's Ridge but the toughest bit of traveling that kept outside visitors to a minimum. The minister could have done as he pleased and he therefore created his personal American state within Burnham's rotting Guyana.

Transportation was most difficult in this region and Jones decided he would supply his own. Being satisfied with his choice of virgin forest with all its haves and have nots, its beauties and beasts, Jones and his team of negotiators approached the government for an agricultural lease of 27,000 acres in the North West District but the officials at the Lands Division could not deal with the size of property for foreign settlers and referred the group to the Minister of Agriculture Ptolemy Reid who, suffering from fear as all underlings to the Prime Minister did, washed his hands of the affair like a modern Pilate and turned the matter over to the Prime Minister.

Jim Jones was undaunted. He had enough letters of introduction from American politicians and other dignitaries to swamp any opposition to his plans for a commune. Furthermore, he could have created any amount of documents to substantiate the need and the cause for which he fought. The leader of the church had a winning personality and an astute mind which he used to play havoc with the greed and corrupt practices of those in power. There were career officials and politicians who could be bought for trinkets, liquor and other gifts that ran up to wads of good American cash, a far stronger currency on the local market than the country's own devalued bills and the only

money that seemed valid around the world. One official had a \$30,000 base fee for his services and in most cases that meant signing his name to a document on his desk at his office in the Bank of Guyana building. Then there was the government Minister of State who claimed a ten percent fee for his service. The theory seemed to be that if the government could take 51% of the industries or businesses another 10% up front would hardly matter. There certainly was leverage for anyone who was willing to pay the price to operate or live in this destitute corner of the world where Mother Nature seemed to have stacked her wealth and dumped her ignorance.

But the biggest graft bite apparently came on the leasing of the state property to the People's Temple organization. For a sum of \$2.5 million US, purportedly delivered to Prime Minister Burnham by Temple top aides, Tim Carter and Michael Prokes, Jones' lease was signed and it surely must be the only such document to be locked away in the vault at the Lands Division in Georgetown. What was it that the government wanted to hide that called for this particular lease to be locked away? Maybe when it eventually becomes public property the world would learn who signed the lease that allowed for this terrible incident.

There was also verbal agreement to the lease whereby the Temple group would support the government in every way including casting votes in national elections and defending the nation against Venezuelan aggression if needs be. Of course, the more Americans present in the country the better it would be for Burnham. For his total support Jones was granted full autonomy and the government would not interfere with the operation of the settlement.

Jones was ecstatic. He set about creating the American state in Guyana. The young charlatan employed Guyanese labor to hack away the jungle and clear the site for homes. There was not even the barest amenities for living in the forest but the men

felled the timber, cleared the land and erected temporary buildings of wood and corrugated galvanized sheets to house the people who were to live in what was to become known as Jonestown. Only a small portion of the leased area was cleared and barbwire fencing was strung around the perimeter with a few guard posts located for easy control of the entire complex. The site looked more like a concentration camp than a farming community. Spending so many weeks together brought the Guyanese laborers and Jones' aides a little closer and the natives learned of the land deal from Carter and Prokes before their services were terminated in time for the arrival of the first small group of settlers and the subsequent expansion with the arrival of more Americans.

They came from different cities and towns in the United States where development had reached staggering heights, where even the poor were considered affluent in comparison to the Guyanese standard of living. For various reasons they chose to leave a society which they never took time to study properly and therefore couldn't appreciate their rights and freedoms. These members of the People's Temple church were already half-indoctrinated in America and as followers they moved to the drum of the leader. Jones' paranoia overflowed and extended to his members so they moved willingly to the new 'promised land.' Perhaps they yearned for the pioneering spirit of ancestors long gone and hoped to take pride in developing a corner in the world for themselves. These people left homes with running potable water, comfortable beds, a wide variety of available food and fruits and their families and friends.

Irrespective of their individual social and economic backgrounds they were all exposed to and probably enjoyed adequate housing, educational and recreational facilities that were not readily available anywhere else in the world. Yet they gave up all these things and lots more on the vague promise of a man

who wanted to help and who, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, led them to total destruction.

The glowing pictures that Reverend Jones painted of a tropical paradise where everything was serene, fruits and flowers bountiful, the people warm and hospitable and the weather perennially warm without such natural disasters as hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes and snowfall seemed too perfect to be true but Jones was describing the British Guiana of early 1960s. To the gullible folks with a misconception of freedom and gripes against the American society, this migration scheme offered them a chance to hide from their own narrowminded insecurities. The members of the church let their minds conjure up dreams of a euphoric existence and these entrancing dreams harnessed them to the Temple for life and cemented their dedication to a promised freedom in an unknown, far-off land and a belief in Jim Jones as their Messiah.

Jones' propaganda paralleled the Burnham government's tactics in wooing nationals back to the country. At overseas missions and embassies monthly newsletters were prepared and mailed to Guyanese to acquaint them with the country's development. Reports of the nation's stability and economic progress through its cooperative ownership were grossly exaggerated with the intention of encouraging nationals domiciled in Canada, America and England to return to their homeland. The Prime Minister's shallow statement that the small man would one day be the big man was seen by some as having materialized with the nationalization of the nation's only big industry—Bauxite. There were several Guyanese who fell for the government's false 'come-on' and failed to listen to the thousands of nationals who had found it necessary to flee the country because of the hardships and the rising tide of tyranny which blossomed in the Burnham era.

If natives could have been so utterly fooled about the state of affairs in the country which had fallen into moral decay and

economic chaos then it could be quite easily understood how Jones was able to mesmerize the hundreds of Americans who did not take the time to learn more about their own country and realize that there was no nation in the world that emphasized and exercised as much freedom as the United States of America. Somehow, no one thought to query why half of Guyana's 800,000 people had fled to other countries in the few short years since 1972.

In small groups, mostly on weekends, members of the People's Temple left the confines of the free and democratic American society and traveled the thousands of miles by airplane, on one of the most boring trips ever, to the edge of the South American continent. Tiring as those trips were they were just the beginning of the hell that faced the members of the church. As they arrived in the new country these modern pilgrims overnighted in two ultra-modern homes owned by the church in the high-income residential neighborhood of Lama Gardens in eastern Georgetown.

There were just two modes of transport to get the people from Georgetown to Jonestown. The best way being the short one-hour hop by airplane but only a few traveled in this comfort. However, for the majority, the journey was undertaken by a small government-owned motor vessel that made a scheduled run to the North West District once a week.

Their stay in the city pocked-marked with blocked drains and canals that effused unpleasant odors was restricted in time and travel so that these pioneers saw very little of the squalor and nothing of the long lines of people waiting at stores for chicken, flour, oil or whatever food item was available. Jones had several trustees living in these houses who were responsible for the smooth movement of all new arrivals during the final leg of the trip. By noon on any given Monday the intransit members would be transported to the wharf in Kingston to start the sea voyage. Some even thought that the journey couldn't have been more than a mere two or three hours duration.

The little motor vessel that plied the North West route, just a little more than half the size of a New York Circle Line vessel, had seen better days but lack of proper sanitation and upkeep gave it the look of a tramp steamer and the smell of rotting garbage. Most of the black paint on the hull was chipped and flaked and rust had eaten into the metal above the line of barnacle. In a few places an anticorrosive paint was slapped on to delay corrosion. The white superstructure of the upper deck and Captain's Bridge was weather-beaten and peeled with age while the tarpaulin flaps were covered with patches and mildew.

As the members of the Temple boarded the vessel their hearts pounded with anticipation of arrival at the end of the journey and the beginning of what they thought would have been their new life of leisure. A holiday atmosphere hung heavily as the ship became crowded then it dawned on some of the Americans that there would be some discomfort during the trip to Jonestown. The little ship was crammed with luggage, baggage and cartons of sundry items which took up most of the space along the passageway around the upper deck and several deck chairs, aligned somewhat orderly, occupied the front of the deck and along the narrow passage. In the rear of the boat some experienced Guyanese travelers hung their hammocks for comfort.

Some of Jones' followers might even have thought of forebears who moved across the great American prairie to settle new land in answer to the call of 'Go West,' but since there was no more frontier land in America this group moved 'south' to conquer the jungle of the poor Latin American nation in search of peace, home and fortune. Jones' promise of a land full of fruits and peace in forests and of brilliant year-round sunshine was further enhanced by tales of an old Georgetown with quaint little shops, overflowing marketplaces, rustic French and Dutch buildings and colorful people. The smell of tangy mangoes, sweet luscious sapodillas and sun-ripened pineapples never reached the nostrils of the travelers but they watched the rotting

wharves along the Demerara River waterfront with seeds of doubt taking root in their minds.

The crowded vessel slipped from quayside when bow and spring line were cast off. Then just as quickly the stern line was released to the sounds of ringing ship's telegraph, the blast of horn and a chorus of farewells from waving friends and well-wishers shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon, its scheduled hour of departure. As the ship headed downriver to the mouth the foreign settlers took a long look at the changing scenes of the capital from the rails. The Georgetown Lighthouse and the Pegasus Hotel towered above the smaller two-storeyed government buildings and private dwellings then the spire of the St. George's Cathedral, the tallest wooden building in the world, became visible as did the silos and chimneys of a rice factory which dominated the west coast shoreline.

About an hour and a half out of port and cruising at eight knots on the smooth river the vessel changed course to a northwesterly bearing that paralleled the nation's Essequibo Coast and started the roughest boatride that any of the Americans had ever experienced. Six- to eight-foot waves from the great Atlantic Ocean slammed the starboard bow at an angle and forced the ship to port as the helmsman wrestled with the huge wheel to keep the boat on course. Sprays of water flew more than thirty feet high to the Captain's Bridge and sprinkled the passengers on every deck. The ship pitched and rolled in the troughs and heaved and ploughed awkwardly on the crests of every wave. Each time the twin screws labored through the greater volume of water at the swell of the waves then spun almost/freely as the troughs sank away from the stern, concern for their safety showed on the faces of the American settlers. The gentle cruise which they thought would only last for a couple of hours had suddenly become a rough-riding, stomach-disgorging event which brought tears to the eyes of many migrants and painful stomach cramps to others. Walking on the

crowded, pitching ship to get to the lavatory was a daring exercise reserved for those persons with 'sea legs' capable of shifting bodyweight to accommodate the rolling plunge and lift of the ship.

On all decks cartons and luggage shifted and slid about continuously. Crates on the lower deck slammed back and forth and some, not being battened down, slid overboard. A few tethered heads of cattle shifted, slipped and fell in their excrement and a huge steel icebox broke from its steel strap against the port wall to shift a foot out of place.

To keep the watersprays and chilly breezes out the sailors drew the tarps and strapped them in position while the passengers developed a strong dislike for their predicament and an even stronger distrust for the venture. Afternoon passed into evening and more passengers emptied their stomachs just where they sat while some gathered at the vantage points on the rails to take their last view of the coastline with its jungle some twelve miles to port before darkness fell.

The rough Atlantic continued to batter the little ship as it moved steadily onward. It was hard on many of the emigrants who screamed and panicked. Guyanese offered quartered oranges to the new settlers and restrained them from giving milk to the young children.

The minutes dragged into hours with every dip and lunge that the little 20,000-ton motor vessel took and the elderly prayed and soothed their disturbed companions. As if it was any consolation the nationals expressed the logic that it could have been a lot worse with a thunderstorm. Some of the natives climbed into their hammocks and the cocoon-like forms swayed gracefully with the motion of the boat.

Tired and worried about their safety the Americans tried to adapt to their situation. There was nothing they could do but try to be calm. Taking cue from the Guyanese travelers these

settlers found places that offered little comfort for resting as the motor vessel fought the cross currents and the pounding waves.

For more than twelve hours the turbulent ocean tossed the ship about to the dismay of the migrants. In the hour before dawn, restless from their sleepless night and just when they thought they were never going to reach their destination the heaving and twisting ceased and the whine of the screws changed to a steady hum. The vessel had reached the calmer waters after turning inland off the mouth of the Mora Passage in the far northwestern tip of the country. Most of the Americans rose from their uncomfortable positions with dawn's light which seeped through the laced-up tarps before the sailors folded them back to reveal a misty morn. The passageway was a mess of displaced baggage, relieved stomachs and passengers who were disheveled and sad.

As the boat moved toward the coast and the sun shone through the scenery attracted a few of the disgruntled settlers. The pea-green water of the Atlantic changed directly to the murky flow from the Orinocco River and then to the dark brown water that flowed from the Barima River and Mora Passage region.

Porpoises played effortlessly off the port bow and the vessel ran aground on a mud bar. The hour-long wait for the rising tide to send the ship scraping slowly across and into the Mora Passage only served to add to the frustrations.

The jungle stretched for miles along both banks of the Waini River and there seemed to be no end to the boring trip upriver. Along the narrow black-water route with its thick foliage little canoes skimmed the surface with Amerindian children on their way to school.

Travel was smooth though it took several more hours to reach Port Kaituma after two stops at riverside settlements. A thoroughly disgusted group of Americans disembarked at 'The Port.' For more than thirty-six hours they had suffered the indignity of traveling cramped, hungry and with very limited facilities and still no new home. A rough trailer ride through the jungle along

a narrow mud trail brought the party to the barbwire enclosure and the ruggedly constructed buildings. This was Jonestown and the new arrivals were totally shocked. If they still held hopes and dreams of seeing a beautiful city like anything back in the United States their hopes died and their dreams were shattered.

Jim Jones seized all passports, money and other valuables from the members immediately on arrival and warned them it was impossible to leave. There was no way to get out. There was no ship to ferry them back to Georgetown and any attempt to escape was a futile exercise. He hit them early and he hit them hard with the truth. The barbwire fencing was explained as the boundary and protection against such wild animals as the ocelot, deer-tiger and wild hogs which roamed in bands of several hundreds.

The minister terrorized them further with tales of deadly bushmaster, a viper related to the cobra, the swift-moving labaria snake, rattlers and the giant anaconda. In the water some distance off, large electric eels and flesh-eating piranhas mingled freely with other fish.

Some of the cultists argued and fought among themselves for the right to leave the area and return to the turf they knew. They must have had various reasons for turning their backs on America to follow a man who conned them into believing that they would be better off in the utopia he had created only in the mind. The Temple followers were sold on the idea of freedom and freeness and hoped they could exist in this world without working hard to accomplish a better life.

One thing was very certain and that was none of these people realized the good in America until they had arrived in this outback region of another nation. There was no way out unless Jim Jones wanted it.

CHAPTER 5

The Eroded Society

Over the years of Burnham rule Guyana had suffered in every way possible at the hands of this autocrat. His selfish desires had enriched his personal life while pauperizing and degrading the people and the nation as a whole. Piece by piece Forbes Burnham had whittled away at the network of social, moral and economic fiber that had given the country a strong framework on which to build a very prosperous nation after its independence.

The country was full of developmental potential with a vast array of untouched mineral deposits and a quite small population of 700,000 for its 83,000 square miles of forests, savannahs and water. But the nation's biggest and possibly the only real problem had been its glib, conniving Head of State. Ever since Independence of 1966 with Forbes Burnham as the elected Prime Minister and a British-appointed Governor-General, the Prime Minister set about molding and creating a personal monarchical dynasty. He verbally abused the British and all other Europeans in much the same way as his Ugandan counterpart and role model 'Idi' Amin had done, to the delight of his

illiterate sycophants. But the jetstream of vituperation only served to illuminate his almost flamboyant ignorance to the more literate and scholarly nationals.

The years he spent in Britain as a young scholar, at taxpayers' expense, solidified his lust for power and greed for wealth which his dear departed sister, Jessica, had warned the nation about before her eternal rest. So fortunate were those nationals who read Jessica Burnham's book about Forbes Burnham for they have been able to judge the merciless heart that hid behind the effluent smile for years. Prime Minister Burnham seemed to have admired the pomp and splendor of the British monarchy and pitted deep in his devious brain was his burning ambition and driving need for personal attention by loyal subjects or better still, servants. It was by sheer chicanery that Burnham attained the highest office in the land and continued his evil plot to subvert the constitution and create a personal kingdom.

Shortly after assuming this high office Burnham stopped elections in all the communities that were duly constituted as villages or towns with Local Government status. No longer were councillors elected to office by the voters in the local districts and as time went by the old elected representatives were traded off for selected ones hand-picked by the Prime Minister. These new councillors were installed primarily to do Burnham's bidding and there was very little opposition from any source. Bit by bit the power-crazed egomaniac eroded the people's constitutional rights and eventually the entire Constitution was swept under the political rug.

National elections thereafter became a farce with the two political parties, People's National Congress and People's Progressive Party, sharing the seats on a percentage basis. The regulations which required candidates to face the polls in the thirty-five electoral districts or constituencies were brushed aside to wipe out popular choice. No candidates were really nominated to any of the thirty-five constituencies for the elector-

ate to exercise their franchise. Rather, the parties submitted a list of members from which each party would select its legislators when the nation went to the polls. The total number of votes cast for each party determined how many seats that party won in the Legislature. Subsequently, in continuing his quest for total power, Burnham created a 65-member parliament and appointed some of the most illiterate people to replace those legislators whom he had little or no control over. Even the office of Speaker of the Assembly fell to Burnham as he placed someone in that post who was expected to do as he was told. Like everyone else in the Burnham camp the new Governor-General had no power to resist the pressures nor did he have the guts to step down. Of course, the alternative for disobedience was to be fired.

The results of the 1973 and 1979 elections and the notorious 1978 referendum were as fraudulent as Burnham's eventual ascendancy to the Presidency of the nation. The regulations for elections had been so altered that the voters' choice for a candidate in a particular constituency was never ever to be an issue then and in the future and as a result most of the electorate, threatened by supporters of the Burnham mob, stayed at home for fear of being beaten by the hooligan gangs that roamed the streets. There were other voters, too, who had simply lost interest and respect for the political system. Of the few who exercised their right to vote most were known PNC supporters who were allowed to cast several ballots for Burnham's slate of candidates and even a ballot or two for Dr. Jagan's group. Voters who were considered anti-Burnham were turned away by Polling Station officials who explained that some relative (dead or alive) had already cast the ballot for the entire family. In one such instance a female voter was told that her husband had voted for her entire family earlier in the day whereupon the woman broke into tears as she berated the

official for not sending someone to call her to be reunited with her husband who had been dead for more than six years.

Polling booth staff had field days dumping ballots in the boxes to ensure a Burnham victory and the continued yoke of servitude for the nation. Many of these devious people managed to gain visas to live in the free countries of the world while their friends and neighbors suffered under the man whose rule they helped to perpetuate. Balloting was crude and threats so blatant that it was considered wiser not to report these incidents to the authorities or to charge the officials with electoral fraud. Even Dr. Jagan, not really in opposition to Burnham whose ideals he espoused, kept quiet being too afraid of returning to political prison for life, or for as long as Forbes Burnham remained alive whichever was shorter. That was understandable from the standpoint that both Burnham and Jagan have accomplished the total wreck of a very highly organized society with an equally high standard of living and instituted a crude constitution that robbed the nationals of their basic freedom of speech, freedom to oppose and freedom to elect representatives both at the local and national levels.

Why did no one report these fraudulent practices to the Elections Commission? The question was more a matter of just whom to talk to. All the nation's judges, magistrates, prosecutors, military and police officers and everyone else in high office were placed there by the Prime Minister and they could have lost their jobs at the whim of the leader they paid homage to. These officials were mere pawns in a game that Burnham played from both ends. Any attempt to force an issue was like trying the devil's case in satan's court. Among Burnham's appointees was the Commissioner of Elections, a very feeble and retired Sir Donald Jackson, and all the other members of the commission. The receptionist at the Elections office was no more than a security guard who screened all appointments with the officials. Talking to this male desk jockey called for a lot of

patience and understanding. He was selected to frustrate the complaining public with his serious case of the stammers.

These fraudulent elections have held Burnham in office even though he had lost the support of the people and his party was merely a shell. While the results at each successive election showed a widening margin of support for Burnham that was only the rigged results on paper. In reality Burnham's popularity had dwindled faster than the population. Because the Prime Minister could dismiss the legislators at will from the government he replaced those who offered some semblance of opposition to his methods and rule of might over right. The popular liberals were shunted to overseas posts as ambassadors. The entire Legislature was constituted of dense individuals who cast their vote with Burnham on any measure because he had elevated these persons to high office with the security and income for being loyal supporters. There couldn't have been more incompetent individuals in the nation than those who made up the Cabinet of Ministers. They followed blindly in their lust for status and material wealth.

Throughout his regime Burnham has appointed people of dubious character or criminal inclinations to high career and political office to ensure his long reign of corruption. The poor standards which developed as a result of the Prime Minister's incompetence attracted a certain undesirable element and soon the nation became a haven for foreign criminals. The Prime Minister had not been able to develop the country and had never proven that he was capable, moral, and just but rather quite the opposite. Because of Burnham's 'dog in the manger' attitude the nation had suffered from a lack of foreign investors even though investment opportunities abound. The Prime Minister never invested his money, which he acquired as Head of State, in development projects to open jobs for an expanded labor force but such was the level of the man's mentality and

confidence in the nation that he had stripped and torn apart with his obsessive dream to have servants at his beck and call.

All of the ministers and parliamentarians remained in office when the 1973 government ended its term in 1977 and for more than one year thereafter these selfish officials remained in office illegally drawing taxpayers' dollars in emoluments and allowances while they charted what was to become the Burnham Constitution that would create the new Executive President.

At the lower level of the administration and society the government encouraged hooliganism and with the use of the American fugitive David Hill, whom they had granted asylum, and his Guyanese followers in the House of Israel, continued to keep the nationals tractable. Fear for the government's methods grew alarmingly as people were beaten in the streets at political rallies held by opposers of the Burnham regime and there were several workers who lost their jobs for simply attending such meetings or making anti-government statements. Students of the Teachers' Training College and the University of Guyana were beaten and forced to write slogans on city streets and on the concrete dyke that stretched along the Atlantic coast from Georgetown to about fifteen miles east. Strong support for Burnham's measures also came from The People's Temple and the senior career officials who were too afraid to lose their cushy jobs, new cars and all the perks that came their way.

But the fear that gripped the nation crossed the ocean with each wave of Guyanese refugees who fled the country seeking a better life in some foreign land and this fear encircled all of the Guyanese domiciled in such far off lands as England, Canada and the United States. Wherever Guyanese met whether it was in New York or D.C., California or Toronto, Brixton or Notting Hill, the atmosphere chilled at the mention of the name Burnham or the atrocities that were committed daily in the homeland by the erratic Prime Minister and his faithful servants. In several instances this phobia by Guyanese living in these strange coun-

tries had been intensified by the knowledge that they had families still living in Guyana who were exposed and subjected to any and all kinds of personal attacks or victimization by the oppressors.

There have been cases of brutal beatings and murders by known attackers yet none of the perpetrators had ever been convicted of these crimes. Organizations such as the Working People's Alliance, another political party embracing the socialist doctrine and led by Dr. Walter Rodney, issued a call to foreign media, particularly those in the Caribbean region, and Amnesty International to visit the country and witness the horrors being committed by the country's government but no organization ever answered the plea.

Not one Human Rights group attempted to find out why Guyanese had been as disenfranchised as the Africans of South Africa. On the other hand no one could enter Guyana through normal channels without the necessary visas which could be just as hard to get as an affirmative reply from Jim Jones to visit the little commune which he had been building in the jungle.

So it was that Jim Jones capitalized on this countrywide fear to keep his cult behind that barbwire fence and in fact he seemed to follow Burnham's example right down to his personal health bulletin in which he claimed to be suffering from cancer of the throat.

Since it appeared that Prime Minister Burnham would stop at nothing to remain in office and hold sway over the lives of the peaceful people of his nation the exodus multiplied considerably. Everyone who obtained a passport and tax clearance did so with the express purpose of fleeing to strange lands where, according to Burnham's rantings, they would be treated as second-class citizens. However, several of these political refugees declared openly that they felt much happier with the prospect of being free second-class citizens in someone else's country than being first-class fools or slaves in their own.

The American Consulate in Georgetown was the scene of many campouts as nationals with applications and appointments for visitor and immigrant visas queued from midnight to gain entrance to the office when the doors opened at regular hours during the day. Some families even had a shift system operating whereby one member would stand in line from midnight, for a few hours, then be relieved by another member who would hold the position for a while. This rotating system continued until the doors swung open some time after 8:30 a.m. It was all so much like a Bruce Springsteen concert in the New York Metropolitan area.

During the one-year strike at British West Indian Airways during 1977 Pan American Airlines flew some one hundred and fifty passengers out of the country every day and the nation lost an average of 50,000 nationals that year. At that time, too, Panam was operating at a serious disadvantage. Every aspect of its operations in Guyana was being sabotaged by government agents. Luggage was left at the airports in New York, Port-of-Spain, Miami or anyplace in between.

A security man with PNC membership let customers into the office at his discretion and had to be told the nature of the business to be conducted. The staff also frustrated customers who eventually blamed the airline for every problem they encountered. Only experienced Panam passengers, who knew of the airline's efficiency around the world, recognized the clandestine maneuver to replace the carrier with the local airline.

The doors were kept locked at all times and customers had to wait for service. This was so unlike the services available at British Airways and Guyana Airways where the doors were opened to the public. But then the government was only interested in opening a Guyana Airways Corporation service on the lucrative route to the US. At that time GAC had a fleet of two eighteen-seater Twin Otters with one professional pilot. The

DeHavillands could not run the Guyana-United States route and the pilot was in the process of migrating to the United States.

While the exodus of Guyanese seemed somewhat unbelievable for so small a nation, a breakdown of the population shift, or disappearance, by 1978 showed that bordering countries and several Caribbean islands were recipients of thousands of runaway Guyanese. Surinam headed the list with a Guyanese intake of some 40,000; Brazil collected 15,000; Venezuela another 7,000; Trinidad 5,000 and, scattered throughout a few of the smaller West Indian islands and Jamaica were another 3,000. These figures were representative of both legal and illegal entry into South American states holding common borders with Guyana and did not reflect the thousands who settled in North America and Europe.

Young men and women crossed the borders at will and with as much American currency that they were able to mop up with a black market rate of up to Guy\$7. to US\$1. Most of these unmarried young people settled with foreign mates to escape the frustrations of the very poor prospects in their own jobless nation and the ban on, or lack of, food items. It seemed inevitable to the refugees that the nation would suffer through mounting starvation and escalating malnutrition for many years.

Guyanese nationals were running in every direction from the terrible rule of a man who rose to the pinnacle. Like a crab Burnham had crawled to the top and used his position to make the people of the land know misery and torment.

This mass exodus from the reign of terror left the country further underpopulated. No more than 400,000 people remained in Guyana with a far greater chance of reducing even further because of the government's ineptitude. Burnham's plan to allow other nationalities to settle in the country was doomed to certain failure. Very few people willingly migrated to socialist countries and hardly any ever remained in poor nations.

Of the people from China, Bangladesh, Jamaica and Cuba

only the Jamaican rastafarians still totalled a few hundreds and their presence was never popular with the nationals. Guyanese were not dope-conscious nor quite untidy although with the presence of the spineless, prideless 'rasta' group ganga or marijuana started a trend which top officials of the Police Force encouraged and later became controllers in the disgusting mind-deteriorating drugs.

There were some two hundred and fifty Cubans in Guyana who were ostensibly engaged in the shrimping industry. Their trawlers operated in Guyana's territorial waters off the Atlantic coast but while they wore civilian clothes and did not bear heavy arms the Cubans were subtle reminders to the Guyanese that Prime Minister Burnham had a special relationship with the communist leader, Fidel Castro. Burnham's tight grasp of the Cuban dictator's bearhug was meant to show the public that the communists would help to repel any act to overthrow the Burnham regime thereby perpetuating a rule for life in just the same manner as Castro remained Cuba's Head of State. This relationship also afforded Russia the foothold it needed on the South American continent while the United States turned a blind eye.

Guyana government statistics showed a population of 850,000 people but more than half-a-million of these actually lived in foreign lands. Even with the loss of more than half of the nation's 210,000 electors for more than a decade, the staticians still managed to show that 240,000 ballots were cast in the infamous 'riggerendum' and represented 70% of the electorate.

Elections were so blatantly rigged that the ballots from overseas voting were almost enough to cover the total voters on the electoral register. In Cuba where only thirty Guyanese attended training in several disciplines, more than 5,000 ballots were cast. In America and England where PNC members staff the government's missions, ballots were freely cast by unauthorized proxy and many Trinidadians, Jamaicans and other West Indians

voted in the past election. Despite the burning hatred that he knew was boiling against him the Prime Minister continued to break the backs of the 400,000 nationals who still remained in the country, most of whom hoped to find their rock to crawl under. With harsh measure added to harsh measure the people prayed constantly for the return of the British forces and another suspension of the Constitution or, even better, an American take-over of the country to avoid the communist threat on their doorstep.

The older generation remembered the arrival of the British troops as vividly as if the event was only a year old and when the horrible event of the People's Temple rocked the world Guyanese were almost jubilant at the prospect of American soldiers moving in to rout the real oppressor, Forbes Burnham. If there was one country in the world that would have welcomed 'Uncle Sam' with open arms and waving banners that nation was Guyana.

The nationals vowed that if elections were held under strict supervision with free and fair balloting of the legitimate electorate the nation would have shaken free of Forbes Burnham and all other communist groups and installed a stable democratic government with a capable Prime Minister. Many nationals felt that a progressive free-enterprise society would have assured a viable economy and an accelerated development into the twenty-first century.

More imports were banned each year until it became much easier to enumerate those items that were legal to import than the hundreds that were axed. Flour was banned but the government imported wheat to mill at a newly constructed, modern mill. Because there were no strict quality control guidelines the wheat flour was mixed with yucca (cassava) flour and packaged as wheat flour. However, with the high yucca content bread soured after only one day of storage. Management then reduced the percentage of yucca and the flour shortage remained acute.

Milk powder and cooking oil, donated by foreign governments for free distribution to the people, were sold at quite exorbitant prices. Items imported by the government, the sole importers in the country, were distributed to stores in certain neighborhoods where the government had its concentration of supporters, for sale to the public and left other areas bare of supplies. For years the country faced milk shortage just as every other item yet in 1979 several tons of evaporated were dumped because of spoilage in warehouses. Thousands of the cans were thoroughly rusted as ample proof of the length of time they were in storage.

The education system continued to deteriorate rapidly. Lack of text books and equipment along with the new breed of teachers who could neither write nor speak proper English hampered the learning process of the children and, like the more affluent nations of the world, indecent language surfaced as a communicative skill.

As a means of controlling the minds of the people, particularly the new generation, the government stipulated that children must serve in the National Service. This organization was commissioned supposedly to provide everyone with the knowledge and ability to work in any given field and to eradicate the class distinction of white collar, blue collar and labor.

Serving in the National Service was a must for anyone who wanted to continue their formal education through high schools and colleges. Some Indo-Guyanese parents objected and declared that they would rather remove their daughters from schools and wed them early as was customary in years past. It was also necessary to serve in the National Service if a person wanted to follow a professional discipline under the auspices of the government.

A young med-school student who was assigned to farm labor while on summer vacation objected on the ground that his service to the sick would be more in keeping with his studies

and, while offering him valuable experience, would certainly have advanced the welfare of the patients in the hospital. What the young man did not understand was that the government had enough staff at the hospitals and an alarmingly low stock of medical supplies. He was already obsolete and didn't know it so he had to stick it out in the farm with sugarcane and cutlass, shovels and mud because the socialist bureaucracy demanded that of him.

Then it also became necessary for the older workers to give time to the National Service and for those who entered the job market to understand that their chances were better after doing a stint with the National Service. Irrespective of what the government hoped to accomplish the service was more military than educational. It was in the National Service too, that the morals and integrity of the nation received its shellacking. Young girls were molested and raped and boys confined and beaten. Many girls who became pregnant had abortions in doctors' offices without the knowledge of their parents.

Dressed in school uniforms on a school day these innocent deflowered girls visited the doctors' clinic, before class, bearing the weight of scorn, remorse and fear and were out before the end of the school-day allowing them ample time to return home without arousing the parents' suspicions, at least for a while, anyway.

A young boy just turned into his teens, attended the National Service camp and while at ease on the parade square felt a rock smash into his chest. It was thrown by the drill sergeant to draw the child's attention and as an additional punishment for his crime of distraction the boy was ordered to sweep the parade square with his toothbrush. Fear of antagonizing the sergeant and drawing a confinement sentence prevented the boy from tossing the rock back into the nco's chest as a swift reaction to the painful blow. The incident was indelibly printed in the young boy's mind and there was frustrated anger as he related the incident.

These are not isolated cases involving persons who were opposed to the government but were representative incidents of what happened to alter the Guyanese society because of the poor mentality of the personnel who were left to manage the nation. Cameras were not allowed in National Service locations and there were incidents of officers seizing and smashing the little black boxes carried to camp by members unaware of the rule.

Two things were accomplished by the establishment of this other arm of the government's military establishment. The National Service was used as a threat to the Defence Force and the People's Militia to stem any acts intent on overthrowing the government. Also, by using the members as laborers without pay in the cotton fields and other farm projects the government utilized slave labor.

Another military organization commissioned was the People's Militia. This group of all-age nationals was yet another line of defence against foreign powers but its actual purpose was to serve as defenders of the Burnham dynasty. The Prime Minister's paranoia made it possible to have several organizations spying on each other and serving as counterbalance against conspirators who planned the overthrow of Prime Minister and government.

Adults and children were being taught to bear arms to protect their leader and establish his life-long dynasty. Many were hyped on the 'Burnham Fever' ditty which they had to learn and sing. Whatever they did to advance 'Burnhamism' they did through Burnham Fever in the mind-controlled system.

The constant spying by one organization or person on another continued to drive the stake of fear deeper into the hearts of the members of the general public. It was the sort of fear that shattered family trust to the extent that sharing of hope and future was almost nonexistent. People kept their plans secretive lest someone quashed their development and everything go wrong.

As a result, the majority of emigres left the country without

the knowledge of relatives and friends. In the government circles it was not surprising to have made an appointment with an official only to find that the person had flown out of the country on the weekend or the very morning of the appointment.

The situation in Guyana seemed very much like the normal state of affairs in socialist countries where the Head of State would hold office for successive terms through rigged elections then eventually cling to continual rule for life. Guyana had reached the stage where nobody cared to vote because they knew the Burnham government would provide fictitious results to maintain the dynasty.

Confusion reigned in every sphere and nationals really had no time to be bothered with political interests. Every day long queues appeared at stores, shops and supermarkets for whatever item was available and the thought of ration slips becoming a reality was gaining strength in the communist-like society.

CHAPTER 6

The Tough Times

All the comforts of the American society were left just there—in America. There was no such thing as potable water, hot or cold, running in the little houses. No comfortable homes with beds, appliances or carpeting. The wide variety of food-stuff and sundry items that was taken for granted and even wasted in the wonderful land of the free was absent from the new society at Jonestown. As a matter of fact, things were even worse than in the rest of the poor downtrodden country that Forbes Burnham had forced into retrogression and decay.

Irrespective of their social, cultural and economic backgrounds and the cities or towns from which they came everyone of those immigrants at Jonestown knew the pleasure of having a fairly decent meal, be it breakfast or dinner, which might have included ham, bacon, eggs, cereal and juices. But that was while they lived in the USA the seat of affluence and the lap of luxury. The closest thing to ham and eggs in their new classless environment still raced about the jungle in the form of the abuya and kiruni wildhogs. But these were not the kind of animals that

anyone would want to call friendly and certainly no inexperienced hunter would want to tangle with. These wildhogs roved in bands of from two hundred to a few thousand and on the run their combined hooves rolled like thunder. If they could have been found the blue-green eggs of the maam would have made an ideal substitute but Jones never allowed his people to forage.

Even the fruits that Reverend Jones had spoken about in his pressure spiel to convince Temple members to emigrate, were nowhere near the commune and the glowing description that they had heard of the land of promise and their own 'city' in the jungle were all untrue. The place was desolate to say the least. Horrible bugs, which the people were not accustomed to, swarmed unceasingly about by day and night. Sandflies made life miserable, mosquitoes drank freely of the cultists blood, cowflies, bees and wasps zeroed in and stung the American pioneers at will. But that was only the beginning of the hardships that Jones' followers had to face. Their skins became blemished with insect bites, rashes and minusculous miburi (tick) settled in the moist areas of their bodies and developed as they sucked on human blood.

The spark that kindled their pioneering spirit in America faded and died with the awesome realization that they had arrived in the 'deep' jungle with very restricted knowledge. To 'Tarzan' fans in the group this was the real thing and there simply was no way out of their dilemma. Visiting a zoo was nothing like being right in the middle of the natural habitat of the wild animals. Busch Gardens, Great Adventure or any other safari trail might have been exciting but not nearly as frightening or dangerous as the wild kingdom of the world and in particular this jungle region of Guyana.

Only those people who have lived close enough to Nature, in forests, wilderness or prairieland could envision and respect some of the sensations that the people of Jonestown felt as each day passed in the unfamiliar jungle which they had found quite

unbearable after living in the safety of the concrete jungles where they knew every crosswalk and ballpark, supermarket and fast food outlet. Waking to the harsh wails of a family of howler monkeys (baboons) was a very frightening experience especially with the mournful wails echoing through the hilly region. The dreadful feeling intensified because none of the cultists ever saw the animals responsible for the eerie sounds.

There was no cinema, theater, amusement park, arcade nor baseball ground for relaxation. Jones didn't bring them all the way to Guyana to relax. All the wonderful things that made their life so easy in America were absent in the thick forest and nearly just as bad in the nation's capital. But Jones' slave camp was a place to work. But the most crushing realization must definitely be the lack of telephone service. There was no way, other than censored mail, for the cultists to reach families and friends in the United States.

Reverend Jim Jones constantly reminded the members of his commune of the dangers of living and working in the jungle and the futility of attempting to escape. There were many who wanted to return to their homes rather than live and work in the fields with such creepy denizens as the huge black tarantulas that dropped out of trees and the three-foot-long salapenters, the brown, scaly iguana-like creature which crawled about with their long slender tongues flashing menacingly. These ugly crawlers sent chills down the spines of the city-bred pioneers. No one wanted to see the land or water boa constrictor in action or become a victim to the deadly bushmaster or rattler. Life was miserable enough with the myriad pepperflies that managed to find their way into the eyes and create a burning sensation which left the orbs red and smarting uncomfortably.

Cute marmoset monkeys, beautiful whistling birds and furry rabbits were a small part of the 'friendlier' fauna that lived in the region but these were not enough to allay the mounting fear for the dozens of dangerous species that made life an uncertainty.

Jim Jones used this natural fear to further intimidate the members of his church.

The group was under constant indoctrination. From the break of day to the last thing before going to bed, for the few short hours they were allowed, Jones pressured his group to believe that if they stepped beyond the barbed wire fence the military and the Amerindians would capture, torture and shoot them. He preached that the people in Guyana were just as hostile to the Temple as the American society and he would protect them as long as they stayed in the commune. The religionist bragged that he had 'connections' with the Guyanese Prime Minister and the cultists had no reason to doubt especially after members of the government, ambassadors and other foreign service staff personnel paid visits to the religious commune and in some cases enjoyed the sexual favors of American women.

Life did not get any better for members of the People's Temple at Jonestown. They were subjected to the worse type of slavery in the world. The enslavement of the mind so narrowed their thought processes that these humans became mere tractable beings to be used and abused by the master figure. They were slaves both in mind and body and worked hard every day from Sunday to Saturday every week without pay. Their meals were far below normal standards though still above the fare that the nationals were exposed to. Meat or fish soon became a delicacy and after a while 'jungle' food made its way into the communal kitchen. Rice, the staple diet in the country, was a major dish in the commune. The church in San Francisco shipped most of the other items like vegetables and cereals which the cooks used to prepare palatable meals. When parcels were received from families in the United States food items were confiscated by the trustees and put aside for the leader.

Letter writing was restricted and all mail had to pass through the Reverend Jim Jones. Being quite remote there was no postal service to the community and Jones had to pick up and deliver

mail to the nearest post office at Matthew's Ridge. All outgoing mail was censored and incoming letters were thoroughly rifled for money and checks which were confiscated and put into the Temple coffers.

The Reverend Jim Jones ruled his church with absolute power. It seemed as though he followed in the path of the Guyanese Prime Minister who had already succeeded in degrading the people and nation and who continued to exploit the human resources at his disposal. After gaining the control of the minds of those who opposed conditions at the jungle commune it became much easier to condition subsequent arrival of more members in their quest for a place in the sun. The man was brutal and used every means to punish those who challenged his rule.

From sunrise to sunset the members of the religious sect were subjected to gruelling labor in the fields. The sharp tropical sun baked their bodies as they cleared the jungle for farming. They tilled the soil and planted crops in the 'good old fashioned way' with inadequate tools. They built more houses to accommodate more members who were expected to settle in the commune by early 1978 and another one thousand were to follow by the summer of 1979. Only the lack of electricity saved the workers from longer hours in the fields but that did not deter Jones from working the group in the camp area where there was electricity from the commune's little generator. They continued building after sunset and then came the hours of brainwashing, religious service and for some, the public punishment for infractions of Jones' rules.

Only a small number of members had arrived in the four-year period that the Jonestown commune had been in existence up to 1977 when the largest contingents ever to travel to the shores of Guyana joined their fellow cultists in the little settlement. It certainly wasn't what they had in mind or expected but after the rough unpleasant boat trip around the Atlantic Coast which had

left them all wobbly and thinking of tales of mariners who braved the currents off the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Horn, many wept. Their numbers put a heavy strain on the facilities. There were more than a thousand people living in buildings that could only take two hundred with a lot of effort. People slept anywhere and everywhere on floors, in hammocks and on cots whenever they were allowed the luxury of sleep. The picture of night movement in the buildings was somewhat like a frame from the movie 'Ben' only these were humans.

But Jones had more guards and spies and a lot more fear to go around. Even though he had shifted his character into a more drastic, completely satanic role it seemed impossible for anyone to escape and therefore it became much easier to accept his dominance while praying secretly for a way out of the jungle.

The church members were used and abused both mentally and physically. Their bodies became tools of pleasure for Jones and those he deemed friends. The idea of communal cohabiting and sodomy in public could only have been devised by a perverted mind that was so base it became animal-like. That sordid practice of public intercourse between unrelated couples, men, women and the more developed youngsters caused psychological wounds that could not have been healed by magic wands nor the passing of time. Children were beaten and teenagers suffered through some lewd and crude indignities. One or two men tried to escape but not knowing where to turn did not help their cause. Looking to the sun for direction or having a compass for the basic cardinal points was as insane as burrowing a hole in the earth to find China. They had no idea where they were in relation to anywhere else in the country and when they were eventually caught their punishment was severe.

There were so many members willing to do Jones' bidding that very few of the trapped cultists bothered to oppose them openly. During all the terrible times they suffered the church members continued to listen to and accept the religious

interpretations, preachings and teachings of Reverend Jones for whom they had developed the sobriquet of 'Father.' For long hours at a time 'Father' preached his gospel and the people sang praises more in reverence to Jones than to the Heavenly Father. The more devious mind of the leader continued to force the belief that it was better to die for social justice and the right to their own religious belief rather than be persecuted by their enemies. The practice of 'white night' which was established in the United States continued in Guyana.

Diarrhea and a few cases of dysentery were present for a while occasioned by the change of diet and the impure water which they ingested. There were other health problems too but Dr. Schacht and his team of nurses worked hard to alleviate the medical sufferings which was so unlike the situation in Georgetown where 'sugar' pills were prescribed for almost every ailment by some doctors frustrated by the lack of supplies in the country.

Several babies were born at the commune and had it not been for the powerful transmitter which Jones used for communicating with the church in San Francisco, Dr. Schacht would not have received instructions for successful caesarean sectioning from doctors in the United States and maybe a few of those Guyanese babies would have entered the world as still births and may well have taken the lives of their mothers as well.

Over the years of indoctrination in California and particularly in the dense forest of Guyana the members of the Temple developed their own paranoia and as time passed the group made the best of the bad times in the community where they were stuck. Those who thought of it lost all hope of leaving Jonestown to return to American soil and turned their souls over to Jim Jones. Guards patrolled the perimeter of the commune by day and night as the cultists slaved through the long hours. Jonestown was no more than a concentration camp for its American residents.

At times the Temple sent teams to play games in the city but

as could be expected these players were trustees who were sure to return to the commune in the jungle. The Temple canned a religious program for airing in the capital every Saturday afternoon on station GBS. The fifteen-minute gospel show was hosted by a female member and carried appeals to the public for instructions on how to use some of the herbs, fruits and nuts. Limited contact with some of the natives in the Port Kaituma region led the cult members to believe that several herbs could have been substituted for 'tea' or used as pleasant beverages. Two shrubs, capadula and coction, were mentioned regularly but these plants were hard for untrained persons to recognize in the complex jungle. The brew from these shrubs and the locust bark were highly potent and could have proved inimical to their interests.

Very few nationals took note of this program although it was heard in many homes. No Guyanese knew that the church was all-American and occupied a separate town or settlement somewhere in the country. In a society with established Hindu and Muslim and Christian faiths such as Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians and others a mild stigma was attached to new religious orders. Termed a 'wayside' or 'clap-hand' church the People's Temple of Jonestown was grouped with revivalists, Unificationists (Moonies), and Hari-Krishnas.

While the slave labor was concentrated in the jungle a small contingent of members were assigned to the two houses in Lama Gardens in the capital. These were all hand-picked trustees who had convinced Jones of their faithfulness but nevertheless they were not allowed Passports or money. About a dozen pretty young women and just as many strong-arm males under the direct supervision of Jones' secretary, Mrs. Sharon Amos, were responsible for the intransit members who arrived at the nation's airport on their way to the commune. Among their various duties was to solicit donations from the business community and give moral support to the Burnham government. It was this

group that waved pro-Burnham placards at the Public Buildings, the seat of the Legislature.

There was no restriction on the area for soliciting and with two motorvans the young ladies traveled the full length of the coastal roadway east of the capital to the Corentyne River border, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. West of Georgetown they drove the short twenty-mile strip of road in search of big business to support their effort of settling in the country. But there was no such thing as big business in Burnham's Guyana. The malfeasant Prime Minister made sure of that by squeezing out or nationalizing the few worthy businesses. Since the government owned all companies the party-appointed management were more concerned with supporting Burnham even as they floundered through incompetence.

With a bit of psychology and some feminine guile the two Afro- and ten Euro-American women of varying attractiveness and ranging in ages from seventeen to about forty years, approached the small businessmen for support in coin or kind. The women spoke of the good work that was being accomplished through the resettlement of people in the interior and asked for support that was necessary to aid them through the transition period. Many of the merchants supplied foodstuff and money but there were not too many prosperous businesses in the country. In fact, Guyana had become such a financial risk and its entrepreneurs and investors so wary that the number of private commercial and industrial companies of any worth were less than fifty. It was the little businessmen who supported the Temple with what little they could have afforded. While the Georgetown group made decent collections none of it got to the community in the jungle. The food was used to feed the members in the city and the money had to go toward operating expenses for the two motorvans and the truck which the men drove.

Conditions in Forbes Burnham's little autocracy which the Prime Minister projected to the world as a cooperative socialist

republic were so horrible that no one could have afforded to donate much of anything. Even rice which stretched for miles in paddy fields at harvest time could not be donated in adequate quantities to feed the commune. In fact, while members of the business community and public in the free and democratic society of years past were happy to donate prizes for school athletics and national and international amateur sporting events the milk of human kindness dried up with the advent of the selfish political leader. Those nationals of the wealthy class had fled the country taking their assets with them and the new breed of people that made up the modern wealthy and upper class were not business-oriented nationals but rather greedy politicians who used their offices to amass personal property.

With prices for commodities as staggering as under Burnham's leadership where a 5-lb live chicken cost about \$17.50 and five pounds of tough, stringy beef from savannah-wild cattle that suffered through lean years without proper feeding, cost close to \$20 it was impractical for people to contribute to the People's Temple with great magnanimity. Donations from butchers were not the everyday American cuts like round, sirloin or roast but much more like stew beef with as much bones as meat. Since very few items were imported by the government, the sole importers, the variety of donated items was restricted to rice and sugar, coconuts and seasonal fruits.

The male members of the cult in the city were responsible for pick-ups of parcels at the General Post Office and clearing customs on equipment and supplies shipped from the church in America by plane or ship. Simple as that should have been it was quite an onerous task in this society where not too many people functioned as workers. Chasing from Customs office to shipping office and back and forth like a pendulum was just another one of the areas where the consumer had to suffer at the hands of the new regime. Collecting parcels from the Post office in Georgetown was not a cut and dried operation either. It was

frustratingly time-consuming to stand on line and watch the slow movement by the staff to open the parcels and inspect the contents. In more cases than not the government workers removed items which they liked or wanted. A few of the recipients would let customs men have the articles but in cases where members of the public started a ruckus the inspecting officer claimed that the articles were banned items.

On one such occasion while waiting his turn on line a member of the cult declared that he would no longer have to clear parcels at the Georgetown Post Office because the Temple had acquired a boat that plied between the USA and Jonestown. This meant that Jones had embarked on direct import without paying excise duties. While this offered a little relief to the men in the city they still had to collect the larger crates of equipment that continued to arrive through the normal shipping lines.

The group in the city rode around the capital and countryside in their vehicles soliciting donations but there was still an air of isolation surrounding the cult. They were afraid to talk to individuals in the streets and only communicated with merchants in their search for donations. Actually, with all their soliciting and placard-bearing activities Jones' group managed to maintain a lower profile than the Hari-Krishnas and the Unification (Moonies) sect. Because of this very few Guyanese knew anything of the Americans living in their midst until the fateful weekend.

Being in the capital was a lot better for the lucky few who did everything that was asked of them because no one wanted to return to the commune at Jonestown. Their meals were of a higher standard and their homes were supplied with the basic necessities of water, electricity and telephones though only the phone service was available on an almost around the clock basis. Besides, they were able to do a little sightseeing in the garbage-strewn city. Like everyone else in the capital Jones' trustees had to shower when water was available and avoid

using the lavatory most of the day because water was not running. Because of daily blackouts that lasted for several hours they also suffered the same food spoilage as all the nationals. Living in the capital exposed the trustees to the reality and pressures that the nationals faced under the Burnham regime and their own roles as pawns to both the leader of the commune and the leader of the country. Some of the government officials were entertained at the Lama Gardens homes on occasions though the group never discussed the conditions at Jonestown.

Sharon Amos, as secretary and an executive in the Jones hierarchy, kept a strict vigil over the group in the city and stymied many a relative who had arrived in the country to witness the development of the commune. Some of these strangers had heard that their relatives were being maltreated and held against their will in the commune and wanted to get them out of Guyana.

On a few occasions journalists made attempts to see Jones but the coldly efficient secretary managed to dissuade attempts to interview the leader of the People's Temple. In most cases Amos pointed out that it was quite difficult to see Jones who was away in the jungle and there was no proper communications link to talk to the minister of religion.

Because of their pledge to support the government of Guyana the Georgetown group supplied a small contingent of eight members as representatives to the Labor Day Parade on May 1, 1978. The eight-foot wide banner which proclaimed the People's Temple of Jonestown caused a mild stir. This annual date was set aside for the support of international workers in communist countries and never was a religious organization present on the parade.

Only two of Guyana's twenty-eight trade unions attended the rally in the face of a general boycott of the proceedings because of the terrible conditions which existed in the country. The two unions, the Clerical and Commercial Workers and the Guyana

Agricultural Workers, were both anti-Burnham groups who were joined on the parade by some 2,500 military and paramilitary members of the Guyana Defence Force, the Police Force, the National Service and the People's Militia in a show of government strength.

The few nationals who witnessed the parade from the safety of their homes on the streets along the route saw the cult as another cog in Burnham's political machinery to hold perpetual sway over their lives. Members of the cult also cast the ballot in support of Burnham at the scandalous referendum which was drawn up by an already illegal government that had been in office past its term.

Whether they lived in the jungle of Georgetown with its muggings, killings, robberies, beatings, shortages and stench or the jungle of Jonestown the brainwashing process continued without respite. At Jonestown the reverend Jones used his public address system to good advantage in the controlled situation. He bombarded his followers with orders and suggestions in just the same manner that 'pop' stations had the young crowd in America hung up on nonintellectual music and TV stations had the gullible public following freakish trends, sex and violence. The world was built on followers and given the right conditioning everybody would suffer for a cause.

Life continued to be one hell after another for these people who had only sought to live in peace and harmony in the new country of adoption. Some prayed earnestly for an end to their stay at the commune or even a change in the conditions but things didn't get any better. Rather they became increasingly worse with each attempt that was made by concerned families, journalists and community leaders to see how the people at Jonestown were living and find out how well the commune was developing.

Those who really wanted to return to the United States but resigned to their fate still held out their hands to hope. Many

managed to hide money around the commune with an everlasting hope that someday it would help them to leave the jungle.

The poor Americans had no recourse because they were so far removed from the American embassy and visits to the Temple by a staff member were few and far between. In any case the officials were treated to the 'nickel' tour which lasted about an hour.

There was no apparent reason for the Embassy personnel to spend more time at the commune. Whenever an official paid an inspection visit the usual 'whitewash' was thrown over everything. The guards usually remained out of sight though very much present to the cultists who presented a vision of happiness. A little more attention to detail in the commune from an experienced civil servant would have illuminated the situation early and prevented the cruelty that the members of the church suffered which led to the eventual wipe out of the settlement. The American Embassy in Georgetown was not even aware that one thousand American citizens had migrated to a delapidated dump like Guyana and taken up residence in untouched forests.

Every aspect of life in Guyana was dependent on government-controlled services which really meant that the services were rotten. If an official wanted to overnight at Jonestown it would have been near impossible or at least cost-prohibitive. A charter plane would have had to fly in twice with just the one visitor. Who would blame the civil servant at the embassy who declined to visit longer with the cult? It was difficult enough to live in Georgetown with all the bugs, rats, roaches, the stench of rotting garbage, the massive blackouts and the long hours without water. At least there was still the comfort of a personal bed in a decent hotel or home to help pass the night.

CHAPTER 7

To the Rescue

The squad of soldiers dispatched from Georgetown aboard the last of the Guyana Airways fleet of two planes arrived on Sunday morning somewhere near the 'rooster' hour. The landing strip, like most others in the country, was barely serviceable for the few aircraft that used it but being a left-over from an old expatriate corporation it was hard-surfaced and adequately lit. For that reason the army chose Matthew's Ridge for entry to the blood-splattered region where the shooting occurred.

Matthew's Ridge once bustled as a manganese mining town in the hills of the North West, carved out of the jungle and settled on a rock bed. In better times the African Manganese Company supported a progressive community of nearly 5,000. Under heavy economic pressures and the political ideology of the Burnham regime the manganese company ceased operations and repatriated leaving the nationals and all company property intact.

As everything else the government capitalized, as best as its limited mentality would allow, on another area already under

development by a foreign company. In an attempt to stabilize the region before the jobless workers drifted back to the capital the administration tried to diversify by establishing an agricultural economy to replace the mining industry which the government was incapable of operating.

It was the old power plant, part of the Manganese Company legacy, that made it possible for the plane to land on a fairly well lit runway where the soldiers disembarked and raced off into the jungle in trucks along the eighteen-mile dirt road. The vehicles ploughed through large pools of water on the road to the tiny airfield at Port Kaituma. Without taking any undue risks in the jungle the soldiers plodded through the last mile of rain-soaked, water-logged dirt road on foot to avoid being ambushed by the gunmen who had attacked the passengers several hours previously.

This exercise was so unlike the army's response to the 1969 uprising by the cattle ranchers of the Rupununi District when the residents of the south savanahs were accused of plotting to overthrow the Burnham government after nine persons, including the district policemen, were killed. In those early years of the independent nation the Guyana Defence Force had acquired a few helicopters which, along with four small Cessna, formed the nucleus of the Air Wing of the Army. These helicopters had transported the soldiers sent in to quell that uprising and because of the flat terrain the nation's defenders were able to jump from the low-hanging 'choppers' and attack the buildings with guns and grenades. When the soldiers realized that there was no return gunfire they sacked the buildings burning houses, barns, abbatoir and all other property and machinery that had been abandoned. So destructive were the officers that no one could think of leaving the ranches intact for continued operations and future development.

On this occasion, however, it did not appear to be that easy. Somewhere in the thick jungle men with semi-automatic weap-

ons were ensconced and nobody had any idea just where they were really located. Entering the jungle in search of armed men was disadvantageous to the army and the soldiers stumbled along the last mile hoping with each step they took that they would not be ambushed. As they neared the airfield where the massacre occurred the uniformed men had no idea what to expect. They spread out fan-like and approached the little airfield cautiously from the cover of the forest. All was quiet as they got to the edge of the opening and when the servicemen saw the tent with their four comrades near the broken plane they relaxed somewhat and moved in.

On the little airfield in the warm sunlight of the early Sunday morning there was the strained calm of death and wounded men grimacing with dull pain. There was ridicule and laughter over the nonparticipation of the four guards to the plane who refused to become involved in defending the unarmed people. After a few minutes they headed for the nearby settlement. Over at the 'port' the rescue squad spoke to the survivors huddled with the natives. The soldiers couldn't help the injured because there was no medic nor were there any medical supplies. These men were trained to defend the nation not to heal the wounded so they moved back into the forest to hike over to the Jonestown commune intent on bringing the killers back to the capital.

It was well into the mid-morning and the sun had already baked the water off the topsoil when the group of soldiers reached the perimeter of the commune. The quietude was unexpected for such a sprawling settlement but as the soldiers spread out and advanced stealthily they observed the small flock of black vultures (carrion crows) that glided into circles and figure-eights with slow effortless grace. Wherever they were observed, patiently circling and waiting to swoop down on carrion, the crows presented a sure sign of death future, present or past. Economic conditions in the country had affected the crows too. The large flocks that ranged every area in past years

had dwindled to little groups that scanned the land from above in search of carcasses.

The nation's defenders advanced carefully but not a person stirred at the settlement and not even a wisp of smoke rose from any of the buildings. Even stranger was the fact that not even a hymn filled the air from the religious settlement. It appeared that the place was deserted or a late sleep-in was in effect for a Sunday before the first faint odor and the sight of several people lying stomach-down crossed the wary minds of the military men. There was something awkward about the commune.

Stealthily they entered the enclosure through the gate and under the barbwire strands then the soldiers stared on the death tabloid spread about the encampment. The faint odor developed with each moment of sunlight that baked the dead bodies. The soldiers were shocked and grew grim at the sight of dozens of unresponsive people scattered about the commune dressed in T-shirts, denims and other rough tropical wear. As they entered some of the buildings the same cold morbid scene touched the men. Death had claimed the lives of several hundred people and that was more than any one of the military men had ever witnessed. Heavy rainfall had soaked the bodies left exposed to the elements all night and the clothing had begun to dry out but none of the soldiers attempted to remove the dead.

The rescue team searched for survivors around the commune and a short distance into the surrounding forest. Bodies were strewn all over the place, some in final embrace, some piled up to four-high and in the main building the cause of the wilfull and wanton destruction of so many human lives stood there as an invitation to further death. The large washtub of poisoned Kool Aid attracted flies and as the insects sipped on the liquid they fell into the galvanized tub. The army broke into rooms in search for survivors but found a large cache of arms and a container of passports which Jones had seized from the members.

In the leader's cottage the sight of gold, diamonds and a very large amount of American currency was tempting.

Back at the Port Kaituma area evacuation of the survivors of the airstrip slaughter had begun and the wounded were flown out of Guyana for treatment at American hospitals. The remains of Congressman Ryan was returned to his hometown.

In their sweep of the commune the soldiers found the body of the leader Jim Jones, with at least three bullet wounds, lying on the bare floor. There was a handgun nearby and three or four more bodies that were shot.

Since there were no detectives on the team and no one really wanted to sift through the whole mess for clues the army called it a cut and dried case of mass suicide. No one there realized or saw any connection with those who had been shot. Jones was the supreme leader and grand exalted Messiah to the cult and the others were top trustees. Some person or persons unknown had snuffed the lives out of those officials who probably knew too much and would have spilled their guts to the authorities had they lived. Jones died at the hands of a very angry person who wanted to see an end to the atrocities being committed on all these misguided people with their mislaid trust.

Certainly, circumstantial evidence pointed squarely to suicidal death of all the members of the People's Temple at Jonestown and the government labeled it as such to reduce the risk of exposure of their involvement with the cult. If all the members of the legislative Assembly were engaged in the executive management of the nation someone of the Elected representatives would have thought it fit to delve into the cause of the multiple deaths but because Forbes Burnham was established as a one-man dictator he shuffled inquisitive locals around and had the bizarre incident closed.

The soldiers continued to search the buildings and surrounding area until it appeared that none of the Temple members were alive. With nothing else to do some of the soldiers swung into a

debasing activity in a cleanup that paralleled the ghoulish robberies carried out by area residents the previous evening at the Port Kaituma airstrip.

Guyanese had suffered ceaselessly for years from shortages of every kind and the temptation of all the food items and personal property that was in evidence was too great for the soldiers who reasoned that the articles could no longer be of use to the departed or serve in any worthwhile manner in the 'ghosttown' that remained.

What really started as a simple raid on the larder for onions, potatoes, canned meats and other items missing from the local diet for several years, turned into a scavengers' picnic with money, watches and rings being snatched off the bodies in furtive movements around the settlement.

On Monday morning, after learning of the situation at the commune where untold wealth had been discovered, Mrs. Viola Burnham, the wife of the country's Prime Minister and the nation's Crime Chief Cecil Roberts flew to the site in the jungle and the devil cast his lot.

Thirty-six hours had elapsed since death and the odor from the decaying sun-baked remains was nauseating but the greedy people searched and grabbed and fought verbally for the American currency without respect or care for the untouched dead. Everybody underwent a metamorphosis to vulture-like beings and collected every valuable item they could. Like carrion crows they started picking the commune clean. The soldiers broke locks and barricades, doors and safes to steal everything from sneakers to money and jewelry.

The presence of the Prime Minister's wife and a senior Police Officer who took part in the ghoulish behavior gave license to the soldiers. The military men simply followed the example set by no less a personality than the wife of the nation's Prime Minister.

It was apparent that Jim Jones had stored quite a huge sum of

American currency, checks and money orders in his house at the commune. Like many nationals of the country he did not trust his money to the local banks. As the soldiers broke into the rooms they came upon the money in just the same manner as they had found the small arsenal. The more money they found the more their greed intensified and they searched everywhere thoroughly.

With all concentration on stealing no one bothered to count the bills in the illegal and disorderly transfer of ownership. Of one thing all were certain, not one worthless Guyana currency note was in Jones' coffers. But it really was hard to expect a physical count of all that money especially since it was not being turned over to any authorities. It was a 'finders keepers weekend' and those who found the money certainly had no intention of parting with their spoils. The search for valuables was conducted more like a free-for-all grab-bag session with Mrs. Burnham's greed getting the better of her poor training and low moral scruples.

The soldiers dug up small areas of the farm and money was found buried at the roots of banana suckers, orange plants and in other locations around the camp. This gave rise to the belief that some of the members of the commune had found a way to stash money for that ever-elusive rainy day. Somehow American currency had slipped past the prying eyes and groping fingers of the trustees and the recipients had buried the cash while working in the fields.

Some of the soldiers who were first to arrive at Jonestown after the mass murders and suicides guessed that there had been more than two million dollars in good American currency that got 'airing' at the commune that weekend. Nobody there had ever seen all that cash before. Coming so hard on the heels of the number of human beings who had lost their lives at the settlement, the stench that rose and the realization that they could never have such a chance again the soldiers tossed

regulations and morality to the wind. Cash, gold and diamonds changed hands without question, fear or guilt. A large portion of the wealth was stored in a suitcase which Mrs. Burnham collected in a spate of vituperation.

In the money melee one soldier slit the seat of the truck he drove and stuffed his loot where he could sit on it then eventually move it to the coast. A few others hid their portions in some very strange places to avoid detection. Some devised original ways to shift their new found wealth to the coast without being caught on their return to the capital.

Mrs. Burnham flew back to Georgetown with the suitcase of American currency and valuable gold and diamond jewelry with Crime Chief Roberts riding shotgun. Whatever the motive for Mrs. Burnham's interest in the remains of the cult it certainly wasn't sympathy. What puzzled the public for a while was why did the Prime Minister's wife visit the site of all those deaths while the Prime Minister stayed away. She definitely had no official function but an obsessive greed might have drawn her to the settlement. Several members of the public saw Mrs. Burnham with the suitcase when she arrived in Georgetown yet she did not turn the evidence over to the authorities nor was the suitcase lodged with the Prime Minister. As a matter of fact never once did she utter a word about her visit to the commune and how and where she disposed of the currency remained a subject of debate for a long time.

But anything could have been expected for this was the strangest incident to occur in this sleepy little nondeveloped country where the silent majority got swept underfoot of the brazenly loudmouthed few who were intent on the destruction of the higher standards of the upper class.

No senior government minister nor administrative official traveled to Jonestown for investigations of the tragedy during the first few days. Everybody seemed too preoccupied with wiping out all traces of involvement with the dead preacher and

his equally dead followers who had given the world another long distasteful look at Sir Walter Raleigh's unperturbed Eldorado.

The soldiers never bothered to move, cover or wrap the numerous bodies that lay molding, most of them on the cold, clayey-loam soil and others inside the buildings. The way things were in the country there just may not have been sufficient material to wrap all those bodies. There certainly wasn't enough caskets or coffins and body bags were still a novelty in Guyana.

There were no facilities in all of Guyana to undertake the massive preparations for the disposition of the dead. Burial of that many would have taken a couple of months as would shipping the remains back to America. The People's Temple had ceased to exist and as time elapsed only a few members had been found alive in the nearby forest where they had bolted to escape the drastic ritual.

Soldiers used helicopters equipped with public address systems to hover over the steaming jungle and hail out to survivors who were thought to be scattered and lost in the endless forest. Among those found in the vicinity of the settlement were Tim Carter and Michael Prokes, two of Jones' executives who had not taken the poison. These men knew every plan, every detail and every payoff that Jones had arranged for the right to use the huge tract of forested land for his American-based church. Carter and Prokes were the 'go-betweens' who later claimed that they were responsible for transferring funds to the Russian Embassy in Georgetown and to the Guyanese Prime Minister.

Officials hurriedly processed Carter and Prokes and placed them aboard an American-bound aircraft on Monday, just two days after the killings, and bade them a hasty, official goodbye before members of the press could really interview them. Yet for some unexplainable reason the oldest member and survivor of the commune who had run into the forest rather than drink the laced Kool Aid, was not allowed to leave the country immediately. As anxious as the octogenarian was the govern-

ment bureaucratic tape frustrated her attempts as it did a few others.

Then it was discovered that Dr. Larry Schacht was missing. His disappearance without trace and two lost boats triggered the theory that the young doctor had executed his last order for Reverend Jones and made good his escape.

Jim Jones did not plan his death nor was it likely that he took his life. The development plans and his preparations were too elaborate for someone who had reached the end or feared for his life. There were no debts outstanding and his operational costs in Guyana were not as high as some might want to believe. In fact, most of the funds were parceled out in huge bribes to local officials and not for actual development.

Even though Jones had trained his followers to drink the poisonous liquid and die for his cause and that of communism the minister never drank the liquid and never intended to take his own life. Jones was not a leader by example. He adhered to the old principle of 'do as I say not as I do.' That rule that Guyanese recognized as being practiced by Prime Minister Burnham on his band of 'new upper-class' illiterates.

The American religious leader had stashed away so much money and jewelry which he had taken from the members of his church that he could never have been without funds if he had lived. Then too he had real estate, machinery and equipment that boosted his net worth and he could have slipped across the border at any time. Actually the leader's original plan to flee to Venezuela with Dr. Schacht, Tim Carter, Michael Prokes and the bundle of wealth could have included the Georgetown secretary, Sharon Amos. The executive thereby forming the nucleus to start again in another country because another 1,000 church members from the recruiting center in San Francisco were due in the summer of 1979.

Dr. Schacht must have developed a conscience while tending the sick and delivering so many babies in the short time the

group had been operating in the Guyana forest. Chances were that Schacht, the two Carter brothers and Prokes had a change of heart and did not really admire the methods Jones employed to keep his followers in line and must have pondered their future which looked extremely fraught with litigation and other troubles after the senseless slaying of Congressman Ryan's group at the airfield.

The cold-blooded murders of all those visitors on the airfield was the last straw that broke the back of the proverbial camel and Dr. Schacht was the most likely suspect in the shooting death of Jim Jones. The theory was advanced that the young doctor, feeling remorseful at being responsible for so many deaths, shot the maniac who ordered the catastrophe then grabbed a share of the money, rushed down to the river where the boats were moored and motored downriver to the Venezuelan-Guyana border. Nobody would have stopped the vessel though a few residents at Morawhanna must have seen the cruiser on its way to the mouth of the Waini River.

Having a great relationship and a clear knowledge of the officials in the government Prokes and Carter chose to face the not too intelligent investigators whom they made deals with and without any trouble the immigration service ushered the key witnesses out of the backward country.

As the days rolled by the dead bodies became swollen and the local army could not cope with the stench that emanated from the heaped, partially decomposed bodies. Because they had never witnessed anything of this magnitude and therefore had no experience in dealing with mass burial the army did not put much effort into counting the dead.

Somewhere back in 1963-64, throughout the year or so of interparty hostilities between the ignorant followers of the PPP and the PNC due to the political machinations of party leaders Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham the total deaths from bombings, shootings and all other life-taking methods, was less than 200.

The largest toll of any one incident being the 120 souls who perished with the bombing of the river vessel 'Sun Chapman' in the Demerara River. Yet, in what was supposed to be a religious settlement, more than 900 people had lost their lives within half an hour as a result of the two striking incidents.

By the time the upper echelon of the People's National Congress government stopped shunting blame for the commune around the usually garrulous Prime Minister appeared to have lost his voice as he fell into a disturbed quiet. Forbes Burnham did not want the CIA nor the US Armed Forces involved in the affair even though almost everyone at the commune was American and it was a Federal offence to kill the Congressman.

However, the public had hoped the incident would provoke the American government to send troops to free the oppressed nation or the British Army to return and remove Burnham from office thereby suspending the constitution as was done in 1953.

Of course, it was all wishful thinking but it was the fervent hope of those Guyanese who had suffered for too long under a very callous and selfish political Head of State.

The country had become an independent nation and the electorate would therefore have to take adequate steps to alter the course that the young country had embarked upon.

The sometimes abusively-inclined nincompoop who aided with the establishment of Jonestown and who habitually berated the evils of European societies and Western achievements eventually pulled the stopper out of his mouth and called on the United States government to remove the remains of their nationals from the jungle area where Jones had held total control and what definitely appeared to be immunity from local interference, both in life and death.

Burnham handled the affair as though Jonestown was the 52nd state and when he declared that all the victims were Americans he wilfully turned his back on more than thirty

babies who were born at the commune which made them legally Guyanese whose births would have been registered in Guyana.

In the diplomatic service honest people lost their integrity for various reasons and in the Jonestown tragedy, which dropped like a bomb, a few Americans wrapped their hearts in diplomatic silence and hoped that the mess would all go down quietly. Embassy officials did not comment on the hasty expulsion of Jones' top lieutenants, Michael Prokes and Tim Carter, the disappearance of Dr. Schacht nor the fact that millions of American dollars had been stolen by those people who had gone to the settlement to investigate the carnage and found the horror of mass suicide.

The Prime Minister's plea was answered almost immediately and although a local pathologist had begun the examination of the bodies for certification of death there still was no proper count until the US military arrived with all the necessary equipment for handling the badly swollen and decomposed remains. The troops looked like spacemen with their masks but they did their work diligently, and above all, efficiently.

Huge US military helicopters ferried the laden body bags from the jungle site to the national airport where transport planes waited to fly the unidentified dead Americans back to their homeland. Timehri Airport became a focal point for many Guyanese who wanted to experience the airlift and learn more of the truths behind the bizarre incident at the Jonestown they had newly discovered.

By the time the last body was removed, almost two weeks after the tragic occurrence, the count of bodies had reached a staggering 914 and the disparity with the local army count was explained as an inability of the GDF to count those bodies which lay at the bottom and covered by other bodies in the mounds of human flesh.

The wealth of Jonestown had dwindled before the US Army arrived but things were not all peaches and cream for the people

who reaped the 'dead' windfall. About a week after she returned to the city Mrs. Viola Burnham met with an unfortunate accident which left her with a 'twisted' arm. An official health bulletin was released from 'The Residence,' the Prime Minister's official home, which stated that Mrs. Burnham took a spill from her horse and broke her arm. However, the ever-knowledgeable Guyanese 'lip press', spurred by members of the Prime Minister's guards and domestic help, let it be known that Mrs. Burnham was kicked by the family's favorite jackass.

A young NCO brought eleven thousand American dollars in a brown paper bag to the Royal Bank of Canada in Georgetown to be exchanged for local currency. The young male teller took one look at the green contents of the bag, eased it aside and told the soldier he had to get the manager. The soldier swiftly exited the bank leaving the foreign currency on the inside of the teller's window. The bank employee never bothered to call the manager but at lunch break calmly took his brown paper 'lunch' for a walk out of the bank without raising a bead of perspiration.

The possession of foreign currency remained a very serious offence in Guyana where Burnham's courts hand down stiff penalties to persons engaged in trading foreign currencies.

Another soldier splurged his share of the Jonestown goldmine. At a time when black market prices for US dollars were reaching new heights at as much as Guy\$7 for US\$1 this soldier purchased a car, a house and got married but he couldn't buy happiness nor stability. Over a period of time his bubble collapsed and he lost all his assets.

But there were those who wisely waited on time and chance. They had hidden their money for better days which came along later. A few migrated to the United States when their visas were processed. They were able to stow their American currency out of Guyana and eventually purchased homes. At least five of these one-time soldiers live in New York.

More than a million American dollars circulated in the Guyana

underground currency exchange as a result of the Jonestown tragedy and the suitcase that Mrs. Burnham airlifted like an overnight case had not been included though some of the soldiers estimated its currency value to be about one million American dollars.

The final mop up operations at Jonestown were not what one would have expected under better economic conditions in Guyana but not too many nationals continued to live with the honesty of a bygone era. Forbes Burnham, without labor experience and political know-how had piloted the nation onto rocks of nonprosperity from his very first day in office and after fourteen years his lack of ability and resiliency to the needs of the people culminated in the disaster that was Jonestown with a subtle reminder of the volatile situation that could cause another historic happening.

After the worst of handling the deceased was over members of the People's Militia and the National Service stationed near Matthew's Ridge township arrived at the ghost town with the same attitude as those who had passed through before. Like vultures they raped the settlement of cups and saucers, sneakers, tumblers, radios, clothes and whatever else they wanted. Some took small items as mementos of the historical event while others wanted articles that could bring cold cash on the market. Eager hands snatched up items that people would have been glad to buy at exorbitant prices. Sneakers (US\$15) were sold at G\$125; small table radios (US\$12) were priced at G\$425 and 35mm cameras (US\$79) were sold at G\$1,200 and many more articles that were used by the Americans entered the mainstream of the Guyanese society. Many pieces of personal property had new owners long before the original owners were laid to rest.

Strange enough, when all the excitement, thrill or morbidity waned nobody could recall finding any Bibles in the religious commune and the sparse crops did not appear to have been too long planted. None of the local military personnel seemed

content to stay and guard the settlement. With nothing much left to occupy their time and minds superstitions took charge of their idle thoughts. To think constantly of over nine hundred restless ghosts that paraded the area because of the manner of death was just too much for the members of the Defence Force, People's Militia and National Service.

Some forty cult members remained in Guyana after the initial shock wore off around the world. Most of these were young Euro-American women between the ages of 18 and 25 who rode around in government vehicles as they continued to give support to the Burnham regime. There were several Afro-American men who laid claim to all the property left around the country including the homes in Lama Gardens and the vehicles, some of which they still used around the city.

These members were basically of the Georgetown group who had found living in the city acceptable and the tropical weather in the country to their liking. Some of the very young girls could well have been runaways from American homes and who had found their niche in the strange likeable country.

CHAPTER 8

Street-Level Economics

Not too many people ever go into Guyana today. In fact, as recent as a few years ago, North Americans thought it was a country somewhere in Africa and West Indians believed it was another island in the Caribbean chain. However, if you have never been there you haven't missed anything unless you're greedy for punishment. If you've lived there up to 1970 chances are you know of the better days and fabulous potential that Jim Jones and many others recognized and you shouldn't want to burden yourself with the results of the nation's costliest mistake—Forbes Burnham.

If you want to return there or plan to migrate to what could easily be the best land in the world through the next century, wait until the country is rid of the unscrupulous Burnham and his few evil aides who constantly bicker for top billing in the circus of a legislature. Under a democratic government elected through fair and free balloting and with free enterprise as its platform this magnificent country will blossom forth.

I was not prepared for the shock of a totally deteriorated

Guyana when I flew out of New York. It did not even occur to me that the flight was 'island hopping' but, once I knew, I figured I could live with that little disadvantage until I found it impossible to get a cup of coffee at any of the three airport lounges in the Caribbean islands we stopped at. It seemed like everyone was being encouraged to become alcoholics with all the liquor that was catered but there was no coffee or sustenance for the tired and hungry travelers.

A team of soccer players from the Guyana Defence Force joined the flight at Piarco Airport in Trinidad for the hop over to the South American mainland and I got my first dose of the rowdy mentality of the new Guyanese society. Their annoyingly vociferous singing, particularly of a ditty about 'Burnham Fever,' and overwhelming joy led me to believe that the team had been victorious but I asked for an ease in the noise anyway. Then I learned that they had been vanquished. If the soldiers had won, the final leg of the trip would have been unbearably noisy and disconcerting for other passengers. I couldn't believe this uncouth behavior was a part of the Guyanese culture.

Arriving at 1:30 a.m., the following day, some sixteen hours after leaving New York without crossing the International Date Line, then spending two hours to clear Customs and Immigration was a little frustrating but then I didn't realize just how much change had taken place under the Burnham government until I had spent several weeks moving around the country. The clean streets of Georgetown with neat painted homes and private gardens had lost their splendor. Everything and everywhere had become drab as the people lost enthusiasm and pride and dirt and grime spread even to the highly residential neighborhood of Alberttown-Queenstown.

Most of Guyana had been my old stomping ground for more than a decade when I took to forest surveys like a duck to water so it was natural that I would want to know why such a drastic retrogressive change had taken place in the country that was

primed with potential and human energy that needed molding into a model nation.

Returning to self-rule after the political fiasco of 1953 the country had shown a willingness to separate the evil influences of communism from the working class and proved that there were nationals capable of investing, building, managing and fighting for a free and democratic society. For the first time nationals had pooled their limited financial resources to float a public company, the Banks Brewery.

A superb investment package with development incentives granted by the Jagan government enabled the company to declare a huge profit in its first year but that also encouraged the government to rescind the tax- and duty-free clauses that were granted for a 7-year period.

It seemed like a good idea to investigate the conditions in the country that the Burnham government had been touting as progressive cooperative republic. Sure it was cooperative. The nationals were encouraged, coerced and eventually forced to cooperate in making life extremely comfortable for the Prime Minister and miserable for themselves.

Because of a lack of business acumen and general ability, which even he did not recognize, Prime minister Burnham had no idea of what to do to hold on to the established stable economy he inherited and from the results of his years in office it was obvious that his economic advisors were unable to propose workable solutions to advancing economic problems.

Unlike his predecessor, Dr. Jagan, who let the experienced career officials carry on their duties Forbes Burnham, in his quest for absolute power, undermined the establishment and replaced capable executives with card-bearing status-seekers sympathetic to his cause. In their own way these incompetent workers accomplished their desires by playing on Burnham's ego and rising to positions they could not hold. Only Forbes Burnham could have been that stupid to place his sycophants in

positions to feather their own nests while they propped up his government. However Burnham did acquire unlimited power and proved that he was always a man of limited ability.

As a young, vibrant trade unionist of the early sixties I led striking workers during the 80-day general strike that crippled the Jagan government and forced it to rescind the infamous Kaldor Budget of 1963 which was aimed at hiking prices 50 to 100%. The trade unions still had the same old heads who were affiliated with Burnham for long years and therefore were too afraid to oppose the senseless direction the government had taken.

In the mid-sixties when a group of workers were told by their executive officer that their democratic rights stopped at the gates to the office he became a target of snide remarks and ridicule. Then the brain drain got into full swing and he and a few others on staff subsequently left the civil service for distant shores but those who remained saw their democratic rights trampled under the weighty feet of Forbes Burnham.

To a question posed to some of the trade union leaders regarding their lack of opposition to the hardships imposed on their members and the public as a whole the leaders declared that these were different days. What was so different about the Jagan and Burnham eras? Jagan sought to raise taxes 50% to 100% and had the Trade Union Congress bracing the country into bankruptcy. He was eventually dumped at the next elections but Burnham had forced the ambivalent TUC to accept price increases on basic items way beyond the Jagan proposals.

Burnham's dogmatic attitude had driven fear into the hearts of Joe Pollydore, Richard Ishmael, Winslow Carrington, Oscar Henry, Norman Semple and many more. All the TUC leaders were afraid to go to jail or be beaten by Burnham's strong arm men and by accepting high government offices they sold out the working class to the slave owners. These days were different because everyone was afraid.

I remembered the police brutality I tasted at the hands of Assistant Superintendent Laurie Lewis who, in blind ignorance, threatened the striking workers daily during the 80-day strike with guns and tear smoke. On one such occasion too many when Lewis overstepped his bounds and ordered his nine-man police team to prepare for shelling the peaceful workers with tear gas I advised the workers to forget the policemen and trounce the upstart officer for giving the order. The officer peeled off his mask and cried that day but subsequently sent his men to single me out for a whipping with their rifle butts and he kicked me while I languished on the ground. This officer had since reached a lecturing position in the newly established National Service where children were being trained to bear arms.

The minimum wage in Guyana was \$11 (US\$4.75) a day and I thought it would be interesting to cost a weekly shopping basket but there weren't too many items and the prices were staggering. Black eye and split peas which were retailed at 16¢ per pint during the Jagan years and couldn't rise to 24¢ had eventually climbed out of the shopping basket at \$2.70 per pint under Burnham and his government even proposed to ban their importation. A 10-oz box of cereal was priced at \$24; a gallon container of vegetable oil cost \$25; eggs reached as high as \$3 each during the Christmas season; a 4-oz jar of coffee was \$8.50; garlic \$20 per lb; chop meat \$6.50 per lb; chicken \$3.50 per lb.

Mangoes were sold at 3 for \$1 and an elderly woman asked the fruiterer how many she could get for fifty cents. The instant reply was, "We don't sell less than \$1." The woman's next remark surprised me as she reminisced, "Well, apples came all the way from England and we got at least two for fifty cents."

With prices that high and the Trades Union Congress executives continued support of the government rather than the workers it was small wonder that the country's workers eventually

realized that they had been sold into economic bondage. As a result they withheld their labor and the situation really deteriorated.

Shop owners were not required by law to package most of the commodities and homeowners therefore had to tote along containers, plastic and paper bags for items such as meats, fish, rice, flour, sugar, crackers, oil, salt and anything else that was not imported in packaged economy sizes.

Roaches, flies or bees had their choice of the exposed items in the little shops though the minimarts and supermarkets were a little better off except they stocked bottles of strange-looking locally produced ketchup that oozed fomentation out their unsealed corks and looked horrible on the shelves. This was just a little of what the Guyanese consumer had to put up with in their new Burnham-run society.

Householders found daily living very stressful. It was impossible to feed a family on the necessary nutritional diet because of the prohibitive cost. Peas and white rice boiled in coconut milk became an established diet and local herbal (bush) teas took the place of imported coffee, cocoa, tea and other imported beverage bases.

Even bedspreads and sheets were confiscated when shipped in by overseas residents attempting to ease the strain imposed by the selfish Prime Minister who, on several occasions, had his luxury items flown in by special courier.

While Burnham aggressively encouraged the use of local substitutes when queried by the public at some of his roadside meetings, his homes were well stocked with a wide variety of banned imports from hair sprays to apples and canned meats. When toilet soap was not available on the market the vociferous Prime Minister told the inquirers to use dounce leaves which makes a little foam when crushed.

From early morn young people seemed to suckle on the nutrients of malt liquor. It was not uncommon to see two

persons imbibing a 24-bottle case of beer at a neighborhood tavern or drowning their ambitions with hard liquor.

The meteoric rise in prostitution, not restricted to the lower class, as women at all levels attempted to adjust to the shortages and roaring inflation occasioned the operation of many sleazy motels and hotels around the country that once boasted a very high level of purity. To these people everything was government-owned and with poor services their derisive taunts of 'This is Burnham's bus' or whatever helped to take a little edge off the rough life.

Soon enough the streets became home to many individuals who could not withstand the all-encompassing pressures which the Burnham government fostered and who gave vent to incoherent ramblings proving a dire need for psychiatric attention.

The government had supposedly earmarked \$100,000 in support for the Freedom Fighters in Africa and taxed its workers \$35 per month. Whether these payments were actually forwarded was questionable. Then, too, paychecks were further cut by party dues taken out to support Forbes Burnham's PNC. The average monthly pay for a government worker was \$300 and with all the regular deductions plus the two compulsory additions a take home check looked a lot more like \$175. In Guyana that could have purchased a pair of leather slippers which appeared to be the national wear although the Prime Minister was a believer in high-top western boots and expensive all-leather shoes.

There was an adage, 'the stricter the government, the wiser the population,' so naturally, the workers devised means of recouping wages lost to the government's fiscal rape. Policemen, the fingers on the long arm of the law, reached into the pockets of persons with nefarious character and those who skirted or bent the law to stay just one step ahead of the undertakers.

In the crowd that gathered daily at a popular bar adjacent to the taxi stand at the Stabroek Market Square in the middle of

downtown Georgetown, policemen collected \$1 from each taxi driver in return for turning their backs on oversteering offences. The \$1 was insignificant but it was the start of a million. It seemed a happy though risky and illegal medium for all concerned. The government got its slice of the pie, the police shook down the taxi driver who in his turn carried one or two extra passengers every trip to get his share. A cop averaged \$40 a day and recouped everything that Burnham deducted many times over every month.

The Pegasus Hotel on Georgetown's beach front was in partnership with the Government of Guyana and Trust Houses Forte which was charged with its operation. Unfortunately, management was not aware of the two 'in house' call girls who operated out of a lobby office with a clear view of unattached males who registered.

These vivacious, high-priced, vamps one an Afro- the other an Indo-Guyanese, would solicit by dialing the rooms to offer their services. Local Johns couldn't afford to stay at the Pegasus and foreigners never squawked so there was no fear of arrest.

Waiting for the arrival of Venezuelan President Andrez-Perez for a Press Conference I ambled out to the driveway to get a couple pictures but chatted with a fascinating young woman until a mutual acquaintance introduced us formally and occasioned my embarrassed apologies for my light-hearted conversation. In my quest into the real conditions and aspirations of the country I had zeroed in on the male members of the Legislature and missed out on the distaff. My introduction was to the Minister of State for Education, Shirley Field-Ridley.

That behind me, I watched as a uniformed policeman tried to impress some urgency upon a Venezuelan member of the President's security team who couldn't speak English and seemed aggravated at being distracted from his duties. I figured I could help with my spanish limited to 'Jo tequiro hasta manana' so I approached the frustrated cop who brushed me aside with a

grouchy "Never mind." Yet he pursued the security officer and pointed to 15-year-old Indo-Guyanese girl who lurked in the shadows of the early evening.

Then I got the picture. I called the policeman over and chided him for trying to jeopardize the Venezuelan's job even if he didn't mind his own which he had put on the line while playing procurer for the frail teenager. He seated the girl in the lobby during my wait.

In almost every office there was graft and corruption. Some workers thought it was their right to expect a tip for making up paychecks or signing some necessary document. Better still if members of the public needed any kind of service and particularly in emergencies they were at the mercy of some very unmannerly scalpers.

The dissatisfied workers who were quite bitter at the government, hit back in any way possible without jeopardizing their livelihood but their efforts did not really harm the few politicians who were totally responsible for this disaster of a nation. Every day, as religiously as Jim Jones' brainwashing sessions, there were political indoctrination classes held in government offices which the workers had to attend or face a reprimand and possible loss of job.

On the Corentyne Coast where Forbes Burnham dared not tread heavily and where the nationals still contrived to keep their homes and surroundings in fair condition, potatoes, sardines and other banned foodstuff were getting to the people from across the border. Police officers were among the 'importers' of contraband which they sold at high prices.

An ingenious adaptation from an old movie was put into practice to transport potatoes down the coast. Someone ordered a casket and hearse be sent to Crabwood Creek, a border village on the Corentyne River, where the vegetables were packed in the casket and passed mournfully through the police checkpoint.

Not too many people wanted to check a hearse let alone a casket.

Guyanese peddlers had become international hucksters. By taking a few needed items to Trinidad and Barbados they financed their shopping trips to those countries. The Guyana currency was not accepted anywhere in the world so it was of no value to anyone leaving the country. Travel across the Dutch river on the Guyana border was a booming industry for the Dutch ferry boats. For a mere \$30 a Guyanese could be in and out of Nickerie after shopping with limited funds.

On one such trip I watched the operations openly so as not to appear like a cop waiting to pounce on a felon but a young woman who stepped off the Dutch ferry at Springlands on Guyana's eastern border developed a sudden uneasy feeling every time we caught each other's eyes. Whatever guilt she felt was of no concern to me and we traveled by separate taxis to the Berbice River crossing where, once again, she was edgy when I turned up to join the boat. On the other bank of the Berbice River a special car raced her away but she must have made it through the checkpoint without any trouble.

There were five passengers and the driver in my car when it was flagged down and pulled over to the curb at the police roadblock about 9 p.m. Somehow a policeman took a liking to my overnight bag and told me to open it. Of all the luggage there mine was singled out for contraband inspection and I asked the cop if he had a search warrant. That must have shocked him and he stuttered through some excuse for not having one. Since I had already been cleared at the port of entry by Customs officials more than six hours earlier and I had already traveled at least sixty miles into the country I was not about to be stalled, hungry and tired, on the dark roadway sifting through dirty clothing and cosmetics. I expressed my feelings with quiet civility when I told the cop that I was not going to open the bag and if he did I would sue him and his

senior officers and the Prime Minister of the country by 8 a.m., the following morning.

That was too heavy for the officer to handle especially since he had nothing to gain so he instructed the driver to proceed. Back in the car the driver explained that I should have placed a \$20 bill on the bag as that was the customary thing to do but I was not one for bribery and corruption.

The 'ripoff' artistry of the Burnham government was most reprehensible in the area of overseas travel. Airline tickets to foreign lands carried a 20% tax and travelers had to pay an airport tax of \$25 but none of that was possible unless the passenger first got a Tax Clearance from the Inland Revenue Service. Only with this clearance would any airline issue a ticket to leave the country and because of the mad dash for borders east, west, north and south the one office for this service was under siege daily by hundreds of nationals.

An uneducated man who, for most of his life had been a scalper at city cinemas and spent a short period as a teacher in the Jagan era, saw an opportunity to become a gouger and grabbed it. Barney Johnson, one-time steelband leader and target of the newspaper expose "Monkey Business at Monkey Mountain," acted as agent and procurer.

Almost every day this crude, muscular man walked along the long queue at the Tax Clearance office stopping at one person or another to collect passport, papers and \$50 from anyone who could afford to pay. There were many who could not afford to spend hours waiting for, and talking to, Tax Inspectors and this man cut their hassles and time considerably. The big man claimed he had an insider who drew \$25 for issuing the required Clearance and many people got theirs in this manner.

The health services suffered drastically under the Burnham government, too. At the Georgetown Hospital, the major health care center in the country and recognized in many countries as a teaching institution, the services were chaotic. Shortages of

every kind including medicines and equipment plagued the hospital. Nurses cut cloth and old clothes to make bandages and some spent time knitting crochet bandages too.

A motorcyclist, with a fractured hip after being hit by an automobile, was brought to the hospital but none of the porters whose job it was to handle patients was present. The driver and the injured man combined their knowledge and contrived somehow to get the patient onto the stretcher and into the emergency room where he waited hours for a doctor to see him.

On another occasion I brought an extremely ill elderly man to this hospital and had to move the patient from car to stretcher and into the emergency room because the porters were not keen in doing their job. They just stood around idly passing time. I buttonholed one of the nurses as she was doing a 'sight' evaluation of the emergency cases and she turned into the cubicle, took a quick look at the stretched-out elderly patient and declared, "Oh, he just come. We got others before him." It was so distressing to hear a human being speak so flippantly of the suffering of another.

In the hospital wards it was not uncommon to find two patients on a narrow bed and some even on floors. There were a few dedicated nurses who left their jobs in disgust and frustration because they couldn't help the ailing patients for want of medical supplies.

Transportation was yet another source of stress in this country with a government that was sucking the people dry through personal expenditures. By tearing down the Railway system the administration messed up the only feasible mode of transportation.

In the years when the East Coast trains transported scholars and workers up and down the coast the first train out of Mahaicony started its run about 5 a.m., to cover the thirty-odd miles to the capital. The eight-car locomotive with at least one thousand rush-hour passengers clung to schedule to get workers on the job and students to school on time.

In 1972 the government scrapped the nation's railway system and replaced it with a new bus service. The fleet of motorcoaches was purchased from Tata Industries of India and as everything else the wisdom of the incompetent people who managed the new system shone through.

But the changeover was just another confusing step taken by a government that continued to grow more insensitive to the needs of the people. The new Guyana Transport Services put one 58-seat bus to fill the vacuum left by the removal of the 8-car 5 a.m., train. There was no way that a 58-seat bus could transport the large rush-hour crowd but the government persevered with the totally inadequate service.

So vindictive was the Burnham government that they pulled off the privately-owned buses and the owners had to mothball the vehicles and hope for some change to the better in the future. By 1977 the government nationalized the only decent and efficiently-run bus service, Motor Transport Limited (MTL), which operated on city streets. This private enterprise had been in operation since the 1940s and one of its first vehicles was still in service. All of MTL vehicles had been operating much longer than the Guyana Transport vehicles.

Every day, throughout the country where GTS operated its services, workers were left stranded for hours and students couldn't get to classes on time and this transit condition helped to further cripple the nation's productivity and deteriorate the educational standard.

Only five years after its inception more than half of the 450 vehicles put in road service had been wrecked and most of the others cannibalized to keep some sort of transport system operable. The vehicles that were still serviceable had their little faults like being stuck in gear or having windows that wouldn't budge. I never thought that I would ever see such a laughable situation but on one particularly rainy day I rode in a GTS bus on which half the windows were stuck in the open position.

Passengers opened umbrellas at the windows to avoid being wet.

The utilities situation was at its worst ever. Throughout the nation residents found it hard to store perishables as power was in short supply. Refrigerators burnt out with the surge of power whenever it was restored and those householders who didn't cook meats and fish suffered their loss.

Cinema patrons had yet another ax to grind when they attended a show and blackout hit the area. In time several of the cinemas installed auxiliary power plants in just the same manner as the hospitals and many other commercial and private places. There were so many of these power plants in Georgetown that if they were linked the capital would have had continuous electricity provided there was finances to purchase fuel.

In a country that had water stretching its length and breath it seemed strange that the government would claim water shortages. In Georgetown and New Amsterdam most of the water was pumped from large rivers and in recent years the salt Atlantic water was making its way higher up the inland waterways yet no project was designed to move the pumps twenty-five miles further upriver or to an area past the tidal point.

Around the rest of coastal Guyana water was mainly pumped from shallow wells. A recent expenditure of several million dollars to supply water to the Mon Repos area with modern system proved wasteful. Designed to pump 500,000 gallons of water per day the well broke within twenty-four hours of its commissioning and joined the rest of the Guyana Water Authority's failures.

CHAPTER 9

The Burnham Syndrome

The Guyanese society reflected its leadership. The deterioration at all levels was possible because the Prime Minister and the entire House of Assembly never acquired the stature required to encourage upward mobility in the human resources that had to rise to the challenges ahead.

In the Legislature it was not only that Forbes Burnham had replaced the politicians of integrity with people of dubious character and limited ability but he also led in the disrespect of the electorate, the Legislature and the status he attained. As leader of the nation the people looked to him for examples and expected the Prime Minister to lead a highly exemplary life to meet the standards of past leaders. However, not being familiar with higher decorum, the Prime Minister prostituted society and the Legislative Assembly.

Debates on Bills before the House was a thing of the past. In fact, parliamentary procedure was an unnecessary practice to those people who propped up the Burnham dynasty. Because of the reversal of roles the government no longer worked for the

people but the people worked to satisfy the government. Then, due to the system of Burnham hand-picked appointees being replaced even easier than they were appointed the government rolled over into an autocracy with dummies for window-dressing. Yet another brand of communism had arrived. As in so many socialist states where governments forget that the people put them in office Burnham abused the people who had given him work.

With so many Bills passing in the Legislative Assembly I had to see the legislators at work. While some delivered addresses on the Bills before the House very few ever paid any attention. There was usually a constant stream of traffic to the bathrooms which gave the impression that several members were incontinent.

Hamilton Green and his wife Shirley Field-Ridley along with Frank Hope, Desmond Hoyte and Cammie Ramsaroop, all Ministers in the government, led the child-like bathroom parade. The interruptions were numerous as they asked to be excused by the Speaker of the House. This behaviour worsened when members of Jagan's PPP had the floor.

This was not just the plain old filibuster act to delay the passage of a Bill which Dr. Jagan's party proposed. The majority party in the government had 'yes-men' legislators who had no understanding of the rudiments of parliamentary procedures and it was not necessary to debate any proposals. Opposition Bills were hardly ever tabled and when they were the Burnham-appointed Speaker placed it on the agenda to white-wash the system. This gave the impression of orderly, democratic government. However, democracy and free enterprise were far from Burnham and the new Guyana he was hammering out. It was alarming to see those charged with the responsibility of leading the nation acting so flippantly. The PNC legislators obviously voted with Burnham to ensure their monthly paycheck and the status.

Guyanese had a habit of finding humor in just about every situation and the 1978 referendum was no exception. Burnham's sycophants worked or slaved to guarantee a PNC sweep. The event was so crooked that the results were known to the public at least two weeks before the balloting and was labeled in advance as the 'riggerendum.' On the day of balloting almost everyone stayed at home and left the streets practically devoid of mankind. Only some diehard party supporters, using several government vehicles put at their disposal, traversed from one polling station to another to cast votes by the handful and succeeded in giving Forbes Burnham the right to remain in office for life and to make life even more miserable for the nationals.

It would really have been awkward if the electorate were allowed to cast their ballot freely because the results would have shown twice as many voters than those on the register.

There have been little pockets of opposition to the Burnham rule but they were either stifled cries by the oppressed or else crushed by a government that had no intention of surrendering its rule.

At the Guyana Teachers Association's Conference in August of 1978 the Prime Minister declared to the delegates that his party was paramount to the government. In his speech he declared war on all opposition and promised to eradicate all who were against his rule. Since Burnham was leader and obviously above his party this meant that he was also above the government and therefore sole ruler of the country. Being a lot more incompetent than his predecessor Jagan, and more vindictive and ruthless as he had been with anyone else's life but his own, there was little wonder that the nationals were afraid and the country continued to wallow in economic chaos.

Many of the people who served wholeheartedly in the Burnham regime of the past fifteen years and helped to shackle friends,

relatives and neighbors have bolted and taken up residence abroad. Some had repented and, as they witnessed the nation's destruction, lamented the fact that they soiled their hands and blackened their hearts to help the satanic ruler attain and hold his position over the good people of the country. Then there were others who lived in fear for their lives.

It was most unfortunate that too few of these educated people who had helped to blow away their fellow nationals, gave credence to the long departed unschooled, retarded young man, Cato, who in his own limited street education remarked to his defence attorney in censored language, "Uncle Forbes, you messing me up."

Forbes Burnham, the attorney, could not be bothered with the 'charity' case of lewd exposure against the young man and advised him to enter a plea of guilty. The lawyer was entrusted with the defence of a mentally sick client who had no parents to aid him and no proper place of abode but he was sensible enough to understand that Forbes Burnham had sold him out.

It was not too long thereafter that the lawyer, while on a political tour of interior communities, divested himself of a bath towel to wash his body at the river. Just fifty yards away on the opposite bank was an Amerindian settlement and as I approached I saw the naked man dipping water and pouring it over himself. As a responsible person I shouted to the man to put his swimwear on and don't offend the neighborhood.

Forbes Burnham's retort was rudely lewd and I remarked that he was too gross to be anybody good and it would have been better to swim or stand in the water at waist height. He was much too scared of pihranas so he washed with the gourd (calabash) and withdrew to the home he was overnighing at. During the next few weeks he was the talk of that neighborhood and rather than lift his standards he pulled down the rest of the country to his level and beyond.

I had visited with the people and seen the turmoil. They suffered terribly but they still laughed about life and even about their hardships. Too busy scrounging for food and keeping away from the goons who were paid to beat and maim anyone who uttered anti-Burnham sentiments, these fearful nationals prayed for the day when the evil forces would be struck down.

I needed to know the alternative political platforms available to the electorate and attended several roadside meetings prior to the 1978 referendum which sought to extend the life of the 1973 legislature. It was yet another way by which Burnham intended to keep his stranglehold on the country.

At a meeting held by the PNC at an abandoned railway station site, Prime Minister Burnham addressed a motley group of two hundred people, some of whom were motored in by the party to boost attendance figures. I was taping the event when the first security man approached me with a cloak and dagger attitude. The young man looked like he had been a recent high school dropout and he tried to pump me for information.

From the corner of his mouth this young man asked me what I was doing and I let him know. He threw me a line that no one was allowed to tape the President of America or the Prime Minister of Britain so it was wrong to tape Burnham's address. That branded him as a member of the PNC's youth arm, the Young Socialist Movement. I had heard some of their propaganda before. He left after I set him straight about the taping of public officials.

It didn't take two minutes for another security officer to get over to where I was standing. He seemed to have had a short course on espionage overseas. In a smooth undertone and with lips that hardly parted, this officer questioned me for five minutes on my political views but left as ignorant as he had come. He wanted to seize my tape but I dissuaded him. I knew that bigger fish would be around and sure enough the head honcho arrived by circuitous route coming up on my back. I

played as though I did not see although I had known him for years. Here was another educated journalist who had vaulted to the top post in the Government Information Services but whose training in security was limited to the dirty deeds he committed against his peers.

I watched the approach of the short, bearded Afro-Guyanese in his white-tweed bush suit from the corner of my left eye and heard the quiet salutation as he neared. I feigned deafness because ever since the word was introduced in a political context I found it distasteful.

"Comrade." The pot-bellied individual uttered. I had never been a follower and never intended to accept anyone's suggestions without careful deliberation so I avoided the approach.

"Comrade, I'm Victor Forsyth, Chief Information Officer. I want to talk to you." He stuck his ID card out to me as I turned.

"I am not your comrade. You may call me anything else though my name is Jackson." I corrected pleasantly.

He apologized and reiterated his request to talk to me. I told him to wait a minute while I wrapped up my chore. That was not too kind to do. He expected me to bow to his request and I never stooped to any person.

"But I'm the Chief Information Officer. I want to talk to you." He bristled.

I had heard that these people played rough and to prove it I jerked him to a quiet stop. "So! I'll be with you in a minute. I've got my work to do."

I wrapped up then turned to give him my full attention and we exchanged IDs. I never knew the word fear to bother me because the sword cut both ways and I was capable of taking care of me.

"I don't have your name listed." He offered as he read the Press Card.

"That's not my fault. I registered with your office the very

day I arrived in the country. Your deputy took my name so what's the problem." I asked politely.

"You're not allowed to tape the Prime Minister's speech." Victor Forsyth directed.

"Since when? This is a public meeting." I queried. Astonished that a man who was supposed to be more acquainted with the laws should be so dumb.

"We don't allow the taping of the Prime Minister because that is an accurate record. When you write from what you hear we could claim you misquoted or misrepresented the Prime Minister." The Information Chief declared.

"That's the general idea behind the tape, my man. To be accurate." I countered with a smile.

"I'm afraid we'll have to take the tape." He pointed out.

"That wouldn't be necessary. Since you're so uptight I am finished here." I closed him off knowing that he was going to try to block me and get the tape.

Victor Forsyth walked away grudgingly but with a mind that was working overtime. He returned to the command center, a Landcruiser wagon.

Now, I know Guyana extremely well. I can get in and out and about with infinite ease. I could have disappeared from the railway track but I knew they wanted me badly so I volunteered to help. I figured I would see just how far the government forces would go in Burnham's 'free' society. I walked over to the Toyota Landcruiser where there were a few men and women with the Chief Information Officer and boldly asked for pamphlets and brochures relating to the PNC and the government.

Forsyth took the bait. He told one of the women to pass him some information sheets as he winked to two men whom I hadn't seen before but I did a quick mental study of them for future reference. As I took the papers from Victor Forsyth I bade them all a cheerful goodbye and strolled in the opposite direction to where I should have been going. That gave me

some four hundred yards of roadway to keep under surveillance without actually turning around to see in rear of me.

Victor Forsyth and his goons spilled out of the 'cruiser' and the driver spun the vehicle around with the two men who were to come after me. I turned into someone's yard and ducked around the back of the house as the two pairs of footsteps rushed across the concrete. I turned as the taller man snatched my arm.

"Oh, no, don't hold me, my friend." I directed coldly.

He turned me loose as he said, "We want the tape."

Meanwhile the shorter man looked at me from ten feet where he had come to a standstill and queried, "Oh, you're bad?"

This was a regular 'Mutt and Jeff' team. They were not regular security but members of the bad gangs that brought pressure to bear on Burnham's opponents. The shorter guy was a robot who had to wait for orders so I turned to the taller man, who was rifling my shoulder bag, as I pointed out, "I'm not bad. I just don't meddle with small fish. I go for the top."

The poor guy could not operate the tape deck and he handed it back to me to play. I set it to work and we listened to Jim Reeves. He asked me to skip and there were more Jim Reeves tunes. That got the short man frustrated and he suggested that I flip the tape. I was always willing to cooperate and did just that. The melodious voice of Nat Cole rose from the tape and taunted the men. The short guy was getting erratic while the tall man was perplexed. What they were looking for was not to be found and he did not know what to do. Finally, he gave up and called off his search but he seized the tape.

"Remember the address. If you don't return it I will find it in somebody's home." I called after the duo as the driver came a little closer.

"He's a smarty. I..." The short man declared and I broke into his observation.

"Naw, I'm not smart. Its you guys who are dumb. Don't

forget I know you now, so be careful." I advised as I waved goodbye. They had let me walk half-a-mile and expected to find the tape. I couldn't understand that.

When they drove off I hurried over to a taxi stand and grabbed a car headed for the capital. "Drive and don't stop until I tell you."

The chaffeur was as good as most wild drivers on that road. A mile down the road I stopped him and stepped out the vehicle to let him continue his journey. I had come past Burnham's 'mongoose squad' without their knowledge and positioned myself to give the 'pack' leader, Victor Forsyth, a mild jolt.

I stood in the middle of the one lane road and in about five minutes a car came tearing along. I stood there long enough to get the driver's attention then stepped to the roadside and as luck would have it the man at the steering was Forsyth. I watched his eyes widen as he recognized me and realized that I was not where I had been left by his ruffians.

That was the general idea. I had to let him know that I could get to any point at any time and in particular I could reach the people who gave the orders.

A few days later the shorter man was seen running around shooting wildly and threatening the public and I was told of the incident. It was fate that made our paths cross once more just a week later. He joined the taxi in which I was riding and sat in the front seat directly ahead of me. As the car drove off I mentioned to the driver that he had a dead man sitting beside him and he asked why I said that.

I explained that there was a poisoned needle in the short man's neck. The driver didn't understand but the security man jerked his head around to see me while searching his neck line for the offending needle.

"See what I mean, fellow. You guys may smell bad, you may be no good, but you're not bad. Take my advice, quit before you get hurt. Don't worry, there's no needle in your neck.

You're too small. You don't give orders. You only follow orders." I patted his shoulder knowingly as I explained to the driver what had transpired a week earlier.

During the last few years Forbes Burnham had padded himself with a team of unscrupulous people and a few just as bad ministers and other nitwits in the political mainstream. People who were not particularly bright other than in their own sluggish greedy way to milk the society of the wealth which should have been used to continue the orderly development of the country.

The strike by the Clerical and Commercial Workers Union in the summer of 1978 closed a few major stores in the capital and the Minister of Labor, Hamilton Green threatened the striking workers as they waited outside the Booker Universal Building which, after nationalization, became Guyana Stores Limited. One of the workers asked the minister what steps the government would take if the workers failed to return to work in the face of the threats.

"Go back, or else!" Shouted the minister.

The mood of the crowd got a little ugly as half of them shouted, "What are you going to do, comrade? Shoot us down?"

"It might come to that. All I know is that you had better go back to work, or else." Minister Green answered.

I had worked my way up to the front of the crowd where a lot of questions were flying at the Minister. He was hot in the collar but I caught his eye and asked, "Would you really shoot this group of people?"

"Well, it might come to that." The Minister shouted over the noise of the striking workers.

A few of the workers shouted, "You're right, that's the only thing left for the government to do! Kill the people off."

Under the heavy pressure from the workers the Minister of Labor turned to leave and someone mentioned, "Look at all the bodyguards. That's where the money going."

Hamilton Green left with his bodyguard entourage of twenty rugged men shortly before the arrival of Dr. Walter Rodney a professor at the University of Guyana and a leader of the Working People's Alliance, yet another socialist group.

I moved about to get some pictures and eventually climbed atop a truck cab. From the roadside some of the people were shouting to me, "Mister, you know they killed a foreign pressman. You better be careful."

I had my telescopic lens on the camera and was casing the surroundings from on high when I replied, "No sweat. I can cover myself. You don't do anything rash."

Meanwhile on the ground the striking workers had become more incensed. People shouted suggestions wildly while Walter Rodney addressed the gathering. Some were concerned with the overall conditions in the nation and some wanted a resolution to their particular union grievances but the loudest noise came from those who wanted to go after the Prime Minister who, as they put it, was responsible for all the nations problems.

Dr. Rodney tried to reason with the crowd. He reiterated his call for a total strike in the country to surpass the 1963 General Strike but the insinuations of Minister of Labor, Hamilton Green, was too fresh in their minds. They were all aware that the executives of the Trades Union Congress were aligned to Forbes Burnham and were much too afraid of losing their status and lives to call a walk-out on the government.

"Go for Burnham!" the shout rose at the front of the crowd and mob justice surfaced.

"Get the 'Fat-boy'," and "Beat him at Bourda," were two of the more understandable phrases shouted before the three thousand workers mobilized into a fired-up mob on the move. They rushed out of the head of the street and onto Water Street then through a street that would bring them past the American Embassy on Main Street with a harried Dr. Rodney trying to get to the front.

Every step the workers took led to loss of jobs, loss of health and even loss of life and Walter Rodney attempted to halt the mad dash. Tempers were too fired-up for words and the mob was to attempt storming the Prime Minister's residence without weapons to 'drag' the errant political leader into the street and over to the Bourda Mall.

I jumped down from my perch and cut through a shorter route to get ahead of the throng and when I learned of the march to 'The Residence' at the front of the Botanic Gardens I turned back to retrieve my car. I had barely run half a block when I heard someone shout from the western roadway.

"Hold that man with the camera!"

I turned at the sound and saw a Police bus which had pulled to the curb as I asked willingly, "What man?"

"You, with the cameras!" The voice replied.

I saw a lot of cops in that bus and a few had already scrambled out to come after me but I stood there in the middle of the avenue and asked defiantly, "Which one of you got the guts to hold me?"

"Christ! That's Jackson! Leave that man alone!" Those words came from somewhere in the rear of the vehicle and someone else shouted, "Drive!"

As the Police vehicle moved on I continued my race for the car and within a few minutes I had piloted the little British job two miles through the city streets to D'Urban Park, the race track that Burnham had closed because he was moving into the serenity of the adjacent Gardens. I sat in the shadow of a hideous monstrosity only because the spot offered me the most vantage view of several approaches to the official residence of the Prime Minister.

The crude statue had gained notoriety rather than popularity with the nationals who preferred to label it "Cuffy" to honor the slave who led the Berbice slave rebellion back in 1763. It

also served as the locale in many deriding political jokes of leading members of the government.

When the workers did not show up in my estimated time I backtracked to the Mall and found that Walter Rodney had managed to head them off. The Mall was an adjacent site to where the Burnham-Jagan team first held political meetings and won the hearts and votes of the people with the newly gained Adult Suffrage of 1952. While Rodney explained that it was senseless to rise against the might of the armed soldiers people shouted for mob justice. The raving crowd wanted to beat and string up the Prime Minister right where he had started his ride to the top by using and abusing the workers and for being responsible for hundreds of murders, acts of arson and sabotage.

There were several suggestions as to what should have been the outcome of the march on 'The Residence' but after much arguing the University professor laid it on straight. There were not enough people and it would be best to wait for reinforcements from the bauxite industry and the rice and sugar workers who were expected to go on strike. That day Dr. Rodney prevented a blood bath that would probably have claimed the lives of several hundred Guyanese and more than likely that of their notorious Prime Minister.

Life in Guyana continued to deteriorate at a rapid pace. The government continued heavy spending in nonproductive areas and paying heavy subsistence and out of town allowances to the Prime Minister and his wife. With some sixty overseas missions and some \$500,000 spent on the Prime Minister's official visit to Europe the Treasury was going bankrupt.

CHAPTER 10

The Tragic Visit

The first time I saw one of the motorvans with the group's name on the front doors it was parked outside the electrical showroom at Guyana Stores on Water Street, Georgetown's main shopping area. The sliding door on the offside rear was open and when I approached the vehicle owned by the People's Temple of Jonestown there was a frail, young, Afro-American sitting there and a young Euro-American woman sat in the front passenger seat.

Neither woman answered my hearty greeting but I nevertheless expressed my desire to see the Reverend Jim Jones. I gave my name and tendered a Press ID to the Afro woman who, without uttering a word, passed it to someone in the rear. I continued to talk breezily as I thrust my torso through the doorway to see who was sitting in the rear.

The silence was strange. The woman in the front seat still stared into the showroom and the one at the doorway seemed uneasy. Even the two in the rear were unresponsive to my easy

banter. The ID was returned directly to me after a short while with a cold response.

"You'll have to talk to the secretary!" The older of the two European women in the back seat offered.

"Where could I reach the secretary?" I smiled engagingly.

There was a slight pause as the three women looked at me. I figured they were still strange in the new country and decided to give them a taste of the renowned Guyanese hospitality. I invited the group to stop by my parents' home in the countryside when next they were in the neighborhood.

"What's your names? What do you think of the country?" I asked hopefully.

Nobody answered with a name but the middle-aged woman who had returned the Press Pass called the telephone number to the Lama Gardens residence to me as she stared through gold-rimmed glasses. They all appeared nervous as I tried to crack the barrier between us while hoping that the driver would return before I moved on. I had great admiration for the driving skills of both the women who piloted the Temple vehicles in this country where motorists made New York taxi drivers look tame. However, she did not appear and I had to leave without further information about the organization.

For several weeks I tried to talk to the secretary and/or make an appointment for an interview with Jim Jones but the secretary was as evasive as I was persistent. I explained that I felt the project at Jonestown could work for the benefit of both Americans and Guyanese and I intended to establish a dairy farm in the interior along a somewhat similar method. But Mrs. Amos found several excuses to blunt my eager desire to meet Jones. I knew I was being jerked around but felt that I had the upper hand as a national. I knew their location and intended to use that knowledge to travel to the commune in a roundabout manner if that became necessary.

With a little help from old acquaintances it would have been

easy to visit the settlement that Jones had been boosting as a utopia and probably talk to the leader of the church who had bribed government officials into giving him support. Maybe Jones had only been spreading propaganda in the same manner that the Burnham government did.

The confusion in the country showed at every level. An automobile insurance agency was the only office where workers served the public courteously and efficiently. At the Georgetown offices of the Transport Department I booked a cabin on the scheduled riverboat that plied the north west route six weeks in advance on a totally open date when my reservation was first on the list.

However, when I arrived at the Kingston wharf at travel time on the scheduled day I was informed that there was no cabin accommodation available. I could not believe that and remonstrated with the clerk who thereupon informed me, in that frustratingly offhand Guyanese attitude, that there hadn't been any service to the region for months because the regular ship had been dry-docked for repairs. The substitute vessel which had been shunted from another area was only equipped with one cabin and that had been allocated to the district nurse.

I had nothing against nurses and I was more than willing to share the cozy two-bunk room on that turbulent Atlantic Ocean. I explained to the clerk that I needed to store valuable equipment from the salt water and air and would be happy to travel with the nurse.

"This is Guyana, man, not America. I can't put you in the same cabin with the nurse." The clerk said, somewhat piqued at the suggestion.

"I'm going to sue for this! I booked several weeks in advance to avoid this sort of problem." I tossed in just for the hell of it.

"That's a problem for you and the government. I just work here." The clerk smiled knowingly and terminated the discussion to deal with the next person on line.

He was right! I was in Guyana where nothing was sacred and, according to public opinion, Burnham owned everything and everybody as a result no service functioned properly except church service. The judges would more than likely have tossed the lawsuit out if I was lucky to get it that far.

Since I did not want to jeopardize the jobs and possibly lives of people who were to aid me in getting to the commune I aborted the unsanctioned visit for a rescheduled date in November.

Meanwhile, around the country the nationals were suffering more than ever. Workers were fired from jobs and party bullies attacked opposition meetings. Even members of the ruling PNC lost their lives under strange circumstances, including Minister of Education, Vincent Teekah.

The government continued to spend loans and grants from the World Bank, the United States and other sources to keep the regime in office rather than on the projects for which they were earmarked and the Audit Department could not really serve its purpose. But nothing affected the affluent lifestyle of the foppish 'purple' Prime Minister nor 'Butcher' Green who remained the destructive force in the illegal regime.

Prime Minister Burnham continued to ride through his 'acquired' estates on horseback to ridicule upper-bracket career officials whom he forced to cut sugarcane, work in the rice fields and gather coconuts for the manufacture of vegetable oil. These supposedly educated men and women who gave Burnham his power through their own ignorance were bound by their insecurities to the drudgery of nonpaid labor or just plain slavery.

Just one week before my next attempt to travel out to Jonestown I drove along Main Street in the capital's business district where I saw a WNBC-TV team milling about the gateway of the American Embassy. Across the street and in the once well-manicured avenue a few youngsters from nearby Sacred Heart school stood inquisitively surveying the Americans and their equipment.

"Looks like another politician on visit! Wonder who that could be!" I remarked to friends in the car as I continued past.

"Nobody special! He didn't make the news!" Someone offered from the rear seat.

Then I recalled the incident of the early sixties when someone planted a bomb in that office. One of its walls was blown out and the pretty Indo-Guyanese secretary, Shakira Baksh, was seriously injured.

Later that Thursday I learned of Congressman Leo Ryan's visit to Guyana but not of his intention to visit with the People's Temple group in the jungle. The congressman had been seeking Jones' permission to visit the American settlement for some weeks and still had not got approval. Jones' lawyers, Charles Garry and Mark Lane, were obnoxiously obstinate in their defence of their client's hard-line refusal to accede to the simple tour. Both lawyers were quite aware of Jones' character and potential for violence but this never fazed them. The money which the dapper Indiana-born false prophet flashed seemed to be of more import to the pecuniary lawyers than human suffering and loss of lives.

Knowing the tenacity of the trained newshounds it would hardly have mattered if I had spoken to the members of the TV team about the information I had already gathered on the Temple.

It was obvious that there was no proper rapport between the US Embassy in Georgetown and the Guyana government. Rumors had been circulated that the US planned a systematic withdrawal from the country because of the unfriendly Burnham regime. Further, the supposedly religious leader of the Temple never cooperated to any degree with the State Department agency in the capital.

No one at the American Embassy could truthfully claim that everything was 'honky-dory' at Jonestown. They were all too

aware of incidents that focused inimically on the Reverend Jim Jones particularly the Stoen vs Jones court farce.

The nation's Court was held up to more scorn when Jim Jones was able to walk rough-shod over another of Burnham's gutless appointees in the custody case for the young John Stoen whose American-domiciled parents, Jim and Grace Stoen, wanted him out of Jonestown and back in their parental care to avoid the evil influences of the Jones they knew so well.

True, the judge disqualified himself from the case because of threats to his life but that did not make him any more honest in his career. Like everyone else who accepted a Burnham appointment, from President of the land, ambassadors right through to the lower rungs of the career ladder, he was like the beef in a sandwich. He was pressured into following the dictates of a very spiteful Forbes Burnham or life would have been quite unbearable for him.

Whether they stole money, time or services or even turned their backs on the dastardly acts of others these modern appointees certainly encouraged the graft and corruption that Burnham seeded and made the society a haven for criminal minds. None was without sin in Burnham's Guyana.

Jim Jones' influence had reached into top-level administration and everyone below quaked in their slippered feet for fear of upsetting the oligarchy and 'preferred friends' of the Prime Minister.

The laws of the nation stipulated that all transmitting/receiving sets must be registered with the Director of Posts and the location and schedule of operations listed to make communications through radio-telephone accessible to the general public. Yet the People's Temple had one of the most powerful Citizen's Band sets in the country and the unit was not registered.

Jones used this CB to speak to his secretary in Georgetown but primarily to talk to the church in San Francisco and the ever-helpful 'contacts' in the Guyana government. He used the

telecommunications network at will yet Garry and Lane found it difficult to reach the minister to get his permission for Ryan's visit. Later, while they were in Georgetown, only a hundred and fifty miles from the commune, the lawyers had to route their calls through the US and Burnham's cooperative republic was not so cooperative after all. It was not until Friday before Jones agreed to the Ryan party tour.

This was a rather strange situation because anyone could have arranged for the American visitors to go into the jungle but Forbes Burnham had a lot to hide. Was it the 51% partnership which he seemed to control without any financial investment or the amount of 'dirt' that was to be released? Jones had been occupying Guyanese territory on a 'sweetheart' lease which allowed him some very unhealthy freedoms. Privileges that were denied the nationals since Burnham set himself up as a dictator and made it impossible for the citizens to remove him from office by the ballot.

Leases normally extended to the lessee the right to engage in a particular development of an area but reserved the right of ingress and egress to the government and anyone else the lessor deemed necessary for any given purpose. Any of a dozen different departmental officers should have had easy access to the commune to monitor its progress. Agricultural and Forest officers would normally have entered the lease without prior notice but this special lease which Jones and the government had worked out was more of an unofficial land grant.

With competent public servants doing their jobs Leo Ryan and everyone else would have found it much easier to fly to the Kaituma airstrip and ride in to Jonestown after a few well-placed phone calls or, with the phone service on the blink, a quick motor ride from office to office in round-robin fashion to make the few arrangements.

But widespread corruption and Jones' knack for greasing behind the back palms hampered Ryan's investigation. Even the

policeman at Matthew's Ridge was instructed to stop and turn around the visitors when they arrived at the little runway.

Eventually, without assistance from the government, Leo Ryan and about half of his entourage hopped aboard a chartered Guyana Airways plane and flew over the tall coastal forest to the little patch of farm land in the Northwest District.

At the airfield US Congressman Ryan and his partially frustrated group of fellow Americans were greeted with hostility by a Guyanese policeman who finally let the team proceed to the commune after a spate of haggling.

While the Ryan party visited with the cult they were treated to an expanded version of the half-hour song and dance routine that was reserved for the members of the American diplomatic corps in Guyana. Jim Jones had a marvelous idea for settling the people and there was enough finances to carry it through even after greasing the sweaty palms of dirty politicians but his method was horrible and the evil which fomented deep in his heart surfaced to create the slave camp with gun-bearing guards to keep the members against their free will rather than to protect them from the denizens of the jungle.

None of the visitors was fully satisfied about the conditions at Jonestown. They couldn't be fooled by the cult leader's attempts to project a happy atmosphere in a commune where the members were not allowed to travel freely to and from their homeland or even around their adopted country. No one expected to find one thousand Americans in the backwoods region and there were not enough buildings to accommodate the large church following.

Because of the late hour of the visit the Ryan party could not return to Georgetown that evening and the commune was much too crowded to host visitors overnight. As a result Ryan and his troupe had to suffer through the night in separate dilapidated houses at Port Kaituma where bathrooms and lavatories had not yet become a way of life and food was in direly short supply.

The visitors turned in to a rather strange night's rest in even stranger surroundings. Like most people who have never been there but merely heard of the country they all took Guyana for granted. There were no hotels nor 'flea bags' for the weary traveler but the hospitality was still unsurpassed. A beautiful people with a selfish leader, the Guyanese would share a banana leaf if that was their home.

Aside from the practically sleepless night which was filled with strange sounds and continuous attacks by mosquitoes and flitting bats the visiting group passed an uneventful night and by midmorning the following day were back at the commune. The night of 'nearness' to the politician emboldened some of the cultists to show a desire to leave the hell they had experienced.

By the time Ryan was ready to leave Jonestown for Georgetown a few members of the cult had developed enough courage to express their choice to return to America with the representative but Jim Jones reacted negatively to the requests to leave the commune. What gave Jones the audacity to believe that he could stop anyone from leaving his group? Did he depend solely on the promises of Prime Minister Burnham? Jones was aware that the defectors would have spread the truth about the real Jonestown on their return to civilization and eventually the remaining members would then have turned against the modern slave society locked away in the jungle.

The cult leader became quite agitated at losing the few members and during a heated altercation Ryan was wounded by a half-crazed knife-wielding young man. In the ensuing commotion Jones gave his consent to the defectors though he remained belligerent.

Lawyers Garry and Lane chose to remain at Jonestown for another day to give up their seats on the plane to the enlarged party. When the group finally rolled out of the compound to emplane at the airfield Jones' last vestige of sanity cracked and

he set in motion a chain of events that was guaranteed to add to his notoriety and rock the world for years to come.

In total dementia 'Father' Jones sent a squad of guards after the Ryan party with instructions to stop them at all costs even if that meant blowing the plane out of the air. He then ordered Dr. Schacht to prepare the poisoned brew in preparation for the final act of 'white night' and he placed a radiophone call to a male member of the Georgetown group. The leader planned to bring the curtain down on the commune in Guyana and flee with his lieutenants to neighboring Venezuela with the hoard of money and precious stones.

When the first report of the attack on the jungle strip reached the capital a rescue party was dispatched to the area but with the confusion about the true status of Jonestown and the relationship Jones had with Prime Minister Burnham no one considered it prudent to visit the Temple properties in Lama Gardens. Somehow it still appeared that the two localities were unrelated.

The Police Department was so incompetent and the sleepy media so out of tune with reality that no investigation was made and nothing was done to secure the Georgetown center and as fate would have it someone entered the Amos home and left another gruesome scene that was related to the trouble which erupted at Port Kaituma. Much later, when the Police learned of the murders in the east Georgetown home of the secretary of the People's Temple the ugly tableau which awaited their investigation occasioned the shock of yet more deaths. The bodies of Mrs. Sharon Amos and three children were found with their throats brutally slashed and added to the toll of deaths in the Jonestown-related massacre.

All those nine hundred and twenty-three bodies were removed and shipped back to the United States but the wealth remained in Burnham's Guyana. The police hastily expelled Tim Carter and Michael Prokes, two of the main witnesses to the debacle to cover up local involvement with the cult. Some forty young

people chose to remain in the country where they were free to roam without Jones on their heels.

Several thousand tons of machinery and other equipment, which represented the last shipments from the church in San Francisco remained on the John Fernandes wharf for more than a year and more than likely was confiscated by the government of Guyana.

Although there were a few court cases to whitewash the historical event no one paid for the colossal crimes committed against the American people and the nationals of Guyana but the dirt will, sooner than later, come to the forefront when justice is served.

The Guyanese public will have its answers to questions why Burnham did not cooperate with the American government and even allow an honest investigation into the operations at the People's Temple of Jonestown and to a lesser degree the operations of the American fugitive David Hill bearing the alias of 'Rabbi Washington' and leading the House of Israel cult.

The end of Jonestown is yet to come. Several Guyanese may yet commit suicide for their involvement with the Euro-American charlatan and yet others will continue to flee the country to hide from the retribution that is inevitable.

With the advent of a free and democratic government which Forbes Burnham abhors the world will finally learn of the full ramifications of Jim Jones and those Guyanese so involved will answer to a tribunal and pay for the crimes for which they may be found guilty.