

Dec. 20, 1977

Peoples Temple Agricultural Project
P.O. Box 893
Georgetown

The Honorable Forbes Burnham
Prime Minister
Public Buildings
Brickdam
Georgetown

Dear Prime Minister Burnham:

Please forgive what will undoubtedly end up being a lengthy letter, but there are a few matters we think you would want to be aware of, and a few others that we would like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention. During the

During the course of a friendly exchange with one of our staff members, one of your security guards--without being prompted in any way--made the statement that he liked the United States and preferred capitalism. The remark wasn't very comforting, to say the least, for obvious reasons. We don't know his name but he mentioned that he has been your guard for seven years and was trained in Cuba for six months. Our sense of duty requires that we report this to you, as we felt it was a grave statement that might have serious implications in a time of crisis.

Our members appreciated hearing you speak in Port Kaituma during your recent visit, and this past Sunday in Black Bush Polder. We sent 125 people to Port Kaituma who were rewarded for exemplary work with the privilege of going. We would have sent more people but it was discussed and decided that the loss in production would be too great (which also affects how much we are able to assist the Party.) (We hope our last assistance to the Regional Minister was helpful; we'll continue to do this from time to time as we are able.) Unfortunately, our financial burden has been increased by the problem of our members' social security checks being deliberately held up. (We will likely start a class action suit.)

Knowing these are difficult times, at least half of our people did not take refreshments at the rally in Port Kaituma because they decided among themselves not to add to the cost to the Party. (They did consider it a special reward for work well done to be able to attend, as I mentioned.) Had we known we were going to be on the program, we would have been prepared with more things that we're making and growing in Jonestown.

Our members enjoyed your speech immensely. Bishop Jones, who ordinarily doesn't want to go out, would have loved to have made the trek to Port Kaituma to hear you speak. But our members wouldn't hear of it being that the arrest orders are still in effect, and it's thus felt that it is still not safe for him to leave the project.

Perhaps all the agencies, such as Interpol, will see in time that the Bishop has no political ambitions and then will leave Guyana and our people alone. However, our attorney here says there has to be enormous money behind the attempt to nullify our organization. Money has been spent to buy-off any persons who it is felt might be effective in promoting the conspiracy against us. (A prominent San Francisco public relations firm has been hired, for example, to

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discredit us by utilizing the media. Former Temple members, including infiltrators, provocateurs, and even a terrorist and Trotskyite element, have been paid to fabricate bizarre, outlandish stories against us. These stories are then submitted pre-packaged, we are told by journalist friends, to the press.)

One of those who has been turned against us is Timothy Stoen, the husband of the woman who is attempting to get custody of Bishop Jones' son, John. Although they have been separated for several years, they are coming here in the first week of January, if not sooner, for the continuation of the hearings. According to their attorney, they plan an indefinite stay when we know that neither of them have any money of their own to speak of.

Stoen only used Peoples Temple to advance his own career as an attorney. He was not in basic agreement with our socialist lifestyle. He pretended otherwise, but his own lifestyle revealed too clearly his capitalistic nature. The enclosed article, copied from an old news clipping, shows where his true sympathies lie.

Another area of concern to us is in regards to various comments made by an official whose wife we mentioned in a previous letter. (She was referred to as not showing patriotic concern when the national anthem was sung at a district conference.) We're not wanting to indict this man; that's why I'm not referring to him by name (not knowing who might read this). We hope this will be kept confidential so that things won't be strained further. It could be our own subjectivity, but this official gave the impression that he had to escort you and your delegation around. He said that when you came, he had to have gasoline, so we gave him all that we had at the time and our people got to Port Kaituma (for the rally) the best way they could. His comments made our members feel uneasy. He said he felt that our organization couldn't function without Bishop Jones' charisma--that it was the only thing holding us together. First of all, the Bishop is not that charismatic; but beyond that, the remark showed a total lack of awareness of the Bishop's character and loyalty. Though he does function as the leader of our organization, he has taken great pains to insure that the survival of Peoples Temple does not depend upon his personal leadership.

One of our members, a woman, mentioned to this official after the rally that you were sensitive to cut your speech short due to the heat, which few leaders will do. He responded in a snide, cutting way, saying, "Yeah, but it was still an hour long." We don't know whether he was testing us or what, but if that's the case, our loyalty will always come through 100%. It's absolutely pointless to land that on us and we wonder why he continues to do it. Maybe he is trying to test different ones of our group because everyone he talks with hears him make snide little remarks. But there is some overlap because he put one of our people, Harriet Tropp, through it before. It's practically an interrogation. In fact, that's how he tried to represent himself, as a sort of official interrogator. It's almost as if he feels like he has us in a corner. Our people got the impression that we have to do pretty much what he demands of us.

The official said he had a one-track mind and then started in about sex. He said he believes in free sex and that such an attitude between men and women and whomever is an indication of freedom in other areas. It sounded very strange to us. Among those talking with him were a lawyer and a school teacher.

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They didn't get argumentative; they simply said that people get together in our group as they wish, although we do not encourage promiscuity because it is a form of exploitation. That was our statement. But then he went on to ask the group about Bishop Jones' sex life. (The Bishop was not present.) He asked if the Bishop saw someone in the group he wanted, would he be able to have sex with that person (That's roughly how he put it). He was told that one of the Bishop's strongest character points is loyalty and that includes loyalty to his wife, (who is under no small amount of fire in the States.) The group then said they didn't feel comfortable discussing the Bishop's sex life without him being present and suggested that the questions be asked of the Bishop himself. When it was mentioned that the Bishop has been happily married for 28 years, he said in a brash sort of way, "Well, a lot of men are happily married but that doesn't mean they don't have sex with other women." (The man's wife, by the way, who is pregnant, was there during this conversation.) Our people aren't easily bothered by forthright discussions, but they found this to be a disgusting performance.

His wife never spoke until he left the room, at which time she said she would like to have some of our folks help out with a craft workshop with local youth. We of course said we'd be happy to do so.

Maybe it is just this man's personality to act in the manner he does around us. At least he did it directly to our face. (Although he has taken children aside who later told us some rather strange questions he asked them.) He also said he thought--from observing faces--that our people lacked spontaneity, which is the most ridiculous thing in the world. Anyone would know by observing that they were spontaneously enjoying your speech. He attributed this "lack" to regimentation and some sort of socialist authoritarianism. We told him to drop by in the evenings or after work hours so he could see us when we were having recreation, entertainment, or simply moments of pleasure and levity. He asked us point blank if he could spend a week on the project, going to meetings, touring the various programs and facilities, etc. We of course said yes but he would be coming with bias and not from our perspective at all, so we would prefer that he not be sent. He could never appreciate our lifestyle. He said he wanted to bring some people from the Ridge on a tour in January and we said we would love to have them. But we basically don't trust this man. He is someone who, in our opinion, has no loyalty to you because he revolves almost entirely around his own self.

It's people like the above-mentioned who make us feel short-lived. We live only one day at a time but we can't help but wonder what we would face if and when you, and a few of your top ministers, are not on the scene. We have not seen the same character and commitment in others as we have seen in the few of you. Knowing your resolve, has helped us when we've received anonymous letters (an example of one is enclosed) saying that there is no commitment to us and that we're going to be sold out here. We know these are-undoubtedly-tricks.

Another thing that was disturbing to us was a question asked by the official mentioned earlier if we thought our organization could be used as a front (just as the Black Panthers had been found to be infiltrated.) It bothered us because we received word from a friendly source of ours that the man (Joseph Mazor, the private investigator with the long criminal background who is referred to as a "con man" in an official probation report we obtained) who is pulling the strings said he was going to plant the notion that we are a CIA front. We told

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the official that our organization is not conducive to infiltration because we are a hard-working group of people, and as such, we really get to know our members well. What we do is not glamorous, and through our work routine we develop a high degree of camaraderie that would cause a phony to stick out like a sore thumb.

The intelligence community is aware of our organization, however-- there is no doubt about that. Through an attorney for Daniel Ellsberg (who leaked the Pentagon Papers, as you may remember), we learned how various data banks are being used, particularly the kind that centralize information on dissidents and political figures. One of these data banks is in East Lansing, Michigan where I'm sure it is no coincidence that a minister by the name of Trifa lives. Trifa has been identified by a number of Jews as having participated in a mass slaughter of Jews in Hitler's Germany. (A book we have entitled Wanted documents this man's past and shows his connections with the American Nazi movement today and its significant political influence.) Peoples Temple clashed with the Nazis when we took them on in our newspaper.

The intelligence center housing the data bank is connected with the University of Michigan. It gives actual recommendations and plans on how to "smash" (the actual crude word that was used, post-Watergate no less) persons who are considered to be political threats. We're supposed to get a copy of such a report which we'll pass along to you. The intelligence is both national and international in scope. This is the type of thing that goes on covertly in the U.S., no doubt without even the President's awareness, as it is unlikely that Carter would approve of such a mess. (The data bank covers S. American countries, including Guyana.)

The attorney told us that Bishop Jones is viewed as a political threat in South America and that he is rated for kidnap or assassination. The Bishop is not worried about these threats but our members are extremely concerned. The ironic truth is that he doesn't want anything for himself. He only wants to establish a model community to help Guyana in her relations with the U.S. To help bring peace for Guyana, the Bishop doesn't even speak about the U.S. anymore. He was refusing all political interviews when he was in the U.S. last. He granted only those interviews that permitted him to speak of our human service work because, with the U.S. public going more reactionary, he didn't want to risk hurting Guyana's situation in regards to the U.S.

The attorney is concerned that the data banks make it easy to push organizations around because of the ease of feeding information into them (which is often false) and also taking information out. Thus, even honest agencies can be confused and manipulated by the information that is under the auspices of data banks, which a lot of people are utilizing. Plus, the fact that the information is coming out of a computer gives the information more credibility (at least for a time) as well as an aura of authority.

It has long disturbed good peoples' consciences in the States, including progressives in government, that false information is fed into federal data banks with ease. Such information can be, and often has been, recirculated and used for political reasons-- pawned off as the gospel truth. We don't know exactly what is going on in our case, but we sure have plenty of nefarious and horrible things happening to us. They tried to poison Bishop Jones' wife in a cocktail setting, which was quite a jolt recently. And just two weeks

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ago a young man who was remotely connected with us who was an activist, was clearly assassinated. Our people in the States see it as an attempt to intimidate us into thinking we can expect more if we don't quit supporting socialism and socialist causes here and there. The information on this case looks very bad. No one, including our attorney, doubts that it was an assassination. The victim had a considerable amount of money on his person which wasn't touched.

Bishop Jones received a lot of harassment before he left the States, particularly in the Los Angeles area where it's like a police state. Cde. Claude Worrell told several of us before he died that--similar to Bishop Jones' experience--he was also the target of a set-up involving plainclothes police who hung out in men's toilets. (Cde. Worrell was undoubtedly remembered there for representing members of the Black Panther Party, which would automatically buy trouble with law enforcement agencies.)

I just want to bring a couple of other things to your attention that are of concern to us here. One involves a man who came to our Open House last Saturday night. There were a couple of hundred guests who came and all were friendly except for him. He signed our guest book as L.P. Ferreira (or something close to that) from the Register's Office. He serves in a capacity of marrying people, and he said he didn't believe our people chose their partners. It was an absurd and ludicrous statement because often the couples have related sexually, and one couple was even expecting a child before the marriage. (We don't prohibit such relationships, as we aren't strict in that area, though we do strongly encourage the nuclear family.) His statement was most disturbing probably because he works in an area that attempted to serve the papers on us concerning the Bishop's son. This man was intoxicated at the time, but that is when we find people often reveal what's in their minds.

An item that has just been brought to my attention is that Constable Persaud came to the PNC meeting (after not having attended for some time) making bigoted remarks about our people being "yankees". It was obvious he was a little drunk, I'm informed. He accused our doctor of only helping people who support the government (which of course is ridiculous). He started his harangue outside the meeting and then came inside. My information is that other Party members were very supportive of us.

Finally, we wanted you to know how much we appreciated your friendliness, as well as that of your wife, Dr. Reid, and Minister Mingo following the rally last Sunday in Black Bush Polder. We felt as if we were treated with genuine respect and that helped us considerably, because of our feeling of not having a future. We know we work better than others we see who think they have a whole lifetime to live, but it helps more than you can ever know to have people of your positions take the time to say encouraging things and even make suggestions (such as the one you made about stocking our stream with fish). Thank you for the show of friendship. We again pledge to you our undying loyalty-- though we're well aware of what that can mean. We are realists. We know there are some who don't share your progressive views, and thus if you were gone our loyalty would mean that we'd be sacrificed. But we face this because we've always faced what the future might bring. That is how we've survived. Our people have been through hell. 25 years of harassment in the U.S.--the most vicious type of racist harassment that is more than anyone would believe, unless they themselves lived through it--caused Jim Jones to become very realistic. That

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is whiv you can be assured of our solidarity and staunch support. It's based on awareness and on principle, which is the best kind of solidarity to have. It's based on a 20 hour-a-day work schedule of the leader, not on some charismatic quality. Though he speaks and writes well, that's not where it's at. It's based on an immense concern for every individual--to always be there in the time of crisis or emergency and to risk himself for them.

There are many other things that seem significant enough to pass on, but we've already taken more of a Prime Minister's time than I suspect we have a right to. If you have any suggestions or criticisms arising out of anything we've brought to your attention, we'd love to hear from you via any means you might choose to communicate. But please know we are not expecting it. We only want to be doing our best to serve.

All the best.

Co-operatively yours,

Mike Prokes

Mike Prokes
Asst.-to-the-Bishop

cc: Dr. Reid
Min. Mingo

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