July 27, 1978

Mr. Carl Blackman
Editor, Guyana Chronicle
Georgetown, Guyana,
South America

Dear Mr. Blackman:

I welcome the opportunity to write to you as a representative of the Peoples Temple of the United States. Bishop Jim Jones has spoken very kindly of you, and we have all been very appreciative of the articles that have appeared in the Chronicle concerning our Guyana work. Bishop Jones expressed that you wished to know more about the conspiracy working to hinder our work in both Guyana and the United States.

There is a great wealth of information relating to the conspiracy, far more than I could presume to convey adequately in a few pages. So I think rather than simply presenting a catalogue of facts, I would like to go over several developments that reveal the true motivation of the conspirators: a vicious reactionary effort to destroy a work that has become too effective in bringing socialism to the poor. We had stated from the start that Bishop Jones and the Peoples Temple were being attacked because we are socialist (Bishop Jones' own statement attached (1.), printed in the August '77 issue of the Peoples Forum, our community newspaper). The other major reason for the attacks against us is because we are predominantly Black, and have provided alternatives to the conditions of exploitation which exist for Black people in the ghettoes of the cities of the United States.

In the way of general background, the Peoples Temple had been established in the United States for close to thirty years before Bishop Jones departed from the United States a year ago. A wide range of human service programs were established to aid every disadvantaged segment of society: Black and minority causes, the elderly and disabled, troubled youth, as well as a number of liberation support groups and political prisoners. A particular drive undertaken in the Temple's newspaper, the Peoples Forum, in the months preceding Bishop Jones' departure, was the repeated expose of Nazis organizing locally, as well as Nazi war criminals still at large in society.

As you can see from the enclosed March '77 article in the Bay Guardian (2.), the Peoples Temple carries on a vital human service program, which has received wide recognition. Bishop Jones has received awards ranging from a Certificate of Honor from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, to a similar citation from the California State Legislature, the Martin Luther King Award, Humanitarian of the Year award from two major Black newspapers in the State, to the national honor of being named one of the top 100 clergymen in the entire United States, given by the largest interfaith organization, Religion in American Life. In fact, the Secretary of that organization, H. Newton Hudson, went so far as to state, "No published list of 100 congregations in America showing exemplary leadership would be complete without your name on it." The National Newspaper Publishers Association, the main organ of the Black press in the United States, gave Bishop Jones their Freedom of the Press Award just prior to his leaving the country, in recognition of demonstrations, donations, and

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vocal support of a free press so outstanding that it has even been written into the Congressional Record of the United States and received coverage in the New York Times (3.).

Why then has Bishop Jim Jones, the finest and most courageous citizen you could find in America, been subject to attacks ranging from the assaults in the media, to blackmail attempts, electronic surveillance, the cut-off of pensions to senior citizens, attenpts to remove the tax-exempt status of the the church (to name just a few of the persecutions that Temple has undergone); and most recently, efforts to cut off our short-wave radio communications between the U.S. and Guyana by trying to provoke trouble with the U.S. Federal Communications Commission? The attached booklet "Victims of Conspiracy" (4.) will give you more details of these persecutions; and what follows will give you a clearer idea how this all came about.

You may already be familiar with the power of the huge press conglomerates in the United States. We have a phenomenon here we call "trial by media", during which a person, or organization, is charged repeatedly with unproven misdoings by the press, so the public begins to believe the individual is guilty before there is even any opportunity for defense. This type of method has been used against many Black leaders, such as presently against Senator Brooke, the only Black Senator in Washington, who is up for re-election this year. Irregularities in his divorce settlement have been blown up into national news, leading to the present investigation of his finances by the Senate Ethics Committee, whereas with another individual this might have been passed off as a purely personal matter. Another example involving the persecution of a Black Congressional Representative, William Clay, through charges instigated in the media, is illustrated by the article (5.) taken from an issue of the Peoples Forum.

Three other articles are attached (6.), dealing with the "COINTELPRO" program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which was established to discredit and destroy organizations and individuals considered too "radical", or "Black activist". As you can see from Mr. Rowan's article (16) it is also widely known that the FBI used very similar tactics against the great leader Martin Luther King before he was assasinated.

So the Peoples Temple also, has come under much persecution at the hands of reactionary elements. The original proponent of vicious attacks in the press was one Rev. Kinsolving (cited in Mr. Thomas Fleming's article about our Guyana project, 7.). This was back in 1972. Mr. Kinsolving, who is widely known for his racist, reactionary views, and backing of white supremacist governments in South Africa and Rhodesia, was at that time employed by a paper of the Hearst publishing empire; and wrote a series of article downgrading Bishop Jones with lies until public opinion put a stop to his tirade. He was recently seen on the "Tomorrow" show, an interview program, accusing the World Council of Churches of "supporting the slaughter of (white) nuns and priests in Rhodesia", a preposterous claim that he would doubtless launch against anyone who demonstrated the slightest sympathy with Rhodesian liberation. (U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young of course also recently refuted that the Patriotic National Front had anything to do with the slaughter; that it was transparently the work of the Smith regime). Note the letter from one of our Guyana members printed in the World Council of Churches monthly magazine, ONE WORLD (8.), about Jonestown. That type of article, in the paper of an organization that can by no means be termed "radical" would be thoroughly condemned by Rev. Kinsolving.

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The present company of conspirators against the Peoples Temple is dominated by people of a similar reactionary frame of mind. A leader in many of the harassments launched against Bishop Jones, former Temple member Timothy Stoen, has been virtually identified as an agent provocateur who was infiltrating our ranks. Mr. Stoen had always claimed to be of a far left persuasion, yet we later discovered he had been involved in escapades such as the one described in the enclosed article about his trip to East Berlin (9.), a place he insisted to us he had never been: i.e. he is a staunch "anti-communist". We also discovered he had been trying to provoke our non-violent organization onto a violent path, appealing to youth who had been embittered by the hardships of ghetto life. Mr. Stoen (and others) did not succeed in this design, which was a key factor in their leaving the Temple. Some --such as those now seeking to cut off our radio communications-- were asked to leave our organization when they were discovered manufacturing ammunition; and have now emerged in a rightist, reactionary stance. It is clear we were the intended victims of provocatuers in our midst.

Elmer and Deanna Mertle (aka Mills), instigators of both the press attacks and agency investigations, acknowledged that their background was with right-wing causes --- Mrs. Mertle had claimed membership in the John Birch Society (note later reference to the vicious campaign of the Birch Society against Marxist journalist Wilfred Burchett (12)). They claimed a "conversion" during their period with the Peoples Temple; yet after they left the Temple it was revealed that they had been close friends all along with a conspirator David Conn, whom Elmer Mertle worked alongside in the Standard Oil Corporation for many years. Mr. Conn admitted then that he had been "investigating the Peoples Temple" during the entire time the Mertles were members. It was also Daivd Conn who attempted to blackmail American Indian Movement leader, Dennis Banks. Mr. Banks was fighting an extradition order at the time, to the racist state of South Dakota where his life had been threatened repeatedly. Mr. Conn claimed connections with the U.S. Treasury Department who he claimed could "prevent the extradition" if only Mr. Banks would denounce Bishop Jones, who had come to the aid of Dennis Banks' wife when she was jailed on false charges. Mr. Conn said that if Mr. Banks did <u>not</u> cooperate in the proposed denunciation, then "it would go badly for him". Mr. Banks refused to cooperate, and exposed the balckmail scheme for what it was. Later Mr. Conn emerged to talk with the officials of our church denomination, trying to use false information to destroy our affiliation; thus, he hoped, our tax-exempt status as a church, without which it would be impossible to function. (Mr. Banks' affadavit about the blackmail attempt by David Conn is attached, (10.)).

Others who have had no direct connection with the Temple (such as David Conn) have been "hired" to work against the Peoples Temple as well, and are invariably of a far right persuasion. Joseph Mazor is a case in point. He is a so-called "private investigator" licensed by the State of California -- although he himself sports a 75-page criminal record! (See Berkeley Barb article attached,(11.)). In addition, he is bonded by the State although his convictions for fraud are numerous. One of the most expensive public relations firms in San Francisco acknowledged that they assisted Mr. Mazor for many months in instigating and orchestrating the campaign in the media against the Peoples Temple, a costly enterprise for which Mr. Mazor refuses to reveal the source of his funding or who is retaining him for such work. He has admitted that he is employed by the Mertles (cited above) and other former members of the Peoples Temple. This man is also known to be connected with INTERPOL,

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the Nazi-dominated international police organization. INTERPOL has also been implicated in a lie spread abroad that Bishop Jones was involved in a riot in Guyana, at a time when his passport proves he was not even there!; and other lies involving our shipping crates.

Numerous reporters also figure prominently in the media campaign: George Klineman of the Press-Democrat, who also collaborated on the original smear in New West magazine, and whose paper has consistently taken the side of the "Concerned Relatives" group organized by Timothy Stoen. The Press-Democrat also sponsored the recent visit of reporter Kathy Hunter to Guyana, a woman who misrepresented herself to gain entry into Guyana, as verified by your Minister of Home Affairs, Vibert Mingo, and whose misadventures in Georgetown were apparently set up by the conspiracy in an attempt to renew a vicious media campaign against the Peoples Temple.

Marshall Kilduff, who co-authored the original smear in New West, and writes for one of the two major dailies here, the San Francisco Chronicle, is still lambasting Bishop Jones a year after his departure from the United States for his involvement in "liberal and civil rights causes". He listed one of his original reasons for suspicion of the Peoples Temple that the Temple's newspaper "regularly exalts socialism", and Temple support of Huey Newton when he was exiled in Cuba, and Angela Davis, when she was a political prisoner in the United States for her avowed Marxist views and her leadership in the Black community.

Another significant figure in the media conglomerates working against Bishop Jones is Rupert Murdoch, an Australian multimillionaire, racist and right-wing, who owns scores of newspapers and magazines in the United States, and whose "yellow journalism" has provoked harsh criticism from the media themselves, in the media magazine, "More". Mr. Murdoch owns not only New West, the magazine to run the original bad press, but also the New York Post, which aroused the ire of the entire progressive community in the Eastern United States, by blatantly accusing renowned Marxist journalist, Wilfred Burchett, of being a KGB agent (12.). (Mr. Burchett has subsequently won his suit against the Post).

Other connections regarding the media have yet to be drawn. When Kathy Hunter visited Guyana in May, the little-known reactionary reporter sent by the Press Democrat, there was virtually instant UPI coverage of the things that allegedly happened to her. Yet there was no UPI in Guyana at the time; all the "information" had originated with persons working with the conspiracy in the United States which had the connections to provoke this kind of media "blitz" using allegations that turned out to be entirely false. In fact, it is of some concern to us these days that major news agencies appear to be used regularly to distort or even fabricate information, to promote the current "cold war" effort in this country to discredit socialists. The latest emphasis has centered on the Soviet and Cuban involvements with liberation movements in Africa. A flagrant example of this is illustrated in the enclosed clipping (13.) from the San Francisco Chronicle, June 19, 1978, given out by UPI (signed "United Press" at the bottom). This covered an ABC interview with Fidel Castro on national television which was taped by one of our members, so positive proof of discrepancies was available. When Premier Castro was asked on the interview about alleged Cuban involvement in the invasion of Zaire, he said: "Our policy has been precisely the opposite of those adventures in Zaire". Yet as you can note, the UPI quoted him as answering: "We simply because of political reasons, have abstained ourselves from using the Katangans against Zaire". He is quoted word-for-word as saying something he not only never

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said, but which is in content and meaning entirely the opposite of what he did say! It angers and saddens us to see this happening, but we know realistically, and from our own experience certainly, that these are the times in which we live.

The Kathy Hunter incident is itself a vivid example of how a media attack against socialists can get totally out of hand, so that facts count for nothing. Note our release, "Open Letter to the Media and the Community", (14.), submitted by our attorney, Charles Garry, as a rebuttal to a smear printed by the Press Democrat. The paper was apparently well aware of the lies and discrepancies in their article and feared being sued: for even though the Press Democrat has been unremittingly hostile to our organization, they printed the "Open Letter" word for word!

So much for the media campaign, against the Peoples Temple and, in a larger perspective, against all advocates of minority and socialist causes. Simultaneously there has been a concerted long-range campaign to use agencies of government to block every avenue of survival. Some of this is outlined in the pamphlet, "Victims of Conspiracy": the attempts to halt shipments of supplies by the U.S. Customs Department; to cut funds to disabled and elderly pensioners by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare; to intercept mail through the U.S. Postal Service; to try and sow division between Bishop Jones and other minority leaders, such as the attempt to blackmail Dennis Banks using the U.S. Treasury Department. More has been attempted in recent months: The Internal Revenue Service (U.S. Treasury Department) has been instigated to do a tax investigation with the aim of removing the church's tax-exempt status (this type of investigation of a church is almost unheard of); and the Federal Communications Commission has been instigated to try and discontinue our only means of communication between Guyana and the United States, our short wave radio. The U.S. State Department has been approached innumerable times to provoke interference with, or condemnation of the work at Jonestown, and to provoke trouble in international relations between our two countries, such as would-be interference in Guyana's legal system.

The State Department, for its part, has refused to intervene in Guyanese internal affairs in relation to the Peoples Temple. They visit Jonestown regularly, in response to inquiries from relatives in the United States, and have distributed a report affirming that everyone in Jonestown whose status has been questioned is fine, and glad to be there. In fact, high officials of both Guyana and the United States were contacted in the preparation of a recent article by Marshall Kilduff, BUT SINCE ALL THE REPORTS ABOUT JONESTOWN WERE POSITIVE, NONE WERE REPORTED! Instead, the writer relied solely on the lies of one malicious individual who had formerly been a member of the Temple and then joined the conspiracy. Ms. Layton's turn with the media was short-lived however, as she produced lies too outlandish for any person of common sense to even believe, such as that residents of Jonestown "live mostly on rice brought in from Georgetown" -- when Jonestown is a thriving cooperative producing over 200 kinds of crops!

Other agencies have been brought into play as well, on a local and state level, yet in every case no evidence of wrongdoing is ever found. The obvious intent has been harassment, to tie up our funds, personnel, and wear down our energies. Fortunately these attempts have not succeeded, which is perhaps all the more remarkable in that Bishop Jones has been physically absent for a year. But he is a humanitarian of rare magnitude, and this type of influence does not readily fade. In fact, it is a source of pride that the work has continued here for this extended period of time, given the intensity of the attacks.

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The last matter for consideration is the self-styled "Concerned Relatives" group, organized by Timothy Stoen as a pressure and publicity devise to exert against the U.S. State Department and the United Nations. Mr. Stoen has claimed himself to several newspapers as well as government officials that "his son was kidnapped" by Bishop Jones; when in fact, the child in question is not his son, and was in fact abandoned by both Mr. and Mrs. Stoen, who gave full consent for the child to be reared by his father, Bishop Jones, in Guyana. Indeed, as if to illustrate the complete hypocrisy of this effort from the start, as recently as July 11, 1978, the Press Democrat, who has always defended the false allegations of Mr. Stoen, now printed, "The boy (John Victor) was taken to Guyana by Stoen in 1976 and remained there when Stoen left the church..."; plus Mr. Stoen detailed in his own hand at length how his wife Grace had abandoned the child to go off with another man for whom she had an infatuation!

The first official action of the self-righteous "Concerned Relatives" contingent was to present a lengthy document publicly, alleging "human rights violations" on the part of Bishop Jones in Jonestown -- a preposterous allegation! Their accusations are verified, they stated, by "sworn affadavits" by people with the following credentials: 1. One set of parents who came to Guyana with the stated intent of forcing their son, a young married adult, back to the United States against his will; 2. A parent who was known to have already brought malicious accusations against the Jonestown project to governmental agencies before his visit to Guyana, while disclaiming all (positive) reports from his own adult daughter; 3. A "former member" of the Peoples Temple, a young woman who disliked the cooperative lifestyle at Jonestown, openly stated she disliked Guyana, and when she finally left (at the Temple's expense) was somehow induced to tell the most outrageous lies about Jonestown in compliance with the workings of the conspiracy. The major complaints in affadavits 1. and 2. were of course that these individuals were "denied access" to the Project, although their own (adult) children have stated publicly they do not wish to see them. Affadavit 3. was signed by the young woman who was a former member, one isolated liar who claimed she had managed to "escape" from Jonestown -- completely neglecting to mention that her travel arrangements back to the United States were openly made and paid for by the Peoples Temple!

Everyone who has visited Jonestown knows firsthand the exceptionally high standard of human rights, and the excellent living conditions the Project affords its residents. But the press was not yet at the point where they would permit this to be printed. Nevertheless, the "charges" were so outlandish that it attracted less media coverage than the "Concerned Relatives" had hoped for. Thus they then organized a demonstration in front of the Federal Building here in San Francisco --- a handful of demonstrators, whom supporters of the Peoples Temple outnumbered 10 to 1. In fact, 2/3 of those demonstrating against "human rights violations" were not even related to people in Guyana! (A list verifying this was later given to a representative from the Guyanese government). Placards were carried saying "Wake Up Guyana" and "Please Mr. Burnham: Make Jim Jones Give Me Back My Son" (a case where the person bearing the placard had herself abandoned the child). The press made no mention of this ridiculous but offensive demonstration, doubtless because of the embarassingly small showing on the part of "Concerned Relatives", but the demonstrators revealed their true sentiment towards Guyana: one of contempt -- as if Guyana's government did not know what was happening in their own country, or was a party to terrible acts. The most offensive demonstration was a sign posted behind a wire fence, to demonstrate

captivity, which was a picture of Prime Minister Burnham accompanied by a sign about Jonestown saying, "Utopia or Concentration Camp?". The enclosed pamphlet, "Concerned Parents or Provocateurs?" (15.) will give more background about the malicious character of this group.

The above demonstration was in April 1978. It was obviously a fiasco so far as attracting publicity was concerned, and moreover, the State Department was taking a positive position even under this concerted pressure. The visit of Kathy Hunter the next month, May 1978 was transparently another malicious "publicity ploy" to stir up some more trouble in the light of these aborted efforts. Of course, the key issue as stated by Minister of Home Affairs Vibert Mingo, is that Mrs. Hunter misrepresented herself to gain entry into Guyana, which the media here would not quote. But nevertheless, Mrs. Hunter's and the media's accounts of her ill-starred journey have been so erratic and contradictory (as you can judge yourself from the "Open Letter"), perhaps the conspirators have only done themselves a disservice.

Now it is claimed that Mrs. Hunter's home was broken into, by "two Black men", Mrs. Hunter being identified as "a reporter harassed by the Peoples Temple", leaving the reader to make the malicious accusation against innocent people (our organization) themselves. Law suits have been fabricated from literally nothing, lies so malicious and false I would feel ridiculous repeating them. It seems like the watchword now is virtually like what was written by the FBI in the article (6.) about COINTELPRO operations about other "radical" and "black activist" groups: "The purpose of counterintelligence action is to disrupt... and it is immaterial whether facts are present". What a sad day to have to witness this kind of travesty of justice. We are so proud to have endured beyond anyone's expectations, and to remain unified and undaunted in our purpose. But it saddens us to know of all our other comrades here, perhaps unknown to us personally but who in their own way have struggled for a better life for minorities and the poor, and have been hindered, or even felled by such heinous tactics.

We hope this letter will be helpful in giving you more background on the types of attacks that the Peoples Temple, as a socialist, predominantly Black organization has encountered in the United States. Despite it all, we retain strong community support from people who know Bishop Jones as a man of impeccable integrity and conscience going many years back. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Prime Minister Burnham, Dr. Reid, Ambassador Mann, and countless other officials in Guyana's government who have made possible the realization of a great socialist dream for people who were previously very oppressed. No words could be thank you enough, but it is our privilege to develop and expand agricultural, medical, and educational programs as they will best benefit Guyana and her gracious people. We here in the United States stand 100% behind Guyana and the Jonestown program, and remain ready and willing to assist in any way.

Thank you for your conscientious concern, and please accept the cordial regards and best wishes of myself and all my comrades in the Peoples Temple in San Francisco.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie Efrein,
Corresponding Secretary

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