

It's Fall of 1978, with Thanksgiving less than two weeks away, Congressman Leo Ryan flew to Georgetown, Guyana, accompanied by a contingent of relatives and members of the press. The purpose of the trip was to determine whether or not American citizens were being abused or held against their will at the Peoples Temple agricultural settlement, in Jonestown.

Reports to that effect had been received from a number of sources, including Temple defectors, relatives of those in Jonestown, and investigative journalists. Whether those reports should be believed was a separate matter. An American-based political organization that used the trappings of religion to attract members and avoid taxes, the Temple was a controversial institution—a personality cult that presented itself as a vehicle of apostolic socialism. Though its membership was predominantly black, the group was run by a white matriarchy that was, in turn, under the spell of a Bible-hating, charismatic sadist, named Jim Jones. That he was charismatic is obvious to any who have ever heard him. That he was a sadist is apparent from his mistreatment of dissenters at Jonestown, and from the sexual attacks that he so often carried out upon his followers. That Jones was Bible-hating, as well as Bible-thumping, is clear from his instruction that the Book should be used as toilet paper. Other evidence of Jones's hatred for the Bible abounds in a journal found at Jonestown. In its pages, the anonymous diarist quotes Jones as saying that, "The Bible will be used to put you back into slavery." "The white man used the Bible to keep blacks in slavery." "That God up there doesn't look after the good people down here. If Harriet Tubman hadn't torn it up, we'd still be in slavery. We've got to get rid of the Bible or the white man will use it to lead us back into slavery." Jim Jones claimed superiority to Jesus. Elsewhere, we are told that "Jim led the congregation in singing, 'The Old Bullshit Religion Ain't What It Used to Be.'" And, by no means finally, "Religion is the opiate of the people - telling of God's creation of Lucifer, who led away one-third of the angels. God fouled up. 'Some of you get nervous when I say that.' He said religion was used by the ruling class to control us. 'They" steal, 'they' lie, but they tell us niggers,

'Nigger, don't lie.' They kill all the time, but 'thou shalt not kill."

Escorted by Richard Dwyer, Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, Congressman Ryan and a part of his contingent visited the remote commune on the afternoon of Friday, November 17, 1978.

Though the visit was unwelcome and filled with tension, Temple attorneys Charles Garry and Mark Lane arranged for the delegation to be given a tour of the settlement, food and a place to sleep. Accordingly, members of the Ryan party met with Jones and spoke with many of the organization's rank-and-file. Speeches and entertainment went on until late in the evening. By Saturday afternoon, November 18, though Ryan himself had spoken favorably about several aspects of the settlement, a number of defectors had declared themselves, saying that they wanted to leave under the congressman's protection. It was then, as Ryan and his cohort were preparing to depart, that the congressman was suddenly, freakishly attacked by a knife-wielding man. Though the scuffle was quickly broken up, and Ryan uninjured, the provocation put an end to the uneasy truce that both sides had cultivated. Credit for stopping the attack is usually given to the attorneys. In fact, it seems that one of the Templars, Tim Carter, was the first to intervene. Interestingly, Carter reports that Don Sly's attack on Ryan, was most, best half-hearted. "It was like he wanted to be stopped," Carter said. The implication is that Sly's attack was a command performance that Jones had demanded and that Sly himself hoped would fail.

Driven to the airstrip at nearby Port Kaituma, where two small planes waited, Ryan and his party were ambushed by a contingent of Templars, driven to the scene on the back of a tractor. When the shooting ended, five people, including the congressman, lay dead on the tarmac. Nearby, and in the surrounding jungle, survivors of the congressional delegation, having fled from the shooting, hid from sight, tending each other's wounds. Meanwhile, the death-squad returned to Jonestown as one of the small planes, its engine damaged, took off for the capital carrying both flight crews and news of the ambush.

As night descended on western Guyana, both the wounded and the well concealed themselves in a rum shop at Port Kaituma,

awaiting evacuation in the morning. Five miles away, unknown to anyone in Port Kaituma, a holocaust unfolded in Jonestown. Guyanese defense forces arrived at the airstrip the next morning, shortly after dawn. Securing the runway, the troops turned toward Jonestown, marching down the long, rough road to the commune. They reached the settlement at mid-morning, and were horrified to find a field of cadavers - men, women and children lying in an arc around the settlement's central pavilion.

Some two-hundred bodies were quickly counted, but the numbers of dead climbed ever higher in the days that followed. Additions to the toll were continual, and sickening: 363, 405, 775, 800, 869, 910, 912, 913. To newspaper readers and watchers of the evening news, it seemed almost as if the slaughter was on-going, rather than a fait accompli. Amid the confusion and horror, the escalating body-count provoked suspicions, though explanations abounded. It was said, for example, that the count was consistently low because the bodies of children lay unseen beneath the corpses of adults. Skeptics, however, pointed out that some of the earliest reports listed 82 children among 363 dead. (Baltimore Sun, November 21, 1978). A subsequent report, by the Associated Press on November 25, listed 180 children among 775 cadavers. The final count, recorded by the Miami Herald on December 17, reported that 260 children were among the dead. It seems fair to say, then, that the children's presence was known from the beginning, and ought to have been taken into account. Moreover, even if the dead had been counted from the air, and even if one assumed that all of the children had been hidden from sight—which, as photos attest, was not the case—the body-count should have been more than 600 from the very first day.

But it wasn't. Of course, conditions were primitive and the circumstances ghastly. Mistakes were inevitable. Even so, 789 American passports had been found at Jonestown within a few hours of the troops' arrival. (Los Angeles Times, November 24, 1978). This discovery, coupled with the low body-count, had somehow caused those at the scene to believe that hundreds of cultists were missing. Indeed, it was to find these supposedly missing Templars that military search-parties were sent by foot, plane and helicopter to search the surrounding forest.

Meanwhile, incredibly, the dead lay in plain sight—nearly a thousand of them in an area the size of a football field. It was a week, then, before the body-count stabilized at 913 and, when it did, skeptics wondered how it was possible that 363 bodies had concealed 550—particularly when 82 of the 363 were said to have been small children. Even mathematically, and from its inception, Jonestown did not make sense. Something was wrong with the reports from the very first day.

More than 900 men, women and children were suddenly, violently dead under circumstances that, even at this late date, remain mind-boggling.

Manner and cause of death

More than 900 men, women and children were suddenly, violently dead under circumstances that, even at this late date, remain mind-boggling

The official view, as it emerged in newspapers and instant-books, was that upwards of 1000 brainwashed religious fanatics committed suicide in the jungle because their leader, Jim Jones, told them to. One by one, they'd come forward without protest to drink cyanide-laced Kool-Aid from a vat. In fact, the sweetener used was Fla-Vor-Aid] It was as simple as that, the public was told. Jonestown was proof-positive of the effectiveness of brainwashing, and of the dangers inherent in the new religions

In reality, what was presented as news was only a theory and, as it turned out, an inaccurate one.

Seven months after the massacre, the New England Journal of Medicine commented on the handling of the bodies at Jonestown. (New England Journal of Medicine, Law-Medicine Notes: The Guyana Mass Suicides: Medicolegal Re-evaluation. William J. Curran, J.D., LL.M., S.M. Hyg., June 7, 1979). Citing the criticisms of forensic experts and organizations, the Journal noted ;

Six months after the massacre, only one-third of the bodies at Jonestown had been positively identified; no death certificates had been obtained for any of the people who had died in Guyana; a medico-legal autopsy ought to have been performed on every body to establish the cause and manner of death in each case. In fact, only seven autopsies were carried out among the 913

victims—an appalling figure. As one forensic expert, Dr. Cyril Wecht, remarked, every American who dies under suspicious circumstances has a right to an autopsy. Even then, the autopsies that were carried out were hardly conclusive. All of the bodies had been embalmed in Guyana, using a procedure that ripped up the internal organs, almost a month before the autopsies were conducted. It was Dr. Rudiger Breitenecker who commented on the procedure used in Guyana (trochar embalming). Dr. Breitenecker was the only civilian who participated in the seven autopsies conducted by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology team at Dover Air Force Base. Those autopsied were, Laurence Schacht; William Castillo; Jim Jones; Violatt Dillard; Maria Katsaris; Carolyn (Moore) Layton; and Ann Moore.

This was unfortunate, to say the least. But it was also understandable. The dead were infested and putrefying in Guyana's heat, which made their handling exceedingly unpleasant, and their identification difficult. Indeed, six leading medical examiners described the handling of the bodies by the military and others as inept, incompetent, embarrassing, and a case of doing it backwards. - 'Medical Examiners Find Failings By Government on Cultist Bodies', by Lawrence K. Altman, New York Times, Dec. 3, 1978] Dr. Rudiger Breitenecker, who assisted at the seven autopsies, agreed. There had been a series of errors, he said. We shuddered about the degree of ineptness. [Op cit., American Medical News. See also, "Coroner Says 700 in Cult Who Died Were Slain," by Timothy McNulty and Michael Sneed (Chicago Tribune Service story), The Miami Herald, Dec. 17, 1978.] Despite the difficulties, probable cyanide poisoning was listed as the cause of death in five of the seven autopsy reports—though, as it happened, only one of the five bodies (that of Maria Katsaris) showed any traces of cyanide (although carefully searched for). (The quote is taken from the autopsy report on Carolyn Moore, prepared by Dr. Robert L. Thompson).

Still, the suspicion of cyanide poisoning in the absence of cyanide itself is not as strange as it sounds. As one of the examining physicians pointed out, cyanide is unstable in the postmortem interval. Perhaps, then, it broke down in the victims' tissues. In any case, the relevant body fluids may have been contaminated by the embalming process itself or, in the course of that procedure, the fluids may have been diluted or

discarded. The fact that Diphenhydramine was found in the stomachs of several victims and in the poison-vat as well, suggested that the victims had partaken of the vat's contents. That the contents of the vat included cyanide could not, however, be proven from an examination of the vat itself— which, upon study, betrayed no traces of the poison. With respect to the absence of cyanide in the vat, see page 4 of the autopsy protocol (AFIP #1680274) for Laurence E. Schacht. The explanation was offered that the vat had an acid pH at which cyanide is unstable. The assumption, then, was that the poison broke down in the days after the massacre. Probable cyanide poisoning was, therefore, a conclusion based upon circumstantial evidence: i.e., reports, including press reports, from the scene. These accounts noted the presence of cyanide salts in the inventory of Jonestown's medical dispensary; and, also, the discovery of cyanide in syringes and bottles on the ground around the pavilion. Finally, there was the account of Dr. Leslie Mootoo, chief medical examiner and senior bacteriologist for Guyana, who examined scores of bodies in situ within a day or two of the disaster. According to Dr. Mootoo, who labored long and hard, taking specimens and samples from many of the dead, cyanide was present in the stomachs of most of those whom he examined. Unfortunately, evidence of his findings disappeared soon after it was collected. According to Dr. Mootoo, his specimens and samples were given to a representative of the American Embassy in Georgetown, expecting that they would be forwarded to American forensic pathologists. They weren't. No one seems to know what happened to them. Of the two remaining bodies (of the seven that were autopsied), Jim Jones was found to have been killed by a gunshot wound to the head. As for Temple member Ann Moore, her death was attributed to two causes, because it was impossible to say which came first. She had been shot in the head; and, unlike the others, a massive quantity of cyanide was found in her body's tissues. Why the poison should have broken down in the bodies of the other victims, but not in the body of Ann Moore, is unknown.

In the end, physicians were able to certify the cause of death in only two of the more than 900 cases—though Dr. Mootoo's field-work lent considerable weight to the conclusion that most of the victims had been poisoned. As for the manner of death,

whether suicide or homicide, the best evidence was again Dr. Mootoo's. The Guyanese physician, trained in London and Vienna, concluded that more than 700 of the dead had been murdered. This conclusion was based on several observations. In the case of the 260 children, for example, they could hardly be held responsible for their own deaths. So they had been killed by others. As for the adults, Dr. Mootoo reported that 83 of the 100 bodies that he examined had needle-punctures on the backs of their shoulders— suggesting that they had been forcibly held down and injected against their will. (American Medical News, 'Bungled Aftermath of Tragedy,' by Lawrence Altman, MD, p. 7.) (A second possibility is that they may have been given coup de grace injections, perhaps to guard against the possibility that some of the victims might have feigned death in hopes of escape.) Moreover, Dr. Mootoo noted, syringes containing cyanide, but lacking needles, lay everywhere on the ground at Jonestown—a circumstance which led him to conclude that the syringes had been used to squirt poison into the mouths of those (children and others) who had refused to drink. Still other victims seem to have been duped into thinking that they were taking tranquilizers - bottles containing potassium cyanide, but labelled Valium, were scattered on the ground around the pavilion. ("Some in Cult Received Cyanide by Injection, Guyanese Sources Say," by Nicholas M. Horrock, New York Times, Dec. 12, 1978.] Based upon this evidence, Mootoo concluded that as many as 700, and possibly more, of Jonestown's victims were murdered.

No other conclusion seems reasonable. Once Dr. Mootoo's findings are accepted with respect to the cause of death (cyanide poisoning), we have little choice than to accept his judgment upon the manner in which the vast majority of victims died. As the only physician to gather evidence at the scene and to examine the dead where they lay, Dr. Mootoo based his findings upon the best (and, sometimes, the only) evidence available. An eye-witness account would help to answer some of the lingering questions, but few witnesses survived. Those who did survive— Charles Garry, Mark Lane, Mike and Tim Carter, Michael Prokes, Odell Rhodes, Stanley Clayton, and others—did so because they were able to flee the scene. In interviews with this writer, Clayton and Rhodes emphasized the presence of armed guards, some with rifles and others with crossbows, who formed a perimeter to

prevent people from escaping the encampment. The street-smart Clayton and Rhodes escaped using pretexts. The only exceptions to this were a group that left Jonestown on the morning of the massacre, supposedly to go on a picnic; an elderly woman named Hyacinth Thrush, who slept through the massacre and remembered nothing of it; and a man named Johnny Cobb, who hid through the night in a tree. According to Cobb, he heard screams and gunshots throughout the night, and saw flashing lights. Just as the cause and manner of death were obscured by the decision to embalm the corpses before they could be autopsied, the identities of those who died were also encrypted. Why this was so is a mystery.

"Lots of people had identification tags on their wrists, usually their right one," said Frank Johnston, an American magazine photographer who toured the commune shortly after the massacre. (Miami Herald, "Army to Identify Bodies of Cultists," 22 Nov., 1978, p.1.) Some of these tags were hand-made, apparently by the communards themselves, while others had been issued by the medical clinic at Jonestown. Still other victims were identified on the ground by Hyacinth Thrush and others who'd known them. Once identifications were made, the military tagged the bodies. Relatives of the dead, including Johnny Cobb, saw the tags. So did anyone who glanced at the cover of the contemporaneous Newsweek, in which the massacre was reported. But then the tags and id bracelets disappeared. When the bodies arrived at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, the tags and bracelets were gone. In a real sense, the bodies had been dis-identified, though how and why and by whom remains a mystery. According to Newsweek, the order to remove the tags was issued by Robert Pastor, the National Security Council's staff coordinator for Latin American and Caribbean affairs. Asked about this, Pastor denies that he gave such an order, adding that it would have been senseless for him to have done so.

A great deal more could be said about the mishandling of the bodies. It may be enough, though, to call attention to news reports published nearly a decade after the massacre. According to UPI and the Los Angeles Times, three of the Jonestown dead were discovered in January, 1986 stacked in caskets inside a Storage-R-Us facility in Southern California. (Los Angeles Times, 9 January, 1986, I:2:5; UPI, 9 January, 1986,

National/Domestic News, PM cycle, Los Angeles.) How they had gotten there is unknown. All that could be said with certainty is that they had been forgotten, and were awaiting burial years after they had died.

THE NOIWON ALERT

As Dr. Mootoo's evidence established, most of the people at Jonestown were murdered. How is it, then, that Jonestown has become synonymous with mass suicide? An 'After Action Report of the Joint Chiefs of Staff' helps to establish the chronology of the myth. According to the Pentagon, which took responsibility for transporting the dead back to the United States, the National Military Command Center (NMCC) was first notified of an incident in Guyana at 7:18 P.M. on Saturday, November 18. (Guyana Operations, After-Action Report, 18-27 November, 1978, prepared by the Special Study Group, Operations Directorate, USMC Directorate, Joint Chiefs of Staff (distributed 31 January, 1979). All times are taken from Appendix B, Chronology of Events.) This information, apparently based on reports brought back from Port Kaituma by the escaping pilots, was that Congressman Ryan had been shot at the jungle airstrip.

Wikipedia captions this image, 'Photograph of military personnel carrying bodies of the victims of the Jonestown massacre out of a helicopter.' However, this does, indeed, appear to be a C-141 aircraft. This image is from the Jonestown Institute, at San Diego State University. At 8:15 P.M., a Department of Defense MEDEVAC was requested by the State Department. Its mission - to evacuate the wounded from Port Kaituma, and to return the bodies of those who had been killed. At 8:49 P.M., the State Department relayed a request from the Prime Minister of Guyana, Forbes Burnham, asking that a pathologist accompany the MEDEVAC. Why Burnham should have requested a pathologist from the U.S. is uncertain. The information available to him at the time would seem to have been restricted to the news that Congressman Ryan and others had been ambushed by small-arms fire. Six hours later, at 3:04 A.M. on November 19 a C-141 MEDEVAC left Charleston, N.C., bound for Guyana.

Barely 25 minutes afterward, at 3:29 A.M., the JCS chronology indicates that CIA NOIWON reports mass suicides at Jonestown. The JCS chronology cites the following reference - CIA 191138Z

Nov 78. NOIWON is the National Operations and Intelligence Watch Officers Network. All entries in the JCS chronology are Eastern Standard Time. In Guyana, however, it was one hour and fifteen minutes later than in Washington, D.C. - which means that the CIA notified the Defense Department of the mass suicides at 4:44 A.M. (Guyana-time)

But how did they know? How did the CIA know that anyone was dead in Jonestown - let alone so many as to justify the notion of mass suicides? And how could the CIA be so mistakenly certain of the manner in which the dead had died, that is to say, suicide rather than murder? Somehow, the Agency learned of the mass deaths while it was still dark, hours before the Guyanese Defense Forces (GDF) arrived at the commune. According to the narrative summary of the JCS report - At approximately 1800 that same evening (November 18), Reverend James Warren Jones, the founder and leader of the Peoples Temple cult, held a meeting of all members. He convinced them that they and their children would have to die. The members of the cult lined up and began receiving a poison drink. Guards were stationed around the compound to insure that no one left the camp..." The CIA was the source. But from where did it get its information, so soon after the apocalypse in the jungle?

This has been a mystery for than 25 years. Until recently, certain were of the opinion that the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, Richard Dwyer, had returned to Jonestown after the ambush at Port Kaituma. What made questioners think so was an excerpt from the so-called Last Tape that Jim Jones made, while sitting on the dais at the pavilion in Jonestown, cajoling his followers to kill themselves .The tape was obtained from the FBI under the Freedom of Information Act FOIA;

Against a background of wailing and screams, one hears the following;

JONES: "And what comes, folks, what comes now?"

UNIDENTIFIED MAN in background: "Everyone, hold it! Sit down right here..."

JONES: "Say peace, say peace, say peace, say peace...what comes, don't let...take Dwyer on down to the middle (?) of the East House. Take Dwyer on down."

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: "Everybody be quiet, please!"

UNIDENTIFIED MAN in background: "Everyone...hold it! Sit down right here..."

JONES: "Say peace, say peace, say peace, say peace...what comes, don't let...take Dwyer on down to the middle (?) of the East House. Take Dwyer on down."

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: "Everybody be quiet, please!"

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: "Show you got some respect for our lives."
(NB: On the tape-recording it appears this is Jones speaking, rather than an Unidentified Man, and that what he says is: "Keep Dwyer alive!" - and then adds, "Sit down, sit down, sit down.")

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: "Let me sit down, sit down, sit down."

JONES: "I know..." (Jones begins to hum, or keen.) "I tried so very very hard... Get Dwyer out of here before something happens to him."

UNIDENTIFIED MAN: "Jjara?"

JONES: "I'm not talking about 'Jjara'! I said Dwy-er!"

The "Last Tape" is anything but indistinct, and there would seem to be only one way of making sense out of it: that is to say, it means what it says. Jones is giving orders to his followers to protect "Dwyer" by taking him to East House (a part of the Jonestown encampment to which Temple attorneys Charles Garry and Mark Lane had been sent, and from which they had already escaped. There is no other "Dwyer" associated with the Peoples Temple, so it would seem fair to conclude that Dwyer had returned to Jonestown from the ambush at Port Kaituma - and that Jones wanted to protect him. But why? Jones is explicit and yet...it makes no sense. For his part, Dwyer has always denied that he returned to Jonestown that evening. He says he tended the wounded in Port Kaituma, throughout the night. If some of those at Port Kaituma found him missing at various times, then it must be because he was moving back and forth between the two

locations in which the wounded had been sequestered. "What reasons people may have had for saying these things, I don't know," Dwyer later testified. "I was not present in the tavern (at Port Kaituma), obviously, when I was at the tent. I wasn't present in the tent when I was in the tavern. But that's it."

Compounding the uncertainty about Dwyer's whereabouts that night is the allegation that the Deputy Chief of Mission was, in fact, a CIA officer under embassy cover. The allegation is made by Dr. Julius Mader, an East German academician with ties to the former East German intelligence service (Stasi). (Mader is the author of Who's Who in the CIA. It's in that book that Dwyer is named as a CIA officer.) Mader's opinion would appear to have been based on analysis of Dwyer's background, which included Dwyer's enlistment in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, followed by service in the fly-blown capitals of Syria, Egypt, Bulgaria and Chad. In other words, Dwyer looked like a spy. And Mader wasn't the only one who thought so. Kit Nascimento, Guyana's Minister of Information at the time, has stated flatly that Richard Dwyer was the CIA's Chief of Station in Guyana, when the Jonestown massacre occurred.

Mader and Nascimento were mistaken. In fact, the CIA station chief in Guyana was a colleague of Dwyer's, who was himself working under State Department cover at the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown. This was James Adkins, who would later come a cropper in the Iran-Contra hearings, during which he was criticized for what might be characterized as 'over-achievement' on behalf of the Contras in the early 1980s. He later resigned from the CIA. Adkins is important to the story because he was the first outsider to learn of the murders and suicides at Jonestown - and it was he who notified his CIA bosses in Washington about what had happened. Whether he reported that suicides and murders were taking place, or just suicides, is uncertain. In the event, there were others in Georgetown who knew what was happening at Jonestown - but said nothing about it. One of them was a member of the Peoples Temple who lived in Lamaha Gardens, a modest house that the Peoples Temple used for liaisons in Georgetown, Guyana's capital. Told by radio of the ambush at Port Kaituma, Amos knew what would happen next. Everyone in Jonestown was about to die. Taking her children into the bathroom, Mother Amos dutifully slit their throats,

then took her own life, as well. News of the horror quickly got out, but nothing further was heard from Jonestown itself. The agricultural settlement was a black hole. When the Embassy learned of the ambush from one of the returning pilots, Adkins got on the radio - and stayed on the radio for hours - listening hard. For a long while, nothing could be heard. But in the early morning hours of November 19, the voice of Odell Rhodes was suddenly heard, transmitting almost hysterically. After witnessing so many murders and suicides, Rhodes had used a pretext to get past a cordon sanitaire of Temple guards armed with shotguns and crossbows. Reaching the relative safety of the surrounding jungle, he'd made his way to the little police station in nearby Mathews Ridge. It was from there that he broadcast the report that stunned Adkins. As for Dwyer, he appears to have played a courageous role at the airstrip that night, taking care of the wounded and the dead at considerable risk to himself.

In the AE documentary played on TV a few years ago about Jonestown, is stock/archive footage from that day not seen before, in particular is the scene of congressman Ryan & the other defectors / members of Ryan's party, and non-other than Dwyer are all walking in a semi single file line and right as they get to around the wing area Dwyer takes a hard left away from the rest of the members toward what vaguely seems like a gesture toward the pilot perhaps? We'll probably never know, but the fact is that less than 30 - 45 seconds later, the first gun shots are heard. Then tie that into the time frame it would take for him to walk back there to where Jones was giving his final sermon, so to speak, and it lines up perfectly, I mean literally perfectly. It hits a black wall after you get past that, the witness testimonies are scarce and conflicting so quite frankly it's hard to know - how exactly and truthfully were Dwyer and Jones linked?