

Box 9

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper with a blue header. The text is mostly illegible due to blurring and is written in dark ink.

A large, mostly blank white area, possibly representing the main body of a document or a very faint page. There are some very faint, illegible markings scattered across this area.

Interview with Ambassador Burke, 3/19/1979

[2 of 2]

Linda Baumman

Committee on Foreign Affairs

MEMORANDUM

April 6, 1979

TO: Ambassador John Burke
American Embassy, Georgetown

FROM: George Berdes, Ivo Spalatin, and Tom Smeeton,
Guyana Staff Investigators, House Foreign
Affairs Committee

THRU: Richard McCoy, Guyana Desk Officer
Department of State

The following are two questions we would appreciate your response to to be submitted along with your corrected transcript:

- (1) Do you know a Pat Small? If so, please specify how you know her, especially as it relates to Peoples' Temple.
- (2) During your July and/or August 1978 visit to Washington, did you discuss Log #126 and Log #130 with anyone in the State Department? If so, please describe with whom and the substance of those discussions.

(1) I do not know Pat Small. I became aware of her merely from the mention made of her in the diary of Mrs Hunter which appeared in the Guyana Chronicle subsequent to Nov. 18.

(2) I believe that I discussed log #126 and log #130 briefly with desk officer Timminia ~~briefly~~ during a July visit to Washington. I recall registering disapproval to him that my recommendation in log #126 had not been accepted.

~~Confidential~~

*Copy
M Berdes*

Stenographic Transcript Of
7/20/79

HEARINGS

Before The

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

U.S. House of Representatives

INTERVIEW OF JOHN BURKE

WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 19, 1979

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

Official Reporters

1028 CONNECTICUT AVE., N.W., SUITE 1110 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

(202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

10/11 7/20/79

INTERVIEW OF JOHN BURKE

- - -

MARCH 19, 1979

- - -

Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

The interview convened at 10:45 a.m., in the offices of the United States Embassy, Georgetown, Guyana, George Berdes, presiding.

Present: George Berdes, Ivo Spalatin, Thomas Smeeton, and Linda Bauman.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

2

1 Mr. Berdes. This is a continuation of the inquiry order
2 by Chairman Zablocki of the House Foreign Affairs Committee into
3 the death of Representative Leo Ryan and the resulting incidents
4 at Jonestown, Guyana, November 18, 1978.

5 We are privileged this morning, March 19, 1979, to be
6 interviewing Ambassador John Burke, United States Ambassador to
7 Guyana, in his office in Georgetown, Guyana.

8 Mrs. Bauman, I believe you have a statement to make.

9 Mrs. Bauman. I would like to state our understanding that
10 we are conducting the interview under the same conditions set
11 forth by Mr. Fortune during the December 14 interview with
12 Mr. McCoy.

13 Mr. Berdes. Very good. To which I have customarily added
14 to Mr. Fortune's comments that we are, as employees of the United
15 States Congress, concerned in upholding the interests of our
16 Branch. We respect yours, of course, and may have some modest
17 differences of opinions regarding them, but we have proceeded
18 so far in a very amenable way.

19 I have no reason to doubt we will continue to do so.

20 Mr. Ambassador, we are pleased to be with you today.
21 We appreciate your time. I would ask that you begin, perhaps,
22 by outlining for us briefly some biographical information.

23 Ambassador Burke. I am a career Foreign Service officer.
24 I have been in the Foreign Service since 1956, and since that
25 time, I have served in a variety of posts around the world as

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 well as having seen service in Washington, D.C., at the
2 Department of State.

3 I am a generalist in that most of my career has been in
4 the political field. But I have done consular work during my
5 approximately three-and-a-half years in our embassy in Paris.

6 I have had a fair amount of experience both in Southeast
7 Asia and in the Caribbean, having served in the early 1960's
8 as a member of the staff of the Office of the British Commonwealth
9 and Northern European Affairs at the time this office had
10 responsibility for the then still dependent Commonwealth
11 Caribbean.

12 Subsequent to that, I served two years as number two in our
13 embassy in Haiti and served three years as Director of the
14 Office of Caribbean Affairs. I arrived in Georgetown as
15 Ambassador late in September of 1977.

16 Mr. Berdes. Has your service been continuous here since
17 that period?

18 Ambassador Burke. Since that time, yes.

19 Mr. Berdes. Your assignment to Guyana in September of
20 1977, was that your first posting here?

21 Ambassador Burke. It was my first posting here. I
22 had visited Guyana previously in my capacity as Director of
23 the Office of Caribbean Affairs.

24 Mr. Smeeton. When would that have been?

25 Ambassador Burke. That would have been in May of 1972.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Spalatin. Presumably for an overnight stay.

2 Ambassador Burke. It was a stay, as I recall, of
3 approximately three or four days. It was a familiarization
4 trip. I ^{had} never visited Guyana previous to that time. In
5 preparation for taking up my duties ^{as Director of} [at] Caribbean Affairs, I
6 visited Guyana as well as several of the other posts in the
7 Caribbean.

8 Mr. Berdes. I ask you, please, to outline for us your
9 first awareness of the Peoples Temple.

10 Ambassador Burke. I believe my first awareness of the
11 Peoples Temple was -- I had heard, I believe, this would have
12 been in either late 1974 or early 1975, about a group that had
13 come to Guyana to set up a community. My inclusive dates as
14 Director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs runs from the
15 period ^{of} roughly June [of] 1972 to June [of] 1975. It ^{was} [is] a three-
16 year tour.

17 My recollection is that I heard possibly -- I heard
18 definitely about the establishment of some sort of a community
19 of Americans in Guyana either in late 1974 or in early 1975.

20 Mr. Berdes. What was the nature of that information at
21 that time?

22 Ambassador Burke. I can't recall, quite frankly. It may
23 have been in conversation with then Ambassador Krebs during one
24 of his periodic visits to Washington or perhaps some other
25 embassy staff member had come to Washington during that period.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 As I said, I left the position of Director of Caribbean
2 Affairs in June [of] 1975 and my Caribbean experience terminated
3 as of this time. I went off to the Senior Seminar ^{and then to} [in] Bangkok
4 as Minister ^{- Counselor.} [of] [Consul.]

5 Mr. Smeeton. In terms of what was discussed, do you
6 remember anything of significance?

7 Ambassador Burke. I cannot. All I recall is I heard ^{that} some
8 community of Americans had been established in Guyana; no
9 details.

10 Mr. Berdes. Can we assume from that, therefore, that your
11 next point of reference to Peoples Temple was after you had
12 assumed the position of Ambassador in September of 1977?

13 Ambassador Burke. Actually, before that. It was during
14 my briefing in preparation for coming here. I think that would
15 have been in August-September of 1977. I went through the
16 usual briefing in the Department of State on all aspects of our
17 relationships with Guyana and our other responsibilities here
18 in the embassy. And during the course of that time, I did hear,
19 again, of the fact that Peoples Temple did exist and did continue
20 to exist here in Guyana as a community.

21 Mr. Berdes. Was it a fleeting reference or anything beyond
22 that?

23 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that the then desk
24 officer, Frank Tummanⁱ, mentioned it to me. He mentioned the
25 fact there ^{had} [have] been some Congressional inquiries regarding the

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 welfare and whereabouts of certain individuals involved in
2 Peoples Temple. There had been also correspondence on the
3 other side favorable to the Peoples Temple.

4 He also, in that time^{period}, drew my attention to an article
5 that had just appeared in New West Magazine on Peoples Temple.

6 Mr. Berdes. Did you read that article?

7 Ambassador Burke. I did read that article.

8 Mr. Berdes. Can you share with us, please, your reaction
9 to it?

10 Ambassador Burke. I was obviously interested in the
11 article, but I was certainly in no position to judge the
12 voracity of the article or any statements made in it.

13 Mr. Berdes. Did it serve the purpose of jogging your
14 memory in terms of this is something I will have to check out
15 when I get there?

16 Ambassador Burke. I certainly did tuck this away,
17 although there were other briefings I was going through at
18 the time.

19 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall Frank Tummania offering any
20 observations regarding the article?

21 Ambassador Burke. I can't remember how he characterized
22 it. He gave me a Xeroxed copy of it to read. That is my
23 recollection.

24 Mr. Berdes. From that point onward, could you perhaps
25 narrate the further points of contact or reference of awareness

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 you had to Peoples Temple?

2 Ambassador Burke. On arrival at post, of course, I
3 received the usual briefings from the various section chiefs
4 of the embassy -- political, economic, consular, public affairs,
5 and I do remember that the consul, the then consul, Mr. McCoy,
6 made references in his briefings to the fact that he was con-
7 ducting a certain amount of business with the Peoples Temple
8 and that he was responding to various inquiries in connection
9 with the Peoples Temple.

10 I personally had no contact with anybody from the Peoples
11 Temple until some time several weeks after my arrival when two
12 ^{OR} [to] three people from the Peoples Temple paid a courtesy call
13 on me. This would have been perhaps in December of 1977.

14 Mr. Spalatin. Just before we proceed on, I want to
15 return one moment back to the briefings that you received from
16 Mr. Tummania and others in preparation for your new post here.
17 In reference to the New West article and the Peoples Temple
18 in general, did Mr. Tummania observe that that situation,
19 Peoples Temple activities, might prove to have an adverse effect
20 on the diplomatic bilateral relations between the United States
21 and Guyana? Do you recall if he might have said that to you?

22 Ambassador Burke. I don't recall any such observation on
23 his part.

24 Mr. Spalatin. Specifically related to the political
25 difficulties, I believe, in October of 1976, that had underwent

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 questions.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall at this time any discussions
3 of his discussions with Guyanese officials with respect to
4 Jonestown, what might be happening?

5 Ambassador Burke. Not at that stage.

6 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall him discussing any of his
7 discussions with Guyanese officials located in the Northwest
8 who might have had some contact with Jonestown?

9 Ambassador Burke. No, I was very interested in having
10 him describe [ge]ographically to me the difficulties of getting
11 to Jonestown. I think he had made that trip using the commercial
12 means available by taking the regular Guyanese airways up to
13 Matthews Ridge and coming ^{on} [up] down by this ^e rather antique railroad
14 ^{to} [by] Port Kaituma and then having to arrange transportation into
15 Jonestown itself through ^{local} officials, but I don't remember him
16 giving me any impressions what the local officials had to say
17 about it.

18 He did describe it as a self-contained community ^{which} [and]
19 appeared to be reasonably successful.

20 Mr. Berdes. Over the period from your appointment in
21 September of 1977 for the next several months, did you become
22 aware of the cases of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Oliver?

23 Ambassador Burke. No.

24 Mr. Berdes. Or Dr. Steve Katsaris?

25 Ambassador Burke. I was familiar with the meeting that

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 had been arranged ^{by} [between] Consul McCoy and Ambassador Mann
2 between Mr. Katsaris and his daughter, but I was not personally
3 involved in setting it up or certainly in assisting. Again, I
4 considered that an affair between Mr. Katsaris, an American
5 citizen, and his daughter, an American citizen.

6 Mr. McCoy played an appropriate role in facilitating,
7 in setting this up, taking due regard of the fact there were
8 American citizens on both sides of the affair.

9 Mr. Berdes. Did you in that same sense regard it chiefly
10 as a consul ^{aw} matter?

11 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

12 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall McCoy conveying his impressions
13 of that meeting to you afterwards?

14 Ambassador Burke. I have the general feeling that McCoy
15 may have described it as a rather tense meeting, but as to
16 substance, I did not know.

17 Mr. Smeeton. He at that time indicated because of that
18 meeting possibly his suspicions about the Temple might have
19 been heightened a little bit?

20 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't remember that.

21 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any discussions you might have
22 had with Ambassador Mann regarding that meeting?

23 Ambassador Burke. No, I had no discussions with Mann --
24 on that particular meeting -- other than his saying to me he had
25 been helpful in setting it up.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall anything in the wake of
2 that meeting, as far as Ambassador Mann's observation about what
3 transpired?

4 Ambassador Burke. No.

5 Mr. Spalatin. Or characterizations of Peoples Temple being
6 weird or normal or anything?

7 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't. I don't recall Mann --

8 Mr. Spalatin. Or saying something like, "How can an
9 American citizen do that to his daughter?" I am not saying
10 he should have, but I am curious.

11 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember the ^{observation.} [conversation.]

12 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall McCoy making any observations
13 about Mr. Katsaris?

14 Ambassador Burke. Other than saying that the atmosphere
15 of the meeting appeared to be tense between the father and
16 daughter, I don't remember him characterizing Katsaris beyond
17 that. Again, it seemed to me at the time that this was a meeting
18 between two American citizens on a private matter. Certainly
19 it was their business between them.

20 Mr. Smeeton. I was thinking in particular McCoy maybe in
21 the context of this whole perception of Peoples Temple suggest
22 that Mr. Katsaris might have been one of the most credible
23 critics of the Temple that he had encountered to that point.

24 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember McCoy characterizing
25 Katsaris to me in those terms. But as I say, I don't remember

1 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall anything in the wake of
2 that meeting, as far as Ambassador Mann's observation about what
3 transpired?

4 Ambassador Burke. No.

5 Mr. Spalatin. Or characterizations of Peoples Temple being
6 weird or normal or anything?

7 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't. I don't recall Mann --

8 Mr. Spalatin. Or saying something like, "How can an
9 American citizen do that to his daughter?" I am not saying
10 he should have, but I am curious.

11 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember the ^{observation.} [conversation.]

12 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall McCoy making any observations
13 about Mr. Katsaris?

14 Ambassador Burke. Other than saying that the atmosphere
15 of the meeting appeared to be tense between the father and
16 daughter, I don't remember him characterizing Katsaris beyond
17 that. Again, it seemed to me at the time that this was a meeting
18 between two American citizens on a private matter. Certainly
19 it was their business between them.

20 Mr. Smeeton. I was thinking in particular McCoy maybe in
21 the context of this whole perception of Peoples Temple suggesting
22 that Mr. Katsaris might have been one of the most credible
23 critics of the Temple that he had encountered to that point.

24 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember McCoy characterizing
25 Katsaris to me in those terms. But as I say, I don't remember

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 him characterizing Katsaris generally beyond what I have already
2 said.

3 Mr. Berdes. What do you recall of the Stoen custody case?

4 Ambassador Burke. The Stoen custody case had been a matter
5 of interest to the embassy before my arrival, in the weeks just
6 preceding my arrival, as a matter of fact. When I arrived, I
7 was briefed by Blacken and by McCoy just in very brief outline
8 as to the case and where it stood. I saw a copy of the note
9 that had been sent in connection with it and I was generally
10 made aware of the meetings that McCoy and Blacken had.

11 Mr. Berdes. Did all that information in any way reinforce
12 some concept that you may have been evolving up to that
13 point regarding Peoples Temple which may have been set in motion
14 by the New West article? Did it deepen any kind of an awareness
15 or attitude?

16 Ambassador Burke. No, I would say it reinforced probably
17 in my mind the fact that here was a community of several
18 hundred Americans and ^{that} they were going to be a continuing consular
19 concern to us; certainly as long as the community existed
20 here, that there would be perhaps custody cases or just
21 general consular affairs having to do with the Peoples Temple.

22 Again, in the Stoen custody matter, I viewed this as a
23 custody case with American citizens on both sides of the affair,
24 and I felt it was very important that the embassy be facilitative
25 to both sides in any appropriate way that we might be, taking

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 great care not to appear to favor one side or the other.

2 Mr. Spalatin. If I surmise from that, you viewed the Stoen
3 case and the Katsaris case as matters between two American
4 citizens, private citizens, and, therefore, being basically
5 consular matters of responsibility within the embassy.

6 Ambassador Burke. Right.

7 Mr. Spalatin. We are talking about the time frame when
8 you first came on board, basically the fall of 1977.

9 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

10 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, I would appreciate it if you
11 would look at log 770. Unfortunately I don't have a clean copy
12 of it. It is a Xerox of the one submitted by the State
13 Department to us. Just take a moment or two to glance at that,
14 if you could, please.

15 Mrs. Bauman. Could you indicate for the record a general
16 summary of it?

17 Mr. Spalatin. I will get into it as soon as the Ambassador
18 has a chance to review it. That is why I referred to the
19 log reference number. This is the procedure we have been
20 taking throughout.

21 I also believe the article that is attached thereto is
22 the article Mr. McCoy refers to.

23 Ambassador Burke. "Enclosed is a copy of the newspaper
24 article published by The London Observer."

25 Mr. Spalatin. I believe that is the one there.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Among other things, I believe that article alleges or
 2 cites, somebody has alleged a young man's head was shaved,
 3 some type of punishment imposed allegedly by Peoples Temple
 4 members in Jonestown. That refers back to Mr. McCoy's memo
 5 through the DCM to you indicating when he was up there the
 6 last time, he did not see any evidence of anyone's having been
 7 shaved. That is in reference to the article.

8 I was intrigued by the observation in that memorandum
 9 in which it states or indicates that the Peoples Temple was
 10 no longer quite so trusted, seemingly, by the Guyanese Government.
 11 I believe that was in the last paragraph in the middle there.

12 Could this becoming in your mind at that time a consular
 13 matter that could spill over into the non-consular areas? That
 14 is one of the key questions I have.

15 Mrs. Bauman. Are you asking the Ambassador ^{what he thought} at that time?

16 Mr. Spalatin. At that time, yes.

17 Ambassador Burke. This memorandum was dated October 7,
 18 which would have been a memoradum which I received, perhaps,
 19 within eight to ten days after my arrival. I do not recall I
 20 felt at this stage that Peoples Temple was likely to spill over.

21 Mr. Spalatin. We have no record, but did this result in
 22 any verbal or written direction on your part back to DCM or
 23 Mr. McCoy of any sort?

24 Ambassador Burke. This particular memorandum?

25 Mr. Spalatin. Yes.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Ambassador Burke. I am not sure this memorandum did.
2 I do know I emphasized to the DCM and also to the consul that
3 we may have, from time to time, questions regarding Peoples
4 Temple coming to our attention and that it was very important,
5 given the fact these people were American citizens living in
6 Guyana, that we be extremely careful of their various
7 Constitutional rights and rights to privacy.

8 Mr. Berdes. You had in mind there, I take it, the Privacy
9 Act?

10 Ambassador Burke. Yes, and the fact ^{that} this was, as I under-
11 stood it, a religious community. Jones himself was described,
12 in various things [as] I have ^d seen and heard, as a Bishop, a Church
13 of the Disciples of Christ, [an] ordained minister. It was my
14 understanding Peoples Temple was a religious community.

15 Mr. Smeeton. I notice in this same log Mr. Spalatin had
16 cited, McCoy concludes the memo by saying, "I know that a number
17 of police officials are concerned about the Peoples Temple,
18 including the head of the Special Branch, James Mentore, and
19 the Chief Immigration Officer, Theo George.

20 In connection with that observation, do you recall
21 subsequent to this particular memo or conversation McCoy
22 discussing those concerns expressed by those officials to you?

23 Ambassador Burke. At the time I saw this memorandum,
24 I hadn't yet met either Mr. Mentore or Mr. George. I was still,
25 of course, in the process of familiarizing myself with the

1 entire Guyanese scene. I had no idea just where they fit into
2 the scene or how authoritative they might be on any subject.

3 Mr. Smeeton. At what point along the way would you have
4 had the opportunity to sit down with Mr. McCoy and discuss in
5 depth the kind of concerns that are expressed here?

6 Ambassador Burke. Of course, I saw McCoy several times a
7 week in person getting reports from him on his various consular
8 problems and met with him and with John Blacken, usually the
9 three of us together, sometimes just McCoy. So there was a
10 continuing dialogue between all of us on Peoples Temple just as
11 there was on the other concerns and questions that we had.

12 I am sure during the course of these meetings, McCoy
13 very well may have mentioned some hearsay that he had gotten
14 from Guyanese sources regarding Peoples Temple, but I was in no
15 position to appreciate how authoritative this information was,
16 and I was very concerned, obviously, ^{that} whatever information came
17 to our attention regarding Peoples Temple or the group or
18 individual American citizens be absolutely reliable and could
19 be considered as hard evidence, if you will, and not just gossip
20 or hearsay.

21 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall McCoy characterizing the relia-
22 bility of the information he usually got from Mentore and
23 George?

24 Ambassador Burke. Georgetown, like so many other places ⁱⁿ
25 which I have served, is a small community, the principal

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 conversation around here really is gossip. Certainly, as you
2 have already observed, I am sure, on the basis of your couple
3 of days here, there is not a great deal to do in Georgetown.

4 So gossip does figure largely as a topic of conversation.

5 Mr. Smeeton. I am still trying to assess to what degree
6 McCoy felt these people were reliable sources.

7 Ambassador Burke. I honestly don't know.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Did you ever come to a realization at any
9 time along the way as to what degree these people were reliable?

10 Ambassador Burke. This takes us into the future to a
11 certain extent. I do know for a fact Mr. Mentore never visited
12 Jonestown himself. But as I say, I did not at that stage know
13 that to be the case.

14 Mr. Smeeton. I am thinking, you wouldn't necessarily have
15 to have visited to provide worthwhile information given the
16 fact he may have had access from other sources elsewhere in
17 Guyana.

18 Ambassador Burke. Certainly at the time this memorandum
19 was drafted and these conversations were taking place, I was in
20 no position to judge the reliability of Mr. Mentore.

21 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall Mr. McCoy offering his
22 own observations, these are two people whose opinion I respect;
23 they have a pretty good track record as to the accuracy of
24 information they might have provided on other things?

25 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember --

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Smeeton. Therefore, I may be attaching a little more
2 average credibility to what they say about Peoples Temple?

3 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't.

4 Mr. Berdes. I might just note here, Mr. Ambassador
5 as a point of information, it may, only in your judgment may
6 have to determine this, it may become necessary at some point
7 for you to distinguish between the information you had prior
8 to November 18 and what you have learned after November 18.
9 I think it will be useful and helpful for us to have that
10 distinction.

11 Ambassador Burke. Right. As I said, regarding these
12 two individuals and any discussions that might have taken place
13 in this time frame of October 7, more or less, that we are talk-
14 ing about now, I was in no position to judge the credibility of
15 these individuals or what they might have had to offer.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

ld ends

ajk flg

~~Confidential~~
Confidential

19

1 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall encouraging McCoy or any
2 other members of the Embassy staff to maintain contacts with
3 these two individuals or other individuals in the Government
4 to maintain a sort of monitoring capability with respect to
5 what might be going on in Peoples Temple in Jonestown?

6 Ambassador Burke. No, I certainly did not encourage
7 them to do that?

8 Mr. Berdes. Did you discourage them from doing that?

9 Ambassador Burke. I didn't discourage them. The point
10 I made from the beginning was that this was a group of American
11 citizens and we ought to be extremely careful to make certain
12 we weren't intruding on their constitutional rights.

13 Mr. Smeeton. But at the same time, you didn't want
14 to discourage them in the respect that they might provide you
15 with potential information, showing you certain things with
16 respect to what was going on in Peoples Temple which might
17 be elicited?

18 Ambassador Burke. Certainly these two people cited in
19 the memorandum were in normal contact with McCoy. He would
20 have an ongoing relationship with both of them. I certainly
21 didn't discourage him ^{from} having any such ongoing relationship
22 with both of them.

23 Mr. Smeeton. Would it be natural for a consular officer
24 to maintain contacts with people in the Immigration Service
25 and in the Police Service?

Confidential

mjkl
f's ld

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

mjk2

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Ambassador Burke. Yes.

As you probably know, in connection with the issuance of immigrant visas, it is necessary to run police checks.

Mr. Smeeton. Before we move on to other items, George, I would just like to focus on one item that is mentioned in the attached article which, if you still have that article -- is it attached to the copy you have? I am referring to an article entitled "The Profit Exit Shocks California", by Charles Foley.

The penultimate paragraph of the copy before me reads as follows:

"A list of missing persons is expected to include scores of young delinquents entrusted to Temple homes. Shortwave broadcasts from Georgetown claim they are being given a new start in a world free from big city perils."

Do you remember the substance of that paragraph being discussed at this time or shortly thereafter?

Ambassador Burke. I don't remember the substance of that paragraph being discussed.

Mr. Smeeton. And in connection with the possibility there may be a number of children who were formerly wards of the State of California being moved from California to Jonestown.

Ambassador Burke. I don't recall that being discussed.

Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall it being discussed anytime?

Mrs. Bauman. The paragraph or the allegation?

Mr. Smeeton. The allegations about foster children being

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 moved to Jonestown?

2 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't recall that allegation
3 discussed, certainly within this time frame.

4 I am trying to recall whether or not we had subsequent
5 conversations about it. We may have.

6 My assumption is that if any wards of the State of
7 California had been removed from the State of California,
8 that we probably would be hearing about it from the State of
9 California through official channels.

10 Mr. Berdes. May I just go back for a moment to the point
11 that was raised regarding Mr. McCoy's contact with police
12 officials? I believe you indicated that was an appropriate
13 matter of business for a consular officer.

14 Ambassador Burke. Certainly the consul would have contact
15 with the police because, as I said, it is necessary for us to
16 get police checks on immigrant visa applicants before issuance.

17 Mr. Spalatin. I meant to ask this question earlier,
18 I am sorry.

19 Just to turn back a little bit, Mr. Ambassador, during your
20 preparation for coming to Guyana as the Ambassador in August-
21 September 1977, among other things, you mentioned Mr.
22 Tumminia brought up the ^{New West} [newest] article and gave you a copy.
23 At that time, did he share with you a copy of, or draw your
24 attention to a Customs report dated September of 1977?

25 Mr. Smeeton. Actually for the record, it was late August

1 1977.

2 Mr. Spalatin. Dealing with allegations of alleged
3 gun smuggling and other contraband items into Guyana from
4 California?

5 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember that.

6 Subsequently I have heard of it, but I don't remember it
7 ever being drawn to my attention at the time.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Subsequent, you mean subsequent to the
9 tragedy of November 18?

10 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

11 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, we understand you had made
12 a trip back to Washington in February of 1978; is that correct?

13 Ambassador Burke. There was a meeting of the chiefs
14 of mission, all the ambassadors in Latin America were brought
15 to Washington for a meeting with the Assistant Secretary.
16 To my recollection, the dates were February 27, 28, March 1 ^{for}
17 of our three-day meeting. So I was back in Washington.

18 Mr. Spalatin. At that ^{time} itme, did you meet with Mrs. Watson?

19 Ambassador Burke. I did meet with Barbara Watson.

20 Mr. Spalatin. During your meeting with her, was there any
21 discussion of Peoples Temple?

22 Ambassador Burke. We did discuss the Stoen custody case,
23 as I recall.

24 Mr. Spalatin. Aside from the Stoen case, was there any
25 discussion as to welfare and whereabouts inquires in general,

mjk5

1 allegations of people being held against their will or
2 alleged bondage or related such charges that you recall?
3 Ambassador Burke. I do not recall specifically now.
4 The principal focus of that meeting was the Stoen custody
5 case and exchanges we had had on the Stoen custody case in January
6 and February. It may, indeed, be that we did go beyond
7 that and make some comments back and forth about Peoples
8 Temple generally.

9 Mr. Spalatin. But nothing today strikes you in your memory?

10 Ambassador Burke. No. I think we may have said -- or
11 at least I may have said a group this large of American citizens,
12 we are probably going to have from time to time various
13 consular matters that will come up as a result of their
14 presence in Guyana.

15 Mr. Spalatin. During your discussion with Mrs. Watson
16 of the Stoen custody case, did either one of you
17 speculate as to which side was right on the issue?

18 Ambassador Burke. Again, I would have to say no because
19 certainly as far as I was concerned, neither this Embassy
20 nor the U. S. Government was in any position to judge which side
21 was right or wrong.

22 Mr. Spalatin. Was there any discussion as to the potential
23 consequences of Mr. Jones winning custody or Mrs. Stoen
24 willing custody of John Victor and what might be the consequences
25 of either one of those decisions, in a proper judicial way,

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 upon U. S.-Guyanese relations?

2 Ambassador Burke. I didn't really see it in the context
3 of the U. S.-Guyanese relations.

4 Mr. Spalatin. Therefore, there would be no need to discuss
5 the potential consequences of it going either way?

6 Ambassador Burke. No.

7 Mrs. Bauman. There was no discussion?

8 Ambassador Burke. Not that I recall.

9 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall any questions with Mr.
10 Hewitt back in the Department of State regarding the potential
11 of this case spilling over to the political arena, possibly
12 creating a cause for tension between the United States Government
13 and the Government of Guyana?

14 Ambassador Burke. I didn't view it as such; no.

15 Mr. Smeeton. You never had that perception of the case?

16 Ambassador Burke. I didn't have ^{that} [a] perception of this
17 particular case.

18 Mr. Smeeton. At any time, or just at this time?

19 Ambassador Burke. At any time that I can recall. I felt
20 that it was important that this case be handled strictly
21 in accordance with [the] Guyanese law, that it be decided on
22 its merits and that we should be very careful so as not to
23 appear to take sides in the matter.

24 As to any effect a decision would have on Guyaneze-U.S.
25 relations, I don't remember having ever considered this was an

1 important consideration.

2 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall having any discussions with
3 Guyanese officials regarding the possibility of this undermining,
4 exacerbating relations between the two governments?

5 Ambassador Burke. I do recall that an incident arose.

6 Again, the time frame escapes me a little bit. But I suspect
7 it was January or February that the Stoens were down here for
8 a hearing and that midway through the week, the Stoens came
9 to the Consul, or perhaps just Timothy Stoen himself -- I am
10 not sure if both ^{came} or not -- and told the Consul that they had been
11 informed by the Immigration authorities that their visas
12 would be canceled.

13 The hearing that they were here for was in progress, so
14 I directed my DCM --

15 Mr. Smeeton. For the record, that would have been --

16 Ambassador Burke. That would have been Mr. Blacken --
17 to get in touch with the Minister of Justice, who was a good
18 friend of the DCM.

19 Mr. Smeeton. For the record, who would that have been?

20 Ambassador Burke. Fred Wills -- and ask Wills why this had
21 happened, and unless there was good and sufficient reason why
22 their visas have been canceled, they should be permitted to
23 stay while the hearings were in progress.

24 As I understand it, their visas were extended. They were
25 permitted to remain

1 Mr. Smeeton. Mr. Wills was also serving as Foreign
2 Minister at that time?

3 Ambassador Burke. Also as Foreign Minister. He held
4 both those positions.

5 This was in his capacity as Minister of Justice.

6 Mr. Smeeton. We are focusing on the Stoen case, I gather.
7 Were you out of the country when Mr. Blacken sent the diplomatic
8 note to the Government of Guyana with respect to the Stoen
9 case?

10 Ambassador Burke. That was before my arrival.

11 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any conversations with him after
12 you arrived as to whether or not that was a good idea?

13 Ambassador Burke. I do remember reviewing ^{the} [a] note as
14 part of my briefing. The note struck me as being a very strong
15 statement. Certain implications were made in the note, and I
16 asked him if he had any hard evidence to support the statements.
17 But I had discussed it with him and was interested in what had
18 caused him to send the note in the first place.

19 Mr. Smeeton. You say based on your briefing of him,
20 he didn't seem to have any solid evidence?

21 Ambassador Burke. No.

22 Mr. Smeeton. How did he rationalize going to the
23 lengths he did? As you indicated, it was a strong statement,
24 absent hard evidence.

25 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that he said that

~~Confidential~~

1 the note had been rather hastily done --

2 Mr. Smeeton. Pardon?

3 Ambassador Burke. The note had been rather hastily done,
4 and I believe also that Mr. Haas was here present in Georgetown
5 at the time it was drafted.

6 It was done perhaps on the basis of conversations that he
7 had had with Haas.

8 Mr. Smeeton. In other words, you feel there is a distinct
9 linkage between Haas' information and Blacken's action regarding
10 the diplomatic note?

11 Ambassador Burke. Yes, that is my impression. I was
12 not here at the time.

13 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall Mr. Blacken indicating
14 to you that he had been encouraged to take this action by
15 Foreign Minister Wills?

16 Ambassador Burke. I believe he may have made a statement
17 along those lines. I must say, I find it rather strange
18 that he would have been encouraged to write this note along
19 these lines by the Foreign Minister, although at that time, I
20 really had no appreciation of the personality of Mr. Wills or
21 ^{the} [any other] relationship Mr. Blacken may have enjoyed with him.

22 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall him indicating that Wills
23 more or less suggested such action might get the thing back
24 on track and might speed it up?

25 Ambassador Burke. I think he may have said that when he

~~Confidential~~

mjk10

1 made the statement that Wills had encouraged him to write it.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Looking at Mr. Blacken's recollection of
3 that particular period, he says, "I am convinced in my own
4 mind there was a stoppage and it basically was necessary to
5 do something in order to break it loose. The Foreign Minister
6 subsequently told me that we had broken it loose with that."

7 Do you recall that?

8 Ambassador Burke. I don't recall him putting it to me
9 in those terms.

10 As I say, this all happened before my arrival in terms
11 of how the note came to be written and what conversations
12 Mr. Blacken and Mr. Wills had.

13 Mr. Smeeton. Based on our own interviews, Mr. Ambassador,
14 with Mr. Blacken, I get the impression that some discussion
15 between you and him took place regarding this note.

16 Ambassador Burke. Yes, I am certainly not denying the
17 discussion did take place.

18 Mr. Smeeton. It has also been suggested that possibly you
19 expressed your disapproval of such action and that if you had been
20 in Mr. Blacken's position, you wouldn't have gone to those
21 lengths?

22 Ambassador Burke. No, I think the point I made to Mr.
23 Blacken when I reviewed the note was more on professional terms.
24 As I said, I asked him if he had any hard evidence to support
25 the statements made in the note. He said he had no such

83
MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 hard evidence. Reading the note, you will see the form is rather
2 odd. It is a third-person diplomatic note, but midway through
3 the note, it becomes a first-person note. So just from the
4 point of view of the professionalism that went into preparing
5 the note, it isn't a very professional note. The important
6 thing to me was in retrospect, the Stoen case, as I have said
7 before, was a case involving two Americans, parties on both sides.
8 It seemed to me not improbable that at some stage [in] this
9 case would either revert back to California or be continued in
10 some fashion, or there might be a subsequent process that might
11 grow out of it, and that the note could conceivably be
12 introduced as evidence either by one side or the other in
13 connection with such a process and that Mr. Blacken might
14 be called upon to testify in support of why it came to be
15 written.

16 Depending on whether it was introduced by the plaintiff
17 or the defendant and for what reason, it is conceivable that
18 he might have been called upon to testify as to why he had
19 done it in terms of being unable to produce ancillary evidence
20 that would support the points made in the note. So it was
21 purely on that basis.

22 Mr. Smeeton. Was Mr. Blacken ever disciplined by you
23 or members of the department for taking this action?

24 Ambassador Burke. Certainly not disciplined by me.

25 Mr. Berdes. Reprimanded might be a better word.

TF

1 Ambassador Burke. I never reprimanded him because he,
2 at the time, was charge. I was not yet chief of mission
3 here. This, of course, all took place while he was in charge,
4 so he had a perfect right to do whatever he saw fit while he
5 was in charge. I certainly wouldn't in an a priori manner make
6 any comment on what he had done.

7 Mr. Smeeton. To try to get a little better understanding
8 of this kind of action, based on your own experience in the
9 Foreign Service, how would you characterize this action?
10 You indicated the contents were rather strong. In the context
11 of how you register disapproval or concern to another
12 government, how would you rate this on a scale of 1 to 5?

13 Ambassador Burke. You mean 5 being the top?

14 Mr. Smeeton. The top, the strongest.

15 Ambassador Burke. I would put it around 4.75.

16 Mr. Smeeton. Is that right?

17 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Given that perception, is the major reason
19 for your concern about this action being taken possibly
20 that the potential, that it carried the potential for
21 straining relations between the two governments?

22 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

23 Mr. Smeeton. On something that shouldn't have
24 intruded upon or impacted upon the relations of two governments?

25 Ambassador Burke. Again, when notes are sent, they

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

Confidential

31

1 should be prepared as carefully as possible.

2 They should be based on the best evidence available.

3 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall Mr. Blacken during this
4 discussion of this whole period regarding this note telling
5 you that he touched base with the Department to get their
6 feeling as to whether or not he should go forward with this
7 action?

8 Ambassador Burke. I do not remember, and I do not think
9 the record shows there was any such exchange.

10 Mr. Smeeton. By the "record", what are we talking about?

11 Ambassador Burke. Cables.

12 Mr. Smeeton. Cable traffic. Would it have been possible
13 for him to have had telephonic dialogue with the Department?

14 Ambassador Burke. Possibly. It would have been possible,
15 surely.

16 Mr. Smeeton. Does the Embassy maintain logs of those
17 conversations?

18 Ambassador Burke. No.

19 Mr. Smeeton. You maintain no log whatsoever of your
20 discussions between Washington and here?

21 Ambassador Burke. One of the problems, of course,
22 in diplomacy generally these days, is the accessibility of
23 the telephone. Often times you do have to resort to it when
24 you have to get something done quickly. Often times, unless
25 either one end of the conversation or the other does a

Confidential

Confidential

1 memorandum for the file, for the record, there isn't a record
2 of such exchange.

3
4 Mr. Smeeton. Do you keep a log just indicating so-
5 and-so contacted so-and-so on such-and-such a date?

6 Mrs. Bauman: ~~Are we getting procedural?~~ Would you
7 rather go off the record for a discussion of procedures involved?

8 Mr. Berdes. Procedures are essential for us to understand.

9 Mr. Smeeton. It is essential for us to understand the
10 procedures which take place in this context. We have heard
11 about a number of telephone conversations not just in regard
12 to this matter, but other matters. I am trying to get how a
13 dialogue might have been maintained between the department
14 and the Embassy on a variety of matters, including this one.
15 It is in that connection that I raise the question.

16 I think it gives us a much better appreciation of how
17 the Embassy sometimes addresses questions. Sometimes they can
18 proceed unilaterally, other times, such as in a case like this,
19 where there is a potential for impact on another government,
20 possibly in an adverse nature, they feel the necessity to
21 touch base with the home office, so to speak, to get their
22 guidance before they take the action indicating or recommending.
23 So I raise it in that connection. I would just like to ask
24 it again to get some feel for how you maintain a dialogue
25 on difficult questions.

Confidential

1 I gather some of it is done by cable. I gather also
2 there are discussions over the phone?

3 Ambassador Burke. What is the question?

4 Mr. Smeeton. Is that true? There are considerable
5 discussions over the phone as well as in written form?

6 Mrs. Bauman. Excuse me a second, I think if you would
7 like a general statement on what procedures are followed, we
8 should allow the Ambassador to speak to the way things are
9 generally done, and then answer specific questions.

10 Mr. Berdes. Doubly good.

11 Ambassador Burke. As far as important matters are
12 concerned, or matters that require the judgment or the advice
13 or counsel of the Department of State, certainly my practice
14 has always been in my career to put these in the form of a
15 cable and get a response back from the Department or in the
16 form of an operation memorandum or airgram, whatever form
17 of communication.

18 Occasionally, if it is a non-substantive ^{matter} [one, but] you
19 want to check, then there are phone conversations, again,
20 if urgently required. But certainly on a matter of substance,
21 bilateral relations, these are through formal communications.

22 The exigencies of the moment might dictate otherwise
23 in a matter of high urgency. But any such type of
24 conversation that might deal with substance will be confirmed
25 by a cable later on.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

mjk16

1 Mr. Smeeton. If the urgency of a given situation
2 is such that it requires you to resort to the telephone,
3 because you really had no other means of getting your message
4 across quickly, do you sometimes engage in your own sort of
5 makeshift code to make it difficult for those who might
6 be eavesdropping?

7 Ambassador Burke. I can't remember a case since I have
8 been here, since I have been in charge, where I have resorted
9 to the telephone on a matter of substance.

10 I am very conscious^{of}, and I certainly emphasize^{this} to the
11 staff, the insecurity of the telephone because, of course,
12 anyone can pick up telephone conversations anywhere in the
13 world. They are transmitted now, not by long line, but
14 radio signals and they are open and available.

15 Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ambassador, in your periodic meetings
16 with either Mr. McCoy or Mr. Blacken, do you recall either
17 of those two gentlemen relating to you a concern of the Government
18 of Guyana over the importation of goods into Guyana by
19 the Peoples Temple and that Mr. McCoy had once again been
20 told by Mr. Mentore that he, Mr. Mentore, had been told to
21 "Lay off" concerning such matters?

22 Ambassador Burke. What sort of goods are we talking
23 about?

24 Mr. Berdes. I cannot specify simply because I do not
25 know, but within the broad context of the information we have

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

mjk17

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

observed over the past several months, it could range from weapons to various commodities.

Mr. Spalatin. To drugs.

Mr. Berdes. To drugs. That the procedure by which the Peoples Temple brought their materials into this country was not scrutinized in the same procedural fashion that other items brought in were. There was at least the allegation of certain exceptions or privileges that have been provided them.

Ambassador Burke. I think it is quite possible that either Mr. McCoy or Mr. Blacken may have mentioned these allegations to me, but as allegations.

Mr. Berdes. I am sorry, sir?

Ambassador Burke. But as allegations.

Mrs. Bauman. Excuse me for just a second, could I go back to the question we were dealing with earlier and just ask the Ambassador whether the DCM, Mr. Blacken, had ever told you that he cleared this note with the Department by telephone?

Ambassador Burke. No, he never told me that he cleared the note in question either by phone or by cable.

Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall him even indicating that he had discussed the contents of the notes, seeking their advice, not necessarily their okay, but just seeking their input.

Ambassador Burke. No.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Smeeton. Given his charge position at that
 2 time -- he was running the mission at that particular time --
 3 would it have been proper for him to act unilaterally?

4 Mrs. Bauman! I am sorry, could we go off the record
 5 for a second?

6 Mr. Berdes. Off the record.

7 (Discussion off the record)

end mjk

11 files

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

25

LizL-1

fills MJK
3/19
McC.
P-2

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Mr. Smeeton. Do you want me to depersonalize that?

Mrs. Bauman. If you would.

Mr. Smeeton. Does an ambassador or somebody acting in a charge capacity have the authority to unilaterally issue a diplomatic note?

Ambassador Burke. The answer is: Yes. A charge or an ambassador does certainly have the authority to transmit a diplomatic note to the government to which he is ^{accredited} [associated] and on his own authority.

Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ambassador, I would like to draw this portion, at least, of our discussion to a conclusion before we move into the next area by recapitulating as best I can what I believe I have heard so far and ask you if you could at the end of that recapitulation tell me what your cumulative impression of People's Temple was at the point when you first learned -- I believe it was sometime in September of 1978 -- that Leo Ryan's coterie was coming to Guyana.

If you could, please summarize your general bottom line as to People's Temple.

What I have heard so far, from the point of your appointment as Ambassador in September of 1977, was that you were exposed to the ^w newest article, that you had various briefings from Mr. McCoy and others, in which references to the People's Temple were made, that you had before you the matters of the Oliver case, of which you were unfamiliar at the time, the

LL-2

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Dr. Katsaris case -- Maria Katsaris case -- the Stoen custody
2 case -- the latter two which I believe you described as
3 essentially involving two American citizens -- private
4 citizens. Therefore, these matters were chiefly consular
5 in nature.

6 We had the log number "770." We had the matter of the
7 note written by Mr. Blacken.

8 We have had discussions between you and Mr. McCoy and/or
9 Mr. Blacken regarding the possibility, again, of allegations of
10 possible irregularities in the importation of People's Temple
11 goods into Guyana.

12 Could you tell me, please, what your cumulative impression
13 of People's Temple was at that point in approximately
14 September 1978, one year after you had assumed your duties?

15 Mr. Spalatin. To that, you should add also: Miss Blakey's
16 departure in May of 1978 -- which I am sure the Ambassador was
17 aware of.

18 Mrs. Bauman. If I could just ask the Ambassador:

19 Is that a fair assessment of your knowledge up to that
20 point in time?

21 Would you prefer to state what the factors were that,
22 in your own mind --

23 Mr. Berdes. I would simply remind him, before the
24 Ambassador answers your questions, I am working off the record
25 we have established here at this point. Unless there are

LL-3

1 elements that he has not raised, we would be delighted to hear
2 them at this point. If there are --

3 Mrs. Bauman There is also ~~that and also~~ the question of
4 the Stoen case.

5 When ^{at} the Ambassador ^{has} said ^{about} the Stoen case was in regard to
6 a prior time; I don't know if his assessment ~~has~~ changed ^{during the} in a
7 year. That is why I am asking if he would prefer to state his
8 own assessment of ~~what the fact of the situation was~~ at that
9 time.

10 Mr. Berdes. That is perfectly all right.

11 Mr. Smeeton. For purposes of clarification, what point in
12 time are we talking about now?

13 Mr. Berdes. We are talking about the period of time in
14 September 1977 when the Ambassador first assumed his duties
15 here up to the point of September 1978 when, I believe, you
16 first learned of Mr. Ryan's trip to Buyana.

17 Is that correct?

18 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

19 In the year's time that you have set out, I was made, of
20 course, generally aware of People's Temple -- of their
21 activities here -- both based on discussions with my consul
22 and on the basis of two courtesy calls I received from members
23 of the People's Temple.

24 I saw the People's Temple, certainly, from the beginning,
25 as I have already indicated, as primarily a consular matter, in

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

Confidential

40

1 that these were, after all, American citizens, who had chosen
 2 to come to Guyana to live and to establish a community. I was
 3 very much aware of the protection that these people enjoyed
 4 from intrusion ^{under} [on] the Privacy Act and, also, the constitutional
 5 safeguards that they had as a religious community -- which,
 6 of course, I was under the impression that they were.

7 From the various trips that had been made by the consul --
 8 and in one case, by Mr. Blacken and Mr. Tumminia -- I had a
 9 fair idea of what the community was like physically.

10 During the course of his visit with Mr. McCoy in May --
 11 [and] Mr. Dwyer, ~~the~~ the DCM, had taken some photographs of the
 12 community. And I reviewed those photographs. I had an idea
 13 physically of what was involved as to the size of the
 14 community and how active they had been in terms of clearing
 15 the land and just putting together their community.

16 On the basis of the second courtesy call that I received
 17 from representatives from the People's Temple, I had been told
 18 this was to result in [a] sufficient ^{self} ^{cy in a future} time frame, perhaps three to
 19 five years. They seemed to have a fairly clear idea of how
 20 they were going to develop the community.

21 At the same time, I knew about the volume of welfare and
 22 whereabouts requests involving individual members of the
 23 People's Temple, which the consul had checked on during the
 24 course of his visits.

25 I knew that in his talks with the individuals who were the

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

Confidential

LL-5

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 subject of these inquiries that he had not once run into a
2 case where a member had said he was dissatisfied or unhappy or
3 was in any way imposed upon and wanted to leave the community.

4 I had also been aware of the fact there had been a fairly
5 heavy volume of correspondence in terms of describing -- many
6 of these letters came from the United States, largely from
7 California -- describing People's Temple in the most glowing
8 terms and, also, indicating that this group had felt that ^{it} [he]
9 had been the subject of harassment by state and Federal
10 officials in the United States.

11 Mr. Smeeton. In that connection, with respect to those
12 letters from California, do you recall any of them that stood
13 out over the others you received -- maybe carried special
14 weight -- from people in view of their position, either
15 political or otherwise -- considered a better witness to
16 their --

17 Ambassador Burke. Not in the group I am referring to.

18 But during the course of their courtesy calls on me, the
19 People's Temple did present for my review various endorsements
20 that they had received from political figures in the United
21 States -- state officials and Members of the Congress --
22 formally endorsing what Reverend Jones had done in California
23 and what they understood he was doing down here.

24 Furthermore, of course, I was aware he had been head of
25 the Housing Authority in the City of San Francisco prior to

LL-6

1 resigning and coming down here to head up the community.

2 So, my general impression was that this was a group of
3 Americans who, for reasons of their own, had chosen to absent
4 themselves from the United States. It seems ^{ed} like a serious
5 group in terms of what their purposes ^{was in} [were] being in the
6 Northwest District.

7 They did seem to be quite dedicated and quite zealous.
8 But their zealousness seemed to me not the zealousness I have
9 encountered ⁱⁿ [by] religious communities elsewhere in terms of
10 their devotion to their perceived ideas or the people that were
11 guiding them.

12 So, this generally was my impression.

13 This was a group that had obviously stirred up a certain
14 controversy in the United States. But there seemed to be people
15 on both sides, both pro and con.

16 Mr. Berdes. Those pro and con images, inputs to which you
17 just referred, did they cancel each other out, essentially?

18 Ambassador Burke. Obviously, we were in no position to
19 undertake any investigation of our own here, so it was
20 difficult on the basis of our own resources to attempt to
21 really deduce or decide an intrinsic weight to assign to either
22 side.

23 Mr. Berdes. I can appreciate that very much.

24 And I suppose, therefore, what I am asking is perhaps a
25 personal question as to your own evaluation of the People's

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

LL-7

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Temple at that time.

2 Did you smell smoke, sir?

3 Ambassador Burke. No. I don't think that at that stage,
4 I smelled smoke -- an imprecise phrase.

5 Mr. Berdes. I understand.

6 Ambassador Burke. Whether or not I had serious
7 reservations about the group --

8 Mr. Smeeton. "At that stage" being September 1978?

9 Ambassador Burke. September 1978.

10 I was not in a position, really, to judge -- again,
11 because we did not have the resources to try and undertake an
12 investigation of our own here in Guyana nor would it have been
13 appropriate for us to do so, because they were American
14 citizens.

15 Mr. Berdes. I understand.

16 Ambassador Burke. I also heard -- I believe it was about
17 in this time frame -- that despite various charges that had
18 been lodged against the People's Temple -- it was my under-
19 standing that no law-enforcement agency in the United States
20 then was currently investigating the People's Temple.

21 Mr. Smeeton. Were you aware that the Customs Bureau had
22 conducted an investigation?

23 Ambassador Burke. No, not the Customs Bureau.

24 But my recollection is that we had heard generally --
25 perhaps in a newspaper article -- a general discussion of

1 cults or groups -- it might have been specifically in
2 reference to People's Temple. But there was no current
3 investigation underway against them.

4 Mr. Berdes. Off the record.

5 (Discussion off the record.)

6 Mr. Smeeton. We will continue to review this time frame
7 between your arrival on duty in September 1977 through
8 September 1978. And, as George has indicated, a number of
9 episodes involving the People's Temple had accumulated during
10 this time frame.

11 One that stands out as one of the more significant
12 episodes involving the People's Temple pertains to the
13 defection of Debbie Blakey in mid-May of 1978, with the
14 assistance of Consular Officer McCoy.

15 I wonder if you could recall for us your recollection of
16 that event and your knowledge of it -- participation or advice
17 to McCoy as to how to proceed.

18 Ambassador Burke. My recollection -- the first that I
19 knew of it was when Consular McCoy came over to tell me that
20 one of the people from People's Temple had come to him to ask
21 for the issuance of an emergency passport, saying that she
22 wanted to return to the United States and that she didn't
23 have access to her own passport.

24 Certainly, I told Mr McCoy that unless there was
25 something that militated against this in consular regulations, I

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 thought that we should issue the emergency passport.

2 And I know that he did proceed to issue it.

3 Subsequent to that, he said that she had wanted assistance
4 in getting to the airport.

5 I, again, reacted by saying that we should be as
6 facilitative as we could be within the regulations.

7 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall why she asked for this kind
8 of assistance?

9 Ambassador Burke. The story, as I understood it from
10 Mr. McCoy, was that she was defecting from People's Temple,
11 that she wanted to leave the group and that she feared possibly
12 ^{that} some of the group might attempt to impede her.

13 Mr. Smeeton. Possibly kidnap her?

14 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember that.

15 But the group might be upset ^{by} [at] her defection. She
16 wanted to be certain to get on the plane and get out of
17 Georgetown.

18 Mr. Smeeton. You at no time met with her personally?

19 Ambassador Burke. No.

20 Mr. Smeeton. Is there anything else you would care to
21 share with us regarding this period of time?

22 Ambassador Burke. You probably know the details from
23 talking to Mr. McCoy and others, so I really can't add to what
24 they have given.

25 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall Mr. McCoy having a discussion

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 with you as to how to provide assistance in getting Mr. Weber,
2 for example, involved?

3 Ambassador Burke. We certainly did discuss this, yes.

4 That is when I instructed him to be as facilitative as
5 we could.

6 Mr. Smeeton. Was it your decision to get Mr. Weber
7 involved, also?

8 Ambassador Burke. I am not certain whether it was my
9 decision to get Mr. Weber involved.

10 It was at Mr. McCoy's suggestion that we use Dan Weber.

11 In any event, I certainly did not oppose the idea.

12 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall meeting with Mr. Weber at
13 that time?

14 Ambassador Burke. I very likely did.

15 Mr. Smeeton. Brought him in?

16 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

17 Mr. Smeeton. Explained to him the role he should play
18 and the lengths he could go? Did you put any perimeters around
19 what he could do and could not do?

20 Ambassador Burke. I think I probably emphasized to him,
21 too, as I had to Mr. McCoy, that we certainly should facilitate
22 and do as much as we appropriately could for ^{her.} [him.]

23 Here is the case of an American who certainly thought
24 herself to be in some distress. And I thought we should help
25 to assist her.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Smeeton. To your recollection, McCoy was impressed
2 with her story and believed this was a genuine defection?

3 Ambassador Burke. Well, it is always somewhat difficult
4 to describe the impressions of others.

5 I think he felt that, certainly on balance, this might be
6 a valid case for an emergency passport and that we should be
7 assisting her. Whether or not he had any reservations of his
8 own, I just don't know. I think, on balance, he felt this was
9 a case deserving of our assistance.

10 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall him indicating this might have
11 been a break in the dam, so to speak, with respect to People's
12 Temple?

13 Ambassador Burke. "A break in the dam"?
14 Again, that is ^{an imprecise} [a] phrase -- what do you mean by that?

15 Mr. Smeeton. It is using his own words.

16 There had been a number of events that had occurred with
17 respect to People's Temple over a period of time prior to May
18 1978. And, with respect to this event, he thought -- "It was
19 the first time, maybe, we had something solid that might lead
20 to other information."

21 Ambassador Burke. I don't recall Mr. McCoy ever using a
22 phrase like that to describe this particular situation.

23 If I could back up just a moment and interject at this
24 point something that I perhaps should have put in my statement
25 as to my general impression of the People's Temple as of
September 1978:

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 I was concerned about the People's Temple, because this
2 seemed to be a group that had come down here following the
3 leadership of Reverend Jones and the whole community seemed to
4 turn around Reverend Jones. And my consular concern about the
5 People's Temple from pretty early on was with respect to what
6 might happen if, say, Reverend Jones's health were to suddenly
7 fail and [if] he were to have died suddenly.

8 It seemed that the whole community did seem to orbit around
9 him.

10 This would have posed an important repatriation problem
11 should that have occurred. Obviously, we ^{would have} [had] a welfare-and-
12 whereabouts problem of considerable dimension if that ever were
13 to happen -- ^{OR} [as] did happen.

14 As far as Debbie Blakey herself is concerned, as I said,
15 I don't remember Mr. McCoy's characterizing her appearance
16 as "a break in the dam."

17 Certainly, we were all interested in that incident as
18 being a development. But I think we were all inclined to try
19 and see what it was all about.

20 Mr. Smeeton. With respect to this episode, was your
21 suspicion of the Temple's activities heightened to any degree?

22 Ambassador Burke. In the case of Miss Blakey, again, it
23 was the basic problem that faced us in dealing with the
24 People's Temple from the very outset -- that these were
25 American citizens and that all of them were entitled to [have]

1 our assistance and protection. They were entitled to have
2 whatever facilitative assistance we might appropriately give them
3 within consul^{ar} regulations.

4 In the case of Miss Blakey, of course, we [did] know she did
5 have a husband in Jonestown, that her mother was still there,
6 and that her brother was still there. So, it was difficult to
7 evaluate and assess, because of this -- given the facts, it
8 might appear to have been an intra-family problem of some
9 sort. And --

10 Mr. Smeeton. Was that possibility discussed --

11 Ambassador Burke. That certainly --

12 Mr. Smeeton. -- between you and Mr. McCoy?

13 Ambassador Burke. It was in my own mind.

14 Mr. Smeeton. That was your own evaluation?

15 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

16 Mr. Smeeton. It was not an evaluation shared by McCoy,
17 to your knowledge?

18 Ambassador Burke. I don't know that I discussed it with
19 him during this time frame.

20 But, again, it was a persisting problem we had to face in
21 dealing with the People's Temple.

22 Mrs. Bauman. Did Mr. McCoy ever discuss with you any
23 reservations he had about Deborah Blakey's genuine intention
24 to defect?

25 Ambassador Burke. I do know that after Miss Blakey

1 departed that people from the People's Temple came to see him,
2 indicating the reasons for her departure might have been other
3 than the ones she had given us.

4 Mr. Smeeton. And in that connection, they indicated she
5 stole a lot of money?

6 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that is the statement
7 they made.

ac
fills

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

ac 1

fols Liz

1 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, during this time frame
2 before Mr. McCoy and Debbie had actually left Guyana, I think it
3 was May 12 or May 13 were the dates, do you recall the two
4 affidavits that Miss Debbie Blakey signed?

5 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

6 Mr. Spalatin. I believe one was the standard one releasing
7 to allow for emergency passport to be issued. Do you recall the
8 substance of the second one?

9 Ambassador Burke. Not precisely, but I remember generally
10 what was in the second one. However, it was not truly an
11 affidavit. It was a statement that I believe Mr. McCoy had
12 handwritten himself and that Miss Blakey signed prior to leaving.
13 I am not certain that she was ever formally sworn.

14 Mr. Spalatin. Do you understand, among other things, in
15 that affidavit, she stated that mass suicide drills had taken
16 place in Jonestown?

17 Ambassador Burke. Yes, I do remember that.

18 Mr. Spalatin. Basically, it was a handwritten item
19 which Miss Debbie Blakey affixed her signature on the bottom
20 plus the date of --

21 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

22 Mrs. Bauman. Did you see that, Mr. Ambassador?

23 Ambassador Burke. After the fact.

24 Mr. Berdes. When?

25 Ambassador Burke. After she left for the airport.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Spalatin. You did not see the affidavit prior to her
2 signature?

3 Ambassador Burke. I do not recall seeing it prior to her
4 signature.

5 Mr. Smeeton. It was very soon after her departure that
6 you saw the contents?

7 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

8 Mr. Spalatin. How did the contents strike you?

9 Ambassador Burke. Again, it ^{was} [is] difficult in my mind to
10 imagine a group such as the Peoples Temple, headed by a man who
11 had occupied an important position on the political scene in
12 California and then come down here so well recommended, was
13 engaged in this sort of enterprise of having mass suicide drills,
14 as I mentioned, of course, our concern was, in her case, she
15 still had family members who were up there and apparently still
16 zealously devoted to Peoples Temple and Reverend Jones. Her
17 mother and brother and husband, as I mentioned.

18 Furthermore, we did have the statements made by the
19 representatives of the Peoples Temple after she had left, so,
20 again, what might have caused her to make these statements was,
21 to my mind, somewhat questionable.

22 Again, I think Mr. McCoy made the statement that while
23 accompanying her, and, of course, he didn't accompany her on
24 the plane as such; he wasn't escorting her. It was just by
25 accident the two left the same day, that he recommended to her

1 that she go to law enforcement agencies, bring her evidence to
2 their attention, which I think was quite appropriate sort of
3 advice to give.

4 Mr. Smeeton. How soon after his journey to the United
5 States with her, which you indicated was purely coincidental,
6 did you learn of the gist of her conversation on that plane with
7 Mr. McCoy.

8 Ambassador Burke. As soon as he came back.

9 Mr. Smeeton. How soon would he have come back? Just a
10 matter of days?

11 Ambassador Burke. A matter of days, as I recall. I would
12 have to look it up.

13 Mr. Smeeton. As soon as he got back, he came in, or
14 shortly thereafter, and conveyed to you the contents or the gist
15 of the conversation between Debbie and himself, which elaborated
16 in considerable detail upon the contents of that brief affidavit
17 that was signed in the office.

18 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember that ^{as such} [so much]. I
19 remember the substance of the conversation being [as] what he
20 himself had said to her.

21 Mr. Smeeton. What do you recall specifically?

22 Ambassador Burke. As I say, that he had recommended to
23 her --

24 Mr. Smeeton. Over and above going to the officials,
25 anything else?

1 Ambassador Burke. No. I do recall she raised with him the
2 idea of going to the press. I think his recommendation was that
3 she go to the appropriate law enforcement agency and make her
4 complaint, filing a complaint formally.

5 Mr. Smeeton. Did you consider the possibility of maybe
6 recommending that somebody in Washington contact her regarding
7 the contents of her affidavit?

8 Ambassador Burke. No.

9 Mr. Smeeton. In other words, you were in agreement with
10 Mr. McCoy that the initiative for coming to the government
11 should come from her rather than the government going to her?

12 Ambassador Burke. Yes. You can appreciate, of course, the
13 people in Peoples Temple here and elsewhere were quite sensitive
14 to any harassment on the part of the government or the agencies
15 of the government. That is why it seemed appropriate for her
16 to go directly.

17 Mr. Smeeton. Did McCoy indicate to you after his return to
18 Georgetown, as a result of this episode, his suspicions were
19 considerably hightened with respect to the Temple? I guess this
20 would be after returning to the Consular Conference in mid-May?

21 Ambassador Burke. We certainly discussed it again. I
22 can't recall what he had to say. We had a continuing dialogue
23 on Peoples Temple, along with every other Consular matter of
24 importance that he addressed. Certainly this, taken together,
25 we did discuss it. I think we began to consider whatever

~~Confidential~~

1 appropriate steps might be taken and perhaps out of these
2 discussions had grown my decision to put the question of the
3 Peoples Temple to the Department in terms of the cable that I
4 sent in June.

5 Mr. Smeeton. I was going to lead up to that cable next,
6 but before I do, I would like to get your observations about
7 another event that came hard on the heels of the Blakey episode
8 that might have also had a bearing on your decision to cable the
9 Department in early June and seek advice as to how to proceed
10 with respect to the Temple.

11 I am referring, Mr. Ambassador, specifically to the Kathy
12 Hunter episode. I wonder if you could recall for us your
13 recollection of that?

14 Ambassador Burke. I don't really have much recollection
15 based on the actual time frame she was here. I am at a bit of
16 a disadvantage because after November 18, I did have the
17 opportunity to read this article that she wrote --

18 Mr. Smeeton. Excuse me, when did you learn?

19 Ambassador Burke. After November 18. In fact, it was in
20 the special edition of The Chronicle that I referred to earlier
21 in informal conversations. So it is a little bit difficult for
22 me to sort out what I knew on the basis of my own information
23 at the time that Ms. Hunter was actually here and what I know
24 subsequently or what she has put in this record of her visit
25 here that I read after November 18.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 I do recall she came to our attention because I believe [it
2 was] the management of the hotel had gotten in touch with us that
3 this was an American citizen in some distress for a variety of
4 reasons. There was a question about a hotel bill; there was a
5 question about her being able to get in touch with her husband
6 in the United States, I believe it was her husband, I am not
7 absolutely sure of that, regarding getting additional funds.

8 So I do know Mr. McCoy did go to the hotel to meet with
9 her and was of assistance to her in getting out of the country,
10 getting back to the United States.

11 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any discussions with McCoy about
12 the alleged intimidation, harassments she experienced at the
13 hotel.

14 Ambassador Burke. Whether or not this was during the
15 period she was actually here or immediately thereafter, I can't
16 honestly recall, but I certainly do remember having heard about
17 these incidents, such as fire alarms, ^{and} whatnot, that had been
18 experienced at the Pegasus Hotel, [and] due to the fact, some
19 people thought ^{that} she was there.

20 Mr. Smeeton. And including the Guyanese Police officials.

21 Ambassador Burke. Again, I learned this after the fact.
22 I know the Guyanese Police officials did apparently apprehend
23 some people who later proved to be members of the Peoples Temple,
24 as I recall, around the hotel lobby at the time she was there;
25 yes.

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall learning this from McCoy?

2 Ambassador Burke. Again, this is such a small town that
3 news and gossip travels rapidly. I don't recall if I got it
4 from McCoy first or another source first.

5 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall having any discussions with
6 Guyanese authorities regarding this episode?

7 Ambassador Burke. I did not have discussions.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Did any members of your staff have discussions?

9 Ambassador Burke. Not that I know of, but I don't rule out
10 the possibility Mr. McCoy may have discussed it.

11 Mr. Smeeton. But you do not have any recollection of Mr.
12 McCoy discussing such a conversation with Guyanese officials
13 with you?

14 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't.

15 Mr. Smeeton. I think that takes us up to your cable of
16 June 6, 1978, from the American Embassy, Georgetown, to the
17 Secretary of State, Washington, D. C. It is identified as log
18 No. 126 in the cables that have been provided to us by the
19 Department of State.

20 I would like to offer you the opportunity to review that,
21 Mr. Ambassador, for a minute or two, to refresh your memory, and
22 then we would like to ask you a number of questions related to
23 its contents. (Pause.) I would like to begin by asking you
24 what specifically motivated you to write this particular cable?

25 Ambassador Burke. Well, certainly the Blakey case did

~~Confidential~~

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 figure into it. As I mentioned earlier, when Mr. McCoy got
 2 back from Washington, we discussed the Blakey case in retrospect.
 3 Then, of course, the fact we had received so much in the way of
 4 correspondence both from concerned relatives, on the one hand,
 5 and from zealous advocates of the Peoples Temple on the other
 6 hand, I felt that to a certain extent we were operating in the
 7 dark and that we didn't have a precise instruction or legal
 8 advice about what the appropriate role of the embassy might be
 9 vis-a-vis People's Temple. An embassy as small as this one, you
 10 can appreciate I don't have a lawyer on its staff, I am not a
 11 lawyer myself, nor are any of the other Foreign Service officers
 12 who are here. So I felt that it was important to put down in
 13 a cable our understanding -- describe the community in the first
 14 place, describe the ambiance ⁱⁿ [of] which they were living and
 15 operating, and also obtain ^{from} [of] the Legal
 16 Adviser's Office and the Bureau of Special ^{Regular} Counsel Services,
 17 instruction as to what we might do.

18 I did feel if the Department felt on the basis of my
 19 presentation and, of course, what the Department already knew
 20 about the Peoples Temple, because we down here really had only
 21 a small part of the iceberg to look at, we had no idea what
 22 Peoples Temple was like in California, we had no idea of what
 23 various law enforcement agencies either at the State or Federal
 24 level might be doing or might not be doing ⁱⁿ [an] investigation ^{ing the} [into]
 25 Peoples Temple.

1 I decided to put in cable form the problem and our under-
 2 standing of the relationship and ask the Department for its best
 3 advice as to how to proceed in terms of our relationship with
 4 the Peoples Temple. That is what motivated the cable.

5 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, do you recall, was it your
 6 suggestion to Mr. McCoy or did Mr. McCoy suggest to you, or was
 7 it a mutually derived suggestion, or is it hard to differentiate?

8 Ambassador Burke. It certainly grew out of discussions we
 9 had. I think the idea of the cable was mine, probably, but I
 10 did, of course, give it to Mr. McCoy in draft form.

11 Mr. Spalatin. I understand.

12 Ambassador Burke. I gave it to my DCM to go over the
 13 draft before it was actually sent.

14 Mr. Smeeton. You indicated the Debbie Blakey episode had
 15 a bearing on it develop and possibly the Kathy Hunter episode
 16 which came hard on its heels, the proximity of those two coming.

17 Ambassador Burke. Possibly --

18 Mr. Smeeton. Several days or weeks of each other.

19 Ambassador Burke. Possibly, but I can't remember the Kathy
 20 Hunter episode ^{figuring} [favoring] in that largely.

21 Mr. Smeeton. Mr. McCoy, for your information, has indicated
 22 those two specific events coming back-to-back directly triggered
 23 that particular cable.

24 Mrs. Bauman. ^{If that is accurate, it indicates only what} ~~It would have~~ motivated Mr. McCoy.

25 Mr. Smeeton. Yes, and he more or less indicates, I don't

1 know if George and I would want to review the record, it is my
2 recollection I think you shared that perception. But I am not
3 sure; I am qualifying it.

4 Ambassador Burke. When you try to comment on the
5 impressions or ideas of other people, it is always a difficult
6 and a very murky area to get into. I don't remember the case
7 of Mrs. Hunter figuring that largely into it at all. Of course,
8 Mr. McCoy was dealing with Peoples Temple on a regular basis.
9 So what ^{might} have bulked large with him might not necessarily ^{have} bulked
10 large in my mind.

11 I might also add there were other things going on in Guyana
12 at that time, the political scene. Peoples Temple was part of
13 several things we were following.

14 Mr. Smeeton. Is it fair to say you relied heavily upon him
15 for advice with respect to how to deal with Peoples Temple
16 matters?

17 Ambassador Burke. Certainly I have a high regard for Mr.
18 McCoy's professional qualities. In fact, that is why I recom-
19 mended him for a superior honor award before he left here
20 because I think he is a really extraordinarily devoted Consular
21 officer, very well qualified. I certainly would rely heavily on
22 his technical advice.

23 Mr. Smeeton. Did the reason for that honor being given to
24 a great degree relate to his performance with respect to Peoples
25 Temple?

ac 11

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Ambassador Burke. No. Actually, I think, quite honestly,
2 the principal reason I did that was for his really extraordinary
3 performance as a Charge during a very critical time between
4 October 1976 and mid-January of 1977. As quite a junior officer,
5 he was in charge of this mission.

6 I think, in retrospect, he did an extraordinarily good job
7 during a very tense period. So I recommended him for the award
8 and extrapolated beyond my time period, I made references to
9 both his Consular performance, which I consider extraordinary
10 across the board, Peoples Temple and all the other things he
11 had to ^{deal} [do] with, including the horrendous visa problem we have
12 here.

13 The demand for visas in the Commonwealth Caribbean is
14 extraordinary. We have lines of people, people misrepresenting
15 themselves, trying to get visas to go to the U.S. I would say
16 his principal consular problem during this whole period was the
17 visa problem, both NIV's and IV's. Certainly, Peoples Temple,
18 yes, presented an additional problem. It was for all those
19 things.

20 Mr. Smeeton. I gather from reading his testimony that he
21 devoted a very significant portion of his time to Peoples Temple
22 related matters.

23 Ambassador Burke. No question about it.

24 Mr. Smeeton. There were periods when upwards of 50 percent
25 of his time was devoted to Peoples Temple.

ac 12

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Ambassador Burke. Quite honestly, I don't know how ^{he}we spent each and every one of his days. As you probably know, the Consulate is a block down the street. I am certain sometimes when these Peoples Temple representatives came in to see him, mostly in the morning, a discussion of one sort or another took up most of his time. He probably did spend a lot of time.

Mr. Smeeton. With respect to this cable, the Blakey episode figured in it, to a degree. To what degree did the other episodes that preceded that play?

Ambassador Burke. Certainly the Stoen custody case entered into it. The fact we kept getting this volume of traffic, by this I mean the volume of correspondence coming to us from people on both sides --

Mr. Smeeton. The inquiries.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

ac end

mk fols

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

mjkl

ls ac

1 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Welfare and whereabouts inquiries from a
3 variety of people.

4 Ambassador Burke. And again our ignorance, of knowing
5 the California end of the story, or the story of the Peoples
6 Temple in the United States.

7 We had no way of knowing what was proceeding either legally
8 or politically in terms of Peoples Temple in California or else-
9 where. These were areas we were totally ignorant ^{of.} [on.]

10 Mr. Smeeton. To what degree did information from Guyanese
11 officials play --

12 Ambassador Burke. Not very much, quite frankly, because
13 I didn't talk to Guyanese officials about Peoples Temple
14 in the normal course of business. It may have come up from
15 time to time, but it certainly was not a principal topic
16 between myself and my interlocutors on the Guyanese side.

17 Mr. Smeeton. I was not thinking so much of your personal
18 contacts, but information you might have received from some
19 of your subordinates; for example, McCoy's discussions with
20 people like Theo George, James Mentore, Skip Roberts, people
21 in the Customs and Immigration Service.

22 Ambassador Burke. Certainly that would have been an input
23 on McCoy's behalf of his dialogue with me.

24 Mr. Spalatin. Would it be fair to say it was complementary
25 but not primarily motivating?

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

2 Mr. Smeeton. But it fit into this general picture that
3 was developing, it was another input.

4 Ambassador Burke. ^{That} It was a general picture that was
5 developing, really prejudices, if we are talking strictly about
6 what we knew at that time and where we ended up on November 18.

7 Mr. Spalatin. I think the point of Mr. Smeeton's question
8 was the inference that there was some suspicions among yourselves,
9 lack of total understanding, you said ignorance before, about
10 total understanding of what this group is all about, a
11 variety of succeeding events, heavy correspondence, and the
12 fact that, at least through Mr. McCoy, there were some
13 elements within the Guyaneze Government that has some question
14 about the organization as well.

15 In the context of June, McCoy had some information from
16 some of his contacts with the Guyanese Government that there
17 were fellow peers, shall we say, colleagues in the Guyanese
18 government structure that weren't totally enthusiastic about
19 Peoples Temple.

20 Mrs. Bauman. What had Mr. McCoy told you Guyanese
21 officials ^{had} told ^{him?} you? Is this a fair characterization of what
22 you had been told?

23 Ambassador Burke. Well, again, I go back to the point
24 I made earlier, a good share of the information that came
25 to McCoy from Guyanese sources seemed to come under the

1 heading of really gossip without hard evidence or information
2 to back it up.

3 Mr. Spalatin. I guess what the point was, some of the
4 gossip was defending Peoples Temple and some of the gossip
5 was not defending Peoples Temple.

6 Ambassador Burke. I would say from those people who
7 sought him out, such as you cited, Mentore and George, they
8 seemed to be prejudiced against the Peoples Temple.

9 Mr. Smeeton. In that connection, do you recall seeing any
10 information suggesting the people at the Immigration level
11 or Custom Bureau level were told to sort of look the other
12 way with respect to possible illicit activities of the Temple?

13 Ambassador Burke. Certainly these rumors surfaced, yes.
14 If I could jump ahead in time and operate on the basis of
15 information that became available to me afterward --

16 Mr. Smeeton. After the tragedy?

17 Ambassador Burke. Yes, and which has been verified
18 by several sources that Guyanese Customs did, indeed, seize
19 and investigate a shipment of something like 35 cases at roughly
20 this time, and shook them down thoroughly, examined them
21 completely and found nothing in the way of contraband in those
22 cases.

23 I learned about this after November 18, but something
24 I did know at the time that we are talking about is that the
25 Peoples Temple came in to McCoy, I believe, on at least one

mjk4

1 occasion to complain about the fact they had trouble getting
2 their shipments through Customs and they asked for his assistance
3 in expediting or getting some of these shipments loose
4 that had been, they felt, held up unduly without any real
5 reason.

6 So what I am saying, I guess, by these two incidents, is
7 that you really had conflicting stories arriving often times.
8 You had on the one hand people saying, well, Peoples Temple
9 can get anything into this country they want to through a
10 special pipeline. Then you have the Peoples Temple coming
11 to us complaining because they feel they are being harassed
12 by the Guyanese Customs.

13 Mr. Berdes. Do I understand, however, that latter point
14 you learned only after the fact?

15 Ambassador Burke. Not the complaint, no. The complaint
16 we knew about at the time. The actual shipment being opened
17 I did not know about until after November 18. Certainly
18 I did know when they came to see Mr. McCoy and complained
19 about the fact they were having trouble getting their shipment
20 through. I must say my reaction was that that is their
21 problem, in effect. They ^{were} [are] private American citizens
22 coming abroad and they ^{were} [are] dependent upon whatever arrangement
23 they ^{could} [can] make [out] with the Guyanese Government, ^{AND NO} special
24 intervention [which] was made on their behalf to get their
25 shipments through.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall with respect to those
2 inspections that you referred to on the part of the Guyanese
3 officials any discussions with anybody on your staff or
4 elsewhere in Georgetown regarding the possibility these might
5 have been less than thorough, might have been perfunctory
6 and cursory in nature?

7 Ambassador Burke. You mean the one I referred to that
8 I heard about ex post facto? I have been told, I have
9 taken pains to verify it from sources other than the one
10 source who told me, that this was an extremely complete
11 inspection and they actually took apart every one of these
12 cases down to the last tennis shoe.

13 Mr. Smeeton. Are you pretty satisfied it is an accurate
14 account?

15 Ambassador Burke. I think I am, because of the fact
16 others told me about it.

17 The primary source is an official source in a position
18 to know in the Customs Service. The other sources --

19 Mr. Smeeton. With a record as a reliable source?

20 Ambassador Burke. The other sources were unofficial
21 sources who did confirm, yes, indeed, they certainly did
22 shake it down.

23 Mr. Smeeton. You are aware of allegations that certain
24 members of the Immigration and Customs Service might have
25 been compromised?

1 Ambassador Burke. Yes, I certainly am.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Are you aware in that connection with, among
3 other things, certain Temple members, females in particular,
4 females in particular were given instructions to maybe flirt
5 with these officials to distract them from conducting a
6 thorough investigation of the contents?

7 Ambassador Burke. So I have heard after the fact.

8 Mr. Smeeton. After Jonestown?

9 Ambassador Burke. After November 18.

10 Mr. Smeeton. Do you have anything to add on any of
11 that, either retrospectively or during this time frame we
12 are discussing?

13 Ambassador Burke. We are talking about hard evidence ^{OR} of
14 informed gossip or uninformed gossip?

15 Mr. Smeeton. You were continuing to get information along
16 these lines, but it is hearsay in your information, gossip?

17 Ambassador Burke. Again, getting back to the point that
18 the Peoples Temple appeared to get their shipments in without
19 interruption, we had contrary evidence in the form of their
20 own protest to the Consul saying they ^{were} are being harassed
21 and ^{couldn't} can't get their shipments in. So when you have an official
22 saying they do have special arrangements and a special
23 pipeline and then you have the people themselves saying,
24 "Do something about it to help us because we are being harassed
25 by the Customs officials," you begin to wonder, do they have

mjk7

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 anything --

2 Mr. Smeeton. Did you exclude the possibility that was
3 a ruse to throw you off the scent?

4 Ambassador Burke. That is pretty clever.

5 Mr. Smeeton. We are dealing with some pretty clever
6 people, from what we have learned.

7 Ambassador Burke. Not that clever.

8 Mrs. Bauman. You did not think that was the case at the
9 time?

10 Ambassador Burke. No, I did not think that was the case
11 at the time.

12 Mr. Spalatin. Do you think that could be the case now?

13 Ambassador Burke. No. Not in view of the evidence I just
14 cited, that the shipment was shaken down.

15 There was, of course, the fact Peoples Temple did
16 operate two vessels and, as you know, I am sure from your
17 conversations with Mr. McCoy, that there was ^{little} [a] Customs control
18 actually in the area around Port Kiatuma and it is always
19 conceivable that shipments directly into the country through
20 that particular river entry would not necessarily have cleared
21 Customs.

22 But any large shipments [that are] coming in here have
23 to go through the Port of Georgetown and have to be subjected
24 to Customs inspection at that time.

25 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any of these Customs officials

1 expressing dissatisfaction with the ability to take a look
2 at what was coming in at Port Kiatuma?

3 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't.

4 Mr. Smeeton. My recollection is there might have been
5 some traffic; I am not so sure. It might have been one
6 of McCoy's recollections.

7 Ambassador Burke. You mean that some Customs person
8 told McCoy this?

9 Mr. Smeeton. Somebody up in the Northwest
10 might have indicated they weren't able to adequately probe
11 the contents of some of those cargoes that were coming in.

12 Ambassador Burke. That may indeed be.

13 Mr. Smeeton. You were mentioning large shipments would have
14 to come in elsewhere?

15 Ambassador Burke. They would have to come in here, Port
16 of Georgetown.

17 Mr. Smeeton. It is conceivable arms shipments which
18 could have come in in small parcels could have come in through
19 Port Kiatuma?

20 Ambassador Burke. That is correct.

21 Mr. Smeeton. You have learned nothing to suggest that?

22 Ambassador Burke. I have learned nothing to suggest that.

23 Mr. Smeeton. Even in retrospect, or after the fact of
24 November 18?

25 Ambassador Burke. My understanding is the total number

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 of arms located up there approximated 34.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Of which 4 were licensed by the Government?

3 Ambassador Burke. Four were licensed by the Government and
4 the others were illegal, or at least not licensed. They were
5 all either pistols, shotguns, or rifles.

6 Mr. Smeeton. You have come across no informaton which
7 would indicate how those arms came?

8 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't really. I haven't heard
9 any information as to how they were able to come in.

10 Mr. Smeeton. Not even gossip that you are hearing all
11 the time?

12 Ambassador Burke. The gossip, of course, [is] turned around
13 [in] the presence of large arms shipments and shipments
14 specifically of automatic weapons, but there certainly was no
15 evidence at all of discoveries of any cache of weapons up in
16 Jonestown Georgetown certainly no automatic weapons. So how 34 or 28
17 or however many unlicensed arms got in --

18 Mr. Smeeton. There isn't a favorite theory being
19 circulated?

20 Ambassador Burke. No. I just don't know. I guess
21 they probably came in over time, one here, one there.

22 Mr. Smeeton. If we could focus, I guess, a little more
23 precisely on log number 126, and some of the language that is
24 used in there.

25 I have an excerpt, Mr. Ambassador. You have the full

1 contents there. Among other things, you indicate, "Given
2 the nature of many of the inquiries both private and Congressional
3 concerning the welfare and whereabouts of the various
4 members and residents of Jonestown, as well as many of the
5 articles appearing in the press, which allege that individuals
6 are being held in a community against their will, the lack
7 of any objective, elected or appointed political presence
8 in Jonestown raises a legal question which this mission is
9 not qualified to answer."

10 I wonder if you would focus a little more precisely on the
11 words, "the lack of any objective, elected or appointed
12 political presence in Jonestown." Do you recall anything in
13 particular that triggered the use of those words?

14 Ambassador Burke. No, other than what they have to say
15 on their face.

16 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall in that connection any
17 information indicting that maybe some of the local officials
18 were dissatisfied with their inability to have free access
19 to Jonestown?

20 Ambassador Burke. I guess what I was thinking of at that
21 time was here is a community of 800 Americans, however many there
22 were at that moment, and that it was existing as a community
23 and there didn't seem to be a political presence elected
24 under Guyanese law or in compliance with Guyanese regulations.
25 I was really referring, I think, to a political presence within

1 Jonestown itself, based on Guyanese administrative regulations
2 and law.

3 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall any discussions with
4 anybody associated with the Government of Guyana regarding
5 their access to Jonestown?

6 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't.

7 As you will see, What I am asking for is the
8 authority from the Department of State --

9 Mr. Smeeton. I am talking about people at lower
10 levels. I sort of get the impression from reading the
11 traffic that there were two different perceptions within the
12 governmental apparatus of Jonestown to higher levels, you
13 get the feeling that there wasn't much concern about what went
14 on there, it more or less operated as a nation within a
15 nation, which is addressed in your opening paragraph.

16 I also get another perception from some of the other people
17 farther down the ladder that seems to suggest maybe they would
18 like to have more access and know more clearly what was going
19 on, but they weren't able to enjoy that kind of access.

20 Did you get that feeling at that time, as you were
21 preparing this?

22 Ambassador Burke. Certainly that particular point may have
23 been an ingredient based on perhaps conversations with McCoy
24 in the course of his consular visits, but not on the basis
25 of any discussions I personally had had.

mjk12

1 Mr. Smeeton. With anybody associated with the Government
2 of Guyana.

3 I would like to drop down to your recommendation section
4 where you start out, "It is requested that the Office of
5 Legal Adviser review the situation described above as well
6 as other pertinent data concerning the Peoples Temple and
7 the Jonestown community which are available to CS/SCS of
8 the department. If, after such review, and assuming the answer
9 to the question posed in the preceding paragraph is affirmative,
10 it is requested we be instructed to approach the Government
11 of Guyana at an appropriate level to discuss the Peoples
12 Temple community and request the Government exercise normal
13 jurisdiction over the community particularly to insure their
14 residents are informed to understand they are subject to
15 all laws of the Government of Guyana, they enjoy the protection
16 of the Guyanese legal system."

17 The second sentence of that recommendation, I would
18 like you to focus on the part of the sentence that reads,
19 "and assuming that the answer to the question posed in the
20 preceding paragraph is affirmative," from that, is it accurate
21 to infer that you were expecting an affirmative answer?

22 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

23 What I am referring to, of course, is the question which
24 says, "Can the host Government be obliged to extend its
25 governmental control or protection of legal residents residing

1 within its territory."

2 Again, as I said before, I am not a lawyer by training
3 nor do I have a legal officer on my staff. This was just
4 an assumption--

5 Mr. Smeeton. Layman's assumption.

6 Ambassador Burke. -- which I obviously needed legal
7 affirmation of.

end mjk
ld fls.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

ud 1
flg mk

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 Mr. Smeeton. Again focusing a little farther on in that
2 sentence, "It is requested we be instructed we approach the
3 Government of Guyana at an appropriate level." What did you
4 envision as an appropriate level?

5 Ambassador Burke. Quite honestly, I phrased it that way
6 in the expectation that the discretion be left to me. I would
7 have seen an appropriate level to be ministerial level and in
8 the first instance, I probably would have started with the
9 Minister of Foreign Affairs and --

10 Mr. Smeeton. Would that have been Mr. Wills at this
11 time?

12 Ambassador Burke. No.

13 Mr. Smeeton. Mr. Rashleigh Jackson?

14 Ambassador Burke. Mr. Jackson. Depending on his advisory
15 action, then I would have gone to probably Mingo, Minister of
16 Home Affairs.

17 Mr. Smeeton. You would not have gone to the Prime
18 Minister?

19 Ambassador Burke. No.

20 Mr. Smeeton. You didn't envision it would --

21 Ambassador Burke. If I attempted to go to the Prime
22 Minister on this matter, he would have ^{said that I was} [been] raising [the] facts
23 that appropriately ^{should be raised with} your point of contact ⁱⁿ [with] my government: [is]
24 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

25 Mr. Smeeton. I think that is all I have to say about 126,

1 unless you have questions.

2 Mr. Berdes. Just to make sure I understand in my own mind,
3 log 126 represents a sort of judgment on your part of the
4 situation that had reached a point where you felt the need
5 for guidance, a legal sense of direction from the department,
6 is that essentially what was at issue in 126?

7 Ambassador Burke. I certainly was looking for legal
8 advice. As I said earlier, what our appropriate role vis-a-vis
9 Peoples Temple immediately was, I was not in a position to judge
10 and in view of that, I felt it wise to go ^{to} through the department
11 and ask them in view of what they knew from our reporting, on
12 the basis of what they might know from the Washington and U.S.
13 ends and the administrative situation which I described in my
14 cable, whether it would be an appropriate moment for me to go
15 and talk to the government, just discuss Peoples Temple and
16 what their perception of the Peoples Temple from the Government
17 of Guyana might be.

18 I saw this as a dialogue that might go on for a certain
19 amount of time.

20 Mr. Smeeton. Another perception of this cable bag
21 motivation behind the cable is that at this point, you had
22 seen enough smoke to suggest maybe you had a real fire down
23 there. How would you respond to that perception?

24 Ambassador Burke. Again --

25 Mr. Smeeton. And maybe you should bring it to the

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

ld 2

ld 3

1 attention of the government for that reason.
 2 Ambassador Burke. I am really a little put off by
 3 "smoke and fire", phrases like that. I think one has to be as
 4 precise as possible. The way I saw the situation was that it
 5 was important to me and to my people who ^{were} [are] working for me to
 6 have the best legal advice as to how to relate to Peoples
 7 Temple, how to relate to the government regarding the Peoples
 8 Temple.

9 So I didn't really see it as a critical moment in terms
 10 of fire or smoke or whatever, but I did feel we were operating,
 11 to a certain extent, without the best possible guidance, and we
 12 ought to get the best possible guidance.

13 Implicit in my cable is, again, the problem of privacy,
 14 the problem of Constitutional guarantees, whether they are
 15 going to consider this; if we began a dialogue with the govern-
 16 ment about this, were they going to perceive this as a form of
 17 harassment and ^{and} attempt to impinge on their Constitutional rights.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Do you think McCoy had a different perception
 19 of what motivated this cable? Do you recall any discussion?

20 Ambassador Burke. All I really have to go on in response
 21 to that question is ^{that} the cable ^{grew} [drew] out of discussions I had
 22 with Mr. McCoy as well as Mr. Dwyer. Both of them reviewed the
 23 cable before it went.

24 Mr. Smeeton. Both of them had input into it?

25 Ambassador Burke. I think very slight, as I recall. They

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 4

1 accepted my draft pretty much as written, although they
2 both looked at it very carefully. I think there may be a
3 few refinements each tossed in. Basically it is my cable.

4 Mrs. Bauman. They had an opportunity to comment on it?

5 Ambassador Burke. Yes, each reviewed it. I sent the
6 draft over to McCoy and I sent the draft to Mr. Dwyer; they
7 both had it overnight or longer.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Would it be fair to say it reflected a
9 heightened sense of --

10 Ambassador Burke. I think it reflects perhaps an under-
11 standing or feeling that we needed the best guidance possible
12 as to how to come to grips with this very special sort of
13 consul^{ar} problem.

14 Mr. Smeeton. Can we turn now to the department's
15 response to that particular cable of yours. For the record,
16 it is identified as log No. 130 from the department to the
17 Embassy of Georgetown, dated 26 June 1978. Why don't you review
18 that and we would like to ask you a couple of questions related
19 to that cable.

20 What was your reaction to that response?

21 Ambassador Burke. I had, I believe, expected that I
22 would receive an instruction to begin a dialogue with the
23 government on Peoples Temple, [but] I thought my recommendation
24 in paragraph 7 of my cable would have been accepted and, of
25 course, this cable does not accept it.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

13 5

1 Mr. Smeeton. When you received that cable, did you initiate
 2 a dialogue with Washington, getting a little deeper probing
 3 as -- this is a rather terse, succinct reply, and you asked to
 4 maybe get a little deeper response?

5 Ambassador Burke. No, I did not. Again, my cable was sent
 6 off from here from the very narrow point of view of ^{Georgetown} [Jonestown].
 7 It was my reading of the situation from Georgetown and in effect
 8 in my cable I asked the department based on evidence available
 9 to it to accept my recommendation, if you will, assuming my
 10 logic was valid.

11 [I think] when the department cable came back, I did not
 12 begin a dialogue with the department. I assumed the cable
 13 from the department -- it had taken, after all, 20 days, to
 14 come up with a response -- had been well considered.

15 Mr. Smeeton. What would be the normal response? Is that
 16 an extraordinary amount of time?

17 Ambassador Burke. I didn't expect the response the next
 18 day. This was something I was calling upon ^{the Department} to review and
 19 consider. I expected that I would get a ^{el} considerate reply. I
 20 would have thought maybe 10 days, but it certainly could
 21 have been longer and the fact it was longer led me to believe
 22 it had been weighed very carefully and that in light of evidence
 23 available to them, interpretation of the law not available to me,
 24 they drafted this reply.

25 Mrs. Bauman. Could I interject a clarifying question?

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

When you said you expected your recommendation to be accepted, that was ^{based} on the assumption ~~as you put in your recommendation,~~ ^{stated in} ~~based on~~ the preceding paragraph; ^{that} ~~whether~~ a host government could be compelled, so there was that question built in.

Ambassador Burke. I just assumed that my logic was impeccable.

Ms. Baumann. And your ^{assumption} arguments as well.

Mr. Spalatin. Is it fair to say, Mr. Ambassador -- I don't want to put words in your mouth -- that you were somewhat surprised and taken aback by the answer?

Ambassador Burke. Yes, I think so. I did feel that I made a very careful presentation in my cable, and I felt logically it led up to an acceptance of my recommendation. But as I say, given the length of time it took to respond to it, given the fact I have asked for the best judgment ^{obtainable} [updatable] from Washington, I assumed --

Mr. Smeeton. Did you find that response ultra cautious?

Ambassador Burke. Again, not having a full appreciation of the legal considerations involved, I don't think I was in a position to consider it ultra cautious. It might indeed be that there were certain provisions of various acts, the Privacy Act and other types of legislation, that I was unfamiliar with, ^{that} the department was maybe ultra cautious ⁱⁿ [is] the way one should have been given the knowledge of all the facts they had available.

ld 7

1 Mr. Smeeton. In your long career as a diplomat, you
2 never came across an analogous situation that was treated
3 differently that caused you to be a little more optimistic
4 than you should have been?

5 Ambassador Burke. You mean in terms of having my
6 recommendations turned down?

7 Mr. Smeeton. No, in terms of anything that would parallel
8 this in terms of a request of the department.

9 Ambassador Burke. You mean taking both cables together,
10 the exchange?

11 Mr. Smeeton. Yes.

12 Ambassador Burke. I certainly have never, in terms of
13 my own personal experience, had an analogous case. Obviously,
14 Jonestown is unique. So, no, based on my own experience.

15 Mr. Smeeton. I gather the Privacy Act had a distinct
16 bearing in the response?

17 Ambassador Burke. That was my reading of the response.

18 Mr. Smeeton. You had nothing else in your experience prior
19 to this in other posts which you made a similar request or were
20 aware of a similar request being made by somebody on your staff
21 that was maybe responded to in a more affirmative fashion?

22 Ambassador Burke. The Privacy Act dates from 1974, so I
23 only had one post abroad other than Georgetown since then under
24 the Privacy Act.

25 Mr. Smeeton. You have encountered nothing during that

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 experience?

2 Ambassador Burke. No.

3 Mr. Smeeton. So I guess it would be accurate to say
4 your optimistic assumption is based on your impeccable logic.

5 Mr. Spalatin. Did you consider requesting either an elabora-
6 tion or a reconsideration of that response as indicated in
7 log 130?

8 Ambassador Burke. Certainly the idea must have crossed my
9 mind.

10 Mr. Spalatin. But evidently not enough --

11 Mr. Berdes. There is no indication in the record of the
12 matter supplied to us by the State Department that such --

13 Ambassador Burke. I was about to say, the idea may have
14 crossed my mind, but the fact is I did not seek a clarification.

15 Mr. Spalatin. Would one reason be or the reason be that you
16 felt that 130 was quite definitive?

17 Ambassador Burke. I just assumed that 130 was based on
18 the best legal judgment available to the Department of State.

19 Mr. Spalatin. And, therefore, it was academic to go back
20 again?

21 Ambassador Burke. Not necessarily academic. It is
22 possible I could have gone back and argued more strongly.
23 I didn't because, as I say, I tended to accept 130 as the
24 best legal advice available to me from the Department of State
25 at that time. I should also mention the fact there were other

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

128

44

ld 9

1 things going on here at the time. The political situation was
2 getting, not critical, necessarily, but probably the most
3 important political development in the last several years was
4 about to happen in Guyana, the referendum of July 10 of last
5 year.

6 So we were fairly heavily involved in following this
7 political involvement and reporting on it.

8 Mr. Smeeton. During this period between June 6 when you
9 sent this cable and June 26 when you got the response, I point
10 out it is a rather long period of time, roughly three weeks
11 elapsed. At any time during that interim, did anybody from the
12 department in Washington contact you in any way to ask you
13 what gives? The reason I ask this question is there seems to be
14 a little different perception in Washington's motivations.

15 For example, they cite the fact that there are not specific
16 mentions of specific cases that causes them to treat in a
17 general sense. For example, Debbie Blakey's episode is not
18 mentioned as being a part of the reason for writing it. I
19 get the impression that if there had been a little more
20 specific mention of cases like that, you might have got a more
21 positive response.

22 As this is information that is probably new to you,
23 but we are trying to analyze this whole thing, it strikes me,
24 given that perception that maybe somebody might have wanted to
25 contact you -- I wonder if they did -- from the department to

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

53

Jan 10

1 just get a little more specific information from you as to
2 what motivated you to take this action.

3 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember any contact from the
4 department between the time of my out-going on June 6 and the
5 reply on June 26.

6 Mr. Smeeton. Do you find that rather odd?

7 Ambassador Burke. No, again, because I just assumed the
8 cable was receiving careful consideration. So I don't really
9 consider it odd.

10 Mr. Smeeton. Is there any particular reason why you
11 didn't resort to specifics?

12 Ambassador Burke. Yes, a particular reason because,
13 again, I was uncertain under the Privacy Act whether it was
14 permitted to discuss active cases involving American citizens
15 over the age of 18.

16 Mr. Smeeton. That had a distinct bearing on the general
17 way in which you posed your question?

18 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

19 Mr. Smeeton. Did another bearing on that relate to the
20 Freedom of Information Act?

21 Ambassador Burke. It is related to it, of course.
22 Specifics have been mentioned on specific individuals, I think
23 that is where the two intersections cross, really, the Privacy
24 Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

25 Mr. Berdes. Could you be more specific, please, about your

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 concerns stemming from the Privacy Act, whether you could
2 actually use it?

3 Ambassador Burke. Yes, whether specific mention could be
4 made without the permission of the individual. I, at this
5 stage, at the time I did this, I had no idea what Debbie Blakey
6 had done when she got back to California, whether or not she
7 decided -- whatever had caused her to defect down here, that
8 reason might not have evaporated or she might have had a
9 complete change of heart.

10 Mr. Berdes. And yet you had an affidavit or statement
11 signed by her dated May 13 which was a formal part of your
12 files which could have been referred to constituting, in effect,
13 approval to use that statement as reinforcement for specificity?

14 Ambassador Burke. You are talking about the document
15 that she signed?

16 Mr. Berdes. Correct.

17 Ambassador Burke. The legal status of this particular
18 document was faulty and obviously faulty from the beginning.
19 It had not been written by her. The statements contained in it
20 were based on what she had to say, as I understand. But they
21 were not her words. So that if she had chosen to completely
22 disown this piece of paper, which was not inconceivable, at some
23 later stage --

24 Mr. Berdes. But she did sign it, of course. One can
25 deduce from that that there is at least a quasi-legal status to

11

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

83

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

it. Very few statements of that order verging on affidavits are rarely drafted specifically by the signatory. More often than not, they do have counsel to do that.

Ambassador Burke. They are ^{not holographic} [wholly graphic] in that case.

ld 12

ld ends

mm flg

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

83

mfm 1 fls. 1d

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Mrs. Bauman: There was a record sent back to the Department on Debbie Blakey ~~on her~~ leaving the Temple?

Ambassador Burke. Yes.

Mrs. Bauman: I think in your cable, Log No. 126, you refer to the other materials the Department has. One could, therefore, assume they would look at all the materials you had sent them over the time period involving the Peoples Temple. So to that extent, specific cases would be considered.

Ambassador Burke. Also, of course ---

Mr. Berdes. I would simply remind you, Miss Bauman, that my question related to the Ambassador's reference to the Privacy Act and his hesitancy from this die to have included that degree of specificity in his cable.

Ambassador Burke. Quite honestly, I would have felt that the reference to the specific Blakey case, as we knew it at that time, would not necessarily have strengthened my cable. I wanted them to focus on the whole spectrum, if you will, of the Peoples Temple problem and the Peoples Temple generally in the United States, here, elsewhere, congressional interest, pro, con, and what not.

Mr. Berdes. I think what Mr. Smeeton has already indicated, though, is in the broader sweep of our trying to put the pieces together; we are trying to understand that people in the State Department receive, reviewed and acted upon Log 126.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

BB:

~~Confidential~~

1 We have almost unanimously heard that the reason for
2 the response was the lack of specificity, that it was sort
3 of a vaporous generality of that issue, as they saw it, in
4 any event, with Log 126.

5 Ambassador Burke. I ^{would} [don't wish to] take umbrage ^{at} [of] the
6 characterization of my cable as vaporous.

7 Mr. Berdes. I am only reporting ---

8 Ambassador Burke. I would say it is a highly professional
9 cable and anything but vaporous. I just now note ^{the reply} [it] was
10 drafted in SCS where ^{as had} I asked the legal advisor to take action
11 on my cable.

12 Mr. Berdes. You understand and appreciate our challenge
13 in trying to see the issue from all perspectives in a very
14 factual way. We have the same respect for fact as you do.

15 Mr. Smeeton. Are you aware of the fact the political
16 section, represented by Mr. Hewitt, Mr. Griffith and I gather
17 whoever might have been on the desk, I think it might have
18 been Mr. Tumminia at that time, had apparently no input what-
19 soever into that response.

20 Ambassador Burke. I learned that considerably after the
21 fact, yes, indeed. After November 18.

22 Mr. Smeeton. After the tragedy?

23 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

24 Mr. Spalatin. Did you expect that office would have
25 input into it?

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 Ambassador Burke. Certainly they should have cleared it
2 before it left the Department.

3 Mr. Smeeton. That is rather atypical given what your
4 understanding of the procedures to not allow them to sign
5 off on ---

6 Ambassador Burke. The point of having a political desk
7 is to monitor requests from posts, information coming in from
8 posts and making certain any requests or request for guidance,
9 what have you, ^{are} [is] promptly and properly responded to.

10 Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ambassador, given what I think perhaps
11 might be described as your disappointment of the response
12 contained in Log 130, I would ask you to examine what we have
13 identified ---

14 Mr. Smeeton. Could I just finish one little tidbit here
15 to sort of tidy up on this perception of 126 and 130?

16 How would you describe 130's impact on your embassy
17 in the context of how you proceeded from that time on vis-a-vis
18 the Temple.

19 Ambassador Burke. I would think, probably, it was
20 cautionary.

21 Mr. Smeeton. On your part?

22 Ambassador Burke. Yes, especially taken in context with an
23 earlier cable we received back in January.

24 Mr. Smeeton. Would you elaborate a little bit on that
25 one?

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

mfm 4

1 Ambassador Burke. I am sure you have it, too.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Just for the record.

3 Ambassador Burke. I cannot remember offhand. I don't
4 have it before me. It was a cable we received from the
5 Department in January in response to a report made, I believe,
6 by Mr. McCoy regarding a trip he had made to Jonestown that
7 seemed to be concerned about harassing or appearing to
8 harass the Peoples Temple.

9 Perhaps it should be introduced here. As I say, I am
10 sure you have it in the file of things that was made available
11 to you.

12 So taking this particular case, 130, I think the general
13 reaction on my part, probably on the part of my people was that
14 we should be particularly careful about the Privacy Act, we
15 should be particularly careful about appearing to intrude on
16 the constitutional rights and privileges of the members of
17 the Peoples Temple.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall, after getting that response,
19 having a staff meeting citing this response as more or less
20 official guidance from headquarters as to how to proceed
21 vis-a-vis the Peoples Temple?

22 Ambassador Burke. I cannot recall that there was a
23 staff meeting called on that subject, surely. I have normally
24 three staff meetings a week, and we possibly did discuss this
25 in the next subsequent staff meeting.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

.PC

1 Certainly it was discussed between Mr. McCoy, Mr. Dwyer
2 and myself.

3 Mr. Smeeton. In other words, those people on your staff
4 should know about the response and take its guidance into
5 account in dealing with the Temple?

6 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

7 Mrs. Bauman. Mr. Ambassador, did you feel that this
8 cable precluded you from going back to the Department, for
9 example, if there was evidence of lawlessness within the
10 community?

11 I am questioning whether the last paragraph gave you an opening
12 to feel you could go back, ^{to the Department of} whether you felt this was a definitive
13 ^{answer.} word.

14 Ambassador Burke. Certainly, I would have gone back if
15 there was evidence of the lawlessness of the community.
16 Certainly, that option was to go back with any further infor-
17 mation that came to our attention. I was asking for legal
18 judgment, really, and I took the incoming response to be a
19 legal reply and the best legal reply, given the seriousness of
20 my outgoing, that I could have expected.

21 Mr. Spalatin. Log 130, I believe you said one of the
22 results was general cautionary and be particularly careful
23 about the Privacy Act and preserving the constitutional
24 rights of Americans living in Guyana, i.e., specifically
25 the Peoples Temple. But, if I recall Log 130, while that may

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

Confidential

1 be what you perceived, it specifically stated that the action
2 recommended that you take with appropriate Guyanese officials
3 would be perceived as interference in the internal affairs of
4 the Guyanese government?

5 Ambassador Burke. Where is that?

6 Mr. Smeeton. We have an excerpt here, "The Department
7 is present of the view any action initiated by the Embassy
8 to approach the government of Guyana concerning matters raised
9 in reference to telegram could be construed as U.S. Government
10 interference."

11 Ambassador Burke. But I took that to read, could be
12 construed by some, the "some" being Peoples Temple and the
13 members thereof. Certainly not construed ^{as} by the government
14 of Guyana.

15 I wouldn't see that as a consideration at all.

16 Mr. Smeeton. That was not your reaction to that?

17 Ambassador Burke. Not at all.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Then what are the legal implications from
19 your perception? That seems to be the heart of the response.
20 They seem to be concerned more about that than anything else.

21 Ambassador Burke. Construed by some, as I say, construed
22 by members of the Peoples Temple that this represented U.S.
23 Government interference into the private lives and intruding
24 on the constitutional rights and privileges of this group.

25 Mr. Smeeton. And you didn't view it in the context of

Confidential

~~Confidential~~

1 Guyana then at all.

2 Ambassador Burke. Not at all. I would have raised that
3 point in my outgoing. It was clear from my outgoing that
4 I wasn't concerned about ---

5 Mr. Smeeton. So, the response was perfectly clear to
6 you it was referring specifically to American citizens?

7 Ambassador Burke. Yes. In my response, I would never
8 have recommended I be empowered to approach the government.
9 If I thought this was a problem at all, I would have made
10 mention of it. I make no mention at all about it.

11 Mr. Smeeton. I hate to keep focusing on this, but these
12 are two very significant cables from our perception of this
13 whole inquiry. If I could just go back to your recommendation
14 again in Log No. 126, towards the end of it there, "Be requested
15 we be instructed to approach the government of Guyana at
16 the appropriate level to discuss the Peoples Temple community
17 and request the government take normal jurisdiction over the
18 community."

19 This is the part I would like to focus on, especially,
20 particularly, "to insure that all of its residents are informed
21 and understand they are subject to the laws and authority of
22 the government of Guyana and they enjoy the protection of the
23 Guyanese legal system."

24 Looking at that, I drew a possible inference that you
25 were suggesting that maybe a lot of the people that were

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 residing within Jonestown were not truly aware of the fact
2 that they enjoyed the protection of the Guyanese legal system.

3 Could you cite as background information that you had at
4 that time that caused you to make that statement?

5 Ambassador Burke. No, I didn't have any background infor-
6 mation as such to support the contention that you just outlined
7 or the perception that you just outlined.

8 I did feel, perhaps, that it was not unlikely, as with
9 any other group of citizens of varying educational background,^s
10 that there were some in the group up there who may have come
11 to Guyana and had no appreciation of the fact there was a
12 relationship between the community of Jonestown and the govern-
13 ment of Guyana.

14 So, just as oftentimes in other countries, even in our
15 own, individuals who don't understand necessarily or appreciate
16 the legal framework within which they live, I felt that it
17 would be useful to have somebody from the Guyanese government
18 go out and ^{give} [have] a good old civic^s lecture ^{at} [to] Jonestown to
19 explain to the people in Jonestown where they fit and what
20 the relationship was of Jonestown to the Northwest District
21 and to the government in Georgetown.

22 Mr. Smeeton. Was this based on any degree to what you
23 learned from Debbie Blakey?

24 Ambassador Burke. No, not at all. That is a follow-on
25 of the setting of the scene earlier in my cable. I point out

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 there doesn't appear there is a governmental presence ---

2 Mr. Smeeton. In the context of a nation within a nation?

3 Ambassador Burke. Yes, it ^{was} [is] very likely, ^{ed} it seems to
4 me there ^{were} [are] some residents out there ^{who} [that] just didn't have
5 an appreciation of ^{where} [whether] they fit in the scheme of things.

6 Mr. Berdes. Ambassador, given what I believe is your
7 disappointment to the response contained in Log 130, I would
8 show you now Log 136.

9 (Pause)

10 Mr. Berdes. Will you establish for the record that it
11 was written on September 8, 1978, three months after the
12 transmission of Log 130, that it was from the State Department
13 to this embassy in Georgetown and that it was, in effect,
14 asking the embassy to take a quick reaction of the relatives
15 of the Stoen custody case.

16 Could I ask you, please, for your reaction at the time as
17 to the receipt of that cable, especially in the context of
18 the comments that we have just exchanged here regarding Log 126
19 and 130?

20 Ambassador Burke. This particular cable I viewed entirely
21 within the context of the Stoen custody case, which was still
22 under adjudication in Guyana. Again, there were American
23 citizen interests on both sides.

24 For that reason, the Embassy and the U.S. Government had
25 to be very careful in any actions it might take in connection

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 with this case for fear of attempting to prejudice the judgment
2 that one expected would be rendered.

3 Mr. Berdes. Did that cable come as a bit of a surprise
4 to you?

5 Ambassador Burke. No.

6 Mr. Berdes. Did you relate it in your thinking to your
7 own views that were incorporated in Log 126?

8 Ambassador Burke. No, I see the cable Log 136 as being
9 unrelated, really, in response to my cable.

10 Mr. Berdes. In terms of factual matter, yes, but in
11 terms of what was at issue here, Embassy relationship to
12 the government of Guyana on matters involving Peoples Temple.

13 Ambassador Burke. Here was a case that was already
14 before the courts in Georgetown and it was in legal process.
15 Certainly my view unrelated to the question I raised in my
16 Cable 126, I was talking about the Jonestown community itself
17 and the relationship of the Jonestown community to Guyana and
18 the relationship of Guyana to the residents of Jonestown.
19 But, here we have a case that was pending before the courts,
20 was in process before the courts and ^{where} there are American
21 parties, each with legal representation, ^{contesting} [attesting] the case
22 before the Guyanese courts.

23 Mr. Berdes. Did it strike you in any way that it came
24 close to intruding into a matter that involved the Guyanese
25 government judicial system?

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 Ambassador Burke. Yes, and I certainly was surprised
2 by that suggestion.

3 Mr. Berdes. Did you have any ideas of what motivated
4 that cable?

5 Ambassador Burke. I assume the first paragraph explains
6 the motivation. It says, "Department contacted by Tim Stoen."
7 That is why I assumed Tim Stoen probably had ^{motivated the} [a] cable.

8 Mr. Berdes. Paragraph 3, I believe, to which it says,
9 "All parties would be best served," I am not sure of the exact
10 language.

11 Ambassador Burke. It says, "We believe it is in the best
12 interest of all concerned for the case to be put back on the
13 legal tracks and resolved as quickly as due process would
14 permit."

15 Mr. Berdes. Who did you conceive to be all parties
16 concerned?

17 Ambassador Burke. Mr. Stoen and his wife on the one side
18 and the opposition on the other.

19 Mr. Berdes. Let me show you, please, Log 140.

20 (Pause)

21 Mr. Berdes. Dated September 18, 1978, from this embassy
22 to the State Department reporting on the decision of Justice
23 Bishop to withdraw from the Stoen custody case saying that
24 he had been harassed by offensive phone calls and found it
25 necessary to hire security guards for his residence.

~~Confidential~~

1 Is that the essential thrust of that message?

2 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

3 Mr. Berdes. What was the relationship, as you saw it,
4 between 136 and 140? Did it represent a drastic setback for
5 the resolution of the Stoen custody case which was so urgently
6 sought in Log 136?

7 Ambassador Burke. It certainly meant the case was going
8 to be put back and delayed considerably; yes.

9 Mr. Berdes. Did you have any understanding of where
10 this alleged harrassment had come from which was directed
11 against Justice Bishop?

12 Ambassador Burke. I have not talked personally to Bishop
13 myself. But in Bishop's statment at the time he was released
14 from the case, I think he said he was receiving harassment
15 from both sides.

16 Mr. Spalatin. Have you been able to substantiate the
17 veracity of that observation?

18 Ambassador Burke. No, I have not personally, because,
19 as I say, I don't know Bishop personally ^{and} because I haven't
20 discussed the case with him.

21 Mr. Spalatin. Or any members of your staff?

22 Ambassador Burke. It may be ^{that} the DCM, who drafted this
23 particular -- reference is made to him in this second cable,
24 "DCM met September 18, with the Chief Justice."

25 Mr. Smeeton. For the record, what we have regarding

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 Justice Bishop's statement concerning intimidation and
2 harassment, he doesn't indicate both sides.

3 Ambassador Burke. He does.

4 Mr. Smeeton. He does not.

5 Ambassador Burke. What is your source?

6 Mr. Smeeton. Traffic we have received from the Department.
7 For the record, I will give you that citation in a minute.
8 Maybe we will proceed on and come back to that.

9 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that he did make
10 a public statement at the time he withdrew. His public state-
11 ment was carried in the local press and there was reference
12 made to harassment from both sides.

13 Mr. Berdes. In any event, you did not regard Log 136 as
14 an unreasonable intrusion, or did you?

15 Ambassador Burke. I was certainly concerned about our
16 intrusion ⁱⁿ on the Stoen case at all for fear it might appear
17 to one side or the other that the U.S. Government and the
18 U.S. Embassy were taking sides in the matter.

19 I also felt that if we were to discuss the matter with
20 the Judiciary, we also could conceivably leave ourselves open
21 to intrusion.

22 Mr. Berdes. That is exactly my point, because in
23 Log 130, which is a response to your earlier cable, the thrust
24 of that message being that such an effort could be construed
25 by some, whether Peoples Temple members or not, as U.S.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 Government interference.

2 Three months earlier, in effect, what I am trying to
3 point out, the State Department was not to do something because
4 of deep concern over the possibility of U.S. Government inter-
5 ference; that was in June.

6 In September, they were coming back and acknowledging
7 the delicacy of the challenge involved in not conveying any
8 sense of interference, but they were, in effect, asking this
9 embassy to make contact with appropriate Guyanese officials
10 to do whatever possible to expedite this matter.

11 Does that strike you as a contradiction? Inconsistency?

12 Ambassador Burke. I can only repeat what I said before.
13 I felt all along that intrusion in the Stoen case would be
14 inappropriate for this embassy and for the U.S. Government
15 at any stage.

16 Mr. Berdes. Given that feeling, what did you do in
17 response to Log 136, do you recall?

18 Ambassador Burke. Log 140 indicates what we did.

19 Mr. Berdes. I understand that.

20 Was there any discussion here in the Embassy among the
21 staff members as to who should be approached?

22 Ambassador Burke. I am sure it must have been discussed.
23 The content of that discussion, I can't recall. I assume it
24 was along the lines I have already indicated to you, our
25 earlier discussion of the Stoen case.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 However, in view of the fact that the Justice had already
2 retired from the case and, therefore, it appeared the case
3 was going to be reassigned and become virtually a new case,
4 that it wouldn't be inappropriate for Mr. Dwyer to discuss it
5 with the Chief Justice.

6 Mr. Berdes. Did you ever conclude in your own mind
7 relative to Log 136 that a number of congressional inquiries
8 relative to the Stoen custody case had in some way generated
9 the writing of that cable?

10 Ambassador Burke. I am not sure that I made such a
11 conscious deduction.

12 Mr. Berdes. Let's take a break here.

13 (Brief recess)

14 Mr. Smeeton. Maybe I can conclude with a clarification
15 of my recollection of what I heard concerning the J's statement
16 regarding harassment, intimidation. I am citing from an
17 interview with Steven Dobrenchuk and Eileen O'Kane, dated
18 15 February, 1979.

19 I am citing Log No. 140, dated 18 September, 1978, coming
20 from the Embassy in Georgetown and among the information pro-
21 vided it states, according to the record, "The Chief Justice
22 regreted that eight months of work and 14 hearings had been
23 lost with the withdrawal of Justice Bishop from the case.

24 He said that Bishop had been harassed by offensive
25 telephone calls and found it necessary to hire a security

~~Confidential~~

1 guard for his residence."

2 I guess that is what I was thinking of rather than
3 Justice Bishop's statement per se. It was this particular
4 cable which cites the Chief Justice as the source.

5 Ambassador Burke. But again it talks only of harassment
6 and it doesn't talk about the source of harassment.

7 Mr. Smeeton. It doesn't specify on both sides.

8 Ambassador Burke. Wheas I recall, Bishop's own statement
9 released to the press ^{that} was ^{re} he was getting harassment from
10 both sides.

11 Mr. Berdes. We will return at 2:30.

12 (Whereupon, at 1:40 p.m., the committee recessed, to
13 reconvene at 2:30 p.m., the same day.)
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

AFTER RECESS

1
2 The committee reconvened at 2:45 p.m., in the offices
3 of the United States Embassy, Georgetown, Guyana, Mr. George
4 Berdes, presiding.

5 Mr. Berdes. We would like to discuss with you now,
6 Mr. Ambassador, the period of the preparation for the arrival
7 of the Ryan codel to Guyana and begin by asking you when
8 you first learned that Mr. Ryan would be coming to Georgetown.

9 Ambassador Burke. The first information I had about his
10 prospective visit was a cable which originated in the Department,
11 I believe drafted by Ashley Hewitt, which described a meeting
12 between Congressman Ryan and Assistant Secretary ^{Vakey} [Aikey],
13 I believe, in which I think this was the first indication
14 I had he was coming.

15 Mr. Berdes. Was that in approximately September of 1978?

16 Ambassador Burke. Yes, I am sure that cable had ³ been made
17 available to you.

18 Mr. Berdes. What requirements did the State Department lay
19 upon this embassy for that purpose?

20 Ambassador Burke. There is a certain amount of automatic
21 things you do when you have notice that a codel is coming.
22 Administrative arrangements that you have to make. This initial
23 telegram indicated an intention, not a firm go "as yet, it was
24 just a preliminary discussion with the prospect that a visit
25 would occur, but as of then, it was ^{not} firm. As far as actions

ldd 1
fi, mfm

1 by us and by this mission, we really didn't get into that
2 ^{fuss}
[fuzz] until later.

3 Mr. Berdes. When did it first become absolutely clear that
4 the trip was definitely on?

5 Ambassador Burke. My recollection again is that it was
6 probably mid-October we got word that it was firm. Again,
7 my memory might be a little faulty. I don't have the cables in
8 front of me.

9 Mr. Berdes. Do you recall what the State Department's
10 advisers to you indicated to be the purpose of that trip?

11 Ambassador Burke. The first cable I believe said the
12 Congressman intended to visit Guyana for the purpose of paying
13 a visit to Jonestown and talking to the people at Jonestown.
14 I believe in the first cable, there was an indication that the
15 party would be fairly large and it might include a psychiatrist
16 and certain other people, not necessarily members of the Congress-
17 man's staff.

18 Mr. Berdes. Were certain of those other people the media?

19 Ambassador Burke. I don't think we had notice of the media
20 at that stage. There may have been mention of the possibility
21 of a journalist coming along, but I don't remember being so
22 conscious or aware of the fact that there would be media represen-
23 tation along.

24 Mr. Berdes. What about members of the Concerned Relatives
25 Group, is it your impression they were included in that group?

ld 2

1 Ambassador Burke. I believe there was reference to the
2 possible visit coincidentally with the codel but not necessarily
3 connected with it.

4 Mr. Berdes. You say you understood Mr. Ryan's purpose to
5 be to visit Jonestown?

6 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

7 Mr. Berdes. Why did you think he wanted to do that?

8 Ambassador Burke. In response to an interest, as I under-
9 stood it, that developed within his constituency. He did come
10 from the San Francisco Bay area and, as I understood it, there
11 were relatives or people interested in the Peoples Temple who
12 had come to him and asked that he look into Jonestown and find
13 out what was going on.

14 Mr. Berdes. Did he or did the department on his behalf
15 ask you to advise the Government of Guyana?

16 Ambassador Burke. We certainly did advise the government
17 at the stage when it was firm the codel was coming. We did not
18 at the early stage back in September.

19 Mr. Berdes. What was the Guyanese reaction to that, please?

20 Ambassador Burke. When we did officially inform the govern-
21 ment at this end, I think there already had been some contact
22 between the Ryan staff and the Guyanese Embassy in Washington.
23 The government was not unaware of the trip. I think they got it
24 through their mission in Washington, the first word of it. I do
25 not recall there being any special reaction on their part.

ld 3

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Certainly in my discussions with the government on the trip, as it became a more obvious possibility, the government said that they considered Jonestown and the community itself in the same fashion or view ^{that} they regarded private citizens in Guyana, that if the community or the individual members of the community refused to receive Congressman Ryan, they, the Guyanese Government, would certainly not attempt to intrude on their privacy.

Mr. Berdes. Was that position in some way extrapolated out of the terms of the lease which the Peoples Temple had with the Government of Guyana?

Mrs. Bauman. Are you asking if the Government of Guyana's view was extrapolated?

Mr. Berdes. Yes.

Mrs. Bauman. I think ^{the question} it calls for speculation.

Mr. Berdes. Did they indicate the view you just expressed was reinforced by the lease --

Ambassador Burke. They didn't make reference to the lease specifically, but they said they regarded Peoples Temple as private community and that the individuals had the right to receive Congressman Ryan or not. I think the analogy used was any citizen or American living in Georgetown, if someone comes up and knocks on his door and he doesn't want to receive him, that is his right. There was no specific reference to the lease in the conversation.

c 1 ld
mfm fls.

1 Mr. Berdes. Were you aware, by the way, at that time
2 of the terms of the lease?

3 Ambassador Burke. No.

4 Mr. Berdes. Was a copy of the lease here ---

5 Ambassador Burke. Not to my knowledge. In fact, I first
6 saw the lease after this whole affair came up and we were able
7 to obtain a copy of the lease at that stage.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Is this a copy of the lease that was
9 executed or a specimen?

10 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is it is a copy of
11 the lease as executed.

12 Mr. Berdes. Could we go off the record here for a moment.

13 (Discussion off the record)

14 Mr. Berdes. Back on the record.

15 Can we have the record show, please, the staff investiga-
16 tive group has requested from Mrs. Bauman a copy of the actual
17 lease that was executed between the government of Guyana and
18 Peoples Temple and I would ask you, Mr. Ambassador, to relay
19 any other related documents or government actions which may have
20 been taken up at that time relative to the lease.

21 Was there an act of Parliament, for example?

22 Ambassador Burke. My understanding is there was an act
23 of Parliament executed at the time Peoples Temple was established
24 here in Guyana.

25 Mr. Berdes. And that was a legal format required in the

1 due process.

2 Ambassador Burke. Again, speaking without precise knowl-
3 edge of Guyanese law, it is my understanding that it was an
4 act required for the establishment of an entity of this type
5 in Guyana.

6 Mr. Berdes. We will have the record show, please, also
7 that we have also requested a copy of that document if it is
8 available from the Department of State.

9 In reference to the arrival of the Ryan codel here in
10 Georgetown, when did this embassy, or did it, let's establish
11 that fact first, did this embassy notify representatives of
12 the Peoples Temple that the codel was arriving?

13 Ambassador Burke. We certainly were in conversation with
14 Peoples Temple regarding the arrival of the codel. The point
15 we have made in all of our cables in preparation for the codel's
16 arrival was that it was important, even essential, to the success
17 of the codel that they establish direct contact with the Peoples
18 Temple ^{and} [out of] Jonestown and make the necessary arrangements for
19 the entry of the codel into Jonestown ^{before arriving} [to be received] here in
20 Guyana. And we were in general dialogue with the Peoples
21 Temple telling ^{them} that the codel did intend to visit and they
22 were coming back to us to indicate their receptivity or non-
23 receptivity.

24 The dialogue changed from time to time because they
25 modified their position from time to time.

1 Mr. Berdes. Do you recall when the first advice to the
2 Peoples Temple from the embassy regarding the Ryan codel was
3 made?

4 Ambassador Burke. No, I recommend that you ask either
5 Mr. Dwyer or Mr. Ellis on that point because I had no direct
6 contact with the Peoples Temple.

7 Mr. Berdes. Do you know whether that contact with Peoples
8 Temple here in Georgetown was made at the request of the
9 State Department?

10 Ambassador Burke. Again, without having a file in front
11 of me, I can't tell you. My recollection is that the Peoples
12 Temple knew of the visit of the codel, even before we established
13 the dialogue.

14 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, in turing to our September
15 of 1978 and your initial preparation and knowledge of the poten-
16 tial Ryan codel, for the record, this is Log No. 143 from you
17 to the Department laying out three general categories for
18 potentiality of the group coming, physical, political and legal.

19 Since we will be talking on this a little bit, I ask you
20 to briefly review the context of it.

21 (Pause)

22 Mr. Spalatin. In Log No. 143, dated September 25, 1978,
23 among other things, the cable indicates your requests for a
24 legal advisor to accompany the codel to Guyana.

25 Could you elaborate as to the motivation behind that

1 request?

2 Ambassador Burke. It seemed to me that during the code's
3 visit, questions might arise regarding the various sections of
4 the Privacy Act and, as I have said before, we had no legal
5 advice at this embassy.

6 I felt that if such questions did arise, a lawyer ^{from} [for] the
7 Department of State ^w could be able to respond to them on the
8 spot.

9 Mr. Spalatin. Does that same concern apply to the Freedom
10 of Information Act?

11 Ambassador Burke. As I mentioned earlier, there is an
12 intersection of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy
13 Act.

14 Mr. Spalatin. Subsequent to this cable, Log No. 143,
15 there is Log No. 157 dated November 2, 1978, where basically
16 you indicate that to date you have not received a response to
17 your request for a legal advisor and that you indicate that you
18 now view it in stronger terms as being absolutely essential,
19 using the words in that particular log.

20 It is almost five or six weeks since the initial request
21 for legal advisor. Presumably, you haven't had a feedback,
22 negatively or positively for that. Is it fair to say you are
23 underscoring your interest and perceived need for such an
24 advisor?

25 Mrs. Bauman. Excuse me, is it accurate you had no interim

1 contact with the Department on that matter?

2 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that I had no
3 reply from the Department on that point. I think I had reiter-
4 ated the request somewhere else.

5 Mr. Spalatin. Cable 158 of the same date?

6 Ambassador Burke. Same date.

7 Mr. Spalatin. That I have been able to find.

8 Ambassador Burke. What I had done there was reinforcing
9 the 158 with 157. As you notice, I have slugged this one for
10 Assistant Secretary ^{VAKY} [Aikey]. I was taking it up a notch rather
11 than pushing it in at the desk level.

12 Mr. Spalatin. In fact, two cables went out on the same
13 date, one a longer one, 158, both of the same dates. In the
14 longer one, you reiterate your request indicating it absolutely
15 essential in a subsequent cable to Secretary ^{VAKY} [Aikey], you
16 reiterate that point and raise it to a level of more interest
17 and concern of the need on your part.

18 Your motivations are basically the same as the ones you
19 basically told us reiterating and underscoring your interest
20 on that part?

21 Ambassador Burke. That is correct.

22 Mr. Spalatin. Subsequently in Log 162 dated November 14,
23 1978, the day of the arrival of the codel, you were advised
24 that "after careful consideration, legal adviser office is
25 unable to send lawyer with codel because of heavy workload and

1 serious travel restrictions."

2 It goes on to indicate Jack ^{ie Speiers -} Keyspear and Jim Schollaert
3 have been thoroughly [reviewed and] briefed by the ^{Advisors} legal office
4 as to the implications of the Privacy Act and other concerned
5 statutes that might apply.

6 How did you react to that information?

7 Ambassador Burke. Well, I was disappointed they weren't
8 able to provide a lawyer. I was somewhat eased in my mind in
9 view of the fact they had been able to brief Miss Speier and
10 Mr. Schollaert in the Department and explain the interpretation
11 of the Privacy Act as perceived by the Department of State.
12 But in answer to your question, I was disappointed they hadn't
13 been able to provide somebody.

14 Mr. Berdes. Were you aware that in those briefings some
15 differences of opinion had arose between the Congressman's
16 staff and the State Department as to the legal interpretations?

17 Ambassador Burke. We had a report on the briefing and that
18 doesn't indicate a difference.

19 Mr. Berdes. Is it safe to assume that your request
20 generated by concerns of the Privace Act indicates that the
21 Privacy Act was a rather pervasive issue throughout the matter
22 of the Peoples Temple?

23 Ambassador Burke. Yes, sir.

24 Mr. Berdes. We would like to return to that question in
25 rather more detail later on, but for the moment, I think it is

1 adequate to establish that point.

2 Mr. Spalatin. This is somewhat related to this issue,
3 Mr. Ambassador, Log No. 591, which is a letter dated October 19,
4 1978, from Mr. McCoy to you on a number of items. Specifically,
5 the first major paragraph deals with the upcoming codel trip.
6 I want just to glance at that big major paragraph and then ask
7 you one or two questions related to that.

8 (Pause)

9 Mr. Spalatin. Specifically, Mr. McCoy states in the final
10 line of that opening paragraph which you just read, "The
11 staff" -- presumably Miss Speier -- "does not want to make trip
12 so she may exaggerate some of the difficulties."

13 Did you, knowing Mr. McCoy, read anything into that, or
14 how did you react to that?

15 Ambassador Burke. I just took it at face value.

16 Mr. Spalatin. What did you understand some of the
17 difficulties that Mr. McCoy was referring to?

18 Ambassador Burke. I assume just the physical difficulties
19 of getting up to Jonestown.

20 Mr. Spalatin. You didn't see any potential difficulties
21 in terms of differences of interpretation of the Privacy Act or
22 other items in this particular content?

23 Ambassador Burke. No.

24 Mr. Spalatin. Primarily the logistical remoteness of the
25 settlement.

1 Ambassador Burke. And the fact they might not be admitted.
2 So the trip would be made in vain.

3 Mr. Spalatin.. Thank you.

4 Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ambassador, a relative question, perhaps,
5 but given the number of sensitivities that have been generated
6 over the past several months, beginning with your memo of
7 June 6, Log No. 126 and various other inputs, did you feel that
8 it was perhaps and inopportune time for the Ryan delegation
9 to be coming to Guyana?

10 Ambassador Burke. No, I didn't think it was a particularly
11 inopportune time for them to be coming. I wasn't, quite
12 frankly, certain how successful they were going to be in terms
13 of having access, whether Peoples Temple would refuse or admit
14 them.

15 I didn't think that the visit was particularly inopportune.

16 Mr. Berdes. Were you prepared to do whatever was possible
17 to facilitate Mr. Ryan's entry into Jonestown?

18 Ambassador Burke. It ^{is} set forth in all of the cables that
19 went out of here dealing with the ^{was} codel the basic problem.
20 The codel had to establish direct contact with the Peoples
21 Temple and get permission to enter Jonestown.

22 Certainly, insofar as we could, we encouraged Peoples
23 Temple in all of our conversations to accept the codel. I think
24 we made the point consistently and we reiterated on several
25 occasions that the codel seemed to furnish an excellent

1 opportunity to them to put to rest some criticism they said
2 was being constantly leveled by critics. And what better
3 opportunity would they have than a codel be able to come, visit,
4 meet with Jones and everybody else up there, ^{and} go away ^{than}
5 file a report that it came and found nothing wrong.

6 Mr. Berdes. Is it true, as we have been advising^{ed}, that
7 members of this embassy staff, such as its consular officer,
8 both within the terms of the lease that Peoples Temple had with
9 the government of Guyana and within other legal understandings
10 had a right of entry, in effect, into Jonestown.

11 Mrs. Bauman. Are you asking for the Ambassador's opinion
12 or ^a legal view?

13 Mr. Spalatin. For his understanding, his understanding
14 if U.S. Embassy officials have the right to enter Jonestown
15 to conduct business consistent with being a member of the
16 embassy.

17 Ambassador Burke. Well, the question never arose. The
18 system of visitations had been established before I arrived
19 and was continued during the time I was here.

20 Mr. Berdes. I understand, but we have been told, for
21 example, by Mr. McCoy very emphatically that his position,
22 legally firmly established position, was one of right of
23 entry.

24 Do you share that view?

25 Ambassador Burke. We, I am sure, told the Peoples Temple --

1 again, I didn't do this myself, because I had only those two
2 meetings with Peoples Temple members earlier that I referred to.
3 But I think we made it clear to them we expected to have access
4 to individuals, consular access to individual members of the
5 community on a need basis.

6 Mr. Berdes. Would Mr. Ryan, as a member of the United
7 States Congress, qualify for that same legal access?

8 Ambassador Burke. I think I would have to refer that to
9 the legal adviser of the Department of State.

10 Mrs. Bauman. Would you like us to address that question?
11 I am not going to respond to it at this point.

12 Mr. Berdes. Yes, I think it might be useful to have that
13 set for the record.

14 Ambassador Burke. I don't think the Congressman, the time
15 he was here, ever claimed that right.

16 Mr. Berdes. I am sure he didn't. We are just establishing
17 the academics of it, so to speak.

18 The reaction of the Peoples Temple to the prospect of
19 Mr. Ryan's arrival was one of the articulating the three con-
20 ditions which I believe became the subject of separate nego-
21 tiations, letters involving Mr. ^{LANE} [McClean], legal counsel for the
22 Peoples Temple.

23 The short of all of that, however, was, there were
24 negotiations both in Washington and here in Guyana after
25 their arrival; those conditions were either met or changed enough

1 to make it possible for the group to leave, to go.

2 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

3 Mr. Berdes. The codel arrived here late the night of
4 November 14, early November 15, if I am not mistaken?

5 Ambassador Burke. Yes, sir, just after midnight; in the
6 early hours of the 15th.

7 Mr. Berdes. Shortly before their arrival, you were aware
8 that a fairly large press delegation and members of the concerned
9 relatives group would be accompanying Mr. Ryan, not as part of
10 his official party but coincidentally.

11 Ambassador Burke. We became aware of it over the preceding
12 48 hours before their arrival. Just the nature of the size of
13 the group. We didn't have names in advance of who would be
14 coming on the press side or on the so-called concerned relatives
15 side.

16 Mr. Berdes. Could you share with us, please, your reaction
17 to that news?

18 Ambassador Burke. Our reaction was that this would be
19 possibly ^{complicating} [indicating] in terms of the mission of the codel,
20 because of the conditions that they had set, because of the
21 fact the Peoples Temple representatives here in town appeared
22 to have information on these additional travelers before we did
23 and we were put somewhat in the position of saying we didn't
24 have any information and then going back and finding out this,
25 indeed, was the case.

1 It also posed a problem in terms of visas because the
2 government of Guyana ^{ye} acquires visas for journalists. Though
3 some of the members of the press group had applied for visas
4 and did have them, I believe it was only the NBC team that
5 really had them in hand.

6 Others had made applications for them, still others didn't
7 have them at all. So it became a problem during that night,
8 the early morning of the 15th just trying to facilitate the
9 entry of the journalists.

10 Mr. Berdes. What precisely was the problem?

11 Ambassador Burke. Lack of visas.

12 Mr. Berdes. Relating to which members of the press
13 group?

14 Ambassador Burke. I cannot recall offhand. I think one
15 of them was -- one of the journalists who co-authored one of
16 the books.

17 Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ron Javers?

18 Ambassador Burke. Javers, he was the one who sticks out.

19 Mr. Berdes. Was your staff here at the embassy aware of
20 those problems out at the airport on the late night of
21 November 14th, early morning of the 15th?

22 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't think we were. We weren't
23 until early the next morning, because, of course, all we did or
24 all we were expected to do was to meet the Congressman and his
25 party and bring the Congressman and his party into town.

1 The Congressman said these people were travelling on the
2 same plane but not connected with the codel.

3 Mr. Berdes. Did you at any time during the periods of
4 November 15th through the 17th discuss with Mr. Ryan the purpose
5 that he might have had in mind for allowing the press group to
6 accompany him?

7 Ambassador Burke. I don't think I did. He was my house-
8 guest, as you know. I brought him in from the airport at
9 approximately 2 oclock in the morning on the 15th. We had one
10 nightcap, as I recall. He went off to bed; I went off to bed.
11 We didn't see each other the next morning. He slept in a bit.

12 I saw him at 9 o'clock here in my office for a pre-arranged
13 appointment we had made to brief him and his staff. I saw him
14 again at lunch and saw him again in the afternoon.

15 Do you want to go off the record?

16 (Discussion off the record.)

17 Ambassador Burke. I don't know if it is worthwhile to
18 run through all of these times I was with him.

19 Mr. Berdes. Just that specific point of reference, if
20 he ever explained to you what he had in mind by allowing that
21 large press group to accompany him.

22 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't think so.

23 Mr. Berdes. Likewise, did he ever comment on the fact
24 he had a group of concerned relatives who could, incidentally,
25 we are here at the same time?

1 Ambassador Burke. I think that subject did arise. I got
2 the impression these were people either he or his office had
3 been in touch within the bay area and that they had become
4 generally aware he was coming down and they wanted to be here
5 the same time he was.

6 I do know he was very close to both the press group and
7 the concerned relatives all the while he was here in Georgetown.
8 And, in fact, had a couple of press conferences for the press
9 group.

10 He did also have a dinner party on the night of Thursday
11 which he hosted for both the concerned relatives and the press
12 group at the Pegasus.

13 Mr. Berdes. In any of the conversations you had with him,
14 did he ever or did you ever convey to him or did any of the
15 members of your staff here at the embassy convey to him a sense
16 of a potential danger in going up to Jonestown?

17 Ambassador Burke. I certainly didn't on my part.

18 Mr. Berdes. Did he raise the issue?

19 Ambassador Burke. No. We discussed the possibility he
20 might get up there and wouldn't be able to get in and after all
21 this traveling. He didn't raise with me the danger.

22 Mr. Berdes. What was his reaction to your comments about
23 the possibility of not getting in?

24 Ambassador Burke. He seemed to be philosophical about
25 that -- if it didn't work out it wouldn't work out. He kept,

1 at least in conversation with me, exuding a great deal of
2 confidence he would get in.

3 Mr. Berdes. Did he ever reveal to you the impression,
4 first of all, the press group would serve as a bit of a shield
5 for him in the event there was any violence and that, secondly,
6 the press group would also serve to expedite the entry into
7 Jonestown?

8 Ambassador Burke. Certainly not the former point, but
9 I do recall that he felt that given the fact that the press
10 was here, NBC was here, the Chronicle was here, the Examiner,
11 that this would be an additional lever, if you ^{will} [would], to get
12 them in there.

13 Mr. Berdes. Do you recall your reaction to that?

14 Ambassador Burke. No, I didn't have any particular
15 reaction to that.

16 Mr. Berdes. Did you ever convey to him the thought it
17 would have been better if the press had not accompanied him?

18 Ambassador Burke. I think I conveyed the thought that his
19 access would have been more easily arranged if the press hadn't
20 been along.

21 Mr. Spalatin. Did that apply similarly, Mr. Ambassador,
22 to the concerned relatives?

23 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

24 Mr. Spalatin. More so or comparably.

25 Ambassador Burke. I think probably if I did mention it

~~Confidential~~

123

1 to him. I am pretty sure we talked about it. It was in the
2 context of if you had been able to work out your arrangements
3 with Jones, with Lane, with the Peoples Temple, and if we hadn't
4 been put in the position of, on the one hand, Peoples Temple
5 coming to us and saying we know the Congressman is bringing
6 "X" number of journalists and "X" number of concerned relatives,
7 ^{they} we always knew about it before ^{we} they did,
8 (We would have been more facilitative in just generally
9 arranging for the visit.

10 Mr. Spalatin. Was there any discussion between you and
11 Mr. Ryan about the possibility of having Mr. Jones come down
12 from Jonestown to Georgetown to meet with Mr. Ryan as opposed
13 to the codel going there?

14 Ambassador Burke. No, that never arose in any conversa-
15 tion I had. My understanding is from the outset, he wanted to
16 visit Jonestown himself.

17 Mr. Smeeton. At any of these meetings you had with
18 Mr. Ryan, did he indicate what he thought of the Department's
19 findings to that point regarding Jonestown?

20 Ambassador Burke. No, beyond the points that he made
21 certainly ⁱⁿ his exchanges in the Department that were reported
22 to us in the cable. I think he felt that he was under some sort
23 of a mandate by virtue of the fact he had Peoples Temple ^{people} in
24 his constituency and to do more, to go look for himself, to
25 really examine close, firsthand as to what was going on up there.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 I think he had an appreciation for the handicaps under which
2 we were operating in terms of the Privacy Act, but I don't
3 remember him taking strong issue with any shortcomings on our
4 part.

5 Mr. Spalatin. You say "strong issue," did he take issue
6 in any way?

7 Ambassador Burke. In passing, he may have said I think
8 the Department might have done more to look into this matter,
9 but, again, it was very clear in my conversations with him that
10 he realized the limitations under which we were to conduct
11 ourselves.

12 Mr. Spalatin. If he realized those limitations, what,
13 specifically, did he have in mind that you might have done that
14 you didn't do?

15 Did he offer any examples?

16 Ambassador Burke. No; no examples.

17 Mr. Berdes. This post or the State Department?

18 Mr. Smeeton. I was thinking of you and your embassy here
19 but also the Department in Washington.

20 Ambassador Burke. Quite honestly, we didn't dwell on this
21 point in any detail at all. Most of our conversations had to
22 do with, ^{will} ^{be} [are] we able to get in or not, what is the latest state
23 of play?

24 ~~He~~ ^{He} I sent Mr. Schollaert over to Lamaha Gardens. I knew
25 that he, Ryan, himself had been over there on Wednesday night,

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 for example, and I knew there was this ongoing dialogue with
2 Lane and Garry as soon as they arrived. So most of our con-
3 versations really dealt with, is it going to go or not go?

4 Mr. Smeeton. Did he or any member of his official
5 entourage ask to review your files and reporting regarding
6 Peoples Temple?

7 Ambassador Burke. That subject, I think, did come up,
8 perhaps, with Mr. Dwyer and some of the staff members. It
9 wasn't raised with me.

10 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall what was the result of that?

11 Ambassador Burke. We had instructions on that point, at
12 least I read in a cable, a report on the briefing they had back
13 in the Department.

14 Mr. Smeeton. For example, would it have been appropriate
15 and proper for you to share with him Cable Log No. 126, and
16 Log No. 130?

17 Mrs. Bauman. I think the Ambassador can only answer as
18 to whether he did.

19 Could we go off the record for a second?

20 (Discussion off the record)

21 Mr. Berdes. Back on the record.

22 Mr. Smeeton. Let me just rephrase that question and say,
23 did Congressman Ryan during his visits with you prior to
24 departure to Jonestown at any time ask to have access to the
25 files you might have had here in the embassy regarding Peoples

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

1 Temple?

2 Ambassador Burke. I cannot remember him requesting that of
3 me. It may be that his staff requested it of one of the other
4 members of my staff.

5 Mr. Smeeton. So I should pose that question to other
6 members of staff?

7 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

8 Mr. Spalatin. You said that much of your discussion with
9 Mr. Ryan had been related to trying to get into Jonestown.

10 Did you offer any opinion or conjecture or did he ask for
11 your opinion or conjecture as to what was the likelihood of the
12 results of such a visit being, how do we handle it if five
13 defectors come out or one defector or 35?

14 Was there a give and take in terms of a discussion along
15 those lines between the two of you?

16 Ambassador Burke. There was not.

17 Mr. Spalatin. You didn't discuss the possibilities of how
18 we are going to handle the situation if "X" amount of people
19 decide to come out with you?

20 Mr. Berdes. Did you understand that one of his purposes
21 might be, in fact, to bring out such defectors?

22 Ambassador Burke. That was not my understanding.

23 Mr. Berdes. He never at any time conveyed that thought
24 to you?

25 Ambassador Burke. He didn't convey that thought to me.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 He conveyed the idea he wanted to go and see for himself.

2 Mr. Berdes. Were you aware of the fact he had printed
3 forms available to show to people at Jonestown that, in effect,
4 said, if you wish to go out, simply indicate that to me per-
5 sonally, quietly.

6 Ambassador Burke. Absolutely not.

7 Mr. Berdes. No knowledge whatsoever of that fact?

8 Ambassador Burke. No knowledge.

9 Mr. Berdes. Is this your first knowledge of that fact?

10 Ambassador Burke. This is my first knowledge of that.

11 Mr. Berdes. If you had known that that was, in fact,
12 one of the purposes of his trip, what would have been your
13 advice to him?

14 Ambassador Burke. I certainly would have gotten directly
15 into a discussion of that aspect of his visit.

16 Mr. Berdes. Would you have advised him to continue to
17 produce ^{cred} along those lines or urged him to desist?

18 Mrs. Bauman. Can we go off the record?

19 Mr. Berdes. All right.

20 (Discussion off the record)

21 Mr. Berdes. Back on the record.

22 Mr. Ambassador, as you recall now the point of contact and
23 conversation you had with Representative Ryan and part of his
24 official party, as you recall that now, and in retrospect,
25 would the provision of a legal counsel, adviser, as you had

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 requested, conceivably have forstalled some of the misunder-
2 standings or other confusion that may have perhaps generated
3 and which, in fact, moved him to go to Jonestown under other
4 than ideal circumstances?

5 Mrs. Bauman. Excuse me, what do you mean by "other
6 than ideal circumstances," and ⁱⁿ whose view?

7 Mr. Berdes. Would it have allowed him to be more
8 ^{informed} forward as to the consequences of going to Jonestown?

9 Ambassador Burke. In the presence of a legal adviser?

10 Mr. Berdes. Correct.

11 Ambassador Burke. Certainly not to my knowledge. He
12 seemed to feel, and I must say that I felt, the circumstances
13 were satisfactory for visiting Jonestown—that he had accom-
14 panying with him not only the press but the concerned relatives
15 but also the two leading counsels of the Peoples Temple,
16 Mr. Garry and Mr. Lane, so that the conditions seemed to be
17 satisfactory for visiting.

18 What a legal adviser could have added to that, I just
19 cannot appreciate that at this moment. My point in requesting
20 a legal adviser was whether or not questions might arise
21 regarding the privacy of individuals and he would be available
22 to respond to questions of that nature.

23 Mr. Smeeton. Mr. Ambassador, I would like to turn for a
24 moment to your meeting with the concerned relatives. I would
25 like as best you can to recall for us that meeting and the gist

1 of what was said.

2 Ambassador Burke. I think you already have available to
3 you in cable that I drafted afterward reporting on the meeting
4 itself. That, I think, is a general impression of the meeting.

5 Mr. Smeeton. Bear in mind we are not able to incorporate
6 all of the cable traffic into the record. So for this record,
7 it would be helpful to try to recapitulate the best you can the
8 highlight of that meeting from your perception of it.

9 Ambassador Burke. We had the meeting in this office and
10 the people present were the concerned relatives group plus
11 Congressman Ryan plus Miss Speier, I think Mr. Schollaert,
12 although I cannot remember precisely. My deputy ^{and} my consulate.

13 We had set up a meeting. I think they requested an
14 appointment early that morning and we have ^u given them 2 o'clock
15 in the afternoon of the 16th for a meeting. The meeting lasted
16 for about an hour and a half. We showed them the slides that
17 Mr. Dwyer had taken of Jonestown.

18 Some of the people in the group recognized next of kin
19 and people they knew in the slides. After that, we ^{threw} through it
20 open to a general discussion, and I began by outlining the
21 difficulties that we had in appearing to take sides between
22 two groups of American citizens.

23 I also offered appointments for them individually with my
24 consul, so ^{Met} in the course of his next trip up to Jonestown, he
25 might inquire on behalf of their relatives.

~~Confidential~~

130

1 Mr. Smeeton. For purposes of clarification, that consul
2 would be Mr. Douglass^{Ellice}?

3 Ambassador Burke. Yes, and assuming the concerned rela-
4 tives were willing to sign a Privacy Act release, we would
5 convey whatever information to them that he was able to obtain.

6 There were several speeches made in the group. There was
7 a good deal of contradicting one another, a good deal of people
8 interrupting before somebody had completed his or her pre-
9 sentation.

10 The one point they did raise toward the end of the meeting
11 was ^{that} one of them had been over to Lamaha Gardens earlier and ^{had}
12 talked to some of the people at Peoples Temple and reportedly
13 been told that if they wanted to see their relatives, they
14 ought to go to the American Embassy.

15 So, to clarify that point, I had Ellice, my consul, get
16 Lamaha Gardens on the phone and I spoke with -- I was looking
17 for a spokesperson to clarify this point with. I finally did
18 get, I think it was Miss Touchette or Mrs. Touchette, although
19 I am not certain, and the clarification was they really hadn't
20 said that.

21 What they said was, if they wanted to make contact with
22 people up there, then the consul during his next consular visit
23 can make contact with their next of kin. It wasn't, go to the
24 embassy ^{to} [and] see your relative or make contact with your
25 relatives really in this fashion. And, at this point, the

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 meeting terminated with a reiteration of my offer that they
2 meet individually with the consul and discuss their individual
3 cases with him. And, then, I had to go off with an appointment
4 with the Canadian High Commissioner, which was about 3:30.

5 Mrs. Bauman: You mentioned contradictions, that the con-
6 cerned relatives were contradicting each other.

7 Ambassador Burke. Well, it was rather an unsatisfactory
8 meeting from that point of view. They didn't seem to have one
9 spokesman. Somebody would begin talking and make a point or
10 begin to make a point and somebody else would interrupt, not with
11 a related point but just with their own particular concern.

12 Mr. Smeeton. But nothing that one person said tended to
13 fly in the face of what another person said.

14 Ambassador Burke. Just in terms of detail. I do remember
15 at least one point. I cannot remember precisely what it was,
16 one person saying, no, that isn't right and they started
17 [often.] again.

18 Mr. Smeeton. In terms of the general thrust ---

19 Ambassador Burke. General thrust was pretty much the same.

20 Mr. Smeeton. Generally consistent.

21 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

22 Mr. Smeeton. On balance, how did all that testimony
23 impact upon your impression?

24 Ambassador Burke. These people were obviously, some of
25 them were greatly emotionally worked up to a fairly high pitch.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

132

1 I think that felt somewhat better after having had the session.
2 I think clarifying the point on the phone with Peoples Temple
3 itself -- I should add, after having clarified the point with
4 Peoples Temple, I did also tell the individual I was speaking
5 with that as long as these people were here, it would seem to
6 me appropriate for Peoples Temple to make arrangements for
7 their relatives to come down here to Georgetown to meet with
8 him or make arrangements for them to visit Jonestown since they
9 had taken the trouble to travel down here.

10 Mr. Smeeton. As a result of listening to those people,
11 would it be fair to say your suspicious with respect to Jones-
12 town might have been heightened to any great degree?

13 Ambassador Burke. Well, again, I am forced back to our
14 basic problem with Jonestown and Peoples Temple -- here are
15 American citizens, adults, talking on one side and there are
16 other people just as zealous talking on the other side and
17 oftentimes in the same family.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Let me put it this way: In your sorting
19 through all this, by this time you had accommodated an awful
20 lot of data pro and con.

21 Was there anything you received from anybody on either
22 side of the issue that you found more credible than what you
23 received from others?

24 Mrs. Bauman. Are you asking for the most credible piece
25 of information?

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 Mr. Smeeton. I am asking whether there were particular
2 people passing on information that struck you as being more
3 credible than others?

4 Can you recall any information provided by such people
5 that struck you as being more credible?

6 Ambassador Burke. Not at this remove. I cannot remember,
7 I cannot project myself back in time to that particular
8 meeting. You are asking, I imagine, about this meeting
9 specifically.

10 Mr. Smeeton. That particular meeting.

11 Ambassador Burke. No, I cannot say that one struck me
12 as being more credible.

13 Mr. Spalatin. Is it fair to say there is nothing that
14 came up at that meeting that you did not necessarily know
15 factually but you felt reasonably aware of the variety of
16 charges made against the Peoples Temple as well as a variety
17 of defenses made on behalf of the Peoples Temple.

18 In terms of that particular meeting in this office, there
19 was no new information, a bit of fact here and there, but,
20 practically speaking, it did not affect your general under-
21 standing of Peoples Temple.

22 Ambassador Burke. There was a new bit of information in
23 that Mr. Stoen, present at the meeting, mentioned alleged human
24 rights ---

25 Mr. Berdes. Alleged human rights violation.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

1 Ambassador Burke. I don't know.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Did Mr. Stoen bring to your attention a
3 message to this department, come hell or high water, something
4 to that effect, he was going to get his child; he might take
5 unilateral action on his own?

6 Ambassador Burke. Two of the members of the group
7 mentioned that in the meeting.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any discussions with the
9 Department after receipt of that message from him?

10 Ambassador Burke. I am talking about those statements
11 that were made in this meeting.

12 Mr. Smeeton. But prior to that meeting related to the
13 same message from Mr. Stoen, do you recall any discussion
14 between the embassy and the Department regarding his treat
15 to take unilateral action?

16 Ambassador Burke. No.

17 Mr. Smeeton. And go in there and get the child by
18 himself?

19 Ambassador Burke. No.

20 Mr. Smeeton. I think the message was sent early October,
21 if my recollection serves me.

22 Ambassador Burke. It may be.

23 Mr. Smeeton. To the Department. It wasn't sent here.

24 Mrs. Bauman. When did you first hear of this threat of
25 unilateral action?

~~Confidential~~

1 Ambassador Burke. At the meeting with the concerned
2 relatives, this statement was made by Stoen.

3 Mrs. ^{Smeeton?} Bauman. While we are talking about credibility or
4 lack thereof of various people you talked to about Peoples
5 Temple, going all the way back to the beginning of your survey,
6 is there anybody or any people in particular that strike you
7 as being rather impressive witnesses to a particular point of
8 view?

9 Ambassador Burke. Now you are asking about the entire
10 group on both sides that I came in contact with?

11 Mrs. Bauman. And ^{by standard} what is the Ambassador to measure them,
12 by?

13 Mr. Berdes. By his good sense and common judgment.

14 Mr. Smeeton. Let me try to make it a little easier for
15 you.

16 Other people have indicated that some people they found
17 more credible than others. For example, Mr. McCoy, in his
18 testimony, indicated that Mr. Katsaris, the father of Maria,
19 was one of the most credible witnesses that he interviewed
20 regarding Jonestown.

21 You didn't have an occasion to meet Mr. Katsaris.

22 Ambassador Burke. He was at the meeting of the concerned
23 relatives.

24 Mr. Smeeton. Maybe we should conclude the testimony you
25 heard that day. How did he strike you, as being one of the

~~Confidential~~

1 more balanced or more reasoned, less emotional types who made
2 his case maybe a little more credibly than others?

3 Ambassador Burke. No, I wouldn't rate him over the others.
4 I wouldn't rate him any higher than Stoen.

5 Mr. Berdes. Let me approach the issue, perhaps, from
6 another angle.

7 You had said the basic problem regarding Peoples Temple
8 was one of two groups, in effect, balancing each other out,
9 cancelling each other out; is that correct?

10 Ambassador Burke. No, the point I wanted to make was there
11 were two groups of Americans. They weren't balancing each
12 other out necessarily. There were two groups of Americans here
13 oftentimes taking diametrically opposed positions and we were
14 in no position to judge between them as we have no judicial
15 function to perform here nor do we have a police function to
16 perform here.

17 So, we were, in effect, being obliged to both sides and
18 try and provide appropriate consular services to both sides.

19 Mr. Berdes. You were striving mightily to be objective.

20 Ambassador Burke. I think that is probably a fair
21 statement.

22 Mr. Berdes. I think, however, that the essence of
23 Mr. Smeeton's question is, during the course of natural human
24 events, people come up with a scale that is up or down in these
25 matters. Correct me if I am wrong, Tom.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 Mr. Smeeton. That is precisely the point I am driving
2 at. At some point along the line, we are utilizing in favor
3 of one point of view or one perception vis-a-vis another.

4 Ambassador Burke. I was trying mightily to be objective
5 in this matter.

6 Mr. Smeeton. And in your objectivity, does that preclude
7 admitting you might have found some people's point of view more
8 credible than others?

9 Ambassador Burke. It is difficult to pose that question
10 to me because I had so much less contact with the individuals
11 than did Mr. McCoy, for example, or Mr. Dwyer or Mr. Blacken.
12 My three contacts with Peoples Temple, in effect, were a
13 courtesy call in , I guess, December of 1977, a meeting with
14 Mrs. Marceline Jones in June of 1978 and then the session with
15 the concerned relatives.

16 Mr. Smeeton. Given that reality, would it be fair to
17 say your perceptions of Jonestown of what might be transpiring
18 there were colored to a great degree to perceptions of those
19 officers on your staff who had more familiarity with the
20 subject?

21 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

22 Mr. Smeeton. Given that, maybe we ought to go back a
23 little bit in time and see if you can recall your meetings with
24 Mr. Blacken, I don't know if you ever met with Mr. Tumminia,
25 right after they returned from a February 2, 1978, visit to

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Jonestown.

Can you recall roughly what they told you as to their findings?

Ambassador Burke. Not in detail. I can remember them coming into this office after their return talking about the trip.

Mr. Spalatin. Do you remember any differences of perceptions between the two gentlemen?

Ambassador Burke. I began to wonder about the differences of perception. It seemed Mr. Blacken had an appreciation of the place that was somewhat different from Tumminia's. Although on certain areas they were quite in agreement.

One, that it was quite an impressive layout, a lot of land had been cleared, was being cultivated and all the rest.

The major difference seemed to be in the reaction to the individuals, whereas Mr. Blacken seemed inclined to feel that these were pretty normal people and seemed to be under no stress at all.

I think Mr. Tumminia had the feeling that someone might have been under some stress. That was the basic difference.

Mr. Smeeton. Mr. Tumminia might have indicated he thought some of the people were programmed or acting sort of like robots.

Ambassador Burke. I think he may have used that phrase.

Mr. Smeeton. Was this the first such observation to come

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

1 your way?

2 Ambassador Burke. I think it was the only such observa-
3 tion that I heard.

4 Mr. Smeeton. Throughout the whole period?

5 Ambassador Burke. From the debriefing of all the people
6 who had been up that way.

7 Mr. Smeeton. Therefore, you tended to discount it because
8 it was the only one vis-a-vis a lot of other impressions you
9 had from McCoy and so on?

10 Ambassador Burke. There was a lot of information filtering
11 in from a variety of sources, again, pretty much in the gossip
12 category. There are a lot of people, as you know from the
13 guestbook, who did visit Jonestown.

14 The British High Commissioner, who is no longer here,
15 visited the place. The present foreign minister visited the
16 place. Many Guyanese with whom we talk from time to time did
17 go up and to see it. Peoples Temple were always trying to get
18 people to come visit.

19 The second thing they would say to you after they identi-
20 fied themselves saying who they were and where they came from,
21 "Why don't you come up and see our community?" So, there were
22 a lot of takers. You were getting a lot of impressions fed in
23 from Guyanese sources and other sources.

24 Mr. Smeeton. Did it strike you most of the people invited
25 in were favorably disposed toward the Temple?

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 Ambassador Burke. Did it strike me?

2 Mr. Smeeton. You didn't find any potential adversaries
3 of the Temple invited in? For example, Mr. Katsaris failed
4 in his efforts to get in. The Olivers failed in their efforts
5 to get in. Katsaris failed in the fall of 1977; the Olivers
6 in December of 1978. The Stoens in their efforts after they
7 launched the litigation.

8 In other words, people who were generally known to be
9 adversaries of the Temple were denied access.

10 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

11 Mr. Smeeton. Given that reality, did it strike you that
12 maybe these might have been staged demonstrations where they
13 put their best foot forward?

14 Ambassador Burke. Indeed they could have been staged.
15 Certainly they weren't inviting only those people in they knew
16 ^{would} [to] react in a favorable way. Certainly the British High
17 Commissioner couldn't ^{have a} care less about the Peoples Temple either
18 pro or con and might be expected to be a fairly objective
19 witness.

20 Mr. Berdes. Have you ever been invited?

21 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

22 Mr. Berdes. May I ask why you didn't go?

23 Ambassador Burke. I didn't go primarily because of the
24 Stoen case. Peoples Temple had already proven themselves to
25 be very adroit in using propoganda of one sort or another.

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

141

1 They had, as you probably know, a radio program here every
2 week aired over one of the local stations and, invariably,
3 that program would be a long the lines of what is new in
4 Jonestown.

5 They would talk about the new crops they ^{were} [are] trying out,
6 the fact they were sending their cultural troop down to
7 Georgetown for a presentation and, if there ^{had been} [were] any visitors
8 that previous week, they would say, well, we had visits from
9 the following people this week and they would proceed to say
10 ^{For example, that} the Minister of Education ^{had been} [was] up ^{and that}.

11 He indicated he was very impressed with what ^{they} [we] were
12 doing here. Then he ^{to} would go down the list ^{of other} invariably ^{visitors}.

13 Mr. Spalatin. In other words, you didn't want to be
14 used?

15 Ambassador Burke. I didn't want to be used.

16 Mr. Berdes. Your thought was that by having yourself
17 identified in that way being present at Jonestown, you might
18 in some way affect the outcome of the Stoen custody case.

19 Ambassador Burke. I certainly didn't want to, [in my] ^{by}
20 inadvertence or what have you, give the impression that this
21 embassy was anything but objective about the Peoples Temple.

22 Mr. Berdes. That is something I find extraordinarily
23 admirable, your respect for facts and ^{of} first-hand knowledge.
24 And in the course of this interview, I notice that you have
25 referred to two meetings you had in the form of courtesy calls

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.
PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

142

1 and your one meeting with Mrs. Jones.

2 Ambassador Burke. That was one of the two courtesy
3 calls.

4 Mr. Berdes. As the only real direct personal contacts
5 that you have had with Peoples Temple representatives. I don't
6 want to extract from that too much implication, but does that
7 leave me with the impression wrongly or rightly that you placed
8 greater weight, obviously, on those personal encounters as
9 opposed to inputs and information you were receiving from other
10 sources which you have tended, perhaps, as I recall the course
11 of this interview, tended to discount possibly a^s hearsay,
12 rumors, et cetera?

13 My point, of course, is how better to have established
14 first-hand knowledge about Peoples Temple than by going there.
15 I understand the dilemma you faced and I appreciate that
16 completely, but back to my question, is it essentially true
17 that you gave greater weight to those personal encounters that
18 you, yourself, participated in?

19 Ambassador Burke. I gave very little w^eight to courtesy
20 calls, almost none. As I said at the outset, I perceived the
21 Peoples Temple and ^{the} various contacts with this mission of the
22 Peoples Temple to be primarily a consul^{aw} matter and responsi-
23 bility.

24 I left it in the hands of my consul. I accepted the
25 courtesy calls on the two occasions they asked to pay courtesy

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 calls.

2 These meetings were of very brief duration, lasting
3 20 minutes at a time.

4 Mr. Berdes. You said you regarded the Peoples Temple
5 matters chiefly as consular issues, that you turned them over
6 to your consular officer. I am toally, virtually, misinformed
7 about the relationship between consular activites as exercised
8 in an embassy such as this as opposed to the diplomatic
9 responsibilities and functions of the bilaterial political
10 international relations issues.

11 Do those two come together in some way? Is there a
12 distinct separation between those two functions?

13 Ambassador Burke. There is a distinct separation between
14 all the functions, political, economic, consular, information.
15 Economic matters I leave to my economic officer. ^{For example,} He goes to
16 the banks ^{BIDCO} [of] or goes to talk to the chairman of [Vidco] about
17 the bauxite industry.

18 Our present ^{information} officer talks to the local jouranlists, members
19 of the media. Certainly, they all come together and they all,
20 in effect, have an influence on the bilateral relationship
21 with Guyana, sometimes to a greater extent, other times to a
22 lesser extent.

23 ^{The} Consular function, as it pertains to visas, ^{has} [those have]
24 a potential for creating differences between ourselves and the
25 Guyanese government. Or, if we are talking about protection

Pad #II

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

144

1 of American property, which is a consular function, this has
2 the potential for ^{bringing us} [coming] into conflict with ^{the} other governments.
3 All ^{impose} [I am pinning] on ^{the} [a] bilateral function. All the functions
4 are separate and the chiefs of each section ^{their own} [can] handle [it.]

5 Mr. Berdes. We have spoken about overlapping in the
6 prospect of a consular or economic issue, certainly the knowl-
7 edge of the economics isn't quite as clear, but the consular
8 issues overlapping into the diplomatic side, by what process
9 does an embassy such as this coordinate those various functions
10 to preclude that from happening, to minimize the problems;
11 maximize the opportunities?

12 Ambassador Burke. If you have an experienced consul,
13 experienced section chief, he brings -- identifies such a
14 potential problem of overlapping and will bring it immediately
15 to the attention of the DCM or me as Ambassador.

16 If he feels a need ^{for} [of] guidance, he will ask it. If he
17 feels he knows the way to handle it, he will check his proposed
18 modus operandi and go back to doing what he was doing.

19 Mr. Berdes. Is there a sort of hierarchy by which these
20 different levels of operation are ranked? The Ambassador as
21 the general. Who is the lieutenant in the organizational
22 structure? Where do the consular section fit in?

23 Ambassador Burke. The consular section is a very impor-
24 tant section. As I mentioned earlier, the visa problem in
25 the Caribbean is a real ^{ly} important one. It often does bring

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

145

1 us into an area of potential conflict with the host government.
2 Both the Ambassador and DCM have frequent contact with the
3 consul in the embassy.

4 Mr. Berdes. Do I recall your answer in reference to
5 Log 126, the request to State Department, suggesting an
6 awareness that indeed this consular issue was now beginning
7 or had the potential of overlapping into the diplomatic side.

8 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't remember having said that.
9 What I did say was that I felt this issue had become suffi-
10 ciently important, (which, ^{seems apparent} in view of the situation [which] we
11 are in,) which I mentioned was part of the iceberg, that it may
12 ^{have been} [be] the appropriate moment to discuss it with the host govern-
13 ment.

14 Mr. Smeeton. I would like to focus on 126 again, going
15 back to it. You indicated to a great degree your perception
16 of Jonestown and what was happening there was colored by the
17 perception provided to you by people on your staff who were
18 dealing with it on a more regular basis.

19 Mr. McCoy would be one of those people; is that correct?

20 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

21 Mr. Smeeton. Mr. McCoy has indicated to us in his
22 testimony that by the time you put pen to paper on June 6,
23 his sensitivity to the Temple and his suspicions about their
24 activity had heightened to a considerable degree.

25 He indicated there has been an accumulation of episodes

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

~~Confidential~~

1 going back to the beginning, that, coupled with information
2 he was getting from a number of sources, all combined to
3 significantly heighten his suspicions and then when you add to
4 that the Blakey episode and the Hunter episode, his concerns
5 were far greater now in June 1978 than they were back in
6 September of 1977.

7 Did you get that kind of feeling from him that he gave
8 us regarding his suspicions?

9 Ambassador Burke. Certainly I didn't get an impression
10 from him that we had reached a critical point, that Peoples
11 Temple ^{was} [is] likely to reach a critical point in the immediate
12 future.

13 As I said before, he and I had discussed it on a regular
14 and continuing basis and that I decided pretty much unilaterally
15 to draft my cable of June 6. I, then, referred ^{it to} him for
16 comment.

17 Mr. Smeeton. But you do not recall him underscoring
18 his suspicions and saying, I am beginning to become more and
19 more suspicious, and he ticked off these episodes, indicating
20 there is mounting evidence to suggest that behind that smoke
21 there was a fire.

22 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember it in those terms,
23 no.

24 Mr. Smeeton. But do you remember generally the idea that
25 his concerns were heightened to a considerable degree?

MILTON & GREENWOOD REPORTING ASSOCIATES, INC.

PHONE: (202) 833-3598

~~Confidential~~

1 Ambassador Burke. Again, not in that sense of urgency
2 that you describe.

3 Mr. Smeeton. Do you get the impression he was much more
4 suspicious then than he was back in September of 1977?

5 Mrs. Bauman. His concerns were increasing?

6 Mr. Smeeton. Mounting.

7 Ambassador Burke. I think it is probably accurate to say
8 his concerns were mounting.

9 Mr. Smeeton. And, then, over that period of time, mounted
10 to a considerable degree.

11 Ambassador Burke. That implies a certain consistency,
12 a steady input of information that I don't think necessarily
13 was the case.

14 Mr. Smeeton. That was his perception after ---

15 Ambassador Burke. At the time, of course, we had a whole
16 series of, if you will, other business to cope with, in early
17 April, for example, of last year. All the lights went out
18 in Georgetown and stayed out for five days virtually. There
19 was no water. People were rampaging around the streets.
20 It amounted to really a political situation in terms of the possible
21 evacuation [possibly] of members of the staff [and] others. That
22 was just one of the things.

23 It is difficult because we are focused here on Peoples
24 Temple. This is the purpose of the inquiry. But when you are
25 talking about growing concern on Mr. McCoy's part and anyone

1 else's part, I think that gives the impression that this is
2 the only subject everyone was focusing on.

3 Mr. Smeeton. I understand that. I know in your capacity,
4 there is no way you can focus on that. What I am trying to
5 understand is how his perception affected your perception of
6 Peoples Temple and Jonestown.

7 You have indicated you had to rely upon those officers
8 of your staff who were most familiar with the Temple to develop
9 your own perceptions that you had minimal contact. McCoy, based
10 on what I have been able to determine, was the principal officer
11 during most of this time frame, from most of the information
12 accumulated on People's Temple. He has related to us his
13 sensitivities and suspicions of Peoples Temple had heightened
14 to a significant degree and he linked that to a variety of
15 episodes he was involved in or aware of and information he
16 received from a variety of people, including certain officials
17 within the government.

18 I wonder, given his perception and his suspicions, how that
19 affected yourself and how it related to the June 6 cable?

20 Ambassador Burke. For comment, I merely would interject
21 that I have always asked my section chiefs, of course, to
22 recommend action to me whenever they felt action was required
23 on any given subject.

24 I have always maintained a policy of complete accessibility
25 to officers. It doesn't mean just the section chiefs, but it

1 means ^{the} lowest ranking ^{consul} advice ^{local} counselor, even staff. I don't
2 remember any recommendation for action from McCoy. As I said,
3 the June 6 cable was my own idea.

4 Mr. Smeeton. But it was an idea that might have been
5 stimulated by information provided to you by Mr. McCoy?

6 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

7 Mr. Smeeton. The principal source?

8 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

9 Mr. Smeeton. And that information could have included
10 comments to the effect of suspicions about the community down
11 in Jonestown growing?

12 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember suspicions like that.
13 From his impressions of the early May visit, which Mr. Dwyer
14 accompanied him on, was that the community seemed to be moving
15 along. it seemed to be making progress.

16 Mr. Smeeton. Then a couple days later or almost the next
17 day, the Blakey episode hits.

18 Ambassador Burke. What you are doing, you are getting
19 inputs that sometimes were self-cancelling or at least they
20 tend to balance each other off to a certain extent.

21 Mr. Smeeton. But you won't admit that maybe having a
22 little tilt in the direction of suspicion and that coloring the
23 effort to convey your message to the Department on June 6.

24 Ambassador Burke. No, I really stand on what I said
25 before.

1 Mr. Smeeton. The reason I am harboring on it, there is
2 a dramatic difference in perception. The major inputer for
3 your perception is Mr. McCoy, and I am just having a hard time
4 reconciling.

5 Your primary source is Mr. McCoy, his perception is one
6 of heightened concern and suspicion. He conveys this to you,
7 more or less. Nevertheless, it doesn't seem to have any bearing
8 on the June 6 cable and what was said there.

9 Ambassador Burke. I certainly didn't mean to convey^{idea that} all
10 of these things didn't input into the June 6 cable. I said
11 earlier definitely^{that} Blakey^{was} [did become] a factor.

12 Mr. Smeeton. Let me put it this way: It in no way
13 heightened your own suspicions about People's Temple.

14 Ambassador Burke. As I said before, I count on my
15 section chiefs recommending action when action seems indicated.
16 They are in the best position to suggest it. But the June 6
17 cable is my own thought, my own draft.

18 Mr. McCoy had not recommended we do anything or consider
19 doing anything up until the time I drafted the June 6 cable.

20 Mr. Smeeton. Surely, one of the perceptions of the people
21 who have read that cable in the Department, one personality
22 suggested you might want to cover your flanks, so to speak.
23 It is perceived as an effort to protect yourself as a possibility
24 of something erupting down the pike; you might have egg all
25 over your face, or maybe even worse, and this was an effort

1 on your part to get something on the record to protect yourself
2 against the possibility.

3 Ambassador Burke. I assume that judgment is a hindsight
4 judgment, but I can assure you, as I said before, the reasons
5 I drafted the cable were as I stated earlier.

6 Mrs. Bauman. If I could interject one thing, you did
7 say that your concerns were mounting. I just get the sense
8 you don't feel they ^{situation was} were extreme; you don't like the smoke and
9 fire analogy.

10 Ambassador Burke. I think when we talked about it earlier,
11 I said the June 6 cable represented an effort on my part to
12 get advice and counsel from the Department as to how best to
13 adjust our relationship or set our relationship with Peoples
14 Temple and with the government.

15 Mr. Smeeton. I think you did indicate the Blakey episode
16 did play a part.

17 Ambassador Burke. Yes, I did.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Even though you had a hard time evaluating
19 the validity of what she had to say.

20 Ambassador Burke. Again, as I said before, Miss Blakey
21 left at Jonestown her mother, brother and husband. It is
22 always difficult to evaluate family disputes, if, indeed, they
23 are family disputes.

24 Mr. Berdes. Can we move now, please, unless you have any
25 other comments or observations regarding the period prior to

1 Representative Ryan's departure on November 17, which you
2 wish to share with us which we may have overlooked in the
3 course of our questions.

4 Is there anything else in that period ---

5 Ambassador Burke. No, nothing really.

6 Mr. Berdes. That stands out in a significant way to
7 you?

8 Ambassador Burke. No.

9 Mr. Berdes. Perhaps we could proceed then to the period
10 of November 18 and preface that slightly by whatever reports
11 you were receiving from Jonestown on the night of November 17th
12 and by what means were you receiving those reports?

13 Ambassador Burke. The only communication link between
14 Jonestown and Georgetown, as you know, was the shortwave radio
15 at the Peoples Temple command. They had a station here in
16 Lamaha Gardens.

17 Of course, they had the other end of the linkup at Jones-
18 town itself.

19 Mr. Spalatin. There was no way of communicating from
20 the embassy to Jonestown?

21 Ambassador Burke. No. We don't have such communications
22 here in the embassy. Of course, Congressman Ryan, before he
23 went up, was fully aware of ^{what} [the] ^{there was} communications, both between
24 here and Port Kaituma and between here and Jonestown.

25 Once the group had arrived, I asked my consul to go over

1 to Lamaha Gardens, once the group left Georgetown and Timehri
2 Airport, and to stand by, ^{to} get news as soon as the group actually
3 had entered into Jonestown.

4 So, that evening, he did establish communications directly
5 with Mr. Dwyer in Jonestown.

6 Mr. Berdes. He was at Lamaha Gardens.

7 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

8 Mr. Berdes. Who was that, please?

9 Ambassador Burke. Mr. Douglas Ellice. Mr. Dwyer reported
10 that all was going well. He said the group would stay over-
11 night because of the lateness of the hour; it was too late to
12 get a plane into Port Kaituma. They had just gotten into
13 Jonestown quite late, and that we would be in touch the next
14 day; they would be in touch with us.

15 So the next morning we awaited for news as to how the
16 visit was going. In the meantime, the Peoples Temple put
17 out a press release Saturday morning saying how well things
18 were going and how much Congressman Ryan was enjoying his
19 stay.

20 I didn't have Ellice over at Lamaha Gardens that morning,
21 but we did have telephone contact with Lamaha Gardens. Through
22 that link, we got word from Mr. Dwyer that they were going to
23 have some people coming out with them. And they would need
24 an extra aircraft.

25 Mr. Berdes. By the way, was that your first awareness

1 of people coming out?

2 Mr. Spalatin. I am sorry, I missed the time frame of
3 this.

4 Ambassador Burke. Just about noon or just afternoon.

5 Mr. Spalatin. This is from telephone conversations from
6 Lamaha Gardens who transmitted that information to you here?

7 Ambassador Burke. Right, a message coming from Mr. Dwyer.
8 So we attempted to get another aircraft. As you know, from
9 your own experience here, it isn't very easy, but we were able
10 to locate a single engine aircraft, five passengers, and got
11 it in motion. And, of course, the Guyana Airways ^{plane} was already
12 scheduled to go up and pick up. I had sent my car and driver
13 out to the airport to pick up the Congressman, and I had already
14 sent the duty officer to the airport just to be there and be of
15 facilitative assistance.

16 Mr. Spalatin. Who was that?

17 Ambassador Burke. Peter Londano. I was in touch off and
18 on with Doug Ellice looking for news as to when they ^{might} [may] be
19 coming back. I had planned on having Congressman Ryan for
20 dinner that night and -- we just didn't have a firm word.

21 Mr. Berdes. I am sorry.

22 Ambassador Burke. We didn't have a firm word as to just
23 when the plane would be out of there. We knew the planes had
24 gone off. We knew they should be on the ground at Port Kaituma.
25 I think we had word -- I ^{would} have to check this with Mr. Ellice --

1 I think we had word that the group had left Jonestown on its
2 way to Port Kaituma.

3 That word had come through to us from Jonestown. So
4 we were just waiting for an ETA on the aircraft's return.
5 Approximately 6 o'clock, a little after, I got a call from
6 the Prime Minister at my residence, and I cannot remember his
7 precise words, but he said, "Would you come over and see me
8 right away."

9 So I immediately did go to his office and met with him
10 and he had with him, as I recall, Brigadier Price, who is the
11 commander of the Guyana Defense Force, and one other officer,
12 I think, perhaps, Colonel Singe.

13 The Prime Minister told me that they had gotten word
14 from the crew, as it turned out, the crew of the plane that
15 had managed to take off, they radioed in that there had been
16 a shooting at the airstrip and that several people, perhaps
17 as many as 10, were dead.

18 The crew didn't have the names. They thought that the
19 Congressman was dead and they thought that one or more of the
20 NBC team might be dead. The Prime Minister told me that he was
21 sending his helicopter out to Timehri to pick up the crew as
22 soon as they arrived, to bring them to his residence for a
23 debriefing.

24 So, I excused myself and came back here and dictated a
25 flash cable to the Department of State.

1 Mr. Berdes. Can I establish, please, just for the record,
2 te time difference between Georgetown and Washington?

3 Ambassador Burke. Two hours.

4 Mr. Berdes. At that point was two hours difference?

5 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

6 Mr. Spalatin. You are two hours ahead here?

7 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

8 I sent off this flash cable. I also placed a call to
9 Ashley Hewitt at his residence, but I felt that I should go
10 back to the Prime Minister's residence before the call came
11 through, so I instructed my secretary, when the call did come
12 through, to read my cable -- the cable had already been dis-
13 patched -- but to read the text of it to Hewitt so that he would
14 have the information and would be in motion, in gear as fast
15 as possible.

16 I returned to the Prime Minister's office. The crew had
17 already arrived at his office by that time and we are being
18 debriefed in a somewhat confused manner, I must say, because
19 there were just a lot of people there.

20 Deputy Prime Minister Reid was there, the Foreign Minister
21 was there, Brigadier Price, Commissioner ~~B~~arker, Director of
22 Civil Aviation, Roberts, -- Assistant Commissioner ^{Skip} Roberts,
23 Colonel ^Singh, perhaps four or five other people whose names
24 I cannot recall at this minute.

25 There ^{was} ~~were~~ a large group of people throwing questions at

1 the crewmen ^{who were} [we are] still in a state of some shock and confusion
2 because of the whole incident. So we got some basic information
3 from them.

4 Captain Spence, the pilot of the Guyana Airways Corporation
5 plane, did tell me he thought Mr. Dwyer was wounded, wounded
6 on ^{the} [his] leg and ^{had} escaped into the bush. He confirmed that the
7 Congressman, in his view, was, indeed, ^{dead} [indeed] and perhaps,
8 three or four others.

9 The Prime Minister, after it became quite clear that ^{the} [he]
10 ^{debriefing} was a little unmanageable, directed the police commissioner
11 to take the crew off for a detailed debriefing and I excused
12 myself ^{to come} [and] [came] back here, making arrangements, of course, to send
13 one of my officers over to the police headquarters to be avail-
14 able, and I would be on the phone.

15 Mr. Berdes. May I ask you whether as part of the meeting
16 with Prime Minister Forbes Burnham that night the subject of
17 what the government of Guyana planned to do to get security
18 forces into the area came up?

19 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

20 Mr. Berdes. Could you share with us what the details of
21 that arrangement were to be?

22 Ambassador Burke. They were already at work on it [and]
23 probably even before I arrived for the first meeting.

24 Mr. Berdes. Which was at ---

25 Ambassador Burke. Probably 6:30.

1 Mr. Spalatin. Before we go into this, did the Prime
2 Miniester indicate when you first got there when he first
3 heard timewise about the incident?

4 Ambassador Burke. I got the impression [with] moments before
5 he called me.

6 Mr. Spalatin. And he called you around 6:00, so it would
7 have been a couple of minutes or 10 minutes at best before
8 that from your perspective?

9 Ambassador Burke. Yes. They told me they couldn't get
10 a plane into Port Kaituma that night, but that they were flying
11 units up to Matthews Ridge and they would bring them down from
12 Matthews Ridge probably by train to Port Kaituma.

13 Mr. Smeeton. Is it possible to light that airfield by
14 flairs, actually effect midnight landings or night landings?

15 Ambassador Burke. Theoretically, I would assume it is
16 possible.

17 Mr. Spalatin. I was given the impression that it has been
18 done in the past.

19 Ambassador Burke. The only such story that I heard is
20 that at one stage when there was a medical evacuation out of
21 the Northwest region, a flight had gone into Port Kaituma after
22 hours and that there had been pots placed along the runway,
23 ^{flair}flair pots.

24 I didn't know this at the time. I have heard about it
25 only subsequent to that.

1 Mr. Spalatin. Was that idea entertained as a possible
2 way of getting anybody in there that evening?

3 Ambassador Burke. No, there was a great deal of concern
4 on the part of the government; they didn't know what was ^{going on} up
5 there.

6 From the evidence that the crew had presented, there was
7 no clear idea of how many Peoples Temple personnel might still
8 be in the area, still be armed ready to shoot at any plane
9 that might arrive overhead or any group that attempted to come
10 in except in force.

11 Mr. Berdes. Was it clearly established at that point
12 that those who carried out the shooting were in some way
13 affiliated with Peoples Temple?

14 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

15 Mr. Berdes. By what means?

16 Ambassador Burke. By what the crew said.

17 Mr. Berdes. How did they know they were affiliated?

18 Ambassador Burke. Either because they had seen them before,
19 they said these were Americans and the question came back, as
20 I recall, from the Prime Minister or one of the other officials,
21 what do you mean Americans? They said Peoples Temple per-
22 sonnel.

23 So, I don't know if I am giving you a good answer on the
24 question of night flights into Port Kaituma or not. There
25 was an additional problem. There were two disabled aircraft

1 on the field.

2 One, the Guyana Airways Corporation plane that was to
3 have taken the party out, that was disabled there. There was
4 also a GDF Islander that had broken a nose ^{wheel} while the preceding
5 week and was under repair on the field. Whereas the earlier
6 incidents where they had brought a plane in there for night
7 landing, the field was in acceptable condition and not impeded
8 by another aircraft.

9 Mr. Smeeton. This may fall in the category of hearsay.
10 We have heard testimony from some of the people who survived the
11 tragedy that during the time they were in the area, they had
12 talked to Natives who had indicated there had been night flights
13 out of there, a number of them.

14 Mr. Berdes. Using flares.

15 Mr. Smeeton. Using flares, and they suggested there might
16 have been Peoples Temple members being evacuated for emergency
17 medical reasons, among others.

18 Ambassador Burke. The only one I know of is the incident
19 described to me of using flare pots along the runway just to
20 mark out the runway. As far as helicopters are concerned, the
21 government only has two helicopters that are in a flyable con-
22 dition and are not capable of being run nonstop from here up
23 to Port Kaituma.

24 Mr. Smeeton. Is it fair to say their overriding concern
25 is the unknown, they were fearful a good part of the Jonestown

1 settlement could be armed and their troops would be facing some
2 real difficulties.

3 Ambassador Burke. That was certainly a concern, obviously,
4 on their part. How large a part it played in their decision-
5 making, I don't know.

6 Mr. Smeeton. They were fearful of the risk of bringing
7 aircraft in there at night, given that possibility?

8 Mr. Spalatin. Do you know if there were any adequate
9 GDF forces up in that area at that time as opposed to having
10 to bring them in?

11 Ambassador Burke. I was told there were not. There may
12 have been some, but, certainly not enough to deal with the
13 ^{problem} [decision] they perceived.

14 Mr. Spalatin. And you received no evidence to dispute
15 that observation?

16 Ambassador Burke. No.

17 Mrs. Bauman. Excuse me, the last point about the govern-
18 ment of Guyana's reluctance to send planes in at night, they
19 ~~did~~ discuss that with you to the extent ^{of} saying they were con-
20 cerned about it?

21 Ambassador Burke. No, I am sorry if I gave you ^{the} [that]
22 impression ^{that} they discussed it with me in those terms. They did
23 say to me that the strip was not available for night landing;
24 there were two disabled aircraft on the strip.

25 The most expeditious way of getting forces into the areas

1 was through Matthews Ridge.

2 Mr. Berdes. Did you at any time with the Prime Minister
3 or anyone affiliated with the Guyanese government suggest the
4 need or desireability of taking medical supplies up on that
5 first group for the people who were injured at Port Kaituma?

6 Ambassador Burke. I cannot remember that specific subject
7 coming up. I believe it was assumed on my part, at least, that
8 any relief team ^{was} [is] going to be a relief team equipped to handle
9 an emergency such as the one ^{that} existed.

10 Mr. Berdes. What did you subsequently learn of that?

11 Ambassador Burke. I really don't have details on that.

12 Mr. Berdes. Our information suggests quite clearly that
13 they came with nothing.

14 Ambassador Burke. I honestly don't know. I know medical
15 equipment in Guyana is in pretty short supply in the best of
16 times. But I would think one would have had some medical
17 equipment along with them.

18 Mr. Berdes. At minimum, a first-aid kit?

19 Ambassador Burke. I would think so.

20 Mr. Berdes. Can I ask you also, please, whether there
21 is any form of radio communication between Port Kaituma and
22 Georgetown?

23 Ambassador Burke. There is, as I understand it, and
24 I suggest you ask Mr. Dwyer and Mr. Ellice who are familiar
25 personally with the situation. I would say Mr. Dwyer would be

1 the best person.

2 Mr. Berdes. Did you at any time speak with or receive
3 a message from Mr. Dwyer on Saturday night or on into Sunday
4 morning?

5 Ambassador Burke. No, I had no direct communication with
6 Mr. Dwyer at all.

7 Mr. Berdes. Indirect communication?

8 Ambassador Burke. I had no direct.

9 Mr. Berdes. Did you have any indirect communication?

10 Ambassador Burke. No indirect message at all other than
11 second-hand information that he was still staying up there and
12 trying to evacuate people leaving Sunday while he was still
13 walking around wounded.

14 Mr. Berdes. What was the source of that second message?

15 Ambassador Burke. Perhaps it was the crewman of one of
16 the planes coming out that brought some of the people out
17 Sunday morning.

18 Mr. Berdes. When did you first learn of the deaths at
19 Jonestown?

20 Ambassador Burke. At Jonestown?

21 Mr. Berdes. The alleged mass suicide murders.

22 Ambassador Burke. The first official verification of the
23 murders and suicides at Jonestown came, I think, approximately
24 midnight Sunday/Monday.

25 Mr. Berdes. That is your first awareness?

1 Ambassador Burke. That ^{was} [is] my first official ^{confirmation} [information.]

2 Mr. Berdes. Did you have any unofficial?

3 Ambassador Burke. There was a report of somebody who had
4 apparently walked out and did report into the Guyana police
5 somewhere along the line up there, at least made contact with
6 the Guyana police. This would have been the early morning hours
7 of Sunday.

8 Mr. Berdes. So Saturday on to Sunday, early Sunday
9 morning?

10 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

11 Mr. Berdes. Approximately 24 hours?

12 Ambassador Burke. Approximately 24 hours earlier.

13 Mr. Berdes. What was the nature of that information,
14 assuming it was shared with you by some source?

15 Ambassador Burke. Yes, it was shared with me by the fellow
16 we had over at the police headquarters.

17 Mrs. Bauman. Can we go off the record?

18 Mr. Berdes. Certainly.

19 (Discussion off the record)

20 Mr. Berdes. On the record.

21 Mr. Ambassador, earlier in this interview, I posed the
22 question to you relative to the Privacy Act in which I said
23 I believe, in effect, if I am not mistaken, I believe you also
24 concurred, that the Privacy Act was a pervasive dimension of
25 the entire matter relating to the Peoples Temple; is that

1 Ambassador Burke. That ^{was} [is] my first official ^{confirmation} [information].

2 Mr. Berdes. Did you have any unofficial?

3 Ambassador Burke. There was a report of somebody who had
4 apparently walked out and did report into the Guyana police
5 somewhere along the line up there, at least made contact with
6 the Guyana police. This would have been the early morning hours
7 of Sunday.

8 Mr. Berdes. So Saturday on to Sunday, early Sunday
9 morning?

10 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

11 Mr. Berdes. Approximately 24 hours?

12 Ambassador Burke. Approximately 24 hours earlier.

13 Mr. Berdes. What was the nature of that information,
14 assuming it was shared with you by some source?

15 Ambassador Burke. Yes, it was shared with me by the fellow
16 we had over at the police headquarters.

17 Mrs. Bauman? Can we go off the record?

18 Mr. Berdes. Certainly.

19 (Discussion off the record)

20 Mr. Berdes. On the record.

21 Mr. Ambassador, earlier in this interview, I posed the
22 question to you relative to the Privacy Act in which I said
23 I believe, in effect, if I am not mistaken, I believe you also
24 concurred, that the Privacy Act was a pervasive dimension of
25 the entire matter relating to the Peoples Temple; is that

1 correct?

2 Ambassador Burke. Certainly it was an important
3 consideration.

4 Mr. Berdes. Would you articulate that a little bit more;
5 how important and why?

6 Ambassador Burke. Important in terms of our application
7 of the Privacy Act and the protection of American citizens
8 abroad that we were prohibited from reporting on the activities
9 of private American citizens abroad, from conducting any sort
10 of surveillance of private citizens abroad.

11 Certainly in terms of any gossip, second-hand or un-
12 substantiated information that might come to our attention
13 regarding the activities of American citizens abroad, I think
14 there is a prohibition against a reporting based on such
15 sources.

16 Mr. Berdes. Could you characterize your familiarity with
17 the Privacy Act?

18 Ambassador Burke. Well, my familiarity with the Act
19 involves the various instructions I have received on it from
20 the Department, specifically the guidance that was sent to
21 us, I believe, during early 1978, I think, which was a general
22 instruction regarding the Privacy Act and its application which
23 was drafted -- do you have it?

24 Mrs. Bauman! I have a copy of it back in my room.

25 Can we go off the record for a second?

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

Mr. Berdes. Sure.

(Discussion off the record)

Mr. Berdes. Back on the record.

May I show you, please, Mr. Ambassador, airgram message No. A-4671, dated 18 November 1977, and ask you if that is what you were referring to?

Ambassador Burke. No, my recollection is that it is an instruction subsequent to this.

Mr. Berdes. Are you familiar with this particular document?

Ambassador Burke. I do recall having seen this document when it came out originally. I don't think I have reviewed it since it was first received here.

Mrs. Bauman. Excuse me, Mr. Ambassador, this one is dated November ¹⁹⁷⁷. You are saying you did see this in November.

Ambassador Burke. I did see it in November. The one I was referring to was a later one. My recollection is it came out in 1978, which, as I recall, ^{was} [is] an airgram. There may be an amendment to this or addendum to this. Of course, we did have the benefit of the specific guidance in the form of a telegram which was given to us just on the eve of the Congressman's visit.

Mr. Berdes. Are you aware of any similar type documents from the Department of State relative to the Privacy Act which preceded this particular airgram of November 18, 1977?

Ambassador Burke. Not from memory as of this moment.

1 That doesn't mean there isn't an instruction, but from my own
2 memory without reference to any files; no.

3 Mr. Berdes. On the basis of your knowledge of the Privacy
4 Act and of the points of contact that you have had with it in
5 the course of your work here as the Ambassador, would you
6 characterize the Privacy Act as complex, difficult to implement
7 in any way?

8 Ambassador Burke. I do think the Privacy Act is a very
9 important piece of legislation. Obviously, it is one that
10 requires a great deal of study and interpretation. I don't
11 think I really have anything beyond that point in the way of
12 comment.

13 Mr. Berdes. Am I to understand what you said, it is, in
14 your judgment, a complex piece of legislation, difficult to
15 implement?

16 Ambassador Burke. It strikes me as a complex bit of
17 legislation, ⁻⁻⁻ my understanding of it, ⁻⁻⁻ and one that requires
18 careful instruction to the field by the various agencies in the
19 Executive Branch, making certain the various features within
20 the law are fully understood and respected.

21 Mr. Berdes. Given the difficulty of interpretation, as
22 you have said, the complexity of the legislation and the
23 resulting complexity of implementation in the field, would
24 you characterize this airgram as adequate in terms of guidance
25 to your officers here in the embassy, particularly in the

1 context of the embassy's dealings with Peoples Temple as they
2 in turn related to the Privacy Act?

3 Mrs. Bauman. For the record, this is the ^{November} airgram 4671
4 ~~November~~ airgram.

5 Ambassador Burke. The document in question is 15 pages
6 long and I haven't had an opportunity to look at it for some
7 time, so I really wouldn't be able to render a judgment whether
8 it is adequate at this time.

9 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, in that respect, did any
10 of your consular officials share with you their opinion that
11 it was adequate or inadequate?

12 Ambassador Burke. None shared their opinion with me.

13 Mr. Berdes. Could one deduce safely that your request
14 to have a legal person accompany the Ryan delegation was, in
15 part, a reflection of, perhaps, confusion centering on the
16 Privacy Act resulting from possible inadequacy of information?

17 Ambassador Burke. Certainly my request ^{was} based on the fact
18 it does appear to be a complicated bit of legislation. Whether
19 or not the various instructions taken in their totality are
20 adequate or not, I would have to review them again before
21 offering a judgment.

22 Mr. Berdes. The point of our questioning of this line
23 of questioning, in any event, is to establish the integrity of
24 the issue that was raised so frequently here in the context
25 of the Ryan code and the difficulties they might encounter

1 relative to the Peoples Temple and the way this embassy and
2 State Department interacted with the Peoples Temple, just how
3 well, in fact, the Privacy Act was understood since it was so
4 often cited.

5 Mr. Spalatin. Or difficult it is to understand.

6 Mr. Berdes. Precisely.

7 Ambassador Burke. I do know Miss Speier raised the question
8 of interpretation when she arrived. She said that on reflection
9 she felt her briefing at the Department was ^{inaccurate} [inadequate] or at
10 least the interpretation was inaccurate.

11 This, of course, was an issue to be decided between her
12 and somebody representing the legal side of the Department of
13 State.

14 Mr. Spalatin. What kind of effect did the Act have on
15 the capacity of an embassy, such as this, to report back to
16 State -- to report accurately, to report completely?

17 Mr. Smeeton. In other words, candidly.

18 Mr. Spalatin. Accurately, completely and candidly.

19 Ambassador Burke. Much of the information that you cited
20 ^{which} perhaps came in ^{to} [the way of] Mr. McCoy or possibly even others
21 within the mission regarding Peoples Temple, the activities of
22 individuals within the Peoples Temple, perhaps, coming to
23 various officials in the embassy from Guyanese sources.

24 It was information that was not substantiated; it was not
25 information that could be legally substantiated. It was raw

1 gossip and more, to move it up a grade, raw intelligence.

2 To have reported such information in its unevaluated form,
3 I would submit that being able to evaluate this by this mission
4 would have been an impossible task because it is beyond ^{the} [its]
5 resources and capabilities of this mission, what appeared to
6 risk bringing the embassy or the individual making the report
7 into conflict ^{with} [about] the intent of the Privacy Act.

8 Mr. Berdes. Are you saying the Privacy Act had a chilling
9 effect upon the nature of the information that was conveyed
10 to the State Department from this post?

11 Mr. Spalatin. Or limiting effect if chilling effect is too
12 strong.

13 Ambassador Burke. I do think one has to be ^{more careful} by contrast
14 ^{with} [before] the period ^{prior to} [of] 1974, before the enactment of the Privacy
15 Act. It seems to me one has to be particularly circumspect in
16 ^{reports} [points] that are made to Washington about individuals, about the
17 activities of individuals.

18 Mr. Spalatin. Does one deduce from that that more infor-
19 mation might have been supplied in the cable traffic had the
20 Privacy Act not been on the books?

21 Ambassador Burke. Again, that is an iffy question ^{requiring} [and in]
22 ^{one to} contrast [to] two different situations entirely?

23 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any discussions with McCoy
24 on this as it relates to reporting on Peoples Temple?

25 Ambassador Burke. I certainly did mention to Mr. McCoy

~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~

1 and Mr. Blacken, as I said earlier today, the importance of
2 making absolutely certain that any information that was reported
3 be as accurate as possible and as legally supportable as
4 possible.

5 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall deleting anything that McCoy
6 might have sent up to you for clearance?

7 Ambassador Burke. I could very well have, yes.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Do you ever recall him saying because of
9 the existence of the Privacy Act the candor with which he wanted
10 to say certain things or convey certain things about the Temple
11 back in Washington was diluted or diminished?

12 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember it in those terms at
13 all. Of course, every officer has his own way of drafting and
14 his own way of reporting. Many changes made along the way are
15 editorial as much as they are substantive. But I don't
16 specifically remember a remark such as the one you have just
17 stated coming from McCoy on the point.

18 I do think we all agreed after we had discussed the Privacy
19 Act and its application to a group and individuals such as
20 Peoples Temple and its membership, that we all had to be
21 absolutely certain that what was reported was absolutely
22 accurate and defensible.

23 Mr. Smeeton. This did not preclude you from sharing some
24 of the substantiated information amongst yourself in an oral
25 fashion, did you exchange, you termed gossip, with respect to

~~C O N F I D E N T I A L~~

1 a lot of information. Once in a while gossip is also true.

2 Ambassador Burke. What you have to do is find substance
3 for the gossip, if that is possible, but if you don't have any
4 investigative assets or responsibilities, it is difficult to
5 do.

6 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall him telling you that he con-
7 veyed some of his suspicions about the Temple in an oral fashion
8 to certain members of the Department when he visited the Depart-
9 ment on home leave?

10 Ambassador Burke. He didn't have home leave while I was
11 here, but he made a trip up in May.

12 Mr. Smeeton. Not home leave, that was a consular con-
13 ference.

14 Ambassador Burke. It was a consular conference. My
15 recollection is that he did discuss consular problems generally
16 with the people in SCS while he was there.

17 Mr. Smeeton. I am speaking specifically, though, of
18 matters related to Peoples Temple.

19 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember him saying specifically
20 that he had. But I would have been surprized if he hadn't,
21 because the purpose of the conference was to discuss consular
22 problems, generally.

23 Mr. Smeeton. Did you instruct him to raise Peoples Temple?

24 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember specifically instructing
25 him to do that, but if he had come to me before leaving and said,

1 I am going to be discussing Peoples Temple and the visa problems,
2 visa caseload and all the rest of it, I would have thought that
3 a quite ^(can) appropriate agenda for him to take up at the conference.

4 Mr. Smeeton. Would it also have been appropriate for him
5 to talk outside the consular section, say, people in the poli-
6 tical section, like Mr. Hewitt or Mr. Griffith and others that
7 operated the political section at that time?

8 Ambassador Burke. It certainly wouldn't have been un-
9 appropriate. Whether he did or did not depends on his availa-
10 bility. It certainly wouldn't have been inappropriate, as
11 I said, after all the political desk is our principal link with
12 the Department.

13 We count on them to coordinate responses to requests we
14 make and vice-versa.

15 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall him conveying to you the
16 gist of those kinds of discussions with either the political
17 section or department section of the Department.

18 Ambassador Burke. Quite honestly, I don't.

19 Mr. Berdes. Would you please describe for us the effect
20 on this embassy and its staff of the request that was placed
21 upon it by the State Department in December 1977 related to a
22 Privacy Act request on 26 individuals associated with Peoples
23 Temple?

24 Ambassador Burke. Freedom of Information request, wasn't
25 it?

1 Mr. Berdes. It seems to bounce back and forth, but from
2 at least as I cull through this information -- Privacy Act.

3 Mr. Spalatin. . Identified to us as a Privacy Act request.

4 Ambassador Burke. What does the instruction read?

5 Mr. Berdes. I quote from the November 30, 1978, Department
6 of State memo to Mr. Frank Mashuk through Sharon Kotok from
7 Mary A. Patrino, the privacy staff:

8 "From early in October through December of 1977, the
9 Department's privacy staff received daily requests in the law
10 offices of Dreyfus," et cetera.

11 "The privacy staff, according to the Department's regulations
12 have determined since these letters ask for personal information
13 pertaining to each of the requesters, the request will be
14 processed under the provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974."

15 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember seeing that document.

16 Mr. Spalatin. The subject matter is entitled, "Privacy
17 Act Requests: Records pertaining to the Peoples Temple of the
18 Deciples of Christ."

19 Ambassador Burke. There must have been a request coming
20 out to us.

21 Mr. Berdes. There was, indeed. I don't have the request
22 number, but it was sent here on December 14, operations memo-
23 randum and it was answered on March 23.

24 (Discussion off the record)

25 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

1 Mr. Berdes. And your answer is immediately after on
2 March 23?

3 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

4 Mr. Berdes. Could you describe for us, please, the effect
5 that request had on this embassy and its staff?

6 Ambassador Burke. Well, I personally wasn't surprised.
7 And we did, as you know, cull our files for appropriate tele-
8 grams and other bits of information and data relating to
9 individuals for ^{whom} [which] the information has ^{been} requested.

10 As you know, of course, requests for files under the
11 Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act have been proli-
12 ferating ever since these Acts ^{have been} [were] on the books. Every
13 embassy and every office, I think, in the Department has
14 received requests.

15 So, as I say, I wasn't surprised for that reason.

16 Mr. Berdes. Did the effect, if I can get back to my
17 original question, in any way influence the staff in their
18 report writing to the State Department, is what I am getting
19 at?

20 Ambassador Burke. I think you can conclude this request
21 reinforced in the minds of the staff the necessities and obli-
22 gations under the Privacy Act.

23 Mrs. Bauman? Did they speak about this with you? Was
24 it a subject they brought up?

25 Ambassador Burke. I think we talked about this when

1 the request came in.

2 Mr. Berdes. Many people with whom we have spoken, I might
3 observe, are very much aware of the penalties involved, not
4 nearly as much as they are with the substance of the Act itself.

5 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

6 Mr. Berdes. May I ask you to examine your operations
7 memorandum of March 23, these last three paragraphs, in which
8 you raise specific objections providing three documents in
9 question?

10 Ambassador Burke. For Mrs. Bauman, perhaps I can ask
11 whether we can obtain copies of those, because I don't believe
12 we have them, these three documents.

13 Mrs. Bauman. I will see if we can provide them to you.

14 Mr. Berdes. May I ask you, first, specifically your
15 reasons for objecting to the release of those documents?

16 Ambassador Burke. I think the reason is stated in the
17 operations memorandum.

18 Mr. Berdes. Could you state it, please?

19 Ambassador Burke. As far as Georgetown Telegram 671 of
20 April 1977 is concerned, it was considered ^{that the} release of ^{the} telegram,
21 authorized GOG ^{would} involves ^{as} the disclosure of privileged conver-
22 sation between the charge and the Foreign Minister.

23 Mr. Berdes. That the matters could conceivably impact on
24 diplomatic considerations of overriding importance between the
25 United States and Guyana, is that essentially the thrust of that?

1 Mrs. Baumanⁿ. Would it be possible to stop for now?

2 I have Terry on the phone.

3 (Brief recess).

4 Mr. Berdes. If we can get back to the Privacy Act, my
5 question was, I ask you to note the three items to which
6 specific objections were raised and your response to the State
7 Department and asked whether those three itmes were ever, in
8 fact, provided to the lawyers for the Peoples Temple in response
9 to their action.

10 Ambassador Burke. Well, I already read off the stated
11 objection on the first item which was Georgetown ---

12 Mr. Berdes. I guess what I am asking is, with respect
13 to your stated objections.

14 Ambassador Burke. I have no idea. I never heard to this
15 day whether or not they accepted the recommendations or not.

16 Mr. Berdes. So we haven't established firmly whether
17 those three items to which you specifically objected were,
18 in fact, provided to the counsel for Peoples Temple?

19 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

20 Mr. Berdes. I would, therefore, request, Mrs. Baumanⁿ,
21 that determination be made.

22 Mr. Smeeton. If I could interject for a second here
23 while we have that particular first cable in mind, which is
24 dated April 1, 1977, maybe you could share that with the
25 Ambassador again, based on my own recollection, Mr. Ambassador,

1 that was probably Foreign Minister Wills we are talking about
2 who is mentioned by Charge' Blacken; is that correct?

3 Ambassador Burke. Given that date, yes. It predates my
4 arrival here, as you know. My understanding is that on April 1,
5 1977, Fred Wills was the Foreign Minister.

6 Mr. Smeeton. Mr. Blacken has indicated he had a number
7 of discussions with Foreign Minister Wills regarding the Temple.
8 I think I indicated earlier, among other things, during that
9 period when Blacken was flirting with the idea of sending a
10 diplomatic note, he met with Wills on the subject and Wills
11 encouraged him, as I understand it, to send the note, to get
12 things back on track.

13 Mr. Blacken also indicated to us in subsequent conversations,
14 I don't know if they are subsequent, but in other conversations,
15 that Mr. Wills had sort of a funny feeling about the Temple.
16 I think he used the term "something fishy about them."

17 I think that is the term he used when he met with us a
18 month or so ago.

19 Do you recall Mr. Blacken passing that impression from
20 Mr. Wills on to you?

21 Ambassador Burke. I think he could easily have. I don't
22 precisely recall ^{that} he did, but as you know from our earlier
23 discussion, we did discuss the note and we did discuss this
24 understanding on Blacken's part that Wills had ^{not} necessarily
25 rejected the note ^{or} found it unwelcome.

1 As to this other point, Wills' impression of the Temple ---
2 Mr. Smeeton. Did you ever have any meeting with Mr. Wills
3 regarding the Temple or any discussions?

4 Ambassador Burke. No, not specifically on the Temple.
5 We may, indeed, have alluded to it in conversation, but I never
6 met specifically with Wills about the Temple, ^{or} or about a problem
7 that was Temple-related.

8 Fred Wills ^{is} [was] a very gregarious individual, I should say.
9 I saw him socially many times during the period before he was
10 relieved as Minister of Foreign Affairs. He ^{is} [was] a very free-
11 wheeling conversationalist, both in social conversation and
12 also in business conversation.

13 Mr. Smeeton. Did he ever express to you his skepticism
14 about the Temple?

15 Ambassador Burke. I don't specifically recall that. Fred
16 said a lot about a lot of things. I do know he met frequently
17 with people from the Temple and, of course, he did make at
18 least one visit that I am aware of to Jonestown itself.

19 Mr. Smeeton. How would you characterize his relation
20 with the Temple?

21 Ambassador Burke. Well, again, this is one of those
22 problem areas because I have since heard Fred was very close
23 to some of the people in Peoples Temple, but this is something
24 I was unaware of at the time and information that has come to
25 my attention, again, by word of mouth, since November 18.

1 Mr. Smeeton. Would you characterize these sources as being
2 reliable?

3 Ambassador Burke. It is difficult to say. I would
4 characterize them as this: People who were in a position to
5 know, people who weren't necessarily friends now of Fred Wills.
6 So how much self-serving there might have been ⁱⁿ [and] what they
7 had to say, I just don't know.

8 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall any discussions with him
9 regarding the Temple in the context of this group possibly
10 causing some problems in bilateral relationships between the
11 United States and Guyana?

12 Ambassador Burke. I cannot remember it in those terms.
13 As a follow up to that conversation I mentioned earlier that
14 Blacken had with Wills regarding the visas of the Stoens, I may
15 have in a subsequent meeting with Wills myself referred to
16 that incident and indicated to him, ^{that} I felt that the Stoens
17 should be unimpeded in their efforts to pursue their court
18 case here.

19 Mr. Smeeton. I sort of get the impression from reading
20 some of the traffic that after the downturn of the relationship
21 between the United States and Guyana, which occurred in the
22 wake of that airplane accident, that Wills makes a concerted
23 effort to improve relations.

24 There was a period when they were down and there was an
25 effort to try to maybe develop a better relationship, and it was

1 in that connection maybe the Peoples Temple, his concerns about
2 them arose, and he might have posed questions to representatives
3 of the embassy as to what the embassy knew precisely about the
4 Temple and particularly with respect to its activities in the
5 United States.

6 As the influx began to grow, the number of people, do you
7 recall anything in that ---

8 Ambassador Burke. The time frame strikes me as being
9 personally a little wrong. The downturn that you refer to,
10 which really was a chill in the relationship, occurred after
11 the bombing of the Cuban airliner off Barbados on October 6,
12 1976, and the relationship was just about at its ^{radio} [negative] point
13 for the next three months.

14 That is when McCoy was in charge. Blacken had been
15 recalled. Then it was quite a while before the relationship
16 began to warm.

17 Mr. Smeeton. When would you say it began to warm?

18 Ambassador Burke. I would say it began to warm probably
19 with the visit of Andrew Young in August of 1977 and with
20 Deputy Prime Minister Reid's visit to the United States in
21 September 1977 for the Panama Canal signing.

22 He represented Guyana at the Panama Canal signing. The
23 relationship was moving upward roughly about that time. So
24 I am talking about the period, say, June 1977, when the thing
25 began to warm and improve.

1 Mr. Smeeton. I refer you to Log No. 16, dated August 25,
2 1977, and the signatory at the bottom is John Blacken. Among
3 other things, he discusses a conversation with GOG chief
4 immigration officer, who I think was George at this time,
5 Theo George.

6 He indicates he is keeping a special file on the Temple
7 because he has been disturbed over the entire affair even since
8 Jones indicated last Spring to the Minister of Home Affairs that
9 immigration was politically motivated.

10 Then, there is a comment at the bottom which indicates,
11 I assume this is Blacken's comment, "The issue of Peoples
12 Temple immigrants has become a problem within the GOG immigra-
13 tion officials concerned over group. However, Jones has cemented
14 relations in Guyana with Deputy Prime Minister Ptolemy Reid,
15 who, according to Foreign Minister Wills, has defended PT
16 immigration.

17 "The matter has been given to Foreign Minister Wills to
18 handle, but he lacks the clout to overrule Reid if their views
19 should differ."

20 Does that little summary trigger your memory at all as
21 to any discussions that might have been had?

22 Ambassador Burke. That doesn't differ ^{from} [with] the statement
23 I just made.

24 Mr. Smeeton. I am not suggesting it does. What triggers
25 my memory is when you mentioned August 1977 as an improvement in

1 the relations. I was trying to deduce if Wills' part of that
2 was bringing up this question, although it is brought up by
3 George specifically, I was wondering if it was reflective of
4 maybe Wills' point of view, he was a little concerned about
5 his point of view prevailing because another member of the
6 Cabinet might have a contrary point.

7 Ambassador Burke. Of course, Wills is saying the Peoples
8 Temple immigrants have become a problem within the GOG un-
9 specified. This is a comment made by Mr. Blacken at that time.
10 I don't know just what the nature of the problem might have
11 been as perceived by Wills or by Blacken.

12 Mr. Smeeton. I realize you weren't in place as Ambassador
13 when this particular conversation took place. For the record,
14 it is Log No. 14, dated April 1977 and it is signed by Blacken.

15 On page 2, it indicates that Wills is apprehensive that
16 Jones is carrying out this operation because of possible hos-
17 tility on the part of his organization towards the United States
18 Government.

19 It goes on to say, "The government definitely does not wish
20 to harbor a colony of ^{expatriates} [ex-patriots] who may be hostile towards the
21 United States Government."

22 He also goes on to say, "The government is concerned that
23 the group may have been smuggled foodstuffs into Guyana and
24 Mentore suggests we establish a police outpost in the region."

25 Mr. Spalatin. On page 2. beginning with paragraph 6,

1 starting with where it says, "Wills is apprehensive that Jones
2 is carrying out this operation harboring possible hostility
3 toward the United States Government."

4 Is that sentiment expressed there reportedly by Mr. Wills
5 consistent with what you might have heard from him or through
6 other members of your staff when you came on board?

7 Ambassador Burke. It certainly is a sentiment that he
8 never expressed to me about being concerned about the size of
9 the group or the fact that it was here or the fact it might
10 be publishing literature hostile to the United States Government,
11 ^{or} what have you.

12 Certainly, he didn't express in any of his conversations
13 with me this sentiment. Mr. Wills, I assume ---

14 Mr. Spalatin. Yes, Mr. Wills.

15 Mr. Smeeton. You do not recall them ever saying the
16 government does not definitely wish to harbor a colony of
17 ^{expatriates} [expatriots] which may be hostile to the United States.

18 Ambassador Burke. I don't remember him making a statement
19 to that effect. He might have if it ^{had} occurred to him, but he
20 didn't, to my recollection.

21 Mr. Berdes. If we can return for just a moment to the
22 Privacy Act once more, earlier in this interview, you indicated
23 admirable respect for First Amendment protection. In fact,
24 I believe you cited it to members of your staff for guidance
25 in terms of the rights which Peoples Temple were to be accorded.

1 Were you ever aware from any of the clarifying guidance
2 which you received from the State Department relative to the
3 Privacy Act that it allowed for an exception in maintenance of
4 records describing the exercise of the First Amendment where
5 it involved law enforcement activity?

6 Ambassador Burke. Could you repeat that, please?

7 Mr. Berdes. It is confusing. That the Act stipulates
8 that no records be maintained describing the exercise of First
9 Amendment rights and then provide for this exception, except
10 information pertinent to law enforcement activities.

11 Ambassador Burke. I am aware of that. I am not certain
12 just precisely when I became aware of that perception, or what
13 it meant, really, in terms of law enforcement activities, law
14 enforcement activities by the United States Government or law
15 enforcement agencies of the United States Government or law
16 enforcement activities of the law enforcement agencies of other
17 governments.

18 Mr. Berdes. In terms of coordination between Washington
19 and your post, does it strike you as somewhat strange that the
20 State Department response to the actions exercised by Peoples
21 Temple legal counsel, Charles Garry, looking through all the
22 file systems that they had established for Privacy Act compli-
23 ance on Peoples Temple and having found none, they called Garry
24 to ask him for guidance and suggestions?

25 It was only after he responded to that request by suggesting

1 they come to the embassy here in Guyana that they did so,
2 would that information strike you as unusual?

3 Ambassador Burke. When would that information have come
4 to us?

5 Mr. Berdes. I cite from a memo again of November 30, 1978,
6 which was provided to us in response to the Chairman's request
7 for additional information of February 2, third paragraph of
8 which reads, "In our efforts in searching these systems indicated
9 that little if any information existed among these record
10 systems.

11 "We contacted Charles M. Garry in order to ascertain that
12 the Department had overlooked in responding to these requests.
13 Mr. Garry indicated that a search of records of the American
14 Embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, could produce documents regarding
15 his clients."

16 Then, on December 2, The Department forwarded the post of
17 such a request. Does that strike you as somewhat unusual that
18 the Department wouldn't have had the ---

19 Ambassador Burke. As you saw, in our response, our opera-
20 tions memorandum of March, we cited several cables that certainly
21 were available in the Department that made mention of individuals
22 that were mentioned in the requests.

23 I just assumed the retrieval system is not sophisticated
24 enough perhaps to have broken out the name of every single
25 individual mentioned in the cables as a cross reference in the

1 computer.

2 Mr. Spalatin. If I may have asked this before, remind
3 me, but I don't recall now.

4 Did receipt of the knowledge that this Privacy Act request
5 would be made by Charles Garry inhibit subsequent reporting
6 by the embassy, in your opinion?

7 Ambassador Burke. I think we dealt with that in response
8 to your question.

9 Mr. Berdes. Could you refresh it?

10 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that I responded
11 by saying that this certainly would reinforce in my mind and
12 the mind of others, the importance.

13 Mr. Berdes. One additional aspect which I would like to
14 elaborate just a bit in terms of the adequacy of the guidance,
15 et cetera, which were provided to the post by the State Depart-
16 ment. On the basis of information which has been provided to
17 us, for the record, it should be noted the Privacy Act became
18 law on December 31, 1974, and that on July 17, 1975, this
19 post was furnished a copy of the Privacy Act and guidance for
20 its implementation issued by the Office of Management and
21 Budget, that a supplementary guidance on implementation, again,
22 from the Office of Management and Budget, was issued on
23 November 21, 1975, but it is unclear on the basis of the infor-
24 mation provided to us whether that particular document of
25 guidance was ever provided to this post; that a document in the

1 form of a request for review and comment on proposed regulations
2 of the Department of State was sent to various posts on
3 September 4, 1975; that a copy of the State Department's rules
4 for processing Privacy Act requests and a copy of the 48
5 retrieval system records were provided to all diplomatic con-
6 sulates and posts in 1976. That is record system No. 25,
7 entitled "Overseas Records".

8 And, next, the clarification to all posts with respect
9 to providing guidance on how to handle certain types of Privacy
10 Act requests occurred on November 18, 1977, the airgram which
11 we have already examined.

12 Again, I am trying to establish the complexity of the
13 Privacy Act and the adequacy of the State Department's guidance
14 to posts for its proper implementation.

15 I do so, once again, in terms of the seemingly important
16 dimension which the Privacy Act made in the question of the
17 briefing of Representative Ryan in his preparation for coming
18 to Georgetown and then in his presence here.

19 And I would again cite a paragraph from an airgram dated
20 September 5, 1978, to all consular diplomatic posts, which
21 I am sorry I don't have the complete text of, but pertinent
22 portion reads, "In responding to complaints, we have been
23 embarrassed by our failure to assure the court we have retrieved
24 all relevant documents. Frequently, posts have produced
25 additional records after the requester has taken the Department

1 to court.

2 "This has led requesters to believe the Department has
3 willfully withheld documents."

4 Does any of that suggest to you, Mr. Ambassador, first
5 line quality coordination between the Department of State and
6 the Embassy abroad on the question of the Privacy Act?

7 Ambassador Burke. I think it underscores the complexity
8 of the Privacy Act and its interpretation and application.

9 Mr. Spalatin. In that respect, one might be well advised
10 to look at the entire matter very seriously with the desire and
11 intent to improve upon it.

12 Mr. Berdes. The light at the end of the tunnel is coming.

13 We usually close these interviews with a variety of
14 miscellaneous wrapup-type questions. I turn to Mr. Smeeton for
15 some of those, please.

16 Mr. Smeeton. The first one pertains to Tim Carter.
17 During the visit of the concerned relatives and the Ryan code
18 to Georgetown in November of 1978, did they bring to your
19 attention what now appears to have been the phony defects^{ion} of
20 Tim Carter?

21 Ambassador Burke. No, they did not. I learned after the
22 fact and did report to the Department a news item that had
23 appeared on, I think, Radio Barbados.

24 Mr. Smeeton. I picked that up in the log. That was at
25 your initiative that that was sent to the Department.

1 Ambassador Burke. That is right.

2 Mr. Smeeton. For the record, maybe we ought to identify
3 that. That is a cable from Ambassador Burke to the Department
4 dated November 28, 1978, identified as Log No. 354.

5 Have you received anything, Mr. Ambassador, subsequent
6 to that that would be worth mentioning in the context of this
7 investigation?

8 Ambassador Burke. No, that is the only bit of evidence
9 I did pick up. As I say, I did report it because, obviously,
10 had this information been available to us in advance or been
11 available to Codel Ryan, it might, indeed, have been important
12 information for him to have had.

13 Mr. Smeeton. We seem to have information indicating that
14 possibly some members of the Ryan party, whether they be con-
15 cerned relatives or other members of the party, may have been
16 alerted to the possibility that this was a phony defense ^{echoed} just
17 before they departed for Georgetown.

18 To the best of your recollection, that was never brought
19 to your attention by any member of the Ryan party or anybody
20 associated with the party?

21 Ambassador Burke. No, the first reference to it, as I say,
22 was in that telegram.

23 Mr. Smeeton. The next item pertains to, for the record,
24 Log No. 290, dated 25 November 1978, entitled, "Previously
25 Reported Deaths of Peoples Temple Members Before Codel Ryan's

1 visit."

2 And it is essentially an enumeration of the people who died
3 prior to the tragedy. By name it gives basic biographic data
4 on these people. Maybe I should let you review that for a
5 second.

6 (Pause)

7 Ambassador Burke. Yes, sir.

8 Mr. Smeeton. I am struck, first of all, by the fact that
9 all of them, with one exception, died of cardiac arrest. Were
10 your people in the Embassy here able to satisfy yourselves as
11 to these causes of death as being indeed what they were adver-
12 tised to be?

13 Ambassador Burke. We certainly were in no position to
14 verify cause of death. I believe the dates of birth on most of
15 these people runs into the period 1920.

16 Mr. Smeeton. Well up in years?

17 Ambassador Burke. But in answer to your direct question,
18 no, we had no way of verifying those. The deaths were reported
19 to us and we informed the people from the Peoples Temple what
20 steps they had to go through to enable us to issue a consular
21 certificate of death.

22 Mr. Smeeton. In each of those instances, was the report
23 of their death conveyed to you by Guyanese officials?

24 Ambassador Burke. I honestly cannot tell you because
25 I didn't talk to the people from the Peoples Temple. I suggest

1 you refer that either to Mr. McCoy or Mr. Ellice.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Another area of inquiry resolves around
3 the alleged relationship of certain members of the government
4 at various levels with the Peoples Temple, and in that connec-
5 tion, it has been suggested by some sources that some of these
6 people might have been compromised.

7 I wonder if you could share with us any information you may
8 have relating to that?

9 Ambassador Burke. I don't have any hard information to
10 support that. I have heard almost entirely in the period since
11 November 18 about these connections between various members of
12 the Peoples Temple and members of the government. But I have
13 no way of verifying whether or not the government officials
14 were, in fact, compromised in any way or affected at all by
15 these relationships ^{with} [by] Peoples Temple.

16 Mr. Smeeton. None of the officers were in direct contact
17 with Peoples Temple matters ever brought information to you
18 that you would characterize as hard with respect to possibly
19 compromising certain GOG officials.

20 Ambassador Burke. No.

21 Mr. Smeeton. Would you generally term the information
22 that you received in this connection as gossip or hearsay?

23 Ambassador Burke. Certainly it would come under the
24 heading of very raw intelligence.

25 Mr. Smeeton. Unevaluated in nature?

1 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

2 Mr. Smeeton. And from people of untested reliability,
3 as far as you were concerned?

4 Ambassador Burke. Yes. I think the important word in
5 your question is whether or not -- I certainly am not denying
6 that ^a [the] relationship might have existed between these people.
7 The problem really was to try and determine whether or not these
8 people within the government who may have been consorting with
9 or had relationships with members of the Peoples Temple were
10 influenced in some ^{sinister} [sort of a] way by this connection.

11 Mr. Smeeton. As we indicated in an earlier cable, I think
12 it was authored by Mr. Blacken back in the 1977 time frame, that
13 comment section where he is citing several of Foreign Minister
14 Wills' observations about the Temple, in that context, the
15 relationship of the Deputy Prime Minister to the Temple is
16 mentioned by Mr. Wills.

17 Do you have any knowledge regarding that relationship you
18 would like to share with us?

19 Ambassador Burke. No knowledge of the relationship. I have
20 heard the same raw intelligence, unevaluated, regarding a
21 connection that may have existed between the Deputy Prime
22 Minister and the Peoples Temple. But it hasn't necessarily been
23 characterized, again, in any way.

24 There are those who content ^{a that} the Deputy Prime Minister was
25 very sympathetic in terms of Peoples Temple in terms of what

1 they were here to do. He felt the Peoples Temple were genuinely
2 devoted Socialists and that they did, indeed, want to carve
3 out for themselves a community down here, and that it was
4 because of this belief in their purpose, their aims and goals
5 that he was sympathetic to them and willing to be facilitative
6 in assisting them here.

7 Mr. Smeeton. Several people, Mr. Blacken, among others,
8 characterize Mr. Reid as a man of integrity beyond reproach
9 in that regard.

10 Is that consistent of our own assessment of Mr. Reid?

11 Ambassador Burke. Certainly, he has such a reputation
12 in Guyana. He has been considered by many to be the most loyal
13 member of the government in terms of his loyalty and allegiance
14 to the Prime Minister and also to Guyana itself.

15 Mr. Smeeton. One of the other relationships that is cited
16 by a number of people pertains to the alleged or purported
17 alleged relationship between the current Guyanese Ambassador
18 to the United States and a certain member of the Temple head-
19 quartered here in Georgetown.

20 Do you have any information regarding that relationship
21 that you could share with us?

22 Ambassador Burke. Again, my knowledge of this relationship
23 really post dates November 18. I don't recall having heard
24 of a connection between the Ambassador and anybody at Peoples
25 Temple prior to that time.

1 Since November 18, again, there has been a good deal of
2 gossip and raw intelligence that has been generated which
3 indicates there was a close relationship between the Ambassador
4 and some individual within the Temple.

5 Mr. Berdes. Had you heard the rumors prior to November 18?

6 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't recall ever having heard
7 that. When I first heard it, I was quite surprised. As you
8 have probably seen from one of my reporting cables, before the
9 visit of Congressman Ryan, I discussed -- I was with the
10 Ambassador -- and I recommended very strongly to him ^{that} it seemed
11 to me to be in the best interest of the Temple, if the Temple
12 wanted to lay the ghosts of all this criticism they had been
13 receiving to the codel, and suggested if he had any influence or
14 if his government had any influence, it might be wise for them
15 to encourage the Peoples Temple to receive the Congressman and
16 the codel.

17 Mr. Smeeton. How did he react to that suggestion?

18 Ambassador Burke. As you see from my cable, he appeared to
19 take the same view, although he did reiterate this position the
20 government had enunciated earlier, ^{that} if they ^{didn't} [don't] want to receive
21 the codel, they are in no position to force them to.

22 Mr. Smeeton. Just one final question in this whole
23 general area of a possible relationship between certain members
24 of the government and Peoples Temple.

25 As you look back on it, can you think of any other

1 information relating to this whole subject we should be aware
2 of in the context of this investigation?

3 Ambassador Burke. In the context of?

4 Mr. Smeeton. Of this investigation relating ---

5 Ambassador Burke. On the subject of special relationships?

6 Mr. Smeeton. Yes.

7 Ambassaodr Burke. No, I think I have heard probably the
8 same information, the same information has come to my attention
9 since November 18 that has come to ^{you} yourself. ^{yes}

10 The one thing I found interesting in all of this infor-
11 mation that came our way after November 18 was an incident
12 I cited this morning regarding the shipment of cases that the
13 Guyanese Customs did open and examine, according to their infor-
14 mation, peripheral information that I obtained from other
15 sources, they did shake it down very carefully and found no
16 contraband.

17 Now, as far as personal connections with members of the
18 Peoples Temple and the government's officials, I really don't
19 have anything more to add that I can think of.

20 Mr. Smeeton. With respect to the Temple's relationship
21 with our own staff, are you aware of any efforts on the part
22 of members of the Temple to compromise members of your staff?

23 Ambassador Burke. No.

24 Mr. Smeeton. Are you aware of the allegations made against

25 Mr. McCoy?

1 Ambassador Burke. I certainly am aware of the allegations
2 made against Mr. McCoy.

3 Mr. Smeeton. Would you care to elaborate a little bit
4 for the record?

5 Ambassador Burke. As I said, when I recomended Mr. McCoy
6 for the superior honor award, it was done on the basis of my
7 appreciation of his being a totally loyal and public servant
8 of the United States.

9 Mr. Smeeton. Based on your assessment, these are outrageous
10 statements, totally inconsistent with what you know about the
11 mn as one of your officers?

12 Ambassador Burke. Right.

13 Mr. Smeeton. In this connection, Mr. Blacken mentioned
14 Temple visitors from time to time would seemingly try to flirt
15 with members of the staff.

16 Ambassador Burke. They tried to flirt with Mr. Blacken?

17 Mr. Smeeton. I gather it was construed as such. I gather
18 there was a perception of this as maybe being part of their
19 modus operandi. We heard it not only with respect to the
20 embassy staff, I think as I mentioned earlier in our former
21 discussion prior to this get-together that apparently certain
22 members of the Temple were under instructions to flirt with
23 Customs officials and try to divert their attention while certain
24 types of material were passing through Customs.

25 Do you have any information regarding that which you would

1 care to share with us?

2 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't. ^{In} The two courtesy calls
3 they ^{paid} [called] on me, no one ever made an effort to flirt with
4 me.

5 Mr. Smeeton. And you don't recall Mr. Blacken pointing
6 this out to you?

7 Ambassador Burke. No.

8 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, when did you first hear
9 of Sharon Amos' murder/suicide, whatever it is?

10 Ambassador Burke. In the Office of the Prime Minister
11 on November 18.

12 Mr. Spalatin. Would it be after the 6 o'clock meeting?

13 Ambassador Burke. In the second meeting.

14 Mr. Spalatin. Which would have been 7:30 or 8:00 time
15 frame?

16 Ambassador Burke. I supplied the times in the memorandum.
17 It was built into the reply to the Chairman.

18 Mr. Spalatin. So it would be the second meeting?

19 Ambassador Burke. Second meeting.

20 Mr. Spalatin. Was it indicated at that time it was a
21 suicide or murder or it was not clear?

22 Ambassador Burke. It was not clear. In fact, it was
23 news to me and news also to the Prime Minister. The Foreign
24 Minister joined us later in this session and after the crews
25 had withdrawn to go to police headquarters for interrogation,

1 he said there have^d been apparently other deaths in addition
2 to the shootings at Port Kaituma. Some people have either,
3 I cannot recall precisely what he said, I don't know if it
4 was suicide or how he characterized it, but he did inform me
5 and the Prime Minister there had been others^(deaths) at Lamaha.

6 Mr. Spalatin. When did you first hear or read about
7 Debbi Blakey's affidavit of June 15, 1978?

8 Ambassador Burke. My recollection is that I heard about
9 it, probably even saw it when it came into this embassy in
10 connection with a welfare and whereabouts inquiry from someone
11 of the Concerned Relatives ^{and} [that] had been sent along as an
12 enclosure to that letter.

13 I am not certain I saw it when it came in, but I saw the
14 package later. The time frame I would say was sometime in
15 September.

16 Mr. Spalatin. Of 1978?

17 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

18 Mr. Spalatin. Was there any discussion with the staff of
19 the contents of that affidavit, if you recall, at a staff
20 meeting or otherwise?

21 Ambassador Burke. Not at a staff meeting, I cannot recall.
22 I am sure I discussed it with the consul, Mr. Ellice. In fact,
23 I think he sent it over to me ^{as} [and was] part of a package. He
24 was sending a reply to this concerned relative and ^{it} was part of
25 the ^{file} [package] and that is when I saw it.

1 Mr. Spalatin. Are you aware that an Interpol report was
2 submitted to the Guyanese government at any time while you were
3 Ambassador?

4 Ambassador Burke. No. I have heard about an Interpol
5 report after November 18, but I was not aware of an Interpol
6 report to the government before then.

7 Mr. Spalatin. What is your knowledge of it as of now?

8 Ambassador Burke. My recollection now, and again it is
9 a little blurred, because so much of this information has come
10 to light since November 18 in terms of total volume, I think it
11 had to do with ^{aw} [this] alleged shipment of arms.

12 Mr. Spalatin. That is correct. Our understanding is it
13 was in June of 1978 when it was submitted to the Guyanese
14 government?

15 Ambassador Burke. I certainly did not know about it in
16 ^{June} [January] of 1978.

17 Mr. Spalatin. I understand that.

18 Ambassador Burke. As I say, my recollection is it came to
19 my attention after November 18 when all this material was coming
20 to light.

21 Mr. Spalatin. Do you know if anybody on your staff would
22 have known about that prior to November 1978?

23 Ambassador Burke. It is always possible somebody might
24 have heard about it. I consider it highly unlikely that it would
25 have come to their attention without ^(there) telling me about it.

1 Mr. Spalatin. So it most likely would have been passed
2 on to you?

3 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

4 Mr. Spalatin. So it is most unlikely someone on the staff
5 would have known about it on the staff prior to that time frame?

6 Ambassador Burke. Right. We don't have a legal ^{attache} [staff]
7 here. That sort of information doesn't come to our attention
8 in the normal distribution of things.

9 Mr. Spalatin. Are you aware of various reports that there
10 was a shipment of cyanide prior to November 14 to Jonestown;
11 shortly prior to November 14?

12 Ambassador Burke. No.

13 Mr. Spalatin. You are not aware of it, either subsequent
14 to November 18 or prior to?

15 Ambassador Burke. Certainly not prior to November 18. I am
16 not at all certain that I have seen any hard evidence of such a
17 shipment subsequent to November 18. I don't rule out the
18 possibility that somebody didn't talk about it in a very general
19 way, but without citing any authority for it.

20 Mr. Spalatin. So you are not aware of any way of sub-
21 stantiating that charge?

22 Ambassador Burke. No.

23 Mr. Smeeton. You are not aware of Mr. Harold Cordell
24 indicating he might have participated in unloading a shipment
25 of cyanide a short time before the tragedy of November 18?

1 Ambassador Burke. No. I have never met Mr. Cordell.
2 I don't ever remember any of my staff reporting to me that sort
3 of information. I don't think this embassy had any contact
4 with him except possibly during the course of one of these
5 consular visitations.

6 Mr. Smeeton. It is my understanding he testified before
7 a court proceeding in the wake of the tragedy, Guyanese court
8 proceeding.

9 Ambassador Burke. Yes, I think he did give evidence at
10 a coroner's inquest up at Matthew's Ridge. I have not seen
11 the full records of that coroner's inquest which ran for 10 days
12 and took evidence from a variety of people, as you know.

13 As I say, I haven't read the full transcript. There might
14 be something in that transcript. I haven't read it nor has it
15 been brought to my attention.

16 Mr. Smeeton. Is this inquest a matter of public record?

17 Ambassador Burke. I am sure it is.

18 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, I will pose the question two
19 ways and you answer it.

20 Would you characterize the situation in Jonestown in
21 August, September, October, early November, prior to November 14,
22 as being tense, or to reverse the question, if somebody would
23 ask you, Mr. Ambassador, do you think the situation in Jonestown
24 as of October 1 or November 1 ^{as} [is] tense, how would you react to
25 that observation? Agree, disagree, not sure?

1 Mrs. Bauman. Are you asking ^{what the Ambassador thought} if at the time back in
2 October-November?

3 Mr. Spalatin. Yes.

4 Ambassador Burke. Well, nobody asked me the question.

5 Mr. Spalatin. I understand that.

6 Ambassador Burke. If somebody had asked the question,
7 is it tense in Jonestown as of that date, I certainly wouldn't
8 have had any way of knowing except through the visit Mr. Douglas
9 Ellice and Mr. Dennis Reece made on ^{November} the 7th.

10 Certainly on the basis of the oral report made to me after
11 their return, they did not give me the impression things were
12 tense at Jonestown.

13 Mr. Spalatin. In that respect, in their oral report to
14 you pursuant to their visit of November 7, Mr. Reece and
15 Mr. Ellice, how did they characterize the physical appearance
16 and behavior of Mr. Jones?

17 Ambassador Burke. They described it to me orally pretty
18 much in the way it is described in the cable that was drafted
19 after November 18 which reported on the visit, which you have
20 available to you, that he complained of having fever, that he
21 was wearing a gauze mask and that he spent a fairly brief time
22 with them while they were having lunch.

23 Mr. Spalatin. From your perception, did that strike you as
24 a change, his physical appearance and demeanor compared to the
25 last visit by a consular official, being Mr. McCoy, in May of

1 1978; was there a change from your perception on that?
2

3 Ambassador Burke. Well, certainly during the visit that
4 was made in May by Mr. Dwyer and Mr. McCoy, Jones did spend a
5 god deal of time with them. He talked with them and I think
6 spent some time with Mr. Dwyer going around the camp. So,
7 certainly, in terms of the total amount of time he, Jones, spent
8 with McCoy and Dwyer, it was a good deal longer than with Ellice
9 and Reece.

10 As to ^{his} [the] physical condition, certainly superficially it
11 seems to have been different. He wasn't wearing a gauze mask.
12 I think he was complaining about a high fever that periodically
13 affected him. But he certainly wasn't wearing a mask.

14 I must say in all candor that I was slightly suspicious
15 of the ill health he appeared to be enjoying during the Reece-
16 Ellice visit, because, as you know, the visit of the Congressman
17 was moving along and had been scheduled and the people that we
18 had been talking to here in Georgetown, the representatives of
19 the Peoples Temple, had said that "Jim hasn't been well." They
20 were using this as one of the reasons why the Congressman should
21 delay his visit.

22 So, as I say, I was somewhat ^{skeptical} [cynical.] Perhaps that is too
23 strong a word. I felt, perhaps, this might be an effort to
24 document his ill health.

25 Mr. Spalatin. As a little bit of a put-on?

Ambassador Burke. Yes, as reason why the Congressman

1 should not visit.

2 Mr. Smeeton. Were you aware on previous occasions his
3 ill health had been offered as a pretext for certain people not
4 visiting Jonestown at a particular point in time?

5 Ambassador Burke. I don't recall.

6 Mr. Spalatin. In the report that you referred to filed
7 reporting on the November 7 visit by Mr. Ellice and Mr. Reece,
8 they observed also that Mr. Jone's speech was markedly slurred.

9 Did they, in their oral briefs to you, seemingly not
10 included in this cable, add additional speculation as to the
11 cause or purpose of that slurring, such as the possibility of
12 being under sedation or medication or drugs or drinking?

13 Ambassador Burke. They didn't speculate. Let me pause
14 just for a moment there. Maybe they did make the observation
15 that he may have been under medication if, indeed, he was
16 suffering from a high fever, that this may have been the cause
17 of his slurred speech.

18 It may also have been the fact he was speaking through a
19 gauze mask.

20 Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ambassador, also in reference to Mr. Reece's
21 and Mr. Ellice's visit to Jonestown of November 7, is there a
22 normal time frame within which you expect your officers to
23 file reports on such activities?

24 Ambassador Burke. No, we ^{were} [are] under no obligation to report
25 each one of these visits except to make certain we got out as

1 promptly as possible the direct telegrams to the next of kin
2 who had requested information regarding relatives, but as to
3 a general report on Jonestown itself or the condition of Jones-
4 town as a result of each one of these trips, these were volun-
5 teered reports and there was no requirement on us to report.

6 Mr. Berdes. Given the fact the Ryan codel's intent to
7 visit Jonestown was now already well established and firm,
8 did you think that a report stemming from the visit of
9 November 7, which was just a few days before the codel's intended
10 arrival here, might have been useful to the codel in their
11 briefings in Washington.

12 Ambassador Burke. I really didn't see it as being that
13 important because I knew that we were going to be briefing the
14 codel immediately after their arrival. And for that 9 o'clock
15 briefing on the 15th of November in this office, I had both
16 Mr. Reece and Mr. Ellice here available to brief the codel
17 on that.

18 Mr. Berdes. And they shared with those people essentially
19 the information that is in Georgetown Cable 04109?

20 Ambassador Burke. Actually I cannot recall ---

21 Mr. Berdes. Dated December 5, 1978.

22 Ambassador Burke. I cannot recall ^{that} all the points mentioned
23 in this cable were gone over with the Congressman. I do know
24 I made a special point telling the Congressman the two officers
25 had been up there and had spent the day on one of our regular

1 consul^{or} visits and ^{were} [we are] available to answer any questions they
2 would have and actually ^I even, I believe, turn^{ed} to Mr. Ellice
3 ^{to} [and] report briefly on it.

4 There wasn't a great deal of interest in that visit by
5 the codel.

6 They seemed to be more interested in just whether or not
7 they were going to get into Jonestown themselves. The principal
8 focus of that briefing was not on the visit of November 7.

9 As to the question as to the state of Jones' health, I dis-
10 cussed Jones' health with Congressman Ryan while he was staying
11 with me saying in effect to him that one of the reasons volun-
12 teered for the unwillingness of the Peoples Temple to receive
13 him was the excuse Mr. Jones was in ill health.

14 I think even one spokesman for the Temple ^{had} said ^{that} he had ^{had} a
15 slight heart attack. So I did discuss that in private con-
16 versation with him.

17 Mr. Berdes. Is there any special reason this memo or cable
18 was not filed until almost a month after?

19 Ambassador Burke. Yes, because, quite honestly, we had a
20 lot of things to do that week in getting ready for the codel and
21 certainly making sure the individual cables were going out to
22 the next of kin, which was the most important product generated
23 by these visits, did get ^{out to the enquirers,} [on the inquiry.]

24 Mr. Berdes. You are familiar with the cable?

25 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

1 Mr. Berdes. Do you agree with me it contains certain
2 expressions of opinion?

3 Ambassador Burke. It does contain expressions of opinion.

4 Mr. Berdes. Is that contrary to established policy of
5 avoiding such unsubstantiated speculative observations?

6 Ambassador Burke. Yes, but we are commenting on people
7 who were then deceased and unprotected by the Privacy Act.

8 Mr. Spalatin. Mr. Ambassador, I want to just return to
9 the short question I had previously of what would have been
10 your answer to somebody if they had asked you if the situaiton
11 in Jonestown in October or early November was tense.

12 If I recall your answer, you said, you would answer I don't
13 have enough information to be able to make such a statement.

14 Ambassador Burke. I would have no way of knowing as of
15 November 1, whatever date, just whether things were tense. I did
16 have a good idea after the visit of November 7.

17 Mr. Spalatin. Would you say after November 7 the situation
18 became potentially tense?

19 Ambassador Burke. No, I am saying that after the oral
20 report given by Mr. Reece and Mr. Ellice, I certainly wouldn't
21 have ^{had} any basis for saying the situation appeared tense.

22 Mr. Spalatin. I ask you ^{that} question because in Log
23 No. 608, briefing memorandum dated November 20, 1978, to
24 Ambassador David Newsom from Barbara Watson, subject, Codel
25 Ryan, killings in Guyan, consular preparations, among other

1 things, it makes the observation, "While the Department was
2 aware that Jonestown was tense, we saw no reason to interpose
3 interventions on this American and his constituents because
4 our own officers had done without any harm or threat to them-
5 selves what the Congressman was planning to do."

6 Evidently, there were elements within the Department of
7 State in Washington that felt the situation was tense. I am
8 just wondering from their perspective how would one come to
9 that observation if that wasn't shared by the embassy here?

10 I am not trying to make a big thing out of something.

11 Ambassador Burke. I have not seen this memorandum before,
12 and I would just refer you to Mr. ^{Horan} [Murrand], the drafter, and
13 ask him.

14 Mr. Spalatin. The point is, from your perspective, you have
15 no information to substantiate such an observation.

16 Ambassador Burke. No, no information. I would add to
17 that just the following: Again, I don't want to put myself ⁱⁿ [at]
18 the skin of the drafter and tell you what he was thinking ^{of} [up].
19 It may be they were referring to the fact there was a certain
20 nervousness within the Peoples Temple group regarding the visit
21 of Ryan and, as you know, we were back and forth with them --
22 yes, he will see him; no, he won't see him.

23 Certainly, this did not ^{appear to} extend down to the group itself
24 in Jonestown.

25 Mr. Spalatin. Thank you.

1 Mr. Smeeton. I would like to refer to Log No. 577 which
2 is Debbie Blakey's affidavit. I think you said the staff became
3 aware of it sometime after it was submitted.

4 When would you estimate, August or September?

5 Ambassador Burke. September was my recollection.

6 Mr. Smeeton. Did you call it specifically to the attention
7 of Mr. McCoy's successor, Doug Ellice, as something maybe he
8 should study it a little bit.

9 Ambassador Burke. He called it to my attention, or at
10 least it came ^{originally} to his office.

11 Mr. Smeeton. Do you recall him citing any particular
12 parts of that document as it related to the visitations of
13 embassy officials?

14 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't remember any discussions.

15 Mr. Smeeton. In particular for the record, I will cite
16 Paragraph 28 and Paragraph 36.

17 Paragraph 28 reads, "Visitors are frequently permitted
18 access to Jonestown. The entire community was required to
19 put on a performance when a visitor arrived. Before the visitor
20 arrived, Reverend Jones would instruct us on the image we were to
21 project. The work day would be short, the food would be better.
22 Sometimes there would be music and dancing.

23 "Aside from these performances, there was little joy or
24 hope in any of our lives."

25 And, then, in Paragraph 36, she gets quite specific with

1 respect to embassy personnel visits. She prefaces her remarks
2 by expressing her gratitude for Mr. McCoy and Mr. Webber's
3 assistance in her defection. She goes on to say, "However the
4 efforts made to investigate conditions in Jonestown are inadequate
5 for the following reasons: Infrequent visits are always
6 announced and arranged. Acting in fear of their lives, Temple
7 members respond as they are told. The members appear to speak
8 freely to American representatives, but in fact they are drilled
9 thoroughly prior to each visit on what questions to expect and
10 how to respond.

11 "Members are afraid of retaliation if they speak their
12 true feelings publicly."

13 Do you recall the substance of those two paragraphs being
14 discussed by you and Mr. Ellice prior to his departure on that
15 trip of November 7?

16 Ambassador Burke. Our standing instruction, the under-
17 standing with Mr. McCoy and also with Mr. Ellice, is that they
18 would do everything in their power to make certain that in their
19 interviews with individuals they were expected to ^{conduct} [contact] on
20 behalf of next of kin, that these interviews be conducted as
21 privately as possible, and ^{that} they do everything they could to
22 establishe whether or not the individual seems ^{ed} to be under any
23 sort of stress or strain or compulsion of any sort.

24 Mr. Smeeton. As a result of this particular affidavit,
25 do you recall stressing to Mr. Ellice the importance of going

1 to maybe exceptional length to determine if anything was being
2 staged.

3 Ambassador Burke. No, I don't remember stressing that, but
4 that was the standing instruction. I am certain when we talked
5 about his trip, we went over this ground yet again, as I had
6 with Mr. McCoy before him.

7 Mr. Smeeton. You don't recall any discussion of this
8 particular part of the affidavit with concerned relatives or
9 members of the Ryan delegation prior to their departure for
10 Jonestown in that week just preceding their departure to Jones-
11 town, did any members of the Concerned Relatives Group or other
12 members associated with the Ryan Codel bring this to your atten-
13 tion, the fact your staff might have been exposed to staged
14 scenarios?

15 Ambassador Burke. Yes, as I had already seen by this
16 time the Blakey affidavit and had seen the charge, but I had
17 confidence in Mr. McCoy; I had confidence in Mr. Ellice.

18 Mr. Smeeton. Did you find them to be reasonably discerning
19 offers?

20 Ambassador Burke. As I pointed out to the Concerned
21 Relatives on this point, these people are trained consular
22 officers and they are ^{not} naive by nature. They are quite familiar
23 with the responsibilities they are to discharge. They certainly
24 were not inclined one way or the other. They were going in
25 to have an objective look.

1 Mr. Smeeton. The reason I am sort of belaboring this
2 point is, we have testimony from a party who went into Jonestown
3 on November 18 who has testified to us that it didn't take that
4 person to detect something was amiss and awry and they expressed
5 the feeling, given the number of visitations on the part of
6 embassy personnel, she was surprised they didn't come to the
7 same conclusions.

8 Ambassador Burke. I would only observe ex post facto there
9 are a lot of impressions and thoughts^s about Jonestown that were
10 not necessarily current at the time. I think it is rather
11 interesting in a way, ^{that} out of the group that opted to ^{come} [go] out
12 with Congressman Ryan when he made his visit, ^{there} [it] wasn't one
13 ^{relative} [member] of any of the Concerned Relatives, despite the fact ^{that} there
14 was contact between some of the Concerned Relatives and their
15 relatives at Jonestown.

16 They all opted to stay, despite the presence of their
17 next of kin.

18 So, I think I would just observe we did the best job we
19 possible could. I think my consular officers did an extremely
20 conscientious job every time they did go up. After the fact,
21 any number of observations are possible. I will stand by their
22 record.

23 Mr. Smeeton. In your estimation, the officers who went
24 into Jonestown were discerning officers, they impressed you with
25 their ability to perceive any detection ---

1 Ambassador Burke. Certainly to the best of their ability,
2 they did the most conscientious job they were capable of doing.

3 Mr. Smeeton. Just one final question.

4 For the record, Log No. 344, dated 27 November 1978, the
5 subject a rather long cable pertaining to the offer of U.S.
6 assistance to the government of Guyana to its criminal inves-
7 tigation relating to the death of Congressman Ryan and mass
8 murders and suicides at Jonestown.

9 I would just like you to focus on the last page and, in
10 particular, paragraph F pertaining to a discussion with Prime
11 Minister Burnham regarding the lease, and I gather also Minister
12 Green, who ^{was} ~~is~~ a participant also. They seem to be equally vague,
13 Green and Burnham, as to the contents of that lease.

14 Were you pressing them at that time for more specific
15 knowledge as to what that lease contained?

16 Ambassador Burke. Yes.

17 Mr. Smeeton. Did you get the impression that the vagueness
18 was the result of their unfamiliarity with the contents of the
19 lease or just a reluctance to discuss it?

20 Ambassador Burke. I suspect in the case of these two
21 gentlemen, it was unfamiliarity with the terms of the lease.
22 I was asking them something that they hadn't necessarily had ^a ~~to~~
23 look at for sometime, if, indeed, they ever had had ^a ~~to~~ looked
24 at it.

25 Mr. Smeeton. At that time, did you ask them to maybe get

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

you a copy of it?

Ambassador Burke. Not at that time; no.

Mr. Smeeton. Have you subsequently?

Ambassador Burke. We have had down here, as you know, Mr. Terry Fortune and also a representative of the Department of Justice, and they have been interested in these types of documents now. Whether or not or just when a request might ^{have been} be made for the actual lease itself, I just cannot say. I personally don't remember ever having talked subsequently to the Prime Minister or to Mr. Green about the lease.

Mr. Smeeton. And the reason for you not following up is you feel that is a matter that will be addressed more appropriately by Mr. Fortune and maybe members of the Justice Department staff that are probing their own investigation.

Ambassador Burke. It seems to be primarily pertinent, if we can use that phrase, to the effort of identifying ^{all the} [only] assets of the Peoples Temple.

Mr. Berdes. Finally, Mr. Ambassador, having resolved our own crisis, if we can return to the outstanding question on the crisis management issue which was the fact you had learned informally Saturday night, early Sunday morning of the events at Jonestown itself and, I believe, if I can recall back that far, the question was from whom did you learn that information?

Ambassador Burke. I believe my response was, we had a report that came to me from the officer I had positioned at

1 police headquarters that somebody who claimed to be from
2 Peoples Temple had come in to ^{at} police post either at Port
3 Kaituma or Matthews Ridge who reported there were 400 people
4 dead at Jonestown.

5 Mr. Berdes. Specifically in that nature, 400, or that
6 more generally suicides ---

7 Ambassador Burke. I think ^{likely} more perhaps everybody is dead
8 at Jonestown."

9 Mr. Berdes. Was that information conveyed to Washington
10 shortly after you learned of it?

11 Ambassador Burke. My understanding is it was; yes. there
12 was a lot going on here. We had an open telephone line to
13 Washington, as you know. It was conveyed to Washington in just
14 that form, that this was an unsubstantiated report. Nobody had
15 actually gone into Jonestown.

16 Mr. Berdes. Mr. Ambassador, you have been most generous
17 and helpful. I know Chairman Zablocki would want us to convey
18 to you his personal appreciation and that of the entire committee
19 for your most useful and informative response to our questions.

20 We appreciate the opportunity to be with you and express
21 our own personal thanks.

22 Ambassador Burke. I would like you to convey my personal
23 greetings to the Chairman -- he is a fellow native of Wisconsin --
24 and members of the committee.

25 Mr. Berdes. Thank you.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

(Whereupon, at 7:08 p.m, the interview was adjourned.)