

# Swiss Reveal Shift of Cult Fund

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The Swiss government revealed for the first time yesterday that \$2 million belonging to the People's Temple cult was suddenly transferred from Swiss bank accounts before the mass suicide-murder ritual that left more than 900 persons dead at Jonestown, Guyana in November.

The information, which is central to the current investigation of the cult's activities here and abroad, also included People's Temple documents held in a Swiss safe. The papers were handed over to U.S. authorities, the Swiss Justice Ministry said in Berne.

The U.S. Department of Justice formally asked the Swiss government last December to provide information about the flow of suspected People's Temple funds to and from Switzerland in an effort to pinpoint the extent of cult activities and possible criminal involvement in obtaining the funds.

Although the request was made under the 1973 U.S.-Swiss judicial aid treaty, the Swiss have until now refused to provide the information.

The Berne announcement said that the funds were held in three bank accounts since 1976 and that they were transferred to the United States and Panama before cult leader Jim Jones led his supporters to drink poison at their Guyana camp on Nov. 18, 1978. The date of the transfer was not disclosed.

U.S. officials here said they were surprised by the Swiss announcement. A spokesman for the Justice Department said "we have not received any official response from the Swiss." Another spokesman expressed doubts that the funds were moved to the United States, adding, "Frankly, we would have laid our hands on it (the money) if that was the case."

According to U.S. officials, the cult had in excess of \$10 million in various bank accounts, most of the funds held in the Panama City branches of Swiss Bank Corp. and Union Bank of Switzerland. It was reported last December that Jones had ordered the transfer of more than \$7 million to the Soviet government for the benefit of "oppressed people" around the world.

The information made public by the Swiss gave no indication of the reasons for fund transfers, nor did it specify persons or accounts to which the money was shifted.

"You have to follow the money" to unravel the extent of Jones' financial wheeling and dealing and the number of persons involved, an official of Justice's Criminal Division said.

There were reports that Jones had established at least six, and perhaps more than a dozen, bank accounts in Switzerland, Guyana, Panama and other countries, using anonymous numbered accounts and dummy corporations. Some

reports have suggested that cult funds may have been channeled to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

A grand jury in San Francisco is currently looking into People's Temple activities. The cult had acquired real estate holdings in California, either by purchase or gift, estimated to be worth in excess of \$2 million.

U.S. officials have sought to freeze cult assets so that these could cover the cost incurred by the U.S. government in transferring the bodies of Jonestown victims to the United States. These costs were more than \$4 million.

Moreover, families of persons who gave property to the cult before the Jonestown tragedy have begun legal attempt to reclaim those gifts. Officials also said that persons who lost their relatives in Guyana were expected to file for financial assistance.

The main objective of the Justice Department, however, is to find out exactly how and why more than 900 Americans died in the Guyana jungle and whether any People's Temple survivors here or abroad pose a danger to other Americans.

Jones led 911 members of his cult to commit suicide after Rep. Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) and four other persons were murdered by cult members on an airstrip near Jonestown. Four other cult members were murdered in Georgetown, the capital of Guyana.