Jonestown is an eerie ghost town. Now, patrols amid rotten cheese sandwiches and scattered clothing.

By Charles A. Krause
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JONESTOWN, Guyana—Just four weeks after the murders and suicides of more than 900 people here stunned the world, the jungle community that the Rev. Jim Jones created in his image is a ghost town.

Only a small and jumpy contingent of Guyanese troops—still afraid that Peoples Temple gunmen may be lurking in the surrounding rain forest—occupies the settlement where hundreds of men, women and children lived just a month ago.

The mounds of bodies that littered the grounds around the community's central pavilion are gone now, shipped to the United States and awaiting burial.

But reminders of what happened here—the attack at nearby Port Kaituma that killed Rep. Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) and four others and the suicide-murder of more than 900 members of Jones' cult—stand out jarrringly in the jungle quietude.

I returned to Jonestown the other day, the fourth time I had been there in less than a month.

The first two times, I accompanied Ryan and saw Jonestown alive and well—but unknowingly, on the brink of its destruction. The third time I returned to see ... bodies piled atop one another, many linked arm-in-arm, the agony of their poisoning evident on their contorted faces.

This last time, Jonestown was still, except for the troops. An eerie silence had replaced the music, the talk and the tension that marked the first two visits, and a kind of emptiness had replaced the bodies and the gore that were so much a part of the commune.

Once a grove of coconuts, the jungle immediately after the attacks was ripped apart by cannon and machine guns. Now, only a couple of coconut trees remain. The rest were levelled by the air strike on Nov. 18.

The Guyanese government of Prime Minister Forbes Burnham was unpopular before the events of Nov. 18 and it is more unpopular now because of charges that Jones had special ties to the ruling party that enabled him to skirt the law. Burnham's government has not yet decided what to do with the commune that Jones' followers carved out of the rain forest.

Indeed, Burnham and his government do not seem to know how to explain crucial questions about Jonestown—how it was that gold and diamonds and other goods were brought from abroad. The government denies that it knows where the goods came from.

Burnham has granted a couple of interviews to foreign journalists after what was, for him, more of a political than a social or human crisis. But he has yet to issue a statement explaining Jonestown to his own people.

So far, the Burnham government has only announced that one Guyanese was among the dead. Thousands of pages of documents and scores of tapes recovered from Jonestown have yet to be released, in part, many observers here believe, because some of the Peoples Temple records may be embarrassing to the government.

Nonetheless, the police, under the direction of Assistant Commissioner C. A. (Skip) Roberts, are continuing their investigation of the killings at Port Kaituma and the mass suicide-murder at Jonestown, trying to deter...
mine whether any of those who sur-

vived may have committed criminal

acts.

Three inquests related to the Jonestown tragedy are under way.
The first, at Matthew's Ridge, about 35 miles from Jonestown, will offi-
cially determine the causes of death

of the 909 persons whose remains

were found here a month ago. This

will allow authorities in the United

States to issue death certificates for

the bodies taken by military airlift to

Dover, Del., Air Force Base.

The other inquests will determine

whether two Peoples Temple mem-

bers charged with murder and at-

tempted murder should be brought
to trial in connection with their alleged

roles in the Port Kaituma killings and

the deaths of four members of the

Peoples Temple who were found in

Georgetown with their throats slashed

shortly after the suicide-murder at

Jonestown.

Meanwhile, a federal grand jury in

San Francisco has been impaneled to
determine whether a conspiracy to

kill Ryan extended beyond Guyana to

the United States.

Early next year the House Inter-
national Affairs Committee will investi-
gate whether the State Department

and the U.S. Embassy in Georgetown

were derelict in their efforts to un-
cover what the real conditions were at

Jonestown.

It appears that the Rev. Jim Jones

and the Peoples Temple will not fade

from memory soon. Trials here and

possibly in the United States, the con-
gressional investigation and the un-
ending details that continue to fasci-
nate much of the world ensure that

the Jonestown tragedy will remain

alive for months, if not years, to

come.

The central questions—whether

Jones ordered Ryan killed, why he or-
dered his own followers poisoned

and why so many of the 909 who died ap-

parently did so willingly—may never

be answered completely.

But a host of related questions, such

as Jones' flirtation with the Soviet

Embassy here, his ties to the Guya-
nese government and the culpability,

if any, of those who escaped the su-

cide-murder rite, will probably eventu-
ally be put to rest.

For the past month, a bizarre rela-
tionship has existed in Georgetown

among those who survived, in one way

or another, Jones' final desperate

hours.

Twelve of those who left Jonestown

with Ryan, known locally and abroad

as "the defectors," continue in limbo

at the Park Hotel. Several of them

have testified as material witnesses to

the killings at Port Kaituma and they

are expected to be allowed to leave

Guyana this week.

Five Peoples Temple members who

escaped the suicide-murder rite, ei-

ther immediately before it began or

while it was under way, continue to

live at the same hotel, unsure whether

the Guyanese intend to charge them

with a crime or whether they eventu-
ally will be let go.

The defectors are hardly willing to
talk to the escapees, believing that

they are still loyal to Jones, even

though he is dead. The escapees fear

that if they are repatriated to the

United States, they may be killed by

irate relatives of persons who died at

Jonestown.

Meanwhile, a third group, now num-

bering about 30, continues to live at

the Peoples Temple headquarters in

Georgetown, where they were the day

Ryan was murdered and Jonestown

was consumed by cyanide. Most of

those still at the Georgetown house

were among the elite when Jonestown

was functioning and some of the de-

fectors have charged that this group

is the most dangerous of all.

In this group is the Jonestown ba-

sketball team, which some defectors

have said was composed of trained

marksmen whom they believe may re-

turn to the United States determined
to kill "enemies" of the Temple,

whom they blame for destroying it.

None of these groups fully trusts

the others, reflecting the paranoia

that consumed Jim Jones at the end.

All of them know, as Tim Carter, one

of the escapees said the other night,

that "Jonestown will haunt us all un-
til we die."