

Mark Lane and People's Temple: A Cause to Back, Then Condemn

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Special to The New York Times

SAN FRANCISCO — Last September, Mark Lane was proclaiming Jonestown a socialist paradise and professing that he had found a conspiracy within the United States Government to destroy the People's Temple and its founder, the Rev. Jim Jones. By December, he was calling Jonestown a horror and Mr. Jones a paranoid murderer, insisting he had suspected as much all along.

Mr. Lane's turnaround came almost immediately after the events of Nov. 18, when Representative Leo J. Ryan, Democrat of California, and four other persons were shot to death after a visit to the commune in Guyana and when Mr. Jones and more than 900 residents of Jonestown died, many of them apparently by suicide.

The contrasting remarks by Mr. Lane,

a New York lawyer and author, are drawing special attention at the moment because of pending actions against him. But a closer examination of his involvement with the Temple illustrates his propensity, demonstrated over two decades as a public personality, for attaching himself to issues of the moment.

A formal complaint that could lead to disbarment has been filed in New York, based on allegations that Mr. Lane failed to warn Mr. Ryan and his group of dangers that awaited them in Jonestown. In recent days, the relatives of some who died there have brought civil lawsuits against Mr. Lane, charging him with contributing to the wrongful deaths of the commune residents. And a California psychiatrist who is suing the Temple said

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