



Marked for Death: My War with Jim Jones the Devil of Jonestown

Timothy Oliver Stoen

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"I have Tim Stoen...in my psyche tonight... I'm a man filled with rage... I could kill him. I could really kill him. Literally kill him... I got the man that'll get him. All I got to do is say the word, 'Go.'... Tim Stoen...hasn't made a move in the United States, there hasn't been somebody on his bottom side." --Jim Jones, April 1, 1978. "We're in a war... [W]e have an absolute--absolute--informer who stepped forward, told us of the plans--of Stoen." --Jim Jones, April 2, 1978. This book is a memoir by Timothy Oliver Stoen of his becoming involved with a devil, being marked for death by that devil, being at war with that devil, and surviving that devil. Preparation for the journey began in San Francisco on August 17, 1969, when Stoen let anger over systemic racism become a ruling passion. It happened as he left Black Panther headquarters to drive away in his Porsche. He became a social-justice radical, adopting Equality as his ideology. The actual journey began in Redwood Valley, California, on January 1, 1970, when Stoen self-recruited into a utopian movement called Peoples Temple to pursue, based on human will alone, a Biblical ethic: "And all that believed...had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." The movement's leader was James Warren Jones. The journey took a dramatic turn on November 18, 1977, when Stoen testified in court and went to war against Jones for custody of Stoen's son, John Victor. Both Jones and the child were then in Jonestown, Guyana--a tropical rainforest in South America where Jones had forged a community of 1,000 US citizens. During that one-year war for John Victor, Stoen made two trips to the then "wired" country of Guyana, and in California he braced, every time the doorbell rang, for a pistol or shotgun blast to the chest. He had no doubt he was "marked" for extinction. Stoen believes the only reason he was not killed is that he had become so aggressive and conspicuous in fighting for the child that Jones feared Stoen's death would, as an international "incident," cause the US to pressure the Guyana government to invade his Jonestown fortress. Stoen also had no illusions at what was ultimately at stake. On October 3, 1978, he filed a declaration in California Superior Court against Jim Jones stating: "I believe he is willing to murder all 1,100 people under his dictatorial control in Jonestown, Guyana." That prediction came terrifyingly true on November 18, 1978, when Jim Jones, in the name of "love," became an Orwellian devil and went for the kill. Within hours he killed 907 of his people by cyanide. Within a matter of minutes, he orchestrated the deaths, by gunfire, of five other innocents, including United States Congressman Leo Joseph Ryan--an act by Jim Jones of FBI-defined international terrorism. Among those Jones killed by the poison was six-year-old John Victor Stoen. "The CIA would have had to acknowledge," says Stanford psychology professor Philip Zimbardo, "that Jones succeeded where their MK-Ultra program failed in the ultimate control of the human mind." Structurally, this book traces the "development" of Jim Jones, as Stoen experienced it from 1967 through 1978, through thirteen stages. It narrates encounters having significance for Stoen at the time. On November 18, 1978, the day he died, Jim Jones exhorted vengeance: "Somebody--can they talk to--and I've talked to San Francisco--see that Stoen does not get by with this infamy--with this infamy. He has done the thing he wanted to do: have us destroyed." At death, Jones also prophesied a curse: "We will win. We win when we go down. Tim Stoen has nobody else to hate. He has nobody else to hate. Then he'll destroy himself. I'm speaking here not as, uh, the administrator. I'm speaking as a prophet today." "Marked for Death" is Tim Stoen's first-hand account of his experiences as Jim Jones's attorney, enemy, and postmortem target.

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