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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
RIVERSIDE

The End of an Era:  
The Rise of the Symbionese Liberation Army and Fall of the New Left

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Gregory Garth Cumming

December 2010

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Clifford Trafzer, Chairperson

Dr. Molly McGarry

Dr. Ralph L. Crowder

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The Dissertation of Gregory Garth Cumming is approved:

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The End of an Era:  
The Rise of the Symbionese Liberation Army and Fall of the New Left

by

Gregory Garth Cumming

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in History  
University of California, Riverside, December 2010  
Dr. Clifford Trafzer, Chairperson

The San Francisco Bay Area, and in particular Berkeley, served as a Mecca for the remnants of the New Left in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Eight out of the ten members of the SLA moved to the Bay Area, either in search of education or to relive the passions and the protests of the anti-Vietnam war movement of the late sixties and early seventies.

As the war in Vietnam began winding down with American participation ending in January 1973, so did the student protest movement. In Northern California, the prison reform movement began to take center stage with what remained of the New Left. In the case of escaped convict Donald DeFreeze, and a group of nine others, found their African-American leader to jumpstart the revolution that deceased inmate George Jackson had so forcefully written about.

The SLA announced their arrival with the assassination of respected educator and Superintendent of Oakland schools, Marcus Foster. As the first African-American Superintendent of Oakland schools, Foster served as a role model for success for many. His assassination brought nothing but scorn from the New Left towards the SLA. Following the capture by police of two SLA soldiers, Russell Little and Joseph Remiro, the remaining members of the revolutionary group went underground and began planning the abduction of Patricia Hearst in order to free their comrades from jail. Instead of freeing Little and Remiro from jail, Hearst provided the SLA with almost unlimited access to the media.

The actions of the SLA did not serve as a vanguard for revolution as they had hoped. Instead, the SLA brought back memories of the violence and anarchy of the late sixties and early seventies that many did not wish to relive. America had moved on even though the membership of the SLA had not. This revolutionary group, however, served not as the vanguard of change, but the last gasp of the New Left and the student protest movement.

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“The SLA was almost a cultural test tube, a specimen sample from a bitter side of the sixties that marched apace after virtually all their comrades veered aside. Yet they marked time oddly, retracing rather than resolving the past. Culturally rootless, out of their time, they leaped into the social void – and in an eerie half-life of their plunge, among themselves, if nowhere else, they recreated something of the pained and pimped adolescence of the New Left.”<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

The Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) existed for a brief 192 days beginning with Marcus Foster’s assassination in November 1973 and ending with the shootout in Los Angeles on May 17, 1974. By 1972, the radical New Left had splintered into many different factions, the most violent, the Weathermen, had exited for life underground.

With the re-election of President Richard Nixon by a landslide in November 1972 and the announcement of the end of active United States participation in Vietnam in January 1973, the synergy which produced the anti-war movement had reached its end. Berkeley, California, however, still maintained its unique counter-culture persona and life style.

With war in Vietnam winding down, protest movements began to focus once more on issues of civil rights through the reform of California prisons.

On February 1, 1960 four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University ushered in a new era for colleges and university students throughout the United States. These four African-American students decided to challenge segregation in the South by sitting down at a lunch counter at a Woolworth’s store in Greensboro, North Carolina. The chairs at the counter were for white customers only and they were refused service. This incident sparked a wider protest that led to a sit-in, which would be a staple of the civil rights movement and student protests on various college campuses. This single act of defiance and courage preceded the Port Huron Statement by two years and the Free Speech Movement by four, serving as a road map for future politicization of America’s college students.

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<sup>1</sup> Vin McLellan and Paul Avery, *The Voices of the Guns* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1977), 495.

Since the Free Speech Movement began in 1964, Berkeley served as a focal point for dissent on college campuses. They initially fought administration policy to ban the tables of political literature from the corner of Bancroft and Telegraph Avenue. Many of the leaders of the Free Speech Movement spent their previous summer involved in the Civil Rights movement. As administrators of the University of California were soon to find out, the students found them much less threatening than the Ku Klux Klan.

The arrest of Jack Weinberg just outside the gate of the University of California, Berkeley, unleashed a powerful student protest movement.<sup>2</sup> Berkeley student Mario Savio, whose speeches on top of the police cruiser would forever link his name with the Free Speech Movement (FSM), declared in the fall of 1964 that “Last Summer I went to Mississippi to join the struggle for civil rights. This fall I am engaged in another phase of the same struggle, this time in Berkeley.”<sup>3</sup> In a direct challenge to the status quo often associated with the Eisenhower Administration, Savio Challenged the UC Board of Regents and administrators when he stated that “There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can’t take part, and you’ve got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon the apparatus, and you’ve got to make it stop.”<sup>4</sup> Little did Savio know that his words spoken in 1964 spoke for the discontent of a generation of college students.

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<sup>2</sup> W. J. Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 19-24.

<sup>3</sup> Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 87.

<sup>4</sup> Mario Savio Speech on the Steps of Sproul Hall, Berkeley, California, December 2, 1964.

Although over 200 colleges and universities were represented during the Freedom Summer of 1964, almost 60 percent came from Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Princeton, UC Berkeley, Michigan or Wisconsin.<sup>5</sup> The growing counter culture elite which would form the backbone of the Student Protest Movement of the 1960s and 1970s established their credentials during the civil rights movement.

On March 3, 1965 John Thomson traveled from New York to Berkeley to make his own particular protest. Thomson, heavily influenced by the Free Speech Movement, had a statement he wanted to make – “F-U-C-K.” This one word written on a piece of paper led to the “Filthy Speech Movement.” It was a continuation of the of the student movement to push the boundaries against professors and administrators whom the students and the agitators who lived in and around Berkeley campus increasingly viewed as overbearing and conservative. W.J. Rorabaugh writes that these campus protests ended *in loco parentis* – a concept that the “university should maintain parental supervision over the student.”<sup>6</sup> The Berkley students were going to fight the autocratic power as they saw it, whether it be in Mississippi or in their own backyard.

By August of 1965, Berkley student protesters shifted their focus to the United States’ involvement in Vietnam. The passage of the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, passed through Congress with little debate in August 1964, led to America’s longest war and provided the student protesters with a readymade issue to rail against. The Civil Rights movement continued to be an important facet of the student protest movement, but not its sole mission.

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 77.

<sup>6</sup> Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War*, 38-39, 44.

The passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution led to the Americanization of the war in Vietnam and the development of an anti-war movement in the country, with the growing involvement of the nation's college students.

The San Francisco Bay Area, in particular, would be forever linked with the student protest movements of the 1960s. The region served as the home to 1967s "Summer of Love," the development of the Black Panther Party; a 134 school day strike at San Francisco State University over the issue of admission of more minority students and the development of African American Studies department; the People's Park riot; the closing of UC Berkley in response to the invasion of Cambodia; and hundreds of symbolic bombings.

At its 1969 national convention, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) split into various factions.<sup>7</sup> The battles over the future of the future New Left included squabbles over action versus political organization and Mao versus Lenin. As a result, the national organization which provided leadership to the New Left and direction to student protestors ceased to exist. In its place rose The Weathermen and the Progressive Labor Party (PL). The action oriented, violence-prone Weathermen served as a model for other organizations, such as Venceremos which was founded in 1970 from a merger of the Chicano Brown Berets and a faction from the Revolutionary Union (RU) which has split from SDS in 1969.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993) 385-390.

<sup>8</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 58-59fn.

Venceremos became a leader in the New Left politics in the Bay Area through the spring of 1972. It was the largest and most radical group in Northern California.<sup>9</sup> In 1971, the organization was actively involved in the anti-war movement throughout the Bay Area. Like many of the other New Left groups in the post-SDS period, Venceremos began unraveling over leadership and organization issues as many other New Left groups had.

Out of this power vacuum within the New Left arose a new, more violent revolutionary group.

The SLA grew out of the Berkeley/Oakland radical political culture, particularly in the streets surrounding the University of California, Berkeley campus. It is from this environment that future members of the SLA viewed the collapse of the New Left over theory and action along with the angry debate over the relevance of Marx, Lenin, Mao, and George Jackson. Within this power vacuum of the New Left came the SLA, a group who became enthralled by the film “State of Seige” and hoped to be the vanguard of a violent revolution against the “fascist Amerikkkan state.” Their hope was to take armed action in the same manner as Tupamaro rebels of Uruguay. Many members of what would become the SLA served as members of the Maoist, direct action oriented Venceremos organization which disintegrated during the summer of 1973.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>10</sup> Venceremos (We shall overcome) was a Marxist-Leninist Maoist organization formed at Stanford University in 1971. Venceremos identified itself as a part of a third world struggle against U.S. imperialism. Thus the SLA’s emphasis on third world leadership came directly from Venceremos. This revolutionary group would splinter as a result of an internal conflict between one faction advocating armed struggle against the U.S. government and another group which wanted to establish a grass roots political organization to challenge the status quo. The internal struggle would be nullified by the October 6, 1972 ambush of prison guards (one of whom was killed) during the escape of Venceremos convict organizer

The story of the SLA is one of violence, tragedy and failure. It is about a small clique of young, self absorbed, guilt ridden, emotionally scarred white men and women who found their salvation in a black escaped convict, Donald DeFreeze, the self styled “Fifth Prophet” Cinque Mtume. They came together in the streets of Berkeley and Oakland; they moved in and around the “The Peking Man House,” a commune on Chabot Road, where they were introduced to the Black Cultural Association and the prison reform movement. Others became involved as a result of the Vietnam War protest activities and, later on, the lesbian communities of Channing Way in Berkeley.<sup>11</sup>

What influences caused the SLA to begin their short lived social revolution? By 1972, the New Left had splintered into many different factions, the most violent, the Weathermen, turned their backs on society in favor of life underground.<sup>12</sup> As American participation in the war in Vietnam was winding down, the synergy which produced the student protest movement was quickly fading from the scene. Berkeley, however, still maintained its unique counter culture persona and lifestyle. It served as a ray of sunshine breaking through the clouds and despair resulting from Richard Nixon’s landslide re-election in November 1972. Individuals such as William and Emily Harris, Angela Atwood, Russell Little, Patricia Soltysik, Camilla Hall, Nancy Ling Perry and William Wolfe, among others, found themselves drawn toward this unique community.

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Ronald Beaty. On December 12, 1972, Beaty was captured and proceeded to inform police of everything he knew about Venceremos, thus hastening an end to this revolutionary group See also McLellan and Avery’s *Voices of Guns*, and Payne, Findley and Craven’s *The Life and Death of the SLA*.

<sup>11</sup> SLA members Camilla Hall and Patricia Soltysik lived together for a time on Channing Way. Soltysik was particularly impacted by the growing politicization of Channing Way.

<sup>12</sup> See Todd Gitlin’s *Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* for further information regarding the Weathermen and the various New Left factions.

The SLA's first act of revolution was the assassination of Oakland Superintendent of Schools, Marcus Foster. The fact that Marcus Foster was an African-American led many to believe that the assassins might be Nazis or some other right wing group.<sup>13</sup> The next day, the SLA's first communiqué announcing the death warrant from "The Court of the People" against Marcus Foster and Robert Blackburn was issued to Berkeley radio station KPFA. This action backfired as the radical communities of Oakland and Berkeley viewed the assassination with horror and grief, isolating the SLA while the mainstream media ignored this new radical leftist group. The Foster assassination brought scorn instead of support from the leadership of the New Left. The SLA learned that action itself would not generate the enthusiasm among the masses. In fact, Marcus Foster's death caused widespread mourning and outrage when it was supposed to generate publicity, notoriety and revolution. This one act changed the way in which the SLA was perceived. They could no longer be conceived as a reform minded organization interested in change. Instead of energizing the New Left throughout the Bay Area, the murder of Marcus Foster left the SLA isolated and alone.

The kidnapping of heiress Patricia Campbell Hearst on February 4, 1974 brought the media attention (as well as the attention of local, state and federal law enforcement officials) which SLA desperately craved, but not the respect from the New Left as the vanguard of revolution.

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<sup>13</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 132. They describe a newspaper account of a Nazi leaflet which was distributed at an Oakland shopping center which mentioned the targeting of "satanic Jews and all their lackeys who are stirring up the niggers against us." The leaflet went on to mention that "There might be shotgun blasts into the guts of mixmaster principals and superintendents."



Despite the national media attention, the SLA remained elusive as it moved about the San Francisco Bay Area from November 6, 1973 until their departure for Los Angeles on May 10, 1974. After eight days in Los Angeles, the SLA would cease to exist. The three surviving members watched in horror in front of a television set in a hotel in Anaheim, California, as they viewed the largest shootout in California's history.

The capability of the FBI to respond to this new domestic threat posed by the SLA had been severely curtailed in the months and years leading up to November 1973. On March 8, 1971, a group which called themselves The Citizens Committee to Investigate the FBI broke into a resident agency in Media, Pennsylvania and absconded with numerous FBI documents. Not too long afterward, these stolen documents found their way into the hands of various journalists and politicians. In fact, when *The Washington Post* published a story on these stolen documents, these revelations led the iconic FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to cancel the FBI's secret counterintelligence program known as COINTELPRO. While the counterintelligence program maintained its secrecy initially, NBC reporter, Carl Stern, began investigating the meaning of these new documents, particularly those with the subject heading COINTELPRO. Stern's requests initially met a stonewall known as Attorney General John Mitchell within the Department of Justice.

As a result, Stern submitted a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for all documents that related to COINTELPRO. Stern's FOIA request began bearing fruit in December of 1973, and documents continued to be released through March 1974.<sup>14</sup>

With the public revelations of the FBI's involvement in domestic spying and the harassment of political dissidents whom Hoover suspected of being disloyal to the United States, the agency came under increasing scrutiny from all walks of life. Combined with the fact that an independent prosecutor had taken over the Watergate case from them – it became increasingly important for the FBI to solve the Hearst kidnapping case quickly and efficiently. Unfortunately, the resources which might have been available via COINTELPRO were non-existent. The question remained, could the FBI live up to its past reputation?

The SLA would leave very few trails for the FBI to follow as it became isolated not only from society, but from the New Left. Not until after the shootout in Los Angeles in May of 1974 which killed six of their nine members, would the SLA receive any meaningful assistance from what remained of the New Left.

The story of the SLA is the period during which the spirit of the 1960's died in the throes of the media attention regarding the abduction of Patty Hearst. By the time the remnants of the SLA were captured on September 18, 1975, Richard Nixon had been out of office for nineteen months and the transition period between the Vietnam Era and the Reagan Revolution had begun.

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<sup>14</sup>Ronald Kessler, *The Bureau: The Secret History of the FBI* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2003) 174. Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 169-173, 177. See also Athan Theoharis, et al eds., *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (Phoenix: The Oryx Press, 1999), 126-127, 374.

The trial of Patty Hearst, with all the media attention it garnered, was a futile attempt to understand the rebellion which had occurred with the nation's youth in the San Francisco Bay Area, and the nation, for the past ten years. If only one could comprehend why Hearst had turned her back on her family, the riddle regarding the activities could be solved. Unfortunately, the trial left more questions than it provided answers. To understand the issues that led to the student protest movement of the 1960's and 1970's one need look no further than the Civil Rights movement and the controversy surrounding the Vietnam War. Mario Savio's rant against the UC Regents and administrators on the steps of Sproul Hall in December of 1964 foreshadowed the feelings of college students as they made it clear with their actions their thoughts and feelings towards the war in Vietnam.

## **Chapter 1**

In the Beginning...

Throughout the 1960s until the middle of the 1970s, Berkeley and the San Francisco Bay Area served as a Mecca for idealistic youths and their protests against the government, the university, and other bastions of the establishment which were viewed through the lens of distrust. Berkeley's reputation as the destination for New Left activities did not spring to life as a result of just the Free Speech Movement. From the Beats in the North Beach section of San Francisco to early protests against the war in Vietnam in 1965 to "The Summer of Love" in 1967, the San Francisco Bay Area developed a reputation as a destination for anti-establishment activities.

For the individuals who would later form the SLA, Berkeley served as much more than just a location. It was a destination, a focal point for New Left politics. Civil rights, free speech and the Vietnam War provided the fodder for many of these protests. The end of the Vietnam War and the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January of 1973 meant the New Left needed a new cause to rally the faithful. For those who later on become known as the SLA, they threw themselves into the prison reform movement. The activities of the Black Cultural Association (BCA) at Vacaville prison brought together the white reformers with the African-American inmates. One inmate in particular, Donald DeFreeze, used these contacts to escape from Soledad prison on March 5, 1973. The escape of DeFreeze led directly to the formation of the SLA.

Many of the SLA members had been involved with a Maoist action oriented leftist movement known as Venceremos. Venceremos emphasized a need for third world leadership.

As they watched Venceremos fall apart before their very eyes, they still believed that revolution was inevitable. However, the white reformers found their third world leadership in the escaped convict from Soledad. DeFreeze and his soldiers envisioned an organization that would move the revolution from talk to action.

The SLA consisted of ten actual members – Donald DeFreeze; Russell Little; Willie Wolfe; Nancy Ling Perry; Patricia Soltysik; Joe Remiro; Bill and Emily Harris; Angela Atwood; and Camilla Hall.<sup>15</sup> With the exception of Donald DeFreeze, the SLA membership consisted of white members who came exclusively from the middle to upper class segments of American society. Only two members – Nancy Ling Perry and Joe Remiro - grew up in the Bay Area. Prior to joining the SLA, many future members felt the sting of failed marriages and difficult relations with other loved ones. Some of these difficulties arose from a change in political views. In the case of Patricia Soltysik, her estrangement from her father occurred prior to her move to Berkeley. Both Perry and Remiro left the Bay Area only to return as prodigal children. Their return led to a radical shift in lifestyles and political beliefs. For the others, Berkeley served as the destination for either education or greater involvement in radical, New Left politics.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The issue regarding Patty Hearst's status with the SLA will be analyzed in later chapters. Thus the ten members mentioned are those who were involved prior to the kidnapping of Patty Hearst.

<sup>16</sup> The term "radical New Left" was widely used during the 1960s and 1970s by members of the New Left. They wanted to differentiate themselves from the "Old Left" of the previous generation.

Patricia “Mizmoon” Soltysik and Willy Wolfe came to Berkeley to attend the University of California. For Soltysik, it also provided an opportunity to free herself from an angry and repressive father.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of her Berkeley experiences Patricia’s world view began to evolve. She moved toward a radical feminism, broadened her sexual experiences to include a lesbian relationship with Camilla Hall, and became involved with California’s prison reform movement and visiting African-American inmates. Her home on Parker Street in Berkeley would serve as DeFreeze’s hideout following his escape from Soledad in March of 1973. It is also where the initial plans for the SLA were formulated.<sup>18</sup>

Camilla Hall came to California in 1968 searching for acceptance for her lesbian lifestyle. By the time she moved to Berkeley she was very open regarding her lesbian lifestyle.<sup>19</sup> She quickly discovered the legendary Channing Way in Berkeley, a communal neighborhood featuring “...rare collective identity.”<sup>20</sup> The collective spirit of the neighborhood combined with its tolerance provided Hall with a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere she had hoped to find in the Bay Area.

Camilla quickly met Patricia Soltysik who had recently ended a relationship with Christopher Thompson, a sometime Black Panther who seemed to know everyone involved with the SLA without becoming personally involved himself.

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<sup>17</sup> Fred Soltysik. *In Search of a Sister* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976.) Fred Soltysik, the older brother of Patricia, described the dysfunctional Soltysik home life and its impact on his sister.

<sup>18</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 90 and 93.

<sup>19</sup> Les Payne, Tim Findley, and Carolyn Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 91. Also provided by the authors is a brief analysis regarding why Hall became a lesbian demonstrating how views toward homosexuality have changed dramatically since the book was published in 1976.

<sup>20</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 116.

During their relationship, Camilla provided Patricia with her new name – Mizmoon. The relationship failed due to Mizmoon’s inability to stay faithful to Hall. Mizmoon continued to have sex with various men, including DeFreeze, once he arrived in Berkeley.

Thus Camilla Hall may have joined the SLA not because of politics, but because of her love for Patricia Soltysik.<sup>21</sup>

Willie Wolfe arrived in Berkeley in January 1971 from Connecticut. The son of a successful anesthesiologist, he came west to attend the University of California, Berkeley. Unlike his father and brothers who attended Yale, Willie seemed indifferent to his studies at Mount Hermon prep school.<sup>22</sup> Following prep school, Wolfe travelled around the United States and Europe, finally settling on Berkeley. A trip to the Bay Area convinced Willie that Berkeley was the place for him because “this is where it’s at.”<sup>23</sup> In March of 1972 Willie attended a BCA meeting at Vacaville prison for the first time. According to Wolfe biographer Jean Kinney, he was at the prison working on “a story about a new prison program designed to give black convicts pride in their blackness and hope and help for making it on the outside.”<sup>24</sup> Through Wolfe, Russell Little and other residents of the Peking Man House quickly became involved with the BCA and prison reform issues.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Kinney, *An American Journey: The Short Life of Willy Wolfe* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979) 106-112, 137.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 144.

Nancy Ling Perry grew up just north of San Francisco in Santa Rosa. At four feet eleven inches and approximately 100 pounds, Perry never fit the physical stereotype of an urban guerrilla. She left the Bay Area in 1996 to attend Whittier College, the alma mater of Richard Nixon. Following her freshman year, she returned home to attend the University of California, Berkeley. She quickly fell in love and married jazz musician Gilbert Perry, an African-American.

The marriage can best be described as tumultuous. Even though Gilbert Perry was often unfaithful, he accused Nancy of infidelity and even painted a scarlet covered letter A on the door of their cottage after he moved away. The on again, off again relationship finally ended in 1971 even though divorce papers were never filed.<sup>25</sup> She graduated from UC Berkeley in 1970 with a bachelor's degree in English Literature. Unfortunately, her life after graduation became deeply involved in both using and selling drugs. During the summer of 1973, she kicked her drug habit and became deeply involved with the SLA.

In many ways, the path taken by Joe Remiro on his way to joining the SLA mirrored Nancy Ling Perry's. However, instead of pursuing an education, he chose the army and soon found himself in Vietnam as a member of a long range reconnaissance patrol (LRRP). Toward the end of his tour in Vietnam, Remiro began experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs. Remiro's experimenting continued following his return to the United States. Like Nancy Ling Perry, Remiro married upon his return to the Bay Area. His marriage quickly ended in divorce.

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<sup>25</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 178.



In September 1972, he helped found the Oakland chapter of the Vietnam Veterans against the War – Winter Soldiers Organization. He had hoped that the Vietnam veterans would serve as a revolutionary vanguard. When he discovered the other members did not share this attitude, Remiro left the chapter he founded around March of 1973 and turned his attention to the California prisons.<sup>26</sup>

His commitment to fighting the United States government led him to the Wounded Knee, South Dakota battleground on the Sioux reservation in April 1973. While there he assisted by running ammunition from bunker to bunker during firefights.<sup>27</sup> He also became a member of Venceremos, a Maoist action oriented Bay Area organization which had a tremendous influence upon the future SLA.

Russell Little, the only Southerner to join the SLA, was born and raised in Pensacola, Florida. Following graduation from high school, Little attended junior college for a year before receiving a scholarship and transferring to the University of Florida in Gainesville. He initially planned to major in electrical engineering. However, as Russell Little tells the story “my second year (at the University of Florida)... would have to be called the turning point in my life – politically and socially. I took a course in philosophy that fall, 1969, which seemed to drive home some of the contradictions which I had and was experiencing.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p. 186. See also John Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 99.

<sup>27</sup> Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 110-112.

The course was taught by a young Marxist graduate student with background similar to mine.”<sup>28</sup> As Russell Little explains his story, he turned his back on the “Great American” following his shift in majors and perspective in life.<sup>29</sup>

Little’s new world view led to his joining with many other young college students throughout the United States as he protested against the war in Vietnam; the shooting at Kent State and Jackson State; and the arrests of members of the Black Student Union at the University of Florida.<sup>30</sup> As a result of taking part in these activities, Little became convinced that change in America was necessary, if not inevitable.

The war in Vietnam, the reelection of Richard Nixon, revelations regarding the FBI’s domestic spying known as COINTELPRO, and later on the Watergate scandal provided proof positive to radicalized students of the early 1970’s that change in the United States government needed to occur.

In the summer of 1971, Little and his girlfriend Robyn Steiner took a trip out west to Berkeley, California. His first impression was not a positive one. Neither he nor Steiner could find work and the anticipated riots in Berkeley never materialized following the violent prison death of George Jackson. Jackson had become a focal point for leftist groups protesting the conditions in California prisons and questioning the reasons for the large number of African American prisoners.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

In this view, Jackson became a “political prisoner” instead of a convict and his prison writings proved to be a foundation upon which the SLA would be constructed. As a result, Little and Steiner returned to Florida for the fall semester.<sup>31</sup>

According to Little, he spent the next year reading and studying national liberation movements and began traveling throughout the country with Steiner. By August of 1972, they returned to Berkeley and moved into a commune style house known as The Peking Man House, where Maoist politics were the norm and a young man named Willie Wolfe lived.

Through Wolfe, Little and Steiner became involved in the prison movement and the Black Cultural Association at Vacaville prison. One of the first convicts whom Little met was none other than Donald DeFreeze.<sup>32</sup>

Angela DeAngelis Atwood grew up in a small town – North Haledon, New Jersey. She was the oldest of three daughters in a tight knit Italian family. When her mother died in 1965, Angela assumed most of the duties of the household performed by her mother. Her father served as a business manager for Local 999 of the Teamsters Union.<sup>33</sup> Her upbringing, in other words, resembled the other members of the SLA. She grew up in a middle-class family in a largely white neighborhood.

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<sup>31</sup> Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 136-137. See also Payne, Findley, Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 100.

<sup>32</sup> Susan Lyne and Robert Scheer, “The Story of the SLA,” *New Times* 4/16/76: 28. The Peking Man House received its name not from the political beliefs of its inhabitants, but from the name of a food stand operated by David Gunnell and his girlfriend Jean Wah Chan.

<sup>33</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 102-103.

A devout Catholic in her youth, young Angela possessed an outgoing and vivacious personality which made her very popular in high school. She maintained excellent grades in high school and was captain of the cheerleaders.<sup>34</sup> When it came time to choose a college, she decided to leave home to attend Indiana University. It was at Indiana that Angela met her husband Gary and her fellow members of the SLA, Bill and Emily Harris.

Gary Atwood, an aspiring actor, was heavily influenced politically by the writings of Gorky and Trotsky. His leftist politics, and Angela's acceptance of them, led to a break between Angela and her family in New Jersey.

In breaking from her family over political issues, Angela lost the allowance her father provided for her while she was in college.<sup>35</sup> She broke her dependence on her father for her new husband.

In the summer of 1972, Gary and Angela Atwood moved to the San Francisco Bay Area. Gary dropped out of the University of Indiana and accepted an unpaid position with a government funded theatre as an alternative service arrangement for conscientious objectors. In this way, Gary avoided military service. Because the position did not provide a salary, Angela supported the couple working as a waitress. Due to their circumstances, each became frustrated and the financial and work situation led to a growing strain in their relationship. The marriage soon deteriorated into a series of arguments and physical confrontations.

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<sup>34</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 81.

<sup>35</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 104.

By 1973, Gary decided to return to Indiana. Angela, however, would remain in the Bay Area.<sup>36</sup> While they never divorced, the marriage was over and they went their separate ways physically and politically.

In late 1972, Bill and Emily Harris moved from Indiana to the Bay Area. They quickly reconnected with their friends from college, Gary and Angela Atwood. However, this was not their first trip to California. Emily spent a summer working at Disneyland, and Bill enjoyed a seven and half week California sojourn in 1965.

The Harris family economically resembled the other families of SLA members. They were solidly middle class and anticipated that their son would attend college, which Bill did. By all accounts, his first two years of college were exceptional only for its lack of academic achievement.

Consequently, his father refused to continue paying for tuition until Bill became serious about school. The one thing Bill did become serious about during this time period was the Civil Rights movement. It became his lifelong cause.

Following his exit from college and trip to California, Bill entered the Marine Corps. He spent two years in the corps and at one point served in Vietnam. Soon after he arrived in Vietnam, Bill tore a ligament in his knee during a touch football game, effectively closing the door on any possibility for a combat role.<sup>37</sup> Much like his experience at the University of Indiana, Bill was confronted by a growing racial division within the United States military, particularly on the island of Okinawa.

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<sup>36</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 82-84.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

His term in the military left Bill questioning America's role in Vietnam and the future role of government. The racism he observed also left a lasting bitterness within him. As a result, upon his return to Indiana University in 1968, Bill joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and became a vocal leader in the anti-war movement on campus.<sup>38</sup>

Emily Schwartz Harris, like the other future members of the SLA, was raised in the comfortable confines of an upper middle class family in the Chicago suburb of Clarendon Hills, Illinois. Always an excellent student, she was a member of the Chi Omega sorority at the University of Indiana. Bill and Emily Harris first met on a blind date in 1968. Prior to meeting her future husband, Emily was viewed by her fellow classmates as a “non-political sorority sister.”<sup>39</sup>

As her relationship with Bill grew so did her interest in politics. Just like the Atwoods, the Harris's married in 1970. As the war in Vietnam was winding down and radical New Left politics began to decline on college campuses, Bill and Emily decided to move to the San Francisco Bay Area.

In late 1972, the Harris's moved to the Bay Area and reconnected with their friends Gary and Angela Atwood. According to Bill Harris, following his trip to California in 1965, he “knew he would return.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>39</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Interview by the author with Bill Harris, 4/7/2009.

Apparently Emily felt the same way when she said “we left Indiana for the Bay Area in 1972 because we wanted to learn more about what was happening in a place that seemed to us as Midwesterners to be the nucleus of radical activity.”<sup>41</sup> Those words ring true for Russell Little, Angela Atwood, Willie Wolfe, Patricia Soltysik and Camilla Hall as well. They all came to Berkeley searching for that unknown something more, including Nancy Ling Perry and Joe Remiro who returned home to the Bay Area. They would find that “something” in Donald “Cinque Mtume” DeFreeze.

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<sup>41</sup> Lyne, Susan and Robert Scheer, *The Story of the SLA*, 26.

## Chapter 2

### Cinque

By 1972, all the components for the SLA, except for one, had established themselves in and around Berkeley. The missing person happened to be their leader – Donald DeFreeze. Some author's have questioned the true role of DeFreeze within the SLA, whether he served as a plant or agent provocateur or figurehead.<sup>42</sup> How could an uneducated former prisoner lead a group of white, well educated people in a revolt against their country? Simply put, these future soldiers of the SLA were seeking an opportunity to rebel. Many made the choice by simply moving to the Bay Area. However, it would be DeFreeze who brought the various individuals and their political agendas together. In a carryover from Venceremos, DeFreeze had the requisite qualities for leadership – he was an escaped African-American convict. It would only take a few months before Donald DeFreeze and a handful of Bay Area radicals formed America's first domestic terrorist organization.

DeFreeze, born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, was the product of a troubled home. The eldest of eight children, young Donald served as his father's personal punching bag on more than one occasion.

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<sup>42</sup> David Boulton, *The Making of Tania Hearst* (London: New English Library, 1975), 45. See also Marilyn Baker and Susan Brompton, *Exclusive! The Inside Story of Patricia Hearst and the SLA* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1974), 87.



This troubled relationship with his father led him to steal a gun in his teens. When caught by police with the firearm, DeFreeze told police he intended to use the gun to kill his father.<sup>43</sup>

During this period in his life he was constantly involved in a variety of small crimes. He left Cleveland while still in high school and bounced around from New York to New Jersey. While living in New Jersey and at the age of eighteen, DeFreeze met and married Gloria Thomas, already a mother of three young children. This marriage, according to DeFreeze, led to much of his troubles as he started “playing around with guns and fireworks and dogs and cars.” He did this to “get away from life and how unhappy I was.”<sup>44</sup>

In 1967, DeFreeze moved to California looking for a fresh start. Again he found trouble but continued to blame his wife stating that she “wanted nice things...the next thing I know I had become a thief.”<sup>45</sup> DeFreeze’s fascination with guns and explosives once more led to trouble with law enforcement. He was arrested in June of 1967 for possession of a bomb and a handgun. The trend continued when he was arrested once more in December of 1967. On this occasion, DeFreeze robbed a female prostitute after paying her for her services. After the prostitute escaped from DeFreeze she contacted police and brought them to the motel where DeFreeze had fallen asleep.

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<sup>43</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 10-11. See also McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 309.

<sup>44</sup> The quotes attributed to DeFreeze come from a fourteen page autobiography DeFreeze wrote in 1970 to a judge prior to a trial. DeFreeze wrote the letter hoping the judge would grant him leniency based on his difficult life and struggles with his wife. McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 311.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

During the arrest the police searched DeFreeze's car in the motel parking lot and discovered twelve stolen handguns which comprised just a small portion of a haul of 200 stolen guns from a Los Angeles gun shop which these belonged to. In a comic escapade, DeFreeze told police his wife knew the individual who sold him the guns and could lead them to where he lived.

In return, DeFreeze requested leniency in regard to his current brush with the law. However, when the police with DeFreeze in tow arrived at his apartment, Gloria was not there. While they all waited for her return DeFreeze escaped by jumping out of the apartment's second story window. The escape proved futile. Police quickly recaptured him at a friend's home based on a tip from Gloria DeFreeze.<sup>46</sup>

When released on bond, DeFreeze fled to New Jersey along with his family, thus continuing his nomadic existence. At this point in his life, he feared prison more than his wife. The family eventually moved to Cleveland where Donald found himself in trouble once more. On October 11, 1969, he was arrested trying to flee from an attempted robbery of the Cleveland Trust Bank after police received a call regarding a man on the roof of the bank. When arrested DeFreeze provided police with the false name of "Steven Robinson." DeFreeze's mother bailed him out of jail before law enforcement learned his true identity. Once more, DeFreeze uprooted his family due to a brush with the law, this time returning to Southern California.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 316-317.

Freedom in California for DeFreeze proved to be short lived. A little over one month after his arrest in Cleveland, DeFreeze found himself in trouble with the police. On November 15, 1969, he robbed a woman at gunpoint, stealing her purse which contained a \$1,000 cashier's check. Two days later, DeFreeze attempted to cash the cashier's check at a Bank of America in Los Angeles. The check was made out to the woman he robbed. Unfortunately for DeFreeze, the check had already been reported stolen.

During the attempted transaction DeFreeze became nervous and fled the bank. He was soon followed by the bank security guard. A running gun battle ensued as the Los Angeles Police Department quickly joined in the chase. During the exchange of gunfire DeFreeze was wounded in his left hand and foot.<sup>48</sup>

After years of avoiding a trial, DeFreeze finally had his day of reckoning with the judicial system. However, prior to his trial, DeFreeze became embroiled in a bizarre case in New Jersey in which DeFreeze was accused of assisting New Jersey Black Panther Party leader Ralph Cobb in the kidnapping of a black caretaker of a New Jersey synagogue. When accused of being a member of the Black Panther Party, DeFreeze replied that "I have been questioned about being a member of the Black Panthers or US or a member of the Muslims – and I have never been a member of anything but a Church!"<sup>49</sup> DeFreeze went on to say that he was "too nervous" to be involved with such aggressive activities.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 317-318.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 318-319.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 319.

The lawyer for the Black Panther Party who interviewed DeFreeze in jail, Milton Friedman, stated that he had "...difficulty reconciling my image of DeFreeze, a hustler, with Cinque."<sup>51</sup> If DeFreeze had been involved with either the Black Panthers or Ron Karenga's Black Nationalist organization US, it would have been on the very periphery through the sale of stolen guns or homemade bombs which he specialized in prior to being incarcerated.

During the period of his incarceration from 1970 through early 1973, DeFreeze underwent a dramatic change in his life. He became politically aware of the world around him for the very first time and he became involved with the BCA in Vacaville state prison. As a part of this change, DeFreeze assumed a new name, Cinque Mtume. With this new name, Cinque hoped to forge a new future and lead a revolution, one that a man named DeFreeze proved incapable of leading.

Vacaville prison served as the chrysalis for DeFreeze to morph into Cinque as a member of the BCA. He was serving a sentence of five years to life for robbery and the ensuing gunfight with police. Despite the fact that his prison credentials were not weighty, DeFreeze aspired for a leadership role within the BCA. In June of 1972 he caused a commotion when he attempted to obtain the leadership of the BCA via election. When he was banned from running for election because he had not attended the requisite number of meetings laid out in the BCA constitution, he challenged the BCA ruling and complained to prison officials. DeFreeze came into the BCA without a reputation as a prison leader, also known as a "heavy."

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 319.

The current inmate leader of the BCA, Robert Jackson, already had a person in mind to replace him. The end result, Cinque/DeFreeze was labeled a snitch, an allegation that would reoccur with the rise of the SLA.

In the aftermath of the BCA election, the outside coordinator of the BCA, Colston Westbrook, brokered a deal that would end the internal sniping. DeFreeze established a new sub-unit of the BCA called Unisight. This new group would focus on the re-assimilation of the African-American prisoner into his family following his release from prison.

Interestingly enough, Willie Wolfe and Russell Little quickly became involved in this new group.<sup>52</sup> Unisight provided DeFreeze with a new opportunity to demonstrate his leadership capabilities. It is apparent that both Wolfe and Little were impressed with DeFreeze. In fact, Little wrote a letter to the California State Parole Board in October 1972, urging that DeFreeze be paroled despite the fact that he was not currently eligible for parole. By this time, the last vestiges of the old Donald DeFreeze had disappeared and Cinque had taken control.<sup>53</sup> Unisight helped establish the connections which DeFreeze used to escape from prison. It also established a framework for support outside of prison that would later morph into the SLA.

Much like Donald DeFreeze, the BCA was undergoing changes in the latter portions of 1972. These changes had a definite impact upon the development of the SLA.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 62.

Colston Westbrook came under increasing attack from inmate members of the BCA. Rumors swirled around Westbrook regarding his involvement with the CIA.<sup>54</sup> Finally, in December of 1972 the BCA's executive Board requested the removal of Westbrook. Prison officials quickly agreed. In response Westbrook explained that "the Maoists" had "taken over" the BCA.<sup>55</sup>

In hindsight, Westbrook's analysis was very accurate. The influence of outsiders such as Wolfe and Little grew as their relationship with prisoners strengthened. Their politics was decidedly left of center and heavily influenced by Mao Zedong.

Westbrook's replacement, Jim Mayfield, would play an important role in DeFreeze's escape from Soledad prison and his arrival in the Bay Area. In return, DeFreeze intended to confer upon Mayfield the rank of Colonel within the SLA.<sup>56</sup>

In December of 1972, DeFreeze was transferred from Vacaville to Soledad prison. This new location did not cut him off from the network of Bay Area contacts he established at Vacaville. When DeFreeze escaped from Soledad prison on March 5, 1973, it would be his friends from the BCA and Unisight that proved instrumental in the success of the escape, the establishment of a safe house, and the development of a new revolutionary group.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 63

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 58 and 63. On page 58, Westbrook refers to Russ Little as the "...sneakiest little son of a bitch." Wolfe gets off easier, Westbrook thought of Wolfe as "Just an immature little kid." Both Wolfe and Little will play an instrumental role in the development of the SLA.

<sup>56</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 8. See also, McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*. 63 and 88 and FBI interview of Patricia Hearst, 4/13/76, p. 14. In *The Life and Death of the SLA*, Jim Mayfield is referred to as "Sherman." Mayfield's role in the escape of DeFreeze is also mentioned in *The Voices of the Guns* as the driver who picked up DeFreeze in Gonzales and brought him to the Bay Area. Patricia Hearst confirmed the role of Mayfield in the escape in a 4/13/76 interview with the FBI.

Upon his transfer to Soledad, DeFreeze was reclassified as a minimum-security risk. This new status meant that prison officials viewed him as someone who was unlikely to attempt escape. As a result, DeFreeze was assigned to work outside the main prison complex on a boiler located at the Correctional Officers Training School. His first day on the job would be his last. As soon as prison guard Jim Tucker dropped him off and left to complete the remainder of his rounds, DeFreeze climbed over the fence surrounding the compound and escaped on foot.

His escape went unnoticed for approximately twenty minutes.<sup>57</sup> Following his escape, DeFreeze managed to travel to the small farming town of Gonzales, just a few miles north of Soledad.<sup>58</sup>

DeFreeze quickly found refuge with a Mexican-American family in Gonzales that willingly provided him with food and a place to sleep for the night. The following morning, DeFreeze phoned Mayfield asking him for a ride into the Bay Area. Mayfield agreed to pick up DeFreeze but both agree that due to their past relationship it was best that he find an alternate place to stay. Upon his arrival, DeFreeze changed out of his prison garb into clothes provided by Mayfield.<sup>59</sup> The difficult part of the escape will be finding a home for the escaped prisoner once they arrived in the Bay Area.

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<sup>57</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 87-90. See also Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 1-2.

<sup>58</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 88 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 2. Both versions of the DeFreeze escape state that DeFreeze hitchhiked to Gonzales despite the fact that he was still dressed in his prison uniform. Apparently the family that provided food and shelter for the night for DeFreeze was similarly unaware of his attire and its significance.

<sup>59</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, p. 3. Kinney, *An American Journey*, 201, states that Willie Wolfe picked up DeFreeze at the home of the Mexican-American family. However, most sources side with Mayfield serving as point man for the pick up.

After picking up DeFreeze in Gonzales, Mayfield chauffeured him around the Bay Area attempting to find him a place of refuge. DeFreeze quickly exhausted his list of Bay Area contacts that he considered safe, but found no takers. Many individuals who talked about revolution with the prisoners in Vacaville did not want to take an active step by assisting an escaped convict. Mayfield, because of his close association with the BCA, could not provide his home as a hiding place for DeFreeze. As a sense of desperation set in, they drove to the Peking Man House in Berkeley.

DeFreeze considered David Gunnell, the owner of the Berkeley commune, to be “kinda freaky.”<sup>60</sup> Gunnell initially seemed reluctant to house DeFreeze for the night, possibly because DeFreeze announced that he was ready to start the revolution.<sup>61</sup> Despite his reluctance, Gunnell allowed him to stay over for one night. Discussing revolution and being actively engaged in a revolution are two very different prospects. However, within the commune, DeFreeze found the revolutionaries he had been searching for.

DeFreeze served his time in prison from 1970 through 1973. This time frame also encompassed the rise of George Jackson as a revolutionary prison leader, initially as one of the Soledad Brothers who were accused of killing a prison guard in response to the death of an African-American prisoner.

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<sup>60</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 6-8 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 88.

<sup>61</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 7.



His fame and influence rose with the publication of his prison letters in *Soledad Brother* in 1970, his death in a controversial escape attempt from San Quentin's Adjustment Center in 1971 and the posthumous publication of *Blood in My Eye* in 1972. Although they never met, Cinque was heavily influenced by the revolutionary rhetoric of George Jackson. As the leader of the SLA, Cinque bought in to Jackson's exhortations regarding the need for a violent revolution. *Blood in My Eye* focused on the issue of a violent overthrow of the American government. Jackson stated that in the early 1970's it was "Time to move, we must show them that resistance is possible, and that there is a hard left cadre willing to lead it."<sup>62</sup>

*Blood in My Eye* focused on the issue of a violent overthrow of the American government.<sup>63</sup> Jackson stated that in the early 1970's it was "Time to move, we must show that the resistance is possible, and that there is a hard left cadre willing to lead it."<sup>64</sup> These ideas set forth by Jackson left a deep impression upon DeFreeze as he began the process of morphing from a small time criminal to prison revolutionary.

The revolution from Jackson's perspective required a vanguard. He admired Fidel Castro and French journalist Regis DeBray and believed that revolution in America required a committed revolutionary group to begin the revolt. According to Jackson "There have never been any spontaneous revolutions. They were all stages, manufactured by people who went to the head of the masses and directed them."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> George L. Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1990), 39.

<sup>63</sup> As a demonstration of Jackson's influence upon the SLA, Jackson spelled America as "Amerika." The SLA in their communiqués spelled it "Amerikkka"

<sup>64</sup> Jackson, *Blood in My Eye*, 39.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

To get to the point of revolution “...revolutionary consciousness can be raised to the highest point by stimuli from the vanguard elements.”<sup>66</sup> Thus Jackson not only sided with the elements of the New Left who advocated direct action against the United States government. He also agreed with DeBray regarding the “Foco Theory” of revolution – a revolution in which a group of individuals would step forward to lead and inspire the masses. DeFreeze envisioned the SLA to be that vanguard.

By the time of his escape, DeFreeze had morphed into Cinque. He had transformed himself from a small time thug into a revolutionary leader. According to the legendary African-American prison inmate George Jackson, “This camp (prison) brings out the very best in brothers or destroys them entirely. But none are unaffected.”<sup>67</sup> To survive incarceration, DeFreeze developed a new persona – Cinque Mtume. This new man no longer played the part of a loner. Instead of shunning associations with groups as he did in his teens, Cinque joined the Black Cultural Association while imprisoned at Vacaville. Not only did this new man join the BCA, he also sought an active leadership role. Eventually he established a subunit within the BCA known as Unisight. Jackson’s statement on prison life for African-Americans certainly rang true for Cinque.

The transformation of DeFreeze into Cinque while in jail and the usage of George Jackson’s writings as required reading within the cell, demonstrates the impact Jackson had upon the politics and revolutionary strategies of the SLA.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>67</sup> George L. Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994), 27.

In fact, Patricia Hearst recalled that icons of the New Left such as Angela Davis, Huey Newton and Jane Fonda were disliked by the SLA. George Jackson, on the other hand, was viewed as a hero.<sup>68</sup> Members of the SLA strongly encouraged Hearst to read the works of Jackson.<sup>69</sup> The SLA's extremist views and violence was a direct result of the influence of George Jackson.

In following the revolutionary ideals of Jackson, the SLA fell victim to a major flaw within his writings: a dependence upon the Bay Area's leftist movements and their willingness to participate in the violent overthrow of the United States government.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Patricia Campbell Hearst and Alvin Moscow, *Patty Hearst: Her Own Story* (New York: Avon Books, 1988), 89.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>70</sup> Eric Cummins, *Radical: The Rise and Fall of California's Prison Reform Movement* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 153 and 224.

### Chapter 3

#### The Formation

Soon after the arrival of Cinque at the Peking Man house, Russell Little and Willie Wolfe began the process of locating a new “safe house” for their friend. With documented ties between Cinque, Little and Wolfe via the BCA and the Unisight programs, they all believed that sooner or later law enforcement would arrive at their doorstep looking for the escaped convict. In the midst of this situation Little happened to run into a former Peking House resident, Christopher Thompson.<sup>71</sup> During this meeting Little mentioned to Thompson his situation without mentioning Cinque by name. As luck would have it, Thompson knew someone who could assist, his ex-girlfriend Patricia “Mizmoon” Soltysik. Soltysik had not previously been involved with the prison movement but she did know many of the members of the Peking Man House and was considered politically in tune with them.

The arrival of Cinque at Mizmoon’s Parker Street residence quickly led to many changes. Soltysik quickly moved from Cinque’s caretaker to intimate friend. In fact, by the end of March, Mizmoon’s brother Fred, and her sister Sue both commented on how happy Mizmoon appeared to be with her new lover.

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<sup>71</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 89-90. Thompson, proprietor of a food stand known as Harlem on My Mind reportedly was a member of the Black Panther Party, at one time siding with the Eldridge Cleaver faction when he resided in New York. Thompson seemed to constantly hang around the periphery of the SLA without actually being a member.

This newfound happiness came on the heels of a period of depression as Mizmoon dealt with a succession of failed relationships and a social disease.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, according to the accounts of Fred and Sue Soltysik, their sister began working with Cinque and some unnamed friends on a “serious document” that would be a declaration.”<sup>73</sup> Within less than four weeks of his escape from prison, Cinque found not only a safe house, but comrades to assist in formulating plans for the revolution.

From March through November of 1973, Cinque along with Mizmoon Soltysik, Russell Little, Nancy Ling Perry, Joe Remiro and Willie Wolfe set about establishing the newest of the New Left organizations, the Symbionese Liberation Army. Taking the word symbiosis to create the new word symbionese, the new group hoped to create a multi-ethnic revolutionary organization that would serve as the vanguard for a Marxist revolution in the United States. They sought to replace Venceremos as the foremost action oriented New Left organization in the Berkeley area. The members of the SLA were serious in their desire to change the United States. An example of the level of how serious they became in the desire to foment a revolution, the members of the SLA drafted a series of documents that included a Declaration of War against the United States; Codes of War; the terms of military/political alliance with the United Symbionese War Council; and a document detailing the seven principles of the SLA.

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<sup>72</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 90 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 96-97. See also, Soltysik, *In Search of a Sister*, 54-64.

<sup>73</sup> Soltysik, *In Search of a Sister*, 63.

The “impending revolution” was serious business and in order to develop this revolution the SLA decided to emulate Fidel Castro. Thus the SLA attempted to implement the Foco Theory which author Dan Berger states “...was first advocated by Che Guevera and based on the military success of the Cuban revolution.”<sup>74</sup> In this manifestation of the Foco theory, the SLA becomes the vanguard for others to follow. It also signifies the revolutionary arrogance of this new organization.

During this formative stage, Cinque attempted to align the SLA with other New Left groups under the Symbionese Federation. Prior to the assassination of Marcus Foster on November 6, 1973, the SLA had some success recruiting beyond the “original ten.”<sup>75</sup> The almost universal condemnation of the SLA by community leaders throughout the San Francisco Bay Area (and the New Left) quickly ended these affiliations.<sup>76</sup> The SLA remained outcasts within the New Left until the shootout in Los Angeles on May 16, 1974. After six members of the SLA died from gunshot wounds and burns which resulted from fire that burned down the safe house during a firefight with the Los Angeles Police Department, the members of the New Left throughout California eulogized the death of the SLA members. Despite the coolness of many revolutionaries toward the SLA, it is highly likely that this new organization worked with others within the Bay Area’s New Left community.

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<sup>74</sup> Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland: AK Press, 2006), 46.

<sup>75</sup> The original ten members of the SLA were Cinque, Russell Little, Mizmoon Soltysik, Nancy Ling Perry, Willie Wolfe, Joe Remiro, Angela Atwood, Camilla Hall and Bill and Emily Harris.

<sup>76</sup> On page two of the February 22-28, 1974 edition of the *Berkeley Barb* a group calling themselves ex-Symbionese Federation members declared that they left the Federation in protest over the shooting of Marcus Foster and the “SLA’s strategic misuse of violence.”

As plans for the SLA continued to develop and activity increased at the Parker Street residence of Mizmoon and Soltysik, the decision was made to move Cinque to an apartment in East Oakland. Prior to the move, Sue Soltysik remembered seeing Emily Harris, among others at a film showing regarding the Frelimo guerilla movement in Mozambique.<sup>77</sup> Mizmoon's bungalow soon became a hub for revolutionary activities. The foot traffic in and out of the residence worried Cinque enough that new living arrangements became a necessity. Mizmoon, because of her close relationship with Cinque, commuted back and forth between her Berkeley residence and Cinque's East Oakland apartment.<sup>78</sup>

According to Vin McLellan and Paul Avery, two Bay Area journalists who covered the SLA during the 1970's, "Wolfe, Little and Nancy Perry were already involved with another prison-based revolutionary terrorist group" at the time of Cinque's escape.<sup>79</sup> It seems highly unlikely that Little and Wolfe, following the escape of Cinque, would melt away so quickly after finding him a safe house. They had been close friends with Cinque prior to his escape, particularly Little. Instead, the prison work of these individuals served as an extension of the newly formed SLA. Many prisoners such as Clifford "Death Row" Jefferson who later claimed to be high ranking members of the SLA, had also been involved with the Vanguard Party through Wolfe and Little.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 92.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 93. The revolutionary group that Wolfe, Little and Perry were linked to was known as the Partisans Vanguard Party or Vanguard for short.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-104.

In previous works pertaining to the development of the SLA, a primary role had been given to Willie Wolfe as the central figure in bringing the various individuals who comprised the original ten of the revolutionary cell together. Unfortunately, these interpretations ignore the role played by Russell Little in the formative stages of the SLA.<sup>81</sup> Little and Cinque developed a close relationship working together in BCA subgroup Unisight and it was Little who wrote to the parole board on Cinque's behalf.

When asked directly by Marilyn Baker if Willie Wolfe was a leader and if Little followed Wolfe into the SLA, Christopher Thompson replied, "Hell, no, Willie was no leader. Nobody would go anywhere with Willie. People wouldn't follow Willie Wolfe to the bathroom. He was a loser. He was just a rich white kid playing at politics. No one respected him, not even in Peking Man House."<sup>82</sup> Another individual on the periphery of the SLA who had been actively involved in the BCA, Amanda de Normanville, referred to Wolfe as "...a follower of David's (Gunnell)"<sup>83</sup> She went on to state that "David I would listen to; Jean Wah I would listen to; I felt more on the same wavelength. But Willie seemed so young. I would sort of think, Ah Willie, there's Willie, all talk and no action."<sup>84</sup> Willie never demonstrated the capacity for leadership, either in high school, college or the prison reform movement.

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<sup>81</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 94 and Kinney, *An American Journey*, 164-165. Both versions provide an account of Wolfe as the primary recruiter for Cinque's new organization. Kinney, in particular believes that Wolfe's affability played a key role in his bringing everyone together. While Wolfe may have known everyone who joined the SLA prior to the organization of the revolutionary group, Wolfe never served in anything remotely close to a leadership position.

<sup>82</sup> Baker and Brompton, *Exclusive!* 91.

<sup>83</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 120. David Gunnell along with his girlfriend Jean Wah Chan, were the owners of Peking Man House. In the FBI reports to come, both Gunnell and Chan were listed as potential members of the SLA.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.



Russell Little was one of two Caucasians who Cinque asked to participate in Unisight. Their work together helped them forge a very close relationship. When Cinque had exhausted almost all possibilities for assistance following his escape, when he had nowhere else to turn, he knew he could trust Little. In return, Little never failed to provide assistance to Cinque. The transfer of Cinque to Soltysik's Parker Street bungalow did not put their relationship on hiatus until September 1973. Instead, Little served as Cinque's second in command and his closest advisor.<sup>85</sup> In this capacity, Little brought Nancy Ling Perry and Joe Remiro into the SLA.

In May of 1973, Mizmoon left her Parker Street residence in Berkeley and moved in with Cinque in the East Oakland apartment. In all likelihood Mizmoon made this move because of the constant activity at her Berkeley home. As plans continued to move forward with the development of the SLA, Nancy Ling Perry becomes the newest member. Perry moved in with Cinque and Soltysik and helped with the editing of the SLA Codes of War and other documents which announced the birth of this new revolutionary organization. As a result, by the spring of 1973, the SLA grew to five members: Cinque, Mizmoon, Perry, Little and Wolfe.<sup>86</sup>

The rise of the SLA coincided with the public revelations of White House involvement in the Watergate scandal during the spring of 1973.

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>86</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 119 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 94.

As the Watergate scandal continued to grow as a result of testimony from prominent Nixon staffers before a Senate investigating committee and the revelation of a White House taping system, public trust in President Nixon and his administration began to erode. The individuals who would comprise the SLA saw these events through the lens of the horrors of Vietnam, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert, and concluded that the present government had become so corrupt that it no longer represented the people of the United States. The net result for these revolutionaries was the implementation of the “Foco Theory” for revolution made popular by Che Guevara, Regis DeBray and George Jackson. As they began writing their codes of war the early members of the SLA convinced themselves that the time for action had arrived. As their membership slowly increased, so did their isolation from the rest of Berkeley society. Consequently, no voice could be heard to contradict their growing belief that the time had come for revolutionary action in the United States and that they would serve as the vanguard for others to follow.

August of 1973 turned out to be a fateful month in the development of the SLA. To begin with, Venceremos announced its dissolution leaving a void within the Bay Area’s New Left community. On August 2, the SLA assisted in the escape of an African-American convict, Thero Wheeler, who had been a member of Venceremos. Also, Wheeler succeeded DeFreeze as the leader of Unisight following his transfer to Soledad prison.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 121-123 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 94.

An event which went unnoticed, despite the high hopes of the SLA membership, occurred on August 21, 1973, when the SLA released its declaration of war against the United States. Lost in the shuffle of the many leftist movements which seemingly rose and fell daily throughout the 1960's and 1970's, the significance of the timing of the declaration was lost – the second anniversary of the death of inmate and revolution leader George Jackson.

Thero Wheeler had the reputation of being a “jailhouse lawyer while incarcerated. His reputation among law enforcement was further tarnished by his membership in Venceremos. Consequently, he earned the reputation as a “heavy” among his fellow prisoners. On August 2, 1973, Wheeler escaped from Vacaville prison. He was surprised to learn that Cinque had been involved in his escape.<sup>88</sup> As a result of Wheeler's previous involvement with Venceremos, law enforcement blamed the escape on that slowly disintegrating organization. Wheeler's escape, however, represented the SLA's first successful revolutionary action. At this point the SLA was still an unknown part of the ever evolving revolutionary politics of the Berkeley area. Consequently, Cinque wanted to announce to the world the existence of the SLA through a communiqué declaring their role in assisting Wheeler's escape. Thero went to great lengths to convince Cinque “that the potential dangers (of the communiqué) were much greater than the advantages.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 113, 121, 124 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 94.

<sup>89</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 125.

Consequently, Cinque decided to forego the communiqué regarding Wheeler's escape. Later that month, the SLA did release their declaration of war against the United States, but it would take the abduction of an heiress for the press to take notice of this new revolutionary group.

Soon after his escape from Vacaville prison and his arrival in the arms of the SLA, Wheeler began to clash with Cinque regarding the aim and structure of this new revolutionary cell. After seeing first hand Cinque's plan for the SLA, Wheeler considered it "really shit."<sup>90</sup> The ambivalence felt by Wheeler toward the organization, politics and goals established by Cinque, Mizmoon, Perry, and the other members foreshadowed their future difficulties. Inside the prison walls the talking about revolution came easily. Wheeler now came face to face with the actual prospect of fighting the United States government and balked. Furthermore, roles had reversed. In prison, Wheeler had the reputation of a leader while Cinque was the follower. The situation and the circumstances had changed dramatically for Wheeler and he did not particularly like what he found. Cinque was the unchallenged leader of the SLA and Wheeler now found himself in a subservient position.<sup>91</sup>

The SLA had a definitive purpose in mind when they became involved in assisting Wheeler to escape from Vacaville. Cinque had difficulties convincing African-Americans to join the SLA.

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<sup>90</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 125.

<sup>91</sup> Many variations exist regarding the leadership of the SLA. Marilyn Baker in *Exclusive!* referred to the women being the leaders of the SLA. In fact, she referred to Mizmoon Soltysik as the "brains of the SLA." p. 87. In an email exchange with the author on 2/2/09, former SLA member Bill Harris had a much different structure for the group when stated that within the SLA "Everything was a group decision. We functioned as a collective and a true democracy.

The hope, which neatly coincided with reality, was that Wheeler had the contacts, reputation and credibility to gain access to individuals Cinque could not reach.<sup>92</sup> Thus the feeling among the collective had been that freeing Wheeler and adding him to the organization would increase their stature and improve recruiting immensely. Wheeler stated that “I couldn’t seriously recruit for him because he was off into suicide and bullshit. The people I knew just wouldn’t accept the SLA.”<sup>93</sup>

The accepted story surrounding the SLA consists of Cinque moving around the Bay Area attempting to sell his vision of the revolution and being unsuccessful. In terms of developing additional cells of hard core cadre this scenario has merit. However, groups of sympathizers did exist, but their allegiance did not match that of the original ten. In a magazine interview in 1976, Bill Harris mentioned that Cinque left the SLA for a period of time to train with a group of African-American revolutionaries.<sup>94</sup> Taken at face value, why should anyone believe this statement? Many of the pronouncements emanating from the living members of the SLA have not stood up in court.<sup>95</sup> In this instance, Harris’ statement was accurate and corroborated by none other than Patricia Hearst. During an interview with the FBI on August 27, 1976, Hearst was shown a paper that had been recovered from the safe house in Clayton, California on January 14, 1974.

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<sup>92</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 126.

<sup>93</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 127 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 195.

<sup>94</sup> Susan Lyne and Robert Scheer “The Story of the SLA” *New Times*, 31.

<sup>95</sup> I am referring in particular to the role of the SLA in the Crocker National Bank robbery and the accidental shooting death of Myrna Opsahl on April 21, 1974 in Carmichael, California. In order to protect themselves from litigation they denied any involvement in the robbery or the murder until they were brought to trial in 2003.

The list contained the names Mwanza, Shago, Sodium (or Sadium) and Aikla. Hearst recognized the “Em-Wanza” as an associate of Cinque who was affiliated with Nairobi College in East Palo Alto. Hearst, during her time with the SLA, had learned that Cinque spent time training with “Em-Wanza” and others prior to her abduction. Hearst also stated that Cinque met with “Em-Wanza at an unrecalled parking lot” after her abduction.<sup>96</sup> Em-Wanza’s true identity was lost in the May 1974 Los Angeles shootout that claimed the lives of Cinque, Soltysik, Perry, Hall, Wolfe, and Atwood. The whole of the SLA collective did not know the true identity of Em-Wanza and the other revolutionaries involved with Nairobi College. These individuals, like the SLA, adopted reborn names that provided them with a certain level of anonymity, which, in this case, served its purpose. Following the shootout in Los Angeles, Hearst along with Bill and Emily Harris attempted to contact Em-Wanza in their search for help.<sup>97</sup>

The FBI was able to identify most of the members of the SLA within a few days.<sup>98</sup> The possibility of other potential members of the SLA was constantly being explored by law enforcement, particularly the FBI. Bill Harris recalled meeting another SLA cell which “widely disbanded after the arrests of our comrades in January, 1974.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> National Archives, Pacific Regional Branch, RG 118, *U. S. Attorney’s Files*, FBI interview of Patricia Campbell Hearst, 8/27/76, 1.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> In the early stages following the abduction of Hearst, Wheeler continued to be listed as a member of the SLA. Camilla Hall was the last of the original 10 to be included as a member of the SLA.

<sup>99</sup> Bill Harris interview with author, 3/20/2009.

These other cells or SLA sympathizers had sufficient reasons to disband during the period starting in November 1973 through February of 1974. In November of 1973, the SLA became the subject of condemnation throughout the Bay Area for its assassination of the Oakland Superintendent of Schools Marcus Foster.

SLA members Joe Remiro and Russell Little were arrested in January of 1974 which led police to an SLA safe house in Clayton, California full of information pertaining to the cell. While the core of the SLA quickly headed underground, those who had any affiliation early on with the SLA quickly and quietly severed any remaining ties. In the February 22-28, 1974 edition of the *Berkeley Barb* a letter from ex-members of the SLA was published. Within the text of this public letter, the former members declared that they “resigned collectively” following the assassination of Marcus Foster. Furthermore, they stated that “The revolutionary role of necessary violence is the opposite of what the SLA believes, and practices...”<sup>100</sup> These former members felt it necessary to go into hiding to avoid retribution from the SLA, as well as law enforcement.

What is most interesting within the open letter from the former members of the SLA related to the timeline they gave regarding their recruitment. This timing lends a great deal of authenticity to their claims. These former members were first approached in June of 1973<sup>101</sup>. This matches the timeline of the Cinque and Mizmoon’s move from the Parker Street bungalow to an apartment in Oakland. After the move, the SLA began reaching out to other radical organizations to join the “Symbionese Federation.”

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<sup>100</sup> *Berkeley Barb*, February 22-28, 1974. p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

According to the article, these former SLA members felt they “had found a place for ourselves in a revolutionary organization that was on its way beyond the Left, old and new. We joined in August.”<sup>102</sup> The August timeline is important because it coincides with the escape of Thero Wheeler and signals the true beginning of the SLA as an active entity. The only issue that strains the credibility of these individuals being a part of the SLA is their seeming innocence regarding the usage of violence. The Federation established a “War Council” and on August 21, 1973, the SLA issued a declaration of War. These documents clearly reflect the general attitude of the original members of the SLA – that violence was the necessary next step on the path of revolution.

The evidence which demonstrates that the SLA made contact with other revolutionary groups and peoples presents a very different picture of the SLA than previously constructed. The early members of the nascent SLA busied themselves with organizing a Symbionese Federation of which the SLA, in their minds, would provide the leadership. Within this new organization they hoped to include individuals and groups seeking a replacement for the Venceremos. Prior to the organization phase, Cinque found assistance through his contacts within BCA, particularly helpful was James Mayfield. Not until the SLA assassinated Marcus Foster would they find themselves isolated from other revolutionary group within the New Left and treated as pariahs by such stalwart figures as Huey Newton, Angela Davis, and Jerry Rubin.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Kinney, *An American Journey*, 256 and David Horowitz, *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 237.



The decision to assassinate Foster not only ostracized the SLA, it demonstrated their single minded determination to become the vanguard of the coming revolution through their attempted implementation of the Foco theory of revolution in the United States.

If a moment in time ever existed in which a leftist revolution might have occurred in the United States, it was August 1973 through August of 1974. During this period of time, respect for an incumbent President hit an all time low as a result of the Watergate crisis and for the first time, it was revealed that a taping system existed in the Oval Office. The revelation of the existence of a taping system in the White House would lead to a year-long constitutional crisis, and ended with the resignation of President Richard Nixon on August 9, 1974. Despite these events the revolution never truly started. Even though the SLA made the national headlines almost daily from February 4, 1974 through the middle of June, 1974 the masses did not flock into the arms of the SLA. Instead of leading a revolution, the SLA became America's first reality television show brought to the nation in the form of news. The kidnapping took America's mind off of the troubles in Washington for the briefest of moments.

## Chapter 4

### Battle for Control

With the arrival of Wheeler as a member of the SLA following his breakout from prison, came a battle for control over the organization. Wheeler did not view Cinque as a powerful leader. Furthermore, he felt nothing but disdain toward the SLA's simplistic Marxist theories pertaining to revolution.<sup>104</sup> Almost immediately Wheeler and Cinque clashed over the idea of issuing a communiqué regarding the SLA's role in facilitating Wheeler's escape. Having just gained his freedom, Wheeler wanted to remain as anonymous as possible. Consequently, Wheeler and Cinque became increasingly frustrated with each other as the days drifted into weeks. Cinque had established himself as the unquestioned leader of this new revolutionary group prior to Wheeler's escape. The Caucasian members of the SLA treated Cinque like royalty. Wheeler did not. Within hours of his escape Wheeler had already begun to challenge Cinque's leadership decisions.

Wheeler did not arrive empty handed into the arms of the SLA. Soon after his escape, he was joined by his girlfriend, Mary Alice Seim. Seim had previous ties with Venceremos, was an heiress to a California lumber and real estate fortune.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 126.

<sup>105</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 95.

According to associates of Seim, she provided Wheeler with “a couple of thousand dollars” which he, in turn, shared with the SLA.<sup>106</sup> If Wheeler had any illusions that the money provided a seat at the leadership table, they were quickly dispelled.

The key discrepancy between Wheeler and Cinque focused on the future of the SLA. Wheeler’s designs were much less grand than Cinque’s. Money, or the lack thereof, had been a continual problem for this nascent revolutionary organization. Mizmoon’s paycheck from her work as a janitor at the Berkeley Public Library and Perry’s money she earned working at Fruity Rudy’s had been the primary source of funding for the organization until Wheeler’s arrival.<sup>107</sup> Wheeler argued that robbing banks provided the necessary money for revolution while it also delivered a blow against “the centers of capitalist oppression.”<sup>108</sup> Cinque was not yet ready to take the step of robbing banks during the formative period of the SLA. Consequently, he found himself at odds with Wheeler once again.

Another critical difference between the two men was Wheeler’s hesitancy to seek publicity. Wheeler had been a member of Venceremos and learned from their mistakes. In other words, take action but do not call attention to the organization by announcing your involvement and avoid a situation such as the Ron Beaty jailbreak. This one action in which two prison guards were shot, one fatally, during the transfer of Ron Beaty led to the dissolution of Venceremos.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>107</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craver, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 133.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>109</sup> Venceremos became a primary target for police and other law enforcement agencies as a result of death and wounding of the prison guards. Venceremos leaders and members were placed under surveillance by law enforcement. Consequently, police arrested Beaty a few months later. Following his arrest, Beaty

Also, Wheeler failed to realize the personal relationship Cinque had developed with the other members of the SLA. Cinque quickly became their knight who would lead this band of white revolutionaries. Little and Wolfe had forged a close bond with Cinque through their involvement with the BCA and Unisight. Even though they knew Wheeler, their relationship never became as close as with Cinque. Both Mizmoon and Perry quickly found a comfort level with Cinque physically and intellectually. They worked closely with him on various documents relating to codes of conduct and the development of a Symbionese Federation. In any confrontation between Cinque and Wheeler, the members of the SLA sided with Cinque which eventually led to Wheeler's decision to leave the cell in October of 1973.

Ever since Wheeler convinced Cinque not to release a communiqué regarding the SLA's role in his escape, the SLA continued to be an anonymous group lost in the shuffle of the Bay Area, completely unknown. As a result, the SLA continued to search for that one action that would announce their arrival on the scene and the beginning of the revolution. During this period of formation they also needed money for safe houses, vehicles, arms and ammunition. The arrival of Wheeler provided the group with a financial windfall in Mary Alice Seim, but only a short term fix to their long term financial needs. The monetary needs of the SLA were much greater than their means, despite the contributions of Seim.

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quickly turned informer providing law enforcement with names of the group's leadership and members among other details. Beaty's arrest and quick conversion created an atmosphere of distrust and paranoia throughout Venceremos accelerating the organization's breakup.

In order to concentrate on the development of the SLA, both Perry and Mizmoon left their jobs leaving the SLA without a visible means of obtaining money.

In August of 1973 Perry left Fruity Rudy's and Mizmoon followed suit in early October and quit her job as a janitor.<sup>110</sup> At first glance, it seems odd that Perry and Soltysik would quit their jobs, thus leaving the SLA without a dependable source of income, particularly in the Fall of 1973 when Little and Perry posed as George and Nancy DeVoto and rented a safe house in the suburb of Clayton, California. Furthermore, in early October, the SLA rented an apartment in Oakland, just a half mile from the Oakland School Administration building.<sup>111</sup>

The money had to come from a source other than Mary Alice Seim. Wheeler mentioned in interviews sometime after the arrest of Hearst and the Harris' that Cinque had received financial support from a well known Bay Area radical without known ties to the SLA. Also, this individual had ties to Venceremos. This scenario seems plausible. However, by late September Cinque began plotting a new course for the SLA. Either Cinque turned his back on the money provided by Wheeler's mysterious source or the SLA found another means for obtaining the necessary arms and money for a revolutionary life underground. According to one publication "In the early Fall, the SLA had burglarized the homes of at least three prominent leftist activists stealing guns, ammunition, and ammo loading equipment."<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 123 and 179.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

They even stole a wallet from Venceremos member Janet Cooper and later used her name and identity to rent a red AMC Hornet which was used in the Hibernia Bank robbery on April 15, 1974. Consequently, Janet Cooper became one of the first witnesses to appear before the Federal Grand Jury investigating the SLA.

With money becoming increasingly scarce for the SLA in the Fall of 1973 the group came to the conclusion that illegal means had become necessary to obtain money for the revolution, just as Wheeler had told Cinque it would be in August. Also, during this time period, Cinque and his followers began their initial planning to assassinate the Oakland Superintendent of Schools, Marcus Foster. Prior to the assassination of Foster, Wheeler claimed that many of his supporters, mainly those involved with Venceremos, had provided money during the early stages of the SLA's development.<sup>113</sup> Wheeler also claimed that the Hibernia bank robbery on April 15, 1974 provided proof positive that Cinque had severed relations with his principal financial supporters. For various reason, the Wheeler story does not ring true. The financial difficulties began long before April 15, 1974. At least one robbery in 1973 perpetrated by the SLA can be confirmed. On September 30, 1973, Mizmoon and Perry successfully robbed Seifert's Floral Company in Oakland, California. They stole between \$400 and \$600 from the floral shop but had to abandon their van used in the getaway because onlookers were seen writing down the van's license plate number.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 320-321. Wheeler's comments regarding the level of support for the SLA from former Venceremos leaders varies greatly. In fact, Wheeler had mentioned that his friends from Venceremos did not support the SLA at all, thus making Wheeler a difficult source to fully trust on this issue.

<sup>114</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 134-135.

Soon after the flower shop robbery, the SLA struck again. On October 12, 1973, Joe Remiro, with gun in hand, approached Donald Sullivan from behind on Berkeley's Telegraph Avenue and demanded the keys to his 1969 Chevy van. The van was later found nearby the Clayton safe house stripped of almost everything, including the engine.<sup>115</sup>

Despite the fact that Cinque had dismissed Wheeler's earlier proposition to target banks for robbery because they were the "center of capitalist oppression," the SLA appeared to be steadily moving in that direction during the Fall of 1973.<sup>116</sup> In all likelihood, what offended Cinque was not the idea of robbing a bank, but the manner in which the idea arose. Whether or not Wheeler meant it, he had in fact challenged the leadership of Cinque over this fledgling revolutionary group. Consequently, it did not take long for the relationship between the two to rapidly deteriorate. From Cinque's vantage point, Wheeler had been disloyal and ungrateful for his efforts to assist in his escape from jail. Cinque feared that Wheeler wanted to take over his organization. After all his failures in life, including an unsuccessful bid to become the elected leader of the BCA, Cinque had finally found a group that accepted him as their leader and he determined that Wheeler had to fall in line or else.

Wheeler viewed the events from a much different perspective than Cinque. Like many other veterans of Venceremos and other radical organizations, the SLA came across as an overly aggressive, violent and politically confused group.

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<sup>115</sup>Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 183.

<sup>116</sup>Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 136.

The “Codes of War” and the act of declaring revolutionary war against the United States appeared overzealous at best and inviting trouble at worst. These acts proved to be much more than what other leftist and revolutionary groups in the Bay Area were prepared to act upon. The aggressive nature of the SLA resulting from their actions and writings, fed into local rumors that the organization itself or Cinque were acting as an agent provocateur.<sup>117</sup>

As tensions grew between the two, Wheeler attempted to ease the growing tensions between himself and Cinque by moving into an apartment with his girlfriend, Mary Alice Seim and her daughter. Even though they moved out of the SLA safe house, both Seim and Wheeler continued to participate in the SLA meetings.

Despite the continued involvement of Seim and Wheeler in the SLA, the distrust between Cinque and Wheeler inevitably led to a confrontation between the two escaped convicts. Cinque finally reached his point of no return where he could no longer tolerate Wheeler’s mocking of his leadership of the SLA.<sup>118</sup> In all disputes between the two men, the membership of the SLA sided with their co-founder Cinque. According to one account, Wheeler attempted to reach out to other members of the SLA in an attempt to wrest the leadership from Cinque.<sup>119</sup> In the midst of this power struggle in September of 1973, Wheeler decided to move into an apartment with his girlfriend and her child and move out of the SLA safe house in Oakland. This arrangement did not sit well with Cinque.

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<sup>117</sup> Boulton, *The Making of Tania Hearst*, 7-9.

<sup>118</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 141.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-142.



In early October, 1973, Cinque, along with Perry and Mizmoon, decided to pay a visit to Wheeler's new apartment.<sup>120</sup> The visit quickly became a confrontation as Cinque and his companions pulled their guns out and aimed them at Wheeler and Seim. Cinque was angry because of Wheeler's separation from the SLA and, therefore, his control. He told Wheeler that there would be no auxiliary members of the SLA. He gave Wheeler an ultimatum – return to the safe house or be shot along with Seim and her child. Throughout the confrontation Wheeler remained calm while he tried to convince Cinque that he was still committed to the cause and an active member of the SLA.<sup>121</sup>

As a result of the meeting Wheeler, Seim and her child returned to the SLA apartment. After a few days, Wheeler and Seim were allowed to leave the apartment to pick up their necessities from the former residence. Both Seim and Wheeler took this opportunity to flee and they did so separately. Both went away with the deep conviction that Cinque and his followers were on a rendezvous with a destiny that they did not want to share. In the words of Thero Wheeler "It (the SLA) didn't have nothing to do with reality, man, all it could do was get you killed."<sup>122</sup> As a result of the defections of Wheeler and Seim, the SLA moved out of the Oakland apartment they shared with Wheeler and Seim and moved into a new safe house in Clayton, California – a residence that Wheeler knew nothing about.

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<sup>120</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 147-148. Wheeler stated that only Cinque and Mizmoon came to the apartment. Every other account, including one from Mary Alice Seim includes Perry as one of the visitors.

<sup>121</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 142-144.

<sup>122</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 147.

The absence of Wheeler left Cinque as the unquestioned leader of the SLA. It also left the organization and Cinque without an alternative viewpoint. Cinque had a thirst for notoriety and publicity. As long as Wheeler continued to participate in SLA meetings and planning, he provided the check upon Cinque's desire to publicly proclaim the birth of the SLA. According to Wheeler, he had vetoed Cinque's plan to assassinate San Francisco Examiner reporter Ed Montgomery. The transgression committed by Montgomery for which Cinque wanted to kill him was an article Montgomery wrote about Wheeler.<sup>123</sup> Cinque planned to write a letter to Montgomery – presumably letting him know he was targeted for death by the SLA. Wheeler replied by telling Cinque that he would write his own letter to Montgomery denying his involvement with the plan to kill him. This event occurred in the same fashion as the proposed communiqué Cinque wanted to release announcing the SLA's involvement in the escape of Wheeler from jail. In each case, Wheeler proved able to convince Cinque not to act in a way that would gain publicity for the SLA. However, once Wheeler left, no other member of the SLA fulfilled the role he previously played. As a result, the SLA would announce their arrival on the scene with an assassination on November 6, 1973 – just a few short weeks after Thero Wheeler left the SLA.

By late October of 1973 Cinque and his followers locked onto their target for the first salvo of their revolution – educator Marcus Foster. Cinque had consolidated his power within the organization which led to Wheeler's departure.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 96.

Under Cinque's leadership the SLA left the shadow of the Bay Area's New Left for the notoriety that only the media could provide. Not only did Cinque wish to lead a revolution, demonstrated by the lengths the SLA would go to in order to gain the attention, but he also hoped that their actions would kick-start the revolution with the SLA as the vanguard. Also, the SLA provided the vehicle with which Cinque demonstrated to the rest of the world that he no longer was the frightened petty criminal who had been trapped in a marriage in which his wife dominated and emasculated him. Donald DeFreeze, the man who never followed through with his plans for a better life, who could never find success, no longer existed. Cinque, the leader of the SLA had taken his place and, for the first time in his life, DeFreeze achieved the recognition he desired.

## Chapter 5

### The Assassination of Marcus Foster

The SLA first came to the attention of law enforcement and the San Francisco Bay Area's radical scene with the assassination of Marcus Foster in November of 1973. David Horowitz wrote that "... the act itself was so brutal, so morally unjustifiable and so politically incomprehensible that most Bay Area radicals assumed the SLA to be a cover for some right-wing or police group."<sup>124</sup> This singular act colored all future actions of the SLA and led directly to the arrests of Joseph Remiro and Russell Little leading the remaining members of the revolutionary group to kidnap heiress Patricia Campbell Hearst in the hope of negotiating a prisoner exchange.

According to one time SLA member Thero Wheeler, a decision by the SLA to assassinate Marcus Foster occurred by mid-October 1973 during a meeting he attended. According to this account, after watching a television news story regarding Marcus Foster and security issues in Oakland schools, Cinque proclaimed that "we (the SLA) are gonna off that nigger."<sup>125</sup> While Cinque acted rashly on occasion, the SLA's standard methodology when planning an action involved detailed planning – if not always accurate information.

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<sup>124</sup> The Editors, "Terrorism and the New Left," *Ramparts* 12, no. 10 (1974): 21.

<sup>125</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 164.

While Cinque may have uttered the threatening and degrading words regarding killing Marcus Foster at an SLA meeting, it is much more likely that these words came in response to a report delivered by Willie Wolfe following an October 9, 1973 Oakland School Board meeting and not based solely upon Cinque's reaction to a news story.<sup>126</sup>

Prior to the School Board Meeting of October 9, 1973, a series of events occurred which led to the fateful meeting that Wolfe attended. In March 1973, an Alameda County Grand Jury had been investigating drug abuse, vandalism and efficient use of school funds. As a case study for its report, the Grand Jury chose to focus on Oakland schools. The Grand Jury's decision may have been influenced by the May 1973 on campus stabbing death of an Oakland Tech student by a non-student.<sup>127</sup> The final report, issued during the summer of 1973 while Foster vacationed, recommended that the Oakland Police and the school authorities develop guidelines regarding each others responsibilities when law enforcement arrived on a school campus. The report also recommended a police presence on school campuses throughout Oakland to combat future violence and other illegal activities.<sup>128</sup>

The California Council on Criminal Justice (CCCJ) provided Oakland schools with a \$275,000 grant to add greater security measures in light of the recent stabbing. However, the CCCJ wanted Oakland schools to add a significant portion to the security program and ensure that all security staff have police experience and target the city's junior and senior high schools.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Kinney, *An American Journey*, 215.

<sup>127</sup> Robert Blackburn interview with author, 8/27/2009.

<sup>128</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 158.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-162.

Foster strongly disagreed with the idea of police in Oakland schools. Instead, he hoped to enlist “parents from the neighborhood” to serve as the security coordinators instead of police.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, Foster decided to remove from the October 9, 1973 meeting a vote regarding the CCCJ proposal because of the clause necessitating security aides in school campuses having a law enforcement background.<sup>131</sup>

In the midst of the debate regarding security/police in the Oakland schools, the issue of establishing a new identification card program arose as a way to keep non-students off school campuses. Just two years prior, Foster and the school board made a financial decision to cut identification cards from the school budget without any reference to ideology or politics. Cutting the identification card program saved Oakland schools approximately \$17,000.<sup>132</sup>

Like security officers on school campuses, the issue of ID cards for students led to public criticism of Marcus Foster, from a local citizen named Vera Silverman and a group known as “Save our Schools.”<sup>133</sup> Silverman alleged that re-instating the ID cards in schools would serve the same purpose as ID cards used by the South African government – to allow law enforcement to track and imprison “all the black and brown” students once the revolution began.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 147.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-143.

<sup>132</sup> Blackburn interview with author, 8/27/2009.

<sup>133</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 142. Save our Schools had been established by radical white former Venceremos members.

<sup>134</sup> Blackburn interview with author, 8/27/2009.

In September of 1973, Robert Blackburn, Marcus Foster's handpicked Deputy Superintendent, met with students at the All-City Council. The council was comprised of elected leaders of all high schools. During the meeting, Blackburn asked the students for their thoughts on re-instating the ID card program for students. The students responded positively to the return of the ID cards. They were useful checking out books at the library, getting into football games and accessing Alameda County transit buses. Consequently, the students favored the return the ID cards.<sup>135</sup> Unfortunately for Foster and Blackburn, Vera Silverman or Willie Wolfe never discussed the ID card issue with the students. Instead, Save our Schools and the SLA jumped to conclusions regarding the potential political usage of the ID cards instead of learning from the students the practical purposes for them.

By the time of the October 9 school board meeting, Elaine Brown had proposed to Marcus Foster that the Black Panther Party "would be happy, for a fee, to provide security for the schools."<sup>136</sup> Foster, however, turned down the Black Panthers by insisting that he was not interested in adding new security at any of the Oakland schools.<sup>137</sup>

If the changes in regards to the Oakland schools were not going to occur, then what led to the confrontation at the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting?

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

According to Deputy Superintendent Blackburn, who attended the school board meeting, it lacked the drama that has been attributed to it previously.<sup>138</sup> While Vera Silverman did move to the front of the audience and did cut up a child's ID card in protest, she did so without a tremendous amount of impact upon the majority of the crowd.<sup>139</sup>

Willie Wolfe, with the assistance of the recently purchased used car his father had obtained for him, attended the October 9<sup>th</sup> meeting and noticed the opposition of Vera Silverman and the Black Panther Party toward the ID cards and police involvement in providing added security for the Oakland schools. Wolfe served as the eyes and ears of the SLA at the meeting and reported his findings to his fellow revolutionaries a few days later at an SLA meeting. Wolfe's report to his fellow revolutionaries must have given Silverman and the Panthers a much more confrontational role against Foster than had actually occurred. As a result of Wolfe's report, the SLA made the decision to target Foster for assassination and began their surveillance of his daily activities.<sup>140</sup> In order to facilitate their surveillance of Foster, Nancy Ling Perry – using the name Lynn Ledworth – rented an apartment in Oakland at 1621 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The new apartment was located within a half mile of Foster's office.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid. See also Kinney, *An American Journey*, 215 and Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 162.

<sup>139</sup> In the interview with the author on 8/27/2009, Mr. Blackburn referred to Vera Silverman on more than one occasion as a community gadfly who did not have a strong following within the Oakland community.

<sup>140</sup> Soon after the assassination of Foster and the Bay Area's outpouring of grief in support of the slain educator, Wolfe left the Bay Area and spent Christmas and New Year's with his family. The common story states that the trip by Wolfe involved obtaining much needed money from his father. However, it is possible that another reason for the trip back East involved Wolfe's crisis in confidence. He had misread the tone events of the October 9<sup>th</sup> School Board meeting and his report led to the targeting of Foster which surviving members of the SLA now consider a huge mistake.



In what would become a standard method of operation, and the SLA kept a close eye on their target and trained daily for the action which would announce their arrival on the revolutionary scene.

Marcus Foster, a native of Atlanta, Georgia and a product of southern poverty and mid-twentieth century racial bias against African-Americans, earned his reputation as a highly respected educator in Philadelphia where he turned around a struggling inner city high school in three short years. His fine work at Simon Gratz High School led to his promotion to Director of Community Affairs. He also became a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania and was named Philadelphia's "Man of the Year" in 1968.<sup>141</sup>

In mid-1970, Oakland provided Foster with an opportunity to "escape from his community relations" position in Philadelphia.<sup>142</sup> Foster was a unique individual who found himself at home with people from all walks of life. As a close friend described him, "he was a good and dutiful student, but could run with the boys on the corner of ghetto Philly."<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, "he was steeped in the Bible," but could "shoot pool like Minnesota Fats."<sup>144</sup> In other words, Foster had the ability to appeal and communicate with a wide variety of people. This ability quickly became important upon his taking the reins of the Oakland schools. The composition of the school board was overwhelmingly Caucasian while the enrollment in Oakland schools for 1973 consisted of 64.2% African-Americans; 21.1% Caucasian; 7.7% Latino; 5.7% Asian; and 1.1% Filipino and other minorities.

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<sup>141</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 137 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 149-154.

<sup>142</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 156.

<sup>143</sup> Blackburn interview 8/27/2009.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

Oakland was a city in transition and Marcus Foster had been hired because of his ability to communicate and bridge the growing gap between African-Americans and the Caucasian minority that still wielded power far greater than their numbers suggested. Foster's ability to succeed within the white power structure undoubtedly led to Cinque's animosity and jealousy towards him. Instead of facing his failures in life, Cinque used Foster as a replacement for his abusive father and his lack of economic success thus far in his life.

By making a target of Foster, Cinque had taken direct aim at his past life and through Foster's death he hoped to free himself from his past weaknesses. Understandably, the surviving members of the SLA have never fully explained the reasoning behind their assassination of Foster. At best, all they have mustered up has been a conclusion that the assassination of Foster had been a "serious error" while also stating that "killing Foster put a quick stop to the intended programs" regarding the ID cards.<sup>145</sup> In retrospect the arguments of the SLA regarding ID cards and the presence of police on school campuses seem ridiculous as both have become standard and everyday occurrences at junior and senior high schools across the country, without any serious dissent from the political right or left. Then again, those who argued against ID cards and law enforcement on high school campuses in the 1970's never in their darkest dreams could have imagined the horrors such as the killings at Columbine High School.

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<sup>145</sup>Susan Lyne and Robert Scheer, "The Story of the SLA," *New Times* 4/16/76, 31.

On November 3, 1973 – an election day – the SLA cast its vote via bullets fired from handguns and multiple shotgun blasts. In the most confounding event of their short history, the SLA made the decision to assassinate Marcus Foster. The assassination made little sense when it occurred and the passing of time has done little to alter the earlier analysis. At the time of his death, Foster had become a popular leader of Oakland schools. He had developed the ability to work with the myriad of ethnicities, and cultures that populate the city of Oakland demonstrated the necessary political skills to deal with a diverse city and a powerful school board composed of mostly Anglo citizens. However, one constituency existed in Oakland that not even Marcus Foster’s vast political skills could successfully neutralize, the SLA.

The day of his death began like any other day for Dr. Foster. His official day began with an Oakland City Council “work session” where he proposed the city should re-open high school gyms after school to keep the youth of Oakland off the streets. A little later in the day he chaired a school board meeting. As one biographer of Foster mentioned, it was “a typical eleven-hour day”<sup>146</sup> It began when Deputy Robert Blackburn picked him up at 8am and ended in a hail of bullets shortly after 7pm. Foster and Blackburn left the Oakland Board of Education building heading toward Blackburn’s Chevy Vega parked in the Deputy Superintendent’s stall. As he left the building with his friend and boss, Blackburn noticed two young men loitering against the building in the shadows.<sup>147</sup> As he glanced over he got a good look at both of them.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> John Palmer Spencer, *Caught in the Crossfire: Marcus Foster and America’s Urban Education Crisis, 1941-1973* (New York: New York University, 2002), 404.

<sup>147</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 128.

<sup>148</sup> Blackburn interview with author, 9/2/09.

As they continued walking toward the car, Blackburn sped up to open the passenger door for Foster. As Blackburn reached the rear of the vehicle and Foster crossed over in front, the two men who had previously been loitering caught up with Blackburn and Foster and began shooting at Foster because he was closest to them. At that moment, Cinque emerged from the bushes with a sawed off shotgun and began firing at Blackburn. Both of Cinque's blasts hit Blackburn, the first spinning him around while the second made contact as Blackburn attempted to escape back toward the Education building.<sup>149</sup> Blackburn recalled hearing the handguns fire and seeing the muzzle flashes from the attack on Foster prior to being shot in the back by Cinque from an approximate distance of fifteen feet.<sup>150</sup>

Despite the pain inflicted upon him by the shotgun blasts, Blackburn continued to stagger back toward the Education building in search of help. Upon arriving inside the building he quickly cried out for help. David Tom found Blackburn lying down in the hallway, bleeding profusely. He yelled out to a janitor to call the police while he checked on Foster. Tom found Foster face down and unresponsive in the parking lot and quickly discovered that Foster no longer had a pulse.<sup>151</sup> The SLA had their first victims; luckily one survived. Police found a wealth of information at the crime scene, but could not immediately translate that information into a suspect. Also, initial sightings by witnesses did not provide police with a consistent description of the murderers.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid..

<sup>150</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 128.

<sup>151</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns* 128-129 and Blackburn interview with author on 9/2/09.

Police came away from these interviews confused regarding the height, weight and ethnicity of the suspected shooters.

The first break for police came during the autopsy. Dr. Allen McNie, while performing the autopsy of Marcus Foster the day after the murder, found a bullet which passed through Foster's heart but had slowed down so much that when it hit the pen and pencil clipped to Foster's shirt pocket, the bullet came to a complete stop. After touching the bullet in the pocket, Dr. McNie became aware of a strange odor that he quickly confirmed to be cyanide.<sup>152</sup> The SLA had drilled tiny holes in the tips of the bullets and inserted small amounts of potassium cyanide in the bullets and then sealing the hole with wax.<sup>153</sup> The Oakland police officer in charge of the Foster murder investigation Detective Sergeant John Agler, upon confirmation of the existence of cyanide in the bullets, quickly closed the loop in the knowledge of the existence of these unique bullets. By requesting secrecy from the coroner and the toxicologist, Sergeant Agler hoped to keep this information from becoming public knowledge. Furthermore, Agler informed only the police chief of the discovery during the autopsy. Consequently, the discovery of cyanide laced bullets found at the site of Patricia Hearst's abduction immediately led police to the SLA as the perpetrators.

The Oakland police did not have to wait long for Foster's murderers to identify themselves. A group calling themselves the "Symbionese Liberation Army: Western Regional Unit" sent Berkeley radio station KPFA their first public communiqué.

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<sup>152</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 130-131.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

Within the heading of the communiqué, the organization listed a “Warrant Order: Execution by Cyanide Bullets” of which Marcus Foster and Robert Blackburn were listed as the targets.<sup>154</sup> As a result, the Oakland police had the name of the organization responsible for the brutal attack, but not the members.

In the San Francisco Bay Area of the mid to late 1960’s and the early to mid 1970’s, new radical organizations sprouted to life and died quickly, usually with little fanfare. This new organization seemed much different, particularly because of their willingness to announce their complicity in a murder of a respected educator. In hindsight, the communiqué represents either an arrogance or absolute contempt of law enforcement. By issuing the communiqué and announcing their involvement, the SLA essentially begged law enforcement to investigate them with all available resources. The communiqués issued by the SLA also demonstrate their need for recognition from both law enforcement and the media, a need that increased over time.

Community reaction toward the murder of Marcus Foster ran counter to the expectations of the SLA. Their first communiqué announce that the act was an order from the “Court of the People.” The people of Oakland, however, quickly demonstrated their grief and anger regarding the murder of their beloved school Superintendent. The Oakland community which had difficulties working together on many issues now came together as one in their anger and sadness regarding the death of Marcus Foster.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

For a period, it brought the city together with Oakland Mayor John Reading standing beside Black Panther Chairman Bobby Seale at the Beebe Memorial CME temple to pay their last respects to Foster.<sup>155</sup> The greatest blow to Cinque, however, concerned the outpouring of grief from the Bay Area's African-American community. The Black Panther Party in Oakland described the murder of Foster as "brutal and Senseless."<sup>156</sup> In fact, initial reactions to the murder, particularly within New Left circles, maintained that the Foster murder must have been the work of a right-wing, fascist or government conspiracy.<sup>157</sup>

The news of the Foster assassination rapidly reached the California prisons. Within one day of the shooting inmate Al Taylor told his prison psychiatrist that "they" should not have killed Marcus Foster, when the doctor asked who "they" were, Taylor responded "The Lebanese Liberation Army." Reports from the prison inmates regarding the Foster murder were extremely critical and may have included an order for Cinque's "execution."<sup>158</sup> Instead of being a celebratory time as a result of their first successful action, the period between the Foster assassination and the arrests of Remiro and Little became a period of introspection and further isolation.

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<sup>155</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 172.

<sup>156</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 132 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 172.

<sup>157</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 132 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 173. VOG mentioned a newspaper account of Nazi leaflets being distributed at an Oakland shopping center with a warning that "there might be shotgun blasts into the mixmaster Principals and Superintendents."

<sup>158</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 146-148.

## Chapter 6

### Triumph Turns to Turmoil

Following the assassination of Marcus Foster, the SLA found itself perched in a precarious position. Forced to abandon the Oakland apartment they used as a base for the assassination, the SLA moved to a new safe house to serve as their base of operations on October 8, 1973. For the first time, the SLA moved outside their traditional base in the Berkeley/Oakland area and moved into the suburbs, 1560 Sutherland Court in Concord, California.<sup>159</sup> In hindsight, Russell Little observed that “The SLA should never have had a safe house in Concord, because we didn’t fit into that middle-class suburban community.”<sup>160</sup> In the aftermath of the Foster murder, the SLA lost its contacts with the New Left in Oakland and Berkeley, the ability to contact friends and possible new recruits, and obtain money. Condemnation of the SLA arrived quickly and universally.<sup>161</sup> While the words stung, the loss of affiliates hurt much more.<sup>162</sup> As a result, Concord was much safer than either Oakland or Berkeley and the fledgling revolution had to be placed on hold while the SLA membership consolidated and set about to determine their next steps.

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<sup>159</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 176.

<sup>160</sup> Susan Lyne and Robert Scheer, “The Story of the SLA,” 4/16/76, p. 32.

<sup>161</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 178 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 185. Weather Underground spokesperson, Bernadine Dohrn, who was generally supportive of the SLA, wrote contemporaneously that “We do not comprehend the execution of Marcus Foster and respond very soberly to the death of a black person who is not a recognized enemy of his people.

<sup>162</sup> *Berkeley Barb*, February 22-28, 1974, “Ex-Symbionese Send Letter to the People.” pp. 2 and 4. The article quotes from unnamed former members of the SLA who were upset by the SLA’s use of “abstract violence.”



Willie Wolfe did not understand what went wrong with the Foster Assassination. As the response from the local communities and the media continually characterized the action in a negative light, Willie began to have doubts regarding his role in the action.<sup>163</sup> Consequently, Wolfe made the decision to return to his family on the East Coast for a brief respite and, hopefully, much needed money. After all, revolutions are expensive.

He arrived at his father's house in Pennsylvania on December 20, 1973. Despite his private doubts, he continued to speak and proselytize about the coming revolution in America. Also, Wolfe mentioned to his family his plans to marry his Swedish girlfriend Eva Olsson, and this was the purpose of his visit.<sup>164</sup> Another reason for the visit involved money and the opportunity to leave the Bay Area and regroup. In all likelihood, Wolfe, the youngest member of the SLA, had become increasingly confused and agitated by the reactions of his friends, currently residing in California prisons, to the murder of Dr. Foster. However, the SLA also needed money. Wolfe's parents had money and his cover story regarding his impending marriage might ease the discussion toward financial assistance from his father.<sup>165</sup> Whatever the reasons for Wolfe's trip to the East Coast, his friends in the SLA had an interest in his activities. Remiro and Little both tried to contact Wolfe around January 1, with Little finally getting in contact with him and asking him to return as soon as possible. On January 10, Bill Harris phoned Wolfe to advise him that Remiro and Little had been arrested and that Wolfe needed to return to the West Coast.

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<sup>163</sup> Kinney, *An American Journey*, 219.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-60.

Harris provided Wolfe with the information necessary so he could contact the SLA upon his return. Willie quickly cancelled his meeting on January 11 with his father and asked his sister Roxie to drive him to the bus station because he needed to visit a sick friend in New York. When they arrived at the bus station, Willie gave his sister his most prized possession, a duffel bag that once belonged to his father.<sup>166</sup> In his own way, Willie said his final goodbye to his sister. With the arrests of his two comrades in Concord, Wolfe returned to California, committing himself to the SLA and leaving any doubts he may have had regarding the assassination of Marcus Foster behind.

The revolution still needed money. Up until the arrests of Remiro and Little, the SLA could count on the income received by Bill and Emily Harris and Camilla Hall as they continued to work. Cinque, Soltysik, Perry, Remiro and Little remained underground, essentially becoming professional revolutionaries. The public grief regarding the Foster murder isolated the SLA from what remained of the New Left in the Bay Area and severely limited any access they may have previously had to financial supporters of New Left causes.

Despite these difficulties, the SLA continued to seek new allies. An undated schedule found at the Concord safe house lists meetings with medical people, Seara, Arco, Chicano Brother, and Bro Hi. Not all of these contacts faded into anonymity however. The individual given the codename Arco provided Cinque with a method for converting a carbine into an automatic weapon with “a high cyclic rate of fire.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 67-69.

<sup>167</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, HEARNAP Files, 2920, p. 1.

The period between the Foster murder and the arrests served as a period of consolidation for the SLA. Although they did not expand beyond their original ten members, they solidified their organization, enhanced their armaments, and most importantly for their organization, they survived the public backlash against the perpetrators of the Foster murder. Law enforcement found little to no help within the New Left communities in their search for the killers. Consequently, as 1973 melded into 1974, the SLA had reasons for optimism for their fledgling revolution as they remained at large and untouched by the Oakland Police department's ongoing murder investigation.

The arrests of Little and Remiro changed everything for the SLA. Prior to their arrests, the SLA had contemplated splitting their organization into two distinct groups; one above ground which would provide a steady flow of information from the local communities, money and other necessary support while the other component went underground and served as a combat unit. After further discussions, the SLA membership decided to establish two combat units with one of the units moving to San Jose. Remiro, Little, Atwood, and the Harrises had planned to move to San Jose.<sup>168</sup> This plan became moot with the arrests of Little and Remiro.

With the Oakland Police Department's investigation of the SLA going nowhere fast, a routine traffic stop near the SLA safe house in Concord proved to be the catalyst for the kidnapping of wealthy heiress Patricia Campbell Hearst.

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<sup>168</sup> Susan Lyne and Robert Scheer, "The Story of the SLA," *New Times*, 4/10/76, 32.

At approximately 1:23am, the SLA had their first brush with law enforcement. Concord Police Sergeant David Duge spotted a van driven by Little with Remiro in the passenger's seat driving slowly in the general vicinity of the safe house. Duge patrolled the area regularly and was familiar with the routine in this suburb. Traffic after midnight was rare and given the slow pace of the SLA van, Duge concluded that the people in the van were car thieves looking for a target. On the other hand, if the driver was lost, he would likely be thankful for assistance from the police. Consequently, he made the decision to pull over the suspicious van. Inside the van, waiting impatiently were Little and Remiro.<sup>169</sup>

Duge asked Little for his license which he provided. The license was in the name of Robert James Scalise.<sup>170</sup> These false identifications proved very important to the SLA. They were particularly handy when they needed to rent a home, apartment, or car without providing their real identity. Duge, however, became suspicious of the van's passenger, Joe Remiro, who provided identification in his own name. Duge then asked both men what they were doing out so late and Little replied that they were looking for the DeVoto residence.

Duge then contacted the police dispatcher to run a check in the names of both Remiro and Scalise.. The check came back clean and Duge had no reason to keep the men any longer. However, on a hunch, he decided to ask the dispatcher if there was a "DeVoto" residence in the area.

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<sup>169</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 159-160 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 189-190.

<sup>170</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 160. Also, Patricia Hearst, in an interview with the FBI on 4/23/76, described the process by which the Third World Liberation Front obtained fictitious identifications. The SLA used a similar process as the one Hearst described in her FBI interview.

When this request came back as a negative, Duge decided to take a closer look at Remiro.<sup>171</sup> As the police officer returned to the van, he asked Remiro to step out of the vehicle. He quickly asked Remiro if he had any knives or guns on his person, but before he received a response he moved toward Remiro to frisk him. Remiro, feeling threatened, stepped back and pulled out his gun, a Walther .380 automatic. Shots were then exchanged.<sup>172</sup> Remiro quickly ran for cover, firing as he ran. Duge, meanwhile, called for backup while Little drove off in the van. With the rear window shot out, a flat tire and a superficial shoulder wound from one of Duge's stray bullets. Little did not get very far and was quickly rounded up, with the police finding a stash of SLA leaflets in the van. The police now knew they were hunting Marcus Foster's killers.

Remiro continued to evade the police, no doubt assisted by his military training. At approximately 5:31am, over four hours after the two SLA members had their first contact with police, Remiro surrendered to two police officers who had noticed him darting in and out of the shadows within blocks of the SLA safe house. Police quickly disarmed Remiro finding the Walther handgun which Oakland police quickly determined to be one of the weapons used to murder Dr. Foster.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> The Concord safe house had been rented under the name "DeVoto," but for some reason did not show up on the police search. In all likelihood the search was conducted using a phone directory and either the SLA did not hook up a phone or the addition of a phone line had occurred too recently in order to add to the directory.

<sup>172</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 159-164 and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 189-192. Remiro and Duge each accuse the other of firing the first shot and instigating the violence.

<sup>173</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 163-164.

In the period between flight and arrest, Remiro had the opportunity to warn his SLA brethren at the safe house. Speculation exists stating Remiro did just that.<sup>174</sup> Remiro's peaceful surrender provides greater credibility to the theory that he warned his fellow SLA members at Sutherland Court. It was against the "Codes of War" for an SLA soldier to surrender, as the Los Angeles Police Department graphically discovered later in the year. According to the SLA's Codes of War, any SLA soldier who "...surrender(ed) to the enemy," if convicted in the People's Court, faced the death penalty. However, instead of condemning Remiro for his meek surrender, the SLA lionized their two captured soldiers and began planning an action that, they hoped, would lead to their release from prison.

The arrests of Little and Remiro proved significant for a number of reasons. To begin with, Oakland Police found one of the murder weapons and two likely suspects in the Foster murder case. Also, through Little and Remiro, law enforcement began the arduous process of gathering information relating to the membership of the SLA. Thus, police began to piece together the activities and contacts of Little and Remiro in addition to the material gleaned from the Concord safe house.

The van seized by police also provided clues regarding the past and future activities of the SLA.

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<sup>174</sup> John Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 202.

Within the van investigators found a cache of SLA leaflets, discovered the van was registered to Nancy Gail Ling (Perry), and traced the motor in the van to a stolen van seized at gunpoint in Berkeley on October 12, 1973. Through sheer luck, the police now had two SLA members in custody and the identity of another.<sup>175</sup>

Unfortunately for the police, they chose not to follow up with a search for a DeVoto residence. Around 6pm on the evening of the arrests, the safe house at 1560 Sutherland Court caught fire while the members of the SLA left the hideout in the vehicle Willie Wolfe's father purchased for him. The attempted arson proved unsuccessful because the SLA sealed the house up, not allowing enough air into the house to allow the blaze to catch fire. All the attempted fire produced was a black billowing trail of smoke which led law enforcement directly to the hideout. The ineptitude did not end with the SLA's attempted fire. To make matters worse, police did not cordon off the residence. By the time reporter Marilyn Baker arrived on the scene, the residence had taken on a circus like atmosphere "as kids and neighbors paraded by clutching their Symbionese trophies, I kept pulling more papers from under the pile on the bed."<sup>176</sup> The police not only missed the opportunity to capture most of the SLA in one fell swoop, they compounded that mistake by allowing people to move freely through the safe house removing potential evidence.

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<sup>175</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 164-165.

<sup>176</sup> Baker and Brompton, *Exclusive!*, 51.

Within the burned out safe house, police found fingerprints from Cinque, Perry, and Soltysik and began to put the puzzle together in regards to the SLA's membership. Police were able to link the Chevrolet that Perry used in the escape from the Concord safe house to Willie Wolfe and then Wolfe to the SLA.

In spite of the colossal failure by the police to cordon off the Concord safe house, they still found a treasure trove of material. Inside the former SLA hideout, police "removed more than a dozen cartons of letters and files along with an address book and other miscellaneous documents."<sup>177</sup> This rich haul of information, which included Patricia Campbell Hearst's name on a list of potential SLA targets, did not seem to be significant initially. The target document listed Marcus Foster as executed; Charles W. Comer, President of the T.A. White Candy Company, had a note next to his name stating "kidnap or execute: warrant prepared." Beside Hearst's name was the citation "arrest warrant issued."<sup>178</sup> References to Patricia Hearst were also found in a spiral notebook belonging to Nancy Ling Perry.<sup>179</sup>

The SLA had obviously been tracking Patricia Hearst and planning some action against her as early as January, 1974. Unfortunately for the Hearst family, police did not consider the notes, lists and other materials significant enough to warn individuals whose names were on them. Even after the Foster murder, police did not consider the SLA to be a major threat.

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<sup>177</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 168.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.



The “arrest warrant” issued for Patricia Hearst signaled a shift in the SLA’s actions. Stung by the harsh criticism that resulted from their murder of Marcus Foster, the SLA moved from political murders to politically motivated kidnappings. The membership of the SLA had seen the movie “State of Seige” which exalted the Uruguayan terrorists known as the Tupamaros. The Tupamaro’s engaged primarily in political kidnappings and armed propaganda and served as a role model for the SLA in the next phase of their development following the arrests of Little and Remiro.<sup>180</sup>

With the abandonment of their safe house in Concord, the SLA found themselves homeless. In the case of Nancy Ling Perry, her name became publicly associated with the SLA. Feeling as if she had nothing to lose in terms of being identified as a member of the SLA, Perry sent a letter to various media outlets.<sup>181</sup> This letter provides an insight into the SLA’s version of American history and its view of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. In an Oliver Stone-like story line, Perry refers to a military coup which occurred in 1963-64 allowing the “militarily armed corporate state” to take over “the existing government” as they “blatantly destroyed the constitution that some of us still believed in.”<sup>182</sup> This same story line, with a few differences occurred in Stone’s movie *JFK*. The SLA attempted, however, to present themselves as patriotic Americans whose movement supported and defended the constitution.

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<sup>180</sup> Leonard Garment, *Crazy Rythem: From Brooklyn and Jazz to Nixon’s White House and Watergate and Beyond* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001), 167. According to one of President Richard Nixon’s advisors, Leonard Garment, the movie *State of Seige* had been scheduled by the American Film Institute to play at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC. When Garment pointed out to American Film Institute’s Director, George Stevens, that the film glorified political assassinations, Stevens quickly cancelled the movie given the fact that the center’s namesake had been the victim of an assassination.

<sup>181</sup> This letter was printed in the February 1-7, 1974 edition of the *Berkeley Barb*.

<sup>182</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 513.

Ironically, Cinque and his comrades missed the opportunity to link their movement to the Founding Fathers by failing to invoke Thomas Jefferson's famous admonition in a letter to William S. Smith in 1787 when he wrote: "What country can preserve the liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance?" Jefferson continued on this theme and wrote "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of tyrants. It is its natural manure."<sup>183</sup> Instead, Perry provided her autobiography, a justification of the murder of Foster, and an assertion that the fire at the Concord residence was meant only "to melt away any fingerprints that may have been overlooked."<sup>184</sup> Odd responses such as this had a negative impact upon the credibility of the SLA because fire does not magically erase fingerprints and the assertion that it could had no factual basis.

*The Berkeley Barb*, an alternative newspaper sympathetic to New Left causes, had a difficult time translating Perry's rambling communiqué. In fact, the communiqué was ridiculed and compared to speeches written for "Nixon, LBJ, or Reagan." Furthermore, the article refers to Perry as "in too far" and went on to lampoon her justification for the fire at Concord safe house by stating a fact that "fingerprints don't melt."<sup>185</sup> Just days prior to the abduction of Patricia Hearst, *The Berkeley Barb* still wondered if Foster's murder was an act of a "CIA dirty tricks team...or is the SLA a bunch of sincere people long on revolutionary theory but short on tactics and common sense."<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Fawn M. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York: WW Norton, 1974), 241

<sup>184</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 516.

<sup>185</sup> *The Berkeley Barb*, February 1-7, 1974, p. 2.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

While *The Berkley Barb* wrote about Perry and her communiqué, the SLA focused on re-organizing and began training for its next action. But first, a new base of operations was necessary following the fiasco in Concord.

With amazing rapidity, the SLA rebounded from the arrests of Russell Little and Joe Remiro along with the abandonment of their only means of shelter. The arrest of Little placed the revolutionaries in a particularly difficult situation since he was the only member of the organization who knew the identities and whereabouts of all the SLA members and sympathizers. Without Little, individuals such as “Arco,” the person who had modified the groups .30 caliber M-1 carbines now was lost to the organization as an asset because no one else knew how to find him or who he might actually be.<sup>187</sup> Cinque, Perry and Mizmoon left their Concord residence at approximately 6:15pm on January 10 as a result of the arrests of Little and Remiro in the morning. As evidence of the resourcefulness of the group, less than two days later they had located a new base of operations.

The remaining members of the SLA, with the exception of Camilla Hall, joined Cinque, Perry, and Soltysik underground following the January 10 arrests. Bill and Emily Harris quit their jobs, abandoned their personal vehicle and vacated their apartment leaving behind most of their personal belongings. Angela Atwood followed the Harrises underground and they were quickly reunited with Willie Wolfe upon his return from the East Coast.

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<sup>187</sup> National Archives, Pacific Regional Branch Office, RG 118, U. S. Attorney’s Files, FBI interview of Patricia Hearst, 4/23/1976, p. 3. Arco’s design modification of the M-1 carbine intrigued the FBI because of its simplicity and its extremely high cyclic rate of fire. Los Angeles Police Department, in its official report of SLA activities in the city referred to Joe Remiro as the groups armorer, when, in fact, this was a false assertion. Remiro was mechanically inclined but did not have any experience as a gunsmith.

On January 12, 1974, Emily Harris and Patricia Soltysik, posing as Joanne James and Judith Lawrence, rented a home at 514 Winchester Drive in Daly City, just outside of San Francisco.<sup>188</sup> The owner of the property continued to stop by in order to make repairs to the newly rented house and kept a key to the house so he could enter at any time to complete the repairs.<sup>189</sup> Typically, a renter would appreciate this type of detail on the part of the property owner. However, when planning to keep a kidnapping victim isolated in the rented house, it became obvious that the Winchester Drive property was not suitable and the SLA began to search for another alternative.

On January 15, 1974, the owner of the house at 37 Northridge Drive in Daly City placed an ad in the *Industrial City Newspaper*, referred to as a throw-away newspaper by the FBI.<sup>190</sup> In a report filed by the owner of the home, he “stated he was contacted on January 20, 1974 by two white females, Toni Wilson and Candi Jackson.” The owner was unable at that time to identify either of the women he rented the house to as being identical to any of the female members of the SLA.<sup>191</sup> The owner’s wife and one of his two sons, however, identified Patricia Soltysik as being Toni Wilson.<sup>192</sup> The fact that the owner of the Northridge Drive residence did not keep a key to the house or make daily appearances led the SLA to quickly change residences.

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<sup>188</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 2826, p.2. The owner of the property identified Soltysik and Harris as the individuals he rented the apartment to.

<sup>189</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 2730, p. 4.

<sup>190</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 2823, p. 3.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 4

<sup>192</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 2826, p. 1.

By January 23, the SLA abandoned the Winchester Drive safe house and relocated to the Northridge Drive property.<sup>193</sup>

Soon after moving into their new base of operations, the SLA changed the locks on the front door and installed a heavy duty bolt-type lock to ensure the owner of the Northridge property would not barge in unannounced.<sup>194</sup> They proceeded to cover up the windows “with a heavy material which was nailed to the wall.” Also, drapes were nailed to the window frame to make sure that no one outside the home was able to peer inside.<sup>195</sup> The strangest renovation to the home by the SLA, however, had to be the walk-in closet of the master bedroom. The knobs had been retrofitted” so that the door could not be opened from the inside.”<sup>196</sup> This walk-in closet measured four feet deep and six feet wide.

The SLA was finally ready for their next action, the abduction of wealthy California heiress Patricia Campbell Hearst. Following her abduction on February 4, 1974, the walk-in closet served as her “People’s Prison,” while the SLA attempted to coerce the release of their jailed comrades Russ Little and Joe Remiro.

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<sup>193</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, HEARNAP Files, 2730, p. 4.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter 7

### The Kidnapping of Patricia Campbell Hearst

February of 1974 found the United States locked in the midst of the Watergate scandal. Every day it seemed, new revelations of wrongdoing by individuals involved with the Nixon Administration were reported on the front pages of newspapers throughout the country. On February 4, an event occurred which replaced Watergate in the headlines of American newspapers when the SLA kidnapped heiress Patricia Campbell Hearst, the granddaughter of the legendary William Randolph Hearst. Initially the media adhered to a voluntary news blackout of the abduction in deference to the Hearst family which owned numerous media outlets. However, by the following morning, KGO radio learned that *The Oakland Tribune*, owned by former United States Senator William Knowland, planned on breaking the story of the Hearst kidnapping in its afternoon edition.<sup>197</sup> The media attention provided validation for the SLA, at least in their minds. It fed into their belief that they represented the voiceless throughout the nation. Negotiations with Randolph Hearst, if the back and forth between the SLA and Hearst can actually be characterized as true negotiations, occurred by way of the various media outlets of the Bay Area. In fact, the line often blurred between those who reported the news and those who made the news as it related to the SLA.

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<sup>197</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 198.

With Patricia Hearst in tow, Cinque found himself in a position of power that had never occurred previously in his life. The difficulty for the SLA resulted from their inability to translate this temporary power into a positive result. They never determined an actual value for their captive. Consequently, the SLA found themselves seduced by the sudden media attention and unable to determine a single course of action following the abduction. Despite the efficiency of the kidnapping, the SLA's actions from that date through the shootout in Los Angeles demonstrated a central weakness within their organization, namely their inability to determine a plausible and achievable goal and develop a means to reach it through their access to the media to publicize it.

The SLA had Patricia Hearst under surveillance for a lengthy period of time, pre-dating the arrests of Little and Remiro.<sup>198</sup> Three weeks prior to the kidnapping took place, Hearst and her fiancé hosted a party at their Berkeley apartment. Both Hearst and Weed spotted three “rough types, not college students – sinister,” at the party. They each figured the three were friends of one of the friends they had invited to the party, therefore, they never confronted them or asked them to leave. Following the kidnapping, Weed identified Mizmoon Soltysik as one of the party crashers.<sup>199</sup>

On the day of the kidnapping, the SLA had everything in place, except for one thing, they did not have enough vehicles for the getaway following the kidnapping. No one in the cell knew how to hot wire a car, thus the SLA had to steal a car.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Notes relating to Patricia Hearst and her activities at Berkeley were found in Nancy Ling Perry's spiral notebook at the Concord safe house. Also, in a phone interview with the author, Bill Harris mentioned that the SLA had kept Hearst under their surveillance for quite awhile.

<sup>199</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 199.

<sup>200</sup> Roger Rapoport, *Oakland Tribune*, 10/16/88, A2.

The would-be revolutionaries “stood on the dark side of Berkeley’s Shattuck Avenue Co-op parking lot” looking for a car to “borrow.”<sup>201</sup> When the members of the SLA first spotted the 1964 Chevy convertible that they used for the kidnapping, they laughed derisively at the vehicle and referred to it as a “junker.” However, after several unsuccessful attempts to appropriate a vehicle, the SLA came back to the Chevy convertible parked nearby on Josephine Street.<sup>202</sup>

As Peter Berenson, the owner of the targeted vehicle, began removing groceries from the car, he was approached by two females from the SLA told him to “give me the keys. We want your car, not you.” He was then knocked down and tied up, blindfolded and gagged by the two women and another assailant. He was then thrown in the back seat of the car with a blanket thrown over him.<sup>203</sup> The SLA know had enough vehicles to proceed with their night’s work.

While hunting for another getaway car, a blue Volkswagen parked across the street from Hearst and Weed’s apartment. The Volkswagen remained in that position, with the motor running, from at least 7pm until the kidnapping, leaving with the other SLA vehicles associated with the abduction. The license plate was covered in mud and not visible. A blonde woman who bore a striking resemblance to Camilla Hall based on descriptions from eyewitnesses, was identified as one of two people waiting in the car.<sup>204</sup> The SLA wanted to ensure that their target remained at home until they came calling.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid

<sup>202</sup> Ibid

<sup>203</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 195-196.

<sup>204</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 194.



The kidnapping of Patricia Hearst occurred at 9:17pm on Monday, February 4, 1974. By 9:21pm, the SLA had their captive in tow and had left the apartment building complex where Hearst lived with her fiancé Steven Weed.<sup>205</sup> This action represented the first political kidnapping in the history of the United States. The SLA, however, had not come up with this idea all by themselves. In fact, they were imitating the leftist Tupamaros of Uruguay who used political kidnappings to fund their activities and bring individuals before the “People’s Court” in order to stand trial for their actions. Members of the SLA had previously viewed the film *State of Seige* which glorified the actions taken by the Tupamaros. Faced with the dilemma of wanting to free their two captured comrades, the SLA used the Uruguayan revolutionaries as a model for their abduction of Patricia Hearst.

The kidnapping of Patricia Hearst occurred quickly and efficiently. Within a four minute period, Cinque along with Bill Harris and Angela Atwood charged into the apartment of Hearst and Weed, tied up and beat up Weed (along with a neighbor, Steven Suenego, who just happened to leave his apartment in the same complex in the middle of the kidnapping), snatched Hearst’s wallet and tied her up.<sup>206</sup> Right before the SLA left the apartment with their victim, Weed leapt to his feet and ran around the apartment like a wild man before exiting out the back door screaming for help. Weed did so, fearing if he did nothing, he would be killed. In the meantime, Bill Harris picked up Hearst, threw her over his shoulder and exited the apartment complex.

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<sup>205</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 189-192.

<sup>206</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 33. In her account of the kidnapping, Hearst derisively quotes Weed crying out to Cinque, Harris and Atwood, “Take my Wallet. That’s all we have. Take anything you want...anything you want...” Taking Weed’s advice, they did. They took his bride to be.

When Harris came to the stolen getaway car, he found the trunk closed. While Harris went to the front of the vehicle and removed the keys from the ignition, he returned to the trunk only to find Hearst attempting to hop away.<sup>207</sup> When he reflected upon the kidnapping in later years, Harris mentioned the much different reactions of Weed and Hearst to the kidnapping. Unlike her fiancé who screamed and whimpered at differing times until he was knocked out by Cinque, Hearst reacted in a cool and defiant manner.<sup>208</sup>

Initial reports of the abduction, based on the eyewitness accounts from Steven Weed and neighbor Steve Suenaga, described the kidnappers as two black men and a white woman.<sup>209</sup> Consequently, the initial search quickly focused on Cinque and Thero Wheeler as the primary suspects. Despite the fact that Wheeler had left the SLA prior to the Foster assassination, accounts of the kidnapping continued to include him.<sup>210</sup> In a search of Weed's and Hearst's apartment soon after the abduction, officers found a box of .38 caliber bullets beneath a bookcase.<sup>211</sup> The bullets had the tip drilled, then filled with potassium cyanide and capped with wax. This was the calling card of the SLA and only the police knew of the SLA's cyanide bullets at the time of the kidnapping.

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<sup>207</sup> Roger Rapoport, *Oakland Tribune*, 10/16/88, A2.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. See also *New Times*, Lyne and Scheer, "Twenty Months with Patty/Tania," 3/5/76, *New Times*, 18. Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 562, reports a few first hand accounts of Hearst screaming for help, but not all. In fact, the majority of the first hand accounts do not recall Hearst screaming at all. In McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns* 191, Hearst is portrayed as screaming hysterically while trying to break free. While trying to break free, Hearst's robe came off exposing her upper body and her screams became sobs while she begged to be let go.

<sup>209</sup> Federal Bureau Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 2.

<sup>210</sup> Susan Darby Hendry, *Soliah: The Sara Jane Story* (Bloomington: Cable Publishing, 2002), 90-91. Hendry continues to perpetuate the myth that a second African-American male had taken part in the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst. Hearst emphatically stated in her autobiography that Cinque, Bill Harris and Angela Atwood were the only members of the SLA to enter the apartment.

<sup>211</sup> The search also led to the discovery of over a pound of marijuana in the master bedroom closet.

Prior to the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst, only Nancy Ling Perry had publicly announced her affiliation with the SLA. She did so by sending a rambling communiqué to the various media sources in the aftermath of the arrests of Little and Remiro and her bungled attempt to burn down the Concord safe house. Police were quickly able to add Cinque's name to the list of SLA members as a result of eyewitness accounts and their ability to pick his photograph from a lineup. While law enforcement officials quickly attributed the abduction to the SLA, the public had to wait for two days before the SLA announced their involvement with an "arrest warrant" sent to Berkeley radio station KPFA and received by station manager Paul Fisher. The document announced that Hearst had been "arrested" as a result of a "warrant issued by: The Court of the People." It went on to state that Hearst had been "removed to a protective area of safety" and that any attempts to rescue her would lead to her execution.<sup>212</sup> Included with the communiqué was Patricia Hearst's Mobil Oil credit card in her father's name, substantiating the SLA as the kidnappers and that Hearst was in their possession. Unfortunately the SLA did not include any explanation for the "Court of the People," such as its makeup and purpose. The court, however, like the "protective area, medical units" and "combat teams," mentioned by the SLA proved to be a figment of their imaginary revolution.

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<sup>212</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 199-200.

Instead of establishing a ransom for their hostage, the SLA demanded that “all communications from this court MUST be published in full in all newspapers and all other forms of media. Failure to do so will endanger the life of the prisoner.” Consequently, the SLA established media access and not money as their initial form of tribute. While Randolph Hearst and Steven Weed hoped for a demand from the captors that could be satisfied, the SLA prepared their next communiqué which outlined for them the “good faith gesture” that needed to be met before negotiations for the release of Patricia could begin.

The uniqueness of the negotiations between Randolph Hearst and the SLA resulted partially from their public nature. At no point did Randolph Hearst have the opportunity or the ability to contact Cinque directly. On the other hand, Cinque and his SLA cohorts preferred to use the media as their middle man. By doing so, Cinque demonstrated his control of the process while keeping Randolph Hearst and law enforcement in a defensive and reactive state.

After almost a week of waiting, the SLA sent an audio taped communiqué on February 12, 1974, again via radio station KPFA. In this second message, both Cinque and Patricia spoke. Patricia’s role was to reassure her family that she was still alive and in good condition. Cinque spoke first on the communiqué. He identified himself as a “black man who holds the rank of General Field Marshall in the United Federated Forces in the SLA.” Cinque stated that Patricia Hearst had been kidnapped as a result of the sins of her parents. As a result, the Hearst family must provide a good faith gesture before negotiations could begin.

The good faith gesture requested by Cinque involved a food give-away of at least seventy dollars worth of high quality foods to each person who provided a welfare card; parole or probation papers; and jail or bail release slips. Randolph Hearst was instructed to begin the food give away by February 19, and to set up the food distribution for Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays. Distribution centers, per Cinque's verbal instructions, needed to be established in the poor communities of San Francisco, Oakland, East Los Angeles, Compton and Watts. Furthermore, the SLA demanded that there not be any interference or involvement in the food give away by police.<sup>213</sup>

Patricia Hearst's role in the communiqué was to provide evidence that she was still alive and being treated humanely. Also, she attempted to validate the kidnapping by providing background on the serious nature of the SLA as she had experienced it. She went on to state that she was a prisoner in the same manner as Remiro and Little, a not so subtle hint that the SLA hoped to exchange her for their imprisoned comrades. The tone of Patricia's voice led the FBI to believe that she may have been "drugged."<sup>214</sup> Although Patricia's portion of the tape must have been scripted, she came across as sympathetic to her captors and their cause, foreshadowing her future role with the SLA.

This second communiqué resulted in two major problems for Randolph Hearst. First, a good faith gesture as laid out by the SLA had been estimated to cost over four hundred million dollars.<sup>215</sup> The other problem he faced was the implied swap of his daughter for Remiro and Little.

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<sup>213</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 211 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 204.

<sup>214</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 156, pp. 2-3.

<sup>215</sup> The estimated cost of the food give away was made in 1974 at the value of the dollar at that time.

In regards to the first problem, the SLA had greatly over estimated Randolph Hearst's wealth. According to Steven Weed, Patricia Hearst had at one time estimated her father's wealth at approximately fifteen million dollars. After Weed reviewed the Hearst family accounts in 1974, he estimated the family to be worth 1.4 million dollars.

During the period between the release of the first communiqué and the taping of the second, Cinque and Perry conducted an interrogation of their captive. The interrogation focused on the wealth of Randolph Hearst. As a result of her lack of knowledge regarding her family's finances and her status as a prisoner, Patricia was in no position to repudiate the assumptions of wealth attributed to her family by the SLA.<sup>216</sup> Factor in the lack of knowledge on the part of the SLA regarding the number of individuals throughout California bearing the types of identification needed to obtain food and it became evident how such an unreasonable good faith gesture came about. The SLA did not have access to the type of information that allowed them to develop a reasonable request within such a short time frame. The "spur of the moment" nature of this initial request is painfully obvious. By March, the SLA lost interest in the food give away, confirming that the good faith gesture had more to do with an attempt to obtain a positive impression among the poor of Northern California, than any real desire to negotiate the release of Patricia Hearst or develop a program to benefit the poor for the long term.

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<sup>216</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 53-53 and Bill Harris interview with author, 2/2/09.

The desire to free Remiro and Little from prison served as the other factor in the SLA's decision to demand a good faith gesture instead of a ransom. The SLA wanted either the Hearst family, Governor Ronald Reagan or any other government entity to offer to swap their captured soldiers for Patricia Hearst. Unfortunately for the SLA, Randolph Hearst did not have the power to release Remiro and Little from prison and Governor Reagan, who did have the power, refused to do so for the obvious reason of the precedent it would set. When the negotiations for the release of their comrades failed to occur, the SLA faced a difficult dilemma – how valuable was their captive?<sup>217</sup> In the end, Patricia Hearst's value led to a two million dollar food give away by her father. The Hearst Foundation placed another four million dollars into an escrow account to continue the food program known as *People-in-Need* (PIN) once the SLA released Patricia. Unfortunately for the Hearst family, the SLA quickly lost interest in the PIN program. While it provided the initial gratification of enabling them to manipulate Randolph Hearst, by the end of March the SLA had new plans for Patricia Hearst.

If the first public arrest warrant issued by the SLA did not provide the Hearst family with enough forewarning that the kidnapping of Patricia would be unlike any other kidnapping in recent memory, the communiqué from February 12 erased any doubts. The request for a four hundred million dollar food program opened a new phase in the relationship between the SLA, the Hearst family and the media. The SLA hoped to reconnect with the Bay Area's African-American community, a relationship that never developed because of the Foster assassination.

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<sup>217</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 208.

Also, they sought to embarrass Randolph Hearst by refusing to negotiate the release of his daughter prior to his providing a good faith gesture. Cinque and his comrades knew that with Patricia, they had a sword hanging over the Hearst family. The question at the time revolved around just how far would Randolph Hearst go to secure the safe return of his daughter?

Randolph Hearst quickly responded to the SLA's second communiqué stating that the request was far beyond his financial means. He went on to state that he would provide another option within "the next twenty four to forty eight hours."<sup>218</sup> Neither the SLA nor Patricia Hearst believed Randolph Hearst. For Patricia, the thought of anything being beyond the financial capability of her family was likely an unthinkable proposition. In reality, Randolph Hearst did not have the financial means to meet the SLA's request.

In the interim, Randolph Hearst continued planning for the People-in-Need program to meet the basic parameters of the SLA's request. However, on February 16, the SLA responded to Randolph Hearst. This second audio communiqué was received by the Reverend Cecil Williams of Glide Memorial Church and featured both Patricia and Cinque once more. Patricia told her father that the SLA was not trying to present an unreasonable request or to feed the whole state.<sup>219</sup> She mentioned that the SLA was mad about comments made concerning the upcoming food program, particularly those by Governor Reagan.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 209.

<sup>219</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 213.

<sup>220</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 251. Governor Reagan had mentioned that very few people "would accept food that was ransom for a kidnap victim." He would later mention, in response to the PIN program that "It's just too bad that we can't have an epidemic of botulism."



Patricia goes on to state that she would remain “okay as long as the SLA demands are met and as long as the two prisoners in San Quentin (Remiro and Little) are okay. And as long as the FBI doesn’t come in here”<sup>221</sup> Once more, the SLA attempted to link their two friends in police custody to Patricia. The fact that no one at any point attempted to insert Remiro and Little into the negotiations for Patricia Hearst’s release complicated further communications between Randolph Hearst and the SLA. Without the release of their comrades, the SLA had to desperately search for a different method to continue to negotiate with Randolph Hearst and yet, not to project any weakness in their negotiating position.

The February 16 communiqué also called upon the Reverend Cecil Williams and representatives of the American Indian Movement; the Black Teachers Caucus of Nairobi College of East Palo Alto; the United Prisoners Union; and the National Welfare Rights Organization to serve as observers of the food program and intermediaries between the SLA and the Hearst family. Other organizations such as the Black Panther Party, *Kalayaan* Newspaper, and the radical newspaper *Getting Together* refused to participate. The groups that chose to participate issued a joint declaration stating that they did not condone terrorist activities.<sup>222</sup>

By involving these outside organizations, the SLA continued its attempt to provide their actions with the cloak of legitimate revolutionary actions.

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 212

<sup>222</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 213-214.

Through the involvement of all these organizations they hoped to clear themselves of any wrongdoing regarding the assassination of Marcus Foster and demonstrate that the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst occurred for humanitarian reasons and to benefit those who had little or no voice in the American political scene. Reactions among the New Left were tepid at best. They proved willing to involve themselves in an activity that they hoped would lead to the release of Patricia Hearst, but they remained wary of the SLA, particularly because of its violent past.<sup>223</sup>

In response to the SLA, Randolph Hearst announced on February 19, the establishment of a tax exempt charitable organization under the leadership of Ludlow Kramer, the Secretary of State in Washington state.<sup>224</sup> In Washington, Kramer established a similar food program known as Neighbors-in-Need (NIN) which served as the model for People-in-Need program set up to respond to the SLA's demands. Randolph Hearst donated five hundred thousand dollars to the program, while another one and a half million dollars came from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. In responding in such a proactive and compliant manner, Randolph Hearst placed himself in a no-win situation. Nothing he did could possibly meet the expectations of the SLA.

The fourth communiqué received by the Reverend Cecil Williams on February 21, made it very clear to Randolph Hearst that he was in an extremely precarious situation.

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<sup>223</sup> The best example of the wariness of the New left towards the SLA was an anonymous article written in the May 1974 edition of *Ramparts* magazine, pp. 21-27. The article was written by David Horowitz, however, he feared retribution from the SLA because of his scathing condemnation of their violence, focusing heavily on the Foster assassination.

<sup>224</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 215.

Cinque responded to Randolph Hearst's two million dollar food program with the critique that it was "not at all a good-faith gesture but rather is an act of throwing a few crumbs to the people, forcing them to fight over it amongst themselves."<sup>225</sup> Cinque upped the ante by demanding another four million dollars be added to the food program. They had the Hearst family by the throat and the SLA was not about to relax its grip on the situation. Therefore, they told Randolph Hearst that not only did they require more money be added to the food program, but the food distribution needed to occur in seven largely ethnic neighborhoods in San Francisco, Oakland and East Palo Alto. No identification was required to receive the food and they designated WAPAC, the Western Addition Project Area Committee, as chairman of the PIN coalition. WAPAC, as Chairman of the coalition, had veto power over any and all decisions regarding the PIN program.<sup>226</sup> WAPAC had the reputation throughout the Bay Area as a "hard-line black radical group" despite its status as a federally funded urban development project.<sup>227</sup> If Randolph Hearst did not meet these new demands, the SLA threatened to break off all further negotiations for the release of Patricia Hearst. Interestingly enough, negotiations relating to the release of Patricia had not yet taken place making the statement practically meaningless. Factor in the SLA's addiction to the media and a complete breakdown of negotiations was not likely. The SLA obtained its meaning from its ability to manipulate both the media and Randolph Hearst.

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<sup>225</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 216.

<sup>226</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*.245.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. Arnold Townsend of WAPAC became the PIN coalition leader. The relationship between Townsend and Ludlow Kramer was strained, at best.

The third audio communiqué presented a change in tactics for the SLA. It represented a final push to squeeze as much money as possible from Randolph Hearst. Yet, the ultimatum reflected a growing knowledge within the SLA that a trade for Little and Remiro would not occur. Furthermore, Cinque launched into a tirade in response to media reports naming Donald DeFreeze/Cinque as one of the SLA suspects. Cinque responded by stating that “You do indeed know me. You have always known me. I’m that nigger you have hunted and feared night and day. I’m that nigger you have killed hundreds of my people in the vain hope of finding. I’m the nigger that is no longer just hunted, robbed and murdered. I’m that nigger that hunts you. Yes, you know me. You know me, I’m the wetback. You know me, I’m the gook, the broad, the servant, the spik. Yes, indeed you know us all, and we know you – the oppressor, murderer, and robber. And you have hunted and robbed and exploited us all. Now we are the hunters that will give you no rest. And we will not compromise the freedom of our children.”<sup>228</sup>

The statement served as Cinque’s personal declaration of war against the world as he knew it. Also, it signaled the high point of Cinque’s manipulation of Randolph Hearst, for he had little more that he could offer the SLA. Even a Hearst had limits as Cinque had slowly come to realize. The SLA released only three more communiqués before leaving the Bay Area for their appointment with destiny and the Los Angeles Police Department.

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid., 241.

Instead of shutting down the food program based on the criticisms of the SLA, Randolph Hearst continued on. The first food distribution occurred on February 22, 1974. Trucks arrived late at the four distribution sites in San Francisco, Richmond, East Palo Alto and East Oakland. The initial food distribution centers used by PIN were owned by the Nation of Islam. Crowds gathered at the distribution centers early in the morning in anticipation of receiving the free food, with thousands of people already in line by 9am. Unfortunately, the trucks did not leave the warehouse until just after noon,<sup>229</sup> Ludlow Kramer predicted that twenty thousand would receive food during the first day of distribution. Unfortunately, Kramer's estimate proved to be way off the mark. In fact, only nine thousand people received food in the initial give away according to Kramer's final tally.<sup>230</sup>

With thousands of people standing in line for hours and not enough food to go around, the potential for disaster was great during the first distribution of food. However, only one location had trouble – East Oakland. At all four locations the food giveaway presented itself as an extremely unorganized affair, particularly through the images pictured by the media. By the time the PIN trucks arrived at the Oakland distribution site, the anticipation had grown to such a level that the arrival of the trucks unleashed the waiting mass of people on the trucks. In this scene of fury, the volunteers who were to distribute the food were pushed aside as people from the crowd leapt onto the trucks as soon as they stopped and began tossing food into the surrounding crowds.

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<sup>229</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 242.

<sup>230</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 224.

Anarchy was the result as the people in the crowds began pushing, shoving and fighting which led to twenty-one injuries reported by local hospitals resulting from the food giveaway.<sup>231</sup>

In the aftermath of the first distribution, PIN received a bill from the Nation of Islam for one hundred and fifty four thousand dollars. The Muslims billed PIN for 150,000 pounds of fish and 820 cases of eggs handed out from their warehouse as a result of the inadequacy of the PIN distribution. PIN ended up settling with the Muslims and sent them a check for ninety nine thousand and twenty six dollars.<sup>232</sup> No more PIN food distributions occurred at Nation of Islam owned warehouses again.

PIN was off to a bad start, due in large part to the quick turnaround necessitated by the SLA's demands. The food give away program had been quickly developed and staffed only by volunteers. Consequently, the program was beset by organizational problems. Although future food distributions did not have the circus-like atmosphere of the first one, first impressions of the program proved difficult to shrug off.

The same day that PIN kicked off its food give away program, Randolph Hearst responded to Cinque and the SLA's demand for another four million dollars to be added to the two million dollars Hearst had already invested in PIN. Randolph Hearst was accompanied by his friend and colleague Charles Gould, who also served as the publisher of the San Francisco Examiner. Hearst declared the latest SLA demand to be beyond his "financial capability."<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 243.

<sup>232</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 243.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

Following Hearst's statement, Gould stepped forward and stated that on behalf of the Hearst Corporation, he was "prepared to contribute to People-in-Need a total of four million dollars for a food distribution program for the poor and needy, provided Patricia Hearst was released unharmed."<sup>234</sup> Randolph Hearst came to the conclusion that in order to continue to finance the food give away, he needed a commitment from the SLA for the release of his daughter, thus the condition placed upon the money's release. Immediately upon freeing Patricia Hearst two million dollars would be added to the PIN with another two million contributed in January, 1975. This response essentially told the SLA to take it or leave it, but no more money would be forthcoming.

The SLA responded to this last offer with silence, possibly because they did not know how to respond to the push back. The purpose of the food program from the SLA's perspective, however, had already been met. The SLA had received the requisite attention from the media. They humbled Randolph Hearst, and, in the opinion of the SLA, the food giveaway demonstrated the support they now had among the poor and the needy.

Despite the ultimatum given to Randolph Hearst from Cinque, Hearst continued on with the PIN food distribution. Volunteers continued to arrive at the PIN warehouse to assist with the preparations for future food distributions. One such volunteer was Sara Jane Moore, who attempted to assassinate President Gerald Ford during his September 22, 1975 visit to San Francisco.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Sara Jane Moore was recently paroled from prison and has freely discussed her past, including a television appearance, regarding her involvement with the FBI and radical movements in the Bay Area.

The volunteers arrived on a daily basis and the individuals who donated their time ran the gamut of American society. With the flurry of activity surrounding the food give away, supplies disappeared from the warehouse by the truckload. The situation was so bad that even the security guards had filled their vehicles with food from the warehouse.<sup>236</sup>

In spite of all the disorganization surrounding PIN, a second food distribution was scheduled for February 28, 1974. By most accounts, this second food giveaway had substantially less drama than the first as an estimated thirty thousand people received “top quality” foods.<sup>237</sup> Arnold Townsend disagreed with Kramer’s numbers. According to WAPAC estimates, only fifteen thousand received a bag of food and each bag had a value estimated at eight dollars each.<sup>238</sup> The third food distribution occurred on March 5, and included twelve distribution sites. Despite the loss of nine trucks, thirty five thousand people received food according to Ludlow Kramer, although Townsend and WAPAC estimated that only twenty five thousand received food. No matter which estimate was the most accurate, a large number of people received free food.

On March 6, while visiting Washington DC and speaking at a private luncheon for the Bull Elephants, Governor Ronald Reagan mentioned in regards to the PIN program that “It’s just too bad we can’t have an epidemic of botulism.”<sup>239</sup> Reagan’s outrage regarding the “blood money” aspect of the PIN food distribution reflected the feelings of many.

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<sup>236</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns* 244.

<sup>237</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 250. Report from Ludlow Kramer.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 251.



However, despite the remarks of Governor Reagan, the PIN program continued with another food distribution on March 8 at fourteen different sites with thirty five thousand people receiving food packages valued at approximately twenty dollars per package.<sup>240</sup> The fifth and final food distribution occurred on March 25.

In all, PIN distributed food to over 100,000 people throughout the Bay Area. All of this had been accomplished with the two million dollars provided by Randolph Hearst and the Hearst Corporation. Given the ad hoc nature of the PIN organization and the almost impossible deadlines imposed by the SLA, the food give away had been an enormous success. If the food program truly held any significance for the SLA, Patricia Hearst would have been released, and then PIN would have been infused with another four million dollars from the Hearst Corporation. Another four million dollars would ensure the continuity of the food distribution to the poor and the needy, theoretically the community that the SLA thought they represented. Unfortunately, the SLA failed to seize upon this opportunity. Instead they focused their criticisms upon the failures of the initial distribution in East Oakland in order to condemn the program. The only activity in the SLA's short lived history to actually benefit the poor communities had to take a back seat to further media attention and the integration of Patricia Hearst into the SLA.

After more than two weeks without a public statement, the SLA released another audio communiqué on March 9. The latest recording was placed in the women's restroom and taped to the toilet at Foster's Restaurant in San Francisco.

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 252. The dollar values reflect 1974 prices.

Phil Buchanan, an on-air personality from radio station KSAN received a phone call from a woman who provided directions to locate the audiotape. The package contained a California State Automobile Association card bearing the name of Patricia Hearst.<sup>241</sup>

This newest communication introduced to those following the SLA, Angela Atwood as General Gelina.<sup>242</sup> Atwood began her monologue with a scathing rebuke of the leftist elements that had condemned the actions of the SLA. She stated that “It has been claimed that we are destroying the left” and those who condemn the SLA “were cowards afraid of revolutionary violence.”<sup>243</sup> What Atwood and her fellow revolutionaries failed to comprehend, possibly due in part to their isolation, was the constant surveillance of individuals associated with the New Left by law enforcement. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies used the abduction of Patricia Hearst as a pretext to follow, interview and keep under surveillance people who associated with leftist causes and organizations. Radical elements within the New Left felt just as threatened by the SLA as they did with law enforcement, due to the unpredictable nature of the SLA’s use of violence.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, 999, p. 1.

<sup>242</sup> The FBI transcripts referred to Atwood as “Dalina.”

<sup>243</sup> Quotes taken directly from the FBI’s transcript of the 4<sup>th</sup> SLA communiqué.

<sup>244</sup> I am referring specifically to an anonymous article in the May 1974 edition of *Ramparts* titled “The Symbionese Liberation Army: Terrorism and the New Left,” pp. 21-27. David Horowitz, the author of the anonymous editorial wrote in *Radical Son: A Generational Odyssey* that “fearful of reprisals that the SLA might take on my family, I had not signed the editorial. Looking back, I realize that this was the first time in my life I had been afraid of the left.” As an interesting side note of history, it is possible that the SLA played an important role in converting Horowitz from his new left beliefs into a neo-conservative.

Atwood went on to blast the food give away by stating that “PIN showed contempt for the people through disorganization and distribution of surplus commodities instead of quality fresh meats, vegetables and produce.” She then complained about the “measly two million dollars” allotted to the PIN program. She blamed Randolph Hearst for not following the guidelines established by the SLA and considered the four million dollars to be added to the PIN program “a sham.” In closing, Atwood stated that no further communication would occur until Remiro and Little had their interview on national television.

Patricia Hearst followed Atwood on the audiotape. In an emotional and angry response to her family, Patricia stated that, in her opinion, the FBI is the enemy and feared that they were attempting to kill her. Also, she did not believe her father did not have the money for the food program that the SLA requested. Along with Governor Reagan’s comments about recipients of the food distribution by PIN contracting botulism, Patricia then stated that she is no longer being treated as a person, but as a political pawn. Like Atwood, Hearst condemned the food program. She asked her cousin and sisters to speak out on her behalf, particularly her cousin William (Willie) Hearst. She went on to state that the SLA had provided her with George Jackson’s *Blood in my Eye* and through her readings gained a greater understanding of “fascism in America.” To protect her from the FBI, the SLA issued her a shotgun and would provide her with ammunition if the FBI attacked the safe house.

The reaction to Patricia Hearst's diatribe against her parents proved to be a mixture of disbelief and hurt. Patricia, by this point had developed a relationship with Willie Wolfe and began reading books written by George Jackson, Regis DeBray and others.<sup>245</sup> Within less than a month, Patricia Hearst changed her name to "Tania" in honor of Che Guevara's lover, and joined the SLA.

Indian activist and radical leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM) who had acquiesced in allowing AIM to join the PIN coalition became fed up with the SLA after the release of the fourth communique. "My fears have been realized," said Means, "and it looks like they're (the SLA) going to continue to make demand after demand. The SLA is a punk organization."<sup>246</sup>

The response of Russell Means to the SLA's fourth communiqué reflected the feelings of many within various "radical" organizations of the mid-1970's. The SLA never found sympathy from the New Left until after the shootout in Los Angeles.

In the end, the food program satisfied no one. The two million dollar good faith gesture did not lead to the release of Patricia Hearst, nor did it lead to negotiations for the release of Russell Little and Joe Remiro. Furthermore, the praise the SLA had anticipated related to their decision to demand a food for the poor program from Randolph Hearst did not occur.

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<sup>245</sup> Patricia Hearst maintains that she never had a relationship with Wolfe. She contends that Wolfe raped her while she was a captive. In a January 9, 2009 email from former SLA member Bill Harris he explained that Patricia was never abused. He states in the email that "There were 5 women and 3 men who would not have tolerated any form of prisoner abuse. Any sexual abuse would have been punished severely. At all times PH (Patricia) was treated with respect and dignity because our intention was to eventually release her and we knew she would be asked about and would reveal how she was treated. Once freed she would be our best propaganda." During her trial for her part in the Hibernia Bank robbery, Patricia told the prosecutor that she had been raped by Wolfe and that she could not stand him. However, when arrested, she had in her possession an "Olmec Monkey" figurine given to her by Wolfe.

<sup>246</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 254.

“No one,” wrote Patricia Hearst, “had come out with any kind of praise for the SLA bringing about the distribution of food to the poor.”<sup>247</sup> For a group that had incurred the negative publicity surrounding the Foster murder combined with a lack of support from the New Left, they needed some sort of success that brought with it positive publicity. PIN did not provide that type of bounce in public esteem, therefore the SLA abandoned the program. By the end of March, Cinque and his followers prepared to make an announcement that provided the publicity they craved so much. Patricia Hearst had joined the revolution.

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<sup>247</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 80.

## Chapter 8

### The FBI

Within hours of the abduction of Patricia Hearst the FBI began its involvement in the case they referred to as HEARNAP. By 1am the following morning the FBI began its unofficial involvement in the case as agents sat in on a briefing with the Berkeley and Oakland police departments.<sup>248</sup> After a twenty-four hour period had elapsed following the kidnapping, the FBI began its official involvement since enough time had transpired for the kidnapers to have theoretically crossed state lines making the case a federal crime.<sup>249</sup> With the exception of the shootout in Los Angeles, the FBI remained the lead investigative law enforcement agency throughout the HEARNAP case. In fact, upon receiving the news of his daughter's abduction, Randolph Hearst placed a phone call to the Director of the FBI, Clarence Kelly. Kelly confirmed that the kidnapping did indeed occur but did not have any other news at that time that he could pass along.<sup>250</sup> Thus from the very beginning, the FBI became involved in the kidnapping which had come at the end of a tumultuous time in the agency's history.

By February of 1974, the FBI had undergone many changes over the past few years as a result of revelations pertaining to COINTELPRO, the death of long time Director J. Edgar Hoover, and the FBI's role in the Watergate investigation.

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<sup>248</sup> Steven Weed and Scott Swanton, *My Search for Patty Hearst* (New York: Warner Books, 1976), 50.

<sup>249</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 194.

<sup>250</sup> Weed and Swanton, *My Search for Patty Hearst*, 65.

Clarence Kelly, a former Kansas City Police Chief had been appointed as the Director of the FBI in the midst of this difficult period for the agency. The San Francisco Special Agent in Charge leading the HEARNAP investigation, Charles Bates, had previously served as the Assistant Director for the General Investigative Division in Washington D.C. As a result, Bates was in charge of the FBI's investigation of the Watergate break-in beginning in June of 1972. The Deputy Associate Director of the FBI during that period, W. Mark Felt, also known as Deep Throat, stated that Bates had been transferred out of the Washington D.C. office along with four other high ranking members of the agency for either leaking information to the media or for pursuing the Watergate investigation too forcefully for interim FBI Director L. Patrick Gray's taste.<sup>251</sup> Gray had served in numerous positions within the Nixon Administration and was considered nothing more than a political appointment by career FBI personnel. He later became ensnared in the Watergate investigation for his role in destroying documents and "turning data on the (Watergate) investigation over to (White House Counsel John) Dean."<sup>252</sup>

The politics of Watergate and the hiring of Gray as the interim Director of the FBI eventually led to the hiring of Kansas City, Missouri Police Chief and former FBI agent, Clarence Kelly on July 9, 1973. With Kelly firmly in charge of the FBI, the organization could finally move forward from the shadow of its legendary leader, J. Edgar Hoover.

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<sup>251</sup> Mark Felt and John O'Connor (New York: Public Affairs, 2006), 223. L. Patrick Gray was the immediate successor to J. Edgar Hoover as Director of the FBI. However, he had the interim title because he had not been confirmed by the Senate. Gray was a Nixon loyalist since the 1960 Presidential campaign.

<sup>252</sup> J. Anthony Lukas, *Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999) 287.

Under Kelly's leadership agents were able to incorporate new technologies into their investigations and African-American and female agents began to be hired. Unfortunately for Kelly, one of Hoover's skeletons was about to emerge from the shadows.

On March 8, 1971, a group calling themselves "The Citizens Commission to Investigate the FBI" broke into a resident agency of the FBI in Media, Pennsylvania and pilfered documents from file cabinets housed onsite. Not long afterward, copies of the stolen documents arrived in the mailboxes of selected members of Congress and the media.<sup>253</sup> This led *The Washington Post* to publish a story relating to the break-in and documents taken from the FBI relating to FBI informants in leftist groups and on college campuses.<sup>254</sup> However, it was NBC reporter Carl Stern and his decision to submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request which led to public revelations relating to COINTELPRO or counter intelligence programs. Even though his initial FOIA requests for COINTELPRO documents had been denied, Stern pursued the case in federal court, finally winning the release of the materials on September 25, 1973, just a little over two months after Kelly was appointed Director of the FBI.

The COINTELPRO documents demonstrated the FBI's involvement in illegal domestic surveillance. Initially created to counter threats from communists, the program evolved and by the 1960's became involved in monitoring and disrupting the people and organizations involved in anti-Vietnam War protests.

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<sup>253</sup> Ronald Kessler, *The Bureau: The Secret History of the FBI* (New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks, 2003), 174.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*



Hoover immediately suspended further action regarding COINTELPROs following the break-in at the Media, Pennsylvania resident agency. The damage, however, had already occurred to both the FBI's reputation and its ability to effectively monitor domestic left wing organizations. In the case of the SLA, it likely had little impact because the SLA had isolated itself from society long before a program such as COINTELPRO would have attempted to infiltrate the organization. On the other hand, revelations regarding the domestic counter-intelligence program did lead to allegations that Cinque/DeFreeze served as an agent provocateur for law enforcement's crackdown on the New Left in California.<sup>255</sup> Even though corroborating evidence had not been uncovered, the subsequent surveillance and interrogations of members of New Left organizations and New Left sympathizers had allowed this allegation to remain a part of the SLA story.

As the FBI takes the lead in the Hearst kidnapping case, the SLA is quickly identified as the perpetrators of the crime. Within hours of the abduction, a box of bullets with the SLA's peculiar calling card is found underneath a bookshelf in the apartment of Steven Weed and Patricia Hearst. The day following the abduction, the FBI began questioning Weed. During the interrogation he was asked if owned a firearm to which he replied an emphatic "No," the bullets must have been dropped in the apartment by the kidnapers.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Boulton, *The Making of Tania Hearst*, 8-9 and 32-36.

<sup>256</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 23, 1. See also Weed and Swanton, *My Search for Patty*, 62. During the early weeks of the investigation, the FBI thought Weed might have had some involvement in the abduction.

The bullets, just like the ones used in the assassination of Marcus Foster had cyanide inserted into the tips of the bullets and covered with wax. These bullets were the trademark of the SLA which only law enforcement knew about. All doubt regarding the role of the SLA in the abduction of Patricia Hearst ended on February 7<sup>th</sup> with the arrival of an arrest warrant for Patricia Hearst sent to radio station KPFA along with a Mobil gas card in the name of Randolph Hearst.<sup>257</sup>

Initial eyewitness accounts from Steven Weed and Steven Suenago identified the kidnapers as two black males and one white female. As a result initial efforts from law enforcement focused on finding Donald DeFreeze and Thero Wheeler.<sup>258</sup> Even after it became apparent that Thero Wheeler had not been involved in the kidnapping, police continued the search for him thinking he might have remained a member or a sympathizer of the SLA with some knowledge of their whereabouts. Within two days of the kidnapping the FBI had listed among the likely members of the SLA Angela Atwood, Bill and Emily Harris, Nancy Ling Perry, Willie Wolfe, and Donald DeFreeze.<sup>259</sup> Patricia “Mizmoon” Soltysik would soon be added to the list. Camilla Hall, because of her past relationship with Mizmoon, also became a suspected sympathizer. The FBI’s list of potential SLA members included approximately twenty other names.<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 257..

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, NR following document 59. Not all FBI documents within the HEARNAP Files was given a document number. Therefore, I gave the document number of the preceding case file.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, document 58.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.* The names of the other suspected members have been redacted by the FBI.

By February 28, the list of suspected SLA members grew to thirty six and included Gary Atwood (Angela's estranged Trotskyite husband); Nancy Lou Boehm; William James Carter; Charles Robert Conley; Elizabeth Ruth Ehrlich; Cynthia Anne Garvey; David William Gunnell; James "doc" Holliday; Roy Nelson Hofstadter; Willie Waco Jackson; Clifford "Death Row Jeff" Jefferson; Anita Landenburg; Katherine Francis Moynihan; Raymond Sparks; and Robyn Sue Steiner. At least fourteen other names were included on the list but redacted for personal privacy by the FBI.<sup>261</sup>

The FBI received a tremendous amount of criticism for their inability to locate the SLA following the kidnapping. Much like the situation the Oakland Police Department found itself in following the Foster assassination, the FBI had to depend on a lucky break to locate the SLA, such as the one that occurred at Mel's Sporting Goods in Los Angeles. The isolation of the SLA coupled with their ability to hide in plain sight due to their variety of costumes and makeup made the group difficult to find. They rented houses and apartments as everyday citizens while Angela Atwood and the Harris' made good use of their background in the theatre by altering every member's look so they would not be noticed carrying out everyday tasks in public. Also, the SLA demonstrated a knack for developing alternate identities and obtaining identification cards such as drivers' license in names other than their own. While underground in the Bay Area, the members of the SLA did not attempt to make contact with associates above ground. They kept isolated from their past lives with the exception of Camilla Hall before she went underground with the rest of the cell.

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<sup>261</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 988.

During the period when she was blindfolded at the Daly City safe house, Patricia Hearst recalled “Gabi (Camilla Hall), who lived aboveground and brought supplies to the combat team” on occasion.<sup>262</sup> Even though she participated in the kidnapping, Camilla “Gabi” Hall remained above ground and assisted the SLA with the activities outside the safe house. Once the FBI identified Mizmoon Soltysik as a member of the SLA, Hall, her former lover became a suspected SLA associate. The FBI quickly discovered that Hall kept a savings account at a local Berkeley branch of the Central Bank. The Berkeley FBI office was located across the street from the bank. In late February, the FBI requested that the bank’s manager notify their Berkeley office immediately if Hall came into the bank. Bank personnel were not to inform Hall that the FBI wanted to talk to her. Unfortunately, the bank manager either forgot or did not think the request important enough to inform the bank tellers, because on March 1, 1974, Camilla entered the bank and withdrew the one thousand five hundred and sixty five dollars she had in her savings account and no one from the bank contacted the FBI.<sup>263</sup> While the FBI had heaped upon it a great deal of criticism for its investigation of the SLA, in this instance they had taken the proper steps but were hamstrung by the bureaucracy of a local bank.

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<sup>262</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 79.

<sup>263</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 219.

On March 4 Hall sold her blue 1967 Volkswagen bug, the car suspected of being the lookout car for the Hearst kidnapping.<sup>264</sup> Flush with cash, Hall, no doubt, was greeted warmly by her SLA comrades when she arrived underground. After all, the revolution required money.

Unfortunately for the FBI they lost their only above ground link to the kidnapers. Interestingly enough, a clerk in the FBI's San Francisco office steno pool unwittingly purchased Hall's blue Volkswagen, a vehicle the agency had been searching for since the kidnapping. For weeks the car had been parked just outside the FBI offices before it was finally discovered.<sup>265</sup>

The FBI kept an eye out for other opportunities to locate the SLA. For instance, they kept in touch with the friends and family members of the SLA soldiers hoping that they could obtain some clue regarding their location. This action almost paid off because the SLA had discovered that its revolution against the American government was quite costly. On February 14, 1974, Bill Harris sent a letter to his mother asking for money. Along with the letter, Bill sent a stamped and pre-addressed envelope in the name of Janet Cooper which was placed in a larger envelope which Emily Harris sent to two friends from college. Emily asked her friends to hand deliver the enclosed envelope to Bill's mother for reasons they would explain later.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1195 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 219.

<sup>266</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 218-219.

Friends and colleagues of the Harris' had been contacted in conjunction with the investigation of the Marcus Foster murder months earlier. Consequently, when the couple received this letter, they decided to open it to determine whether or not they should forward it to Bill's mother. After reading the letter, the friends of the HARRISES decided to contact Oakland Police. The Oakland Police and the FBI decided to forward the letter to Bill's mother and stake out the post office address on the enclosed envelope. Bill's mother did send her son a check for two hundred and fifty dollars, but it was never picked up. It never arrived at the Santa Clara post office because Bill Harris wrote the wrong zip code on the self addressed envelope. Consequently, calls to the Santa Clara post office inquiring about the letter always came up negative because the envelope was placed in a general delivery mailbox in Santa Barbara, California.

In these two instances the FBI had planned correctly, contacting Camilla Hall's bank and staking out the post office hoping to catch the SLA attempting to pick up the envelope. Unfortunately, each opportunity was thwarted by simple, yet important detail issues. Ensuring that the bank manager understood the importance of contacting the FBI when Hall came to the bank and that the zip code on the return envelope was correct provided two instances when the FBI's attention to detail proved to be less than adequate resulting in two missed opportunities. The agency did demonstrate a willingness to look outside the safety of past procedures. Unlike the latter part of the Hoover era, the FBI sought alternative methods and technologies to assist them in their quest to locate Patricia Hearst's captors.

In the aftermath of the SLA's successful daytime robbery of Hibernia Bank in San Francisco, the FBI determined that greater mobility had become necessary. In order to react much quicker to future SLA actions, the FBI rented two helicopters and pilots. The helicopters and pilots remained on standby from 7am to 7pm and would be airborne three to four hours each day. Two FBI agents joined the pilots to act as observers. This rapid response unit first took to the air on April 29, 1974 and remained active until the SLA's shootout in Los Angeles with the Los Angeles Police Department. The helicopters and pilots cost approximately six thousand dollars each for a six day week.<sup>267</sup> Although it did not lead to an SLA sighting, the use of the helicopters demonstrated the new thinking which occurred within the FBI by the agents investigating the HEARNAP case.<sup>268</sup>

During this same period of early May 1974, when the FBI began using helicopters to patrol the skies above San Francisco to help facilitate a more rapid response to future SLA actions within the city, Cinque became convinced that police were in helicopters searching for the SLA.<sup>269</sup> The SLA left their Golden Gate apartment at the end of April and eventually wound up in a dilapidated home in the Hunter's Point section of San Francisco. Hunter's point was – and still is – one of the poorest areas of San Francisco and beset by crime and hopelessness. Consequently, a large police presence in the area convinced Cinque that the SLA was surrounded by law enforcement.

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<sup>267</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1698.

<sup>268</sup> Ronald Kessler, *The FBI* (New York: Pocket Books, 1993), 49. Oliver "Buck" Revell, a pilot and FBI agent, would track Soviet spies on the weekend via plane. Revell did this on his own time because he knew his boss, J. Edgar Hoover, would not approve. According to Revell, Hoover was adamant about the FBI not having an "air force." Therefore, he did not want his agents using planes or helicopters.

<sup>269</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 193.

According to Patricia Hearst, “On more than one night, Cin went out into the backyard and shook his clenched fist at a helicopter roaring overhead,” assuming they were on the lookout for the SLA.<sup>270</sup>

During their brief sojourn in Hunter’s Point, Cinque became convinced that law enforcement had surrounded the SLA, put up roadblocks around the city of San Francisco, particularly along the bridges, in order to locate them. As a result, Cinque decided the SLA could operate more effectively in Los Angeles, a sprawling city with few defined boundaries.<sup>271</sup> According to Bill Harris, the decision to move to Los Angeles was decided by the entire cell.<sup>272</sup> Hearst, on the other hand, stated that whenever Cinque had a point of view, “no one doubted anything he said.”<sup>273</sup>

The isolation of the SLA began to manifest itself in the group’s collective paranoia regarding law enforcement. The fact of the matter is that the FBI had no idea where the SLA was in early May. They were no closer to the SLA in April and May than they were in February to locating the safe house. In fact, the FBI had no idea where the SLA was until May 16 when the Harris’ and Hearst made their escape from Mel’s Sporting Good’s in Los Angeles.

The attempts to verify locations visited by the SLA did not depend on only high tech gadgetry. During the investigation, the FBI trained dogs to know the scent of Patricia Hearst and verify if she had visited specific places. The FBI referred to this program as “Operation Sniff.”

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>272</sup> Harris interview with author, 2/2/09.

<sup>273</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst* 193.



When the SLA had been sighted in Los Angeles in May 1974, the FBI flew dogs involved with “Operation Sniff” to Los Angeles. When six of the SLA members had been surrounded and killed in a firefight with the Los Angeles Police Department, law enforcement officials needed to quickly and accurately determine if Patricia Hearst had been in the house and if she had been one of the victims. Thus dogs were used to rummage through the ruins of the East Fifty-Fourth Street home that served as a temporary tomb for six SLA soldiers.<sup>274</sup> The FBI’s dogs were later employed to confirm that Patricia spent a portion of the summer and early fall of 1974 at a farmhouse in Jeffersonville, New York with Wendy Yoshimura and Bill and Emily Harris.<sup>275</sup>

After almost two months of frustration in their attempts to locate the SLA and their captive Patricia Hearst, the FBI began considering more drastic measures. Physical surveillance of individuals who had been associated or deemed friendly towards the SLA had not been productive. Consequently, on March 25, 1974, FBI agent W.R. Wannall sent a memorandum to fellow agent E. S. Miller broaching the topic of electronic surveillance of individuals who might have knowledge of the SLA’s whereabouts. The memo discussed the topics of probable cause and the Keith decision. The author knew that the FBI needed to obtain approval of electronic surveillance without providing the court with probable cause as “traditionally understood.”<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1843.

<sup>275</sup> VOG, p. 437.

<sup>276</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, unnumbered document, 3/25/74, Wannall to Miller regarding Electronic surveillance for intelligence purposes on the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) on the Patricia Hearst case, p. 1.

Traditions regarding the usage of electronic surveillance had undergone tremendous change in light of the Watergate break-in and allegations of illegal usage of electronic surveillance by Richard Nixon, John and Robert Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and J. Edgar Hoover.

The key question then became whether or not the FBI could pursue a domestic intelligence operation using electronic surveillance methods without new legislation from Congress as a result of the Keith decision, named after United States District Judge Damon S. Keith. Judge Keith had ruled against the legality of domestic intelligence usage of electronic surveillance. The Supreme Court upheld the Keith decision acknowledging that warrantless electronic surveillance was not necessary to “protect the nation from subversion by domestic organizations.”<sup>277</sup> Wannell hoped that Congress’ inability to produce new legislation regarding this issue and given the FBI’s immediate need, a sympathetic U.S. District Court judge might approve the usage of electronic surveillance. The legal counsel for the FBI commended the efforts of Wannell and Miller but emphatically stated “that the Hearst kidnapping case should not be used as a test vehicle to establish the authority of the FBI to undertake electronic surveillance in domestic cases for intelligence purposes.”<sup>278</sup> The FBI in its desperation to solve the HEARNAP case sought all means at its disposal.

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<sup>277</sup> James Banford, *The Puzzle Palace* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 370-371.

<sup>278</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, unnumbered document, 3/25/74, Wannall to Miller regarding Electronic surveillance for intelligence purposes on the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) on the Patricia Hearst case, 3.

The Hearst kidnapping case not only became the first political kidnapping in American history, but also the first case of domestic terrorism. Consequently, the FBI chose to consider the implementation of any weapon in their arsenal to locate the SLA.

Another example of the changes which occurred within the FBI during the HEARNAP investigation is the case of Dr. Murray Miron. On March 12, 1974, a member of the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Air Transportation Security Team contacted Richard J. Gallagher, the Assistant Director of the FBI's Criminal Investigative Division stating that Dr. Miron expressed an interest in assisting the FBI on the HEARNAP case and that he had worked with the FAA and the CIA in the past.<sup>279</sup> Dr. Miron lead Syracuse University's Psycholinguistics Center and wanted to produce an analysis of the SLA's audio communiqués for the FBI. Under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, a strong rebuff of Dr. Miron would have been the likely result. However, new FBI Director Clarence Kelly, according to author Ron Kessler, "wanted the FBI to explore new ways of doing things." According to Gallagher, "Kelly's mandate to me was how can we improve it. Even though it seems to be working, let's check and see."<sup>280</sup>

Dr. Miron specialized in communications involving the mentally disturbed individuals along with other forms of aberrant behavior. In fact, he had been a consultant with the CIA and FAA providing psychological profiles of foreign personalities for the CIA and hijackers for the FAA.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid., document 1124, 1

<sup>280</sup> Ron Kessler, *The FBI*, 246.

<sup>281</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1271, 2.

Miron's analysis focused on key words used by the speakers. The FBI referred to his methodology as "a blend of intuitive and empiricism" based on the Semantic Differential technique pioneered by the University of Illinois.<sup>282</sup> Miron stated at the outset that the analysis generated by his computer program could not replace the experience of the investigator in the field. However, the "more input he (Dr. Miron) has to put into his computer the more definite he can become in his conclusions."<sup>283</sup>

In retrospect, the analysis generated by Dr. Miron proved to be extremely accurate. In a meeting with the FBI on April 3, 1974, Dr. Miron provided an interesting and accurate insight into the SLA. He stated that Patricia Hearst "is using SLA as therapy" and "telling the SLA her problems."<sup>284</sup> Former SLA member Bill Harris echoed this sentiment when he stated that Patricia told members of the SLA about her difficult relationship with her mother and that she was having problems with her fiancé.<sup>285</sup> Miron went on to mention that Patricia had "adopted the ideas of the SLA because she was suggestible and would require psychiatric treatment following her capture."<sup>286</sup> Also, he did not conclude that either the members of the SLA or Cinque, despite the Foster assassination, had developed into cold blooded killers. Therefore, he did not believe that they would kill their captive turned revolutionary. Instead, he stated that the SLA was determined to "commit suicide by establishing the condition in which their destruction at the hands of someone else is inevitable."<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, HEARNAP Files, document 1301, 1.

<sup>285</sup> Bill Harris interview with author, 2/2/2009.

<sup>286</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, HEARNAP Files, document 1301, 2.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

The analysis provided by Dr. Miron at the April 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting chillingly foreshadows the events that took place in Los Angeles on May 17, 1974. Had the events at Mel's Sporting Good's not taken place, it is not difficult to imagine Patricia Hearst along with Bill and Emily Harris joining their comrades in the same fateful ending.

Although the analysis of Dr. Miron's did not lead to the quick capture of the SLA, it did provide the FBI with a greater understanding of the group dynamics of the organization they were chasing. Also, being receptive to Dr. Miron's work demonstrated the FBI's willingness to incorporate new methodologies in fighting crime, demonstrated by the fact that Dr. Miron continued to serve as a consultant for the FBI long after the completion of the HEARNAP case.

Contemporary accounts of the Hearst kidnapping case had not been kind to the FBI. Law enforcement was treated in such a way that their investigation of the kidnapping became more of a "keystone cops" affair. However, this account of the investigation did not come close to accurately portraying the FBI's methods in searching for Hearst and the SLA. Mistakes were made in the surveillance of Camilla Hall's bank and the Bill Harris money/envelope caper. Other factors apart from the FBI's investigation lead to the failure of each activity. The FBI, much like the Oakland police investigating the Foster murder, needed a break to assist in solving the case. The SLA had effectively isolated themselves when they went underground so they were impossible to locate by conventional means. The quick location of the SLA following the events at Mel's Sporting Goods on May 16<sup>th</sup> demonstrated how quickly law enforcement reacted when provided with solid intelligence regarding their quarry.

In the wake of the revelation regarding the FBI's involvement in COINTELPRO, intelligence regarding radical organizations in Northern California was not plentiful. Also, whispers regarding the bureau's misdeeds under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, along with allegations of preferential treatment provided by the agency to the White House during the Watergate investigation placed the FBI in an extremely difficult position at the outset of the HEARNAP investigation. With such a high profile case, the FBI concentrated all possible resources they could muster to locate the kidnappers. In a cable regarding manpower issues sent from the San Francisco office to Director Kelly, it outlined the number of staff assigned to the HEARNAP investigation. In this case, one hundred and nineteen special agents had been permanently assigned to the case, sixty eight operating from the San Francisco office and fifty one from Berkeley. Also, thirty seven agents were on special assignment and working with the HEARNAP investigation. Many of the agents were involved with investigating the various sightings of Patricia Hearst and the SLA that came into the agency from around the country. From April 29 through May 8, 1974 for example, over four hundred sightings were reported.<sup>288</sup>

The FBI along with all the other law enforcement agencies actively investigating the SLA, waited for their prey to make that one mistake. Although it had taken the SLA over three months, they finally made that singular error that allowed the police to locate the cell.

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<sup>288</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1711, 1.

That fateful mistake in Los Angeles on May 16<sup>th</sup>, the combined and decisive efforts of the FBI and the Los Angeles Police Department led to shootout of May 17<sup>th</sup> during which the six SLA members involved died. Although The Harris' and Patricia Hearst did not participate in the shootout, thus surviving and eventually making it back to the Bay Area over the Memorial Day weekend, the SLA as a revolutionary movement did not survive the shootout. It perished in the flames that resulted from the SLA's only direct clash with law enforcement.

## Chapter 9

### The Media

From the moment the Berkeley police officers realized that the kidnap victim from 2603 Benvenue residence was a member of the Hearst family, issues regarding the handling of the media became a chief concern for everyone involved in the case. The initial strategy formulated by Randolph Hearst in response to the kidnapping led to a voluntary news blackout among the various news outlets. The hope of the Hearst family was that either a ransom could be paid or the culprits quickly found before the news of the kidnapping spread. Randolph Hearst's hope for a news blackout quickly came to an end as former United States Senator and publisher of the Oakland Tribune, William F. Knowland let Berkeley Police know on the morning of February 5, approximately twelve hours after the abduction, that his paper would run the story regarding the Hearst kidnapping in the afternoon edition. Berkeley Police then notified the other media outlets participating in the voluntary news blackout of Knowland's decision and the media circus began with the announcement by KGO radio in San Francisco of the kidnapping.<sup>289</sup> What ensued were more than two years of headlines relating to the kidnapping, the Hibernia Bank robbery, the shootout in Los Angeles, the continuing mystery of Patricia's whereabouts, and finally the trial of Patricia Hearst with media magnet F. Lee Bailey as her defense lawyer.

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<sup>289</sup>Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 206.



On many occasions the Hearst case replaced the constitutional crisis then unfolding regarding the Watergate break-in on the front pages of the nation's headlines, at least until July and August of 1974.

As the granddaughter of a media giant, it seemed only natural for the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst to be played out on the front pages of newspapers throughout the country and the lead story on television news programs. As the President and Editor of the San Francisco Examiner, Randolph Hearst knew immediately that his daughter's abduction was big news, particularly within the borders of the state of California where the Hearst family served as uncrowned royalty since the nineteenth century. The sensationalistic journalism popularized by William Randolph Hearst found its perfect story in his granddaughter's kidnapping.

As soon as the news of Patricia Hearst's kidnapping was released to the public, a virtual city sprouted to life outside the Hearst home in Hillsborough, California. The Hearst's front yard took on the atmosphere of a campground for news networks and the print media as they waited for the latest news regarding Patricia Hearst and the SLA. The tapes and communiqués that the SLA released here and there fed into this dramatic environment as the media reported on every utterance that emerged from the SLA. Never before had a terrorist group had this type of access and control of the media and the SLA catered to this atmosphere of crisis.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> It is important to keep in mind that three members of the SLA, Bill and Emily Harris and Angela Atwood, had a theatre background. Atwood, in particular, seemed to have a flair for the dramatic as well as a talent for makeup and costume.

In the midst of all this activity, John Lester, the reporter covering the kidnapping for the Bay Area's ABC affiliate Channel 7, was called into the main house on February 12, 1974, to meet with Randolph Hearst. Hearst asked Lester to round up the news crews so that Randolph and Catherine Hearst could respond to the recent demand for a food program from the SLA. By the following morning, Lester was referred to as the Hearst family spokesman in *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Interestingly enough, Lester went on to serve as the Hearst spokesperson throughout the family's involvement with the HEARNAP case.<sup>291</sup> It is also indicative of the close association the media had in the case in terms of access to the Hearst family, the FBI and other law enforcement officials.

In the first communiqué following the kidnapping the SLA demanded that "all communications from this court (the Court of the People) MUST be published in full, in all newspapers, and all other forms of media. Failure to do so will endanger the safety of the prisoner."<sup>292</sup> Randolph Hearst took the threat very seriously. Consequently, the *San Francisco Examiner* published every communiqué as well as a transcript from every audio tape. This was a small price to pay to ensure the safety of his daughter. Many other media outlets followed suit. No one wanted to be responsible for any harm coming to Patricia Hearst.

Looking back, the year 1974, with Watergate and the Hearst kidnapping vying for headlines and lead stories on television news, can be described as the year of investigative journalism.

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<sup>291</sup> John A. Lester, *Girl in a Box: The Untold Story of the Patricia Hearst Kidnap* (San Jose: Shoestring Publications, 2004), 26 and 32.

<sup>292</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 200.

While Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein were becoming famous for their investigation of the Watergate break-in and the Nixon Administration, a number of journalists such as Paul Avery, Vin McLellan, Tim Findlay, Les Payne, Jerry Belcher, Don West, Shana Alexander and Marilyn Baker were reporting on the Hearst kidnapping. Their insights and investigations led to their producing a number of articles and books, with varying degrees of accuracy, relating to the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst. The insatiable appetite of the reading public, no doubt, encouraged publishers to produce as many accounts of the case as practical.

What made the SLA so unique was their access to the media. Every communiqué was published and every audio recording played for public consumption. No other movement within the New Left ever had such easy media access as the SLA had. The closest comparison, albeit for a much shorter time span, may be the protests outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. Even then, with the students shouting “the whole world is watching,” the whole world was not. The electrical strike in Chicago prevented the media from transmitting the images live. The footage was aired approximately one half hour after the events occurred. While the pictures transmitted the anger of the protesters, the entire media contingent did not publish in whole a communiqué or other form of communication from protest leaders David Dellinger, Rennie Davis or Tom Hayden. The SLA may have had to share the spotlight on occasion with Richard Nixon, but never with Hubert Humphrey.

The media placed the SLA on center stage for all to see and hear. The question remained, however, was the media reporting news or being used by a group of Berkeley leftists who were playing revolution. In the sense that the general public maintained a keen interest in the case, then yes, the media was supplying news. However, they also served as enablers for the SLA's enthusiasm for publicity. Cinque and his followers knew that any public action or statement created instant news. After the Hibernia Bank robbery, for example, SLA members turned on their radios and television sets to catch the latest news of "appropriation." In fact, everyone "was swept up in the awe and public surprise as radio and television programs were interrupted with the sensational news of the daring daylight holdup of the Hibernia Bank by the SLA."<sup>293</sup>

The media provided the SLA with a prominent voice and a forum to express their beliefs. This forum took on a life of its own because every action undertaken by the SLA had to be accompanied with a communiqué or audiotape. In a sense, they represented voiceless portions of 1974 America – homosexuals, women, Vietnam Veterans, and African-Americans. In this instance, the SLA manufactured a forum which had not previously existed, in order to be heard. It was not coincidental that Patricia Hearst, the granddaughter of media titan William Randolph Hearst had been the kidnap victim. With Patricia as their prisoner, Cinque and his band of revolutionaries guaranteed themselves access to the media, particularly from the Hearst owned newspapers, magazines and television stations. In the minds of the SLA, this meant their message would reach "the people."

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<sup>293</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 162-163.

By doing so, it meant an insurrection became inevitable. It had to because Cinque had constantly told them that the country was on the brink of revolution, all it needed was a push. From the very beginning, Patricia's revolutionary captors told her their goal was to lead an armed revolution against the fascist American government and that the revolution had just begun in California.<sup>294</sup>

Just because their audiotapes were played on the radio and their communiqués printed in newspapers, the SLA's message did not generate enthusiasm for a revolution among the American people. The access to the media did not translate into greater enthusiasm for their cause for the simple reason that their message of communism and revolutionary violence was a foreign concept to most Americans. Americans did not rally around the cause of the SLA because they did not believe in it, pure and simple. George Jackson may have struck a nerve with the membership of the SLA, but not with Middle America. In the end, this odd mixture of Marxism, Maoism, and prison politics did not provide the general public with enough reasons to take to the streets to overthrow the government. The SLA's message created a curiosity based not on interest but through an odd sort of voyeurism. Unfortunately, what resulted from this unique opportunity to take a deeper look into the issues and concerns of the New Left led not to the embrace of these ideas by the middle class, but their almost total alienation from the SLA and its goals.

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

Middle America was not the only segment of society that did not view the SLA in a positive way. What remained of the New Left in 1974 did look favorably upon this new revolutionary group. David Horowitz wrote a scathing editorial of the SLA and its violent proclivities in the May 1974 edition of *Ramparts*. He did not sign his name to the article out of fear of reprisals. Horowitz viewed the SLA's emergence as "directly attributable to the collapse of the organized Left at the end of the sixties, and its continuing failure to regroup itself and revive."<sup>295</sup> Horowitz and the writers of *Ramparts* were not alone in the negative assessment of the SLA. H. Bruce Franklin, the former leader of Venceremos and Stanford University English professor referred to the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst in an interview as "counter-revolutionary." He went even further stating that "I can't imagine what political movement the SLA is part of." In an interview at Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, Angela Davis responded to the actions of the SLA by stating "If you want to build a mass movement against racism, poverty and imperialism, you don't do things that alienate people. You do things that will help draw people into your struggle."<sup>296</sup> Unfortunately for Patricia Hearst's kidnappers, the publicity generated by the kidnapping did not endear them to their fellow Americans. The outlandish statements and actions served only to remove serious debate regarding poverty in America in favor of a unique form of "guerilla street theatre" posing as revolution.

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<sup>295</sup> Editors, "Terrorism and the New Left, *Ramparts*, vol. 12, no. 10, May 1974, pp. 21-27.

<sup>296</sup> Lester, *Girl in box*, 22-23.

The various different media outlets played in the HEARNAP case played a vital and central role. Not only did they provide an outlet for the communiqués and other announcements from the SLA, but they also served as the go between for negotiations between the Hearst family and the kidnapers. They played the unique role of conduit between the Hearst's and the SLA, with each party responding to the other via this new public forum. These very public negotiations proved unsatisfactory to each side. In the end, the negotiations proved fruitless as the SLA abandoned their Bay Area roots and set off for their meeting with destiny in Los Angeles.

## Chapter 10

### From Captors to Comrades

Prior to the abduction of Patricia Hearst, the SLA prepared the Daly City safe house on Northridge to serve as Hearst's prison cell. This temporary cell brought Patricia into daily contact with the revolutionary cell. These close conditions provided her with an introduction into the SLA's lifestyle as "urban guerillas." The Daly City accommodations represented the pinnacle of SLA safe houses. In succession, the housing and the neighborhoods in which the SLA hid continued to worsen. The infamous walk-in closet which served as Patricia's personal jail cell from her arrival on February 4<sup>th</sup> until the group's move to San Francisco on either March 20 or March 21, 1974.<sup>297</sup> Patricia's confinement in the Daly City closet has never been disputed. Other factors such as the length of time spent isolated and blindfolded, sexual relationships, and the manner in which the audio communiqués were taped, has been vigorously debated by the survivors and prosecutors of the SLA.

Hearst's SLA "jail cell" had previously been a walk-in closet. It measured two feet and one and a half inches deep and six feet and seven and a quarter inches high.<sup>298</sup> To soundproof the closet, shag carpeting was nailed to the walls.

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<sup>297</sup> The Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1663, p. 2. The lease for the apartment was signed on March 20<sup>th</sup>, but they may not have moved in until the following evening.

<sup>298</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 213.



Also, a three inch thick foam pad was placed on the floor of the closet and served as Hearst's bed until the move to the Golden Gate apartment. Initially, Hearst had her hands tied and the closet door locked from the outside so she could not escape.<sup>299</sup>

Hearst described her closet/jail cell as smelling very bad of a "musty odor of body sweat and filth" and compared it to an "underground coffin." She mentioned her initial reaction to being placed in the closet as "utter terror."<sup>300</sup> Her first thought, according to her biography, was the news story of the girl who had been kidnapped in Florida and buried in a box with an air tube.<sup>301</sup> In her trial testimony, Hearst tells the story regarding her initial fear of the closet, albeit with a great deal of leading by her defense lawyer F. Lee Bailey.<sup>302</sup> However, she never mentioned an overpowering stench in her trial testimony but did mention that she felt fresh air coming into the closet.<sup>303</sup>

Patricia Hearst maintained that following her abduction her only thought was how to stay alive. Every action from that point until her arrest in September of 1975 was a calculated decision based on that single factor. Hearst presented her abduction as a series of events beginning with her isolation and sensory deprivation through a series of audio communiqués taped in the closet, and being raped by Willie Wolfe and Cinque. She also stated that she was kept in closets at both the Daly City safe house and the Golden Gate apartment for a total of eight weeks.<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Lyne and Scheer, "Twenty Months with Patty/Tania," *New Times*, 3/5/76, 22.

<sup>300</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 38-39.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 38. Barbara Jean Mackle was kidnapped in Georgia and buried alive in a coffin with food and water for three days before a ransom was paid and approximate directions given to police to locate Mackle.

<sup>302</sup> Carolyn Anspacher and Jack Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst* (San Francisco: The Great Fidelity Press, 1976), 154.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>304</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 112.

When freed from the closet, Hearst described her attempt to ingratiate herself with the cell and how she convinced them to let her join. However, even after she joined the SLA, she still viewed her situation as hopeless and that her only real hope was a rescue.<sup>305</sup> Unfortunately, when the opportunity for rescue presented itself on May 16, 1974, Hearst chose instead to free her former captors. She took up arms for her former tormentors, Bill and Emily Harris and freed them from certain arrest. The only explanation that Hearst provided for her actions was that she acted “instinctively.”<sup>306</sup>

The time Hearst spent isolated in the closet ended with the move to the Golden Gate apartment. The SLA never contemplated the Daly City safe house becoming a permanent residence. Soon after Camilla Hall’s decision to go underground with the cell in early March, the group decided the time had come to find a new safe house. One of the factors in the decision to move had been the fact that they no longer needed a “jail cell” for Patricia. In fact, she had begun taking meals with the group and was slowly becoming a de facto member of the cell. At mealtimes, according to Hearst’s trial testimony, group discussions occurred and she participated.<sup>307</sup> The decision to allow Patricia Hearst to become a member of the SLA did not occur as a result of a dramatic spur of the moment decision. Instead, it began slowly with the members of the cell inviting Hearst to join them at meals and during group discussions while they lived in Daly City.

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 224-225.

<sup>307</sup> Anspacher and Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst*, 211.

By the latter part of February it became apparent to the members of the SLA that the negotiations for the release of Patricia Hearst had failed. The “good faith” gesture, also known as the People-in-Need program, had not been greeted with the universal acclaim that the SLA had hoped for. Also, it became increasingly apparent that an exchange of Hearst for Little and Remiro had almost no chance of happening. The SLA had been planning on their actions serving as the vanguard for a nationwide revolution which would topple the current form of government in the United States. The SLA was perplexed however, because neither the assassination of Marcus Foster, abduction of Patricia Hearst nor the development of a program to provide food for the poor provided the SLA with the admiration from society which they craved. Instead, the remnants of the New Left found themselves under the constant scrutiny by law enforcement. Many within the movement believed the SLA to be agent provocateurs working for the FBI or some other law enforcement agency. As a result, the SLA remained isolated with little prospect of gaining new followers.

In an interesting and completely unforeseen twist in the kidnapping, Patricia Hearst the captive became the queen of the revolution. The change began when Randolph Hearst replied to Cinque’s demand for another four million dollars to be added to the PIN food distribution by stating that the request was beyond his financial means. This response enraged Patricia and she began confiding in her captors regarding her poor relationships with her family and her fiancé.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> Bill Harris interview with author, 2/2/09.

In doing so, she portrayed her mother as an alcoholic who also was addicted to prescription drugs.<sup>309</sup> Factor in the recent news that in the midst of this turmoil, Catherine Hearst had accepted a new term to the UC Board of Regents. Catherine had one of the most conservative voting records of all the regents and her acceptance of another term right in the midst of the negotiations for her daughter's release added yet another layer of intrigue and complications. For Patricia it demonstrated that her mother cared little for her safety or return.

The feeling that best described Patricia at that point is betrayal. Never before in her life, in all likelihood, had she heard her father say that he could not afford something. To her, it had been unthinkable that her father could not come up with another four million dollars as a good faith gesture. Unfortunately for Patricia, she had little knowledge of the family finances and knew even less about the intricacies of her grandfather's will.

By all accounts, Patricia had always been a bit rebellious with an independent and strong-willed personality. In fact, during the pre-trial period of her incarceration, she had been interviewed by numerous psychologists. One of the doctors hired by the defense, Dr. Margaret Singer, interviewed a close friend of Patricia's, Mimi Swanton. Ms. Swanton described a situation in which Patricia avoided an exam at Santa Catalina High School by making up a story that her mother had cancer.

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

In an interview with a prosecution psychologist, Patricia displayed “feeling ranging from dislike to hatred of her parents but certainly no feelings of closeness or identification with their values.”<sup>310</sup> Her lifestyle, attending the University of California, Berkeley, living with Steven Weed before their wedding, her use of marijuana all demonstrated the different set of rules that guided Patricia’s life.

At the moment she had been kidnapped, Patricia had been undergoing a period of doubt regarding her future relationship with her fiancé, Steven Weed. Her doubts regarding the impending marriage resulted from her dissatisfaction with her subservient role in their relationship and that she found her fiancé “somewhat boring at times.”<sup>311</sup> While in prison awaiting trial, Hearst told psychologists that in the month prior to her abduction she began having thoughts of suicide because she felt committed to going through with the marriage to Weed even though she really did not want to.<sup>312</sup> These feelings of remorse and hatred which Patricia discussed freely with her doctors did not dissipate following the kidnapping. She shared these feelings freely with her captors as she began to form a bond of trust with them.<sup>313</sup>

Given the circumstances of her life, as she portrayed it for her captors and doctors, the kidnapping provided Patricia with an opportunity to free herself from her situation and change her life. As negotiations for her release faded, a change in her temperament appears via the audio taped communiqués released by the SLA, as she severs her ties to her parents and her fiancé.

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<sup>310</sup> Anspacher and Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst*, 432-433.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 433.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> Bill Harris interview with author, 2/2/2009.

Following Randolph Hearst's negative response to Cinque's six million dollar ultimatum on February 22, 1974, a nine day period of silence resulted between the two parties. As the silence of each passing day echoed loudly through the Hillsborough mansion of Randolph and Catherine Hearst, the Hearst's broke the silence and went public with their hopes that the SLA would allow them to communicate with their daughter. On March 9, the SLA responded to the Hearst's request. In an audiotaped communique that lasted over thirty minutes, the SLA introduced "General Gelina," formerly known as Angela Atwood.<sup>314</sup> Atwood attacked the FBI as only interested in ensuring that "Patricia Hearst is killed."<sup>315</sup> In typical SLA fashion, the death of Hearst, if it occurred, would be the result of a plot by the Nixon Administration to rally Middle America behind their policies.<sup>316</sup> More importantly, Atwood mentioned the SLA's isolation from other leftist groups. The SLA did not understand the silence from the left regarding their actions. Did they not understand that they (the SLA) were the vanguard of a new revolution?

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<sup>314</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 99. According to Hearst, Atwood was the author of the communiqué. The other interesting side note, with the addition of Bill Harris and Nancy Ling Perry, it appears that almost half of the SLA had some form of senior officer rank.

<sup>315</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 253.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*

Just prior to her introduction of Patricia, Atwood announced that “communications and negotiations” were suspended as a result of the corporate trickery” of Randolph Hearst.<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, future communications with their daughter would be based on the SLA’s access to Remiro and Little “via national TV.”<sup>318</sup>

Patricia’s role in the first three communiqués had been largely symbolic. She provided her friends and family with evidence that she remained alive. On the March 9<sup>th</sup> tape, Patricia no longer sounded like she had been drugged. Instead, she came across as assertive and angry with her family. From the very beginning of her statement, she mimicked Atwood by asserting that the FBI was her greatest danger. Furthermore, she cannot fathom why her father did not agree to the SLA’s demands for a six million dollar food program as a good faith gesture. In essence, she believed her father had sold out to the FBI and their insistence that the SLA, and therefore Patricia, had to be destroyed. In her moment of desperation, Patricia reached out to Weed and asked for his help. However, what truly demonstrates that the words came from Patricia was her appeal to her cousin William Randolph Hearst, whom she called “Willie.” In essence she had given up on her parents as she appealed to her cousin: “Willie, I know you really care about what happens to me. Make Mom and Dad let you talk. You can’t be silent.”<sup>319</sup>

The SLA selectively fed information to their captive, making sure she had information that corresponded with the issues the cell discussed with her.

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<sup>317</sup>Ibid., 255.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 258.

They made sure, for instance, to let her know when law enforcement raided a suspected SLA safe house. Cinque along with the other members of the SLA had regaled Patricia with stories of the violence and abuse of law enforcement toward the Left and African-American prisoners. At the same time, Hearst began reading *Blood in My Eye* by George Jackson and discussing the poor conditions of prisoners in jails throughout the country. Patty was very receptive the teachings of the SLA. As a result, Hearst concluded that the FBI and not the SLA had become her greatest physical danger. These factors led Hearst to announce that “Because of these dangers, I have been transferred to a special security unit of the SLA combat forces, where I am being held in protective custody. I have been issued a twelve-gauge riot shotgun, and I have been receiving instructions on how to use it.”<sup>320</sup> Hearst knew that she had not been transferred to a new unit of the SLA thus she had either completely bought into the SLA program by early March, or that a portion of her statement had been written for her. She completed her portion of the communiqué by stating that she still wanted to be released and that those who wanted to help her should focus on preventing the FBI from attacking her.

In her autobiography, Patricia stated that the entire communiqué had been conducted under Atwood’s personal direction and that “the clever personal touches Gelina added to the script” led many to believe she had converted to the SLA.<sup>321</sup> However, that was not the case. The thought of Patricia taking up arms with the SLA still remained outside the realm of possibility.

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<sup>320</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 261.

<sup>321</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 100.



Newspaper articles reacting to the communiqué did not mention the possibility that she had switched her allegiance.

Although Patricia's words towards her family seemed harsh and shrill during her portion of the March 9<sup>th</sup> tape, she did mention that she still hoped to be released soon. Also, the reason behind her anger is important. She felt betrayed by her father. Her anger towards her father resulted from her belief that he had not done all he could have to ensure her release and safe return. Instead of signaling the point at which Patricia joined the SLA willingly, the March 9 communiqué served as a departure point in her evolution to becoming the most famous revolutionary figure in the United States.

Although Patricia had been described by her friends and family as independent and strong willed, she also demonstrated the capacity, particularly in her relationship with Steven Weed, to be submissive in certain relationships. In fact, her relationship with Weed is a prime example of the duality of her character. She aggressively pursued Weed while he was teaching math at her high school when she was only a junior. However, despite her being the aggressor in initiating the relationship, Weed was the dominant force. Patricia chose to attend the University of California, Berkeley because Weed was attending the university and completing his graduate work. As a couple, Steve's social circle became Patricia's.<sup>322</sup>

The perception of Patricia Hearst as desperate to remove herself from her relationship with Weed was mentioned prominently by Dr. Joel Fort during his testimony at her Hibernia Bank Trial.

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid., 26-30.

Hearst validates Fort's observations by mentioning her doubts regarding her impending marriage to Weed in her autobiography.<sup>323</sup> However, during her portion of the March 9<sup>th</sup> communiqué, Hearst rhetorically tossed her parents under the fast approaching bus. Her fiancé had been spared from the shrill comments for another month. Not until she announced her decision to take up arms with her fellow SLA soldiers did she finally break free from her fiancé.

Patricia's relationship with her parents had not been idyllic. In particular, she clashed with her mother Catherine, who, like her daughter, has been described as strong-willed and stubborn. The fact that they clashed during Patricia's teen years had not been a secret. Patricia chafed under the control of the nuns at Santa Catalina High School, which her mother insisted she attend. As she became more independent, Patricia seemed to go out of her way to make her mother uncomfortable. In fact, her relationship with Weed can best be described as "exhibit A" of her rebellion against her mother. Not only did she live with Weed out of wedlock, but she also attended UC Berkeley instead of Stanford University. She never hid her negative feelings toward her mother from her captors, providing the SLA with an opportunity to fill a void in her life.

The relationship between Patricia and her father was much more complex. The rigidity of Catherine Hearst was juxtaposed by the flexibility and tolerance exhibited by Randolph Hearst. If anything, Patricia had been a "Daddy's girl." As a result, when her father announced that he did not have the extra four million dollars demanded by Cinque, she was devastated.

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

The fact that her father had drawn the proverbial “line in the sand” with Cinque had shaken Patricia greatly, to the point that she felt abandoned by the one person in her family that had always helped her when she needed assistance.<sup>324</sup> When Patricia began opening up to Angela Atwood and Willie Wolfe regarding her personal and family life, she found the love and acceptance that she had not found at home with her family.

The March 9<sup>th</sup> communiqué, also known as the “shotgun tape,” served as the departure point for Patricia’s integration into the SLA. Her anger towards her parents contributed to her new found acceptance within the collective. Slowly, the members of the SLA began including her in their daily activities. For Patricia, the single-minded pursuit of revolution must have seemed exhilarating given her less than thrilling portrayal of her pre-kidnapping life with Steven Weed.<sup>325</sup>

Following the March communiqué, the SLA remained silent for almost an entire month. During this period of silence, the SLA moved out of their house in Daly City and into an apartment in San Francisco on Golden Gate Avenue on either March 20 or 21. The new apartment did not have the space or yard of their Daly City safe house, but brought them closer to the heart of San Francisco. If they had any hopes for adding new recruits it was most likely to occur in an urban and not suburban setting. The move into San Francisco from the suburbs represented a new era for the revolutionary group. Although the housing would continuously worsen during their San Francisco sojourn, their greatest success came about in the “City by the Bay.”

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<sup>324</sup> When Patricia had been desperate to leave the boarding school at Santa Catalina, she turned to her father to help her out. He also served as conduit for communications between Patricia and her mother.

<sup>325</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 22-30.

The move to San Francisco came about for financial and security reasons. The decision by the SLA to strike out on their own with the Foster and Hearst actions to serve, in their own words, as the vanguard of the revolution, resulted in very little access to New Left sympathizers. Consequently, the SLA did not have access to money and information that is necessary to foment a revolution. This lack of money led the cell to search for less expensive housing. Their lack of familiarity regarding Daly City, as well as Cinque's growing sense of restlessness and paranoia, led to the collective's move to an apartment in the much more familiar city of San Francisco.<sup>326</sup> The move occurred in the evening to keep prying eyes away, and just a few days prior to when the next month's rent was due. This served as the standard SLA model for changing their safe house.

Patricia Hearst's transition to Tania occurred during this period of silence. The silence reflected the SLA's decision to focus on finding a new residence, its education of Patricia, and planning for their next moves. The SLA had determined long before PIN ended that it had failed. Moreover, the program had not generated the attention and goodwill they had hoped for in providing food for the needy. Instead, the publicity resulting from the food program was generally negative. The stories that appeared in newspapers and news broadcasts focused mainly on the disorder surrounding the food handout and the nature in which this food had become available.

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 91. Hearst provides some insight into Cinque's state of mind when she wrote that during meetings, he insisted that the television be turned toward the wall to prevent the government from using it to spy into the house.

Disparaging comments ranging from Ronald Reagan to California's Attorney General demonstrated their misgivings regarding the food give away and focused on the people receiving the food as the by product of extortion. Thus the controversial nature of PIN did not produce the positive media attention the SLA craved so much to receive.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Tania – Queen of the Revolution**

The conversion of Patricia Hearst from wealthy heiress into Tania, the Queen of the revolution, received a considerable amount of scrutiny at the time it occurred, during Patricia's Hibernia Bank robbery trial, and even today remains controversial. Patricia's actions began with her announcement on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1974, that she decided to stay and join the SLA instead of going home to her family. She remained estranged from her family until the day of her arrest, September 18, 1975. Her willing isolation from her family demonstrated her commitment to the revolution. At no point, from April 3 until her arrest did she make an attempt to contact either her pre-kidnap friends or her family. In other words, her commitment was real.

Patricia's decision to join the SLA did not occur as the result of some dramatic epiphany during her captivity. Instead her decision came after her initial imprisonment in a closet, her immersion into the radical politics of her captors and the failure of her father to negotiate her release. Even when she mentioned her with her father during the March 9 communiqué, she still mentioned her hope to be released.

The period of silence which began on March 9<sup>th</sup> and continued until April 2<sup>nd</sup>, served as a period of great change for Patricia and the SLA. Patricia began sharing meals with her captors, reading books they recommended, participating in the daily routines as well as the self critique sessions. She also became romantically involved with Willie Wolfe. By late March, she even began taking her turn on guard duty at night.

At some point following after the release of the March audiotape, Patricia made the decision to join the SLA. What made her want to join the SLA? During the lengthy cross examination of Dr. Joel Fort by F. Lee Bailey during the Hibernia Bank robbery trial, he explained her motivation this way: “She was – something was missing in her life. She was strong, willful, independent person, bored dissatisfied, in poor contact with her family, disliking them to some extent, dissatisfied with Steven Weed with whom she had been with for about three years at the time of kidnapping, and the interaction of that, that kind of vacuum, of something missing, a missing excitement, a missing sense of meaning or purpose in life with what seemed on the surface to be offered by the SLAers as she got to know them and as she became impressed, as she described in the Tania Interview, with their commitment, and as she described to me being impressed by their willingness to die for their beliefs, I think action was very important to her.”<sup>327</sup>

In fact, Patricia referred to the SLA member’s willingness to die in the pursuit of their goals in her initial tape recording following the kidnapping which was released on February 8, 1974. She stated that the SLA “have been honest with me, but they are perfectly willing to die for what they are doing.”<sup>328</sup> Throughout her autobiography, Hearst mentioned the SLA’s commitment to their revolution. By the time the group moved south to Los Angeles, she characterized life in their new safe house as more focused on death than ever before.

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<sup>327</sup> Anspacher and Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst*, 437.

<sup>328</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 205-206.

“Death stalked the foul air in that safe house,” wrote Patricia, “More than ever before, all of them talked of death. Hardly a day or night went by but that someone mentioned death and others quickly took up the subject.”<sup>329</sup> Instead of being repulsed by the group’s fascination with death, Patricia became enthralled by the revolution and their dedication to a cause.

The decision to join the SLA, according to the Patricia Hearst account, resulted from a conversation she had with Cinque following the move from Daly City to the Golden Gate apartment in San Francisco during the latter portion of March. Hearst had been transported to the new safe house unceremoniously in a brand new thirty gallon trash can. Just a few days after the move to San Francisco, Cinque approached Patricia with his proposal to join the SLA or be released.<sup>330</sup> Hearst has steadfastly maintained that she only joined the SLA to ensure her survival. Even though law enforcement had already discovered the names of the cells members, Patricia claimed that she “knew too much” and that the SLA could not release her.<sup>331</sup> What is not difficult to believe from her version of events surrounding her becoming a member of the SLA was Cinque’s reaction to her joining. Cinque viewed the advent of Tania as a “great propaganda coup if the prisoner wants to stay.”<sup>332</sup> As always, the SLA viewed events from the perspective of gaining greater notoriety. The notoriety surrounding Patricia’s conversion into an SLA member, however, lead to greater resolve to find the SLA by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies currently searching for them.

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<sup>329</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 217.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-105.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.



The decision by Patricia to join her revolutionary captors has always been shrouded in controversy and mystery. Did she willingly join the SLA? Subsequent events, such as her participation in the Hibernia Bank Robbery and her role as a shooter at Mel's Sporting Goods, along with her decision not to contact either family or friends following the demise of the SLA in Los Angeles when she had ample opportunity to reach out to them, contradict her version of the events surrounding her decision to join the revolution.

Less than a year after their arrests, Bill and Emily Harris attempted to explain the process which Patricia went through prior to her decision to join the SLA, in an interview with journalists from the *New Times*, Susan Lyne and Robert Scheer.<sup>333</sup> The Harris' began by downplaying the conditions of Patricia's confinement immediately following the kidnapping. However, they did mention that early on they gave her a copy of George Jackson's *Blood in My Eye*. The reeducation of Patricia began early, although the SLA did not contemplate conversion of Hearst until March.

The housing ensured that Patricia remained in close proximity with her captors. However, with the decision to allow the captive to get to know the cell members and their reason for joining the SLA, Hearst became immersed in their belief system. The Harris' emphasized Patricia's relationship with Willie Wolfe, his patience in reading to her and explaining his experiences and developing a true relationship with her.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> Lyne and Scheer, "Twenty Months with Patty/Tania," *New Times*, 3/5/76, 27-28.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-26.

Despite later protestations that she did not like anyone from the SLA, both the *New Times* interview of Bill and Emily Harris and Patricia's autobiography paint a portrait of, at the very least, two close friends. Given their similar ages and upbringing, they naturally gravitated toward each other. However, the Olmec Monkey given to Patricia by Willie provides the strongest evidence of their close relationship. She mentions the artifact in the last audio communiqué following the shootout in Los Angeles which resulted in the death of Willie and five other members of the SLA. The prosecuting attorney used the artifact to damage Hearst's testimony on the stand during the Hibernia Bank robbery trial, because the artifact had been in Patricia's possession at the time of her arrest. If she had hated Wolfe so much and been raped by him, it is very unlikely that she would treasure a keepsake that reminded her of him.<sup>335</sup>

The Harris' made another observation when reflecting back upon Hearst's decision to join the cell. She began to fear law enforcement.<sup>336</sup> Soon after her abduction, the Oakland Police thought they had located the SLA safe house and quickly surrounded, then attacked the residence with a SWAT unit taking the lead. The reaction of law enforcement, in this instance, coincided with the scenarios Cinque had mentioned to Patricia previously. He constantly warned her that the "FBI always came in with guns blazing at revolutionaries."<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> James Browning interview with author, 11/5/2008.

<sup>336</sup> Lyne and Scheer, "Twenty Months with Patty/Tania," *New Times*, 3/5/76, 27: See also Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 90. Hearst mentioned that she truly feared law enforcement and that Cinque reinforced this fear by telling her over and over again that the FBI would come storming in at some point to kill the SLA and their prisoner.

<sup>337</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 55.

In fact, Attorney General William Saxbe mentioned during a press conference that Randolph Hearst should not succumb to the SLA's demands because the FBI would attempt to liberate his daughter as soon as they discovered her whereabouts.<sup>338</sup> Given the aggressive actions of law enforcement, the statement of Saxbe, and the growing kinship Patricia had developed with Wolfe and Atwood in particular, she found herself developing a kinship and closeness with her captors in direct contradiction to her frustrations with her family and her fiancé.

The long period of silence broke on April 2, 1974, when John Bryan, the editor of an "underground newspaper" the San Francisco *Phoenix* received a birthday card, roses and a portion of Patricia Hearst's California drivers license. Within the bundle, which had been scheduled to arrive the previous day, came communiqué number seven from the SLA entitled "Negotiating the Release of Prisoner." The text stated that "further communications regarding subject prisoner will follow in seventy two hours. Communications will state the state, city, and time of the release of prisoner." The communiqué was dated April 1, 1974.<sup>339</sup>

In the days leading up to the release of the "April Fools" communiqué, two appeals were made asking for the release of Patricia Hearst. The first appeal came from an unexpected pair, the imprisoned SLA soldiers Joe Remiro and Russell Little. They released a letter to the media on March 28<sup>th</sup> dealing with many issues, including their theory that the FBI wanted to kill Patricia in order to discredit the SLA.

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<sup>338</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 235.

<sup>339</sup> Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 251 and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 296-297.

They also state that Patricia should not be held responsible for the actions of the Hearst Corporation and that she may actually look back upon her captivity as a “worthwhile experience.”<sup>340</sup>

On the very same day, Randolph Hearst announced a new escrow plan that would provide an additional four million dollars for the PIN food program which concluded its distributions on March 25<sup>th</sup>. He had been searching for some way to reopen discussions with the SLA and provide them with the additional monies they had requested. Thus, Randolph Hearst had secured from the Hearst Corporation an agreement to place four million dollars into an escrow account to be distributed to the food program in two separate two million dollar payments upon the release of his daughter. He did not oversee the escrow account. Three trustees not affiliated with the Hearst family or the Hearst corporation had the sole responsibility for the disbursement of the funds as soon as one condition had been met – the release of Patricia Hearst to her family.

The request did not lead to the reengagement of negotiations with the SLA. The revolutionaries had undergone many changes during the silence, a new safe house and the addition of a new member to the cell. The SLA had moved beyond the food program and had no desire to resurrect discussions based upon what they viewed as a failed effort.

The following day, Randolph Hearst, along with the FBI’s Charles Bates and others, met with reputed SLA member Clifford “Death Row Jeff” Jefferson.

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<sup>340</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 284-285.

Jefferson had spent most of his life in various California prisons and had befriended Willie Wolfe, Russell Little and Cinque and considered himself a high ranking member of the revolutionary organization. Randolph Hearst met with him at the prison hoping to secure his assistance in obtaining the release of his daughter. At the conclusion of the meeting, Randolph Hearst sat at a prison typewriter crafting a public appeal from Jefferson and fellow inmates and BCA members Al Taylor and Raymond Scott.<sup>341</sup> Throughout the latter portions of March, Randolph Hearst attempted to find that one thing that might bring the SLA back into negotiations for his daughter's release. He attempted personal appeals from close associates and the promise of future money for the food program to no avail. Little did he know that what the SLA truly craved had been the attention of the nation's media outlets. The food program did not provide the positive publicity they so dearly wanted. Instead, the SLA had chosen a different path that generated more publicity than any other action in their short history.

As a result of all this new activity on the part of Randolph Hearst and the public appeals for Patricia's release, Cinque decided to play an April Fools Day prank on everyone by hinting that Patricia's release was imminent.<sup>342</sup> The decision to use John Bryan as the vehicle for the "announcement" occurred as a result of the SLA's appreciation of a fabricated SLA interview he ran in the *Phoenix* in March.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 294-296.

<sup>342</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 125.

<sup>343</sup> Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 250.

At no point did Patricia mention that Cinque or anyone else in the SLA seriously considered releasing her in return for the continuation of the food program for the poor and needy. In doing so, the SLA sold out in its so called battle for the people in favor of their continuing dependence on media attention. Consequently, the decision had been made to incorporate this one time hostage into their revolutionary cell.

The Hearst family did not realize that the communiqué had been the SLA's version of an April Fools joke. The family had prepared a room at their Hillsborough residence for their daughter's return. Patricia's sister Anne had moved out of the "blue room" that once served as Patricia's room, prior to moving into the Bienvenue apartment with Steven Weed. The Hearst family came alive once more at the thought of Patricia's homecoming.<sup>344</sup>

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, the response from the SLA that the Hearst family had been anxiously waiting for arrived at radio station KSAN in San Francisco. This communiqué changed completely the public's perception of the case and Patricia Hearst. At the beginning of the audiotape Patricia announced that contrary to the opinions of others, she had not been "brainwashed, drugged, tortured, hypnotized or in any way confused" in her earlier statements. She then stated that "as George Jackson wrote, it's me, the way I want it, the way I see it."<sup>345</sup> Patricia came out swinging prefacing her upcoming remarks with the assurance that these were her words. A statement she refuted when she stood trial for the Hibernia Bank robbery.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Lester, *Girl in a Box*, 82-84.

<sup>345</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1227, 1.

<sup>346</sup> Anspacher and Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst*, 201.

Along with this new communiqué came a Polaroid photograph of Patricia Hearst in a crouch, wearing a beret and armed with a sawed off M-1 carbine with a rifle scope tied to the barrel. She posed in such a way as to give the impression that she had fired the weapon. She did all this in front of a large red SLA flag with the seven headed cobra.<sup>347</sup> This photograph became the symbol of the SLA to a greater extent than the seven headed cobra. Almost overnight, Oakland and Berkeley became flooded with copies of the photograph with the caption at the bottom “We Love You Tania.”

After taking the photograph, in a manner similar to that of the American military, the members of the cell proceeded to “unceremoniously cut off” Patricia/Tania’s hair leaving “no more than a half-inch growth” around her head.<sup>348</sup>

Any hope that Patricia would be arriving home soon vanished with this new communiqué. Patricia, still seething with anger toward her parents completely severed ties with her family. She publicly declared that her parents had no concern for her safety and that the “People In Need program was a sham.” Her parents, she declared, had attempted to deceive the SLA and the people with their phony statements of concern for her safety.<sup>349</sup> She even called her father a corporate liar and compared him to Adolf Hitler.<sup>350</sup> One need not hear the inflection of her voice in order to determine the level of anger in her words.

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<sup>347</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 114-115.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>349</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1227, 1.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

The main component in her anger, which she directed at her parents, involved their inability to obtain her freedom. Acting out in the role of diva, Patricia Hearst's public meltdown transformed her from the poor victim of a kidnapping into the role of Queen of the Revolution, without the actual occurrence of a revolution.

The greatest difficulty for Randolph Hearst had been the inability to react to a legitimate offer for the release of his daughter. The SLA used the term "good faith gesture" to describe the two million dollars spent on the food giveaway. The demands generated by the SLA had little chance of being met, especially the unstated swap of Remiro and Little for Patricia. Because of her circumstances as a prisoner, Patricia had been unable to sift through news accounts of the negotiations. Instead, she received the bits and pieces offered to her from her captors; therefore, she never comprehended the impossible tasks faced by her father.

What Patricia Hearst saw from her vantage point as the prisoner of the SLA was her father, the son of William Randolph Hearst, declare that he did not have the four million dollars that Cinque demanded be added to the food program. Furthermore, in the midst of the negotiations, Governor Reagan announced that Catherine Hearst had accepted a second term to the University of California's Board of Regents. These two events led Patricia to believe that her parents had moved on without her. Thus the anger in the communiqué proved to be her reaction to what she perceived as her parents cutting all ties to her. Patricia's world had been torn apart and she found comfort along with meaning and excitement which had been missing in her former life, with her new comrades.



The SLA provided her with an opportunity to find a new life and she opened up to this new reality as a result of her dissatisfaction with her family and her previous life. Thus she chose to stay and join the revolution because she felt she had nowhere else to go.

After Patricia essentially renounced her family tree and decided to join the revolution, Cinque stepped to the microphone and announced that the SLA had issued death warrants for Christopher Brother Thompson, Colston Westbrook and Robyn Steiner. According to Patricia, the death warrants had caused a great deal of angst among the cell. Atwood and Perry, in particular, attempted to convince Cinque to rescind the death warrants. When a member of the group mentioned that Little “would be very upset when he learned of the death warrant” for Steiner, Cinque responded “that both Osi (Little) and Bo (Remiro) deserved to have death warrants issued against them. They had violated the Codes of War by allowing themselves to be captured.”<sup>351</sup>

The April 3<sup>rd</sup> communiqué did not sit well with either Little or Remiro. Little referred to the issuance of death warrants as one that demonstrated “an unbelievable amount of arrogance” and that “it was a culmination of a lot of negative trends that had developed.”<sup>352</sup> Remiro referred to the decision to allow Patricia to join the SLA as “another example of the media affect taking precedence over more important considerations.” Little went even further stating in 1976 that “It’s obvious now and should have been obvious then that there’s no way in hell Hearst was ready to become a guerilla.”

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<sup>351</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 133.

<sup>352</sup> Lyne and Scheer, *The Story of the SLA*, ” New Times, 4/16/76, 34.

In Little's opinion, what the SLA "should have done was send her home and let her tell her story to the press."<sup>353</sup> Also, the infusion of the additional four million dollars for the food program had the potential to establish a long term program to combat hunger among the Bay Area's poorest families. Unfortunately, that type of revolutionary thinking had gone by the wayside for Cinque.

By this time, Cinque had become addicted to the attention given to him by the media and it factored into his decision making. As long as Patricia remained with the SLA, so did the media attention. Having Patricia also allowed Cinque to manipulate Randolph Hearst and the Hearst Corporation, a scenario beyond his wildest imagination just a year earlier. What Cinque did not factor into this equation had been the reaction of law enforcement; their hunt for the SLA did not rest until Patricia had been found.

The death warrants issued by Cinque had the unintended consequence of pitting the SLA's two captured soldiers in the difficult position of reacting against their comrades. Steiner, who had dated Little for years and had joined him in the move to Berkeley made the decision to leave the SLA prior to the Foster assassination. Steiner returned to Florida to continue her education and remained silent regarding her past affiliation with Little and the SLA. The death warrants, however, demonstrated Cinque's growing paranoia. The decision to issue the warrant on Steiner "freaked out" both Little and Remiro.

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

In Little's words, "here's this woman that I had lived with over two years and loved with all my heart and my best friends put out a death warrant on her. It was like a nightmare."<sup>354</sup>

The death warrants were worthless. The SLA had no way of enforcing them and the individuals named, particularly Steiner, had not been forthcoming with information to law enforcement. Furthermore, they did not have any current knowledge regarding the whereabouts of the SLA and no way of contacting them. If anything, the death warrants only served to further isolate and frighten potential allies in the New Left.

As a newly minted revolutionary, Patricia announced her new name – Tania. Like the other members of the SLA, she renounced her given name in favor of a new symbolic, revolutionary name. Cinque made the decision to give the name Tania to their new convert. The original revolutionary Tania had fought with and killed along with Che Guevera in the jungles of Bolivia. Along with her new name, Cinque gave Patricia the book *Tania: The Unforgettable Guerilla* in order for her to learn more about her namesake. Cinque had big plans for the new soldier.

Giving the name Tania to Patricia did not prove to be a popular choice among all members of the cell. Bill and Emily Harris thought Patricia had not earned the name of such a famous revolutionary, plus the name had previously belonged to their friend Robyn Steiner. Neither argument made much of an impact upon Cinque.<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>355</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 124.

The announcement that Patricia had joined her captors created a stir, not only among her friends and family, but in the media and throughout the country. The kidnapping case which had been covered in depth by the media and seemed to have arrived fresh from the pages of a novel suddenly added another level of intrigue. Taken within the context of the youth revolt of the 1960's and the early 1970's, the Hearst story became yet another struggle between rebellious youth, trading in their PF Flyers and innocence for a new world view that was destined to clash with their parents and their values. This new enlightenment usually came with higher education and access to illegal drugs. While their parents came home to a scotch and water, or perhaps, prescription drugs to "settle down," a new generation defied convention and began experimenting with drugs such as marijuana, LSD, and many others. In Hearst's defense, the SLA provided her with an opportunity to branch out beyond her family lineage and experiment with a different lifestyle. In doing so, she renounced her family, her fiancé, but saved the majority of her vitriol for her parents, while never even mentioning her siblings. For Patricia, her family had become an expendable appendage.

Patricia's conversion to Tania, SLA soldier, came as a shock. However, Larry Lee, the News Director for KSAN, the radio station that received the SLA communiqué proclaiming Patricia's new allegiance, concluded that "The actions of her mother alone could have driven her to this decision."<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>356</sup> *The Berkeley Barb*, 4/5-11/74, 4.

Lee's comments referred to Catherine Hearst's decision to accept a reappointment to the University of California's Board of Regents and her habit of dressing in all black as if she had been in mourning over the death of her daughter. While each of these actions may have been considered by Patricia as detrimental to her survival while a captive, they cannot be considered the sole factor in her decision to join the SLA. In fact, her relationship with her mother had never been a close one. Therefore it is likely that Patricia's greatest disappointment occurred when her father announced that he could not meet Cinque's demands for an additional four million dollars for the food program. Randolph Hearst had always rescued his daughter from difficult situations in the past, in particular from the discipline and regimentation of the Dominican nuns of Santa Catalina High School in Monterey, California. When Patricia became upset with the discipline handed out by the nuns, she complained directly to her father, not to her mother. As a result, Randolph Hearst assisted in the transfer of his daughter to Crystal Springs High School, a private school for girls within a mile of the Hearst family home in Hillsborough.<sup>357</sup>

Patricia's rebellion against her family, portrayed by her decision to stay and fight with the SLA, had much in common with rebellious youth throughout the past two decades. The rise of the New Left occurred as a direct result of the baby boomers against the status quo, whether it be segregation, the draft, the war in Vietnam or university administrators. The difference for Patricia and her family was the public nature of the rebellion and the manner in which it occurred.

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<sup>357</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 222-225.

The Hearst family battles played itself out in newspapers, magazines and television stations throughout the nation, for all to see and comment upon. In essence, Patricia became the role model for rebellious youth in the 1970's.

Now that Patricia had announced her decision to stay and join the SLA, Cinque wanted to demonstrate her allegiance to the revolution in a tangible manner. How could they publicly demonstrate that Patricia had willingly joined them? The decision came down to an act of necessity. The money from Camilla Hall's savings had been dwindling away and was almost gone. The need for an infusion of cash had become acute. With ties to others within the New Left severed because of the Foster assassination, and the isolation of the cell necessitated by law enforcement's all-out hunt for Patricia, the SLA had to find a source of money on their own. That source turned out to be the Sunset branch of Hibernia Bank on twenty second street, just off of Noriega in San Francisco.

In an interview with *New Times* magazine, Emily Harris stated that the Hibernia Bank robbery served two purposes: They (the SLA) needed a large amount of money to survive on," said Emily, "and at that time no one in the SLA was able to work. The second reason was to verify that Tania had indeed stayed of her free will."<sup>358</sup> Tania was supposed to play the central role in the robbery according to Emily Harris, by firing a round into the ceiling and announcing to the crowd "This is Tania!"<sup>359</sup> Bill Harris, in the same interview, stated that the SLA wanted the cameras to capture the moment for everyone to see. Hearst entered the bank with a loaded weapon.

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<sup>358</sup> Lyne and Scheer, "Twenty Months with Patty/Tania," *New Times*, 3/5/76, 28.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*

However, in a freak accident while entering the bank, Patricia chambered a round in her semi-automatic carbine that jammed her gun so she could not eject the bullet or fire a round into the air.<sup>360</sup>

The date chosen for the bank robbery was, April 15. This day has meaning for most Americans because it is the day that income taxes are due. While training for the robbery, the SLA referred to the bank as “the bakery,” because that is where the bread is. Also, they did not refer to the action as a robbery. Revolutionaries do not steal, they expropriate from the wealthy.<sup>361</sup> In her biography, Patricia referred to the fact that the father of her best friend, Trish Tobin, just happened to be the President of the bank the SLA planned to rob. It stretches the bounds of credibility to assume that she neither mentioned nor offered any information relating to the bank. Given the theatrical nature of the SLA and the desire of its newest recruit to gain credibility from her comrades, it is highly likely that Patricia played a role in choosing which bank to rob. As for the date of the robbery, there cannot possibly be a better day to expropriate money from a bank in order to foment revolution against authority than April 15<sup>th</sup>.

Detailed planning for the Hibernia Bank robbery began after the announcement that Patricia Hearst had joined the revolution. The cell members split into two teams: An inside team and an outside team. Based on drawings that resulted from a reconnaissance of the bank, the inside team practiced for the upcoming “expropriation.”

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<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 137.

Between April 11<sup>th</sup> and April 13<sup>th</sup>, Camilla Hall and Emily Harris used an identification card in the name of Janet Cooper to rent four vehicles to be used in the robbery.<sup>362</sup>

On the morning of the bank robbery, each team gathered in their assigned vehicle. In the green LTD station wagon, the inside team congregated, with Camilla Hall driving and Mizmoon in the front passenger seat with Cinque, Perry and Hearst in the back seat. Following the inside team in a red AMC Hornet, the outside team of Atwood, Wolfe, and the HARRISES prepared themselves for their role to provide protection from police or any other potential interlopers, before the inside team left the bank. The red Hornet parked across the street from the bank in an abandoned gas station while the LTD carrying the inside team circled the bank twice before parking illegally in a bus zone on Twenty-Second street around the corner from the bank. The inside team exited the vehicle, rounded the corner toward the bank and on Cinque's signal entered the bank. Hall opened the door for Patricia and the two "strolled together through the length of the bank to the rear writing desk."<sup>363</sup> Mizmoon quickly followed Hall and Hearst, then came Perry who dropped her ammunition upon entering the bank and stooped to pick it up. Cinque became impatient waiting for Perry and leapt over her and loudly announced the bank robbery by yelling "This is a holdup! The first motherfucker who don't lay down on the floor gets shot in the head!"<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1640, 157-201.

<sup>363</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 160.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.* Also, eyewitness accounts taken by the FBI have Cinque yelling out "This is the SLA" and "get down" without the colorful language provided by Patricia Hearst.



While Cinque let everyone in the bank know what was happening, Mizmoon sprinted across the bank, jumped over the teller's counter and began liberating money from the teller's stations. Cinque then relieved the bank's security guard, Ed Shea of his .38 caliber revolver.<sup>365</sup>

Patricia entered the bank with a loaded weapon and the plan called for her to fire a single round in the air to prove to everyone that she knew how to use the weapon and that she was free to use it. By doing so, the SLA wanted to show off their new recruit and provide proof positive that she had joined of her own free will. With proof that she carried a loaded weapon into the bank, claims of coercion could easily be refuted. Unfortunately for the SLA, prior to entering the bank, she chambered a round in her semi-automatic carbine and it jammed her gun so she could not eject the bullet or fire a round into the air. Patricia explained that while in the bank she "happened to notice at this point that the bolt of my carbine was off to one side rather than closed flat. It struck me that the carbine was inoperable."<sup>366</sup> Her prowess with the carbine had to wait until May 16<sup>th</sup> for the world to see.

In all the excitement and free flow of adrenaline, Hearst almost forgot her speech entirely. According to her account, all she could muster was a pathetic "This is Tania...Patricia Hearst..."<sup>367</sup> Given the circumstances, she did her best to announce her new identity and her involvement in the bank robbery.

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<sup>365</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 323.

<sup>366</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 161. Even though she wrote that she knew the gun was inoperable, the film footage showed Hearst pointing her weapon at Pete Markoff and Gene Brennan when they attempted to enter the bank during the robbery. Perry fired on both men as they quickly exited the bank.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid. Eyewitness accounts taken by the FBI (*HEARNAP Files*, document 1640) corroborate this portion of Patricia Hearst's version of the bank robbery.

While Patricia, Perry and Hall along with Cinque rounded up the patrons of the bank, Mizmoon began demanding from the tellers the keys to the drawers containing the money at the teller's counter. All the while, Cinque and Hearst kept track of the time when they had to leave the bank before the police arrived.

While the SLA controlled the bank floor, Assistant Vice President of the bank, Jim Smith watched the robbery unfold from an upstairs break room. He immediately hit the silent alarm button which activated two high speed 35mm surveillance cameras located above the only entrance to the bank. According to an FBI report of the robbery, approximately 400 frames of film had been exposed "during the actual robbery," and at four times per second this indicated that the SLA spent approximately two minutes inside Hibernia Bank.<sup>368</sup>

For the most part, the robbery had been executed with skill and precision, which is until Nancy Ling Perry panicked when two bank customers attempted to enter the bank in the midst of the robbery. Pete Markoff and Gene Brennan had the distinct displeasure of being on the receiving end of Perry's shock as she fired upon both men as they hastily left the bank building once they discovered the bank was in the midst of being robbed. Markoff received a .30 caliber slug to his right buttock that exited through the front of his right leg. Brennan, also wounded while trying to flee, was shot in the hand by Perry. Both men received quick medical attention and recovered fully from their wounds.

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<sup>368</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1640, 233.

After approximately two minutes, the SLA left Hibernia Bank with \$10,692.21 along with security guard Ed Shea's .38 caliber Smith & Wesson revolver.<sup>369</sup> Speed had been the key to the success of the robbery. The SLA left the bank before the San Francisco Police arrived, thus allowing them the opportunity to reach their switch cars unseen and ensure their successful escape. The two rental cars used in the bank robbery had been abandoned in favor of the switch cars. San Francisco Police quickly found the red AMC Hornet parked in a no stopping zone in the middle of the block of 2400 Lawton Street.<sup>370</sup> The green Ford LTD station wagon was discovered at the intersection of 30<sup>th</sup> and Lawton Street. Both cars were located as a direct result of the San Francisco Police Department's intensive neighbor investigation of the areas surrounding 22<sup>nd</sup> and Noriega Street. The quick disappearance of the SLA led law enforcement to speculate that the safe house had to be in the nearby area.

The SLA, however, did not disappear into their safe house, but into the switch cars: a green 1973 four door LTD hard top and a green 1974 four door Ford Maverick. In these switch cars, the SLA drove near their safe house on Golden Gate Avenue where everyone left the vehicles to walk back to the safe house, except Emily Harris and Mizmoon Soltysik. Harris and Soltysik proceeded to ditch the switch cars at the Japan Center parking garage at 1600 Geary Street in San Francisco. The police discovered the vehicles during their search of all the parking garages in the city in an attempt to pin down the SLA in a particular portion of San Francisco.

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 6. The SLA claimed to have taken \$10,660.02 from the robbery in their April 24, 1974 communique.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 171.

By choosing Hibernia Bank and the Japan Center as the locations of the robbery and the drop off of the switch cars, the SLA successfully thwarted attempts by law enforcement to narrow their search into specific portions of the city.

The Hibernia Bank robbery served as a chilling reminder of the violent nature of the SLA. Brennan and Markoff did not make an attempt to interfere with the robbery, yet both had been shot at and wounded by Nancy Ling Perry. By being in the wrong place at the wrong time she nearly killed both men. The fact that the SLA had been heavily armed and once again demonstrated their willingness to use their weapons on innocent bystanders, did not endear them to “the people” they had stated an affinity for. The action only served to further distancing of the group from any potential allies within the community while continuing to place members of what remained of the New Left on the defensive and fearful of both the FBI and the SLA. As a result of their increasing isolation, the SLA, either communally or at the behest of their leader Cinque, began to make increasingly poor decisions. These decisions led directly to the deaths of six of the nine members and effectively destroyed the short-lived Symbionese Liberation Army.

## Chapter 12

### On the Road to Purgatory

The Hibernia Bank robbery provided the SLA with an infusion of much needed cash. Also, it brought the SLA a great deal of unneeded attention. As a result of the increase in attention in the media, the SLA membership felt ill at ease about exposing themselves to potential discovery, thus making the simplest daily activities next to impossible. The collective began feeling trapped within the San Francisco city limits. The pressure to establish a new safe house became acute. The question to be answered, however, was where could they go to escape potential discovery by law enforcement?

The bank robbery satisfied the SLA's immediate need for money. It also solidified, at least in the United States Attorney General's mind, Patricia Hearst's conversion to the side of the SLA. No doubt existed in terms of her participation in the bank robbery. The only question surrounding Hearst's involvement in the robbery related to whether or not active coercion took place inside the bank.

Did Cinque threaten Patricia prior to the robbery? Did she carry a loaded weapon? Did the tapes show Cinque aiming his rifle at Hearst? In the immediate aftermath of the robbery, eyewitness accounts claimed that Cinque pushed a female member of the SLA upon entering the bank.<sup>371</sup> Initially the assumption was that Patricia had been pushed into the bank.

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<sup>371</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1398, 1.

However, the contact occurred between Cinque and Nancy Ling Perry after Perry dropped two clips of ammunition as she entered the bank. While she attempted to bend over and retrieve the fallen bullets, Cinque swept past her and entered the bank. Patricia did carry a loaded weapon into the bank and no conclusive evidence exists, other than Hearst's testimony in court and her autobiography that she was under any duress from any member of the SLA during the bank robbery. According to the prosecuting attorney in the Hibernia Bank robbery trial, Hearst appeared to be acting willfully and purposefully. Her movements, as demonstrated by the bank surveillance tapes depict Hearst "acting with great purpose and verve, immediately swinging her weapon around to train it on a hapless customer who had entered the bank while the robbery was in progress."<sup>372</sup>

In his weekly news conference on April 17, 1974, Attorney General William B. Saxbe stated that Patricia Hearst "was not a reluctant participant" in the Hibernia Bank robbery. Saxbe went even further and expressed his personal view that she was a "common criminal."<sup>373</sup>

These comments quickly reached the public via the media and propelled a backlash against Patricia Hearst that grew even stronger following her actions in Los Angeles. For the time being, however, United States Attorney for the Northern District of California, James Browning, decided to announce charges against Cinque, Perry, Soltysik, and Hall for their participation in the Hibernia Bank robbery.

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<sup>372</sup> James Browning interview with author, 10/14/2008.

<sup>373</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1482, 1.

The arrest warrant issued for the members of the SLA mentioned Hearst only as a material witness and her name did not appear on the list of suspects.<sup>374</sup> The arrest warrants demonstrate the fine line Browning had to adhere to. As Browning stated at the time of the bank robbery, “I think this is the first time in the annals of legal history that a kidnap victim has shown up in the middle of a bank robbery.”<sup>375</sup> The unique nature of the situation surrounding the bank robbery and Patricia Hearst necessitated that Browning’s every move required the preponderance of evidence prior to any action on his part.

Cinque made sure to point out to “Tania” that she was now a revolutionary, just like every other member of the cell. “If the feds get her alive, they gonna put her away in jail for a long, long time. Make no mistake about it.”<sup>376</sup> While Hearst did not serve a long jail sentence as Cinque predicted, his underlying point still rang true: her participation in the bank robbery made her a bonafide member of the SLA in the eyes of the law, despite the fact that she had been listed by Browning as only a material witness.

Patricia’s involvement in the bank robbery also changed her status in the court of public opinion. Her active involvement in criminal activities appeared too many to confirm her statement in the April 3<sup>rd</sup> communiqué that she had, indeed, changed sides.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 334.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>376</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 168-169. Hearst quoted Cinque in the aftermath of the robbery demonstrating that the reasoning for the action was to ensure that Hearst’s ties to the SLA were more than mere words.

<sup>377</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 334.

News of the bank robbery found William and Catherine Hearst during a brief getaway in Mexico. They quickly returned to the Bay Area when it became clear that their daughter's kidnapping case had taken a truly unique and unforeseen turn.

Despite the monetary success of the bank robbery, Cinque began to fear that the police were closing in on him and his band of revolutionaries. In fact, he had convinced himself along with the other members of the cell that both the FBI and the San Francisco police had sent a number of agents and officers throughout the city to conduct a search of every home in the city in their search for the SLA. He also feared that they were trapped on the San Francisco peninsula because he thought law enforcement had placed road block on all roads and bridges leaving the city with specific instructions to look for the SLA.<sup>378</sup> The fact of the matter was that neither the FBI nor the San Francisco police had not blocked the roads or bridges and neither were they conducting a house to house search for them. San Francisco police had been on high alert since April 16, 1974, not because of the SLA's bank robbery, but as a result of the shooting death of Nelson "Nick" T. Shields IV. Shields had been shot and killed while making room in his station wagon for a rug he had just picked up. The .32 caliber shell casings at the scene along with witness descriptions of a young, black shooter led police to conclude that this shooting had been the latest in a string of murders known as the Zebra killings.

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<sup>378</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 173.



The case of the Zebra killings created a deep sense of fear and foreboding throughout the city of San Francisco beginning in October of 1973, but reached its zenith on April 16, 1974. The Zebra killers were a group of young African-Americans with ties to the Nation of Islam. They formed a group called the “Death Angels” and they began targeting and attacking Caucasians throughout San Francisco because, in their opinion, whites were not human beings but “grafted snakes,” “blue-eyed devils,” and “white motherfuckers.”<sup>379</sup> As a result of the racially motivated killings, the Zebra case led to increasing racial tensions within the city. The San Francisco police even set up a special task force known as Operation Zebra to investigate the case.

The reaction of the San Francisco police regarding the Zebra killings must have triggered Cinque’s growing wariness at remaining within the city, especially after the city’s police officers began questioning large numbers of African-Americans who resembled police sketches of the Zebra killers. The racial profiling quickly came under widespread criticism and was deemed unconstitutional by United States District Judge Alonzo J. Zirpoli and the “Zebra Check” of African-American males throughout San Francisco was suspended.<sup>380</sup> Cinque’s reaction to the “Zebra check” resulted from his close resemblance to one of the police sketches of the Zebra killers. Therefore, he concluded that “Operation Zebra was a police plot designed to capture him and put an end to the SLA.”<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> James Lubinkas “Remembering the Zebra Killings,” 8/30/2001, <http://97.74.65.51/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=21980>.

<sup>380</sup> Clark Howard, *Zebra: The True Account of the 179 days of Terror*, (New York: Richard Marek Publishers, 1979) 341-348.

<sup>381</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 173-174.

Either the need to be on constant alert or as the result of his increasing consumption of Akadema plum wine, Cinque's thoughts, pronouncements and actions became increasingly erratic at best, and, at its worst, dangerous and completely out of touch with reality.

With the San Francisco police on high alert due to the Zebra case and the correct assumption by law enforcement following the bank robbery that the SLA had a safe house within the San Francisco city limits, the SLA members began feeling the pressure of constant media exposure and no longer felt safe venturing out of their apartment. The need for assistance became acute. Cinque's response was nothing short of astounding.

Just days after the Hibernia Bank robbery, the SLA instituted a new plan "to enlist new recruits into the SLA to help us get food," wrote Patricia, "and get on with the revolution."<sup>382</sup> The idea came directly from Cinque with unanimous support from the rest of the collective. The only critique came from Bill Harris who suggested that Cinque be accompanied by a back-up team while he attempted to recruit new members. Cinque's plan consisted of him going around the neighborhood and ringing doorbells. The reasoning behind the decision had been that by now people in the neighborhood "would welcome him (Cinque) with open arms" because of his actions for the people.<sup>383</sup>

With this philosophy intact, Cinque set out to find new followers. According to Hearst, Cinque set out on this mission with Bill Harris and Angela Atwood serving as his backup tea, in case anything went wrong.

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

A much different mission, supported by the actual recruits, had Mizmoon and Perry dressed up as nurses going door to door to recruit new members.<sup>384</sup> Regardless of the method and the individuals involved in the recruitment, the SLA made contact with a group of individuals who sympathized just enough with the SLA to be brought into the fold and assist the cell with small purchases. In return, the new recruits received financial compensation.<sup>385</sup>

Long term strategic planning never seemed to occur as part of the daily life of the SLA. The group did not seem to appreciate the level of attention the bank robbery incurred, except on a superficial level. In other words, they wanted the notoriety from the media that came with the proven transformation of Patricia Hearst into an urban guerilla and a successful bank robbery but not the intensified attention from law enforcement. They enjoyed and even reveled in the media attention, but worried about the fact that the faces of those who participated in the bank robbery became front page news as well. The need to stockpile food and other daily necessities before April 15 should have been obvious, but did not occur. Thus the SLA now had the money to purchase food but became too concerned about being seen and caught that they did not leave the safe house.

The new friends of the SLA – Retimah X; Jamella Muntaz; Ronald Tate; and Joel Garrett Webster – soon found themselves face to face with the entire contingent of the SLA at the Golden Gate safe house.

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<sup>384</sup> Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 253. In support of this theory of the SLA's recruitment of new members is document 2055 from the HEARNAP Files in Washington DC. The FBI found three full nurses uniforms in a search of the 833 West 84<sup>th</sup> Street hideout.

<sup>385</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 174-175. Hearst mentions that not everyone contacted by the SLA had been eager to join in the revolution. In hindsight, it is amazing that no one contacted police to inform them of the recruitment efforts of the SLA.

In an amazing decision, Cinque brought these new revolutionary auxiliaries to the SLA's hideout. In desperation, the SLA sacrificed security for needed supplies. This new policy contained great risk, however, Cinque thought the need outweighed the risk, thus the SLA began knocking on doors looking for new recruits. Once they found sympathizers that agreed to help them, Cinque threw caution to the wind and invited them to the safe house. In doing so, he compromised the security of the cell. While the need for assistance with routine tasks such as grocery became necessary, Cinque became increasingly worried about the SLA's safety if they remained in San Francisco.

The four new acolytes of the SLA agreed to visit Cinque and his fellow revolutionaries at their Golden Gate apartment. Atwood escorted the group, which included three children, to the safe house. Following this first meeting, which included an introduction to Tania/Patricia, Cinque handed his newly found friends money and a grocery list.<sup>386</sup>

On April 24, 1974, the SLA delivered their final communiqué.<sup>387</sup> In hindsight, the communiqué represented changes that had occurred within the revolutionary group over the past few weeks. Leading off, Cinque discussed the bank robbery but quickly moved on to a topic that had been haunting him of late, the Zebra killings.

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>387</sup> The remnants of the SLA – Bill and Emily Harris along with Patricia Hearst – issued a communiqué in June responding to the shootout which claimed their six comrades. The communiqué was more of an obituary which eulogized not only their friends, but the SLA itself.

In his typically xenophobic view of event, Cinque stated his opinion that the Zebra operation was an attempt by the San Francisco police to disarm the African-American community, but also an attempt to attack the SLA because “He also understands that I am of the children of the oppressed and the children of the oppressor together. He understands that I am bringing the truth to the children and opening their eyes to the real enemy...”<sup>388</sup> More and More, Cinque viewed himself as the embodiment of the revolution and the focus of all attention, whether it is the activities of the SLA or the Zebra killings.

The latest communiqué also foreshadowed a change in the hierarchy of the SLA. Bill Harris, also known as “Teko” within the cell, followed Cinque. Not long afterwards, Cinque named Harris his second-in-command, replacing Nancy Ling Perry, a change that not everyone welcomed.

The other change involved Patricia Hearst. She announced once again her loyalty to the revolution in a strident and obnoxious manner.<sup>389</sup> She referred to her parents as the “pig Hearsts” and called her fiancé, Steven Weed, a clown.<sup>390</sup> While her parents continued to believe that she had been coerced into joining the SLA, public opinion continued to move in the direction of the assessment of Attorney General Saxbe, concluding that she had been a willing participant in criminal activities.

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<sup>388</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1640, 254.

<sup>389</sup> Lyne and Scheer, “Twenty Months with Patty/Tania,” *New Times*, 3/5/76, 29. The Harris’ mentioned that they had to tone down many of Patricia’s statements because of their vicious attacks against her parents.

<sup>390</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1640, 259.

Future events provide ample evidence that Patricia's break with her family had not been contrived, but had been real.<sup>391</sup> Other than her portion of the eulogy of her fellow comrades who died in Los Angeles, Hearst did not communicate again with her family until after her arrest on September 18, 1975. Hardly the actions taken by an individual coerced into joining the revolution.

With the release of their last communiqué, the SLA once again sought help from their four auxiliary members. They had been purchasing food for the cell, but Cinque had a new mission for them, to find a new safe house. He asked the four new "associates" of the SLA to purchase vehicles, and in particular, requested that Muntaz search for a new safe house. In this support role, the Black Muslims purchased three vehicles, secured a new hideout, rented motel rooms, and helped the SLA move out of the Golden Gate apartment.<sup>392</sup> In late April, when the initial move occurred, the new safe house was not available. Cinque had convinced everyone in the cell that they had to move because the FBI and San Francisco police were closing in on their apartment as a result of their house to house search.<sup>393</sup>

Despite their collective fear of being trapped on the San Francisco peninsula, the SLA remained in San Francisco, first renting a motel room in the Hunter's Point section of the city for two days – then moving into a new safe house at 1808 Oakdale Street, again in Hunter's Point.

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<sup>391</sup> The actions that Patricia had the greatest difficulty explaining following her arrest was her decision to fire on the clerks at Mel's Sporting Goods in order to free the HARRISES and her decision to not contact anyone in her family following the shootout in Los Angeles. During long stretches of the period known as the "lost year," Patricia did not live with either Bill or Emily Harris. In fact, at the time of her arrest, she did not know where they lived in San Francisco.

<sup>392</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 339.

<sup>393</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 185.

In the continuation of the trend, both the house and the neighborhood of the new SLA residence proved much worse than its predecessor. In all likelihood, Cinque knew that the Oakdale residence served only as a temporary stopping place while he planned the SLA's move to Los Angeles.

Just prior to leaving the apartment, members of the SLA decided leave trash all around the apartment, write slogans on the walls, and even left the bathtub full of papers, water, urine, household cleaners, and cyanide. Bill Harris decided to leave a message by this strange concoction: "Warning to the FBI, CIA, NSA, and CBS – there are a few clues in the bathroom. However, you will have to wait until they dry. An additional word of caution: ½ lb of cyanide crystals have been added to this "home brew" – so, pig drink at your own risk. There are also many additional juicy SLA clues throughout this safe house. However, remember that you are not bullet-proof either. Happy Hunting Charles."<sup>394</sup>

An outbreak of cockroaches in the building resulted in the hiring of an exterminator. When it came time for the former SLA residence to be treated on May 2, the building manager and the exterminator were greeted with the filth that was apartment six. Upon entering the former SLA hideout, the building manager noticed two notes left on the floor of the apartment: One from April 26 instructing all tenants to make their rent checks payable to D & G Investment Company and another note from April 29 stating that the apartment building will be fumigated on May 2.<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 188. The last part of the statement, "Happy Hunting Charles" was meant for FBI SAIC Charles Bates, who served as the lead in the investigation searching for the SLA.

<sup>395</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 2233, 89-90. See also, McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 338 provides a slightly different story stating that Lolabelle Evans, who

In all probability, the SLA left the Golden Gate Apartment on April 26, just two days after the release of their final communiqué. Nothing left behind at the apartment provided law enforcement with any new clues regarding the whereabouts of the SLA. In fact, until the shooting at Mel's Sporting Goods, the FBI had no idea that the SLA had even left the Bay Area.

The move to Los Angeles became Cinque's personal Waterloo, and resulted in the death of the SLA. For reasons unknown, Cinque seemed drawn to Los Angeles. On numerous occasions, Cinque returned to Southern California in spite of his past difficulties with the police. Patricia mentioned that during the time period when the move to Los Angeles had been discussed, the SLA had undergone a change and developed "a new sense of fatalism" which she sensed creeping "into all of their thinking."<sup>396</sup> Other changes occurred during the SLA's brief sojourn at their Hunter's Point safe house. Much to the chagrin of the female members, Bill Harris became Cinque's second-in-command, replacing Nancy Ling Perry.<sup>397</sup> Patricia's account of this change, the decision to replace Perry with Harris had been made unilaterally by Cinque. The decision to move to Los Angeles also emanated with Cinque, and "caused considerable consternation among the others."

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lived in the apartment directly below the SLA complained about a cockroach infestation in her apartment and the manager believed they were coming from the apartment above. When he entered apartment six he discovered the writings and debris left behind by the SLA and proceeded to call police.

<sup>396</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 183 and 201.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-199. Hearst provided the only first hand account of this period and it provides some insight into the goals of the SLA as they moved south into Los Angeles.



One of the issues bothering the SLA membership was their lack of familiarity with Los Angeles which “Cinque dismissed” and in preparation for the move had everyone “learning the terrain by studying street maps of Los Angeles.”<sup>398</sup> The reason for the move south had been Cinque’s growing concern that “the whole Bay Area is getting too hot for us now” and that the police were closing in on them.<sup>399</sup> Another reason Cinque had for moving to Los Angeles was the decision made by the cell to break up into three separate three person teams and begin functioning independently and recruiting new members.<sup>400</sup> Patricia found herself teamed up Bill and Emily Harris. The iconic group photographs taken of the SLA at their Oakdale residence with a homemade “SLA flag” in the background were discovered later in Los Angeles. These photographs were to be used in an upcoming recruiting drive in Southern California. Furthermore, Cinque began planning for a new phase of operations for the SLA, a series of “search and destroy” missions focusing on the ambush of police officers and home invasions.<sup>401</sup> Cinque viewed the home invasion component as a recruitment tool and stated that “The people would come to understand our mission and would welcome SLA combat units into their homes.”<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid., 204. In an exchange of emails with Bill Harris on 2/2/09, I asked Harris how the decision was made to move to Los Angeles and why? Was it a group decision? His response was that “everything was a group decision. We functioned as a collective and a true democracy.” What he did not mention was the oppressive amount of white guilt on the part of the white members of the SLA necessitated that Cinque be the undisputed leader.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., 204. The FBI and other law enforcement agencies, however, were no closer to the SLA than any other time during their investigation.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid., 198.

<sup>401</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 202. See also, Lyne and Scheer, “Twenty Months with Patty/Tania,” *New Times*, 3/5/76, 29.

<sup>402</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 202.

Between April 26 and May 8, the four auxiliary members of the SLA bought three used vans – two Volkswagens and one Chevrolet. In return, Cinque gave the Black Muslims the station wagon they had been using to run the errands for the cell.<sup>403</sup> These three vans provided the SLA with the necessary room to move their revolution to Los Angeles. Without even so much as a scouting expedition to establish a new safe house, the SLA left San Francisco at 11 o'clock at night for Los Angeles on May 8, 1974.<sup>404</sup>

On the morning of May 9, the SLA members travelling in three separate vans convened at a small neighborhood park in Los Angeles around 11 o'clock in the morning.<sup>405</sup> The SLA's departure from the Bay Area coincided with a renewed effort on the part of Randolph Hearst to secure the return of his daughter. At midnight on May 3, the expiration of Randolph Hearst and the Hearst Corporation's offer of four million dollars to be given to the People-in-Need program expired. On May 8, Randolph Hearst decided to turn the heat up even higher on the SLA by offering "\$50,000 to anyone who furnished information leading to the safe return of Patricia to her family."<sup>406</sup> Unfortunately for Randolph Hearst, the SLA had cut their ties to the Bay Area in favor of Southern California.

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 207; See also Payne, Findley, and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 260; and McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 347. Hearst states in her biography that the SLA left San Francisco at 11 o'clock at night. The authors of *Life and Death* confirm the timeframe regarding the SLA's departure from the Bay Area being May 8<sup>th</sup>. In *VOG*, the authors state that the W. 84<sup>th</sup> Street safe house in Los Angeles was rented to two Caucasian females on May 9<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>405</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 209. Emily Harris in an interview with *New Times* stated that they all met at a shopping center in South Central Los Angeles. It is not very likely that they met in South Central LA because the group would have stood out in this mostly African-American neighborhood.

<sup>406</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1725, 2.

Leaving the Bay Area meant leaving their known world behind. In an act of complete faith in Cinque, the SLA moved to Los Angeles. They quickly settled into the Los Angeles area as Soltysik and Perry found an “old, dilapidated, unpainted wooden shack” that also served as a two bedroom cottage with no gas or electricity, but it did have running water. This new safe house, located on West 84<sup>th</sup> Street in the ghetto of Compton, brought the SLA to rock bottom in terms of their accommodations.<sup>407</sup>

As a result of their location, the white members of the cell needed to stay indoors throughout the day in order to prevent calling attention to themselves in the predominantly African-American neighborhood. In retrospect, Emily Harris conceded that one of the problems with the move to Los Angeles was the fact that the SLA “didn’t understand the nature of the various communities in LA, being used to the Bay Area where the neighborhoods are much more racially mixed. In South Central Los Angeles white people are really visible and draw a certain amount of attention.”<sup>408</sup> In fact, the property manager who rented the cottage to the SLA, Kyle “Prophet” Jones, informed Cinque that in this neighborhood “Whites were not tolerated and even police came into the area at their own peril.”<sup>409</sup> Apparently the SLA had forgotten about the Watts riots of 1965 and the lingering tensions between the African-American community of South Central Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

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<sup>407</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 211-212.

<sup>408</sup> Lyne and Scheer, “Twenty Months with Patty/Tania,” *New Times*, 3/5/76, 29.

<sup>409</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 213.

The racial tensions played havoc on the multi-ethnic SLA as they attempted to quietly blend in to Los Angeles. In the neighborhood they had chosen, the SLA found it impossible to blend in.

The SLA's move south went undetected by the FBI. From May 9 until the afternoon of May 16, neither the FBI nor the LAPD had any idea the move had occurred. The day-to-day activities of the SLA are largely unknown except for what Patricia Hearst provided in her autobiography and mentioned in her interviews with the FBI in 1976. Upon their arrival in Southern California, the Harris' with Patricia along for the ride, attempted to contact a former friend from Indiana, Jane Bumb. The reunion went as soon as the former friend found out about the recent activities of Bill and Emily. The Harris' also attempted to make contact with the mother of Lumumba (also known as Barron Broadnax), the African-American prisoner with whom Emily Harris had developed a deep attachment with. Lumumba's mother, Utommu, however, was not home. These initial contacts appear odd given the fact that the SLA had avoided interacting with friends from their past in order to not compromise their security. In this instance, the SLA had just completed a move to Los Angeles unnoticed and they began announcing their arrival. In this instance, Bill and Emily appear to have sought out help in desperation, much like Cinque had with the Black Muslims. In each case, the SLA had willingly compromised security in return for links to the outside world. Their isolated lives underground had begun to take its toll.<sup>410</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> National Archives, San Bruno, Record Group 118, Patricia Hearst interviews with the FBI, 4/12-13/76, pp. 7-8. See also Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 211.

After everyone's arrival at the new safe house in Southern California, Cinque once again took command of the cell. The unit continued to drill in anticipation of future actions against the government. Unfortunately for the revolutionaries, all their training had to take place inside the two bedroom cottage. Cinque laid down the law from the very beginning of the Los Angeles sojourn that they were to remain indoors during daylight hours unless involved in an approved activity.<sup>411</sup>

Following the move to Los Angeles, Patricia described an intensified training regimen and a growing focus on death as if "Death stalked the foul air in that safe house." In this atmosphere, Cinque gathered his small army together for what he considered a major announcement. While drinking his ever present plum wine, he told his troops that he had just discovered that "I am really a prophet. I am here on earth to lead the people."<sup>412</sup> This new revelation regarding Cinque's newly minted status as a prophet led Cinque to his next announcement that he intended to write a book that "would impart to the people all of the wisdom and knowledge and experience that he had garnered during his lifetime."<sup>413</sup> In Cinque's mind, his new book would replace George Jackson's *Blood in my Eye* because "George had lost touch with the people in the street."<sup>414</sup>

The constant state of readiness for combat began to take its toll on the soldiers of the SLA. The fatigue began to show, particularly in the case of Cinque as he began to drift into his own new world.

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<sup>411</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 213.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*, 218. Empty bottles of Akadema plum wine were ever present in the SLA hideouts discovered by law enforcement agencies.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

As a result, when the time came for him to exert his leadership over the SLA in order to find safety on the night of May 16 and the morning and afternoon of May 17, Cinque failed to step up and his followers paid the ultimate price.

On May 15, Bill and Emily Harris made one more attempt to make contact with Utommu. The desire to continue to reach out to old contacts must have been the result of the claustrophobic nature of their underground isolation, particularly in their present safe house. Reaching out to Utommu demonstrated the level of desperation to find someone to connect with in Southern California. Unfortunately, the multi-racial SLA found themselves stuck in the midst of Los Angeles' own ongoing racial battles.<sup>415</sup> Consequently, these revolutionaries from Northern California did not arrive in Southern California as conquering heroes. Instead, by the time their presence in Southern California was discovered, they had not developed a single meaningful contact. In all fairness, the task taken on by the SLA in Southern California was next to impossible to accomplish. The New Left and the Anti-Vietnam protests did not resonate throughout Southern California as it had in the San Francisco Bay Area. The SLA found itself in the middle of a racial conflict they were not prepared for.

The SLA's final act of their three month drama unfolded in Los Angeles during the evening commute. As with almost all issues pertaining to the SLA, this last act was televised and came about as the end result of a number of miscalculations and mistakes on the part of the SLA, particularly its leadership – Cinque and Bill Harris.

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 220-221.

On May 16, 1974, at approximately 4:10pm Bill and Emily Harris entered Mel's Sporting Goods on 11425 South Crenshaw Boulevard in Inglewood, California, a suburb of Los Angeles.<sup>416</sup> They left Patricia Hearst in the van, which they had parked directly across the street from Mel's. The sporting goods store had been their fourth stop on this shopping excursion. They had previously purchased four bags of groceries from the Thriftmart totaling \$33.06; Boston Stores of Southern California where they purchased six pairs of Levi's jeans for a total of \$81.41; they bought nine 5 x 3 notebooks from Sloan Stationers; and lastly, they spent \$12.55 on cigarettes, leather gloves, sterno, batteries, chewing gum, and aspirin. At Mel's Sporting Goods Bill and Emily purchases "one blue large sweat shirt, a 25 loop shotgun shell belt, five pair of gray heavy knit wool socks, two "bike" knee pads, one black knit watch type cap, two pair of white wool socks and two pair of white tube socks."<sup>417</sup>

Upon leaving the sporting goods store, an employee of Mel's, Anthony Shepard, confronted Bill Harris regarding an alleged shoplifting of a pair of socks wrapped in cellophane which Shepard spotted Bill Harris slipping inside his three quarter length hunting jacket.<sup>418</sup> Later that day, Harris told Thomas Dean Matthews, whose van the three fugitives had "borrowed," that he had shoplifted a bandolier, not socks.<sup>419</sup>

Regardless of what the item may have been, Bill Harris had been caught shoplifting and Shepard acted quickly to apprehend him.

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<sup>416</sup> University of California, Los Angeles, UCLA Special Collections, Young Research Library, Collection 293. Draft Report prepared by the Los Angeles Police Department, *The Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles*, 22. See Also, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1843, 1, The initial FBI report had Bill and Emily Harris entering the store at 4:40pm.

<sup>417</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1845, 8.

<sup>418</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293LAPD Draft report, 22.

<sup>419</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1627, 10.

As Bill and Emily Harris paid for their items at the cash register, Shepard informed the other employees of the incident. While waiting for the Bill and Emily to complete their transaction, Shepard picked up his pistol and handcuffs and told his boss, Bill Huett, what had transpired. As Bill and Emily left the store, Shepard and Huett followed them outside.<sup>420</sup> Outside the store, Shepard asked Bill Harris to return to the store and pay for the item he had shoplifted. Bill responded angrily that he had not stolen anything and continued walking across Crenshaw Boulevard toward the van. Shepard then grabbed Bill's arm and shouted "you are under arrest!" Shepard and Harris then wrestled each other to the ground as Emily jumped on Shepard's back. Shepard, described by Shana Alexander as a "young man, with a copper afro, a Fu Manchu mustache, muscular and with a tough guy attitude" was not going to shy away from a confrontation with Bill Harris.<sup>421</sup> Larger and stronger than Bill Harris, he was able to secure one portion of the handcuffs to Bill's left wrist, despite having Emily on his back trying to pull him off her husband's back. Bill Harris, in the midst of all the wrestling, attempted to pull a small revolver from his waistband, but Huett quickly pried it away from him while other store employees came outside to assist with the arrest. While attempting to secure the handcuffs to Bill's right wrist, Shepard heard the sound of gunshots emanating from across the street.

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<sup>420</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 341 and UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 22.

<sup>421</sup> Shana Alexander, *Anyone's Daughter: The Times and Trials of Patty Hearst* (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 102.



Thirty shots in all were fired by Patricia Hearst towards Mel's Sporting Goods.<sup>422</sup> Hearst fired 27 shots from Bill Harris' submachine gun and three shots from her semi-automatic carbine in what she referred to in her trial testimony as a reflex action.<sup>423</sup> In her autobiography, Hearst stated that "The only answer I could find that satisfied me," regarding her actions at Mel's Sporting Goods, "was that I acted instinctively, because I had been trained and drilled to do just that, to react to a situation without thinking, just as soldiers are trained and drilled to obey an order under fire instinctively, without questioning it."<sup>424</sup> To do absolutely nothing at all was the easiest thing for Patricia to do in this situation. Her freedom from the SLA would have resulted from the arrests of Bill and Emily Harris. Her active involvement in freeing Bill and Emily from sure arrest provides the best evidence that Patricia Hearst had indeed become a full fledged member of the SLA.

While Patricia kept their pursuers at bay with her suppressing fire, Bill and Emily Harris scampered across Crenshaw Boulevard, leaping over a three foot high retaining wall on their way back to the red and white van. Shepard, not intimidated by actions of Patricia, pulled out a revolver and fired two rounds at the van as it sped away. The three SLA members quickly realized their predicament as they drove away. They initially feared Cinque's reaction to the events at Mel's because Bill had lost his handgun which Emily had purchased in her own name prior to going underground.

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<sup>422</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 22. See also McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 342 and Anspacher and Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst*, 81.

<sup>423</sup> Anspacher and Lucey, *The Trial of Patty Hearst*, 230.

<sup>424</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 224.

Consequently, law enforcement officials soon realized that the SLA had moved to Los Angeles. Meanwhile, Bill and Emily made the decision to look for new transportation since the clerks at Mel's had seen them drive off in the Volkswagen van.<sup>425</sup>

Shepard continued his pursuit of the shoplifter's in his car, following the VW van North on Crenshaw boulevard, then east on Imperial Highway to Wilton Place, then 115<sup>th</sup> Street, finally catching up to the van on Ruthelen Street. Shepard watched as Bill Harris commandeered a black and yellow Pontiac. When Harris noticed Shepard a few car lengths behind, he began walking towards Shepard while pointing a weapon in his direction. Seeing this, Shepard quickly slammed his vehicle in reverse and left the area as quickly as possible.<sup>426</sup>

In the meantime the SLA transferred their weapons to the Pontiac which Bill had taken at gunpoint from Ken Pierre and Marva Davis. In doing so, he announced that "We're the SLA. We need your car. I may have to kill someone today and I don't want to kill you."<sup>427</sup> Three blocks later, the Pontiac stalled in the intersection of 115<sup>th</sup> Street and Cimarron Avenue. After several failed attempts to restart the car, Bill Harris approached Tom Patin senior and junior and told them "We're from the SLA and we need your car, we need it right now." The Patin's gave Harris the keys to their light blue 1963 Chevy Nova station wagon.<sup>428</sup> Once more, the three SLA members transferred their belongings to another "getaway" car.

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 226-227.

<sup>426</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 23.

<sup>427</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 342.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid., 343.

By 4:30pm, Bill and Emily Harris along with Patricia Hearst had effectively escaped from their pursuers. They had demonstrated the capacity to think quickly and strategically in order to elude the police following the incident at Mel's. They were survivors. Unfortunately, they had left their van behind along with a parking citation with the address of 835 West 84<sup>th</sup> Street, effectively provided the police with a location to begin their pursuit of the remainder of the SLA. If the SLA had intended to keep their identity in Los Angeles a secret, they were doing a very poor job of it. Not only had Bill Harris announced their identity when stealing the vehicles, but the revolver lost at Mel's was easily traced to Emily Harris. Furthermore, both Bill and Emily Harris had been identified by their photographs by witnesses to the activities at the sporting goods store.<sup>429</sup> All these clues made it easy for the Los Angeles Police Department to quickly identify the individuals they were pursuing as members of the SLA.

At 7pm that evening, Emily Harris knocked on the door of the Matthews' residence in Lynwood, a suburb of Los Angeles. A for sale sign had been spotted on a blue 1969 Ford van in the driveway by the SLA trio. On the run from police, they needed a vehicle that had not been identified by police or bystanders, and the van provided the perfect target. The owner, eighteen year old Thomas Dean Matthews, hoping he could sell the van, quickly agreed to allow Emily Harris to test drive the van. After driving two blocks to the corner of Pine Street and Pendleton Avenue, Emily pulled the van over and asked if her two friends could come along on the test drive.

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<sup>429</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 24

Bill Harris quickly approached Matthews with an automatic rifle stating “We’re from the SLA. Get in back and do what you’re told and you won’t get hurt.”<sup>430</sup> They placed Matthews in the back of the van and covered him with a blanket. Bill informed their latest victim that they only wanted to use the van for a short time. If he cooperated, no harm would come to him.<sup>431</sup>

With a new means of transportation secured, the first order of business for Bill Harris had been to find a hacksaw so he could remove the handcuff Shepard had placed on his wrist. On their third try, they found a hardware store that carried hacksaws. During this time, Matthews had the opportunity to talk with Patricia and Bill Harris regarding the SLA. To begin with, Bill introduced Matthews to the most famous hostage in America, Patricia Hearst. Bill explained to him that the SLA’s goal was to overthrow the government, which, in their view, had been overthrown by corporate America with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In conversations with Hearst, Matthews was told that they had to rob Hibernia bank in ninety seconds in order to get away before police arrived and explained the SLA’s cyanide bullets. Patricia had been in excellent spirits as she told Matthews that “It was a good feeling to see her two comrades come across the street unharmed” as she explained the events that occurred at Mel’s Sporting Goods earlier in the day.

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<sup>430</sup> Ibid, 24. See also Federal Bureau of Investigation, HEARNAP Files, document 1627, 9; and Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 231.

<sup>431</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 231-232.

She then told their new captive that her kidnapping had been real.<sup>432</sup> Bill attempted to recruit Matthews into the SLA, however Matthews remained much more interested in his baseball game the next day than any impending revolution.

At approximately 8:30pm, they made their way to the Century drive-in movie theatre. The theatre served as a preset meeting place for the SLA to regroup at in case they were separated. Despite all the difficulties they encountered, Bill, Emily and Patricia managed to escape police and find their way to the drive-in. As soon as they parked, they used the hacksaw to remove the handcuff from Bill's wrist followed by a visit to the snack shack. Matthews kept the handcuff as a souvenir.<sup>433</sup>

The drive-in theatre had been chosen as a meeting point in case members of the cell became separated from each other. The sign to notify the others of their location was to place an upside down cup on the pole which held the audio units. This was done as soon as Bill and Emily returned with their food and drinks. They remained at the drive-in theatre until 1am on the morning of May 17<sup>th</sup>. For reasons unknown, Cinque and the others did not follow the procedures established upon their arrival in Los Angeles. Unlike Bill, Emily and Patricia, the other SLA members had not been seen and their vehicles remained unknown to police.

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<sup>432</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1627, 8-11. Jack Scott, the man who helped the Harrises' and Patricia Hearst leave California following the release of their communiqué regarding their slain comrades, claimed in a deathbed confession to the FBI that Patricia Hearst told him that during the cross country drive that the abduction had been part of plan between Nancy Ling Perry and Patricia Hearst. The only other member of the SLA who knew was Cinque. Jack Scott's revelation was used by US Attorney's in an attempt to block a proposed pardon of Patricia Hearst by the President Bill Clinton in the last days of his administration. The block failed and Hearst received her pardon.

<sup>433</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 234.

They could have easily slipped out of Los Angeles or rendezvoused with their fellow revolutionaries at the drive-in. Instead, they chose to stay in the general vicinity of their first safe house and did not attempt to leave the city or hide their identity.

Following the movies, The Harris'' and Patricia with Matthews in tow, headed out to the Hollywood Hills to sleep, but Emily persuaded Bill to drive by the house on 84<sup>th</sup> Street. As they drove by they noticed that their comrades had left. The SLA had been dismembered.

By 10pm on May 16<sup>th</sup>, the FBI notified the Los Angeles Police Department of the SLA's presence in the greater Los Angeles area, confirming the shootout in Inglewood included members of the SLA. The FBI also began to stakeout the 800 block area of 84<sup>th</sup> Street. At 2:30am on May 17<sup>th</sup>, the FBI, LAPD and Los Angeles County Sheriffs along with the Inglewood Police Department met and began coordinating their efforts to locate and capture the SLA. In recognition of the violent tendencies of the SLA, supervisors from LAPD's SWAT team had been involved in these meetings as well. By 4am that morning, the efforts to locate the SLA focused on the residence at 833 West 84<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>434</sup> At 5:30am, FBI and LAPD personnel stopped a resident of 835 West 84<sup>th</sup> Street who told officers that individuals who owned the vans parked by his house were a male and female Caucasian and were living at the 833 84<sup>th</sup> Street residence. This information established the location of the SLA hideout and LAPD and FBI SWAT teams proceeded to surround the suspected SLA residence.<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>434</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 26-27.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 29-30.

At 8:50am an LAPD Sergeant announced via bullhorn that the 833 West 84<sup>th</sup> Street residence was surrounded and that all inside should exit from the front door with their hands up. At 8:55am the FBI's Officer in Charge (OIC) ordered the use of tear gas and seven rounds were fired into the residence by LAPD SWAT officers followed by the FBI SWAT attacking the suspected SLA hideout from the rear, only to discover that they had left in a hurry much earlier.<sup>436</sup> In fact, the six remaining at the residence had vacated the area sometime during the evening of May 16<sup>th</sup>. Following the shootout at the sporting goods store, the news hit television and radio stations quickly that the SLA may be in Los Angeles. Undoubtedly, Cinque and the others left behind at the safe house heard the news and prepared to leave.

Around 4am on May 17<sup>th</sup>, Cinque along with Willie Wolfe, Angela Atwood, Nancy Ling Perry, Mizmoon Soltysik, and Camilla Hall found a residence on 54<sup>th</sup> Street with its lights on. Cinque decided to knock on the door and seek refuge at this small stucco house at 1466 54<sup>th</sup> Street. The occupants of the house had been drinking wine and playing dominoes when Cinque knocked on the door. Christine Johnson and Minnie Lewis answered the door and Cinque introduced himself.<sup>437</sup> He offered the women one hundred dollars if he and his friends could stay for awhile. The women agreed and the SLA began unloading their weapons, bombs and other items from the vans into the house.

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<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>437</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 349. See also Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 275.

Freddie Freeman, a friend of Johnson and Lewis who had been with them when the SLA arrived at their doorstep, informed Cinque that he knew of a spot at 1451 East Fifty Third Street where they could ditch the vans. Unfortunately for Cinque, the spot Freeman mentioned was a drop off point for stolen vehicles and the LAPD kept a watch for new arrivals in that exact area.

After providing Cinque with a location to leave the vehicles, Freeman helped Cinque drive the vans to the location. Freeman noticed the money Cinque had handed over to Johnson and Lewis and he hoped his assistance might encourage Cinque to be just as generous with him.

The activity surrounding Cinque and the other five members of the SLA quickly took a turn for the bizarre as Cinque provided Freeman with money to purchase new vehicles for the SLA while they began scouting out local apartments in the area for a place to hide out until the police lost track of them. Cinque continued to pass out money to people at the new safe house to run errands for the SLA. Brenda Daniels, another friend of Johnson and Lewis, received twenty dollars to purchase groceries and cigarettes from the corner market. The most heavily sought out fugitives in America began throwing money around, telling anyone and everyone who they were while they hunkered down in an 800 square foot home in South Central Los Angeles. Apparently Cinque had tired of running and hiding from police and decided to make his stand, because he made no concerted effort to conceal his identity, nor did he attempt move on as the day progressed.



As Cinque and his band made themselves at home in South Central Los Angeles, The Harris' and Patricia Hearst continued their frantic escape. At approximately 6am, they decided to find another vehicle to further their escape. Frank Sutter, in his 1973 Lincoln Continental pulled over to pick up two young female hitchhickers and instead, he found himself staring down the barrels of two handguns, each held by Emily Harris and Patricia Hearst. With a new car in tow, Bill Harris told Matthews he was free to go and even offered to give him gas money for the drive home. Matthews refused.<sup>438</sup> Sutter's car provided the three SLA members with the transportation they needed to purchase another car, one not associated with a crime or any other known SLA activity. When a used car they had money to purchase had been located from ads in the newspaper and finally purchased at around 1pm in the afternoon, Sutter was released, minus the two hundred and fifty dollars Bill Harris had taken from his wallet. With the new untraceable transportation, Bill, Emily and Patricia headed for Anaheim so they could lose themselves among the Disneyland tourists. By 5:30pm they had rented a hotel room and turned on the television only to find their comrades surrounded by the FBI and the Los Angeles Police Department.<sup>439</sup>

It had all come down to a shootout during rush hour in Los Angeles. The LAPD quickly located the SLA vans that Cinque and Freeman dropped off on East 53<sup>rd</sup> Street. Police officials surmised that the SLA was nearby.

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<sup>438</sup> Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 235-236. See also McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 345.

<sup>439</sup> Hearst and Moscow, *Patty Hearst*, 241-242.

Intelligence from the surrounding neighborhoods led police to initially believe that Cinque and his followers were hiding at 1462 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street. However, at approximately 5pm, Mary Carr and her grandson told police that Cinque, Hall and possibly Hearst were holed up at her daughter's home at 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street. Prior to receiving the information from Mary Carr, the LAPD established a perimeter encompassing 5311 Compton Avenue, 1451 East 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, and 1462 and 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street at approximately 4:20pm.

By 5:30pm, the SLA presence at 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street residence had been confirmed and police began evacuating nearby residents. However, not everyone in the area cooperated with police and the residents of 1449 and 1462 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street refused to leave and remained in their homes throughout the shootout.<sup>440</sup>

The investigation of the Hearst kidnapping case and the ensuing search for the SLA in the Bay Area occurred with the FBI serving as the lead for all law enforcement agencies involved in the case. In the aftermath of the shooting at Mel's Sporting Goods and the assault on the one time SLA hideout on 84<sup>th</sup> Street, the Los Angeles Police Department with Daryl Gates serving as the Chief of Operations, had taken the lead for the search for the SLA as sightings began coming in from all over the city. This issue came to a head at a 2pm meeting on May 17th between the FBI and LAPD officials.

William Sullivan, the FBI's lead agent in Los Angeles insisted that the FBI SWAT team lead the assault once the SLA had been located. Daryl Gates replied simply that "the answer is no.

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<sup>440</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 39.

If there's going to be any shooting in Los Angeles, it's going to be done by LAPD."<sup>441</sup> According to Gates, the FBI did not have a choice. They needed support from Los Angeles police to cordon off the area and provide logistical support, including the evacuation of people, support from the fire department, ambulances, and other services.<sup>442</sup> Furthermore, the Los Angeles Police Department had success in the past dealing with heavily armed and aggressive left wing groups such as the Black Panthers. In stark contrast to law enforcement agencies in the Bay Area, the Los Angeles Police Department had no intention of taking a back seat to the FBI in searching for the SLA and bringing them to justice. In the upcoming shootout, the FBI's SWAT team served as a reserve unit only, with the LAPD SWAT units taking the lead.

With the SLA's new hideout on 54<sup>th</sup> surrounded and the area cordoned off and two SWAT teams in place, the LAPD announced via bullhorn at 5:44pm its presence to Cinque and his followers. From the bullhorn the announcement came: "Occupants of 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street, this is the Los Angeles Police department speaking, come out with your hands up. Comply immediately and you will not be harmed." According to the police report of the shootout, the announcement was repeated immediately and the SWAT teams throughout the area clearly heard each announcement.<sup>443</sup> With no reaction from the SLA forthcoming, another attempt was made to obtain their peaceful surrender, this time an eight year old African-American boy came out the front door confirming that the announcements were heard inside the house.

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<sup>441</sup> Daryl F. Gates and Diane K. Shah, *Chief: My Life in the LAPD* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 132.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>443</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 41.

After two more announcements via bullhorn, Clarence Ross also exited the premises.<sup>444</sup> According to the eight year old boy, the occupants of the house “had guns and were wearing ammunition belts across their chests.”<sup>445</sup>

It became apparent that the SLA had no intention of surrendering without a fight. Therefore, the time had come for the Los Angeles Police Department to take direct action against Cinque and his revolutionaries. The decision to act forcefully was not without its risks. LAPD officials had no idea if Patricia Hearst was one the SLA members inside the small stucco home. However, the last thing the Los Angeles police wanted was a stand-off lasting into the evening. Even though it had been a decade since the Watts riots, the relationship between the LAPD and the African-American population of South Central Los Angeles continued to be difficult, and at times violent. The longer the standoff remained unresolved, the greater the possibility that the perimeter established by police might be overrun by the growing crowds. Also, Los Angeles police had a history of quick resolutions to stand offs with heavily armed leftist groups. In a shootout with six Black Panthers holed up in a fortified house in South Central Los Angeles on December 8, 1969, the LAPD moved as quickly as possible, serving warrants on two individuals in the house at 5:30am. When the shootout became a stalemate by 10am that morning, LAPD had received permission to use a grenade launcher provided by the Marines at Camp Pendleton to dislodge the Black Panthers from their “fort.”

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<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 41-42. See also McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 356-357; and Payne, Findley and Craven, *The Life and Death of the SLA*, 285.

<sup>445</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 42.

Prior to using the weapon, however, a final attempt had been made requesting the Black Panthers surrender “otherwise we’re going to take drastic measures.”<sup>446</sup> In this instance, the SLA had shown no intention of surrendering at any time for any reason.

The shootout between the Los Angeles police and the SLA has been characterized by those sympathetic to the goals of the New Left as a confrontation instigated willingly by police. Within the framework of this theory, the SLA had been trapped and not provided the opportunity to surrender.<sup>447</sup> If an eight year old boy and Clarence Ross had come to the conclusion that they had an opportunity to leave the house before the shooting began, than it is very likely that the members of the SLA had that same opportunity which they chose not to accept. At no point during the initial standoff did any member of the SLA attempt to negotiate or make contact with the police.

At 5:44pm, when the LAPD officer announced over the bullhorn that the house at 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street was surrounded and requested the occupants to come out with their hands up, the SLA had two choices, fight or surrender. In the ensuing eight minutes, seventeen other surrender announcements had been announced by police and two individuals not associated with the SLA responded and left the house.

As the standoff continued into its eighth minute, a SWAT officer complied with the order to fire “two 509 CS Flight-Rite tear gas projectiles through the top of the West window of the SLA residence.”<sup>448</sup> Only after the dispersal of the gas from the second projectile did the SLA respond with gunfire.

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<sup>446</sup> Gates and Shah, Chief, 118-123.

<sup>447</sup> Bryan, *This Soldier Still at War*, 285-286.

<sup>448</sup> UCLA, Young Library, Collection 293, LAPD Draft Report, 42.

The shootout began in earnest at 5:53pm. Los Angeles police replied to the automatic weapons fire of the SLA with more tear gas and semi-automatic weapons fire. The FBI's SWAT team also became involved, firing tear gas into the SLA hideout.

As the shoot out continued on, the house the SLA had turned into their last stand, caught on fire at 6:41pm as smoke began billowing out of house followed by flames. In response to the fire, another announcement ensued over the bullhorn from an LAPD officer requesting the SLA's surrender.<sup>449</sup> No response came from within the burning house was forthcoming, other than the stumbling figure of Christine Johnson who had just awaken from an alcohol and drug induced sleep and made her way out the burning house. At 6:47pm, Los Angeles police made another attempt to reach the SLA over the bullhorn by announcing "Come out, you will not be harmed. The house is on fire. It's all over."<sup>450</sup> By 6:50pm, the house had become completely engulfed in the flames, even though automatic gunfire still came from the house via the air ducts under the house. In response to the fire and to the amazement of police and onlookers, the SLA members sought refuge in the crawl space under the house. With the continuing weapons fire emanating from the SLA house, the Los Angeles Fire Department refused to send its firefighters into the fray and attempt to put out the fire.

Following the latest attempt to convince the SLA to surrender, Nancy Ling Perry emerged from the Southwest portion of the house through the crawl space. She advanced cautiously ten feet followed by Camilla Hall, who also emerged from underneath the house.

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<sup>449</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 46.

Weapons fire from the house continued and when Hall came out of the burning residence she began firing at SWAT team members with her pistol. The SWAT team immediately returned fire killing both Hall and Perry, and, likely, any remaining hope the SLA had in escaping. A few minutes later at 6:59pm, all remaining hostile fire from the SLA had ceased and the Los Angeles Fire Department was given the green light to go in and fight the fire.<sup>451</sup>

In all likelihood, the fire which led to the deaths of four of the six SLA members inside the 1466 E. 54<sup>th</sup> Street residence occurred as the result of a mixture of tear gas, gunpowder and gasoline within the house occupied by the SLA. However, the official Los Angeles Police department report states that “the cause of the fire was undetermined.”<sup>452</sup> The report further stated that “The heavy black smoke that was present and the rapid spread of the fire is indicative of a flammable liquid.” Within the charred remains of the house police found a two gallon metal gas can with perforations on the side along with two pipe bombs, two blasting caps and other homemade explosives.<sup>453</sup>

Tucked away safely in a motel room in Anaheim, California, with Disneyland nearby, Bill and Emily Harris along with Patricia Hearst watched in stunned horror as their friends and comrades were shot and killed or burned to death in a Los Angeles ghetto.

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 47

<sup>452</sup> Los Angeles Police Department, *The Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles, July 19, 1974*, 57.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 59.

While the Harris' and Hearst kept moving with survival and escape as their ultimate goals, the other six members of the SLA did not seem to share that same instinct for survival. Instead, Cinque led his followers to their deaths. He had mistakenly confused the notoriety of the SLA for popularity while he attempted to find in a predominantly African-American neighborhood. In this instance, Cinque and his followers never attempted to hide their identity, in fact they made sure anyone and everyone who entered the 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street residence knew their identity.

Cinque did make a half hearted effort to find a new safe house in the nearby area. Freddie Freeman who had been visiting friends at the residence when Cinque knocked on the door and later helped Cinque hide the SLA vans, viewed the arrival of the SLA as an economic opportunity. Instead of going to work that day, Freeman told his colleagues at work that he had "an opportunity to earn money from the SLA."<sup>454</sup> At 9:30am on the morning of the shootout, Freeman received \$500 dollars from Cinque to purchase a new vehicle for the SLA. He never purchased a vehicle and after 1pm did not return to the residence.

In this bizarre atmosphere, Cinque gave Brenda Daniels money to go to the corner market to purchase bread, lunchmeat, beer and wine.<sup>455</sup> By noon, rumors had spread throughout the neighborhood regarding the presence of the SLA. Throughout the day, members of the neighborhood came by the house to meet the revolutionaries. By 3pm, access to the block surrounding the SLA sanctuary had been blocked of by Los Angeles police.

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<sup>454</sup> LAPD, *The Symbionese Liberation Army in Los Angeles*, 61.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-63.



While all this was occurring the soldiers of the SLA appeared unconcerned regarding their predicament. The fatalism which Hearst described at the previous safe house became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Without his second-in-command, Cinque appeared unable to act decisively. Unable or unwilling to reunite with his comrades at the designated location at the drive-in, Cinque waited patiently for the LAPD to arrive for a showdown he could not possibly win. In the early afternoon of May 17<sup>th</sup>, Cinque lost the desire to survive finding one last ounce of bravado when he announced while drinking a bottle of Boone's Farm wine that "I know I am going to die and all my people know that they will also, but we are going to take a lot of mother fucking pigs with us."<sup>456</sup> In his last known words, Cinque mentioned that he had returned to Los Angeles to search for his wife and six children.<sup>457</sup>

Cinque finally found peace in the rubble that was once a home on 1466 54<sup>th</sup> Street. Whatever he came to find in Los Angeles went unfound. Unlike the Harris' and Patricia Hearst, in the moment of crises, he failed to lead his followers to safety. Nancy Ling Perry, Camilla Hall and Patricia Soltysik all died of gunshot wounds from the shootout.<sup>458</sup> Atwood and Wolfe died due to smoke inhalation and burns. In a very controversial finding, Los Angeles County Coronor, Dr. Thomas Noguchi, declared that Donald David "Cinque" DeFreeze died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head."<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 80, 84-85. Soltysik is listed as dying from multiple gunshot wounds and smoke inhalation and burns.

<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 80-83.

The violent end to the SLA had been predicted earlier by a consultant to the agency. On April 4, 1974, Dr. Murray Miron filed a report with the FBI in which he stated that it was his belief that the SLA was determined “to commit suicide by establishing the condition in which their destruction at the hands of someone else is inevitable. He went even further stating that “the group as a whole is not capable of their own suicides unless engineered as a dramatic culmination of their indecisive lives as the consequence of the acts of others which they can rationalize as outside their responsibility.”<sup>460</sup> Cinque did, in fact, organize his own death. He waited for the police to close in and made no attempt to run or hide.

The SLA had died in the flames of stucco house in Los Angeles. The SLA’s survivors, Bill Harris, Emily Harris and Patricia Hearst were left with the determining the future of the revolution they had believed Cinque had been destined to lead. Without any hesitation, they quickly returned to the birthplace of the SLA, the San Francisco Bay Area, in the hope of finding assistance and support.

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<sup>460</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, document 1301, 2.

## **Chapter 13**

### The End of an Era

As the remaining members of the SLA sat in their motel room on the evening of May 17, 1974, they watched on television as their revolution came to an end in the flames of the fire at 1466 East 54<sup>th</sup> Street. All that they had fought for had come to an end; they just had not yet realized it. The SLA had hoped to recapture the excitement and passion of the protests of the 1960's. They failed. The world had changed dramatically since 1970 and the SLA seemed incapable of noticing it.

The Harris' and Patricia Hearst returned to the San Francisco Bay Area over the Memorial Day weekend. They returned broken, scared, and almost penniless. Almost as soon as they arrived in San Francisco, the car they bought on May 17<sup>th</sup> broke down as if it were a metaphor for their future. The remnants of the SLA were forced to use public transportation as they searched for a place to rest and recuperate. They turned to Angela Atwood's close friend, Kathleen Soliah who had given an impassioned speech before a few hundred SLA sympathizers on June 2, at Ho Chi Minh Park in Berkeley. With the help of Soliah, the remnants of the SLA remained a step ahead of the FBI for another sixteen months.

In a very real sense the SLA had reached one of its objectives: Martyrdom. Patricia Hearst wrote of the SLA's growing obsession with death as they moved to Los Angeles.

Also, a consultant to the FBI, Dr. Murray Miron, in his analysis of the SLA, wrote that the group was incapable of taking their own lives but likely to establish the parameters of their own death at the hands of others, which is exactly the manner in which six of the SLA members died, in a confrontation with Los Angeles police.

Throughout their short existence, the SLA managed to confound the FBI's massive manhunt while continuing to produce communiqués, extracting a food program from Patricia Hearst's father, Randolph Hearst, and robbing banks. Unlike any group before or after, the SLA had unlimited access to the media. In the words of Dr. Miron, "The world was pulled through the titillation of the kidnapping of one of its more distinguished citizens, dumb-founded by the childish and vague extravagance of the ransom demands, disconcerted by the helplessness of the authorities, chagrined by the debasement demanded by the threats, incredulous over the victim herself becoming a criminal in concert with her abductors, and, finally emotionally drained into ennui after an incredible public display of fiery self-immolation."<sup>461</sup>

As the victims of violence at the hands of law enforcement, the three SLA survivors received sympathy and support from the members of the New Left which once scorned their existence. This support led to the release of a final communiqué prior to the departure of Bill, Emily and Patricia from California with the assistance of Jack Scott, a radical sports psychologist who was once the Athletic Director of Oberlin College.

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<sup>461</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *HEARNAP Files*, Document 2866, 10.

In order to keep the heat off of the Harris' and Hearst in the Bay Area, the communiqué eulogizing their slain comrades had been delivered to Richard Allen Frishman, a friend of Kathleen Soliah and her boyfriend, James Kilgore. Frishman left the taped communiqué under a mattress in alley next to radio station KPFK in Los Angeles. He then notified the station of the tape's location and that it came from the three SLA survivors.

All throughout the audiotape, Bill, Emily and Patricia expressed their love and admiration for their fallen comrades, with Cinque receiving the most effusive praise. Hearst told the world of her love for Willie "Cujo" Wolfe and lamented about the possibility that "The pigs probably have the little Olmec monkey Cujo wore around his neck. He gave me the little stone face one night."<sup>462</sup> Bill Harris attempted to rationalize and justify the events which occurred at Mel's Sporting Goods which led to the shootout with their comrades the next day.

Based on his analysis of the communiqué eulogizing the slain members of the SLA, Dr. Miron described the three survivors as "badly frightened." He went on to state that "The romanticized revolution has exploded into the reality of the possibility of their own violent deaths."<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>462</sup> McLellan and Avery, *The Voices of the Guns*, 367. The Olmec monkey given to Patricia Hearst was found in her purse at the time of her arrest. During her trial for her role in the Hibernia Bank robbery, Hearst mentioned her dislike for Wolfe and mentioned that she was raped by him. Prosecutors pointed out the Olmec monkey was in her possession at the time of capture. Both Bill has emphatically stated that Hearst had never been raped and confirmed her close relationship to Wolfe while a member of the SLA.

<sup>463</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, HEARNAP Files, document 2866, 9.

Miron also stated his opinion that the new dynamic of the SLA led to “a good probability that they could be apprehended without harm; a distinct impossibility with the group led by Cinque.”<sup>464</sup> The arrests of the Harris’ and Hearst occurred separately, but they did so peacefully, albeit fifteen months after the release of the communiqué.

Scott’s assistance in ferrying the surviving members of the SLA came with strings attached. The SLA members gave up their weapons and agreed to work on a history of the SLA for Scott to publish in return for food and housing in rural New York and Pennsylvania through September 1974. The arrangement between Scott and the former SLA members eventually fell apart and the Harris’ and Hearst returned once more to the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Harris’ did their best to rekindle the SLA, but to no avail. Upon their return to the Bay Area in September, 1974, they help found a new organization known as the New World Liberation Front, however, their revolution consisted mainly of political bombings. Their other activities included stealing cars and robbing banks to support their lifestyle underground. The former SLA revolutionaries had evolved into common criminals of little note except for murder of Myrna Opsahl during the robbery of Crocker National Bank in Carmichael, California on April 21, 1975.

On September 18, 1975, the FBI finally caught up with the former SLA soldiers. In two separate arrests, the FBI captured Bill and Emily Harris while they finished jogging and Patricia Hearst in the kitchen of a home where she lived with Wendy Yoshimura and Steven Soliah.

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

Even though she no longer lived with the Harris', Hearst never attempted to contact her family or friends. During booking, Hearst gave her occupation as "Urban Guerilla." In a tape recorded conversation with her close friend Trish Tobin she did state her dissatisfaction with her arrest and acknowledged she had changed tremendously over the past eighteen and a half months. Hearst served over two years in prison following her conviction for her role in the Hibernia bank robbery.

For 102 days the SLA confounded the FBI, controlled the media, and caused fear among Bay Area residents involved in the New Left because of their use of violence. The many individuals and organizations affiliated with progressive causes and generally associated with the New Left suffered tremendously as a result of the SLA's actions. In their attempt to locate the SLA following the abduction of Patricia Hearst, the FBI, along with local police, placed people and organizations that had ties or contacts to members of the SLA, under surveillance. In some cases, the FBI made attempts to interview these individuals with mixed results. Within progressive circles, discussions concerning Cinque as an agent provocateur ensued because the actions of the SLA led directly to police actions against those involved in progressive causes.

Upon the incarceration of the Harris' and Patricia Hearst, the FBI Director Clarence M. Kelly reflected upon the performance of his agency in the investigation. In spite of all their efforts and funding, the FBI had made little inroads in securing intelligence about the SLA's whereabouts and agenda. Why? "There were no informants," Kelly said.

Absolutely no leads reached the Bureau from those fringe elements in our society who knew, really knew, where the various SLA hideouts were located. None.”<sup>465</sup> By the mid-seventies, New Left paranoia and distrust of the FBI precluded any real effort to develop a relationship with the Bureau on the HEARNAP case, and because of other events, such as COINTELPRO, the Vietnam conflict, Kent State killings, and the Watergate crisis, the distrust filtered down among the public at large. The fact was that Kelly was taking the agency out of political surveillance of rightist and leftist extremists, and what future political intelligence the Bureau obtained in the future came largely out of criminal investigations. This new focus was to have profound implication for the 1990s and for the 9/11 in 2001.<sup>466</sup>

The violence of the SLA led to questions and concerns among political activists across the political spectrum. David Horowitz, as editor of *Rampart's* magazine in 1974, wrote an article critical of the revolutionary group's violent proclivities, but felt it necessary to remain anonymous out of fear of an SLA reprisal against himself or his family. By causing mistrust among the various progressive elements throughout the country the pressure against these organizations assisted in the demise of the movement. The violence of the SLA coupled with the New Left's inability to find a new cause to rally around in the aftermath of the Vietnam, doomed the movement.

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<sup>465</sup> Richard Gid Powers, *Broken: The Troubled Past and Uncertain Future of the FBI* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 333.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*



With the demise of the New Left in American politics and on college campuses across the nation, came the rise of conservative politics led by Ronald Reagan. The excesses of the student protest movement helped to elect Ronald Reagan as the new Governor of California in 1966. The student protest movement embodied by the Free Speech Movement and its successors occurred during the second term of California Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown, a liberal Democrat. His inability to control the protests which had occurred with an alarming frequency and the outbreak of violence in Watts in 1965 convinced voters that Reagan’s response to the students to “Observe the rules or get out” was the right method of dealing with the growing anarchy then occurring throughout California.<sup>467</sup>

The SLA served as a reminder of the anarchy of the 1960s. In fact, they were trying to bring back an era that the majority of Americans looked back to with sadness given the political assassinations, the war in Vietnam, and violence which occurred as the South began the painful process of desegregation. The political kidnapping of Patricia Hearst brought back painful memories of the lawlessness of the previous decade. By the time Patricia Hearst and Bill and Emily Harris were arrested the nation had undergone fundamental changes. On August 9, 1974, Richard Nixon succumbed to the pressures of the Watergate investigation and resigned as President of the United States and the substantially less polarizing Gerald R. Ford ascended to the office of the Presidency. In April 1975, fighting in Vietnam War came to a halt as the North Vietnamese Army rolled into Saigon. The Sixties were over and the nation had moved on.

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<sup>467</sup>Lou Cannon, *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), 157.

On January 20, 2001, Patricia Hearst was one of 140 individuals who received a last minute pardon from President Bill Clinton on his last day in office. Bill and Emily Harris had no such luck. Bill Harris served time in jail from 1975 through 1983 for the kidnapping of Patricia Hearst. In 2002, Bill pled guilty for his role in the Crocker Bank robbery which included the murder of Myrna Opsahl and was released in September 2006 after serving half of his sentence. Emily Harris, now known as Emily Harris Montague also served jail time for her role in the kidnapping of Hearst, the Crocker Bank robbery and murder of Opsahl. Due to the fact that Harris Montague was the accidental shooter in Opsahl's death, she stayed in prison until February 2007.

The other living members of the SLA, Joe Remiro and Russell Little had completely different results in their trials for the murder of educator Marcus Foster. Remiro received a life sentence and currently resides in Pelican Bay State prison. Little, although sentenced to life in prison, had his conviction overturned on appeal on February 27, 1979 and he was acquitted in retrial on June 5, 1981.

In the end, the SLA had been dismissed as an aberration and a simple footnote in history. The fact remains, however, that this small band of revolutionaries gained access to the national media in a way that no other domestic criminal or terrorist group ever had, before or since. They managed to coerce Randolph Hearst and the Hearst Corporation into funding and distributing food to the poor in less than a month.

In the food program, the SLA missed their opportunity to help the needy and establish a lasting legacy for themselves. Instead, Cinque and his followers became addicted to the media attention they had received and wanted more, with the direct result being the conversion of Patricia Hearst. The conversion provided the SLA with even greater publicity, but ensured the end of the People-in-Need food program due to lack of funding. For the SLA, the attention they received for Patricia Hearst joining their revolution came at the expense of the poor and the needy.

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