



Weather Underground
February 20, 1974

Sisters and Brothers,

A massive morality play of American life is occurring, bringing home the message that this society will necessarily continue to produce revolutionaries, whose essential purpose will be understood by masses of people. It demonstrates that the American Empire is violent, ruthless, and based on oppression.

As the Symbionese Liberation Army action has unfolded, the bare bones of this drama have emerged out of the contradictions and militaristic style: the guerillas have kidnapped the daughter of a rich and powerful man in order to provide food to the poor. Their action has unleashed an astonishing practical unity among people's organizations, and a leap in everyone's consciousness about the fundamental reality which will not die or pass into the memoirs of a previous decade. That is, the war between the rich and the poor.

There are four points we would offer.

1. American society is maintained by force and violence. The ruling class has held a monopoly on violence and has fed us a steady diet for centuries. Africans were kidnapped and brought here in chains to labor as slaves; Asians brought to build the railroads and mine the ore, kidnapped during World War II and transported to detention camps; Chicanos brought to harvest the fruit and vegetables; poor whites brought as indentured servants or desperate unemployed —and historically all of us pawns and participants in the theft of Native American land and history.

Two hundred years later, this terror is still both institutionalized and randomly encouraged:

- Last November, three white policemen murdered 14 year old Tyrone Guyton one block from his home in Emeryville. He was black, shot with a .357 magnum pistol.

- Reagan's latest assault, Welfare Regulation No. 6, became effective January 1, 1974. It eliminates people who are technically illegal aliens from the welfare roles of AFDC and medical programs threatening the survival of thousands of Chicano families who have come in search of work. Poor mothers and their children have been singled out to bear the brunt of the attack. At the same time, farm workers are being shot at and arrested for their struggle to organize.

- Ruchell Cinque Magee, a victim of official kidnap since June 1963, is being tried again in San Jose for participating in a legitimate slave rebellion, called "aggravated kidnap" by the authorities. In that rebellion, 17 year old Jonathan Jackson was brutally gunned down by San Quentin guards. His grieving mother had no riches to save her childrens' lives.

- At the present time, the government holds 22,000 people hostage in the California prisons. They are subject to an escalating "get tough" policy of lock-downs, special adjustment centers and indeterminate sentences. When they can't be contained or broken, they are executed as was George Jackson.

- Terror-bombing from the air, the random destruction of the lives of millions, has been the Asian—and now African—experience of Pax Americana.

For two generations, the Hearst newspapers themselves have wielded their power and profits by exploiting the most lurid aspects of war, irrational violence, and racist and sexist ideas. They have a lot of reckoning to account for.

2. We support the right of people to food. Shadowing the more blatant terror is the silent violence of malnutrition, forced sterilizations, and schools which teach children to be illiterate. This secret form of murder is increasing and it is systematic.

Hunger and the need for food are urgent. The fact that there are enough people in need in California to require \$400 million to feed them for one month reveals the dimensions of the crisis. And this is the cornucopia of the United States.

Look at Vietnam, formerly the rice bowl of Southeast Asia. Now the Saigon-controlled areas of South Vietnam are in the midst of a rice famine. This is the consequence of a US-sponsored decade of savage interference in the Vietnamese right to self-determination and independence. It remains true that in Vietnam, US priorities can be seen most clearly. Last year Nixon gave \$1.3 billion in military aid alone to Thieu.

3. There have always been attempts to disassociate extremists from moderates, to rewrite the fierce struggles of yesterday into "reasonable" unthreatening squabbles, and—above all—to incite racist fears about what might happen when "they" get out of control. It is the people who make revolution, and they must determine how and when revolutionary violence is necessary. This is fundamental: the oppressed have a common enemy. Don't do the enemy's work. The media distort and denounce in an attempt to divide the revolution. Movement spokespeople who react to political crises by asserting their own moderation and legitimacy are providing ammunition which will be used in the ruling class plans to split and weaken us.

Beware of the familiar phrases used against every kind of revolutionary action: "it's premature", "it turns people off" (some people), "it brings down repression". The same words are used to attack sit-ins, draft-card burnings, urban rebellions, the struggle of women, G.I. revolts, or occupations of institutions. Whether or not *any of this is literally true*, the important thing about revolutionary action is its political effect, its direction, what it teaches and changes and strengthens.

Today Nat Turner and John Brown are considered revolutionary heroes. In their own time, each was attacked as a murderous lunatic by the more "respectable" abolitionists. Revolution is officially revered only in retrospect.

It is a new experience for us to be described as a moderate alternative in the Hearst press. This has never happened before. New Left "moderation" is invented now as another racist weapon against Black revolution.

Despite the efforts by the media to sow confusion, many organizations and leaders have kept the primary issues of official violence and oppression in the forefront, affirmed the serious intentions of the SLA, and called for food for people and the safety of both Patricia Hearst and members of the SLA. This is a new and beautiful development.

4. Revolutions are uneven. They develop from concrete conditions. Like people, like nations, they are each unique and yet share common qualities. They will not behave according to expectations; they are forged in grinding suffering and resistance.

For the ruling class, it's an easy thing to anonomously destroy thousands of lives. The use of violence carries different burdens for conscious revolutionaries who love the people, than for their enemies who fear and hate people.

We do not comprehend the execution of Marcus Foster, and respond very soberly to the death of a Black person who was not a recognized enemy of his people. But it is wrong to allow such questions to become a grant of immunity to enemies and executioners of the oppressed. The system always holds that its massive violence is legal and moral and that revolutionary violence by the people is illegal and outrageous. It is the opposite that is true.

The hypocrisy of ruling class morality and justice is shown in their treatment of the SLA prisoners. Joseph Remiro and Russel Little have not been tried, but they are being held in isolation in the Adjustment Center of San Quentin. And still the three policemen from the same area who murdered a 14 year old Black manchild have not even been indicted, despite the collective outcry of the Black community.

Committed political workers will be criticizing and discussing the Hearst kidnapping for a long time, but we must acknowledge that this audacious intervention has carried forward the basic public questions and starkly dramatized what many have come to understand through their own experience: It will be necessary to organize and to destroy this racist and cruel system.

for the Weather Underground,

/s/ Bernardine Dohrn