

Mood of San Francisco: Shocked but Still

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A warm September sun, filtered through a light haze, bathed the bustling streets of San Francisco today. All in all, it was just the sort of early autumn day this city always looks forward to throughout its long, cold summer.

Business people and shoppers slowed their pace a bit, savoring the 80-degree temperature, pausing to admire the bright bouquets of the sidewalk flower vendors, or lingering to watch a mime in Union Square.

A normal day in San Francisco, except for one distracting sight — the unusual number of tourists posing for cameras on a Post Street curb outside the old St. Francis Hotel. That was where President Ford was standing about 3:30 P.M. yesterday when a woman behind a barrier across the street fired a single shot at him from a chrome-plated .38-caliber revolver.

Expect the Unexpected

The apparent assassination attempt shocked even blasé San Franciscans, but perhaps not as much as it would have residents of a lot of other American cities. In the last decade or so, the Bay Area, like much of the rest of California, has grown to expect, and perhaps in some ways to accept, the unexpected.

Beneath its outward calm, the city may be buzzing about recent events, but its easy confidence has not been shattered.

Even by San Francisco's standards, however, today was a day to reckon with. There were these developments:

¶ Patricia Hearst, the fugitive newspaper heiress who was arrested here last Thursday in connection with the alleged illegal activities of the self-styled Symbionese Liberation Army, was in Federal court here this morning for a bail hearing.

¶ In the same courthouse, Stephen P. Soliah, a 27-year-old house painter charged with harboring fugitives in the Hearst case, was appear-

ing before a magistrate for a bail hearing at the same time.

¶ This afternoon, Sara Jane Moore, the 45-year-old unemployed bookkeeper who has been charged with attempting to kill President Ford yesterday, was appearing before a magistrate in the same building at a hearing to determine whether she should be required to have her mental competence examined by psychiatrists.

¶ In a nearby Superior Court, four black men were in the sixth month of their trial in connection with the "Zebra" murders, the random street killings during the winter of 1973-74. The indictment charges only three murders and four assaults, but the police have said that the Zebra incidents—named after the "zebra" band on the police radio—resulted in the deaths of 13 persons and assaults on seven others. All the victims were white.

¶ Across San Francisco Bay, in Marin County, the trial of the so-called San Quentin six, which began in March, continued to drone on. In that trial, six men who were prisoners at the time of the San Quentin shootout in which George Jackson, a convict and black activist, was killed, are accused of killing three guards and two inmates during an escape attempt.

And if that was not enough to occupy the minds of San Francisco residents, they had only to glance around their state to see more evidence of the events of the recent weeks, months and years that have led a lot of thoughtful people around the nation to ask whether California represents modern society run rampant.

Manson Follower

In Sacramento, Lynette Alice Fromme, a 26-year-old follower of Charles Manson, who, was convicted in 1970, along with three other women followers, for the murder of Sharon Tate, the actress, and six others, was judged competent today in Federal court to stand trial, charged with another attempt, just 18 days ago, on President Ford's life during his visit there.

And in Los Angeles, a court-ordered hearing was continuing in Superior Court to re-examine the ballistic evidence in the fatal shooting on June 5, 1968, of Senator Robert F. Kennedy by Sirhan B. Sirhan, another reminder of the violent events that have marked California's recent history.

Do all these cases, and a multitude of others in the not-to-distant past, represent an aberration, some tendency toward violence that is peculiar to San Francisco, the Bay area, or to California? The answers are perhaps as diverse as the people who struggle with them.

Militant Movements

Certainly, most observers agree that California in general, and the Bay area in particular, were in the forefront of the militant black and youth movements that swept the country in the nineteen-sixties.

The Free Speech Movement that began at the University of California at Berkeley in 1964, the Black Panthers' militaristic threats ("Power comes from the barrel of a gun"), the antiwar movement that always seemed to be bigger, broader and louder here than any place else, he battles over People's Park in Berkeley, the flower-child summer of 1967 in Haight-Ashbury — all these were precursors, if not the direct ancestors, of wilder, more violent actions yet to come.

Still, a man who was deeply involved in the antiwar actions of the nineteen-sixties, and who asked not to be identified, cautioned today against concluding that such groups as the S.L.A. were the direct descendants of the earlier ideologues of the New Left.

"I don't see them growing out of any of these sixties movements" the former antiwar activist said. "They are obviously people who watched those pretty carefully, but they're not people who experienced those things."

He described the S.L.A. as young white folks who got involved with convicts, some of the heaviest people in

American society, and got their minds blown."

He added that he thought such groups as the S.L.A. were not trying to emulate the earlier activists, but to "top them."

"Given the society we live in, those people are there. And given whatever the psychological reasons, they're going to make whatever they want to see happen.

"I don't think it's the last one of these kind of things we've seen," he added. "That's a social condition. As long as there are alienated people sitting out there with no sense of anything to lose, there are going to be these happenings."

The Rev. Cecil Williams, black pastor of the Gilbe Memorial United Methodist Church, who received two of the tapes delivered by the S.L.A. early last year, when Miss Hearst was still considered their hostage, said he believed that some of the violent events that occurred in the last two years may be peculiar to the Bay area at this time, but would spread to the rest of the nation.

'Microcosm of America'

"When one looks at the Bay area, one looks at a microcosm of America in a real sense," he said. A lot of what takes place in the Bay area has a way of expressing the signs of the times, the times in which we live and what may occur in the immediate future."

Mr. Williams added that "what has happened here could happen in New York City, Chicago, Dallas, Atlanta, even in St. Louis and Kansas City."

Why did so many violent and bizarre events occur first in the Bay area?

"First of all, we're still on the frontier here," he said. "Second is the different groupings of people we have here — all kinds of people, all colors of people, all styles of life.

"The third thing is the young people; this is the Promised Land to them. And last, the mores of society, the folkways, are not shaped and formed so that they have become the law of the land. The

Confident

folkways are still fluid, the basic fabric of the West is still not put together yet."

San Francisco and its leaders may agree with much of what the former antiwar activist and Mr. Williams said, but they are not about to take the blame for revolutionaries, murderers or would-be assassins.

Roger Boas, a former San Francisco County Supervisor who owns an automobile dealership, said that he had heard "plenty of outrage that the President should be exposed, that he would allow himself to be exposed," but no denigrating of San Francisco because an assassination attempt occurred here.

No 'Self-Criticism'

"I don't know whether it's just an arrogance or an ostrich-in-the-sand sort of thing, but I don't hear any self-criticism," he said. "There's a feeling that all is well, by and large."

And William K. Coblentz, a lawyer and a member of the California Board of Regents, said:

"I guess there's embarrassment that it [the assassination attempt] happened here. But San Francisco is not responsible for it. It could happen anywhere."

"It's not that I'm chauvinistic about it," he added. "We know we had the Berkeley phenomenon, but Berkeley was a repository for people from all over the country."

Considering how San Francisco could take all the aberrations of the last decade in stride without having its confidence jolted, Mr. Coblentz said:

"I think you find this [confidence] about anybody who is good in a particular field, whether it's an actor or a lawyer. But we're not cocky, we're not self-satisfied."

Then, trying to sum up the combination of toughness and sense of self-esteem that personifies San Francisco, he quoted from a song he once wrote for a club show here:

*"San Franciscans are the Nob
Hill crowd;
Of course they're wealthy and
of course they're proud.
Their manners only show
slight signs
Of inelegant beginnings in the
placer mines."*