

What was a nice girl like Patt

By JOSEPH M. RUSSIN

It is three years since Patricia Hearst vanished kicking and screaming into the revolutionary psychodrama of the Symbionese Liberation Army. After almost daily world-wide coverage and three S.L.A. trials, more than a half-dozen books have given us a pretty good idea of what she did and when she did it. The question is still why? The two books at hand are the latest and most informative accounts of her once-haunting, now familiar odyssey. Both are the work of journalists who were early hunters of the S.L.A.'s seven-headed Cobra. While they offer no major revisions of S.L.A. history, both teams have come across some fascinating missing pieces in the puzzle. McLellan and Avery for instance, reveal that the famous S.L.A. aversion to bugs ("Death to the Fascist Insect That Preys Upon the Life of the People.") was well-founded. It was known that filth-spawned cockroaches led the F.B.I. to the main San Francisco hideout where Patty gave birth to Tania. Now we learn that Wendy Yoshimura's fingerprint in the Pennsylvania farm retreat, the clue which eventually led to the arrest of Tania, Miss Yoshimura and S.L.A. charter members Bill and Emily Harris, was also insect-instigated: Wendy stuffed a newspaper in her mattress to keep the bugs out. When the S.L.A. cleaned their house of fingerprints, no one remembered the paper.

"The Voices of Guns" is the more ambitious and satisfying of these books. It knowledgeably depicts the S.L.A. as an inevitable, if mutant, growth of the California revolutionary subculture. "The Life and Death of the S.L.A." is best at detailing the life histories of the core S.L.A. cadre, particularly the six who were incinerated in the Los Angeles shootout. The resumes of the S.L.A. confirm every Middle-American nightmare

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The Voices of Guns

By Vin McLellan and Paul Avery.

Illustrated. 544 pp. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$14.95.

The Life and Death of the S.L.A.

By Les Payne and Tim Findley, With Carolyn Craven.

Illustrated. 369 pp. New York: Ballantine Books. Paper, \$1.95.

about the New Left in general and the Berkeley Left in particular. As Tania Hearst once argued "we could be anyone's daughter, son, husband, wife, lover, neighbor or friend." And indeed, while not exactly the best and the brightest, most of the S.L.A. recruits were once numbered among the smartest of fashionable teen-agers in their towns. They came, for the most part, from conservative or non-political families who often helped the F.B.I. in their hunt. But personal or political yearnings eventually led them all to Berkeley. They came for and found demonstrations, communes, Marxist study groups, leftist teachers, drugs, protests and sex of every biological and political persuasion. Wendy Yoshimura's mother probably spoke for most of the parents when she told reporters, "Maybe if she had stayed in Fresno none of this would have happened."

Still, Berkeley was only the soil, not the seed. Most Berkeley revolutionaries, as Payne and Findley observe, were content to "prepare for the revolution as if it were a final examination in political science." The S.L.A. Army of 10 plotted the murder of black educator Marcus Foster, kidnapped the granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst, demanded and partially achieved a multi-million dollar feed-the-poor ransom scheme, robbed banks, defied scores of police to the last fire-scorched breath, and, in its second birth, apparently bombed industrial pockets all over northern California. The tragedy they produced included their own lost lives. Individually, both

books report, the S.L.A. were caring, gentle, even charming people. How could such warm youngsters become cruel avengers of an uncaring proletariat?

None of the S.L.A. cadre led any of the protests of the 1960's and that, McLellan and Avery argue, was part of their problem. "They were young radicals who had defined themselves as revolutionaries in the late 60's. . . . [and] had then been caught treading water as tension waned in the quieter years." Like those around them, the S.L.A. had dabbled in various liberation movements without being liberated and, guilt-laden by their white middle-class heritage, had sought vanguard leadership among oppressed minority people who refused to revolt. Not until they turned to the politicized black prisoners, the most oppressed representatives of the most oppressed group, did the future soldiers of the S.L.A. find a leader whose very existence conferred moral authority and whose desperation to be someone and to do something matched their own.

In McLellan and Avery's account, the S.L.A. was born when Donald DeFreeze escaped from prison and chanced upon a group of crippled misfits whose personal frustrations were such that they could adopt a radical vision far removed from the realities of the outside world. But even the visions of "Cinque Mtume," the Fifth Prophet (as DeFreeze came to call himself), could not complete the alchemy that separated the S.L.A. from the café revolutionaries. It may seem reactionary, but from the evidence presented

in these chronicles, the critical ingredient was sex. Indeed, the full tale of the lives and loves of the S.L.A. surpasses a pornographer's dream.

The sex wasn't meant for titillation, of course. These intense young people went about their coupling as seriously as they pursued their weapons training. Once underground, they tried to view sex as just another essential need requiring collective action. But our investigators say it never really worked out that way, and it hadn't begun there either. Soon after Cinque escaped, the familiar weakness of some radical white middle-class women for black lovers provided him with romance, refuge and female recruits. The women's ultra feminist yearnings, complete with obligatory lesbianism, helped hold them together. Sex did not lure most of the white men, but it appears that some of the women came on board as their bed partners first and gunslingers later. To McLellan and Avery, the S.L.A. "always carried a peculiar burden of unbridled sexuality." Almost every turn of the S.L.A. story seemed based in part on sleeping arrangements: with the exception of Willie Wolfe, every member had some sexual investment in the core group, and Willie Wolfe became the sexual link to their most celebrated comrade, Tania Hearst.

Like the jury that convicted Patricia Hearst, the two teams of authors find her conversions both authentic and persuasive. They also present some convincing evidence the jury never heard. Payne and Findley, for instance, quote "an S.L.A. member" describing the young kidnap victim as being gradually "caught up in the romanticism of being a revolutionary. It was partially a game with her. It seemed exciting. The 'badder' she sounded the more special she became. We had to tone down some of her tapes." McLellan and Avery are particularly informative about Tania's trial after the Los Angeles shootout. The "terrorist princess," while often unhappy, had sufficient freedom of movement and will to make a break had she wished. Instead,

Continued on Page 14

The Voices

Continued from Page 5

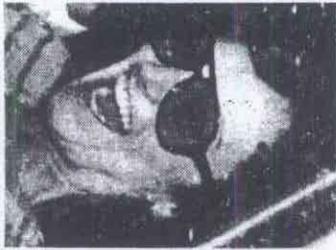
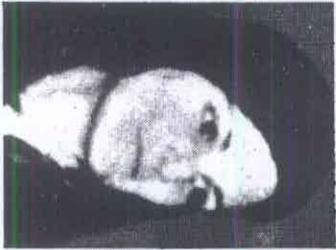
they say, she bombed buildings, helped rob banks and encouraged a feminist revolt in the re-born S.L.A.

But it's still unclear how this enigmatic heroine convinced those around her after each startling change in her life. As a teen-ager she skillfully won the companionship of Steven Weed. As a kidnap victim her passion for Cinque, Willie Wolfe and revolution was impressive. As a fugitive she startled collaborators with her tart tongue and commando bitchiness. As a comrade she battled the male chauvinism of Bill Harris and "amazed" Wendy Yoshimura with her strength. "She is incredible," Yoshimura wrote. "I swear only the toughest could have come out of it as she did." As a prisoner she was an "unemployed urban guerrilla" seeking a revolutionary feminist defense. As a defendant she was a frail victim converted in prison to the Episcopal faith. As a convict she was an active informer on the deeds of her one-time comrades-at-arms. She herself told CBS that to others her story must seem "crazy—it doesn't make any sense."

McLellan and Avery agree that she developed "a psychological history that could fit the design of a new pinball machine." The question is, who or what operated the flippers? Unfortunately they make little

reference to the literature of kidnap victim psychology, and speculate instead on the possible parallels to Maoist coercion and religious deprogramming. Payne and Findley see nothing untoward about a rich adolescent, trapped in an increasingly boring engagement, becoming entranced with women who speak their own minds and men who exude heroic determination to right wrongs her wealth helped to foster. Was Patricia Hearst a weak changeling or a premier victim in an age of victimization? Surely she was horribly treated during her early days with the S.L.A., justly terrified by watching the shootout on television and hearing newsmen and police speculate that her body, too, was in flames, and, later, appropriately afraid of a life in prison. Her trial only made the picture fuzziest. Indeed, F. Lee Bailey's argument that Patricia was both brainwashed and the unwilling victim of coercion served to increase her mortification and, as it turned out, her incarceration. In McLellan and Avery, "It was the misfortune of Patricia Hearst that her lawyers presented a trial defense out of the 1950's, to a jury of the 1970's, to explain an experience that came out of the 1960's."

The riddle of Tania, which for a time held such a powerful fascination for millions, remains. She and the S.L.A. have become an authentic American myth. ■



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