

28 March 1974

Dear Harold:

This will be a brief response to your mailings of 22, 25 and 26 March. We hope your Miami trip turns out well and that the students you're working with live up to your rightful expectations better than their predecessors.

The girls you describe do sound promising. Our feeling about these new kids is that many of them have something earlier generations of young Americans lacked in most cases. They have a much better idea of who and what they are, fewer false hopes and illusions. I'm inclined to suspect that this applies even more to the women than to the men. The fact that some of your girls have children, have been married and/or divorced, and still want to study and work is very encouraging. Some of them may, of course, disappoint you, but it's safe to think that if they do it won't be in quite the same way the men have. The female ego trip happens, of course, but it usually is more apparent than the male because women understand each other better than men do and only the rather extreme female egotist lets herself go.

Miss Hearst perhaps is not untypical in a way. She was kicked out of a convent-run high school on the Peninsula because, as I recall it, she was caught with one marijuana cigarette. She then was put into another private high school on the Peninsula where she did very well, in startling contrast with her grades in the convent-run school. No doubt it was because Steven Weed was hired as her tutor. When she finished the new private high school she moved over to Berkeley and took up living with Steve while both went to Cal. One story I saw quoted friends as saying they thought she had influenced her father in liberalizing the Examiner, something that actually has happened in the past few years. We agree with your assessment of Weed -- thoughtful and well balanced; liberal but not radical or an ~~active~~ activist. It is nonsense to suppose that either knowingly had anything to do with the kidnaping.

She is a quite pretty, happy-looking kid, and it is not difficult to imagine that she, the youngest of I think five sisters, is probably her father's favorite. It is equally easy to imagine her troubles with her mother, who is a devout Catholic. The SLA has had her reading George Jackson and other rebellious stuff, so when and if they turn her loose she may appear brain-washed to some, but it will obviously be only an extension and enlargement of a ~~known~~ path she took up some time ago along with the rest of her generation.

While I'm on this subject, the Chronicle has begun running a series on the origins and history of the SLA, only the first of which I've read thus far. Main source appears to be police or FBI materials, but some obviously gathered from some of the radicals in Berkeley. Already there appears a very suspicious couple which appears to bear out our suspicion that the SLA may have been misled into the kidnaping venture.

The SLA is supposed to have evolved from a group which was working with prisoners and agitating for improvement in their treatment. Some 10 of these people have dropped from sight since the Hearst kidnaping, and among the 10 is a couple named Bill and Emily Harris who just appeared in Berkeley two or three years ago, allegedly from the University of Indiana. Both got into the prisoner movement, he tried to move in on the VVAW, and she went after the Venceremos, a Maoist-oriented group since disbanded.

Harris worked in the Berkeley post office while finishing his work for a Master's at Cal, while she worked ~~for~~ as a clerk typist for a Berkeley opinion-polling firm that does contract jobs for UC Berkeley. As I say, both have disappeared along with eight or so others, including some former cons and activists with whom they had been associating. A familiar pattern, no ?

Ms. Harris, who has an AB degree in English and once taught ~~junior~~ high school for a year at Blomington, Ind., is said to be cool and the leader type, rather than her husband. She worked with Venceremos at a time when some of its members were accused of engineering an escape from Chino State Prison in which a guard was killed. The guy who escaped in this caper later was caught, ~~and convicted~~ *and convicted* ~~the death of a guard who was killed.~~ *of* Two Venceremos members accused of helping him were tried for conspiracy and convicted. The convicted ~~son~~, named Beaty, is still testifying against other alleged conspirators.

Harris directed his attention to the VVAW, specifically to the Winter Soldier Organization, claiming himself to be a disabled Vietnam veteran, which some of his friends doubted.

The first problem about all this is, if the Harrises are working for someone, who is it ? Could be any of several outfits.

The second question is whether there is design as well as discernible pattern in the coincidences and escalation of the kidnapings. Is it a build up ? The demoralizing effects of continued kidnapings cannot be questioned. In this connection, do you remember a tape we sent you of a KPFA program Jan. 20 this year on the alleged persecution of leftwing radicals, and do you remember the charge made in it that the CIA plans the overthrow of the British government and later that of the USA ? At the time it sounded like pure paranoia and probably still is. And there is no reason to suspect the CIA more than anyone else except for its experience and facilities. My present thoughts is that if there is a design to the kidnapings, it is directed more toward the creation of a climate in which startling things would be more acceptable, that it may not be used in the end, but will be available if needed in extremis.

Best,


jdw