

# Melville, Jackson --Martyrs for the Big Bomb Scare

By Tim Findley

Sam Melville was shot to death last September 13 as police stormed into New York's Attica Prison just 23 days after George Jackson had died in a similar manner at the other end of the Nation.

Yesterday's unique national bomb scare was dedicated

**A  
News  
Analysis**

to those two dead radicals. "Remember George Jackson and Sam Melville," the letters sent to news media in San Francisco, Chicago and New York concluded.

The statement, written in the same black ink pen, but with what seemed to be a different, more script-like, hand than the harsh printing in the body of the letter, swept across the page almost as an

afterthought.

It was the nearest thing to a signature in the four-page document written on yellow legal-type paper. It spoke not of dead men, but of martyrs.

The letters sent to media warning of the bombs found yesterday contained only one, almost trite, demand:

"Free All Political Prisoners."

But unlike scores of other letters received in the past by newspapers and radio stations that have both warned of bombs planted and explained some that have gone off, the most recent missive promised a unique campaign of terrorist extortion unheard of in previous radical tactics.

## DEMAND

"How would one kidnap a luxury hotel, a corporate office building or a superhighway and demand the release of political prisoners as ran-

some" the letter postulated.

"Simple again. A seven month time bomb could easily be embedded in the structure of a building under construction e.g., the new FBI building in Washington) or under the roadbed of a highway not yet paved over.

"In 3 or 4 months continued construction would make the device virtually undetectable. The authorities and the public would then be told who is to be freed in exchange for the exact location of the device."

In the past, even when bombs had gone off in public buildings, it had been obvious that most had been set to explode and damage property in a demonstration of contempt.

## TERROR

But the tactic outlined in the newest letter is one of complicated terrorism capable of bringing fear to so innocuous an American as a middle class tourist or a morning commuter.

"Of course, the power structure could refuse to meet our demands. They would then have the option of sitting around for months waiting for some portion of one of their empty toys to blow up.

"Who will want to vacation in that hotel, meet in that board room, or drive on that superhighway for the next few months?"

Bombing as a tactic of the left has been increasingly de-emphasized among radical leaders since a property-smashing series of attacks on banks, college buildings government offices and police stations hit their peak in mid-1970.

### CADRE

Since then, people in the left have argued bitterly about the terrorist tactics of the Weather People, the super-secret underground cadre of young radicals whose hallmark became a mysterious letter to selected persons in the media explaining the revolutionary reasons for a bombing.

Many in the left had come to feel that such a tactic displayed a kind of arrogance toward the working class of America who were appalled by the explosions even though in most — but not all — cases no one was injured.

Bombs, it was felt, had outlived their usefulness just as wild "trashing" rampages to destroy property had before that.

To be sure, even some in the left who adamantly opposed violence could feel some satisfaction at the way the "Establishment" had been frightened by some of those blasts — notably the three bombs that went off on November 12, 1969, in the skyscraper offices of General Motors, RCA and Chase Manhattan Bank in New York City.

Two days later, another bomb ripped apart a men's

room in the New York Criminal Courts building, and police announced they had arrested four suspects in that bombing and that of the skyscrapers.

### MASTERMIND

The mastermind, they said, was a 34-year-old former engineering firm employee named Sam Melville.

In May, 1970, Melville confessed to the bombings and was sentenced to 13 years in Attica Prison.

George Jackson was killed in an alleged attempt to escape from San Quentin Prison on August 21. One week

later, powerful bombs went off in state offices in San Francisco, San Mateo and Sacramento. A terse message from the "Weather Underground" took credit for the "revenge" bombings.

Several inmates at Attica Prison testified after the riot was over there that Sam Melville had not been one of the leaders. They claimed he was shot down for no apparent reason as he sprinted across the prison yard last September 13.

### CREDIT

On September 19, a bomb exploded in the washroom

near the offices of New York State Correction Commissioner Russell Oswald. The "Weather Underground" took credit for that explosion too.

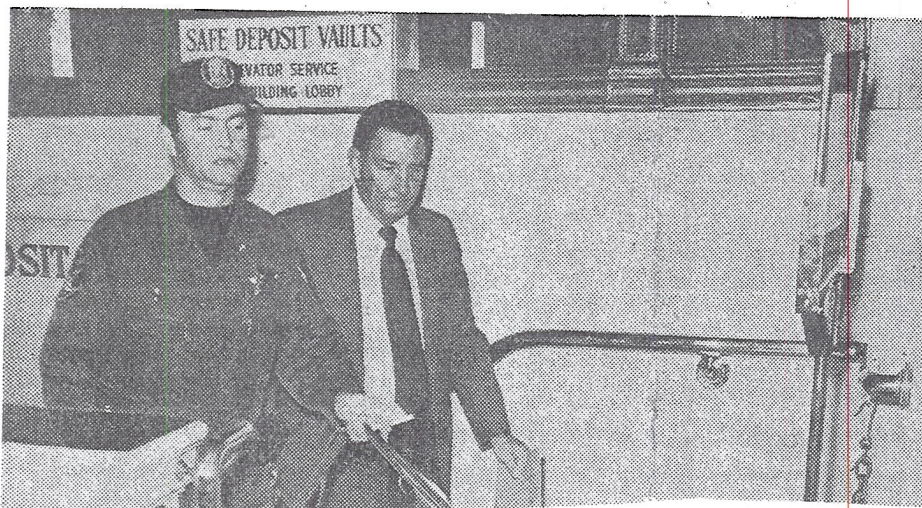
In recent months, major radical political bombings have tapered off as the left has been moving toward reorganizing itself. There was only a spate of incidents in which the title "Sam Melville Brigade of the Weather Underground" was mentioned in informed circles.

But the bombings of the late 60's appeared to be finished.

Yesterday's elaborately planned episode indicated that even while the issue of violence was being debated, at least some people in the left were moving into an entirely new phase of terrorism.

### BITTER

At a time when the body of the left appears to be moving more and more toward striking a new relationship with the working class, this new tactic takes a bitter step many radicals feel is premature and perhaps threatening to their own hopes for eventual revolution.



WOMANET