

## BUT THE MUSIC NEVER STOPS

# State plays 'musical dungeons' with SLA

The long and complicated saga of the now defunct Symphonese Liberation Army (SLA) is still unfolding in the courtrooms and prisons of California. Russ Little, Joe Remiro, Bill and Emily Harris, the group's four surviving members, are all now serving one or more life sentences each and the Harris face even more trials growing out of their urban guerrilla activities in 1974.

While one-time kidnap victim, Patty Hearst, (now the Harris's co-accused turned prosecution witness) is freed on \$1.5 million bail and given a half hour national television time to slander the SLA, the Harris's have been forced to endure a game of what Emily calls "musical dungeons." They have been shunted from jail to jail and systematically prevented from preparing their legal defense.

The latest incident occurred in Oakland, California, when Judge A. Kinsday attempted to arraign the Harris's on the Hearst kidnaping charges. Before proceeding, the judge appointed two lawyers of his own choice for them over their objections. He then refused even the appointed lawyers' request that they step down and let Susan Jordan and Leonard Weinglass defend the Harris's. In the face of this outrage, Emily attempted to leave the courtroom rather than be arraigned without counsel. She was

manhandled by the bailiffs and a scuffle broke out which resulted in overturned chairs, and both Harris's, seven deputies and a matron sprawled in a pile on the floor. Undaunted Judge Lindsay proceeded with his arraignment.

In spite of a bleak outlook Emily has said, "I hope my friends and comrades don't think that I have become bitter and cynical, as the probation officer seems to think. A cynic sees 'what is' and turns her head away in despair because she feels helpless to do anything about it; a revolutionary sees 'what is' and uses this perception as the impetus to 'what could be.' I am a revolutionary and I never lose my hopes for the future even in this atmosphere of a kangaroo court."

On another front the Harris's close comrades, Russ Little and Joe Remiro, have completed their round of trials and have been locked down in separate maximum security prisons where they continue revolutionary activity.

In a letter written while the two were lodged in the infamous San Quentin Adjustment Centre, Russ Little describes their relief at finally being out of the courtroom arena. He spoke of the resistance they have put up since their capture in 1973:

"The pressures of being subjected to these different forms of physical and mental torture were offset mainly



Joe Remiro and Russ Little during 1975 trial.

by our efforts to continue growing and evolving as conscious revolutionaries; by reading and analyzing our own practice and theory, especially as members of the SLA; and by corresponding with above ground revolutionaries on the streets and locked down POW's about the struggles going on in this country and internationally.

"The pressures," Little writes, "were also offset by our attempts to resist by all possible means — from the limited, corrupt framework of the judicial process to the direct action that led to our third trial that attempted

escape — to resist the State's power to hold us in captivity."

At this third trial Remiro and Little did not deny the fact that they had tried to escape, but based their defense on proving that the attempted jailbreak was triggered by their belief that they would be murdered in the custody of the prison system. They focused their case on the racial warfare, guard brutality, stabbings, murder and suicide in the prisons. Escaping from jail, they argued, is not a "crime" but an instinct for survival.

To support their case, Remiro and Little subpoenaed a number of revolutionary convicts from California prisons as witnesses. In a typical over-reaction the State of California called out the largest security force ever assembled for a trial.

The San Jose Civic Centre took on the character of a mini-Vietnam, with at least two hundred sheriff's deputies sporting machine guns and battle fatigues surrounding the area. The personal searches of spectators were so close that three women with Tampax in their purses had each individual Tampax scanned with a metal detector.

In this atmosphere, James "Doc" Holliday, a widely respected revolutionary in California's prisons, testified that the authorities at San Quentin felt threatened by the fact that Remiro and Lit-

tle had relationships with Black, Brown, and White prisoners. He explained that race wars have been going on for years in the prisons, and that guards use the racial antagonism to pit prisoners against each other.

"The kind of multi-racial unity that was sparked off when Russ and Joe got to the prison was in direct contradiction to the way the officials try to maintain control," Holliday testified. "At first the guards tried to investigate the Blacks to attack Russ and Joe, by reminding us over and over that they had been convicted of killing a Black man. When that didn't arouse our anger, the guards repeated the word to the whites that Russ and Joe were 'nigger-lovers,' hoping the Whites would kill them."

### San Quentin

Several other prisoners testified that guards offered to give them weapons if they would "hit" Little and Remiro at San Quentin. One convict said a guard promised to get him haxsaw blades in exchange for the dead.

Speaking on his own behalf Joe Remiro described incidents like the time he and Russ were taken on a "tour" of the gas chamber. Also, the times guards threw scalding hot water on him, set his blankets on fire while he was asleep, and encouraged another prisoner to urinate on his foot. He said the guards always hounded when they told him he wouldn't live five years in prison.

At the close of the trial the judge instructed the jury to ignore the defense case and stressed that "prison conditions have absolutely nothing to do with facts." Subsequently Little and Remiro were convicted and given their second life sentences.

Since the ordeal of courtroom activity has ended, Little writes: "We are continuing to study non-heirarchical, anti-authoritarian theory and practice. I try to use my access to anarchist and situationist literature to

parian marxist-leninist propaganda that is generally the only left-wing literature sent into California prisons. . . We are in the process of starting a study group in our exercise yard, during the rest periods, between basketball games that keep ourselves in good physical shape."

Little concludes: "Joe and I have both been studying the situationist theories on alienation of everyday life in modern, highly technical class societies. We are trying to figure out how armed actions that originate out of the subjectivity of small groups of revolutionaries can function as a catalyst to encourage other alienated people to overcome their frustrations and anxieties by 'taking direct action against all forms of domination that exist in bureaucratic class societies.'"

Meanwhile, Bill and Emily Harris are facing a barrage of upcoming political trials where their vision of a "future humanistic society composed of free individuals" will grapple with the dead hand of the State.

"After that we just went through here in the past few months our dream would seem idealistic and impossible," Emily Harris has said. "But I know it's not, because I realize we start moving mountains one rock at a time. Change begins with each of us. As one man named Bakunin said, 'By reaching for the impossible we discover the possible and those who limit themselves to what seems possible will not advance a single step.'"

More information on the Harris's case can be obtained from their defense committee: 204 Avenue B, Redondo Beach, California 90277. The latest addresses of the four are: Russ Little (B-66002), Tampa, California 94964, Joe Remiro (B-66003), Paloson State Prison, Represa, California 95671. Bill and Emily Harris, Alameda County Jail, 1225 Fallon St., Oakland, California 94612.

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