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Chapter III: Summer-Fall 1983

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Chapter III covers the aftermath of the actions at Vandenberg Air Force Base and Livermore Weapons Lab, a stint in the Oakland County Jail, and the first major anti-corporate action in the San Francisco Financial District.

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Photo: April 2011 protest at CPUC hearing on Diablo Canyon. By Luke Hauser.

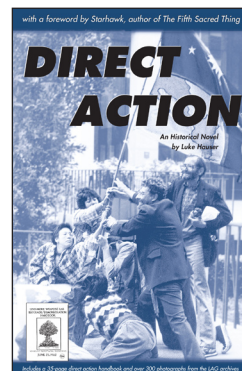


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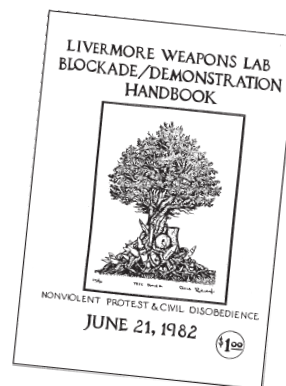


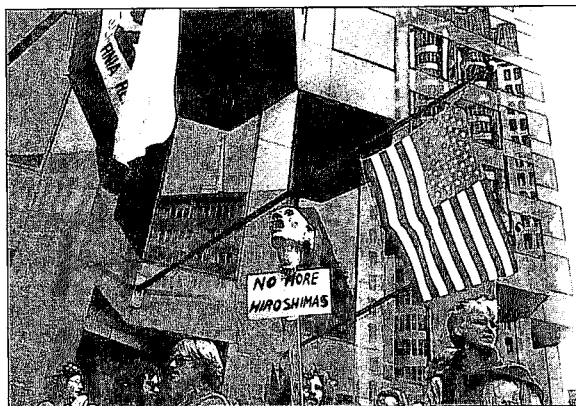
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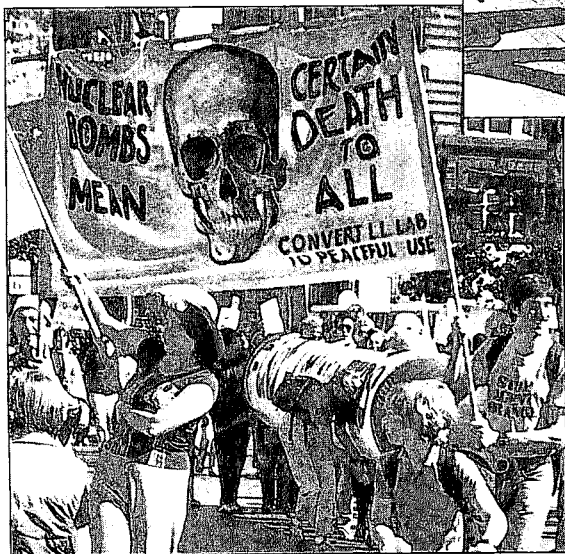




*In October 1983,
LAG joined
activists in Europe
and North America
in a series of
protests...*

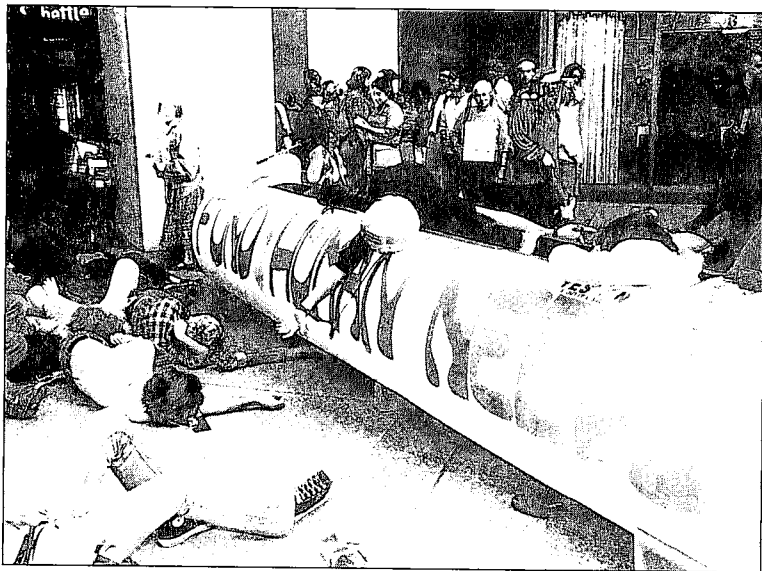
STOP THE EUROMISSILES!

OCTOBER 24, 1983



*... against a new
generation of
nuclear-tipped
"Euromissiles" —
the Cruise and
Pershing Two.*

*Top: Keith Holmes
Middle: Bob Thawley
Bottom: Unknown (see Appendix)*



STOP THE EUROMISSILES!

OCTOBER 24, 1983



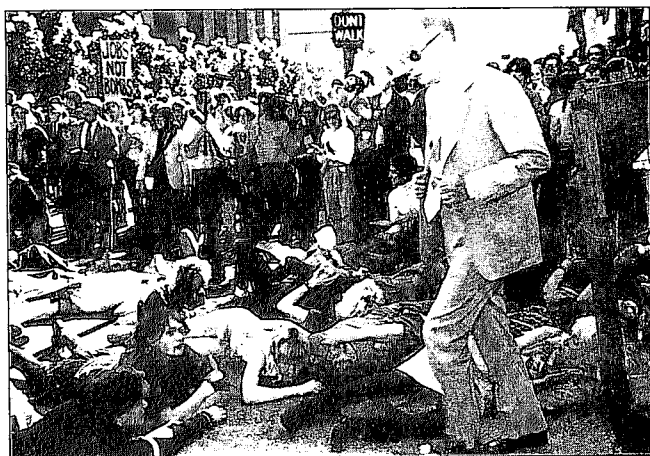
On October 24
LAG protested
in the financial
district. A
dozen affinity
groups did
actions at war-
contracting
corporations.

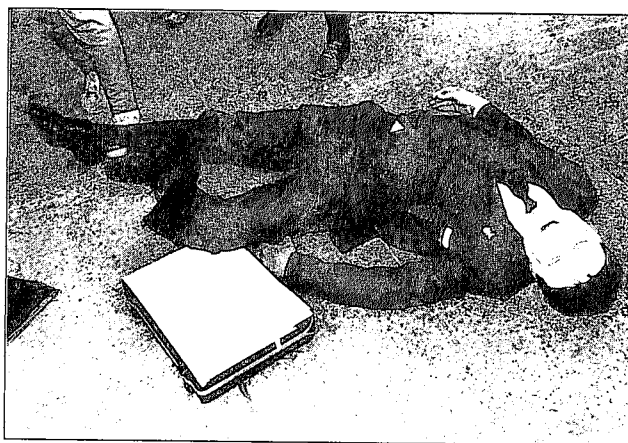


Die-Ins,
imported from
London,
increased
disruption while
lowering the risk
of arrest.
Even the
nukecycle got
into the act
(top left).

Photos by Ted Sahl, except
top right by Keith Holmes.

Any connections between
the people pictured in the
photographs and the
characters in this book are
purely coincidental. The
characters are fictional. No
photo should be taken as
implying that an
individual is in any way
connected to a fictional
character.





A youth AG
blockaded
Wells Fargo.
Many other
protesters
were
costumes and
face paint
at the pre-
Halloween
action.

Protesters
celebrated a
successful
action.



Top: Keith Holmes
Lower pair: Ted Sahl

Three / 1983

"You are deluding yourself about the Court," said the priest. "In the writings which preface the Law, that particular delusion is described thus: before the Law stands a doorkeeper. To this doorkeeper there comes a man from the country..."

— Franz Kafka, *The Trial*

Monday, July 4, 1983

A cloud of beige dust rose behind the old station wagon as it pulled away. I turned my head and tried not to breathe till it settled.

Had I ever spent an odder Fourth of July? And it wasn't over yet. I put down my guitar and shuffled to the right, trying to stay in the shadow of one of our cars. Out in the sun, it must be a hundred degrees.

Twenty of us held vigil in the parking lot of Santa Rita jail, waiting for the final Livermore protesters to be released. I looked at the barbed-wire encrusted complex. Santa Rita. If I had stayed in, I'd be a free man today. No more time to serve. Instead, I was looking at a return trip in three weeks. Right back here.

So I wasn't feeling especially nostalgic. Left to my own devices, I'd have skipped this visit. But I knew I needed to be here. Having forgotten to tell Holly I was leaving jail, the least I could do was welcome her when she got out.

I took a drink of water, then fiddled some more with my guitar, keeping to myself. Since I got out four days earlier, I'd found it hard to be around more than one person at a time. I kept my head low, watching my left hand fingering the strings.

I settled into a simple chord pattern, my mind alternating between dreading jail and fretting over seeing Holly. She probably knew by now that I had cited out. I pictured how our reunion might have been had I stayed in — stepping into freedom together. Instead, it felt like we would be living in separate realities.



The first taste of freedom.

My thoughts were interrupted by a van the size of an RV pulling into the parking lot. I had expected people to be released through the barbed-wire tunnel leading out of the jail's concrete command post. But the big van wheeled up behind us, and protesters began streaming out.

Antonio was the first person I recognized. The sun glinted off his silver hair. A huge smile lit his face. "Great to see you, old man!" he cried out. I welcomed him with a hug, envying his exhilaration.

A dozen others emerged. Then I spotted Holly. She paused in the doorway of the van, as if taking the full

measure of the outside world. I pushed through the little knot of well-wishers. I paused for a moment, wondering how to greet her. Then her eyes fell on me. A beaming smile broke over her face. She stepped down from the van and threw her arms around my neck. She felt slight, almost fragile.

She trembled. How great it must feel to be out. To be finished. To have closure.

I felt a flicker of resentment. Did she have any idea how I was feeling? Did it occur to her that not everyone was so ecstatic?

But I pushed it down. It's not her fault that she's free and I have to go back.

As she beamed at me, though, I wanted to pull away. I reached out and hugged her again, to avoid having to look directly at her.

Friday, July 8, 1983

HOLLY WAS IN the kitchen, making tea. I sat down on the living room floor, then got up and went over to the stereo. "What do you want to hear?" I asked.

"How about flute music?"

We'd set aside Friday evening to work together on the new Direct Action. It was seven o'clock already, and I was anxious to get going so we didn't have to work all night.

I sifted through my tapes and found a Peruvian recording. The haunting tones of pan-pipes opened the album. I sat down on the floor again and tried to get comfortable. The breathless flitting of the pipes sounded a little too close to my life over the past week.

I'd been out of jail for eight days now, and I hadn't taken a break yet. When I wasn't working extra hours to make up lost income, I was scrambling to pick up the pieces of LAG that lay strewn in every direction. With everyone out of jail, it was clear just how scattered we were. The second LAG Congress was planned for early August. I told Craig I'd help pull it together, assuming there would be a whole work group like last year. But most of my expected colleagues were missing in action. Mort was traveling a lot for his job. Craig and Claudia were focusing on their Strategy Proposal. I'd hoped Holly and Caroline would pitch in, but they were busy getting the office back on track. So it fell to me, Jenny, Artemis, Lyle, and a few others to organize the biggest meeting of the year.

To compound matters, the proposals for actions and projects were all over the map — another encampment and action at Vandenberg; a second International Day; October actions in solidarity with demos planned by European peace groups; an anti-nuke alert network; urban actions against corporate military contractors; and a peace camp at Livermore. How were we going to consense on a coherent plan?

Holly came out of the kitchen carrying a small teapot and a cup. She knelt and set them on the floor. She placed a cushion against the rolled-up futon and sat down. Then she stood back up. "I forgot my notes," she said, and walked back toward the bedroom.

I went over to the futon and sat down. It felt lumpy, and I shifted around, trying to get comfortable. I looked at my own notes, ten pages of ideas scribbled, scratched out, and margin-scrawled. I wished I'd had time to type them up, but I hadn't gotten to it yet. Maybe later.

Holly came back carrying a red file-folder and sat down next to me. She took a sip of tea, then started sifting her papers.

"Want to get started?" I finally said.

"I thought we already started," she said without looking up. Her voice was calm and bright, as if she didn't even detect my impatience.

Holly sifted through a stack of papers. "Angie said she can work on the paper all day tomorrow. And Sara will be around, too. With Karina in prison for another month, she has plenty of time on her hands."

Karina was halfway through her prison time for the Vandenberg action. "Have you heard anything about Karina?" I asked.

"Yeah. Sara talked to her and Alby this week. Karina is getting along okay, but Alby isn't. He's in the men's prison down at Terminal Island. It sounds like a pretty tough place, especially for someone as small as Alby. He's been threatened, and he figured it was useless to complain to the guards. He told

one inmate that if the guy attacked him, he would scratch his eyes out. Can you imagine Alby saying that?"

"I guess you do what you have to do," I said. I thought about my upcoming sentence. In seventeen days I'd be in Santa Rita. A lot of my fellow inmates would come from inner-city Oakland, where violence was a fact of life.

My head shook involuntarily. I pulled my attention back to the newspaper. "We have eight pages for International Day follow-up, is that right?"

"Yeah," Holly said. "I'll write an overview article, and then we have reports from all over the place. Plus, we want to get people thinking about next year."

My mind clouded as I thought back to my jail-talk with Craig and Claudia. "Maybe we shouldn't be jumping right into another International Day," I said.

"If we want it to grow," she said, "we have to get going right away. People are waiting for word on next Summer. With a full year to work, we may be able to get a lot more groups interested in CD. We need to get the date out now."

"I think you need to wait to see if there is a new consensus."

She looked up in surprise. "International Day was conceived as an ongoing, annual event. We want to keep up our momentum. Is there something wrong with that?"

My jaw tightened. "You seem to think everything is like it was before the blockade. It's not." My voice felt thin and strained.

Holly set her notes down and looked at me. "What's wrong, Jeff?"

I clutched my sheaf of notes. "I'm really depressed about LAG right now, and I feel like you're oblivious. The Congress is in a month, and there's no focus at all. LAG is in a total shambles, and you just go on assuming that International Day will save us."

Her eyes flickered. "International Day inspired thousands of people to take action against nuclear weapons. It was a big success. The movement is growing all across the country."

"So what if people got arrested in Iowa or Florida? Is that going to help LAG figure out what to do next? We can't just blindly call another International Day. We need to stop and think about what we're doing."

To my surprise, Holly nodded. "You're right," she said quietly. She looked down, and the color seemed to drain from her face. "Most people in LAG don't care about International Day. It was obvious in jail, but I guess I haven't wanted to face it."

I reached out and put my hand on her arm. "I'm sorry, Holly. I didn't mean to be so harsh."

"No, that's okay. You're right."

"Yeah, but I didn't have to be so sarcastic." I took her hand. "I'm sorry. I'm under a lot of pressure."

She set aside her International Day folder and looked at me. "The paper can wait. Let's talk."

I took a breath. Why not clear the air? Tell her I'd been feeling on a totally different wavelength from her, and not just about politics. We were hardly communicating.

But what if she agreed that we weren't communicating? Then where would we be?

I grasped at a convenient straw. "It's the LAG Congress," I said. "It's not like last year. There's only a few of us even working on it. And to make matters worse, Claudia and Craig are demanding that their Strategy Proposal get top priority the first day, and everything else be put off till the second day. That's going to blow the lid off the Congress."

"I heard about that," she said. "At least Artemis said she would facilitate. She's good at pulling people together." Holly seemed to search my eyes for a sign that I shared her hope.

I tried to look encouraged. "Yeah, that's a plus," I said.

"And Caroline told me that finances are looking better. She said your blockade-a-thon brought in almost \$3000."

That made me smile in spite of myself. "Pilgrim alone raised over \$300 in pledges," I said. "And Mustard Seed AG just sent in another \$250."

"That's amazing," Holly said. "Sounds like you and Jenny are getting the hang of fund-raising."

I nodded. "But I think Caroline is pretty fried. She was talking again yesterday about quitting the staff."

"I don't think she'll do it," Holly said. "She just wants to work on something besides fund-raising. Maybe Jenny will take on more of that."

Holly stretched her neck as if working out the kinks. I scooted over behind her and massaged her shoulders. I worked my thumbs deep into her shoulder muscles. Why had I been fighting with Holly? When would life get back to normal?

Sunday, July 24, 1983

As I WALKED along Dana Street, I picked up a spindly twig and tested its flex between my fingers, seeing how far I could bend it without breaking. My shirt felt sweaty. Six more blocks to Ashby House, to the newspaper, to my last day of freedom.

What else would I rather be doing today? Wasn't Direct Action supposed to be my dream project? Besides, we had to go all out if we were going to get it to the printer the next day.

The next day. The first day of the rest of my life in jail. Early Monday morning, Lyle and I would head for Santa Rita.

General population. Would we be kept together? Would we see each other

in the cafeteria? Why hadn't I stayed in jail those last four days, when there were fifty men? Now it was two of us.

Three, actually. We'd heard that one other blockader would be there, a guy named Thad whom Lyle knew a little. With luck, we'd all be kept together, but it wasn't like we'd have any choice in the matter.

In a way, I was ready to go. Get it over with. A cloud of gloom had hung over me since I got out of the tents. It wasn't just fear of jail. It was a feeling of unfinished business. I craved some way to put the gloom behind me. I tried to recall the burst of empowerment I had felt the previous year. This year, life since my release felt like treading water. Or molasses. Hopefully finishing my jail time would give me a new perspective.

I crossed the street and headed up the front walk. Even though I'd been there the day before, the walls struck me as dirtier, the couches more broken-down. The room wasn't as crowded as I expected, considering it was the final day of production. Mort, Claudia, Daniel, and Holly. The thirties crowd. Mort looked up as I came in and offered me a beer, which I accepted but didn't open.

Holly looked relieved to see me. "Can we check-in? I really need a break."

My brow furrowed. I didn't want to pressure her to stay, but I couldn't see how we'd finish if she left. "Are you coming back later?"

"I'll come back in the morning to wrap it up." She stretched and yawned. "It'll be okay. Jenny and Angie said they'll stay late tonight, and Sara should be here soon."

I nodded and ran my hand through my hair. Maybe we could do it. Angie in particular had been a big help this issue, making a production chart that helped us organize the twenty-four pages more systematically than our old method of twenty-four separate scraps of note paper.

Where was Angie now? Maybe she and Jenny were getting something to eat. The two of them had just moved in together, in an apartment in central Oakland. That might have started the rumor mill churning if Jenny and Raoul hadn't hooked up about the same time. Somehow I didn't picture Angie joining them in a threesome.

Holly gave me a briefing. All of the stories were proofread, but several pages of layout hadn't even been started, and none of the 24 pages was finalized. We had our work cut out for us.

Sara arrived a few minutes later. She greeted Holly warmly, but her face clouded as they talked. I went over to join them.

"Sara just got another letter from Karina," Holly told me. "We were discussing whether to run it."

Karina. Would she ever get out of jail? "How's she doing?" I asked.

Sara's expression softened. "She's okay, considering she still has a couple of weeks to go. But I saw Madrigan, who got thirty days for a first arrest. She's out now, but she's pretty shaken up. She doesn't ever want to get arrested again."

My chest tightened. Neither would I, probably. Not for a long while.

Sara rubbed the letter between her fingers, as if savoring the texture of the paper. "The only sad part is, Karina is pretty depressed that they didn't stop the MX test. She thought if there had been more people, they could have stopped it."

"I agree," said Daniel from across the room. "And in the end, most of us got our charges dropped. The government apparently has its quota of sacrificial victims. It's a shame that more people weren't willing to put their bodies on the line."

Claudia had been working quietly at the main table. Just the previous week, she had announced her resignation from the LAG staff. Except for the Strategy Proposal, she seemed to be withdrawing from the fray. But apparently she couldn't resist a jibe. "Given how brilliantly-organized the action was, and given the sentences that some people got, I'd say we're lucky that VAC could only get thirty people arrested."

Sara flinched. Holly leveled her gaze on Claudia. "I think we should be proud of those who did the June action."

Claudia tilted her head. "Oh, sure. But after what happened with the March action, with people getting shipped to Arizona and no one having a clue where anyone was or what was going on, it was obvious that VAC wasn't credible. You can't do federal protests and think everything is going to come out right just because your process is pure."

"It's a tough call," I said. "Everyone wanted to stop the MX test, but people were exhausted by the March action."

Daniel folded his arms across his chest. "Surely we're more committed than that," he said. "If we're unwilling to make sacrifices, how can we expect to stop the arms race?"

GLOBAL ACTION

Mobilization for Survival Conference Sets 1984 Program

...for the Mobilization for Survival Conference...

1984 ACTIVISTS CALENDAR

Spring

Summer

Fall

West Coast Mob Affiliates Meeting Regularly

Strengthening Direct Action Network

CAMPAIGNS

Nuclear Free Zone

First Strike Parade

Deadly Connections

Evaluation

NUCLEAR FREE

Following International Day, Direct Action continued
devoting pages to international activist news.

"I hate to disillusion you," Claudia muttered, "but a bunch of anarchists running around on an Air Force base isn't going to stop the arms race."

Mort had been working in silence, but now he laughed caustically. "No more than a bunch of White middle-class peace groups holding coordinated protests on the Solstice. I hope no one is proposing another International Day for next Summer before we evaluate this one."

Holly sighed, as if to say she'd heard it all before. But Daniel turned to face Mort. "If we waited for some people to finish evaluating," he said dryly, "we'd still be debating whether to do International Day *this* year."

"Well, we need some debate," Mort said. "Are we going to remain a ghettoized peace movement, or are we going to build a coalition that might actually change something?"

Daniel rolled his eyes. "This idealization of coalitions, of trying to link existing groups, ignores the fact that there are millions of people who are opposed to militarism, but aren't involved in any group. The old forms don't attract them. They're waiting for a new paradigm."

"New paradigms," Mort sputtered. "What scares people about building a local coalition is, we would have to sit in a meeting with people who aren't exactly like us. That's the challenge, not sharing new-age psychobabble with people halfway around the world."

Daniel started to respond, but Holly cleared her throat and rattled the stack of production notes she was holding. "I need to get going," she said sharply. She gestured toward Sara and me. "Are you two clear on what needs to get done tonight?"

Sara looked at me and nodded uncertainly.

"We've got it," I told Holly. I followed her out onto the porch. Her face was blank, as if she had dissociated from the turmoil inside.

I put my arm around her shoulders. "Are you doing okay? You want me to walk you partway home?"

"No, I'll be fine. I just can't stand it in there." She shook her head and looked at me sadly. "I'll see you at home tonight. Don't stay too late. It's our last night together."

Our last night. I hadn't thought of it that way. "I won't stay past ten," I said.

She gave me a quick kiss and started away, then suddenly turned back. "Don't forget to call Tai about his photos of the blockade!"

"I already talked to him. Have a good walk home."

When I went back inside, the air felt stagnant. I walked across the room and opened a window. Of course I agreed with Mort and Claudia, politically. But did they have to drive such a sharp wedge between themselves and the International Day crowd? With Claudia promoting the Strategy Proposal for the LAG Congress, you'd think she might be a bit more diplomatic in her criticisms. Then again, having resigned from the staff, maybe she didn't give a damn anymore.

And Mort seemed out of touch. He'd just been heaping scorn on Holly's project. Now he came over to tell me he was leaving. "Let's get together for a beer later this week," he said like nothing had happened.

"I don't think that will work," I said. "I've got an appointment at Santa Rita."

"Oh, right," he said, patting me on the shoulder. "Hope it goes well. Give me a call when you get out."

When I get out? That seemed like a long way off. And I wasn't that excited about hanging out with him, anyway. People have feelings, I felt like saying. Don't you get it?

But I wasn't up for tackling it right then. "I'll talk to you next weekend," I said as he headed out.

I tried to get back to layout, but Claudia corralled me before she left. "Is the Strategy Proposal on page one?"

"Yeah," I said. "It's under my Congress story." I knew she wanted top billing, but I didn't think that was smart. "A lot of people see the Strategy Proposal as delaying decisions on actions for next year. If we put it first, people will say it's a conspiracy to stifle dissent."

"They'll get over it."

Unlikely, I wanted to say. The Congress was shaping up as a royal mess. Even among the action-faction, there was no consensus on *which* actions to call. Vandenberg? Livermore? Diablo Canyon? An urban focus on military corporations?

And hovering over the whole tableau was the likelihood that the Democratic Convention was going to be in San Francisco the following Summer. What a jumble.

In that sense, the Strategy Proposal was the answer — step back, take stock, and regroup. But the way Claudia put it, the proposal seemed more like punishment than perspective.



Direct Action #8, July 1983

Luckily for my mood, as Claudia took off, Jenny and Angie returned, bringing Raoul with them. "Let's have some music," Raoul called out. "How can anyone work in this oppressive silence?" He pulled a reggae tape out of his pocket and popped it into the boombox, cranking up the bass till the speakers started rattling. "That's more like it. Now I can think."

Angie came over and gave me a warm hug. Her hair was done in a bunch of small braids that fell over my arm. "Aren't you done yet?" she said as she stepped back. "What have you been doing, standing around talking the whole time?"

"Not far from the truth," I said.

Angie sat down on the floor in front of her layout board. She was doing the front page, with my Congress story at the top.

"Think you'll be at the Congress?" I asked her.

"No," she said. She straightened the headline, eyed it for a moment, then pasted it into place. "I'm going backpacking up at Point Reyes. I'll be gone all that week."

I imagined her hiking across the coastal foothills, swimming in the ocean, sitting beside a secluded campfire. It certainly sounded more appealing than two days of meetings.

Jenny set her Bay Area pages down opposite Angie. "Shouldn't we say something about the October protests? We already consensd to do an action." Jenny glanced across the table at Raoul, then back at me. "Maybe we could talk about street actions in the financial district."

"I don't know if we should be so specific," I said. "Some people want to stay focused on Livermore. It's up to the Congress to decide where the October demo will be."

Raoul sat down in a folding chair and eyed me warily. "San Francisco is where we should be. A lot of people I know have been talking about a roving protest of military corporations in San Francisco, with street theater and autonomous CD actions. It's perfect for the Euromissiles demo."

I folded my arms across my chest and nodded. "I think we can float the proposal in the paper as long as it doesn't sound like a free-for-all. Melissa and Nathaniel will flip if they picture a mob running through downtown."

Raoul rocked back in his chair. "They're worried about losing control. In the City, it's harder for the pacifists to enforce their code of discipline, where everyone meekly submits to mass arrest."

"Well, if you put it like that, I guarantee it'll never get consensd," I said. "You have to emphasize that it's an AG-based action, and connect it to corporations that are developing the weapons that Livermore Lab designs. If you frame it right, people might go for it."

He squinted at me. Then a slow smile spread across his face. "Sure, we'll call it a street festival. It's the week before Halloween. People can come in costumes. We'll make it sound like a real fun action to bring your kids to."

I wasn't sure how serious he was, but I needed to get some work done on the paper. Raoul clicked the reggae tape off. "Mort left a Nigerian tape that's really good," I said.

"I want to put on this rap mix I made." For once, I didn't mind being one-upped by Raoul. I'd been wanting to get some rap records. Maybe I could make a copy of his tape.

We worked through the hip-hop mix, the Nigerian tape, and a couple more. By ten, most people were wrapping up. Sara, Angie, and I surveyed the progress: every page started, but a lot of loose ends. The two of them agreed to come back and help Holly the next morning, and Raoul volunteered to drive the finished boards to the printer.

They'd get it done, I knew. Still, it felt odd to walk away. It was the first time that I hadn't been present at the end of production.

"Want a ride home?" Jenny asked as we descended the front stairs.

"No, thanks. I want to enjoy the walk. It'll be my last for a few days."

"That's right," Jenny said. "You're going to Santa Rita tomorrow, aren't you?" She gave me a quick, tight hug. "I hope it goes okay."

"Thanks," I said, surprised not to have thought about jail for the past three hours. Score one for the magazine.

Global Resistance

Conflict in the Middle East : The U.S. Neither Neutral Nor Peacekeepers

Global Resistance

The U.S. in Lebanon

Support for Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 has been a major factor in the U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East. The U.S. has provided military and financial aid to Israel, and has been a vocal supporter of its actions. This support has been justified by the U.S. as necessary to maintain peace in the region and to protect its own interests. However, many critics argue that the U.S. is taking sides in a conflict that is fundamentally about the rights of the Palestinian people. They claim that the U.S. is using its power to maintain a system of oppression and that it is responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people.

On the Subject of Israel's War in the Middle East

The U.S. has been a major force in the Middle East for many years. It has provided military and financial aid to Israel, and has been a vocal supporter of its actions. This support has been justified by the U.S. as necessary to maintain peace in the region and to protect its own interests. However, many critics argue that the U.S. is taking sides in a conflict that is fundamentally about the rights of the Palestinian people. They claim that the U.S. is using its power to maintain a system of oppression and that it is responsible for the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The Politics of American Middle Eastern Policy

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Supporting Israel's Invasion of Lebanon

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What Is the Conflict with Syria?

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What's Happening in Lebanon

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A Brief History of Lebanon

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Checklist for Leaders of Nations in 1983

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What Can You Do?

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In addition to activist news, *Direct Action* began carrying news and analysis on global hot-spots such as the Middle East.

I moved toward Raoul, but he fended off a hug by thrusting out his big hand to shake. "Good luck," he said. "Let's catch an A's game after you get out." He seemed unusually serious, and the reality of the next day started to hit me.

I looked at Angie, unsure what to say. She looked up at me soberly. "Remember — don't bend over in the shower!"

We all burst out laughing. Angie gave me a long hug. "Think of me," I said as we parted.

On the walk home, I tried to appreciate the shadowy trees and unkempt lawns along Dana Street. But my mind was shackled to jail. In twelve hours, I would be behind bars. What a waste. As if I'm a menace to society.

Holly was still up when I got home, seated at the table. She turned in her chair as I closed the door. Her face was somber. "Caroline is quitting."

"Quitting?"

She nodded slowly. "I just got done talking to her. She's turning in her resignation tomorrow night at Coordinating Council."

I dropped my daypack. "What a shame."

"She's just burned out," Holly said. Tears pooled in her eyes. I knelt next to her and put my arms around her. Was it the first time I had ever seen her cry? "Caroline was my best friend in LAG," she said. "It was hard enough when she pulled away in jail, but now I might never see her again...."

I groped for something to say. "Maybe she'll reconsider." But I didn't believe it myself. Still, it baffled me. How could anyone in such a powerful position — staffperson for the whole group — give it up? Take a sabbatical, or ask for different responsibilities. But why quit?

"It'll really be different in the office without Caroline and Claudia," I said.

"It's hard to imagine it without Caroline." She shook her head. "Maybe Jenny will pick up the slack. But it won't be the same."

For a moment, I was lost in Holly's sadness, and in the surprise of Caroline resigning. What would it mean for LAG to lose another of its key people?

But nothing could distract me long from Santa Rita. Ten hours. The clock was ticking, louder and louder. Would I be able to sleep tonight? What kind of dreams would I have? What time did I have to be up? My ride was coming at 6:30 a.m. Maybe I could sleep till 6:10. No, can't be late for jail. 6:00.

Holly looked at me curiously. "Are you okay?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah, I guess. Just thinking about what time I have to wake up."

"Too soon, probably," she said. "Let's go to bed." We stood up. She led the way down the hall.

In the bedroom, Holly lit three candles. I put on a tape of Renaissance lute music. The rippling notes wove a delicate tapestry around us. We lay down side by side. Our legs intertwined, and we gazed at each other. Holly brushed a strand of hair off her face. A slight smile rested on her lips. I'll be here for you, her eyes seemed to radiate. I'll hold you in my heart.

I looked at her steadily, trying silently to convey that my love would be unchanged by our time apart. But I had a hard time sustaining my focus. Not that I doubted I would still love Holly after jail. But I had a hard time envisaging a time beyond jail. Santa Rita was a looming vortex — time would whirl round and round, and only by chance might I someday be flung up on the far side.

Gradually Holly drew me away from my brooding. Making love was sweet, tinged with the sadness of parting. Afterwards we lay quietly, holding each other, not speaking a word. I ran my hand up the outside of her thigh, up her back, coming to rest on her neck, beneath her thick hair.

I held her to me, closed my eyes, and tried to memorize the feeling. Finally she faded off to sleep. I wished I could do the same, but my mind wouldn't let go of these last moments of freedom. I reached over and put on a Bach Cantata, took a toke off my pipe, and rolled over onto my back. I'd served time in a warehouse, a gymnasium, and a circus tent. At Concord, I'd even been in a cell-block, but it was protesters-only. This time I was going to jail.

Monday, July 25, 1983

MORT DROVE Lyle and me out to Santa Rita early Monday morning. We were quiet as we swung onto the freeway outside of Berkeley. Mort put on a South African jazz tape. My last music until I get out, I thought. I had the same album at home, and usually I loved it. But now the saxophones set me slightly on edge.

Lyle rolled his window partway down, and a welcome gust of fresh air hit my face. I didn't know Lyle very well. He was a friend of Mort's from Overthrow Cluster and came to pinball sometimes, but he was pretty reserved. Still, he seemed like a solid person, someone I could count on. He had three days left to serve, so I'd have one day by myself at the end unless we hooked up with Thad, the other protester serving time that week.

As we started through the Caldecott Tunnel, I fingered my personal library. Each entering inmate was entitled to three books. Lyle was taking action novels, to have something to barter for cigarettes or shampoo. But I wanted to use the time productively. After much inner debate, I chose a tome on Elizabethan drama to get me back on track with my history studies; a collection of essays by Lenin to sharpen my political perception; and in case the other two seemed too ponderous, *The Trial* by Kafka.

We passed out of the hills into the Livermore Valley and turned off the highway onto the jail access road. The sparse grass of the sprawling grounds was withered to a pale yellow, stretching toward the distant hills. Several perimeters of razor wire surrounded the core compound like cheap necklaces. Behind them were rows of dilapidated barracks.

We pulled into the visitor's lot in front of the concrete command post. In our anxiety to be punctual, we wound up getting there twenty minutes early. Of course they made us wait — no early admittance. We talked a little, but the conversation kept dying.

Finally at 8 a.m. the gate swung open. We bid adieu to Mort, stepped through the portal, and walked down a fifty foot open-air corridor. Chain-link fence formed the walls, with tightly-bunched coils of razor wire as the ceiling. Forget escaping from this sidewalk.

The guards at the front desk studied our IDs, double-checked our prints to make sure we weren't impostors, and confiscated our loose change, keys, pens, and paper. Once they checked our books for drugs and weapons, though, they handed them back.

A guard ushered us down a moldy concrete tunnel to a holding tank. As we stepped in, the steel gate slammed behind us, echoing off the walls.

The cell was fifteen feet square and ringed with locker-room benches. Urine and lysol mingled in the stale air. The shiny white walls had aged to a gray-yellow. A tiny slit window, permanently sealed, allowed a glimpse of a gravel lot and a plain white wall beyond it.

Another prisoner was placed in with us, a middle-aged man who greeted us in Spanish. Lyle returned the greeting. A minute or two later, the guard came and led the guy away. I wondered if we'd see him again on the inside. And whether he'd act like he knew us or not.

A while later, a young White guy was stuck in with us. He was clearly drunk, and with no prompting gave us a complete confession — he'd been busted trying to enter a freeway via the exit ramp. He seemed to plead for sympathy or absolution, but we didn't have much of either to offer.

A stumpy guard strutted by. He recognized us as protesters, and took a little jab. "You guys had it easy before, out in the tents. Now you're going to see what jail is really like."

"I hope so," I answered. "I'm sure it'll be educational."

He harumphed. "I'm sure it will be."

We were left sitting for what seemed like several hours. Finally, a guard fetched me, Lyle, and four men from other holding cells. I was glad to be on with the process.

We were led to the far end of the dank hallway. The other four prisoners were Black. None of them was talking. Lyle and I kept quiet, too.

The guard led us around a corner to a big roll-up window, where we received our jail garb. I had expected some sort of uniform or jumpsuit, but what I got looked suspiciously like what I was taking off — faded blue jeans and a T-shirt. One guy got a shirt stamped "Santa Rita," but mine was plain gray.

As we started to undress, several new guards arrived. I braced for a search, but they didn't even bother to pat us down. We got to keep our own socks and

underwear, and no one seemed to notice that I was wearing two pair of each. I pulled on the jeans, which were a few sizes too big. I tried to tuck in my T-shirt to pad them out, but it was too small to stay tucked.

The worst part was losing my tennis shoes. I'd assumed we'd keep our own shoes, and had stuffed a couple of pair of earplugs into the toes. But now I was losing the shoes altogether. And for real junk. Although some guys got what looked like old bowling shoes, Lyle and I each got a pair of red plastic sandals.

Two guards lined us up and led us out a heavy metal door. "This way, gentlemen," one said, leading us up a gravel road. "Stay in line."

Gentlemen, he called us, as he treated us like errant children.

As we passed a compact concrete building off to the left, one of the other prisoners said, "That's Graystone." I recognized the name — the high-security solitary confinement stronghold.

A hundred feet up the road we approached a chain-link gate monitored by a guard booth. Up to that moment, I had been feeling more curious than apprehensive. As we filed past the booth, I saw several guards eyeing us like we were cattle being driven to slaughter. A chill ran through me. I felt vulnerable, naked to their power.

Inside the gate, a two-lane road stretched for about four blocks, where it seemed to dead end at a tall fence. To the left were four squat buildings made of cinder block and corrugated metal, which one of our comrades identified as the cafeteria, shower, weight room, and infirmary. A long row of barracks lined the right side of the road. Each cluster of three barracks was completely encased inside rusty chain-link grating.

The grating looked familiar. Where had I seen it before? Seventh grade gym class, of course. Seventh grade, when I changed schools and was the youngest kid at a strange junior high.

We were walking quickly, and a sweat broke on my forehead. I used my shirttail to wipe it off. I glanced over at Lyle, but he seemed lost in his own thoughts.

Our first stop was the commissary, where we got our check-in supplies. The area teemed with men, some buying stuff, others hustling or bartering. While we waited in the commissary line, I sensed the other inmates checking us out, which felt a little intimidating. I looked around at the fifty or so men in the vicinity. What stood out was the racial demographics. Three-quarters were Black. Most of the rest seemed White or Latino, with one or two Native Americans. Asian Americans were absent, which seemed ironic, given the compound's origins as a World War II interment camp for Japanese Americans.

Despite standing next to Lyle, I felt isolated. I was not only a White guy in a mainly Black neighborhood, but when I thought about the books I had brought, I got the feeling I wasn't exactly going to blend in with the Whites, either.

A short Latino man in a muscle shirt walked by and looked at us inquisitively. "You guys protesters?"

"Yeah, from the Livermore blockade," I told him, watching for his response. He nodded noncommittally and walked away.

We got our check-in supplies: a toothbrush, a comb, a motel-sized bar of soap, a pencil stub, a few sheets of paper, and two stamped envelopes. No sooner had Lyle and I received this bounty than we were accosted by an inmate beseeching us to give him the paper and envelopes. I wanted the paper, but gave him the envelopes. Another guy hit us up for soap, but I wanted to keep what I had. He went away grumbling over his shoulder.

Lyle and I were led back to the first barracks inside the fence, a nearly-empty transitional dorm. I was glad to be isolated. It seemed safe, outside the main social scene, and I hoped we'd just be left in there for the duration of our sentence. We staked out a couple of cots in the back. The beds had sheets, but no blankets. I knew from our time in the tents how cold it could get at night out here in the valley. We went outside and asked a guard, who informed us that we had received our blankets on the way in.

"No, we didn't get any," Lyle said.

"Well, then you blew it, gentlemen," he said. When we protested, he finally told us to check with the shift officer back at the booth.

The cage around our barracks wasn't locked, so we walked back out and told the gate officer our story. He looked bored. "Not much I can do," he said.

I turned away. "Jesus," I muttered, prepared to spend four nights freezing rather than beg. Lyle persisted, though, and the guard finally relented. He stepped outside his booth and pointed his finger like a pistol. "See that truck just outside the gate? There's a laundry cart right behind it. Run down there and get one blanket apiece."

I looked at him, then at Lyle. How stupid did he think we were? Was this some kind of rookie hazing? Were they going to nab us on escape charges and throw us into Graystone?

The guard looked annoyed at our hesitation. "The gate isn't going to close! Go on, hurry up." His irritation seemed so sincere that Lyle and I went for it. The cart was where he had said it would be. We grabbed a blanket each and hustled back to the gate. As we passed the guard booth, the officer didn't even look up.

We went back into the barracks. As we lay on our cots talking, two Black inmates, one tall and one stocky, came in and looked around. The stocky guy, who had dark, glistening skin, gave us the once-over and apparently decided we weren't a problem. They shoved a bunk bed out into the center of the room. The stocky guy went to watch the door, while the tall guy clambered atop the bunk and reached up into a light fixture. He pulled down a paper bag, took something out, and restashed the rest. They shoved the bunk back into place and exited, never speaking a word to us.

We were silent for a moment, making sure they weren't going to return. "Phew," Lyle finally said. "So that's how they do it."

"Could be useful knowledge," I said with a quick laugh. "Maybe we should stash our books for future blockaders."

We settled in to read for a while, till we were called to dinner by a trustee, a longer-term inmate who was something like a Resident Assistant for the barracks. He pointed us toward the cafeteria. "Are you guys blockaders?"

His tone was friendly, and I felt my body relax a notch. "Yeah, we were busted in June and have some time left to serve."

"That's good," he said with a trace of an accent. "I'm glad somebody is protesting."

As we followed him out toward the mess hall, I wondered whether he was Latino. I frowned. Why did it matter? Every person we passed, I found myself pigeonholing into a racial group. I wondered how much was the lack of other stimuli, and how much was due to my being in the minority.

The cafeteria, with a concrete floor and metal ceiling, looked like the mess hall at Boy Scout camp. Only here, everything was bolted down. The tables and benches were stainless steel, as were the food trays and the serving counters. At best there would have been a lot of clattering, but everyone seemed to take special joy in slamming metal against metal. Over this incessant racket, conversations were conducted in shouts, punctuated by fists pounding on the resonant tables.

We were the tail end of the chow line, although a few other guys straggled in. Some of them cut in front of us, but what could we do? New guys are at the bottom of the pecking order.

The food was served with great panache. The dispensary window was so low that we couldn't see the workers' faces. Two plastic-gloved hands would slam a partitioned tray on the counter. Big metal spoons splatted gobs of food onto the tray. A carton of milk and an apple were hand-dropped, and the ensemble was shoved out at the eager diner.

Lyle and I made our way to an empty stretch of table. We sat on opposite sides, and could barely hear each other.

Most of the inmates sat in racially segregated clusters. Near us, a table of Blacks and another of Chicanos were exchanging loud put-downs. Some of the guys were laughing, but others looked more aggravated. For once, I was glad there were plenty of guards around.

Here and there, I noticed a man eating alone. One guy stared blankly into space, but most of the solitaries kept their heads down. Probably to avoid accidental eye contact, I figured. I glanced appreciatively at Lyle, glad for his company.

The food was short on taste, but at least it was filling, in marked contrast to the National Guard fare in the tents. Still, all the clanging metal didn't make

me want to linger. Lyle and I ate quickly. We tossed our trays into a bin, and under the watchful eyes of two guards returned our silverware.

We went back to our barracks, where we got a rude surprise. While we ate dinner, someone had pilfered our soap, combs, and toothbrushes, Lyle's sci-fi novels, and my spare socks.

Lyle seemed to take it in stride, but I felt rattled. Only my obscure taste had kept my books from being swiped, too. Was it the druggies? The guards? Surely not the trustee...

I let Lyle borrow Kafka, and we agreed we'd each carry one book with us at all times.

A bit later, our trustee came and told us we were being moved down to barracks number four. So much for our private barracks. We gathered our blankets and our scant supplies and followed the trustee down the road. At least we were being kept together. At the second-to-last complex, a guard unlocked the rusted metal grating and ushered us into our new home.

As we walked through the door, Lyle pointed to a tattered, hand-lettered sign: "No stealing!"

We had entered the barracks near the rear. The building was about a hundred feet long by thirty feet wide, with walls twelve feet high. A ring of windows which appeared to have no glass lined the top two feet of the walls. The walls and ceiling were painted in a dark green that reminded me of football bleachers.

Three steel picnic tables were bolted to the floor in the rear. Several guys playing dominoes barely glanced up at us. Beyond them, a wide opening in the rear wall led to a toilet room.

Arrayed along the two long walls were about twenty-five bunk beds. Between each bunk was a wardrobe cabinet. Across from the door, one cabinet stood open and glistened with shiny color. It took a moment for me to realize the wardrobe was lined with centerfold pin-ups.

Thad, the other protester we had heard about, came back to say hello. He was a short, thin White man around twenty-five years old. Lyle knew Thad a little, and I vaguely recognized him. He wasn't real friendly, and didn't seem thrilled when Lyle and I secured top bunks near his. I was surprised at first, then realized that he might have deliberately come to jail alone, as some sort of personal challenge. We might be spoiling his solo experience.

As I set my books on my bunk, I noticed several other inmates checking us out. Were we intruders, interlopers? Or a welcome distraction, a curiosity? Gradually, the others turned back to their own affairs.

Our new trustee, a Black guy about thirty, filled us in on a few details about barracks life. He also told us that we wouldn't get a work assignment, since we were in for such a short time.

A work assignment. I hadn't even considered that. I might have been put on a chain gang. I wondered if other inmates would resent our not having to work.

The trustee returned to watch the TV that was blaring in the front of the barracks. I'd been dimly aware of it before, but only then did I tune in to what people were watching: "Jeopardy." Twenty inmates sitting on a semicircle of cots were trying to outguess the TV contestants, without much luck. Not that I could do any better. The capital of Assyria? Got me. But there was something comforting about the familiar patter.

Lyle and I talked with Thad for a while, who told us that he hadn't had very many hassles in the two days he'd been in, and had gotten to know a few people. Thad was doing time for the Good Friday action, and had six days left to serve, so he'd be around a day longer than I would. That was a relief. Even if he wasn't overjoyed at my presence, at least I wouldn't be totally alone after Lyle left.

The barracks were lit by two rows of bare lightbulbs screwed into the twelve-foot roof. Some were burned out, but I was lucky to have one over my bunk, near enough to read by.

I stretched out on my back and opened the Elizabethan drama book. It was hard to tune out the TV, let alone the game table in the back of the barracks, where they were playing high-impact dominoes. No one slid their pieces into position — they slammed them onto the metal tabletop, interspersed with cursing and arguing, mainly in Spanish.

I turned onto my side and angled to catch the light better. I was facing the front of the barracks, and I looked past my book to see the twenty or so guys gathered on a ring of army cots watching TV. "Jeopardy" was over, replaced by a cop show. That my roommates would choose an action show didn't surprise me. But they seemed to be cheering for the wise-cracking cops. I guess everyone wants to back a winner.

One Black guy near the TV turned and looked back in my direction. I looked back at my book, but not soon enough. The guy stood up and made his way back toward my bunk. He was about my height, with short hair and an odd tilt to his head. I concentrated on my book, but he came right up to the side of my bunk. I leaned up on one elbow and met his eyes, which seemed sullen. He looked slowly up at the lightbulb, then back at me.

My chest tightened. Was a lightbulb thirty feet from the TV really causing a problem? Or was he just irritated that I was trying to read? Finally, without a word, he walked away. I felt relieved.

But a moment later he returned holding a long stick. He stopped next to my bunk and glared up at me. Was this for real? I put down my book, keeping my eyes on the stick. Lyle and Thad were somewhere else. I was alone. The guy gestured toward the light with the stick. I got the message. But somehow I knew I couldn't give in. I had to draw the line somewhere. Might as well be here. Anyway, if he tries to hit me, he has a bad angle. I stared back at him. If he wants the light off, let him climb up the next bunk and unscrew it himself.

He glowered at me, then jabbed at the light with the stick. I flinched, then

realized the stick had a rubber cup on the end, which he used to unscrew the bulb. He stared at me again, apparently daring me to screw it back in.

I wanted to keep reading. Without the light it was impossible. I searched for some response, but I knew whose turf I was on. I took a deep breath, then looked at the lightbulb and shook my head, trying to convey my aggravation. But I made no move to screw it back in. I wasn't going to push my luck that far.

Apparently satisfied, the guy put the stick down and swaggered back to his cop show. I shoved my book aside and scowled. Gradually I realized other people had been watching the drama. Damn. Had our run-in been private, that might be the end of it. But a public confrontation, that was different. What if the guy pushed it further? What if I became a target to prove his toughness?

What a great start. One day, one enemy. Maybe he had a short attention span, and would forget it by the next day.

Soon after, the guards ordered everyone onto their bunks for bed-check. I felt a sense of relief as they went through and counted us. Did guards stay in the barracks all night? I wished they would.

As they finished their count, I reflected on my chronic end-of-day-malaise in the tents. Surprisingly, I hadn't even considered that it would return here. Tension, yes. But depression? So far, the drama of the day's events was keeping me from sinking too low. Besides, even if I still had several days to serve, I felt a distinct sense of accomplishment as the lights went down. I'd made it through my first day in jail. One down, three to go.

Tuesday, July 26, 1983

I SLEPT RIGHT through breakfast. Gummy oatmeal and cold toast couldn't match the extra hour of sleep I got after my fifty snoring roommates had gone off to eat.

I whiled away the morning reading and talking with Lyle and Thad. One inmate approached us to talk, but he wasn't very lucid, and we didn't try to detain him when he wandered away.

The phones were available any time the barracks were unlocked. But with all the cutting in line, it looked hopeless. And after the lightbulb incident, I didn't feel like another run-in.

I didn't really feel like talking with anyone on the outside, anyway. Holly and I had been distant enough when we were in the tents. This would feel even more remote. How could she or anyone on the outside begin to grasp where I was? They'd probably try to cheer me up. No, thanks. Being in jail seemed easier to handle if I wasn't reminded of the outside world.

The morning droned on. I'd almost reached the chapter on Shakespeare in

my Elizabethan volume, which felt like the payoff, the climax of the book. But my attention was slacking as the day grew warmer.

Lunchtime finally rolled around. Everyone was sent back to their barracks, and we were summoned one compound at a time. Thad was ahead of Lyle and me, talking to another inmate. We joined the end of the line. But before we made it to the front, the next barracks came filing in. Half the guys cut in ahead of Lyle and me, scarcely acknowledging our presence. Oh well, there was plenty of food, and we'll get there eventually. Assuming yet another barracks didn't arrive before we got served.

A few more people cut in front of us. Where do you set the limit? Speaking up risked a fight. Was it worth a showdown?

But I remembered getting hazed in junior high, the same nonsense around lunch-line cuts, and how it didn't stop till I fought one of the instigators. Did I have to do that here? If I were around longer, probably. Maybe with a four-day sentence, I could sidestep it.

Luckily, the line moved quickly, and we got our food without further ado. We made our way over to our familiar table and ate in noisy peace.

Later that afternoon, Lyle and I were sitting by the road in front of our compound, when a White guy from our barracks approached us. "I'm Gabe," he said. "I could tell you guys were blockaders. I met another blockader a couple of weeks ago."

Gabe reminded me of street people I knew on Telegraph Avenue, but harder-edged. He was about thirty-five, I guessed, though his weathered face looked older. He was shorter than me, but his arms were more muscular, and were ringed with tattoos, professional and homemade. He readily confessed to having been in and out of jail all his adult life, for theft, marijuana dealing, or vagrancy. "I'm a public nuisance, you could say," he said with a smile.

I liked him right off. For his part, he seemed genuinely interested in why protesters would voluntarily go to jail. "Jail is okay," he said. "I've been through worse. But why would someone with a home and a job want to be here?"

I laughed. Lyle tilted his head back. "I wouldn't exactly say that we *want* to come here," he said. "We did the protest to draw attention to Livermore Weapons Lab."

That's right, I remembered. That's why I'm here. I knew there was some bigger reason than getting closure on my previous incarceration.

Lyle asked Gabe when he was getting out.

"A little over three weeks. I left a car down in Hayward that almost works. If it hasn't been towed, I'm going to get it running and get the hell out of California."

"Where are you going to go?"

"I'm not sure. Depends on how much money I have for gas."

I asked where he was from. "Well, I've moved around a lot," he said.

"Never one place for long. I'm what they call a 'lumpen.'"

"A lumpen-proletariat?"

"Yeah, a lumpen. People like me, we never get a real job. We drift around, and finally wind up in the army or jail. Me, I'm too old for the army, so here I am." He shrugged. "At least there's regular meals."

There was something surreal about hearing this guy call himself a lumpen. "Have you read Marx?" I asked.

"No, not really," he told me. "I just heard some of the ideas."

I made a mental note to leave my Lenin essays behind with him. Our real bond, though, turned out to be music — specifically, Hank Williams. Somehow it came out that I was a folk singer, and he said he was, too. His repertoire was old country songs, and he sang me a few verses of Hank's "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry." He had a rusty, mournful voice, and a poignant way, at the end of a line, of flipping up into falsetto and letting it trail off.

I sang him a number I'd written called "The Minimum Wage," which was set to the tune of a Hank Williams song:

It's lousy pay, but it's for the best
I'm sure if it was legal they'd pay me less
Than the Minimum Wage, yeah the Minimum Wage
You learn time's money when you earn it at the Minimum Wage.

He applauded when I finished. "That's it, exactly," he said. "If you're a lumpen, you're lucky to get minimum wage."

When dinner rolled around, Thad joined Lyle and me in the line. Gabe stopped to talk with someone else, and said he'd catch up with us.

The line was short, but immediately, guys started cutting in front of us. I tried to ignore them and pretend I didn't care. But then the lightbulb guy stepped up. He eyed me callously, then cut in front of me in a way that felt personal. My throat tensed up, and I knew I had to say something. It wasn't the worst of situations, with Lyle and Thad right there and guards nearby. In fact, I sort of wished a guard would walk our way. I would welcome a little show of authority right now. But no such luck.

"What's up?" I said in a shaky voice.

"What's up with you?" the guy spat back. "Got a problem?"

"Oh, just getting hungry," I said, trying to keep it light. "But I'm sure there's plenty of food."

He started to respond, but then hesitated. Something behind me seemed to have caught his eye. I snuck a look around — Gabe had rejoined us, and was glaring at the guy. Was I ever glad to see him!

"Got something to say?" Gabe said to him in a level voice.

The lightbulb guy turned his back on us. I was happy to let the matter go. Maybe he'd learned his lesson and would lay off.

But Gabe was just getting warmed up. "What's the problem? You have something to say? You can say it to me, I'm right here." A couple of other Black

guys ahead of us turned around. Gabe's belligerence radiated in all directions.

Hey, it's all cool, let it go, I wanted to say to him. But maybe that would just aggravate him more. I looked at Lyle and Thad, who were staring at Gabe.

Luckily for us, the line was moving, and the lightbulb guy kept his back turned. The clatter of metal on metal made a long-distance argument impossible, and Gabe cooled off. But the whole situation had just gotten a lot more complex. It was hard enough having my own hassles, but now I was getting sucked into Gabe's. Who knew what past history he had with this guy? And now I was right in the middle of it.

The evening went quietly enough. I read for a while after dinner, but decided to unscrew the lightbulb on my own when the prime-time shows came on. I thought about going up to watch TV, but I still wasn't feeling confident about socializing. Maybe it was reserved seating. I stayed on my bunk.

Lyle and I talked a little, but that faded pretty quickly. He seemed absorbed in his own processes. I envied Thad, who seemed to have a knack for approaching other inmates. At the moment, he was off playing checkers.

At least there was enough light to write. I got out my pencil stub and paper and jotted down some notes. It seemed important to record my impressions while they were still fresh. Maybe someday I'd want to know what I was feeling. Bored, mainly. Like I'd never get to the end of the day, let alone get through two more.

At ten o'clock, the TV was turned off and the place settled in for the night. I pulled my army blanket snug. Two days down, two to go. I was surviving.

But the hardest part was still to come. Lyle was getting out the next day, and Thad didn't seem to want much to do with me. By mid-afternoon tomorrow, I would be on my own.

Wednesday, July 27, 1983

I SKIPPED BREAKFAST again and caught up on my sleep, which shortened the morning to a tolerable length. I'd had enough drama for a while, and turned to my Lenin essays. Maybe I'd develop a new revolutionary theory in prison. There was still time, if I thought fast.

The afternoon brought a special diversion — an Oakland A's baseball game on TV. Most of the guys spent the time outside anyway, but a few men stayed inside and watched.

I sat on the edge of a bunk, not saying much but sharing a few laughs with the other guys, especially a man named Eduardo. He was around forty, with thick arms and a missing front tooth. He kept making rude remarks about the TV announcers, peppering his jokes with Spanish idioms that I didn't understand but which still made me laugh.

During one commercial stretch he pulled out a photo of his kids to show

me. It was smudged and dog-eared, but he cradled it in his palm like it was the Mona Lisa. "There's Eric, and Donnalynn, and that's Laurita," he said, pointing to the youngest. "She's three now." The kids smiled shyly at the camera, and Eduardo beamed back at them.

I looked at Eduardo — on the streets of Oakland, I'd probably feel too intimidated to speak to him. Yet here he was, showing me his kids....

Eduardo had been busted a year earlier for stealing a car. "I had to get my family to Bakersfield. I didn't even want the stupid car, I just wanted to get them to my parent's place before I went to Reno for a job."

"What happened?"

"I got caught and did six months. Then I got picked up again on a probation violation in June and sent here for the Summer."

"Are your kids still in Bakersfield?"

"Yeah. That's where I'm going as soon as I get out of here and get the money together." He looked over his shoulder, then smiled gently. "If I have to, I'll hot-wire a car. I miss my kids."

I nodded. It made total sense. Who could fault him for those priorities?

A while later, Lyle came over to say goodbye. We shook hands. He seemed embarrassed to be leaving me behind, and told me to call him when I got out. "Maybe I'll see you at pinball on Friday night," he said.

"Yeah, maybe so," I said, although Friday night seemed half an eternity away. Lucky guy, to be leaving now.

I walked out to the road with him and bid him adieu. Despite meeting Gabe and Eduardo, I still felt isolated. Well, at least I know a couple of people to sit with in the cafeteria, I thought.

Outside, the day was waxing hot. Stuck in long jeans, I was sweating, and my body itched all over. Could I really go another day without a shower? Even without soap and shampoo, it would feel good. Why hadn't I done it while Lyle was still here? Going it alone felt like a risk. But I decided to scout out the bathhouse.

As I walked by, I saw two White guys from my barracks head inside. I hated to admit it, but that made it seem safer. I could act like I was with them. I made a quick decision to go for it.

Inside was a chintzy locker room, with a row of old benches in the front, and five showerheads attached to the bare concrete of the rear wall. I bundled up my clothes and stuck them in a corner where I could keep an eye on them — all I needed was someone stealing them.

I spotted a sliver of soap on the floor. No one was near. Quickly I bent over and scooped it up. I rationed it out over my body, and coaxed a little lather for my matted hair. It probably just made it gummier, but even the idea of a shampoo was satisfying. The other White guys finished up, and I hastened to keep pace. Not having a towel shortened the process, and in no time, I was back outside, feeling refreshed and proud of my daring.

My luck lasted about five minutes. As I headed back up the road toward the barracks, who did I run into but the lightbulb guy and his pals. He strode away from them and approached me. I sucked in my stomach, ready to roll with the punches.

"Going somewhere?" he drawled at me. I saw no point in walking on, so I stopped and stared at him.

His companions stopped about ten feet away. For the moment, it was just me and him. He looked me up and down. "Pretty quiet, aren't you, White boy?"

"Give me a break," I said, not wanting to provoke him, but determined not to back down.

"Ain't gonna be no break, Whitey," he said. He made no move toward me, but I braced just the same.

"You got a problem with me?" I said, trying to keep my voice steady.

"Looks like I do, don't it?"

His friends moved in closer. My stomach churned. Should I run? The idea galled me. No way I'm moving until I have to. Not till I take at least one punch.

At that moment, two guards walked out of the nearby weight room. Would they intervene? They looked our way with no special concern, but one of the guys near me mumbled something, and several of the group started to move away. The lightbulb guy smirked at me as he turned to follow the others. "Looks like you escaped this time, Whitey."

Given a reprieve, I sputtered angrily at him. "You're real tough, aren't you? Do I look like I'm scared of you?"

He glared at me. His companions looked at me like I was crazy, but the guards were watching now, and my tormentors moved on down the road.

My stomach was tight with anger — at him, but even more at myself. What a stupid thing to do, try to show him up in front of his friends. Now he practically had to do something. And I couldn't count on Gabe or the guards being around to rescue me every time.

Even worse, it felt like the pressure had beaten me down. I had played right into the whole jailhouse game. Before I came in, I saw clearly how the system thrives on infighting. So what happens? I'm here three days, and I get sucked in just like everyone else.

I deliberately went to dinner late, hoping to avoid the guy, and it worked. I didn't even see him in the cafeteria. Back in the barracks, I decided to leave the lightbulb unscrewed. Lenin would have to wait. Hopefully I'd survive tonight, and then tomorrow I'd be out.

I hung out with Gabe for a while, which I figured gave me a little cover. Then midway through the evening a bunch of guards came in and ordered all of us to stand at the foot of our bunks.

The guards had been taking a head count several times a day. It felt like a formality, but this time, they actually came up short. At first I thought it was

because Lyle had left, but then someone noticed that a shy, nerdy White guy who slept at the back of the barracks and kept to himself was missing.

The guards shut off the TV, the worst form of group punishment — as if it were our fault the guy was missing. We were ordered to sit on our own bunks, where we remained for the next hour. Well, at least I won't get hassled over the lightbulb, I thought.

Rumors circulated freely. Apparently the guy had been threatened by someone on his work crew, and it wasn't inconceivable that he had climbed over the inside fence and was hiding in the outlying field somewhere. Maybe he'd escaped altogether.

Finally we got word from the guards that the missing inmate had been discovered. The guy had been on laundry detail, and found a way to climb down an elevator shaft and hide. "He probably did it to get put in solitary," someone said. "At least he'll be away from whoever was threatening him."

Now there's a strategy, I thought. If I had more than one day to go, it might actually have appealed to me. But my getting out the next day was dependent on "good time." If I got put in solitary, they could keep me two more days. I'll take my chances with lightbulb dude.

By the time the head count was corrected, it was bedtime. As I lay back on my bunk, I felt a wave of relief. This was it! Get through tonight, and sometime tomorrow I would be out of here. For the first time in what seemed like weeks, I felt a lightness, almost a sense of release. My mind drifted forward to the next day. Up at the highway entrance was a McDonald's. That was probably the closest pay phone outside of the jail lobby. A plan formed in my mind. Get out, hike up the highway, eat a McBurger, and call Holly to tell her I was out and was catching a bus back to Berkeley.

One more day. I could make it.

Getting to sleep was hard. For the first time I thought of my friends back home. And one who wasn't at home — Karina. Sixty days in federal prison. How could she do it? I could barely do four without giving in to the pressure. I wondered when I'd see her again. Maybe I could write her a short letter the next morning, before I left. I turned phrases over in my mind as I drifted off to sleep.

Thursday, July 28, 1983

AFTER BREAKFAST the final morning, Gabe and I talked about my getting out. I felt awkward at being so excited, and it seemed to get him down.

Hanging out with Gabe was appealing, as a hedge against lightbulb dude. But our conversation was stilted. I got my copy of Lenin's essays and gave it to him. "I put my phone number in the front," I told him. "Call me after you get out." He said he would, then went off to use the toilet.

I paused beside my bunk, wondering what to do. At the front of the barracks, the TV was going full blast, and there were a dozen guys hanging out. Maybe I should join them. Even if the lightbulb guy showed up, he probably wouldn't pick a fight there.

Suddenly a shriek of pain tore through the barracks. A moment later, Gabe came staggering out of the toilet area. He clutched his face. Bright red blood streamed through his fingers.

Oh, shit. I took hold of the bunk bed for support. Someone must have jumped him. I stood frozen in my tracks as Gabe groped toward his bunk.

Two guards came running in. Their presence made me feel safer, and I started back toward Gabe. But the guards grabbed him and pulled him toward the door. Several more guards came running in. "Everyone stay where you are!" They ran into the toilet area. Who would they bring out? As if I needed to ask. Who did I know that might be laying for Gabe?

But the guards returned empty-handed. They looked at us accusingly. "What happened?" the head guard demanded.

"Maybe he fell and hit his head," someone ventured.

"Bullshit," the guard snarled.

No one was allowed to come or go. What if the loudspeaker called my name? I felt ashamed of my pettiness, and of having jumped to the conclusion that Gabe had been assaulted by Black guys. I was buying into the whole jail mentality.

Some of the other inmates talked about Gabe and what they thought might have happened. But none of it made any sense. I'd looked up as soon as Gabe screamed, and no one else came out of the toilet.

Our other barracks-mates were gradually allowed back in, and the story was retold. But no one could explain what had happened.

What with the blood and then my prejudiced reaction, I was feeling queasy, claustrophobic. Enough of this place. I needed some air.

Hoisting up my jeans, I headed out to walk on the road. Maybe my name would get called soon and I'd be done with this whole experience.

It was a balmy morning, with tufts of cloud occasionally hiding the sun. As I walked toward the gate, the main road was crowded with inmates. It felt odd to be walking through the crowd and not know anyone. I reversed my path and headed toward the deadend. I never had walked to the end of our little universe. Might as well see the whole place before I go.

I was still musing over what had happened to Gabe when I saw two Black guys walking directly toward me. I recognized them as companions of the lightbulb guy from the day before. I looked around for guards or some other support, but I'd gotten myself too far from the crowd. My gut tightened. Two on one — get ready.

One of them tilted his head back and squinted into the sun. "You're the guy who was hassling with Jerome yesterday."

No question who Jerome was. My mind raced. I spoke to the squinting guy, taking a step sideways so he wouldn't have to look into the sun. "Yeah, shoot, I didn't mean to be so hard on him. I'm sorry I called him a loser."

He flipped his hand as if dismissing my words. "It's bullshit," he said. The second guy nodded sharply.

They were right in my face. The second guy, who was shave-headed, poked his finger at me. "That stuff shouldn't happen. Jerome was whack, talking like that."

"What?"

"He had no reason to hassle you."

"Yeah," said his companion. "We know why you're here. It's cool. We told Jerome to chill."

I still couldn't quite believe what I was hearing, but I'd take any break I could get. "Tell Jerome I'm sorry for what I said, just the same. I won't see him, I'm leaving today."

"Good for you," the first guy said. "Where you from?"

"Berkeley."

"Cool. Maybe I'll see you at People's Park when I get out this Fall. I hang out there sometimes."

We shook hands, and they walked off. I smiled uncomfortably at my own assumptions — that because Jerome was Black, the other Black guys automatically took his side. That our lives outside would never intersect. And that I was the only one around here with any political awareness.

I went back to the barracks and looked around for Thad, just to have someone to tell the story to, but he was nowhere in sight. Shortly after, they called us for lunch, but even though the lightbulb hassle was resolved, I decided to stay behind and read. I'd save my appetite.

I was daydreaming about hamburgers when two guards escorted Gabe back into the barracks. He went to his bed and started to gather his stuff. He didn't notice me, so I climbed down from my bunk and went over to him.

"Hey — are you okay?"

He looked up, startled. Across his forehead was a heavy bandage with bloody edges. He cast a nervous glance at the guards, but they weren't paying attention. Then he cracked a sly smile. "Yeah, doing great," he whispered.

"They're putting me in the infirmary for a couple of days. You should have seen the babe who put this bandage on me!"

"So what happened?" I asked.

"I needed a break," he said. "I've done this before. You draw a little blood and they freak out. All I had to do was bang my head on the sink."

I looked at him dubiously, but he seemed so matter-of-fact that I finally believed him. "I gotta go now," he told me, reaching out to shake my hand.

"Thanks for the book. I'll call you when I get out. We'll sing together."

I waved to him as he and the guards left, then shuddered. Cracking his

head open to get himself put in the infirmary for a few days? Life must look pretty bleak if that's your option.

The barracks looked stark and cold. It was a beautiful day outside. I gathered my books and my note paper and headed outside. A spot of grass near the weight room beckoned. I stretched out under a scrawny maple tree. I thumbed Kafka, but I was saving him for the holding tanks on the way out. Seemed like a fitting transition back to reality. I tried to read about post-Shakespearean drama, but the subject seemed remote.

Lying there in the sun, I remembered nature, grass, trees. An ant crawled up my arm. Poor little guy. What crime had he committed?

I thought of my friends on the outside. Holly wondering when I was going to call. Hank plugging through the work week, counting the hours till Friday night. Mort buried in his computer. Angie — where was Angie, anyway? She might be sunning herself on a Marin County beach this very minute.

Their faces filtered by, especially precious now that I had been denied contact. I remembered how claustrophobic I had felt in the tents, how much I wanted to be alone. Now, it was the opposite. I couldn't wait to see people. Holly tonight. The pinball crowd tomorrow night. Even Coordinating Council seemed appealing.

A bird alighted in the little maple tree and looked me over. Amazing, I thought. It can leave whenever it wants. I wouldn't mind coming back as a bird in my next lifetime.

Yet look at me — coming and going in four days. I felt embarrassed as I thought of the other inmates, many serving six or twelve months. To them I must seem as flighty as a bird.

I studied the men milling about in the road and over in the playing field. What if I had to serve six months? Would I ever fit in? Or would I always feel like a privileged interloper?

The loudspeaker crackled. A short roster of names was called out — Jeff Harrison! At last! I grabbed my books and headed toward the gate. Farewell to all of you! I wished I'd spot someone I knew, to wish them well. But I didn't see anyone familiar.

Six of us were getting out. No one knew anyone else, but everyone seemed in good spirits. We followed the guards out the chain-link gate and back to the main building.

Inside, they gave us back our street clothes. My feet relaxed into their familiar tennis shoes. No one was watching us, and one of the men slipped his own shirt over the "Santa Rita" T-shirt he had been wearing. Lucky guy! I wished I had a souvenir.

A guard hollered for us to come down the hallway. Two of us were put into the first cell, the rest taken further up the block.

I looked around. There I was, back where I started, in a foul-smelling

concrete holding tank. I peered out the slit window and remembered the little gravel lot and the white wall beyond it.

My cellmate seemed to settle into his own thoughts. I sat down on the wooden bench, leaned back against the cool cinder block wall, and launched into *The Trial*.

Kafka wasted no time on preliminaries. Within a page, the hero, Joseph K, had been arrested. Or perhaps detained was a better word. The details of his charges — in fact, any information whatsoever on why he was under suspicion, or perhaps already indicted — were unavailable at the moment.

Down the hallway, bars slammed. Judging from the tone of the voices, it was someone getting out, not coming in. Maybe I'd be next. It was only around one o'clock. At this rate, I'd be home by three or four.

The stumpy guard I had seen on the way in came and unlocked our cell. I closed my book, but he beckoned only to the other guy, then re-locked the gate. As they headed down the hallway, the guard turned back to me. "Well, what do you think about jail now?"

I smiled with satisfaction. "It was a learning experience."

He scrunched his face and walked away. I got up and tried to look down the hall, but couldn't see much through the grating. I went across the cell and looked out the slit window. The front of a blue pickup truck glinted in the sun.

I reopened Kafka and read another twenty pages before the guards brought a surly White guy and stuck him in the cell with me. He was clearly on the way in, and didn't even speak. Fine with me, I thought. You stay over there, I'll stay over here.

Every once in a while my roommate would spit on the floor, then mutter something about killing someone who was somehow responsible for his presence at Santa Rita.

I concentrated on my book. K had finally found the courtroom, which was packed to overflowing with a fractious crowd. Shoved in front of the examining magistrate, K appeared on the verge of overturning the entire prosecution, when a disturbance in the back of the room threw the proceeding into disarray and ruined his prospects for justice.

My cellmate spat again. I sucked a breath through clenched teeth. Don't take it personally, I told myself. It isn't me he wants to kill. So far, anyway. Still, I was relieved when the guards came and led him away.

No voices came from the other cells. Was I alone down here? I got up and peered out the window again. The truck was gone. Just gravel and the white building, which cast a shadow toward me now.

I read uninterrupted for another hour. Wandering through the offices of the administration of justice, K suffered a fainting spell which the Clerk of Inquiries, despite K's ardent denials, clearly interpreted as a sign of guilt. Why had K even gone to the offices? His own misguided attempts to exculpate himself were bringing him to grief.

A trustee came down the hall pushing a dust mop. I started to ask what time it was, but having seen Kafka's hero reduced to begging petty functionaries for information and assistance, I caught myself. Asking the time was admitting that the wait was getting to me. Don't give in. It must be nearly five, and they had to process me out by then.

On I read, now buoyed by K's renewed dreams of exoneration, now downcast by the perpetual dashing of his hopes. A door opened and closed down the hallway, but I heard no footsteps. It was probably a changing of the guard shift. It must be five by now. What was going on? Were they leaving me here to rot, just because I called their stupid jail a learning experience?

Oh, come on. It's probably 4:30. Chill out. I walked over and checked the window. The shadows were lengthening, maybe ten feet from the wall now.

I tried to get comfortable on the bench and trudged through another chapter without hearing a sound. I was alone in the dungeon. Even if I got out now, I might have to call someone to come pick me up. The last bus to Oakland was at seven. Maybe they had till eight o'clock to process me out. Had I misunderstood? No, it was five. I was sure of it.

Weren't the cops arresting anyone? If they would just bring a drunk driver in, I could get their attention. Could they really have forgotten me? Why not? Who was checking? I shivered. I tried to lie on the bench — too narrow. I thought of my cellmate's spitting — no way I was going to lie on the floor. Damn it! I should yell. No. They want you to give in, admit you can't take it. How could they get so upset over one little remark? Were the guards really that insecure? Come on, bring someone in. I could at least ask what time it is. No! I'll read Kafka all night.

I forced myself to read another half-dozen pages. But my concentration was flagging. I paced the cell again. Out the slit window, long shadows stretched toward me. I was spiraling into another round of despair when the door down the hall creaked open. Feet shuffled my way. A guard? Ask him. No! I am not giving in.

The trustee I had seen earlier ambled down the corridor and stopped in front of my cell. He pulled out a set of keys and started trying them on the door. Alright! Finally! Come on, hurry up! At last one of the keys worked. As casually as I could, I strolled after him up the hall, through the door, past the sewer-like receiving area, and up to the processing window. I was about to burst — I made it! So what if I'd missed the bus. I'll call Holly. She could borrow someone's car and meet me up the road at McDonald's.

As I waited at the window, I didn't mention the delay, refusing to acknowledge their pettiness. All that mattered was that I was free.

The receptionist pushed some papers toward me. "Sign these."

I scribbled my name illegibly. As she took the forms back, her phone rang. One sheet, with my photograph attached, slipped onto the counter. My eyes lit on the mug shot — a souvenir! The receptionist was looking the other way. No

one else could see me. I slid the paper off the counter, folded it over, and stuffed it into my pocket. "Can I go?" I said in a thin voice.

She was already pushing a button. Two guards appeared from behind me. One of the guards stepped toward me. I froze. He reached out and opened the final door. I never looked back, bounding up a short flight of stairs and into the lobby. Free! I reeled at the possibilities. There's the exit — but there's a candy machine! Forget it, get out of here! Wait, there's a phone — call Holly. No, get out of this place! Call her from McDonald's.

I swung around and headed through the double doors, down the barbed-wire tunnel and into the parking area. I practically ran out to the access road, shooting a glance past the fences and barbed wire toward the jail barracks. The compound looked peaceful, almost quaint. Had I really just come from there? Or was that another lifetime?

I was steaming. Kafka felt sweaty in my hand. I peeled off my sweater without breaking stride. Get to McDonald's. I hadn't eaten a bite since yesterday. I didn't feel physically hungry. I just craved food.

I made my way up to the overpass and crossed the highway. Outside McDonald's I found a pay phone. I groped for a quarter. Three rings and she answered. "Holly — it's me. I finally got out! They left me in solitary all day because I smarted off to a guard. Can you come and get me?"

"Jeff? Is that you? Where are you?"

"I'm at the McDonald's up the road from the jail. I missed the last bus. Can you come and get me?"

"What happened to the bus?"

"The last one was at seven."

"But it's only five now."

"Really?" I peered up at the sun, still far above the horizon. Five o'clock. So that was their game. They held me exactly till the legal limit. Wouldn't you know it. They thought of everything...

"Jeff? Jeff?" Holly's faraway voice called me back. "Are you okay? Should I come get you? I'll borrow Daniel's car."

"No, no, it's okay," I assured her. "Nothing a hamburger won't cure."

Friday, August 5, 1983

GIVE JAIL credit for this — it rehabilitated my outlook on life.

After I got out, I felt as though I were rediscovering LAG, Berkeley, and Summertime. Best of all, rediscovering Holly. We made love my first two nights back, went for walks, ate late dinners together...

As I waited for her to get home from the office, I went out on the balcony and examined the pages of the new *Direct Action*. I remembered doing layout ages ago, before my sojourn at Santa Rita.

But flipping through the paper brought home what we had lived through in the past few months. Livermore, Vandenberg, International Day — it was all there, in print. It had really happened.

I paused, awaiting a wave of pride at our accomplishments. But something was off-kilter. I walked back inside and set the paper down, and paced around the room. All the stories about our glorious past basically drove home one point — except for a vague Euromissiles protest in October, LAG had no plans for the future.

The Congress was coming up fast, and positions were ossifying. Claudia and Craig, backed by Mort and a few others, were determined to ram through their Strategy Proposal and force LAG to stop in its tracks and do some long-term planning. Against this strategic consortium, a ragtag alliance of Livermore stalwarts, urban anarchists, suburban liberals, and religious pacifists were preparing an all-out defense of their right to call whatever protests they wanted, whenever they wanted.

It had all the ingredients of a disaster. The only hopeful note was that Artemis had agreed to facilitate the main session. If anyone could hold the Congress together, it was Artemis, with her twin powers of staying grounded and making people laugh.

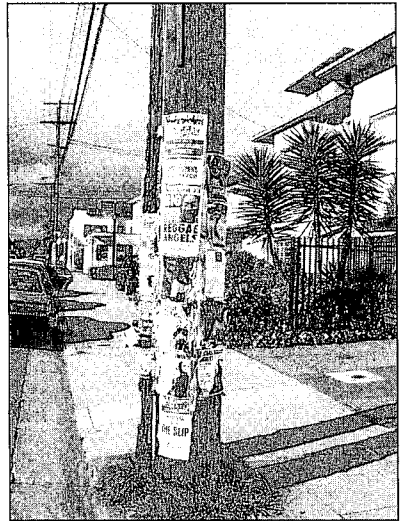
She asked me to co-facilitate, probably because I knew the personal tensions that were rumbling under the surface. But I planned to leave most of it to her. Maybe she could magically transform the convoluted conflicts into a coherent strategy built around the very actions people were dying to do.

Realistically, the best I hoped for was a truce that allowed some concrete decisions to be made without anyone storming out of the Congress. Going into August, even if half of our staff had resigned, no one had totally walked out on the group.

But the list of potential defectors was growing.

HOLLY GOT home about seven o'clock, and we decided to get pizza. I waited while she got a scarf, then led the way down the stairs and out into the twilight.

At the corner of Telegraph, we stopped for a minute to listen to a saxophonist playing a Thelonius Monk song. A small audience applauded as he



A typical phonepole in South Berkeley.

finished the number. Holly placed a dollar in his open case and we crossed the street.

At the next corner, a phonepole flyer caught my eye. "Look," I said. "It's BARF!" The second annual Berkeley Anti-Reagan Festival, sponsored by Berkeley Citizens' Action, was still a month away, but I had good cause to be excited. I scanned the list of performers and spotted my name in the fine print, right underneath Wavy Gravy, the Funky Nixons, and the Plutonium Players:

"Jeff Harrison, Satirical Folksinger."

"There you are," Holly said. "That makes it official."

"I better start finding more time to practice," I said. I looked over the poster again. Playing at BARF felt like being an official part of history, part of the Berkeley-led vanguard of public opinion that would soon sweep Reaganism into the dustbin of American politics. True, Reagan's popularity had risen slightly in recent months, but once the 1984 campaign started, runaway military spending and decimated social services would wash him right out of office.



A hand-pasted flyer for the October protests.

We went into Larry Blake's and got a half-sausage, half-vegetarian pizza. I was hoping we'd get a window seat, but we wound up in the back along a dark-paneled wall adorned with photos of Berkeley in the 1950s. Muddy Waters played from a speaker behind the bar.

As we ate, Holly updated me on the peace camp proposal that she was co-sponsoring. "Our latest idea is not an open-ended camp, but just a couple of months. That way we can see how many LAGers will really come out there, and whether we can open a dialog with Lab workers. If it works, we'll reopen later for a longer period."

Pitching a tent in the fields next to Livermore Lab didn't fire me with passion, and I didn't put much stock in trying to dialog with employees. But Holly's eyes shone so brightly as she talked about the peace camp that I almost wished I shared her vision.

"The Lab workers are human beings," she said. "They have their own hopes and fears. If we want to change what they're doing, we have to be able to speak to those hopes and fears."

After dinner, we walked up to campus. As we crossed Sproul Plaza, her voice turned somber. "Jeff, there's something important I need to tell you."

"Oh yeah?" My response felt flippant, and I added, "What's going on?"

She looked back at me sadly, reaching out to touch my arm. "I've decided to resign from the LAG staff."

"No..."

"Yes. I just can't handle the office any longer. Even if we do another International Day, I want to be out networking, not stuck in the office answering phones. I'm so much happier when I'm out meeting people."

We walked on in silence. Caroline's resignation had been a blow, but Holly? I felt like the office, my most intimate link to LAG, was withering away.

I looked at her in the light of a streetlamp, studying her face in profile as we stopped at a corner. Her chin was jutting out, and her gaze seemed fixed in the distance. I thought back to the day I unloaded my own frustrations on her. Did I share the blame for her quitting?

We crossed a wooden bridge over Strawberry Creek. "I have a job offer preparing an experimental diet for a woman who's recovering from cancer," Holly said. "I'll earn as much as LAG was paying me, and have the rest of my time free for activism. I could work on Direct Action, International Day, the peace camp..."

My head felt light, and I sat down on a bench to collect my thoughts. "But what about the office?" I said. "You, Caroline, Claudia — that just leaves Craig."

"And Jenny," Holly said. "Plus, Sara says that Karina is interested. She'll be out of jail in just a few days."

I smiled slightly. "Karina would keep things hopping," I said. "I'd like to see her on the staff."

"And Daniel might apply," Holly said. "He wants to work on International Day."

My smile faded. "I can imagine Mort and Claudia's response to that."

"Daniel would be great," she said plainly. "There's no one more dedicated."

I tried to picture the office without Holly. Her desk had been my anchor, the calm center around which the chaos whirled. I imagined a tidal wave of paper flooding over her desk.

Holly's gaze wandered away, and she sighed. "I need a break. My life is out of balance." She paused. "Maybe I'll even have time to do some gardening."

I slid closer and put my arm around her. "That would be great."

"Yeah," she said. We sat quietly for a minute or two. I assumed she was thinking more about gardening. But when she spoke again, she was back to LAG. "Sara wants to join Direct Action."

I smiled, relieved to hear Holly talking about Direct Action. "Good," I said, "she'd be great."

Holly turned to face me. "And you know what? Norm, the new guy who has been volunteering in the office, invited the Direct Action collective to go canoeing on the Russian River. He has a house up there. He suggested the last weekend of August. Will you go?"

"I love canoeing."

"Maybe you and I could stay another night and go camping."

"Yeah," I said. "I'll do that."

She smiled. "Great, I'll call Norm and set it up." We stood up and resumed our walk. A canoe trip. For all of Holly's dreams and plans around International Day or the peace camp, she found time to think of something outside LAG. I wished something as simple as a camping trip could distract me.

Monday, August 22, 1983

"WHAT A waste," Claudia said. She peered at me through her black-framed glasses. "I knew people would never agree to strategy discussions. God forbid we should stop and think about what we're doing."

"Give it time," I said as we talked in the hallway during a break at the Congress. The meetings were held in a grade school in the Haight-Ashbury, and all the furnishings, even the ceilings, seemed shrunk. I flexed my shoulders, which felt hunched in the Lilliputian hallway. "People need time to talk it over with their AGs. The Strategy Proposal could still get consensed at the September spokescouncil."

Melissa stopped on her way back to the meeting room. "Assuming the sponsors actually want consensus."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Claudia said sharply.

"Whoa, this is break-time," I said. "Haven't we argued enough this weekend?"

"Yeah," said Melissa sardonically. She tucked a strand of graying hair behind her ear. "And where has it gotten us? Two hundred people, and we haven't decided anything."

My brow furrowed. "We've made progress. There's still room for consensus at the next spokescouncil. A month from now, we could adopt the Strategy Proposal and call some solid future actions."

Right. Did I believe it myself? Thank god it was the final afternoon. We had one last session, where my fondest hope was that we could struggle through to a consensus on the date for our next spokescouncil. Because we sure weren't going to agree on anything else.

Since getting out of jail, I'd had time for some late-night walks, time to reflect and make sense of the whole experience. Especially my time in the

men's tent. If those desultory days taught me anything, it's that my role wasn't to be an inspirational sparkplug for the movement, but a low-key bridge-builder. One moment stood out — facilitating the spokescouncil. Particularly my concern that we consense on supporting diverse actions, not just go our own ways.

A nice image. Bridge-building was difficult, though, when everyone had a different idea of where the road should lead.

Karina, coming up the hall, distracted me. I'd hardly seen her since she got out of prison, and I'd been wishing we'd find time to talk. But this might not be the best moment. All weekend she had been walking the fine line between the buoyant charm of LAG's reigning jail-time champ and the agitated impatience of someone who expected the revolution to happen that very minute.

As Karina approached, Melissa took a step back. Claudia folded her arms across her chest. I took a slow breath and looked around our circle. No one had walked out of the Congress — yet. Let's not blow it now.

Karina walked straight up to Melissa. "The Euromissiles protest should be in the City, not at Livermore. People are tired of the same old blockades. We need to break out. We need to take direct action to the heart of the City."

"That's hardly the sort of action that LAG needs," Melissa said.

Karina jutted her jaw. "For people I know, it is. And we need to decide today so we can start organizing."

Claudia leaned against a bulletin board and laughed drily. "Why are we even talking about CD for October? The European peace movement is counting on us to present a united front, to work in coalition with the Freeze and other mainstream groups. And they aren't going to go for direct action."

"Why not?" Karina said. "Civil disobedience has been a respectable tactic since the Civil Rights movement. Liberals love watching it on PBS, but they run scared in real life."

Euromissile Fact Sheet

What makes the Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles so dangerous? How do they compare to the SS-20?

Pershing II

Although it will replace the short-range Pershing I missiles now based in West Germany, the Pershing II is a completely new version with vastly increased capabilities. It will be able to hit targets made the better 1,000 miles away after launch, thanks to its improved guidance system, which distinguishes the target and makes course adjustments as the missile approaches. It has a higher accuracy than any previous deployed missile. As a result, the Pershing II is thought to destroy important Soviet military targets, including some missile units, command and control centers, airfields and weapons storage sites, with very little warning time.

NATO's 1979 agreement called for deploying 108 Pershing II launchers, which may mean more than 108 missiles, since the launchers are designed to be reusable. The Army currently plans to buy 248 Pershing II missiles, 226 of which will be operational and available for deployment even though the West German government has never agreed to take more than 108.

Another Army plan is to build a reduced range version of the Pershing II, able to reach Eastern Europe, just in case U.S. Soviet negotiations are successful. They may also turn a once one-way missile into a two-way missile by adding a short-range and reentry stage, possibly as a replacement for the SS-20.

But timing problems have plagued the new missile. Beginning with four embarrassing failures in 1982, the Army claims a long list of technical tests in 1983, but has admitted in congressional testimony that testing standards were flawed and costly engineering changes are still needed. The Pershing II rushed into production aimed at achieving its political targets, still seems to have not, and will become even more expensive.

Ground-Launched Cruise Missile

The ground-launched cruise missile (GLCM) can hit the air, the ground, the Pershing II, but it can't fly. It opens and shuts its wings, and its wings are made of a special material that can withstand the heat of reentry. It can hit targets 1,000 miles away. Because the GLCM can hit targets 1,000 miles away, it is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II because it can hit targets 1,000 miles away, including the Moscow area, because of its greater range.

The GLCM shares with the air and sea-launched cruise missile a high-tech guidance system called TERCOM (terrain contour matching). A map is stored in the guidance system's computer. The system then takes pictures during flight, matches those pictures to the map, and makes flight adjustments to stay on target.

However, it takes the first set of missiles deployed over a month. Tests have shown that the guidance system can be corrupted by certain weather and surface conditions. The computer software for the GLCM's launch control can't launch more than 10 missiles at once. And product test line problems caused the first set of missiles to be delayed. The program was planned to be in the GLCM in late 1983, a total of 100 missiles will be built, with 10 operational GLCMs planned for Western Europe. Deployment is scheduled to begin in December 1983 and continue through 1985.

What is the SS-20?

Since 1977 the USSR has been upgrading its medium-range missile force by replacing 15 SS-20s and 55 SS-3 missiles with the SS-20. The SS-20 is the first Soviet missile to use solid fuel instead of liquid fuel, making it easier to store and launch. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II because it can hit targets 1,000 miles away, including the Moscow area, because of its greater range.

Under the new American system, the SS-20 is not a nuclear-armed missile. Although it is more accurate than the SS-20, it is not a nuclear-armed missile. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II because it can hit targets 1,000 miles away, including the Moscow area, because of its greater range.

By June 1983, at least 331 SS-20 missiles had been accepted from "Russia" (see "Fact Sheet" LIVERMORE ACTION GROUP 3128 Shellfish Avenue Berkeley, CA 94702)

been deployed, with 243 of them in range to Europe and the remainder in East Asia. The SS-20 is the first Soviet missile to use solid fuel instead of liquid fuel, making it easier to store and launch. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II. It is thought to be a major threat to the Pershing II because it can hit targets 1,000 miles away, including the Moscow area, because of its greater range.

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Phone: 644-2031
644-2038
Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Leaflet passed out at the October protests. A readable version of this flyer will be available at www.directaction.org

I smiled and propped my foot on a little chair. "I've been to a couple of October coalition meetings," I said. "Organizers from the Freeze aren't anti-CD. They're just worried that a lot of people won't come to a demo where arrest is a possibility. So instead of a huge crowd, all you'd get is the already-committed."

"Getting a big turnout in support of Europe is the essential thing," said Melissa, "They're the ones in the most danger if the U.S. deploys the new missiles. We need to dedicate that day to building the largest possible legal rally."

"Fine," Karina said. "We'll do our action another day. Then we're free to do what we want. We might as well get used to working on our own. When the Democrats come to San Francisco next Summer, I don't think we'll see the Freeze out in the streets with us."

Oh, no, I thought. Not the Democratic Convention. Weren't we fighting over enough already? The more we argued, the more people's opinions seemed carved in stone.

Luckily, Artemis came out into the hall and announced that the final Congress session was reconvening. Just get through this meeting, and we can all go home.

"Let's go," said Melissa, heading into the meeting room.

"Yeah," Claudia said. "Let's get started so we can get out of here."

Saturday, August 27, 1983

"I WANT TO ride three in a canoe," Angie said. "I don't want to have to paddle all the way."

People were pairing off for our journey down the Russian River. The Direct Action collective had accepted Norm's invitation, and a dozen of us made the expedition.

Holly and I started off together. Jenny and Raoul were a natural team. Angie joined them, "as a chaperone."

Mort hooked up with Norm, Craig with Lyle, and Karina, Sara, and their friend Ariel rounded out the venture.

The Russian River wound through Sonoma County, a mostly-rural region an hour or so north of San Francisco. Although much of the county was covered with well-manicured grape fields, the area along the river was relatively wild.

We clustered on a patch of gravel along the river's edge as Norm briefed us. "This late in the Summer, the river is only a few feet deep in most places. But there's some good swimming holes along the route, too."

I'd brought an extra pair of shorts in case I wanted to get in the river, but the day was cool, and the water didn't seem very inviting.

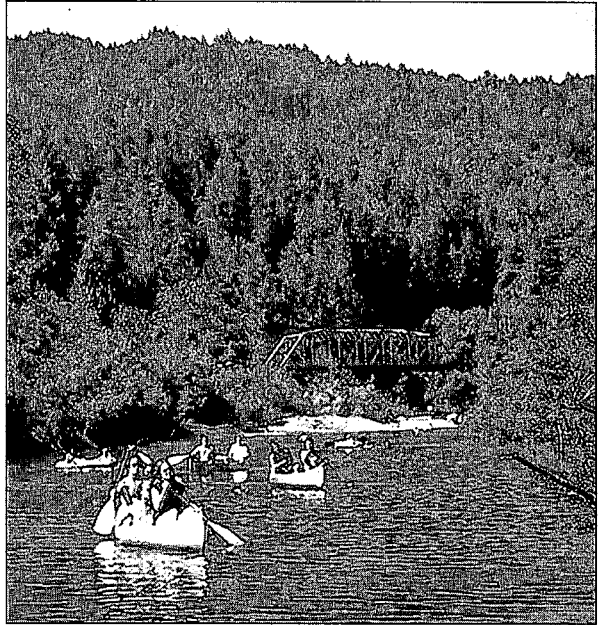
Norm wrapped up his talk, then reached in his pocket and produced a couple of thick joints. "Better burn these before we fall in the river and ruin them," he said.

"Smells like great stuff," I said as he passed it to me. "Grown in Sonoma?"

"No, up in Mendocino County," he said. "That's the best weed-growing territory in the United States. It's getting harder, though. Now that the Republicans are in office, they want to stomp it out. They hate this whole region, the hippie counterculture."

"No wonder," Mort said. "The money trickles down to groups like LAG."

We paired off and hoisted our canoes into the slow-moving creek. Craig and Lyle were the first to leave shore. They paddled toward a bend that went around a sandbar. As the river narrowed,



Canoes on the Russian River upstream from Healdsburg.

the current picked up. Their canoe spurted forward. Craig, who had been sitting in the rear, rocked backwards. Lyle dropped his paddle and grabbed for the side of the canoe. In an instant they capsized.

They had no trouble getting to shore and righting their craft. But they looked stunned. I struggled not to burst out laughing. But Mort couldn't refrain. "Hey, watch out for that first turn," he called out.

Holly and I cleared the bend and settled into the slow flow of the river. The water was cold and clear, and shallow enough in some places to see the rocks lining the riverbed.

The Russian River was twenty or thirty feet wide in most places, with a bend every hundred or so feet. Holly and I glided along, out of sight of the others. I was in the rear, steering. She put her paddle down and slid back toward me. We kissed, then she leaned back against my knees. A heron took

flight against the crystal blue sky. I bent down and nuzzled Holly's hair, which was warm from the sunshine.

Seeing Holly so relaxed and peaceful made me especially glad I'd come on the expedition. She'd been on a roller coaster ever since jail. One day she'd be elated about plans for the peace camp. The next, she'd be wanting a six-month break from even thinking about organizing.

As we drifted along, I heard stealthy laughter from starboard. I turned and took a direct hit as Jenny, Raoul, and Angie used their paddles to slap a volley of water at us. I grabbed my paddle and tried to return fire, but they glided out of reach.

Raoul thrust his arms overhead. "Victory is ours!"

"Onward, troops!" Angie cried, and they raced off.

Holly scrambled back into paddling position, but our tormentors had rounded the bend and were out of sight. We had to accept defeat.

But the river soon evened the score. We caught up with them a few minutes later — capsized along a sandbar.

"Mother Nature exacts revenge," I said as we cruised by. Angie shook her soggy fist at us.

After lunch, we shuffled our canoe assignments. Holly teamed up with Angie. I wound up with Craig and Ariel. I'd been looking for a chance to talk with Craig. Just the previous week he had quit the LAG staff, completing the Grand Slam of resigning staffers. It hammered home my sense of loss, and I wished there were some way to dissuade him. At the same time, I wondered whether Craig and Claudia were cooking up some alternative scheme that I should know about. Maybe they'd quit in order to start something new.

But with Ariel being a VAC stalwart, I doubted that Craig would open up. Oh, well. We're here to relax and enjoy the scenery.

Jenny and Raoul inaugurated the second half of the trip by tipping over within twenty feet. "That'll make those kisses juicier," Angie yelled.

"Oh, shut up!" Jenny answered, dragging the canoe ashore and shaking herself off. Angie threw back her head and laughed, then walked to the riverbank and hugged Jenny. She turned back to her canoe, a fresh burst of laughter escaping her, and I was sorry I wasn't paired up with her. I could use some laughs.

At one turn we found a rope that swung out over a deeper spot in the river. Raoul, already soaked, tried it and landed with a huge splash. It looked fun, but the sky was turning cloudy, and I didn't feel like getting wet.

Toward dusk we reached our debarkation point under an old bridge in Healdsburg. All the canoes except Sara and Karina's arrived about the same time. We circled around, waiting our turn to land. Holly and Angie were the first in. Norm, Lyle, and Mort were next. Norm, up front, stepped onto the gravel shore. As Lyle stepped out, the canoe slipped backwards and he went knee-deep into the water. Holly grabbed the front of the canoe and tugged it

ashore just as Mort stood to move to the front. Mort grabbed desperately at the air. Then, arms flailing, he tumbled into the river.

He staggered ashore like a wet cat. Holly looked forlorn. I thought Mort might toss her into the river, but Holly saved the day by stepping up and giving him a hug. Mort held her long enough to soak her, and then they both laughed.

The rest of us made it safely onto dry land, but there was no sign of Karina and Sara. "Either they capsized, or they got into some heavy necking," Ariel speculated.

"Or both," Angie said.

Ten minutes later their canoe finally appeared. "Sorry to keep you waiting," Sara said sheepishly.

Angie eyed her sternly. "I certainly hope it was worth it."

"Oh, it was," Karina said in a tone that made Sara blush.

The two of them and Ariel headed back to San Francisco, but the rest of us spent the night at Norm's house. We stopped for a hot dinner, got some wine, and drove back to his place, thinking to spend the rest of the evening talking. But the day's workout caught up with people, and with the help of the wine, we were all nodding off before long.

Holly and I rolled out our sleeping bags in a private corner. I curled mine up behind hers and wrapped my arms around her, nestling my face into her thick hair.

She turned her head and kissed my lips. "I love you, Jeff," she whispered. "This was a wonderful day."

Saturday, September 17, 1983

"ARE THERE any objections to Bank of America?" Karina was facilitating the Change of Heart meeting and lobbying us at the same time. "B of A invests in everything we're against. It ties together all our issues."

She looked around the circle as if daring anyone to object. Was she like this before her prison term? Actually, yes. But she seemed to have turned it up a notch.

"Then do we have consensus?" People twinkled their fingers in assent. A few applauded, and Alby leapt to his feet. "Look out, B of A!"

THE PREVIOUS week, at the September 10th spokescouncil, LAG officially endorsed the October rally with the Freeze and other peace groups. Central America groups, social activists, and even a few labor unions had joined the coalition. It was shaping up as the biggest San Francisco rally of the year. Even though it was a non-arrest action, the endorsement was a fairly easy consensus.

Not so the next proposal. Karina, Raoul, and others proposed that on

Monday, October 24th, LAG do its own CD action: a traveling, decentralized protest targeting corporations involved with Euromissile contracts.

I liked the idea of a downtown protest. We'd reach bystanders in a way that a rural site like Livermore or Vandenberg never could. And we'd be challenging the whole corporate structure, not just one weapons lab.

But it didn't sound like the unifying action that LAG needed. Whether anything other than Livermore could reignite the group was questionable. But an urban action wasn't the answer.

As soon as the proposal was stated, Melissa's hand went up. "We shouldn't be doing City actions. There's no way we can be sure everyone is in an affinity group. It could turn into a mob scene. The police could send in provocateurs, or people without nonviolence training could jump in and start trouble."

Karina pounded her fist on her knee. "If we want to stop business as usual, we've got to push some limits. Our blockades have become a formula. We play our role, the cops play theirs, the media prints their stories — and the arms race goes right on."

Melissa looked at her incredulously. "After all the lessons of the 1960s, the senseless violence that derailed the peace movement, you want to have a rerun? No, thank you."

Finally Melissa and Monique stood aside after eliciting a promise that all participants would be encouraged to have preps and be in affinity groups. Ten minutes before we were supposed to be out of the meeting space, we reached a reluctant consensus.

Which was good enough to keep the action-faction satisfied. But it wasn't going to please many others.

And that was a problem. Coming off the Summer, it seemed to me that we had a long way to go toward building a community that could withstand the pressures of imprisonment. I felt like all we had done — at least in the men's camp — was survive. We had a lot of collective growing to do.

But how could we grow as a community if we started calling actions which drew only one subgroup within LAG? What if we lost the cross-fertilization that the big actions provided? How long till we were down to isolated cliques pursuing private agendas? And how long after that till we were all sitting at home alone?

Raoul and I folded up the chairs after the meeting. I figured he'd be happy with the outcome, but despite his proposal being consensed, his expression was sour.

"Hey," I said as I shoved a rack of chairs against the wall, "at least no one blocked the City action."

"No, they just tried to strangle it into submission."

"That's just people airing their usual grievances. In the end they consensed. Or at least stood aside."

He looked at me intently, almost suspiciously. "The point is to restrict

every attempt at spontaneity. Nonviolence training, police liaisons, monitors — they're all control mechanisms."

Forget I brought it up, I thought.

Sid came over and handed me a flyer. "This is a leaflet I'm making for punk shows in San Francisco."

I looked over the crudely-pasted handbill. "You think punks will come to a LAG protest?"

"Why not?"

He seemed to dare me to find a reason. "They already reject corporate music and fashion. Why wouldn't they want to join a protest at corporate offices?"

I nodded, but I was glad he hadn't passed the flyer around at the spokescouncil. Recruiting punks for the protest would hardly reassure Melissa or Monique.

Jenny offered me a ride home, but I was heading to the City on a music errand. And better yet, I was riding there with Karina.

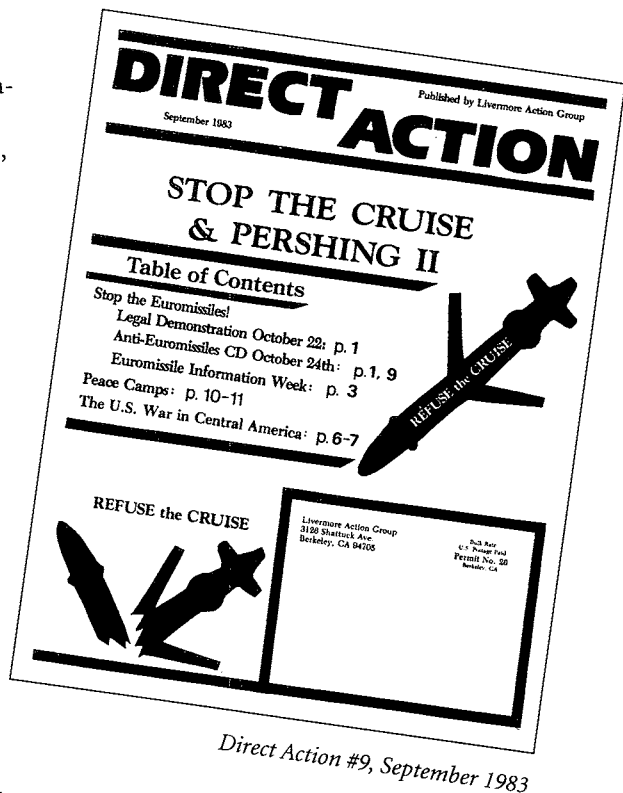
As we parted ways, Raoul called back to me. "Hey, some guys from the print shop are having a softball game and barbeque next Saturday — want to play?"

"Yeah, that sounds great — no, wait, there's a Euromissiles meeting I need to be at. Too bad, it would be great to play."

"Yeah," he said. "Maybe next time."

Karina and I walked down to BART. I could hardly believe I had her to myself for the ride to the City. She had been in constant demand since her return from prison, not just by friends and clusters, but by church and school groups who lauded her stand against nuclear weapons and invited her as an inspirational speaker.

On top of that, she'd been hired — along with Maria, Daniel, and Jenny — as the office staffers for LAG for the coming year.



Direct Action #9, September 1983

Whenever I'd seen her, Karina seemed to be thriving. So I was surprised that once we got settled on the train, she slouched down in the padded seat and frowned.

"How are you doing?" I asked.

She looked at me for a moment. "Up and down," she said. Her voice was unusually soft, and I leaned toward her. "Adjusting to being out of prison has been harder than I thought."

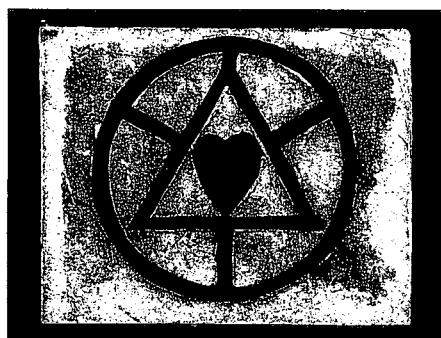
"Yeah? I guess I can understand, but you seem to be handling it so well."

"Oh, the public stuff, sure. It's the personal part that's hard." She paused as if weighing her next words. "You know that Sara and I moved in together? Or rather, I moved in with her, into her house in the Mission. It's wonderful in a lot of ways. But it makes it harder when I'm with someone else. Not that I'd

bring someone home. But if I spend the night with someone else, well, Sara can't help but notice."

"I can see where that would be tough," I said. "I guess I thought you two had worked that sort of thing out long ago."

"I don't know if you ever reach a permanent solution," Karina said. "I completely love Sara. But a monogamous relationship would never work for me. I'd feel stifled. If I care



Change of Heart icon.

about someone else, and we're attracted to each other, it's natural to have sex. It's more than physical pleasure. It's a way of feeling really close to people I love."

She had an almost dreamy look on her face. I couldn't help searching her eyes for a further meaning. Was she trying to tell me something? Or was I caught up in fantasyland?

Suppose it were true? Sure, Holly and I had an open relationship, on paper. But neither of us had put it to the test since she and Frank broke off a year before. I remembered how I had responded to Holly's non-monogamy back then.

I looked at Karina, who seemed absorbed in her own thoughts. I pondered our political differences, imagining us in bed making passionate love and then getting in a huge fight about working with the Freeze.

My reverie was broken when a man sat down across from us and pulled out a very aromatic hamburger. Eating is prohibited on BART, but he hunched down in his seat and unwrapped the burger.

"Oh, gross," Karina muttered. "Charbroiled cow flesh."

It made me laugh even as it reinforced my sense that she and I weren't the most sympatico couple in the world.

But as we parted at the end of the ride, she gave me a warm hug and looked into my eyes. "We should get together sometime."

How could I say no to that?

SO THERE WE were a week later, at the cluster meeting. Once we'd agreed on the Bank of America focus, Karina knelt on a cushion. Her black hair bounced as she spoke. "We have to disrupt the whole financial district, not just B of A. We should do street theater in the intersection."

Sure, I thought. Why not dance on top of cop cars while we're at it? Much as Karina could intrigue me, I had trouble with her constantly raising the stakes. No sooner are we in the City than she has us out in the streets.

Alby was perched on a couch-arm. "Downtown will be packed with traffic," he said excitedly. "If we block even one intersection, it could cause gridlock on all the side streets."

Nice image, but I didn't share his optimism. For one, I didn't want to get arrested. I'd had my fill of jail for a while. Which led directly to my second concern. I raised my hand. "The San Francisco police probably won't take too kindly to shutting down streets."

Karina almost jumped up. "First they have to catch us! And when they do, we get up and run out of the street. We can play mind games with the cops."

"Every AG is an autonomous unit," Alby said. "Every time the cops think they have us pinned down, another AG will start doing something down the street. Even if some get busted, others will keep snarling traffic."

Around the circle, people were nodding. I found myself intrigued by the tactical possibilities of sparring with the police. But realistically, we'd all get busted pretty quickly. And I wondered how many LAGers would even take part in such an action.

As people brainstormed further tactics, I thought of Holly, who wasn't at the meeting. I could imagine her reaction: "It's all so negative," she would say. "What positive alternatives are we offering to people who work all day in those awful high-rises?"

The cluster meeting was winding down. A subgroup including Angie and Antonio took on the street-theater aspect. Karina and Sara offered to put together a leaflet detailing the bank's nuclear crimes, to hand out to bystanders and media.

I didn't volunteer for anything, having told Hank I'd help with the nukecycle he still hoped to build in time for the action. Whatever action Change of Heart did, they'd have to do without me.

But still, as I looked around the ragtag circle, I felt glad to call Change of Heart my home. However confused the rest of LAG was, however discouraged I could feel, our cluster never seemed to lack inspiration.

After the closing circle, Jenny and Angie came over to me. "Hey, we're going dancing tonight at Ashkenaz," Jenny said. "It's a world-beat band, the African Rhythm Messengers. Raoul and Alby are going, too. Why don't you and Holly come with us?"

For a moment, I was tempted to say yes. I didn't doubt it would be fun to go dancing with them. But as inept as I felt dancing to rock and roll, I couldn't imagine moving to African music.

"Come on and shake it out," Angie said. She swiveled her hips, and I had to smile. Some people must have been born dancing.

"Let me check with Holly," I said. "Maybe we'll meet you there."

Friday, September 30, 1983

ANGIE AND I were the last two to leave Direct Action production that evening. With Holly out of town, and Sara at a Shabbat gathering, Angie had stepped up and done most of the coordinating that evening, which I'd appreciated because it gave me a chance to get some layout done.

She unlocked her bike from a post on the front porch. "I'll walk partway with you," she said. But a moment later she slumped. "Oh, no. A flat tire!"

"We have a tire repair kit at home," I said. "And I have some tools. Do you want to go back there and work on it?"

"That would be great," she said.

We headed up Ellsworth Street. Angie pushed her hobbled bike alongside. The night was warm, the low fog illumined by the glow of the city lights.

"I really appreciate your work on Direct Action," I told her. "It's made a big difference."

"Thanks," she said. She tilted her head as if considering what I'd said. Her braided ponytail fell across her shoulder. "I like the paper a lot. I hate going to meetings and sitting in a chair. But the newspaper is so tangible. Plus, I get high on the gluesticks."

"That explains why they keep disappearing," I said. We walked a moment in silence. "So what have you been doing besides the newspaper?" I finally said.

"Working and sleeping, that's about it the past week," she said. "No, not really. On Wednesday, Alby and I did a graffiti action on bank walls around Oakland and Berkeley. We made stencils with questions like, 'Whose future are you investing in?'"

"Wow, pretty elaborate," I said. I felt jealous of Alby. "That's a lot of words to cut out."

She nodded. "It was worth it. We wanted to get people thinking. They just block out slogans. But a question gets into your consciousness in a different way."

"Do you do a lot of graffiti?"

"Not really. If I get better, I'd like to do art-graffiti, like the subway artists in New York City." She paused as if recalling a favorite car. "I don't know if graffiti is really my medium. But it's a fun way to connect with someone. It's a lot more exciting than going to a movie."

We got back to my apartment and hauled her bike up the stairs. "Where's Holly?" Angie asked.

"She flew to Colorado for her brother's wedding."

"Oh, that's right. She mentioned that to me last week."

"You want some tea or a beer?" I said.

"What are you having?"

"Beer."

"I'll have one, too."

I got us a couple of Sierra Nevadas from the refrigerator. She declined the glass I offered, lifting the bottle to her lips and tilting her head slightly back as she drank.

We took the tire apart, but it soon became clear that a repair kit was useless. "The tear is right by the valve," she said.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm too tired to walk all the way home. I guess I'll call a cab."

I knew that with her part-time job, she didn't have money for a cab. Besides, I was enjoying her company, and didn't want her to go so soon. "You can stay here if you want," I offered. "We have a futon out here. You could stay overnight and buy a new innertube in the morning."

She seemed to weigh my offer. "That would be a lot more relaxing. I should call Jenny and tell her I won't be back, so she doesn't worry."

I put on a reggae tape, and we sat down on the folded-up futon on the living room floor. She sat with her legs extended, crossed at the ankle. In her hands she cradled the bottle of beer. A strand of hair had slipped out of her ponytail and fell across her cheek.

We drifted into the sort of get-acquainted conversation that we had never really had — where are you from, what's your family like, why did you come to California...

Like me, she was a midwesterner, from Minnesota. She had come down to Indiana to go to school at Earlham, a well-known Quaker college across the state from my home in Terre Haute. Her family sounded a lot more progressive than mine. "I've told them all about LAG," she said, "and I sent them a copy of Direct Action."

"That must be nice," I said. "I've never told my parents about getting arrested."

"Yeah," Angie said, "Jenny's the same way. I feel lucky that my family supports me. Of course, they think it's a little odd. But at least they try to understand."

She was working a part-time job to pay her bills, clerking in a UC office. "I

work nineteen hours a week," she said. "They can't let me work twenty hours or they'd have to give me benefits. UC does that to all their part-time help."

"I guess I'm better off," I said. "I can work all the hours I want at my maintenance job, and still not get any benefits."

She smiled. "I want to change jobs soon. Sometimes I think I want a real job, a career. But I'm not sure what I'd do. My college degree isn't very practical."

"What was it?"

"Comparative religions. It's ironic, because I'm not a member of any religion. I just studied them."

"I thought you went to Pagan rituals."

"Oh, sure. But I wouldn't say it's a religion. I just like doing rituals. They're a way to mark the cycle of the year. For Equinox, me and Jenny and our circle went up in the Oakland Hills and walked a labyrinth. It was a beautiful, overcast day that made me think of home."

She spoke so matter-of-factly of labyrinths and cycles and rituals that I found myself drawn in. "So what do you really believe?" I asked.

She leaned her head back against the wall, her eyes gazing slightly up. Her chest rose and fell slowly as she pondered the question. "I haven't really spelled it out. I believe the Earth is sacred. I believe that the way we treat other people and other living beings makes a difference." She paused, then looked at me. "And I believe in reincarnation."

"Is that part of Paganism?"

"Not really. But I like the idea. I want to come back as a bird. To me, that seems like the highest form of life, to be able to soar through the air."

I smiled, recalling my bird-thoughts as I waited to be released from Santa Rita. "When you think about it," I said, "reincarnation makes as much sense as anything."

She asked if I was going to the Spiral Dance in a few weeks.

"I don't think so," I said. "It's not really my style."

"In a way it's not mine, either. I like smaller, more personal rituals. The Spiral Dance is several hundred people, so it gets kind of impersonal. But I went last year, right after I got to the Bay Area, and it was a good place to meet people. That's what got me involved in LAG."

"That's funny," I said. "I don't think of it as a political event."

"It is, in its own way. It's about death and rebirth, so it makes sense to bring in things like nukes and war and clear-cutting forests, and to do chants about renewing the Earth. I like that part a lot."

She went to use the bathroom. The reggae tape was about over, so I switched to a tape of bands from Zimbabwe that Mort had made for me.

Angie smiled as she came back to the living room. "Here you are listening to African music, and you didn't come to Ashkenaz?"

"Well, I like listening, but I'm not the world's greatest dancer."

"What's there to it? Just move to the beat," she said. She was still standing, and began gently swaying to the rhythms.

"As if it were that easy!" I said. I was admiring the watery way the music flowed through her body, when she beckoned to me.

"Come on, let's see you do it." I tried to decline, but she insisted. "No one's watching, this is your chance to learn."

My face felt flushed as I stood up and faced her. She smiled at me, started swaying, and looked at my body as if expecting something to happen. I started shuffling my feet to the music, keeping careful time to the complex beat.

Angie watched for a minute, then made a simple observation. "You're dancing from your feet. You need to dance from your hips. Watch." She planted her feet squarely, then undulated her hips in time to the music.

I tried to follow. After a minute she came over behind me. "Keep your feet still." She put her hands on my hips.

Her touch sent a shiver through me. I took a breath and looked straight ahead. Little by little, under the gentle pressure of her hands, my hips loosened.

"Back and forth," she said, "back and forth. Don't think about it. Just follow me."

Slowly, unbelievably, I fell into synch with the music. The percolating drums and cascading guitars set off a vibration in my body that I'd never felt before. Move from the hips.

"Just keep it simple," Angie said, releasing my hips and dancing back in front of me. "The rest of your body will follow when you're ready."

We danced through most of the tape, stopping only to open another couple of beers. I was still a bit mystified about what to do with my arms and hands, but Angie assured me that would come around in due time. The main thing was, I was dancing.

After the tape ended, we went out on the balcony to cool off. The fog had lifted enough to see the lights of San Francisco glistening across the expanse of the Bay.

"Thanks a lot," I said. "All these years I never got the part about the hips."

"My pleasure. Next time there's African music at Ashkenaz, be there."

"Agreed," I said.

Back inside, I put on some quieter music. We sat down again on the futon, side by side. I was still wary of touching her, afraid that it would give her the wrong idea and spoil the mood. After a minute, she stretched out on the carpet, using the futon as a pillow.

"Tired?" I said.

"Getting there."

We talked for another half-hour or so. Finally she said apologetically, "I'm fading. I have to go to sleep."

"Yeah," I said. We rolled out the futon, and she lay down as if testing it out. Then she rolled onto her side and looked up at me enigmatically. A

spark seemed to hover between us. What would happen if I... And what if she...

I coughed and looked away, embarrassed at my rambling imagination. "So," I said, "I guess you need some blankets."

She didn't move. "That would be nice."

I got up and fetched a couple of blankets. When I came back, she was lying on her back, eyes closed, hands folded across her stomach. She had taken the braid out of her hair, which fell loosely over her shoulders. I unfolded the blankets and spread them over her. She smiled without opening her eyes. I gazed down at her slightly-parted lips and smooth, untroubled forehead. Did she look so content every night?

I knelt next to her. "Do you have everything you need?"

"I think so," she said. She opened her eyes and met mine for a delicious moment. I reached out and touched her shoulder. "I'm really glad you stayed," I said. "It's been fun talking."

"Yeah," she said. "That's one flat tire I'll have a good memory of." She leaned up, put one arm around my neck, and gave me a long hug. "Good night, Jeff."

"Good night, Angie."

I headed down the hallway to my bedroom and closed the door. The room felt small, confined. I lay down on the bed and opened an art book, but my eyes strayed from the page. I hunted around and found a South African tape Mort had lent me. It was more jazz-flavored than what Angie and I had been dancing to, but it was close enough. I got up and opened the window, then dropped back in bed. I stretched out on my back and closed my eyes. Against the darkened lids I thought I could make out a glimmer of hope — about LAG, about changing the world — even about dancing.

Friday, October 21, 1983

I HAD TO work all afternoon. The building was a mess, and if I wanted Monday off, I had to finish a couple of plumbing repairs.

I got done around six, washed up, and headed over to Hank's shop. Tonight was the big night. The twenty-foot tube had arrived. A bunch of us were gathering that evening to turn Hank's dream into reality: LAG's own Cruise missile.

It was the eve of the Euromissiles demonstrations. October had flown by, and despite the impending actions, LAG still felt scattered. At the September spokescouncil, after much hand-wringing, we consensed to the Strategy Proposal. *It's About Times*, the Abalone Alliance paper, did a big story on how important it was. But Claudia hadn't been to a meeting since the Congress, and Craig drifted in and out. With the sponsors in withdrawal, the implementation of the strategy discussions — and LAG's future — was left in abeyance.

Meanwhile, the financial cushion we'd built up after June had frittered away. We'd mailed a fund appeal the previous week, but without a major CD action to focus attention, and nothing at all planned after October, a big return was unlikely.

It ran against the spirit of the Strategy Proposal, but I felt like we needed to call another action, pronto. Even if we got the strategy discussions going, it could take months to produce a coherent plan. If LAG was going to get through the Winter, we had to have something concrete to rally around.

Craig and I were the first two to arrive. We looked at each other awkwardly as we waited outside Hank's shop. Since he'd quit the staff, our talks were rare.

I felt like I owed it to Craig to run the future-action idea by him, despite my resentment at him and Claudia. When they got me to help facilitate the September spokescouncil that finally consensed on their Strategy Proposal, I trusted they were doing what they felt was best for LAG. But lately I felt like the whole proposal was just their way of saying goodbye with a vengeance.

Claudia, I'd about given up on. I'd talked to her a couple of times, and her cynicism grated in my ears.

But Craig could probably be coaxed back aboard. I had a sense that his retreat was more pain at how he'd been attacked over Vandenberg than political pessimism.

"Just be patient," I told him as we stood by the curbside in the fading sunlight. "People will finally listen."

"I don't think so," he said, then paused as a truck drove past. "Sometimes I feel like a prophet of doom." He chuckled, but immediately clouded. "Every passing day brings us closer to nuclear or ecological disaster. Most people can't handle the truth. They need to feel hopeful. I don't cater to that."

I scuffed the toe of my shoe against the sidewalk. "Cut people a little slack. You can't lay out some objective political line, some universal truth, and



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demand that everyone instantly see it your way. You have to start from where people are.”

“No, we have to start from what the movement demands. And that’s obvious — a long-term strategy.”

“But that can start from where people are. Why can’t we assume that we’re going to do blockades at Livermore, and build a strategy around that?”

“You can’t preordain your target and your tactic, and then say it’s an open discussion. That’s a joke.”

My chest tightened. “No more of a joke than proposing strategy discussions and then disappearing as soon as they’re consensed.”

Craig took a step back. “If there was any point in my staying around, I would.”

Just then Mort pulled up alongside the curb. “Where’s Hank?” he called to us as he got out of his car.

“He’s on the way,” Craig said, walking over toward Mort. I let him end our conversation, but felt frustrated. After a year of working together, wasn’t I entitled to some explanation of what he was doing?

Looking at the two of them, I felt distant. I had never cleared the air with Mort about his continual trashing of International Day. He didn’t even seem to see it as a problem. With Mort, everything turned into a debate, a win/lose struggle where one side was in sole possession of the truth and the other a deviant tendency to be rooted out. Once the argument was over, it was all supposed to be bygones. “Why can’t we debate ideas without all this emotional attachment?” he would say. “Why do people take political criticism like it’s a personal attack?”

“Hey, here comes Hank!” Craig called out.

I pulled myself back to the present. It was Hank all right, driving a big flatbed truck with the tube lashed on back. “Check it out,” he yelled. “What do you think?”

“Looks like a missile to me,” I said, glad to get my mind off politics. “Want to hoist it off?”

“Are you kidding? This tube weighs a ton. It’s reinforced three-quarter-inch cardboard. It’ll take at least a half-dozen people to carry it. I asked Tai and Lyle to come by. Meanwhile, here’s a six-pack to get us ready.”

The others arrived shortly after. We set aside our beers and tackled the tube. It was heavier than I could have imagined, and the shape didn’t lend itself to grabbing hold. But we finally wrestled it off the truck and into the shop.

“How are we ever going to move it at a demonstration?” Mort asked.

“Oh, don’t worry,” Hank told him. “It’ll have wheels. The problem is what to do at the financial district demo on Monday. I won’t have time to do the wheels, so we’ll have to carry it. I’ll cut away a lot of the top and bottom for people to stand inside it, so it’ll be lighter.”

Hank pulled off his gloves and flipped a couple of circuit breakers, filling

the workshop with the multicolored lights of the pinball machines. Swatches of green neon glowed from one corner. Near the door was an old beer sign where a keg seemed to flow endlessly into a mug.

Once the lights came on, I let go of my earlier grievances. I shared a laugh with Mort, and was sorry when Craig took off. Hank popped the lid off a beer and handed it to me. "Is the jukebox working?" I asked.

"Yeah, go for it."

I punched some numbers, and The Who's "Magic Bus" started spinning. Hank and Tai set to carving the tube with skill-saws. The rest of us turned to pinball.

Lyle left for a few minutes. When he returned, he brought along a friend from Spain, a woman named Carmen who was involved in peace organizing in Madrid. She was about our age, but very professional-looking, with short, styled hair and matching slacks and jacket.

Having a woman around the Friday night scene was unusual. Hank's partner Judith, who was into Buddhism and meditation, rarely came by. Holly had come once, and seemed to have a good time for the short while she stayed. But I doubted she'd become a regular.

Carmen, on the other hand, seemed delighted by the games. "I never played because I was no good and didn't want to lose my money," she said. "But if it's free, how can I say no?"

She apologized for her English, which, other than being formal, seemed as good as anyone else's. "I read better than I talk," she said. "I've been reading the San Francisco newspapers since I got here, and I understand them well."

"That's cheating," Mort said, leaning back against a pinball machine. "With American papers, you already know what they are going to say before you read them."

Carmen laughed. "Es verdad — that is so true!" Then her brow furrowed. "No wonder most Americans are so ignorant of global politics. In Europe, the common people are much more aware. A man as stupid and self-centered as Reagan couldn't be elected in Europe."

"I know," said Mort. "Political leaders in Europe are expected to have a grasp of issues. They've worked their way up through the parliamentary system. A stooge like Reagan could never get a toehold."

I asked Carmen about European activists, how they were different from us.

Her hand fluttered in a flamenco motion. "You Americans are crazy, compared to Europeans."

Hank stopped working on the missile and joined us. "Wait, I want to hear this," he said. "Why are we crazy?"

"Oh, in many ways. For example, I've heard about Pagan rituals at protests. I can't imagine that in Europe."

Mort scoffed. "You're not alone. Outside of California, most Americans think it's pretty strange."

I winced at Mort's tone, but Carmen's response surprised me. "Strange, yes. But Americans are also more creative than Europeans. American people will try new things. Even if it's sometimes strange, this gives me hope."

"I wish I felt some hope," Mort muttered, setting his empty bottle next to the jukebox.

"No, I see what she means," I said, looking directly at Carmen. "You never know how something will grow. What seems strange to us today might turn out to be the wave of the future."

She nodded. "This is the hope of America. In every other way, you're crazy!"

Hank brightened. "What a perfect transition to the missile. Let's try it out. We cut openings so we can stand inside and carry it on our shoulders."

We rolled it over on its side, but try as we might, we couldn't find an angle to lift it.

"Wait," Hank said. "Lift the front onto the workbench, and we'll crawl under it."

Even lifting the front end was a challenge. We finally got it propped up, slipped underneath, and prepared to go airborne. "Okay," Hank called out. "One — two — three!"

Carmen cheered us on: "Come on, you strong American men!"

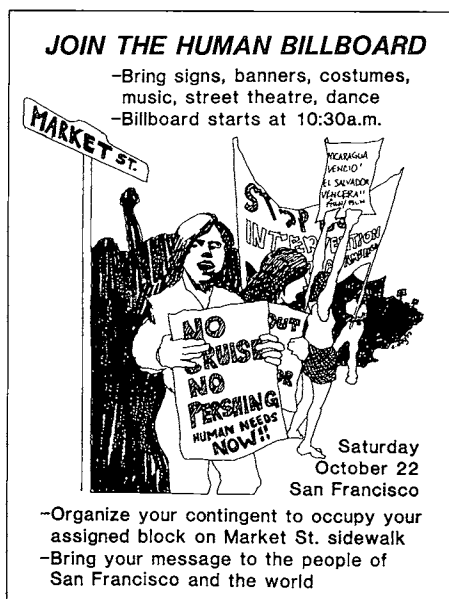
With much groaning we staggered to a standing position. "We could never walk like this," Mort said between gasps. We eased it back against the workbench and crawled out from under it.

Hank put his hands on his hips. "I'll have to cut away more."

While Hank and Tai took skill-saws to the tube again, Mort and I went back to talking with Lyle and Carmen.

"How many people will be at the rally tomorrow?" Carmen asked.

"Twenty thousand, maybe," I said, repeating a figure I'd heard at the last coalition meeting.



LAG reps to the Euromissiles Coalition worked to get the coalition to do something more active at the Saturday event than the usual march and rally. The compromise was a "human billboard," which failed to excite most LAGers.

"If we're lucky," Mort said. He scraped at the label of his beer bottle with his thumbnail.

Carmen looked perturbed. "The rallies in Netherlands and Germany have drawn a half-million people."

"Half a million," I said. "I can't imagine that in this country."

Mort set his beer down. "Not without getting labor involved. That's the difference. In Europe, there's a historic bond between the left and labor that's lacking in this country."

"We have some union people coming to the Euromissiles coalition meetings," I said. "The Service Employees and the Longshore unions have endorsed it."

"SEIU and the Longshoremens, sure," Mort said as if I had stated the obvious. "Those are the last strongholds of progressive labor. But we have to reach out to the broader rank and file."

"Easier said than done," Lyle said. He pressed the start button on a casino-motif pinball game and fired the first ball.

Mort picked up his beer and turned to watch Lyle's game. "Getting working people involved means building alliances around issues that touch their lives. You aren't going to see most Americans in the streets because nuclear missiles are being stationed halfway around the world. We have to frame our nuclear protests in terms of issues like jobs, health care, or transit. We have to show how military spending means cuts in basic human services, and how it creates fewer jobs than investing in education or the environment."

"I think you're right,"

Carmen said. "Of course, it helps to have credible socialist parties to put that message out in Parliament."

Mort rang up the game next to Lyle's. "So what's happening in Spain?" he asked Carmen.

Lyle turned to her. "Tell them about your NATO action."

She smiled. "We did a direct action at the meeting of OTAN, or NATO, as you call it. The national coalition of Spanish peace groups was protesting at the

- The Pershing II, to be based in West Germany, is the most accurate missile ever developed. It can reach Moscow or Leningrad in 6-8 minutes. Soviet leaders have stated that they will put their weapons on launch on warning status if it is deployed.
- The cruise missile, because of its small size and its mobility, would mean that any future agreement could not be verifiable.

DEMONSTRATE

your opposition to
the Pershing II and cruise missiles

OCTOBER 22

Rally*
12 noon
S.F. Civic Center

- No Pershing II or cruise missiles
- A Nuclear Free Europe: *East & West*
- Funds for Human Needs, Not Nuclear War Preparations
- A Non-Interventionary Foreign Policy
- A Bilateral, Verifiable Nuclear Weapons Freeze

*Assembly by contingent along Market St., 10-30 a.m.
Sponsored by the Bay Area Coalition Against the Pershing II & the Cruise
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The Saturday, October 22 coalition rally drew about 15,000 people to San Francisco civic center for speakers and music.

OTAN meeting, directly in front of the building. At lunchtime, the diplomats planned to come out on the front stairs for newspaper photographs."

She took a sip of beer. "Before the protest, some of us had painted letters on our butts, one letter on each cheek, spelling, '¡OTAN Mierda!'"



Lyle gestured with his beer bottle. "Loosely translated, it means, 'NATO is Shit!'"

Carmen nodded. "As the delegates came out on the steps, we turned our backs to them, dropped our pants, and delivered our message."

We burst out laughing. "Now there's an action we haven't tried yet," Mort said. "I'd like to see the media coverage of that!"

"In Madrid, it got on the front page of *El País*," Carmen said, then smiled sadly. "It's the only time my picture has ever been in *El País*. And it's my butt."

"Well, your butts were probably more photogenic than the diplomats' faces," I said.

Carmen laughed. "That's the American perspective."

We talked a while longer, and then she and Lyle took off. "We'll see you at the Euromissiles rally tomorrow," Lyle said.

Carmen bid us all buenas noches. As she was leaving, I caught her eye. "Hasta mañana," I said.

She smiled. "Si, hasta mañana."

Hank and Tai sanded down some rough edges on the missile, and we studied their handiwork. A friend of Hank's had fashioned a nosecone of blue plastic that exactly fit onto the tube. Tai added a couple of plywood fins at the back and a little windshield in front of the cockpit.

"This is practically a full-sized Cruise missile," Hank said. "You could hide one in a two-car garage."

"Or your shop," Mort said.

I had pictured the missile bright silver, with an American flag decal so it looked official. But Hank's aesthetic was a little different. On top of a coat of whitewash, he sketched lines and dots to make it look like the whole thing was riveted together out of scrap metal. Here and there was a jagged crack. Both sides were to be lettered with slogans.

"Can't miss a chance to get a message out," Hank said.

I shrugged. "You're the design engineer."

It was midnight by the time we finished painting the slogans and touching up all of the rivets. I'd told Holly I'd be out late, but I figured I better get going if I was going to be up early the next day.

"Aw, stay for one more game of pinball," Mort said. He passed me a joint.

"Well, when you put it that way, it's hard to say no." I inhaled the sweet smoke. I looked around our circle with a wave of appreciation. Nothing like a little weed and pinball to help us remember that we're all in it together.

A half-dozen games later, I finally headed for the door. Hank called out one last logistical detail. "Don't forget next Tuesday night. We're gonna hit that new building on Telegraph. I want to spray 'Cubeland' on it. That's what it is, a concrete cube."

"Count me in," I called back. "Sounds like the cultural avant-garde — architectural criticism, right on the offending walls."

HOLLY WOKE as I came in. "Hi, sweetie, how did it go?"

"We finished the missile. It's ready for Monday in the financial district. How are you doing?"

"I'm good," she said as I lay down and curled around her. "I talked to Caroline. She wants to ride BART to the rally with us tomorrow."

"So you're definitely going?"

"Oh yeah, I was just in a bad mood when I thought I would skip it. When I talked to Caroline, I knew I wanted to be there."

She rolled over to face me, and we kissed. "You can put on some music if you want," she said.

"I need to eat," I said. I caressed her hair. "Did you ever figure out a costume for Monday's action?"

"No, not really. Dressing up like an office worker seems so depressing, like I'd be punishing myself. How about you?"

"Well, I had an idea of doing something with the *Wall Street Journal*, but I haven't worked it out yet."

We kissed again. Then I headed back to the front room. I was still wired, and put on a Ramones tape, hard-driving punk to draw off my excess energy. I got out bread and cheese and settled in at the table to catch up on my journal.

I should write about the next day's Euromissiles march, my reasons for being involved in the coalition. But that seemed like work. If I was going to write about politics, the Monday action seemed a lot more interesting.

Monday, October 24, 1983

MONDAY'S FINANCIAL district protest gained a distinct psychological advantage from Saturday's Euromissiles rally. Namely, anything had to be an improvement.

Fifteen thousand people took part in the Saturday coalition rally, lining Market Street in downtown San Francisco with a "human billboard" of signs calling for peace and disarmament.

The hitch was, being a weekend, the office high-rises were deserted. Only shoppers, tourists, and panhandlers caught our message. After a couple of hours of standing around on the half-deserted streets, we marched up to civic center for music and speeches. The rally got a little blip on the evening news, a photo on page four of the Sunday paper, and disappeared.

Monday's protest could hardly do worse. I set my alarm for nine o'clock. I'd assumed Holly was coming, but she decided at the last minute to spend the day gardening. So I rode over on BART with Lyle, Tai, and several other Overthrow guys who were the crew for the LAG missile, which Hank and Mort were driving over on a flatbed truck. I'd expected to help carry the missile, but

there seemed to be plenty of volunteers, and I wasn't sorry to be relieved of the burden. This was LAG's first City protest. Who knew what might happen? I didn't want to be trapped inside the missile if things got interesting elsewhere.



Affinity groups dressed as waiters and waitresses approached downtown café patrons with a platter of toy soldiers, tanks, and fighter planes, saying, "Did you order this? Well, you're paying for it!"



We arrived at Embarcadero Plaza around ten o'clock and were greeted by a quiet crowd. My shoulders sagged as I did a quick count. Sixty people. Maybe we were early.

Mainly I saw familiar faces. Some were obvious — Jenny, Raoul, Sid, Karina, Sara, Alby. Others were no big surprise, like Doc or Belinda or Moonstone. But I hadn't expected to see Artemis from Matrix AG, or Nathaniel, my nonviolence prepper. Even Melissa and several others from Spirit had made the scene.

Of course, Melissa might just be keeping tabs on the action. At the previous week's Coordinating Council meeting, she went head to head with Karina and Raoul, insisting that the protest have monitors. Maybe she was checking up.

I wandered around, saying hi to a few people, but not getting any conversations going. I wished Angie would show up, so I could let my guard down, admit my disappointment at the turnout. She'd agree, and we'd share a pensive interlude before pitching ourselves back into the fray.

The protesters gathered in the center of the big plaza. Most others in the vicinity — business types, service workers, tourists — gave us wide berth.

I spied Raoul and Sid nearby and walked over to say hi. "Missed you Saturday," I said jokingly.

Raoul pulled back his head. "The World Series was on! Where are your priorities?" I laughed, but he turned serious. "What's the point in going to a protest that's completely pre-programmed? The organizers guarantee in advance that nothing spontaneous can happen. And then they wonder why more people don't show up. At least the outcome of a baseball game is an open question."

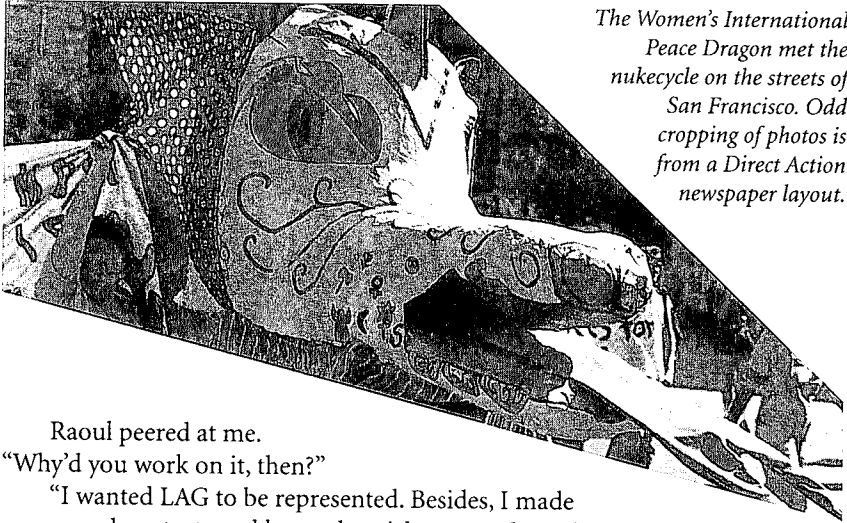
I nodded, then looked at Sid. "And what's your excuse?"

Sid bounced on his toes. "I don't go to legal demos," he said. "A hundred people disrupting traffic does more good than ten thousand getting a permit and marching up an empty street. If you aren't risking arrest, you're no threat to the system."

I smiled. "Hey, I never expected the coalition to threaten the system."



The proximity of Halloween brought out costumes at the October 24, 1983 Euromissiles protest in San Francisco.



The Women's International Peace Dragon met the nukecycle on the streets of San Francisco. Odd cropping of photos is from a Direct Action newspaper layout.

Raoul peered at me.

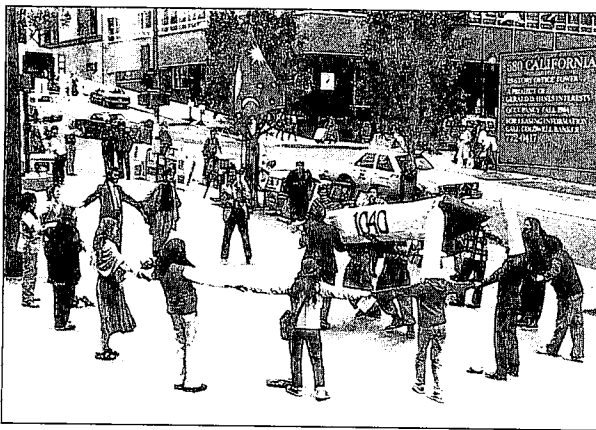
"Why'd you work on it, then?"

"I wanted LAG to be represented. Besides, I made some good contacts and learned a trick or two about fund-raising."

Raoul shook his head as if he were genuinely baffled. He and Sid walked off to find Jenny. I rotated my shoulders, trying to get loose. I surveyed the plaza. Now what? To the right, the old Ferry Building sported a tall tower with a dysfunctional clock. Beyond, the crisp blue sky shone through the steel arches of the Bay Bridge. To the left loomed the four towers of Embarcadero Center, heralds of the sunless, windswept streets of the financial district.

Hank and Mort pulled up, providing a distraction from counting the slowly-growing crowd. I helped hoist the missile off the truck. The white paint glistened in the sun. A crew of six slipped

underneath and bore the missile aloft. Hank was up front, wearing an old leather aviator's helmet and a dashing scarf. The crew took a few tentative steps, then seemed to hit stride, taking the missile for its maiden voyage around the plaza.



A cluster circled up prior to the action. Above and right, a Freudian moment as the International Women's Peace Dragon met the mobile missile.

Other protesters laughed and cheered. Around the plaza, bystanders stared and pointed.

Meanwhile, Spiderwomyn AG had gotten hold of the International Peace Dragon, a big paper-maché dragon's head with a tail made of cloth panels painted or sewn by women's peace groups around the globe. Spiderwomyn stretched the tail to its full hundred feet, ending in the new LAG panel they had added.

The dragon's head was yellow, with a long, slithery red tongue. As Belinda lifted the big puppet, Artemis called out: "Don't get that tongue anywhere near the missile or we'll never live it down." I laughed, but Belinda scowled. I wondered whether she was more irritated at the heterosexual innuendo or the restriction on her movement.

The proximity of Halloween brought out a costumed crowd. One AG fashioned "warheads," silver hats shaped like missile nosecones. Next to them was a couple dressed as Uncle Sam and Betsy Ross. Several groups donned business suits with a twist — ties replaced by nooses, faces painted like skulls, or mouths drooling blood.

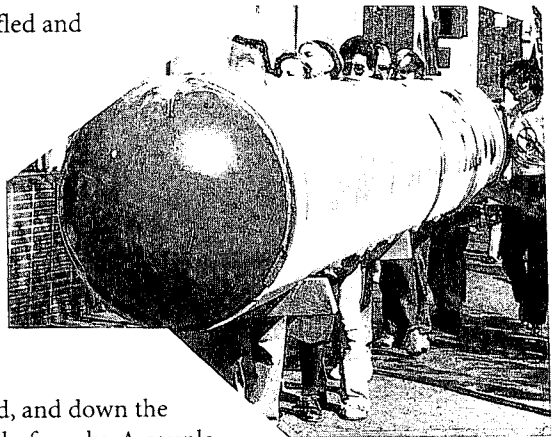
Nathaniel was part of a group of tax resisters dressed as waiters and waitresses. Carrying a platter decorated with toy soldiers, tanks, and warplanes, he approached a café table at the edge of the plaza. "Did you order this?"

The diners looked baffled and slightly amused. "No."

"Well," declared Nathaniel, "you're paying for it!" With a crisp gesture he presented them with a bill for \$300 billion, the current military budget.

Beyond the café, a commotion erupted. A crowd of bystanders parted, and down the center strode a ragtag band of punks. A couple of dozen people, mainly in their twenties, had responded to Sid and Raoul's leafletting. They gamboled through the crowd, their spiked hair, shredded clothes, and nose-rings clashing with the pastel fashions and erect postures of the Embarcadero regulars.

The punks joined our protest, but stayed off to one side, talking among themselves. I'd heard from Jenny that the punks had formed two affinity groups, Domestic Terrorists and Gruesome Rebels. But she also said that most of them hadn't taken a nonviolence prep.



A moment later, Angie came walking across the plaza. I took a slow breath, and a smile crossed my lips. At last, someone to talk to.

Jenny spotted her as well, and reached Angie just before I did. I expected them to hug, but they greeted each other with a quick touch, like they'd just spoken moments before.

They were both dressed as office workers. Jenny's hair was pulled back in a taut bun, and she wore a gray skirt and vest over a white shirt. Angie opted for brown slacks and a matching jacket. Her auburn hair was gathered in a ponytail, and a touch of rouge colored her lightly-tanned cheeks.

I stepped toward her, and Angie threw her arms around my neck and hugged me. I held her for a long moment, then squeezed her tightly before letting go.

"What's your costume?" Angie asked.

"I have this idea to get a *Wall Street Journal* and dress myself from head to toe in stock market quotes."

"Let's do it," she said.

They walked with me to the edge of the plaza to buy a paper, then helped tape the sheets of newsprint onto me. I affixed a paper veil to a pair of sunglasses, and crowned the ensemble with a hat featuring the paper's masthead.

Tai, dressed and face-painted in military camouflage, came over with a can of poster-paint and splattered red drops on me. "Let's put a bloody hand print right over the heart," Angie said. She dipped her hand into the paint and

pressed it onto my chest.

"There," she said as she toweled off her hand. "You're a walking Dow Jones."

Tai moved on, and Jenny went over to talk to Raoul, leaving me and Angie alone. I took off my sunglasses. Standing there with Angie, it was a lot easier to quit counting heads and appreciate the spectacle. Uncle Sam and Betsy Ross posed for a tourist-photo. A guy dressed as Gandhi stood talking to a couple of punks. A woman in a multicolored sarong blew soap-bubbles that wafted over the plaza.

Next to me, though, Angie



The International Women's Peace Dragon, with a tail made up of cloth panels contributed by women's groups around the world, tied up traffic as it wended its way through downtown.

seemed increasingly agitated as we waited for the action to start. I wondered whether it was pre-protest jitters or something else. I wished I could put my arm around her, but my costume got in the way. I



The panels of the Peace Dragon's tail stretched for over a block.

rustled around, and Angie looked up at me expectantly. I fumbled for words. "So — are you getting busted today?"

She nodded. "I think so. I took tomorrow off work, just in case. How about you?"

"Not if I can help it. I've seen enough of jail for a while." I frowned, not liking the sound of my words. "But I'm here to protest, not sit on the sidelines and watch."

"That's good — it provides some cover for people who are getting arrested."

I smiled. "That's a good way of looking at it. The cops will see two hundred people coming up the street, and they'll have no idea how many will risk arrest. That'll give them something to think about."

Angie got called away to fetch Change of Heart's props. I thought about following her, but I wasn't in the skit, so I'd probably just be in the way. I looked around again. Still not much of a crowd. At the June Livermore action, there had been over a hundred affinity groups. Here, there were barely a hundred people.

Well, maybe a hundred and fifty. I'd heard that about a dozen affinity groups had planned actions. Where were the other ninety from Livermore? The day seemed tailor-made for AGs. Each group took a military corporation to research, prepared a leaflet about its complicity, and organized an action at their San Francisco office. So where was everybody?

Karina came past, trying to gather Change of Heart for a cluster circle. But as soon as she'd get a few people together, they'd melt back into the crowd again.

Her efforts to rally our cluster touched me, and I started to help. But Karina threw up her arms. "It's pointless, everyone is too scattered."

Melissa, standing behind us, spoke up. "What do you expect?" She cast an eye toward some skateboard punks warming up on the rim of a concrete fountain. "Affinity groups can't function in this setting. Once you get into the City, it's bound to turn into a mob."

"We're doing AG actions," Karina answered without looking at her. "You could at least wait until we get started before you pass judgment."

"It doesn't matter," Melissa said. "I've seen it before. This is a perfect set-up for provocateurs."

Karina turned around to face her. "Maybe the monitors will protect us," she said coolly. "The 'peace police.' Why do we need them? We can take care of ourselves."

"LAG always has monitors," Melissa said. "You need people who know the general plan of the action, who can answer questions or be ready for problems. It's especially important for new people. If new people don't feel safe, your movement stops growing."

Judging by today's crowd, it looked like we'd already stopped growing. In fact, we were shrinking. Where were Claudia, Craig, Pilgrim, or Caroline? They'd probably never missed a LAG demo before.

But maybe I was expecting too much from our first roving urban action. Maybe this was the cutting edge. We'd pioneer the new style, and next time hundreds more would join.

Walt, wearing a red headband that marked him as a monitor, pulled out a bullhorn and rallied the crowd together. The tinny sound grated on my ears and I stayed toward the back of the circle, touching up the tape on my costume. Walt gave a quick rap about the day's itinerary and the importance of everyone being in affinity groups. He called on any individuals not in an AG to gather over by the fountain and form a group for the day. No one moved.

"We were going to print up a route map," he went on. "But that would tip

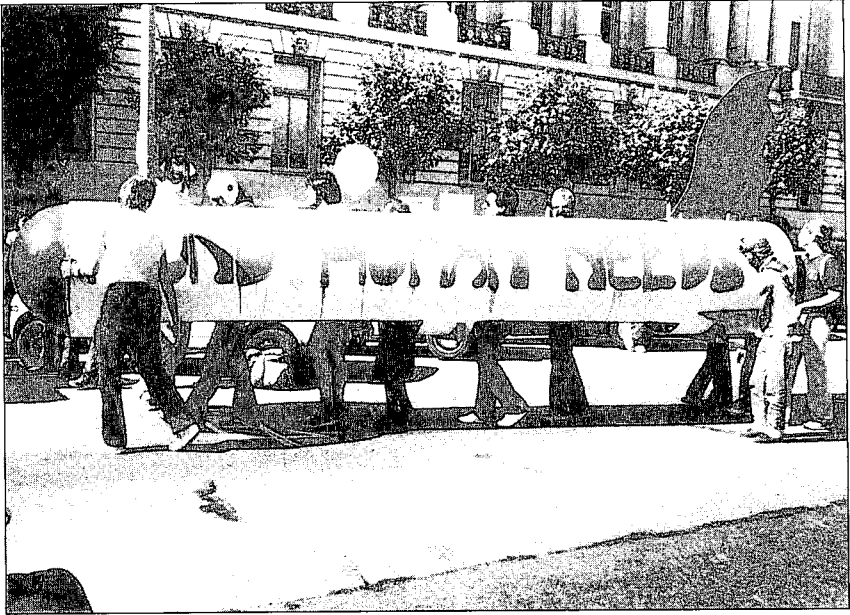
off the police. So we're going to let whichever AG is doing the next action lead the march to that site."

"Let's sing a song before we start," Melissa proposed.

"No, come on, we're already behind schedule," Raoul called out,



The tail end of the Peace Dragon flowed past the monstrous metal fountain at Embarcadero Plaza.



Only one fender-bender marred the maiden flight of LAG's nuclear missile, which weighed several hundred pounds and was carried by crews of four to six men.

and the crowd seemed to agree. Melissa looked frustrated, but rejoined her AG.

Cindy of the Commie Dupes took the bullhorn and led our ragtag procession out to Market Street. The wide sidewalks were bustling with business people and shoppers, and behind my newsprint veil I laughed at the bewilderment rippling through the oncoming faces.

I looked around for Angie. But she was talking intently with Jenny and Alby, probably fine-tuning Change of Heart's action. I adjusted my newsprint mask and fell in step with the march. Through the sunglasses, the street looked dusky. I felt removed, like I was doing my own action parallel to the main event.

Apparently I made a good sideshow. A man with a cane jerked his head and stared at me. Another guy started chuckling. A woman in a bright blue suit squinted as if she were trying to read the stock quotes.

The women's dragon moved into the lead, snaking through the sea of pedestrians and clearing a path for the rest of us. An AG in suits and bloody palms tried to shake hands with strangers, getting no takers. The punks hung together toward the back of the march, leering and making grotesque faces into the store-windows.

Hank and his crew brought up the rear. The missile glided forward gracefully, its blue plastic nosecone glinting like a warning light. In its wake it left a sea of puzzled, irritated, or amused faces. It was an auspicious debut for

the missile. But one look at the grimaces on the crew's faces and I had to wonder how long they could shoulder their burden.

Up front, just behind the dragon, there was a flurry. I picked up my step. Karina and a guy named Jacey were several feet off the curb, calling to the crowd: "Into the street! Take the street!" Raoul and Jenny and Sid followed. A taxi coming up the side lane slowed and honked.

I made my way toward the front. Were they trying to get busted before we'd even done the first corporation? Didn't make sense to me. Still, if this was where the action was, I didn't want to miss it.

So far, only a handful were out in the street. The monitors were trying to keep the crowd moving on up the sidewalk. Karina and Raoul and Jacey yelled louder. A few more joined them. But most people shuffled forward, watching over their shoulders to see what would happen.

The instigators looked chagrined, especially Raoul and Jacey. I studied Jacey, whom I vaguely recognized from a couple of Berkeley demos. He was around my age, with curly brown hair and a chipped front tooth. He seemed

disgusted with people's hesitation, and I thought he might storm away. But he stuck around. Which didn't thrill me. It was one thing to have Raoul or Karina pushing the limits. But someone I hardly knew? Wasn't this a LAG action?

We turned onto Washington Street and halted in front of a nondescript high-rise that housed the offices of Boeing. As skateboarders did stunts on the corporate stairs, the Commie Dupes read a short indictment of the company for its nuclear profiteering. Then five AG members in business



Some costumes bordered on fantasy attire...

suits climbed the stairs, sat down, and linked arms to block the main entrance.

Several motorcycle cops pulled up just as the Dupes were seated. But none came forward to initiate the arrests. We waited around for a few minutes, expecting more cops to show up and complete the action.



...while other protesters chose especially realistic costumes.

The crowd grew restless. Three other members of the Dupes stayed behind to leaflet and observe the eventual arrests, but the march moved on.

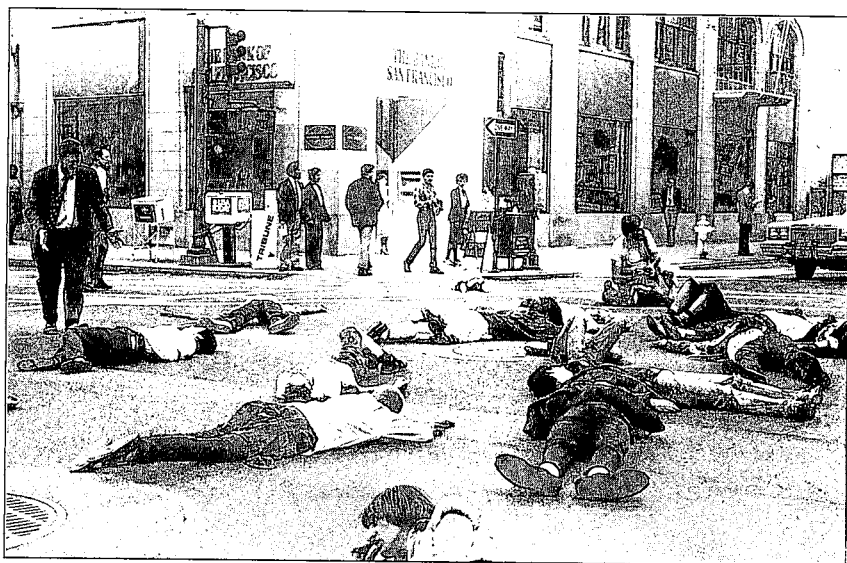
Enola Gay, decked in vintage women's apparel, did a "Nukes are a Drag" skit in front of the Department of Energy. A third AG targeted McDonnell-Douglass Corporation. At both sites, the police again left the blockaders sitting in front of the doors. We marched on, leaving a few people behind to leaflet.

Were the cops really this unprepared, or were they messing with us? The arrests were supposed to be a highlight of the tour. When nothing happened, our morality tales lacked a climax. Maybe it was a new police strategy — bore us into submission.

The women's dragon turned off and went its own way. Hank and the missile crossed to the opposite side of the street, where they didn't have to dodge the rest of the march. The rest of us followed Spirit AG toward our next stop. The march stayed on the sidewalk, but the crowd had developed its own momentum. When the signals changed, people would keep going, stopping traffic till everyone had crossed the street. The motorcycle cops tailing us looked frustrated, but made no move to intervene.

The next stop was Dupont. Spirit and Mustard Seed AGs invoked a solemn tone by inviting people to join hands in a circle. Even the skate-punks paused and held their boards. Daniel, who recently had joined Spirit, spoke about Dupont's role in processing the fuel for the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. Then he knelt on the sidewalk with Melissa and the others. After a moment of prayer, they approached the entrance, wrapped a length of chain around their waists, and padlocked it to the doors.

As they settled into position, a dozen foot-police came marching up the street. They wedged between the blockaders and the rest of us, but instead of



A die-in conveyed the aftermath of a nuclear explosion, shutting down a financial district intersection in San Francisco.

beginning the arrests, they turned to face us. The commander was talking on his radio. Was he calling for reinforcements?

People seemed fidgety, and we moved on. The march, despite losing blockaders, had grown to about two hundred and fifty people by picking up stray bike messengers, office temps, and other marginal downtown types. The mood was decidedly serious, as if everyone were straining to figure out why the cops weren't busting people.

Lunch hour was upon us. If the streets had been crowded before, now they were packed. Blow-dried functionaries squeezed past leather-and-chain punks with spiked mohawks. One AG held up hand-mirrors, mutely challenging the business people to take a look. Few did.

We crossed against another light and wound up on the same side as the missile, which stopped to let the crowd pass. As the last protesters moved past, Hank, still wearing his aviator's helmet, barked out orders. "Company, forward ho!" The six co-pilots lurched into motion. The missile careened down the sidewalk, threatening a first strike on unwary pedestrians.

Next on the itinerary was Change of Heart's Bank of America action. As we started up the slight hill of California Street, the effort seemed to drain the crowd. I took off my sunglasses and wiped my brow.

Then, as if by prearrangement, a late-arriving cadre of drummers joined us. A half-dozen men and two women, playing everything from congas to cowbells to snare drums, kicked into a rhythm.

Heads turned. Eyes brightened. Steps grew bouncier, bodies began to sway. Ahead of me, Angie skipped to the beat, the archetype of the liberated secretary. She called back to me, "Come on!" All around people were joining in, but I couldn't quite pick up the groove. Dancing in my living room was one thing. But dancing in the street?

"Go for it!" I yelled to her. She danced on ahead and caught up with Alby. I scuffed my foot on the concrete. Why hadn't I worn a more flexible costume? Why hadn't I practiced dancing more? Why couldn't I just go for it?

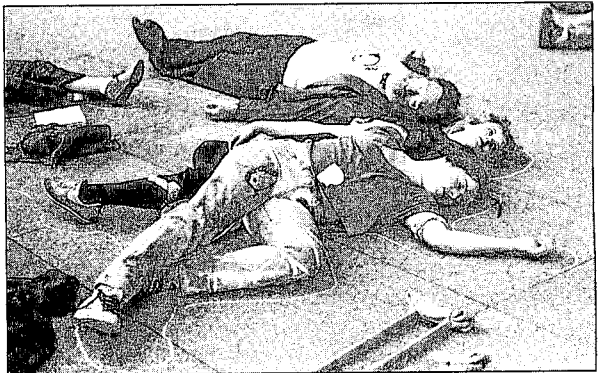
But it was hard to stay down for long. The missile-headed AG danced past me like a conga-line. People stepped off the curb, and the punk AGs, ignoring the pleas of the monitors, swept out into the street. Sid, Jenny, Raoul, and Jacey joined them. Traffic halted. Horns blared. Punks hooted and yelled back. The drummers pumped the beat. Angie danced out with a second wave. I stepped between two parked cars and followed, wishing she'd turn back and see me. Maybe I couldn't dance, but at least I knew how to block traffic.

Soon the entire march was in the street. The laughing and shouting reminded me of getting out of jail my first year at Livermore. People danced among the stalled cars. Sara and Karina waltzed up the center stripe of California Street. Moonstone twirled in circles, his tie-dyed gown fluttering in the breeze.

The motorcycle cops worked their radios overtime. A block ahead, a couple of squad cars and a paddywagon appeared, driving toward us. I moved for the sidewalk, but Raoul called out, "Come on! Up this one-way street! The cop cars can't follow."

The main crowd swung right onto Battery, leaving the paddywagon in our wake. Oncoming traffic on the narrow street backed up as we waded between the cars and trucks. Several motorcycle cops eked their way up the street in pursuit of us.

We passed Sacramento Street, heading toward Chinatown. I turned my *Wall Street Journal* hat so the masthead faced forward and wove around the stalled cars, savoring the mystified faces behind rolled-up windows.



As some protesters lay motionless in the street, others traced their outlines in chalk.

At the next corner, a squad car was blocking the street. Officers were directing traffic away from the scene, but made no attempt to confront us. Jacey and Karina were up front, and steered the march left onto Clay, another one-way street. As the last of us cleared the corner, a smile broke across my face. We were outrunning the cops!

Up at Sansome Street, there were no police in sight. We gathered at the corner, a motley but jubilant crowd of two hundred. Protesters filled the intersection, bringing traffic on both streets to a standstill. I saw Angie with Jenny and headed over toward them. All around was shouting and chanting, but the punks were the loudest: "10! 9! 8!" They yelled like it was a missile countdown. "7! 6! 5!" Angie picked up the count. I joined in, wondering where it was going. "4! 3! 2! 1! Aaaaaaggghhh!!!" Several dozen punks collapsed on the pavement, screaming as if they had just been nuked.

What a sight! As quickly as I could without tearing my costume, I lowered myself to the street.

As the screaming subsided, I rolled onto my side and looked around. Forty or fifty people lay strewn about on the concrete. Other protesters hung back, though, eyeing the "die-in" uncertainly.

A police van wormed its way up to the scene. A dozen riot cops debarked and brusquely lined up fifteen feet away, facing us.

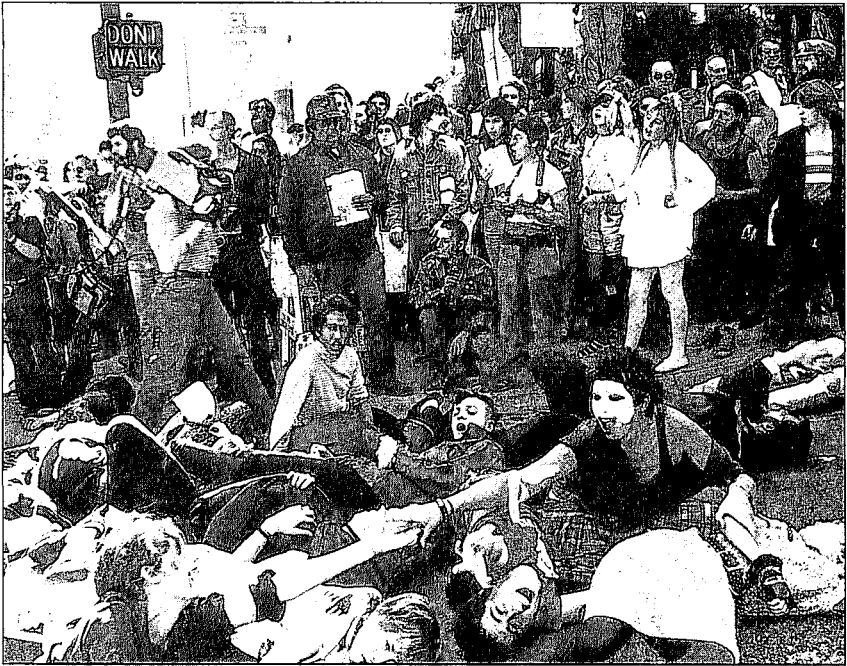
Several protesters jumped up and hurried to the sidewalk. Others followed more slowly. Glad that I wasn't the first to retreat, I got to my feet. The cops weren't moving toward us. I stood there a moment eyeing them, then sauntered back to the curb. Traffic resumed its flow.

The crowd milled about. Office workers elbowed their way through the quagmire. Near me, Karina called out: "On to Bank of America!" I picked up the cry: "On to Bank of America!"

Change of Heart filtered toward the front and started down Sansome Street. Most of the crowd followed, but at Sacramento, the punk AGs peeled off and headed up the one-way street. Sid waved people out to block traffic, which was already stopped by the rest of us crossing against the light. An AG of high school youth turned down toward Wells Fargo headquarters to prepare for their action, which was scheduled after Change of Heart's.

The cops seemed confused by our splitting up, and didn't immediately follow. As we turned the corner at California, I dropped back to walk alongside Hank and the nuke missile. Chugging up the slight incline, the crew huffed and strained. Mort's eyes were tightly shut, and he winced with each step. He groaned in relief as they hit a level stretch. The missile picked up speed. As the crew approached the next corner, they veered left to cross the street.

Suddenly, a mailbox loomed directly in their flight path. I yelled to Hank, who reacted in alarm. "Stop! Stop!" he shouted. But it was too late. The momentum of the heavy tube sent them crashing into the mailbox. The



More people joined the die-ins, and traffic backed up.

nosecone shattered with a loud crack. The missile rocked crazily. Other protesters rushed to stabilize it.

Hank adjusted his aviator's headgear, then looked over his shoulder. "Don't abandon ship," he shouted. "Company! To the rear, ho!" The crew staggered into reverse. "Damage sustained," Hank called. "Resume mission!" The rest of us cheered, and the missile rounded the corner and resumed its flight.

Ahead of us, the protest approached the Bank of America building, a dark plate-glass monolith fronted by a large plaza. I speed-walked toward the front of the march, not wanting to miss Change of Heart's action.

Although we were being pursued by a half-dozen foot-cops, there were none between us and the entrance. As we swarmed toward the glass doors, the security guard inside the lobby looked panic-stricken. He scurried up to the doors and locked them. Some protesters heckled him and pounded on the glass. I felt sorry for the guy, who seemed shaken. Employees approaching the doors were turned away by protesters. "This bank is closed by order of The People!"

A squad of cops caught up with the protest, shoved a few people aside, wedged their way in, and formed a line between us and the door. The crowd was hollering and jeering, and the squad leader radioed for help. I edged up

close. The line of cops planted their boots and gripped their nightsticks. I studied one officer, a young guy with a thin black mustache. He refused to make eye contact, but through his visor I could see discomfort playing across his face. Was he troubled by our message? Was he nervous? Scared? I laughed to myself — a scared cop. Of course, he had a club, and got paid to use it. Maybe scaring cops wasn't the best idea.

Change of Heart huddled off to one side. Then, with the row of cops as a scenic backdrop, Antonio stepped forward and declaimed a paean to Mother Earth in his rich, impassioned voice. As he waxed poetic, Alby led a solemn procession of business-suited “executives,” their faces painted like skulls, across the plaza. The executives carried briefcases stuffed with money and splattered with blood, each stenciled with a lucrative investment sphere: “South Africa,” “Nuclear Weapons,” “Third World.” They circled Antonio, throwing fistfuls of money over him like confetti.

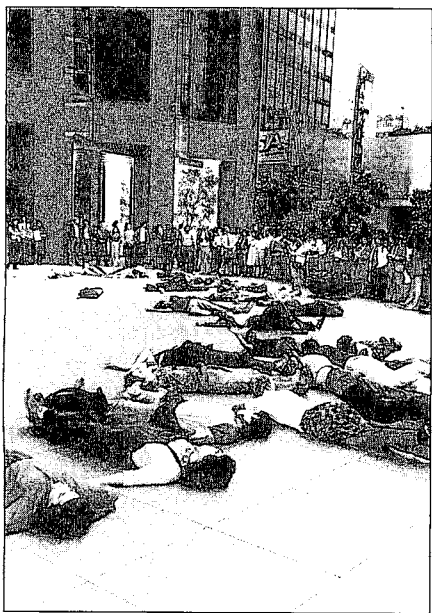
A circle of downtown workers gathered around to watch. Some seemed scornful, but many seemed curious, and accepted leaflets delineating B of A's nuclear portfolio.

Two protesters in gray stepped out from the edges of the crowd, each holding a “mushroom cloud” made of helium balloons. Strung between the

mushroom clouds was a sign reading, “Stop Banking on Nukes.” Simultaneously they released the clouds, and the banner rose gracefully past Bank of America's windows.

As the balloons rose, Angie marched in waving a flag embroidered with the Earth and stars. She joined Antonio and Lifers AG in front of the bank, where they planted the flag and clustered round in a re-creation of the famous Iwo Jima photo from World War II. “In the name of the Earth and its people, we reclaim this land for peace,” Antonio proclaimed.

Karina came forward carrying a length of chain and several padlocks. The original plan was for the cluster to chain themselves to the bank doors. But the row of cops closed off that option.



Following a skit about Bank of America's nuclear portfolio, protesters stage a die-in on the Plaza.

Karina looked at Sara, then cast the chains down in front of the line of police. "Out into the street," she cried, "Let's take the street!"

Before the cops could regroup, eight Change of Hearters and a half-dozen other volunteers moved into the intersection and sat down in the face of oncoming cars.

Angie and Jenny were the first ones seated, with Moonstone and Alby not far behind. Sara, next to me on the curb, hesitated. Conflicted thoughts seemed to flit across her brow. Then she stepped into the street and joined the action.

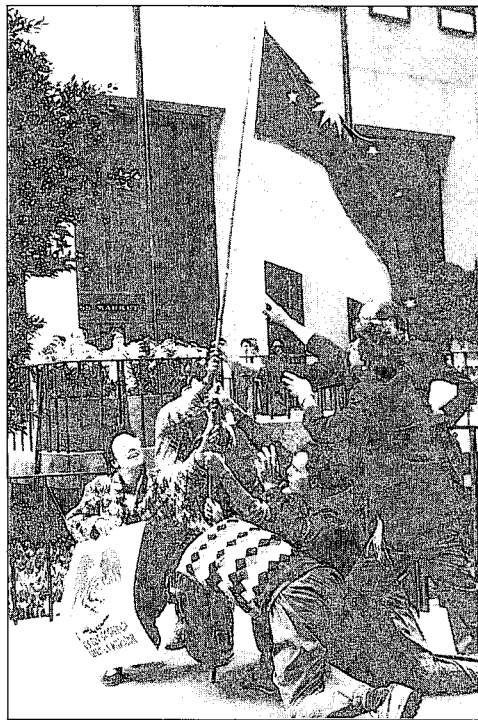
The rest of us, plus assorted bystanders, filled the sidewalk in front of B of A, bearing witness to the drama. The cops, torn between the bank and the intersection, were spread too thin to arrest and detain the blockaders. A half-dozen officers lined up in the street and pulled out their batons. My eyes grew wide. Were they seriously going to attack peaceful protesters?

Luckily, they held off for a minute and reinforcements arrived — a paddywagon and a dozen more police. The new squad fastened down their helmets and quickly took the blockaders into custody.

Jenny and Angie were the last two arrested. I tried to catch their eyes as they were hauled away, with no luck. From inside the paddywagon came shouts and laughter. I pictured Angie laughing with Alby, and felt a twinge of regret. That could be me. I should be in there. Why hadn't I joined Change of Heart's action? What was the big deal about getting arrested?

I wondered whether the earlier AGs had been busted. And what about the rest of us — would the cops try to sweep us all up?

The paddywagon doors slammed, jarring me from my reverie and reminding me how glad I was not to be getting arrested. Besides, with Raoul and Jacey still at large, who knew what else might happen? Maybe the best was still to come.



Planting the Earth flag — an AG re-created the famous World War II image.

We retreated to the plaza. What now? Somewhere in the crowd, a voice cried out: “10! 9! 8!” Jubilantly, people picked up the count: “7! 6! 5!” Dozens yelled together: “4! 3! 2! 1! Aaaaaaaggghhhh!” Hardly anyone held back. A hundred people dropped onto the pavement, screaming and kicking.

The cops fanned out as if to surround us. We scrambled back to our feet. “Down to Wells Fargo,” someone called out. “This way!”

The mass of protesters moved as one, leaving the cops behind. I stepped aside to retape a page of my costume, watching the crowd flow past. Our numbers seemed down. Then I remembered that the punks and a couple of other AGs had peeled off. Hopefully we’d all rendezvous at our next site.

Wells Fargo, a block down the hill, was the final stop of the tour. The bank had investments in thirty-two of the thirty-six top U.S. nuclear contractors, making it a fitting climax to the day. An affinity group of Berkeley High students, Dr. Spock’s Youth Brigade, had gotten to the bank’s main entrance before the cops caught on. When we arrived, a dozen teenagers were blockading the doors.

The police had been called, and a row of riot cops stood in front of an open paddywagon. They seemed thrown off by our arrival — even more when the roving punk AGs rejoined us, pursued by their own personal squad of cops.

The protest spilled into the street. The police cordoned off the entire block to traffic. Some people cheered, but I wondered if it was really a victory to get isolated with a bunch of increasingly-irritated cops.

In front of me, Sid pointed to a clump of tough-looking men across the street. “Meet your friendly neighborhood narcs! Memorize their faces!”

The half-dozen undercover cops stared back at us. Despite their attempt to dress like protesters — flannel shirts, blue jeans, and headbands — they looked more like construction workers ready for a brawl. Next to them, even the punks looked soft and innocent.

I looked through our crowd. Were we already infiltrated? It wasn’t like Livermore, where I knew everyone that I was in the street with.

A squad of helmeted police marched up to the blockade line. We jeered as they began arresting the teenage protesters.

Someone started counting off a die-in. Ten seconds later we were lying all over the sidewalk and street, moaning and groaning and generally making it difficult for the police to get the arrestees over to the paddywagon.

I lay on my back, crinkling my newspaper costume. I took off my sunglasses. My eyes ran up the old twenty-story high-rise. I squinted, and realized there were faces peering down — dozens of Wells Fargo employees were leaning out the windows of the old building, gawking at us.

Someone started a chant: “Corporate Killers! Corporate Killers!”

Even more workers leaned out of their windows, and a second chant gained momentum among the protesters: “Jump! Jump! Jump!” I shuddered and laughed. “Jump! Jump!”



A youth AG blocked the entrance to Wells Fargo headquarters as the final action of the day.

The cops gradually got the youth AG into the paddywagon. They slammed the back door and fired up the engine. With everyone arrested, the die-in seemed pointless. I climbed to my feet and moved back to the sidewalk with the rest of the crowd.

People looked around. Was the demo winding down? That was fine by me. It had been a good day, and I didn't see a lot more we could do. If we wrapped up now, we could call the day a success.

I assumed others felt the same. But as the paddywagon started to pull out, Raoul stepped directly in front of it. "Come on!" he hollered. "Take the street!"

Was he crazy? Did he really trust the cops not to run over him? "Come on!" Raoul yelled again.

Several officers came trotting toward the commotion. People yelled to Raoul, who slowly backed away from the approaching cops. A couple of them used their clubs to nudge him back, but meanwhile Sid and Jacey slipped past them and blocked the van again. Others spilled off the curb, and the van had to wait while the cops formed a line and forced everyone back onto the sidewalk.

Finally, the paddywagon made its escape, seeming to take with it the last lingering purpose of our protest. People were starting to leave. Jacey and Raoul looked exasperated.

I felt exasperated back at them. Over the course of the day, I had marched in the street, done die-ins, even gotten in the way of the cops arresting the youth AG. But every time I joined something, these guys went and pushed it further. Enough already!

Norm, still wearing his red monitor's headband, took the bullhorn. "Come on, let's march back to the Embarcadero and do a closing," he called out. A handful of people seconded the idea, but no one started the stampede. Jacey muttered to himself and stalked off with a few friends. Other people were filtering away.

I felt a dull pain building behind my eyes. What was the point in a closing circle? I looked at the dwindling crowd. Why not just head for BART? I felt like I'd come full circle, back to how I felt before Angie had arrived at Embarcadero. I wished she hadn't gotten arrested, so I had someone to ride home with.

Suddenly, back in front of Wells Fargo, a scuffle erupted. Two undercover had grabbed a protester — Raoul! They forced him toward a patrol car. More cops converged. They formed a tight circle around Raoul and shoved him into the back seat of the cruiser.

I joined a knot of people yelling at the cop car as it sped away. Tai was the only person I recognized. "They got him for blocking the van," he said. "They waited till people were leaving and grabbed him!"

I sucked in a breath. What dirty players, nailing someone after the protest was done! Then I laughed coldly. Had I thought there were rules, and the game was officially over?

The undercover had disappeared. The crowd, now fifty strong, yelled at the remaining cops, who gestured mockingly at us with their clubs as they backed away toward their cars. One seemed to point right at me, as if calling me a dupe, and I erupted. "Cowards! You wait until we're leaving and grab someone! Cowards!"

Norm hurried up to me. "What happened? That was Raoul? Damn! I told him if he got popped, I'd go, too." He pulled off his shoulder bag and thrust it at me. "Take this back to the office, I'll get it later." He fished around in his pockets and slipped me a small baggie of weed. "Get rid of this, too," he said.

I didn't have time to ask questions before he turned and strode into the street, blocking the path of a departing squad car. From the other side of the street, Sid and a couple of punks joined him. The cops got out, pushed the protesters against the car, clamped on handcuffs, and shoved all four into the rear seat of the cruiser.

I stood there, still holding the weed. The police turned toward the rest of us. A chill ran up my back. I ripped off the remnants of my newspaper costume, wadded Norm's bag of weed into it, and stuffed it deep into a trash container.

As I turned back, one cop seemed to be staring directly at me. I felt

vulnerable, isolated. Where was everyone I knew? Oh yeah — in jail. How weird to be the only one on the outside.

I spotted Tai and headed over toward him. The rest of the protesters were filtering away. Lunch hour was over, and the sidewalks were thinning out.

I looked at Tai. "Think anyone went to Embarcadero for the closing?"

"Maybe. Hank said he was taking the missile over there."

At that moment, Hank and Mort came around the corner without the missile. Mort massaged his shoulder as they approached us. "What's going on?"

"Two undercover cops just grabbed Raoul," Tai said. "He wasn't doing anything, just standing there."

"Narcs," Hank said contemptuously. We looked around. The remaining cops seemed to be packing up shop. Hank turned to me. "Can you give us a hand getting the missile over to Embarcadero?"

"Where is it now?"

"We stashed it in an alley around the corner," Hank said. "Hopefully we didn't get a ticket for an illegally parked nuclear missile. Come on, let's get out of here."

I RODE BACK to Berkeley with Hank and Mort. Hank basked in the success of the missile. "People loved it. Now we have to get some wheels on it. Can you imagine their faces when we come peddling up the street?"

"Our whole protest got some pretty funny looks today," I said. "And we had the cops totally confused. When we split into smaller groups, they didn't know what to do."

"I wouldn't go that far," Mort said. "I think they were checking us out. The stakes were pretty low this time. I wouldn't read too much into it as far as how they'll be next time."

"Yeah," Hank said. "Cops don't like losing."

By the time we got back to Berkeley and unloaded the missile, it was 6:30. Coordinating Council had been called off for the week, so the two of them were heading to Hank's shop to play pinball. "We'll probably order a pizza," Mort said. "Why don't you come over?"

"Sounds like fun," I said. "But I told Holly I'd meet her around seven."

Holly, who was gardening at an Urban Ecology plot in West Berkeley, wasn't back when I got home. I made some popcorn and opened a book on Medieval economics, but my mind kept wandering off. The only subject I had attention for lately was art history. I was still pretty good at looking at pictures.

I fiddled around with my guitar, which I had been neglecting again since singing at BARF a month before. Maybe I'd have more time for music this Fall, since LAG didn't have anything planned...

Of course having no plans was hardly something to celebrate. We had to find a way to move forward. The Strategy Proposal was taking forever to get up and running, and I sensed our momentum grinding to a halt. There seemed to

be just one option — call an action. Jenny and I were proposing a spokescouncil meeting in November to consider action proposals for the Winter and Spring. Something to tide us over until the Strategy discussions produced a new consensus. Unless we had a focus, it felt like LAG might fizzle out altogether.

A key turned in the front door, startling me out of my thoughts. Holly came in and gave me a quick hug. “I’m so cold,” she said. Her face was pale except for the red of her nose. “I’ve got to take a hot shower.”

As she headed down the hall, I opened a beer and put on a tape of The Clash. As the guitars crunched the opening chords, I suddenly wanted to tell Holly all about the protest — Hank’s missile, countdowns and die-ins, the confused cops, marching down the center of the street, Raoul getting arrested... I grabbed a piece of paper and started listing things I should write about in my journal.

When Holly came back from the shower, she went in the kitchen and put some soup on the stove. I clicked off The Clash and walked over to the doorway. “You missed a really good action today,” I said.

“Oh, yeah. How was it?” She opened the refrigerator and got some juice.

I leaned against the door frame. “Pretty exciting.” The images came flooding back, but how could I put them into words? I thought of the people in jail — Angie, Jenny, Raoul, Sid, Karina, and the rest. They were still in the midst of the action.

“How many people were there?” she asked.

“Two or three hundred.”

“Is that all?”

“Well, yeah.” I remembered my initial disappointment with the size of the crowd. “But the spirit was amazing. People were marching in the streets, running up one-way streets to avoid the cops, blocking intersections. Raoul got grabbed by undercover cops, and then Norm and Sid got busted in solidarity.”

She poured her soup into a bowl. “I’m glad I wasn’t there,” she said.

I looked at her in chagrin. She was looking down and stirring her soup. “Too bad Norm got arrested,” she said. “We have a peace camp meeting tomorrow night. He’s been going out to Livermore to look for land. If he isn’t there, it’ll be hard to move ahead.”

“Norm might have other priorities than the peace camp right now,” I said. “LAG had an action today.”

She looked up in surprise. “The peace camp is LAG, too. There’s a whole work group — Daniel, Melissa, Artemis, Monique...”

“Not the broadest cross section,” I said.

“Was today any better?”

“A little.” I ate a handful of popcorn, but it tasted stale. I wished I hadn’t said anything about the peace camp. “How about some music?”

“Sure,” she said. “Not too loud, though.”

Nothing in the rows of tapes looked very appealing. I finally settled on an old bluegrass album.

Holly brought her soup out to the table. "I'm sorry I'm not more excited about the protest," she said. "How did Change of Heart's action go?"

I sat down with her and took a drink of beer. "It was good," I said quietly. "I didn't feel very involved with the cluster today."

"Yeah, sometimes Change of Heart doesn't feel like my group anymore. And with International Day postponed, I don't see those people much, either." She paused as if observing a moment of silence. "That's part of my dream for the peace camp. If we're living together on the land, maybe we'll build deeper bonds than at protests."

She scrunched up her neck as if trying to release a knot. I stood up, moved behind her, and started kneading her shoulders. She leaned her head back against my stomach.

"How about going out for a walk," I said, hoping the change of venue might shift our perspectives.

"I'm really tired," she said. "How about coming to bed with me? We haven't made love all week."

"Okay," I said, although a walk was what I really wanted. Maybe later I'd go out alone. My back felt tight as I followed her down the hall. I stopped and stretched against a door frame, then let go a yawn.

In our bedroom, Holly lit a candle. I put on a Thelonius Monk tape. We stretched out on the bed, still talking about this and that. I told her about Karina and Sara waltzing in the street at the protest.

Holly smiled. "I'd like to have seen that. Those two are so beautiful. Especially Sara. Don't you think so?"

I nodded. Holly was quiet for a minute, then asked in a calm, inquisitive voice, "Have you ever been in bed with two women?"

Her question caught me off-guard, and I had to think for a moment. "No," I finally said. "I guess I think of it like conversation — the deepest connections are between two people. It's hard to imagine that kind of intimacy among three."

Holly rolled onto her back. "Frank and I slept with a woman friend of ours one time. I liked it a lot. It's hard to imagine being physical with just a woman. I'd feel so awkward. But with a man and a woman, it was like I had permission to explore. I wanted to do it again, but Frank and I broke up shortly after that."

I tried to picture Sara with us in a threesome, but I had trouble imagining her being interested. Now Karina or Angie, well, my imagination definitely stretched that far. Not that I was going to initiate anything. But if Holly wanted to try it, well...

Holly leaned over and kissed my lips. We gazed into each other's eyes silently, then kissed again. I ran my hand down her back, down the length of

her leg. She pressed her body against mine. As I ran my fingers through her hair, I imagined it was Karina's thick black tresses I was caressing. I felt a rush of excitement. I pushed the image away, but it kept coming back, and finally I stopped resisting.

Afterward, we lay together silently, side by side, holding hands. I felt guilty for my fantasies, and was glad Holly wasn't facing me. Finally she drifted off. I lay with her for a while, ruminating about our relationship and about LAG. In the flickering candlelight, the two seemed barely distinct. What would it take to rekindle the passion? What would it take to bring us back together?

Tuesday, October 25, 1983

Sixteen Americans were killed and seventy-seven injured this morning as the United States invaded the Caribbean nation of Grenada and deposed recently-elected Prime Minister Maurice Bishop. Bishop is an avowed socialist and leader of the "New Jewel" movement in Grenada.

A Reagan administration spokesman said that ensuring the safety of the approximately 1100 American citizens on Grenada was the goal of the intervention, which was supported by the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

— from news reports

THE NEXT DAY began as usual. I slept till noon, showered, and shuffled out to the living room to have a snack before I checked in on my job.

As I got to the end of the hallway, Holly was just hanging up the telephone. She turned her head slowly. Her hand remained motionless on the phone. "That was Caroline — Reagan has invaded Grenada."

"Grenada? The island? What did they do to us?"

"Elected a socialist government."

"So we invaded them? That's incredible." I looked out the window, then back at Holly. "The strongest country in the world invading a tiny island? You'd think we might have a little pride."

Holly nodded. "I wonder if there's a protest up at Cal?"

We decided to walk up to campus. On Telegraph Avenue, people were going about life as if nothing had happened. Did people even know? When we crossed Bancroft onto Sproul Plaza, though, a speaker with a portable mic and amplifier was giving a forceful speech about U.S. imperialism. He was flanked by a few people with hastily-lettered signs. A small crowd of students gathered to listen, but most people ignored him, or stared as if it were a historical re-enactment of Berkeley's glory days.

I felt like I'd awakened into an alternate reality. "Where are all the

protesters?" I said as we walked home afterwards. "Hasn't anyone heard of Vietnam? Don't they know what intervention means?"

"People don't understand what's happened yet," Holly said. "The media is calling it a 'police action,' not military intervention. It'll take time for the truth to get out."

At the rally, someone had announced that CISPES and other Central America groups were calling for a march through downtown Berkeley that evening. I needed to work my job that afternoon, but Holly dedicated a couple of hours to phoning LAGers to let them know about the march.

We headed downtown about five o'clock. "A lot of people told me they'd be there," Holly said. "I'll bet there'll be several hundred people."

"I sure hope so," I said. The little lunchtime rally had left me unsettled and irritable. Another pint-sized protest and I'd have to wonder what was becoming of our movement.

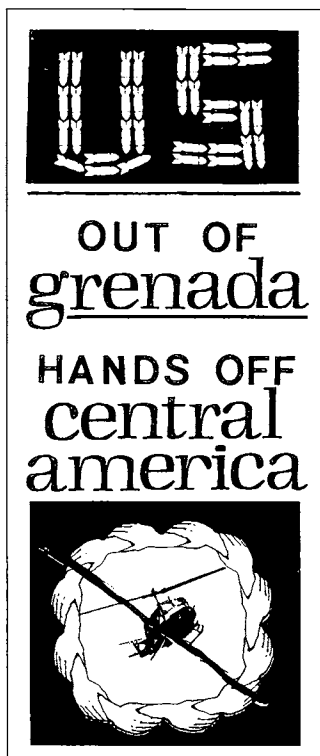
I needn't have worried. When we arrived at the downtown Berkeley BART station, a couple of hundred people had already gathered. Handmade signs were everywhere, and the Inkworks collective had printed a bunch of red and black placards for others to carry.

Here and there I spotted familiar faces, but most were new to me. That's actually a good sign, I thought. Not just the usual suspects. As more and more people arrived, I could practically feel the tide turning.

A couple of leftist groups with dueling bullhorns each attracted a small audience, but the demo lacked focus. I wished I'd brought my guitar.

Sure enough, what brought us together was music. Country Joe McDonald, a hero of the 1969 Woodstock festival, showed up and sang his Vietnam-era "Feel Like I'm Fixin' To Die Rag," followed by "Give Peace a Chance." As Country Joe sang the final chorus, the whole crowd seemed to join in — except for one young woman in ragged black clothes who stalked the perimeter snarling, "Screw this! Let's march! Screw this!"

Hank and Mort showed up with a van-load of signs that Overthrow had painted for past Central America demonstrations. "These'll come in handy,"



Hank said. "Especially since Nicaragua is probably next on Reagan's hit list."

Karina and Sara arrived from the City. "There's a march tomorrow in the Mission, but nothing tonight," Sara said. "So we came over here."

"Yeah," Karina said. "I couldn't miss this."

Sara looked at the crowd, which overflowed the little plaza and stretched down the sidewalk. "Reagan has gotten away with covert intervention in Central America, hiring mercenaries and selling weapons. But people won't stand for war. Didn't the government learn anything from Vietnam?"

"I guess Reagan has to learn the lesson for himself," I said.

All through the crowd I spotted LAGers — Pilgrim, Daniel, Claudia, Doc and Belinda with their son Jeremy, Artemis, Moonstone...

The one person I missed was Angie. If Karina and Sara were out of jail, Angie must be, too. I should have called and made sure she knew about the protest. Probably Holly left her a message. More people were showing up every minute, so there was still a chance.

One of the bullhorns finally rounded the crowd up. Five or six hundred strong, we marched away from the BART station, waving banners and chanting. For once, chanting felt good, like it focused our anger instead of squandering it. We started on the wide downtown sidewalks, but at the first intersection we swept out and took over the southbound lanes of Shattuck Avenue, clogging the southbound lanes. The Berkeley police ordered us out of the street, to no effect. Some people even crossed over the median strip and slowed oncoming traffic, but the police succeeded in herding them back onto the southbound side.

As we rounded the corner at Dwight, two young guys in leather jackets came marching toward us waving a large American flag. My eyes opened wide.



Crowds shut down Berkeley streets in response to news of the Grenada invasion.

Were they crazy? Then one of them whipped out a pocket lighter and flamboyantly torched the corner of Old Glory, which went up in flames so fast that his partner dropped the pole and jumped back.

Most people cheered, although a few shook their heads. I stood transfixed till only embers remained. I'd just witnessed my first flag-burning — a rite of passage.

I found Holly, and we headed up Dwight toward Telegraph Avenue. "Right toward our building," I said. "Can you believe it, we're marching right past our apartment!"

Bystanders joined in. The fresh recruits fueled the chanting: "Stop the killing, Stop the war! U.S. out of Grenada!"

As we passed a row of three-story apartment buildings on Dwight, someone belted out another chant, which the crowd quickly took up: "Out of your houses and into the street! Out of your houses and into the street!" Faces appeared in the windows. Voices twenty feet above yelled their support. From every door people streamed out. Like magic, the crowd doubled in the space of a few blocks.

Holly and I clasped hands as we swept by our building. I gazed at the front steps and the little garden that I tended daily. They'd just become part of history.

We crossed Telegraph, where dozens more joined. "Looks like the truth is getting out," I said to Holly.

We must have numbered a thousand as we angled across People's Park and hit the first U.C. dormitory complex. We marched through the commons, raising a ruckus in the concrete canyons. Hundreds of students were out on their balconies, cheering and raising their fists in solidarity.

When we emerged from the dorms and turned onto Bancroft Avenue, Holly spied Caroline. She made her way through the crowd, and I lost sight of her. I looked downhill toward the front of the march. For a good three blocks, the wide street was packed with people. Chants and shouts resounded from the surrounding buildings.

The cops gave up challenging us for control of the street. Instead, they acted like parade monitors, stationing themselves at cross streets and ordering oncoming traffic to stop for us. Stalled motorists responded by honking in time to the chants. Everyone seemed to know they were part of something big.

As the march headed back downtown, I ran into Sara. I was walking fast, and she sort of bounded alongside me, her long hair fluttering over her shoulders. I remembered hearing that Sara had been a cheerleader in high school. Go team! Stop traffic!

"Unreal, isn't it?" I said. "This is the most people I've ever seen at a protest."

"Hardly," she said. "There were a lot more than this at the Euromissiles demo on Saturday."

I laughed. "That was different. This is the real thing!"

The cops continued to stop traffic for us. But one intersection eluded their

patrol, and a couple of fraternity types in a sports coupe tried to force their way through a thin spot in the crowd.

Marchers exploded in rage. Fists and signs hammered down on the vehicle. People swarmed against the doors and started rocking the car, but others stepped in and shepherded the coupe back out of the jam. When the car turned and fled, a roar went up from those in the vicinity.

I stepped to the sidelines and watched the crowd stream by. People passing the spot even a minute later seemed to have no idea of the incident. The march was too dense for anyone to know what was happening a half-block away.

My part of the march neared the downtown Bank of America. Perhaps out of patriotic zeal, the bank had left its American flag flying on the corner pole. It would have been torched long before, except for one resolute protester, a short woman with glasses and graying hair. She stood with her back to the pole, begging the crowd to spare Old Glory. "Please don't burn it," she pleaded. "It alienates people from our cause."

A tall, skinny guy about my age jumped up on a trash container and started shrieking, "Burn it! Get the flag! Burn it!"

I stopped and stared at him. His fists were clenched, and the veins bulged out of his neck. "Burn the flag!"

Several people harried the flagpole, but the woman fended them off.

"Get the flag! Burn it!" His screeching set me on edge. Suddenly he leapt off the trash can and started for the woman. I stepped into his path. "Hey, buddy, cool off."

He froze for an instant, then whirled at me. "Narc! Cop! Get away from me! Pig! Get away from me!" With a wild look he darted into the crowd.

I staggered back a step and wished I could disappear. How mortifying, to be called a narc in front of all these strangers!

To my relief, I spotted Lyle and Mort coming past. I made my way over and took a deep breath, glad to be among friends. I looked back at the flagpole, where the woman continued to fend off all attempts on the flag.

We rounded the corner and overflowed the six lanes of University Avenue. Up front, CISPES and others argued over what to do next. The CISPES faction wanted to go to city hall and demand that the city council, which met on Tuesday evenings, pass a resolution condemning the invasion. Others wanted to march on through downtown.

CISPES' plan made sense to me. Success with the liberal city council was likely, and a resolution would be a good climax to the march.

Out in the center of the intersection at Shattuck, someone had gotten a small fire burning. I spied Jacey rifling a newspaper rack for fuel. "More newspapers," he yelled. "We need more papers."

The police, restrained up to that point, seemed agitated at the sight of the fire. Several cops near me bunched together and conferred. Over in front

of McDonald's, a row of helmeted officers fidgeted with their billyclubs.

Across the street, a protester with long dreadlocks kicked in a *USA Today* stand and grabbed the papers. Onlookers cheered. A moment later, though, four cops pushed through the crowd and seized the perpetrator. They had him dead to rights. But in a flash, a dozen people surged forward. I watched incredulously as they grabbed the dreadlocked guy back. The cops melted, and slunk away like reprimanded schoolboys. A shout rose from the crowd, and more papers were heaped on the bonfire.

Gradually, the crowd drifted toward city hall, two blocks away. It was eight o'clock, still early enough to catch the council and demand a resolution.

The crowd overflowed the lawn and closed the street in front of the old domed building. I arrived just in time to see Mayor Gus Newport come out of the council meeting. He walked slowly to the top of the stairs holding a bullhorn. People were yelling and chanting, but finally the crowd quieted enough for the mayor to speak.

Newport was a burly man, with the presence of a fullback or a bodyguard. But his speaking manner, even through a bullhorn, was distinctly low-key. He calmly informed us that the Berkeley Citizens' Action majority on the city council had already adopted a proposal condemning the Grenada invasion as a racist attack on the predominantly Black Caribbean nation, and calling it a diversion of attention from the real war on the poor in our own country. The crowd cheered, and when Newport urged people to head home and return to the streets the next day, most seemed ready to comply. A few die-hards wanted to keep marching that night, but it made sense to me that a peaceful denouement to the first night's march would encourage more people to come out tomorrow.

I found Holly in the crowd and gave her a long hug. "Pretty amazing, huh?" My voice was hoarse from yelling.

"It's hard to believe," she said. "And this is just the first night."

All the way home, we traded stories and relived the night. I told her about the un-arrest of the dreadlocked guy. "I always think of the police as invincible," I said. "But when the crowd challenged them, they caved in."

"I think we were reaching a lot of the police," she said. "I loved seeing them stopping traffic for us."

Holly went to bed soon after we got home, but I stayed up for several hours, trying to capture every detail and nuance in my journal.

It was a great story. Somewhere along the way, though, my exhilaration abated. We take over the streets and yell and chant angry slogans — then we go home and have dinner and write in our journals. It seemed a little too easy.

Still, gripping images stayed with me. Thousands of people taking to the streets... Traffic brought to a standstill... Flags burned... The police powerless to stop us...

Friday, November 4, 1983

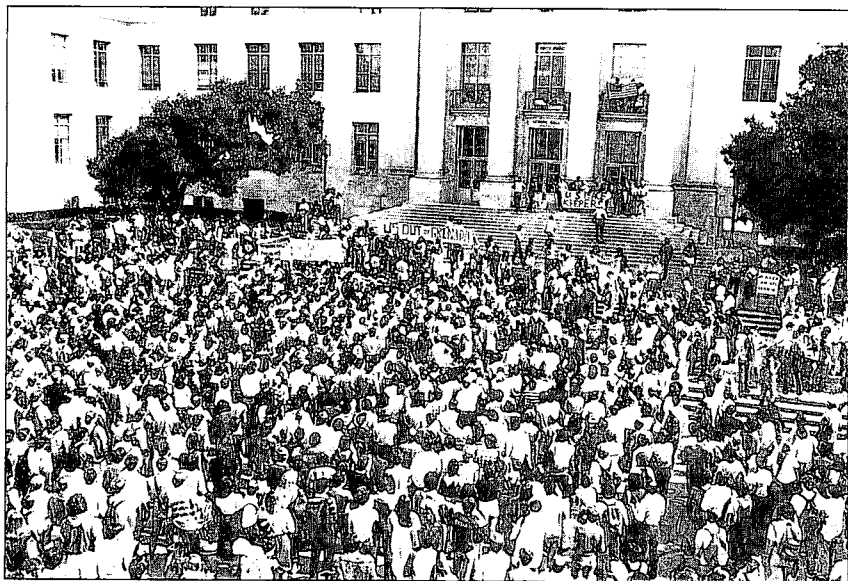
THE FOLLOWING afternoon saw a big noon rally on Sproul Plaza, followed by a march and die-ins around downtown Berkeley. The marches continued for the next several days, and Central America support groups called for an emergency coalition to do a rally on November 12th. Mort and Melissa and I went to the coalition meetings as LAG reps, and I volunteered to help coordinate fund-raising.

True to our word, we continued protesting until the war ended. Which was easy, since the fighting was over in a few days. The socialists were deposed, an acceptable regime was installed, and the conquering heroes headed home to a wave of patriotic fervor unmatched since the early 1960s. Aside from small protests in San Francisco and a handful of other cities, there was no visible dissent. Every day it was the same headline: "America Stands Tall Again!"

I was stunned. With our anti-nuclear protests, even if we numbered only in the low thousands, I always felt that huge numbers of Americans stood behind us. Now, far from being the vanguard of a new anti-war movement, the Bay Area looked like a dusty relic of a bygone era.

That first night, I thought we'd reached a crisis point — even moderates who had slumbered through the nuclear build-up and the social cutbacks of Reagan's first three years would finally wake up.

But where were they? Where were the legions who had stopped the



UC students and community members gathered for an anti-invasion rally on Sproul Plaza, historic site of the mid-1960s Free Speech Movement.

Vietnam War? Where were the university occupations and waterfront strikes? Did we have to wait till thousands were dead before war was worth protesting?

Even worse was the absurd outpouring of patriotism in middle America. As if attacking Grenada was something to be proud of! I pictured my family back in Terre Haute, good Christians every one. They took it on faith that America stood for righteousness and truth. If the president said we were fighting a just and necessary war against a ruthless enemy bent on our utter destruction, it must be so.

Doggedly, almost as a way of distracting myself from reality, I stuck with the organizing for the November 12th rally. The coalition meetings were stiff and uninspiring. But I felt appreciated for my work on fund-raising, and LAG, which older organizations seemed to have regarded as a flash in the pan, was becoming part of the progressive community. Maybe something good would come of it.

As I APPROACHED the office early Friday afternoon, I spotted Karina and Sara talking outside the door. I started toward them, then realized they were arguing heatedly. I tried to nod and slide past, but as I approached, Karina stepped over and welcomed me with a long hug.

I looked over her shoulder at Sara, who said a quiet "hello." She seemed to be staring at the back of Karina's head. As we ended our hug, Karina kept hold of my hand and asked how I was doing. Sara reached for the door. "I'm going back inside," she said curtly to Karina. "I'll see you tonight."


Karina squeezed my hand as if thanking me for extricating her from a tight spot. "I'm taking off. See you soon."

"Where are you heading?"

She looked both ways, then leaned close. "To buy spraypaint. We're doing a stencil that shows the outline of Central America, plus two lines of words, so we need three colors."

"On a Friday night? Why not wait till Sunday, so you only have to stay in jail one night if you get caught?"

PROTEST THE INVASION
U.S. OUT OF GRENADA!



national day of protest
SATURDAY, NOV. 12
San Francisco Bay Area
A CALL TO ACTION - MARCH FOR PEACE

- Stop Reagan's intervention in Central America & the Caribbean!
- No U.S. troops or military installations in Grenada!
- Stop the U.S.-backed war against Nicaragua!
- End U.S. military aid to El Salvador!
- No more Vietnam wars!

Assemble 10:00 am Oakland City Hall (14th & Broadway)
March 11:30 am
Rally 1:00 pm Mosswood Park (Jct. Arthur & Broadway)

Included by
U.S. Grenada Friendship Society
Central America News Information Coalition (CANIC)
For more information call 800 368 3481 ext 101 or 415 3113

A hastily-formed local coalition called a November 12 rally, but by that time the "war" was over and the troops were heading home.

She smiled slyly. "We're doing the same stencil over in the Mission on Sunday night."

I laughed. "Give me a call from jail."

"It's a collect call," she said.

"It'd be worth it. I've never gotten a call from anyone in jail." We hugged again, and I turned to enter the office. The door seemed to stick more than usual. Inside, it took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the light and spot the people amidst the clutter. Sara and Claude were working at a front table. Maria turned from her desk to say hi.

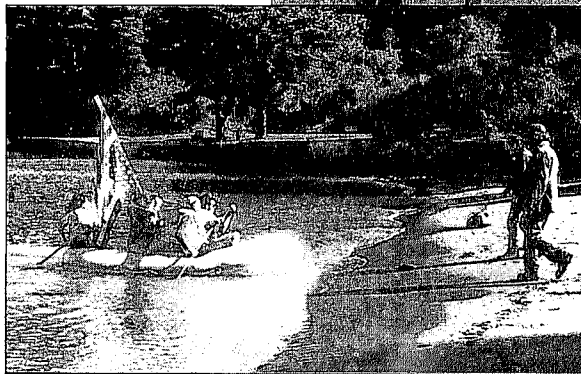
At a back table I spied Angie and Jenny and Raoul working on a mailing. Angie was seated facing the front, and waved to me. I needed to open the Direct Action mail and talk to Maria about the next weekend's spokescouncil, but then maybe I could go back and hang out with them.

As I checked the mail, I looked at Sara. What was going on between her and Karina? Was it a spat, or deeper problems? Her forehead was furrowed as she talked with Claude about the proposal for an Emergency Response Network. I pulled up a chair next to her.

"We need the ERN in place fast," Claude said. "Nicaragua and Cuba are prime targets. Reagan would love to wipe economic and social issues off the front page with war. We need to be ready."

"I think the spokescouncil will go for it," Sara said. "It would give LAG a whole new purpose."

I agreed. I'd heard some



Enola Gay AG led the Faggot Liberation Army and other Allied Forces in an invasion of Angel Island in the San Francisco Bay, in solidarity with the U.S invasion of Grenada.

concerns about process, like who could trigger the network and how to choose a target for an emergency action. But we could work on that. The key point was to be ready with a plan. Reagan's militaristic posturing was polarizing the country, forcing thousands more to take a stand. Soon, it might be millions. And LAG would be on the cutting edge, rallying the forces of dissent and resistance.

Then I thought about Holly. What if she were typical? After the initial frenzy of "emergency responses," the reality of our isolation and powerlessness seemed to overwhelm her. "All we do is rush around protesting the latest atrocity," she had said recently. "It's burning me out. I need to stay focused on positive projects like the peace camp."

Holly had been so depressed the past week that I didn't argue. If working on the peace camp helped stabilize her moods, good for her. But to me, the ERN held a lot more promise for rejuvenating LAG than did the peace camp. We needed an action.

Doc came in the door. "I've got the photos from yesterday," he said.

I went over and sat next to him on one of the front couches, glad for the respite from worrying. The previous day, Enola Gay AG had commemorated the Grenada invasion by leading Change of Heart and friends in an amphibious assault on Angel Island, a state park in the middle of the Bay.

Angie and Jenny, who had been part of the expedition, came to have a look. Jenny sat by Doc. Angie sat on the back of the couch, draping her arm loosely around my shoulder and leaning forward to see the pictures. Her hair brushed my face as she reached for one of the photos. It was a shot of her, Jenny, and Alby paddling a rubber raft toward the island. Jenny gritted her teeth as she worked against the waves. Alby was laughing, and Angie, wearing a camouflage beret, wielded her paddle like a bazooka aimed right at the photographer.

Why hadn't I done the action with them? I had convinced myself that the Grenada coalition rally, just a week away, demanded all my attention. And there certainly was plenty to be done. But seeing the photos, I doubted I'd made the best decision.

Doc held up a photo of the rafts landing on the island. An upside-down American flag fluttered in the breeze. Another showed Enola Gay planting the Faggot Liberation Army banner.

"When we landed," said Jenny, "there were some tourists on the beach, and they put up their arms like they were surrendering."

Angie laughed, which set me laughing, too. She put the photos in the graphics folder, then followed Jenny back to where Raoul was working on the mailing. I looked over my list of phone calls. Nothing seemed especially pressing. I put the list in my mail slot and made my way to the back of the office.

Just as I pulled up a chair, the phone rang for Angie. She went up front to answer, and I was left with Jenny and Raoul.

Jenny and I had gotten closer since Holly left the staff. She was my main co-conspirator at the office, and I supported her at Coordinating Council. But our relationship didn't have the lightness of Angie and me, especially when Raoul was around.

Raoul and I folded the letters and handed them to Jenny to stuff in the envelopes. I hadn't talked with him since his arrest at the financial district action, which seemed like ages ago. He and most of the forty men arrested had elected to stay in jail till arraignment.

"They threatened some of us with heavy charges," he said. "But most of the men held solidarity and refused to give their names. And after three days they let us all out with time-served. It was a great feeling, especially when Norm and Sid got busted in solidarity with me."

"Three days," I said. "What did you do for three days?"

"We spent a lot of time analyzing street tactics. Sid and I made up this board game called 'Gridlock,' where you try to block streets and stop traffic and outrun the cops."

I laughed. "Go straight to Jail — do not pass Go."

He squinted at me. "The point is to get people thinking in terms of small groups. There's an inertia in a large group of people that makes it easy for the monitors and cops to control. With small groups, the cops might thwart some of us, but other AGs would get through." He paused, and his eyes seemed to focus beyond me. "But at least we disrupted something. With just a couple of hundred people we created chaos. What if there were a thousand next time?"

Silently I took a new stack of letters and began folding. Good luck finding another eight hundred street protesters. Gridlock tactics weren't going to draw old-line LAGers. I could already hear Melissa and Nathaniel lecturing us about nonviolence and taking responsibility for our actions.

But I didn't bring it up. Raoul and I tended to get into a dynamic where he was the hip young dude into rap music, squatting, and street demos, while I was the stodgy old-timer who made phone calls for coalition rallies and worried about what Melissa might think.

This time, though, I had a trump card. Raoul's three days in jail meant that he missed the first Grenada march. I told him about the crowd taking over the streets, the cops stopping traffic, and seeing the dreadlocked guy get un-arrested.

I narrated the last incident in gripping detail, but Raoul just shrugged. "Oh, yeah, cops are total cowards if anyone stands up to them. They depend on us being intimidated by the mere threat of violence."

"It's sometimes more than a threat," I said.

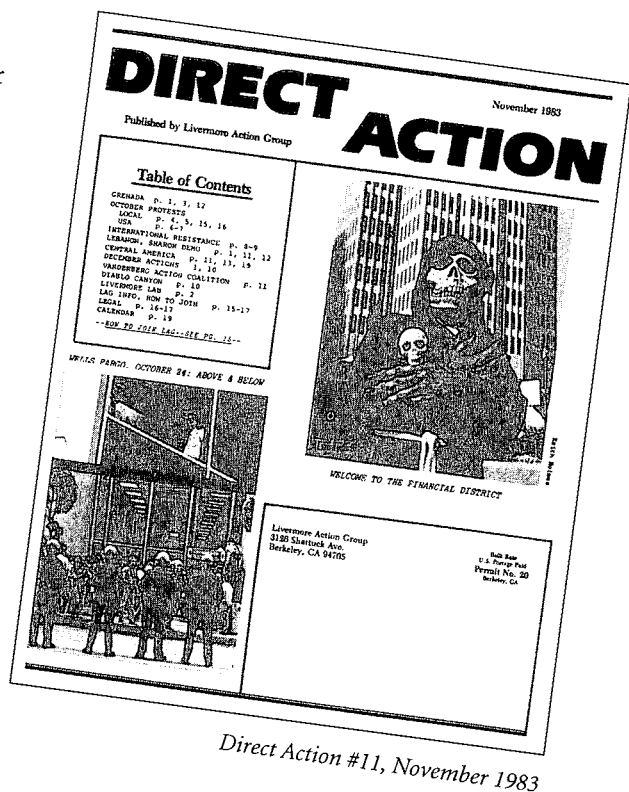
He shrugged again. Too bad Angie was still on the phone. She'd find a way to prick Raoul's bubble.

Suppose he had been at the Grenada march. Sure, he'd have been in the street. But would he have grabbed the dreadlocked guy back? It wasn't just a

question of courage or strength — it was speed. You had to act without hesitation. No time to think. I had little doubt about myself — I'd be too slow, too worried about the consequences, too much in awe of the police. That others were so unflinchingly defiant amazed me.

As we folded the last of the letters, Angie got off the phone and came back to join us. I gestured to the chair next to me. But she declined. "I've got to get going," she said. She leaned down and gave me a hug. "I'll see you soon."

Just my luck, I thought. I work on the mailing, suffer stoically through Raoul's smugness — and still get no time with Angie.



Direct Action #11, November 1983

Monday, November 21, 1983

"DAMN IT!" Claude said. His gray hair glowed under the flickering fluorescent light. "Either we provide a channel for the anger, or we're going to be swept aside. The ERN is our one hope to keep LAG relevant."

Across the twelve-person circle, Doc exhaled sharply through his teeth. "The ERN would destroy affinity group process. Why not set up a steering committee and quit pretending?"

The Emergency Response Network wasn't even on Coordinating Council's agenda. But the bad blood from the previous weekend's spokescouncil seeped into every discussion.

I was facilitating the meeting, trying to keep us on the agenda while allowing some opening for people to vent their frustrations about the ERN. I

cleared my throat, which felt scratchy. Someone's folding chair creaked. I wished I had some water.

Claude, sitting with his back to a green chalkboard, didn't even bother to raise his hand. "You're condemning LAG to impotence," he said. "In a crisis, decisions are needed in an instant. If we wait to get consensus from a hundred affinity groups, history will pass us by. It's simple — is LAG going to take leadership, or stand on the sidelines crying about process?"

At the spokescouncil, Claude and Sara's carefully-crafted proposal had received strong support from most of the sixty people present. But consensus process meant that if even one AG objected, the proposal was delayed or derailed. Four AGs expressed concerns about how decisions would be made in a crisis. Three agreed to stand aside and allow consensus.

The lone dissenting voice was Enola Gay, which insisted that the ERN proposal go back to the work group and be amended to give affinity groups the final power in calling an emergency action.

Reactions ranged from resignation to exasperation, with Claude storming out of the meeting. People sputtered and pleaded and cajoled, but Enola Gay stood firm — send the proposal back to the work group.

Several members of Enola Gay had been at the spokescouncil to take the heat for blocking consensus. But at Coordinating Council, Doc was alone. He crossed his arms and glared at Claude. "We're not opposed to an emergency network. But we refuse to empower a central committee to call actions without consulting the spokescouncil."

Sara held out her hands beseechingly. "By the time the spokescouncil meets, the emergency might be over."

Exactly, I thought. Time is of the essence. In more ways than one. We needed the ERN approved before the next Direct Action went to press, so we could start preparing for the crisis the government was sure to provoke. Consenting to the ERN virtually guaranteed LAG a Spring action.

I called on myself, and twisted in my folding chair so I faced Doc. "Why doesn't Enola Gay have a member on the ERN work group? Anyone can be on it. If you want input, join the work group."

Doc spoke slowly and deliberately. "That's not the point. I'm talking about principle. The spokescouncil is the body that calls actions. We don't need a work group calling actions that they think the movement needs."

Sara slumped in her chair and looked away. Claude looked like he was about to speak anyway, so I called on him. "We're at a critical juncture," he said. "We could wake up tomorrow and find that the U.S. has invaded Nicaragua or Cuba. We have to be prepared to respond now."

"Crying 'crisis' is always the way democracy is subverted," Doc said. "Besides, why do we need a central authority? AGs can do actions in an emergency without a central authority."

Claude leaned forward. His fingers gripped the edge of his chair. "Of

course AGs can protest. But for a major action, we need LAG's reputation and experience. What use is LAG, if not to call and coordinate actions?"

He seemed about to walk out again. I groped for some way to mollify Claude and Sara without pushing Doc further into a corner. To my relief, Melissa spoke up. "Can we move on? There's no decision we can make tonight. Let's get on with the agenda."

"Fine," Claude muttered. "LAG can stand on the sidelines when they invade Nicaragua."

I shared his exasperation, although as facilitator I couldn't say it. Sure, there were other groups that could organize a response. The Grenada coalition could be reformed if needed. But what about LAG? We were an action group without an action, and not even the ability to call one in an emergency. It made me wonder why we were sitting through a four-hour Coordinating Council meeting.

As we moved into work group reports, my attention wandered across the circle to Angie. She didn't come to many Coordinating Council meetings, but tonight she was the Direct Action spoke. Her head was down, and her braids fell across her face. She seemed to be doodling on her notepad. After a moment, she looked up at the clock, then caught my eye and smiled. I smiled back, drinking in the contact.

She stopped drawing to report on Direct Action. I was glad she was giving the report, so I could sit back and enjoy the good news. "The newspaper just celebrated its one year anniversary," Angie said. "And we're no longer losing money. There are enough subscribers to pay for it."

Murmurs of approval rippled around the circle. "We're working on the December issue right now," Angie continued. "We'll have some articles about the local response to Grenada, and four pages of international news. Plus, we're starting a section on organizing around the Democratic Convention."

The Convention. Finally, something definite! The Democrats were on their way to San Francisco next July to nominate an opponent to Ronald Reagan. Since Grenada, Reagan's popularity ratings had shot through the roof, and no one wanted to help him by undermining the Democrats. But at the same time, we couldn't ignore the fact that the Democratic-controlled Congress had rubber-stamped every aspect of Reagan's military build-up. We couldn't stand by and ignore their culpability while they partied in San Francisco.

Angie finished her report, closed her notebook, and stuck it in her daypack. Was she leaving? Damn. I tried to catch her eye, but she waved a quick goodbye to the meeting and headed out of the room. I watched her go, then looked back at our circle. A dozen people sitting on folding chairs in a dingy classroom. This was the revolution? No wonder Angie didn't stick around.

Next to me, Jenny suddenly jumped up and ran after Angie. Maybe we should take a break and I could go, too.

His eyes narrowed. "Not always. Good process isn't efficient. It doesn't produce quick fixes. That's why groups focused on 'winning campaigns' are usually hierarchical." He looked at me carefully, as if weighing how best to phrase his next point. "To build a movement for fundamental change, trust is the key. Over the long haul, you have to have good process to keep people together. Each person has to feel like their voice is being respected."

"Fine," I said. "But Reagan could invade Nicaragua tomorrow. We need an action in place."

"Why? Why is LAG suddenly putting its focus on responding to the government? That was the point of doing our blockades on the Summer Solstice — we were setting our own agenda, creating our own timeline. And didn't we learn at Vandenberg how, if we're in response mode, they can jerk us around by changing their dates? Why are we falling into that trap again?"

It was more than I wanted to hear. My head drooped.

Doc reached out and touched my arm. "Really, I'm not opposed to emergency actions," he said. "I just want accountability. If we sacrifice process to expediency, we're defeating ourselves. Political victory isn't enough. The problem is institutional. We have to change the entire social and cultural system. We have to challenge the whole idea of delegating decisions to 'experts' or 'leaders.'"

As he spoke of challenging institutions, my mind wandered off to a Lenin essay I'd read in jail at Santa Rita: "State and Revolution." Wasn't that Lenin's main point, that we can't simply rehabilitate the existing institutions, but have to create entirely new social structures? Was Doc turning Leninist on me?

It was time to let go. I hugged Doc goodbye, and Jenny and I headed for her car. With the meeting behind me, my mind drifted back to Angie again. "I guess Angie had enough of the meeting," I said to Jenny, fishing for some more specifics.

Jenny was searching her daypack for her car keys. "Yeah, she was meeting this guy named Jackson at ten. He was waiting on his motorcycle when she got outside."

A guy on a motorcycle? At ten o'clock at night? I felt hot. I clawed at my scarf, which was choking me. Jenny opened her door and reached across to unlock mine. A motorcycle. Well, what was it to me? I had plenty to think about with Holly. I didn't need to worry about Angie riding around on a motorcycle.

I climbed inside and rolled down the window. Jenny seemed lost in her own thoughts and said I could put some music on. I poked through the box of tapes on the floor, but nothing inspired me. I stole a look into the back seat, half-hoping Angie would suddenly materialize and transform my spirits. But all I saw was old newspapers.

I stuck in a reggae tape to have some sound besides traffic. So Angie was riding on a motorcycle with some guy named Jackson. Damn, I thought. I hope she's wearing a helmet.

Thanksgiving 1983

THE AIR FELT moist as we passed under the trees that marked the beginning of the fire trail through the Berkeley hills. The morning rain had blown over, and the sun was beginning to dispel the clouds.

Around a bend, the trail narrowed to the width of a jeep, and we began the winding ascent. The trees and underbrush, rising to our left and dropping off to the right, glistened as sunlight struck the wet leaves.

Holly and I were going to Caroline's for Thanksgiving dinner, but that left us the whole afternoon to hike. We strolled hand in hand out of the tree-shadows and into a stretch of sunlight.

Holly had shown signs lately of pulling out of her up-and-down cycle. She was mostly avoiding meetings, but the peace camp seemed to have awakened some of her former passion for organizing.

"It looks like we have land," she told me. "The owner could change his mind, but apparently he has his own feud with the Lab, so he's happy to see us protesting. We just have to agree not to use it as a base for illegal actions."

"That could be a problem if we call a Spring action," I said.

"The camp will close at the end of March. As long as the action is after that, it's fine."

I nodded silently and drew a long breath. It still felt like a distraction. Regardless of the timing, could LAG afford to divert energy into a peace camp?

And if the peace camp wasn't enough, Holly told me about Sara and Karina's proposal for a cluster action in late January. "I'm not sure of their exact plans. They want to do something around Central America."

"We could get that chance any day," I said tersely. "That's why we need the ERN. Who knows what Reagan is planning? We need to stay focused on a LAG protest, not siphon energy away into smaller actions."

Holly shrugged. "You should talk to Sara and Karina. They're presenting their proposal at the cluster meeting next week."

I looked to the right, where the hill dropped off sharply. Far below, a creek flowed past. Why was I arguing with Holly over Sara and Karina's proposal?

"I heard Daniel met with some Mobilization for Survival people from out east," I said, "and they want to revive International Day for next Fall."

Holly yawned. "Yeah, they might. They can use our contacts if they want, but it won't be International Day. I think they want to call it Days of Disarmament. It isn't the same."

We walked along silently. I remembered the previous year, how she'd lived for International Day and for LAG. What would it take to bring her back? What would it take to bring back any of the people who were drifting away?

I thought of Craig, who had just returned from a month of travel. "Do you think Craig will be at Caroline's?"

"Yeah," she said, her voice brightening. "And Claudia might come by, too."

"Wow, a regular office reunion," I said. Holly smiled, but I felt some agitation. "I never have cleared the air with Craig and Claudia for disappearing after we consensed to the Strategy Proposal. I feel like they planned to quit all along."

"I don't think they did it on purpose," Holly said. "They're just feeling burned out. I can relate. You get a burst of inspiration, and you think you have all of your energy back. But then there's a setback, and suddenly everything feels hopeless again."

As we climbed a steep section of the trail, my mind slogged back through the past few months. What a roller coaster. No wonder I felt drained.

We reached a level stretch. A rustic bench afforded a view down the canyon all the way to the Bay. I put my arm around Holly. Enough politics.

We took a deep breath together. Shafts of sunlight played off the waters of the distant Bay. A feathery breeze wafted through the trees, and a wave of thanks spread through me — thanks for Berkeley, for my friends, for the radical community of the Bay Area. Most of all, thanks for having Holly to share it with. Amid the swirling currents of LAG, she was my anchor. Even the peace camp was a blessing, if it kept her engaged.

I looked at Holly, who still gazed out at the tranquil Bay. Her hair, which glinted in the sunlight, rustled against her jacket. She slowly turned toward me, and our lips met in a kiss.

Tuesday, December 6, 1983

"COME BACK to our apartment with us," Jenny said. "We're going to eat dinner before the cluster meeting. Come on, it'll be better than staying here at the office."

I knew she was right. I'd been working on the newspaper all afternoon and would be at the Change of Heart meeting all evening.

"Take a break," Angie said. She came over and tugged on my arm. I didn't need much persuading. We closed up the office and headed for Jenny's car.

"You sit in the front," Angie said. I waited to get in while Jenny moved a daypack and a couple of paper bags off the seat. Angie cleared space in the back and buckled herself in.

On the ride home, they told me about a graffiti action they were planning. Jenny glanced at me as we waited for a light to change. "The idea is to have a garden bloom on the sidewalks over the next few months, leading up to Spring Equinox. The first round will be a stencil of some small green stems poking through the soil."

"Great idea," I said. "Where are you going to do it?"

"Oh, all around," Angie said from the back. "In our neighborhood, around the LAG office, up near Telegraph Avenue. Once we've made the stencils, we

might as well get some use out of them." She paused as Jenny swerved around a stalled car. "After we do the first round, we wait for some rain. Once the pavement is dry again, we do a round adding taller sprouts and stems. The next round adds buds and little flowers. The last adds full-grown flowers."

"Plus we're going to do butterflies and other bugs," Jenny said.

"Wow, that's really ambitious," I said.

"Yeah," said Angie. "We'll see how far it gets. We already made the first two sets of stencils."

Jenny pulled into a parking area in front of their little building, a two-story number wedged between a big house and a bigger apartment complex. Angie unlocked the front door and we stepped in.

The living room had a low ceiling that gave it a box-like feel. On one side were bookshelves and a stereo, on the other an old tan couch. The only ornament on the white walls was a glossy Michael Jackson poster that had come unstuck at one corner. A bright overhead light illuminated the books, clothes, and cassettes strewn around the room.

"So, this is our place," Jenny said with a flutter of her hand. "Back there are our bedrooms."

The doors were open, and it was no mystery whose was whose. Jenny's room continued the living room decor, stark white walls highlighting the clutter on the floor. "I haven't had much time to clean lately," she said apologetically.

"You've been working overtime with Raoul," Angie said.

"Yeah, well...."

Jenny turned toward the kitchen. Angie went into her room. "Come on in," she said to me.

I stepped into a different world. Cloth hangings made the walls gently undulate. Neatly arranged bookshelves rose next to the door. On her bedspread, a deck of tarot cards lay fanned out. Rocks, leaves, candles, beads, goddess figurines, and the like were arrayed atop her dresser. "I like the stuff you have here," I said.

"Stuff?" She laughed softly. "That's my altar."

"Oh." I flushed. I was glad her eyes were on the altar and not on me. "It's nice. What kind of altar is it?"

"It represents the four elements," she said. "Earth, air, fire, and water." She straightened a circle of polished stones. "It helps me stay centered when I do rituals."

Jenny called to us from the kitchen. "I'm heating up some chicken soup, want a bowl?"

"Sure," I said.

"I'll be out in a minute," Angie said.

The kitchen looked like an annex to Jenny's room. Dishes filled the sink and counters. Papers covered the kitchen table. "Maybe you could wash a few

bowls," Jenny said. "I'll clear us a place to sit." She scooped up a bunch of papers and deposited them on the living room couch.

I washed the bowls and set them out. Jenny poured us some soup. "Oh, I forgot to tell you," she said. "The spokescouncil got moved to the campus ministries building. And we have to be out of the room by six o'clock because there's a chorus rehearsal."

Jenny and I were scheduled to co-facilitate the upcoming spokescouncil. "I don't care if it gets moved to Siberia," I said, "as long as we call a Spring action."

"Well, there's plenty of proposals."

"Yeah," I said. "Too many. But only two have any support — Livermore and the financial district."

"Everyone I know wants the financial district," she said.

I nodded. "I'm fine either way, as long as we come up with a decision."

Angie came into the kitchen and held out a brown vest. "Can I wear this tonight?"

"Sure," Jenny said. "You can have it if you want."

"Thanks," Angie said. "I accept." Right in front of us, she pulled off her sweater. Under it she wore a black bra. I acted casual, but I couldn't keep my eyes off her. Her jeans hung low on her hips. The bra was trimmed with lace which followed the curve of her breasts.

I twinged with jealousy at the image of her riding on the back of Jackson's motorcycle, her breasts pressed against his back. What was up with that, anyway? Was it serious? She never mentioned him when I was around.

Jenny dished a bowl of soup for Angie, then went to her room to call Raoul.

Angie buttoned her vest and sat down at the table. There was an unaccustomed silence between us. She blew on her soup. I tried to think of something to ask, and thought of her altar. "Have you been to any rituals lately?"

She sipped her soup. "Mainly, I've been doing rituals by myself, trying to get clear on what to do with my life. I'm tired of sitting in an office typing and answering phones."

"I can see where that would get old," I said.

She glanced over her shoulder as if checking for eavesdroppers. "Don't tell anyone else this, okay? I haven't even told Jenny. But I'm thinking about enrolling in a cabinet-making class. I want to learn a trade."

"Really? Why cabinet-making?"

"I like working with wood. I've heard there's plenty of jobs. And it seems more artistic than regular carpentry. It's just an idea. But lately I've been casting a circle and doing tarot readings to help me see the bigger picture. Because whatever choice I make will close off other options." She tilted her head, then laughed. "I think I just figured that out, right now." She looked at me and laughed again.

I didn't quite get the joke, but I laughed, too.

Angie added salt to her soup. "So that's my personal rituals. As far as bigger ones, the next Reclaiming ritual is the eve of Winter Solstice out at the ocean. I've heard it's wonderful, that there's a bonfire and people go in the ocean and then come back and dance around the fire." She paused and looked at me intently. "Have you practiced dancing since our lesson?"

"Me? A little." I rubbed my neck. "I've been listening to a lot of African music, and I'm getting better at feeling the beat. But it's still hard to move to it."

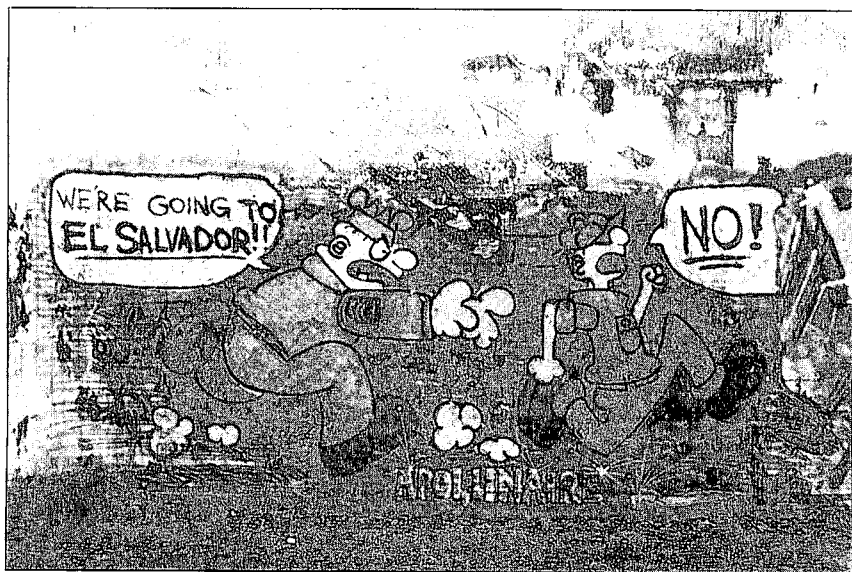
"You need to hear it live. We should check the schedule at Ashkenaz."

Jenny came back and dumped her bowl in the sink. "We need to get going. Raoul is over at Tai's. I told him I'd give him a ride back to Berkeley."

I finished my soup and followed them out to the car. Tai lived close by. Jenny found a spot across the street and shut off the engine. "I'll be back in a minute," she said as she opened the door. She headed toward Tai's house. Angie got out and climbed in the back seat with me to make room for Raoul.

It was a small car, made even tighter by several boxes of books and tapes, plus an assortment of old *Bay Guardians* and other alternative media. I slipped my arm across the seat behind Angie. Her feet were propped up on a stack of papers on the floor on her side, and our knees touched.

Silence settled over us. I tried to remember what we usually talked about, but drew a blank. My chest felt tight, and our cramped quarters made it hard to get a deep breath. Groping for a topic, I asked her about cabinet-making.



This graffiti mural appeared on a vacant South Berkeley building in early 1984.

But she seemed reluctant to say more, as if I might hold her to her words.

Jenny and Raoul were taking their time. Not that I objected to being alone with Angie. If only I could think of something to say. I turned toward her, and she looked at me expectantly. At a loss, I lowered my arm around her shoulders. "I really like being with you," I finally said. My voice felt small.

"Thanks, Jeff," she said in a hushed voice. "I really like spending time with you. You're a special man."

I laughed involuntarily. "I don't usually think of myself as a man."

She looked me up and down. "Why? What are you?"

"A 'guy.' It comes with a lot less baggage."

"I guess I can understand that. Well, you're a really nice guy."

I laughed again, feeling lighter. She turned toward me and we hugged. I ran my hand up her back and squeezed her to me, feeling her warmth. "You're great," I whispered.

The car door wrenched open. "Hey, what's going on back there?" Raoul called. "Think you're at a drive-in movie?"

I flushed. But Angie shot right back: "Yeah! Where's the popcorn?"

We settled into our seats for the ride to Berkeley. My arm was still around Angie, and my chest still tingled.

I looked at her and wondered what she was feeling. Not as much, apparently — she was asking Raoul about the graffiti action he was doing with Tai later that evening. I felt a little disappointed, and made myself listen to Raoul.

"We have this wall in South Berkeley scouted out," he said. "It's really visible during the day, but at night it's dark enough that the cops probably won't spot us. Tai wants to do this whole big mural of Beetle Bailey, with Sarge chasing him and yelling, 'We're going to El Salvador!'"

Tai was good enough with a spraypaint can to pull it off, I knew. "I'll mainly be the lookout," Raoul told us. "But I've been wanting to do my name on that wall in wild-style. Tonight's the night."

We dropped him off downtown and headed for Alby's house for the Change of Heart meeting. It was almost eight when we arrived and made our way into the crowded living room. Holly looked surprised to see me come in with Angie and Jenny. I suddenly felt warm. I pulled off my sweatshirt and said an awkward hello to the circle, then went over, bent down, and gave Holly a hug.

She gave me a quizzical look. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah," I said. "Just running late."

Most people were on the two couches or sitting on the floor in front of them. I took a seat by myself in a high-backed armchair. I tried to get my attention on the meeting, but it was hard. Angie was sitting on the floor across the circle from me, and I had a tough time keeping my eyes off her.

Then I looked at Holly and felt queasy. I looked away before she noticed. I

shifted around, trying to get comfortable in my chair, straining to keep my mind on the meeting.

Not like the meeting itself was exactly a model of focus. Karina read the agenda: "We need to evaluate the financial district action, then discuss the proposal for a cluster action. We have to talk about the Emergency Response Network. Plus, we need people to help wheat-paste some posters about Nicaragua around San Francisco."

Antonio offered to facilitate. We started with an evaluation of the October 24th financial district action.

I'd heard plenty of talk about the action in the past couple of weeks, some negative but most of it indifferent. The City action failed to excite the wider Northern California network that had developed around Diablo, Livermore, and Vandenberg. And even within the Bay Area, a lot of pacifists and Livermore stalwarts were unenthused about another roving action.

But at the Change of Heart meeting, speaker after speaker lauded the protest. There was only one criticism — it was too restrained.

Angie joined the chorus from her seat on the floor. "It's demeaning to have monitors making people stay on the sidewalks," she said. "It's like we're in third grade, and we need crossing guards."

"Yeah," Alby said. "If LAG wants monitors controlling every action, maybe it's time to do our own."

I looked at Angie. Was she thinking the same? I'd heard that Jenny and Raoul and Jacey were forming a new AG to do autonomous actions. Was Angie part of it, too?

We moved on to the cluster action. Karina, who had been sitting on the floor, got up and sat on the arm of the couch opposite me. "Sara and I have a proposal for an action next month," she said. She looked eagerly around the circle. "It's in the City. But we can't tell you the exact location."

A buzz ran around the circle. I looked over at Holly, who was smiling at Sara. Was she in on the secret?

"Can't you give us a hint?" Angie said with a trace of irritation in her voice.

"We want to get inside and disrupt things," Sara said. "So we can't risk letting the police find out."

People started talking about costumes and street-theater ideas, as if consensus on the basic proposal were a foregone conclusion. I seemed to be the only one not enthralled with the idea. And how could I be? LAG was struggling to pull together a Spring action — and Change of Heart was going off and doing its own thing. How was LAG supposed to survive if the most active clusters pulled away?

I looked over at Angie, hoping she would read my mind and offer some sympathy. But she was leaning toward Jenny, sharing a laugh.

My lips tightened. I felt like I was swallowed in the big armchair, that no

one could even see me. Holly was saying something to Sara. What did she know? Holly wasn't the clandestine type. Karina, sure. And Sara made sense. But Holly? Why was she supporting this? Why wasn't she wasn't thinking of LAG, of the bigger picture?

As if to accentuate LAG's impasse, we moved on to the ERN. Doc had sat quietly at the end of a couch through the early part of the meeting. Now he leaned forward.

"Enola Gay wants Change of Heart to support our block of the ERN until it's revised to guarantee spokescouncil input on all decisions."

Sara looked as if she'd been caught off-guard. "Block? You're blocking it?"

Holly quickly raised her hand. "Why can't the spokescouncil decide ahead of time what the target and type of action will be? Then all the work group does is set the date."

"But there's still the question of triggering the alert," Doc said. "Who decides what's a crisis? What if it's not an outright invasion, but a naval blockade or a bombing raid? I don't want to see some steering committee dragging LAG into an action without consulting the AGs."

"Then be on the work group," Sara snapped. "I'm sick of people acting like the ERN is a conspiracy trying to take over LAG!"

Several people came to Sara's support, and it was clear that Doc was outnumbered. "I can't believe how little we value process," he finally said. "Everyone gives lip service to consensus, but when the crunch comes, out the window it goes."

He stared blankly at the floor. I hated to see Doc isolated. I searched for something to say, some common ground. Holly, too, seemed to be groping in vain.



Antonio called us back to the agenda, asking if there were any closing announcements. Alby and Karina said they needed people to wheat-paste Nicaragua posters, and several people volunteered.

To my surprise, Angie objected. "Plastering posters makes a mess. We should have more respect for the neighborhood."

"I don't think we need to respect private property," Alby said. "We're putting them on banks and boarded-up stores. We don't paste them on people's houses."

"It's still something everyone has to look at," Angie said, her voice rising.

"We're not asking you to consense to it," Karina said. "If you don't like it, don't do it. Anyone that wants to help is invited."

Finally we gathered for a closing. As we linked arms around shoulders, talk returned to the secret January action. Antonio and Karina talked about props. Holly and Jenny shared a laugh. I joined the circle, but felt out of the loop. Doc seemed withdrawn, too. I tried to catch his eye, but he was lost in his own thoughts.

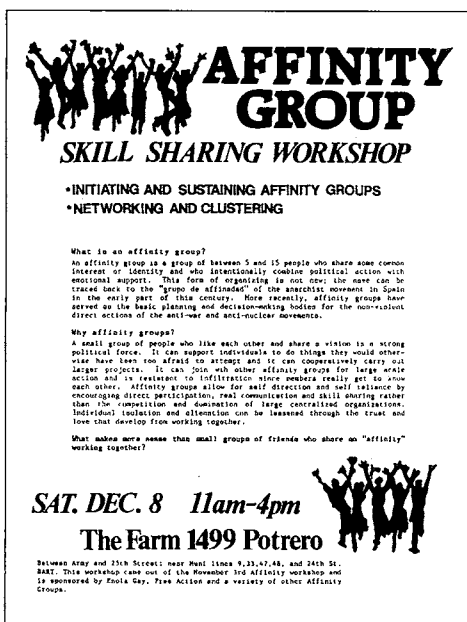
As Karina laughed aloud, I felt irked. How could she, a LAG staffer, be pushing a non-LAG action? Didn't she have any sense of responsibility to the group?

Across the circle, Angie and Alby were talking together. I looked away, then took a deep breath and exhaled so loudly that people looked at me with surprise. I

wasn't sure what to say, but Karina spared me the trouble. "Let's *all* take a deep breath!" she said. Most of the cluster obeyed, exhaling loudly and dissolving into laughter. I smiled in spite of myself. Did these people take anything seriously?

The circle broke up. I was pulling my sweatshirt over my head when Karina said loudly, "Angie, what's happening with your motorcycle honey?"

I paused with my sweatshirt half on. Several other voices clamored for an



AFFINITY GROUP
SKILL SHARING WORKSHOP

- INITIATING AND SUSTAINING AFFINITY GROUPS
- NETWORKING AND CLUSTERING

What is an affinity group?
An affinity group is a group of between 5 and 15 people who share some common interest or identify and who intentionally combine political action with emotional support. This form of organizing is not new; the name can be traced back to the "grupo de afinidad" of the anarchist movement in Spain in the early part of this century. More recently, affinity groups have served as the basic planning and decision-making bodies for the non-violent direct actions of the anti-war and anti-nuclear movements.

Why affinity groups?
A small group of people who like each other and share a vision is a strong political force. It can support individuals to do things they would otherwise have been too afraid to attempt and it can cooperatively carry out larger projects. It can join with other affinity groups for larger scale action and is resistant to infiltration since members really get to know each other. Affinity groups allow for self-direction and self-reliance by encouraging direct participation, real communication and skill sharing rather than the competition and domination of large centralized organizations. Individual isolation and alienation can be lessened through the trust and love that develop from working together.

What makes more sense: these small groups of friends who share an "affinity" working together?

SAT. DEC. 8 11am-4pm
The Farm 1499 Potrero

Between Army and 24th Street; near East Street 9, 13, 17, 48, and 24th St. BART. This workshop came out of the November 3rd affinity workshop and is sponsored by Sheila Kay, Five Action and a variety of other affinity groups.

Skills sharing was an important emphasis of the 1980s direct action movement, either through workshops such as these or through informal internships with more experienced activists.

answer, and everyone looked at Angie expectantly. I braced myself for a dose of reality.

"Oh, it's nothing," she said. "Jackson is just a friend. We were going to hear a band that night, that's all."

No one else seemed to believe her, but I found myself urgently wanting to. I went over to give her a goodbye hug, holding her an extra moment and running my hand down the curve of her back.

She looked at me as we parted. "I'll see you soon?"

"Yeah," I said. "I'll be down at the office Thursday afternoon for sure. And you?"

"I think I'll be there, too."

I wished it were definite, but it wasn't like I could make her sign a contract. I reached out and rubbed her arm once more as we parted. "Until then."

Sunday, December 11, 1983

IT TOOK THE eighty spokes all afternoon, but finally we seemed close to a decision. But there was no time to spare. It was five, and a women's chorus had reserved the room for six o'clock sharp.

As the clock ticked down on our last hour, Jenny was facilitating the discussion of a financial district protest. All afternoon, I'd supported her trying to work through the objections and reach consensus, but it was obvious that we'd never get agreement on a City action without another meeting. We needed to move on to Livermore.

The clock hit 5:30. Something had to happen now. I whispered a hint that we should switch to Livermore and test for consensus as a fallback plan. Jenny shot an irritated glance at me and called on several more speakers about the City.

I tried to sit back and let her facilitate, but I had trouble staying still in my chair. Finally, with twenty minutes to go, Jenny called for discussion of Livermore. Even then, Karina and some others seemed upset that we didn't keep talking about a City action. I clenched my teeth. How were we ever going to reach consensus in time?

Melissa must have felt the same. She raised both hands for a process point. "We've discussed Livermore plenty, for the past two years. Everyone knows how they feel about it. We don't need more discussion. We should move straight to hearing concerns and objections. Are there any objections to consensing on an April action at Livermore Lab?"

I looked at her in appreciation. I knew Melissa really wanted another June blockade at the Lab, and that April was a compromise to avoid competing with the Democratic Convention in the Summer. Finally, someone was seeing the bigger picture!

Her eyes made a circuit of the meeting, as if daring anyone to speak out against a return to our roots. A few people questioned how big a Spring action would be. Several AGs said they would probably do autonomous City actions anyway, and one guy argued for doing both Livermore and a City action. But no one directly opposed Livermore, and that was the proposal on the floor.

I leaned toward Jenny. "We should test for consensus," I said. "I think it's there."

Her mouth tightened. She didn't look at me. "So if there are no objections, does anyone stand aside?" Several spokes raised their hands, but not enough to make a difference. "Does anyone block?" A moment passed. I looked at Jenny expectantly.

Finally she spoke. "Then do we have consensus?" She looked as if she weren't sure of the answer. Around the circle, though, people twinkled their fingers and nodded their heads. Someone clapped and called out, "Yeah!" That set off polite applause, which faded quickly. The women's chorus was already coming in the door carrying music stands. We hurriedly folded our chairs and stacked them in the corner.

I picked up my papers and squeezed out the door behind Mort and Hank. As we filed down the stairs, I wished I felt some excitement about our decision. But it was more a sense of relief. We got what we needed — an action to announce. The date was far enough away to give us time to do outreach and build momentum, but close enough to feature in our Winter fund appeal and in the upcoming Direct Action, which we'd delayed in hopes of such a front-page story.

I looked for Jenny afterwards, but she seemed to have disappeared. Karina likewise was nowhere to be seen.

Mort came over and asked if I wanted to have dinner with him and Hank and Melissa. We headed down to Villa Hermosa on Telegraph. The dining area was laid out like a plaza, with tables around a central fountain. We got a table near the windows. Ivy dangled from a trellis above. Along the side wall was a mural of Chicano history.

Melissa got a cup of coffee. Hank, Mort, and I split a pitcher of beer. "Phew," Mort said as we opened our menus. "I'm getting too old for all-day meetings."

"Well, that's the last one of 1983," I consoled him. "And at least we came out with some decisions."

In addition to the Livermore action, we had consensed to the ERN proposal. The work group made some concessions to AG input, and Enola Gay withdrew its block. But Doc, Belinda, and Claude all missed the meeting. "Seems like a commentary on their fighting," I said.

Melissa nodded. "When people tear at each other, no one wins."

The spokescouncil had also reached a vague consensus to "organize" around the Democratic Convention. It was a step in the right direction. But

there was no agreement on what “organize” meant, and I envisioned endless debates over how far to challenge the Democrats.

The one surprise of the day had been an organizer from the Revolutionary Workers Party showing up at the meeting with a Call for a People’s Convention, a counter-convention endorsed by Congressman Ron Dellums.

“A lot of people took the flyers,” I said as I dipped a chip in the salsa bowl. “Think it’s for real?”

Mort poured himself a glass of beer. “The RWP is credible,” he said. “They’ve done good work on the east coast. This is probably an attempt to expand their base out here. We should check it out. A People’s Convention could help us connect with Black organizers in Oakland and Latino activists in the City. Those opportunities don’t come along every day.”

Our dinner arrived. Hank unwrapped his burrito to the halfway point. “We should do something at the Convention that draws attention to Livermore. We’ll have the nukeycycle up and rolling by then. We could paint Livermore slogans on it and launch a strike on the Convention.”

I smiled at the image of Democratic delegates dodging the missile. Even Melissa laughed. “If you have to do something at the Convention, that’s the best idea I’ve heard.” She paused and looked at me. “It’s such a shame to abandon June at Livermore.”

“We’d never have gotten consensus on an blockade a month before the Convention,” I said. I poured myself more beer. “April was the only hope.”

“I know. But it wasn’t a very strong consensus. How many people actually joined the work group?”

“Me and Monique and a few others signed up,” I said. I took a breath and held it. “A lot of people weren’t at the meeting. Maybe they’ll join later.”

“I doubt it,” Mort said. “People are burning out. Where was Antonio, or Walt, or Caroline? And where was Holly?”

I poked at my burrito. Holly was at work, of course. But why wasn’t this meeting worth her time? Or Angie, who had opted for a poetry workshop. I set my fork down. At the meeting, I had convinced myself we were getting somewhere. But the reality was, action or no action, people were drifting away.

Hank changed the topic, and I tried to shake off my doldrums. Maybe the Livermore action would gain steam after the holidays. Maybe something would trigger the ERN and that would give LAG the burst of energy we desperately needed. But right now, those prospects seemed remote.

I finished my meal in silence. “Hey,” Hank said as we parted, “next Friday is the Christmas party at pinball. You should come over, because I’ll be in Boston visiting my family the week after that. Holly’s invited, too.”

“It’ll be a good party,” Mort said. “We should have a new shipment of buds from up north.”

Even the thought of getting high didn’t do much for my mood. I gave them a weak smile. “I’ll try to make it.”

A drizzly rain was falling as I bid the others goodnight. I turned my jacket-collar up. My shoulders hunched, and my whole body felt stiff. It wasn't even Winter yet, and already I was weary of it. I peered into the future and tried to envision Spring. But as far ahead as I could see, it was gray.

Small wonder. My pessimism wasn't just about LAG. In the aftermath of our demonstrations, the Euromissiles were being deployed, upsetting the balance of terror. The U.S. was harassing tiny socialist countries like Grenada and Nicaragua, almost daring the Soviets to respond.

Suppose they did? Suppose a nuclear showdown developed? Could Reagan be trusted not to push the button? He probably thought the whole thing was a movie, anyway. What were the odds that we'd live to see Spring?

Thursday, December 22, 1983

TEN MORE phone calls, and Angie and I could go over to the Starry Plough and have a beer. Stay focused. Keep dialing.

I'd hoped chance would throw us together sooner, but nothing had developed since going to her and Jenny's apartment two weeks earlier. Finally I suggested going to the Starry Plough, and we settled on Thursday.

As the day approached, I anticipated it like a holiday. I imagined questions I would ask, or bits of my past that I might share. What a relief from worrying about LAG all the time.

I made another couple of calls, trying to get AGs to commit to taking part in the April Livermore action. It was already almost five. I wondered whether Angie had the whole evening free. Maybe we could go for a walk. Maybe she'd get another flat tire...

It was just a coincidence, but Holly was gone again, spending the night in a farm field near Livermore Lab. She, Artemis, Daniel, and Norm were camping overnight at the prospective site of the peace camp to check the rhythm of the morning commute along the adjacent highway.

That left my Thursday evening open. My plan was to play guitar for a while, then do some writing. But spending a few hours with Angie would be a great start to the night.

I was down to six calls when Sara and Karina came in. I sucked in a breath. I'd hoped to avoid them and escape with Angie. But here they were, and we needed to talk. Not only had they gone off and organized an autonomous cluster action. Now I'd heard that they wanted LAG's April action to be changed from Livermore to San Francisco! Wasn't it obvious that most of LAG had no interest in City protests? Were they trying to undercut everything we had worked for?

I took a deep breath, then walked over to Karina's desk. "Can we talk for a minute? I want to check-in about the April actions."

Karina set down her daypack. "Sure. We've been doing a lot of thinking about them. The war-tax angle is perfect. We can visit all the nuclear corporations and talk about how they get millions of tax dollars to build weapons of doom. We'll end up at the main post office at the end of the day and do street theater while people are coming to post their last-minute returns. I'll bet we'll get a lot of media coverage."

I stood there in silence, unable to decide whether to be angry or laugh out loud at her presumption. Luckily, she talked long enough that I could collect myself. Challenging Karina head-on would just harden her resolve. I had to take an indirect approach.

I made myself speak slowly. "I'm all for another City action, but not in April. Livermore is our best bet to pull people together. We can do a financial district action later."

"We could do Livermore later, too," Karina said. "Most people I know will ignore Livermore, anyway."

"And a lot more will skip a City action..." My voice trailed off as it occurred to me that she and I weren't disagreeing. A lot of younger people, including most of my own cluster, had lost interest in Livermore. And people like the Walnettos and Turning Tide and Spirit AGs would boycott a City protest.

Sara looked at me tentatively. "Maybe we should do both," she said. "Why not do a tax-day action in the City on Monday, and move the Livermore demo to Tuesday?"

I leaned against a table and frowned. "With the peace camp and the ERN, we're already spreading ourselves thin." I looked at Sara, who seemed to be weighing my objection. I felt a wave of appreciation for her attempt to find a compromise. I smiled sadly. "Maybe two actions is the only way out."

"It works for me," Karina said jauntily.

Good for you, I thought. I'd probably be happy, too, if I got my way all the time. I looked the other way.

"I've got to get going," Karina said. "I just came by to pick up this folder." She held it out as if it were evidence, then put it into her daypack. Should I say anything else about the action? What was the point? Maybe Sara could talk some sense to her. Sara at least grasped the problem. Karina seemed to think it was all about adrenaline.

I turned back to my lists, which looked like a jumble of letters and numbers. Why was I bothering to make phone calls for the Livermore protest? All the creativity was heading to San Francisco. But having worked so hard for the Livermore consensus, I couldn't very well drop it.

Especially with a five-person work group. Even Jenny, who I assumed would work on Livermore, was staying away. In fact, she seemed to be avoiding me. She hadn't said anything, but I sensed she resented my pressure when she was facilitating the spokescouncil. And now the decision was coming undone, anyway. I'd alienated Jenny for nothing.

I made a couple more calls, but no one seemed to be home. Finally I closed my notebook and put it on the shelf. I wandered back to where Angie was organizing the Direct Action graphics file.

"Do you want to head over to the Plough?"

"Sure, let's do it," she said. She stuck the folders of graphics back into the box. She pulled an oversized brown sweater over her head and wrapped a purple scarf twice around her neck. I zipped my jacket and we took off.

The Starry Plough occupied the ground floor of an old apartment building on the corner next to La Peña. It took a moment for my eyes to adjust to the dim light. Several people at the bar looked up. To the right, a couple of women were playing darts. In the far corner, a band was setting up for the evening. An old Bob Dylan album was playing so loud that I had to shout our order to the bartender: "Two pints of Guinness and an order of home fries."

I followed Angie to one of the shadowy side-tables. The bench seats had tall backs, like being in a private booth. We sat side by side, the only way to carry on a conversation over the music.

I leaned toward her. "Jenny said you're going home for the holidays."

"Yeah. I'm really excited about seeing my younger sister. It's her last year of college. Then maybe she'll move out here." She paused for a moment, as if measuring a thought. "I'm glad I stayed here for Solstice, though. I doubt I could have found anything like it back home."

"Yesterday was Solstice, wasn't it?"

"Yeah. It was beautiful. This time I did the plunge."

"In the ocean?"

"Yeah. It's part of the ritual. Half of the people there did it, maybe thirty of us. In the middle of the ritual, just as the sun set into the sea, we stripped off our clothes and ran out to meet the tide. I thought I was being really brave by going into the water, but I saw Karina dunk all the way under. And Moonstone dove into the surf headfirst. His hair was all ratty, and he looked like a sea creature. I went in up to my knees, but then a big wave came and drenched me to my waist, like the ocean was coming to welcome me."

"Weren't you freezing?"

"Yeah. When you can't stand it anymore, you go back and dance naked around the fire. Those who plunge get to be in the inner circle. People were drumming, and everyone was chanting and singing. By the firelight you could see some people's faces, but those who were further back looked like a ring of ghosts."

I imagined Angie dancing naked around a bonfire and shivered. For once, I wished I had been at a ritual.

We talked a while longer. I was already light-headed, and didn't want to drink another beer. But I didn't want to say goodbye, either. "Do you want to go for a walk?"

"Sure," she said. "I'll walk you home and catch the Telegraph bus from there."

It was dark when we left the Plough. As we started up Prince Street, the top edge of the moon slipped from behind a cloud. Low-hanging trees lent a mysterious air to the sidewalk. We turned north on Fulton, a street of small houses and old trees. Cautiously, I put my arm around Angie's shoulders. She put her arm around my waist, letting her hand rest lightly on my hip. We walked along slowly, learning to match our steps.

Angie told me about the progress on the spraypaint garden she and Jenny were doing. "We've got the first

buds opening now. There are four, two red and two yellow. Plus there's a caterpillar. It came out too big, in proportion to the flowers. But you still get the idea."

I looked at her. Her hair was pulled back in several thick braids, giving her forehead a high, open look. I was struck at how unperturbed her face was, even as she talked about spraypainting.

"We have one more stencil to do," she said, "with the flowers fully opened. We'll paint them right over the buds, like they bloomed. I wonder if people will notice?"

As we passed under a streetlight, she looked up at me. Was she checking my opinion about the flowers, or to see if I approved of her adventure?

We turned up Dwight and approached my apartment building. I felt torn. I wanted to ask her inside. And I had the feeling she'd say yes.

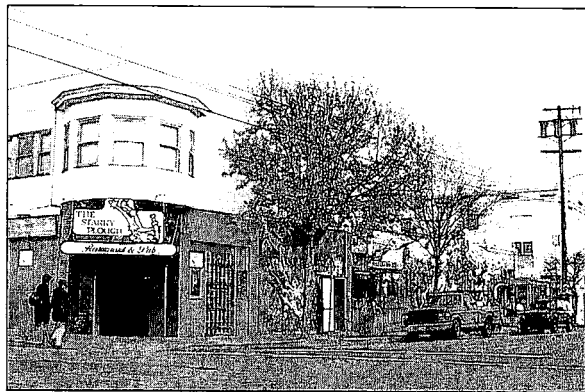
We stopped in front of the building, and I turned to her. The porch lamp shone on her face, which seemed clouded by unaccustomed doubt.

"I sort of want to ask you in," I said haltingly. "But I'm not sure it's a good idea."

"Yeah," she said. "Maybe we should say goodnight now."

I stepped forward and slipped my arms around her. "I don't really want to do that."

"I know," she said. She held me tightly, and ran her hand slowly up my



The Starry Plough, conveniently located across the street from the LAG office.

back. "But I need time to think about what's happening, and I can't think clearly when I'm with you."

I leaned back to look at her, my arms still around her. "Will I see you again before you go on vacation?"

"That depends, I guess," she said. "I mean, no. I'm flying out the day after tomorrow. We shouldn't see each other again. Not till I get back. It's better." She disentangled herself from my reluctant arms. "I need to go. Really." She squeezed my hand and started away.

"I'll miss you, Angie," I called out.

She stopped and looked back at me, and I thought I saw tears glistening in her eyes. Then she turned and walked quickly toward Telegraph.

A light rain started falling. I looked up at the building. Should I go in? If inviting Angie inside seemed inappropriate, how much better was it to take my present thoughts into my and Holly's apartment? I turned away from the lights of Telegraph and lifted my face to the clouds. The mist caressed my cheeks. I fastened my coat, tucked my hands into my pockets, and set off into the night.