

MARCH, 1970

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My Friend,

The thought just occurred to me that you could challenge that guy B— on his theory or statements concerning the possibilities of his secret witnesses being done in, if he allows discovery*. You see every time a rat does get put away, the prison authorities always release a different reason for the attack, never that he was an informer. Their purpose for always withholding the truth is that they don't want to discourage other potential rats and the truth would aid the convict in the psychological war—con against cop. For it is their purpose to always keep us divided and fearful of trusting the next con. You are aware that it's always the goal of oppressive authority (those who govern without the consent of the governed) to keep their wards divided. They can maintain their control in no other way.

Divide and rule in its simplest form is standard police procedure. They must always display their rats, boast of

*At the prosecution's request, the judge initially denied the defense the right of discovery on the grounds that it would jeopardize the lives of the inmate witnesses.

knowing all that goes on among us. When it's more than one person on some crime, they will be split up and each told that the other has confessed and implicated him, etc. You know the line. Inside the joint it is the same only much more intense. A sense of terror, betrayal and insecurity prevails at all times. It flows outward from the captain's office—divide and rule, divide and rule. An Italian in the Syndicate at one time killed a Mexican in Folsom because the Mex suddenly started telling everyone not to trust someone, who was supposed to be a rat. The pigs wanted to put him out of business (importing dope into the joint) and wanted to get the Mex killed. So they called the Mex into their office and showed him some phony papers indicating that the guy was a rat. The Mex went for it and got killed. The guy was out of business in 4A for four years (4A is Folsom's adjustment center).

Terrible conflict going on all the time. At issue is who will run the joint, cops or cons. So it is never released that a police informer was killed for his mistake. I'm thinking that B. will be at a loss to cite some cases in support of his fears that his witnesses will be harmed. We could state that he is playing on some concept of prison conditions that existed in 1920 but that do not exist today.

Monday, March 23, 1970

I'm looking forward to a good Friday. Never had one.

I don't think Los Angeles is a good place for the trial. Fifteen floors above the ground. One million pigs!!

I was pushing you, rushing you, encircling you—recall—it occasioned the remark from you that "I don't know you that well." Look, I do plead guilty but with this explanation, that I hope you'll accept the past months as, say, the equivalent of five or more years' acquaintance. I encircle the people that I dig, there are only two types of people inhabiting my closet, friends and foes, the ones I accept, the ones I reject. I accepted you from the onset, and in spite of the bitter experience of these years I still find it easy to trust people. I sensed from the

start that we were of kindred spirits. I rejected others as you recall, because there was no kinship of spirit there. To me length of acquaintance matters very little. I've been living in the trenches where it's understood that it's us against them, hide and seek. They're always it and getting caught means getting dusted. There never are many of us, so when I've met one in the past it's been my method to encircle and push. But "push" isn't a good term. It implies that I've put someone in front of me and there can never be any room in front of me. Let me say encircle and pull.

You can never fully understand. It is an existential impossibility for you to know how it's been with me. My character and disposition are such that my response to a crisis situation always leads to a situation more desperate than the one which provoked it. But that's the way I like it, and believe me, Fay, I probably wouldn't be alive now if it weren't my habit to overreact, and look forward for the trouble that I know is coming.

It probably didn't have to be this way for me. Other blacks have faced the same situations and have not been hurt too badly. I couldn't take it. I'll never be able to take it, a knife in the back, the nightstick, the gas chamber, death over a slow fire notwithstanding.

And things just keep escalating from one desperate situation to a situation more desperate, and I seize the bull by the horns. I'll ride him till his neck breaks or until he pins me to the wall—conflict, struggle, and preparation for more struggle. You can't understand how it is to have to watch everyone who gets within arm's reach, or when under the gun to have to stay close to something to crawl under. When you came to see me in February my heart was cold as Antarctica.

Tuesday, March 24, 1970 (early morning)

I'm convinced that it is the psychopathic personality that searches out a uniform. There's little doubt of

what's going on in that man's head who will voluntarily don any uniform.

Did you know that in these prisons there is a very fierce competition between the pig who wears a uniform and the pig who works in civilian dress? The uniformed pigs call themselves the Custody Department, while the others go under the heading of Care and Treatment.

It is the function of the uniform to hold a man here. This means they do the key work, the searching, beating, killing. The individual with the tie and white shirt (really just another type of uniform) determines what we'll eat, what bullshit academic and make-work programs we'll have. He presides over the silly group therapy games that always end in fights or snitch contests. Oh, and he also makes out board reports.

These two types of cops have been vying for control of the joints ever since the counselor breed came on the grounds.

It was intended of course that these two groups of cops work together against the con, the rationale being, the more cons broken, the fewer will have to be killed, consequently less bad publicity for Department of Corrections political appointees and the political machine that appointed them.

We killed that off by playing them against one another. If a uniform denied some small request, we would take it to the counselor. If he granted it, well you can take it from there, but we would purposely ask the uniform (and in a way that made it certain he would refuse) for things we were sure the counselor would approve. Everyone connected with the power complex has made the outcome reasonably predictable, chaos. You have a picture of them trying to divide us, manage us, denude us of individuality. When this maneuver fails, they arrange for one unmanageable to murder another unmanageable. At the same time they can't agree among themselves on anything. Cretins with guns. You couldn't count the personality conflicts between cop + cop, cop + con, con + con (usually fomented by some cop or some unnecessarily harsh living condition). You couldn't count these conflicts with an

IBM. And I mean the ones that transpire openly in, say, one hour's time.

To be certain that you dig what I'm saying, I'll here admit that most of the people who come through these places are genuinely sick in one way or the other, monsters, totally disorganized, twisted, disgusting epitomes of the parent monster. Those who aren't so upon their arrival will surely be so when they leave. No one escapes unscathed. An individual leaves his individuality and any pride he may have had behind these walls. When you first enter Chino you're required to write a confession that will be placed right in the front of your jacket* under your picture and number. Failure to write this confession means you go to the board. It means that you haven't taken the first step toward rehabilitation. All this is carefully explained to you in Chino. "No confession, no parole." No one walks into the board room with his head up. This just isn't done! Guys lie to each other, but if a man gets a parole from these prisons, Fay, it means that he crawled into that room. Plus it means that he adopted the philosophical attitude toward shit in the face several times since his last board. Of the billions of conflicts and negative exchanges that take place in a year, the pigs choose which ones to pass over. The guy who earns a parole surrendered some face in the course of his stay here prior to board. He walked away from some situation to save his body—at the cost of some part of his face (read mind, or pride, or principle). No black will leave this place if he has any violence in his past, until they see that thing in his eyes. And you can't fake it—resignation, defeat—it must be stamped clearly across the face.

I've seen it, eyes in black heads, on the yard in San Quentin, Tracy, here. When I hit the yard in December '62 the brothers were lining up in the rain, outside the protection of the shed that covers half of the upper yard. The Mexicans and

*Convict's record folder, log of all observations made by prison authorities.

whites had occupied all the lines under the shed. They would save long stretches of space for friends who never showed. So I had a picture on my first day there of the old slave, wet and trembling while these other people relaxed with plenty of room under the shed. The brothers were mainly concerned with avoiding any trouble, since the pig invariably will shoot at the black face in a black and white altercation. Then it seems that blacks are much more concerned with establishing records that will lead to parole than whites or browns. I can't understand this, since they have so much less to go home to.

Earlier that same year, right here in Soledad, a white (nameless and faceless now) stabbed a brother with my surname because another brother called Butch beat him in one of those childish hand-to-hand disputes in the third-tier shower (the place for settling all disputes). The white inmate ran to his cell and asked for police protection. Two hundred blacks went after him with the intention of taking him from the police. Before it was over there were only four of us against all the police in the county. A—. A. was there with me then, and two others, all the others—well, it started with a trembling of the lips, then a flaring of the nose, then that thing in the eyes. . . .

They sent us to San Quentin lockup for a month. Then J.C. and I were sent to Tracy, being the youngest of the four. In Tracy I did six months in adjustment center and was released to J Unit, the unit for unmanageables. Actually they put me in this unit so that I would be close to some old enemies. A Mexican got killed in Soledad the year before. J.C. was picked up for it but later released. No one was ever convicted. In an honest case of mistaken identity, the Mexicans were supposed to be out to get me for it.

I don't know where you got the tale of me attempting to integrate a movie area. It is a bit off, but it could have come from the events of that week I spent in J Unit. The blacks had to sit in the rear of the TV room on hard, armless, backless benches while the Mexicans and whites sat up front on

cushioned chairs and benches with backrests!!! Now check this, if one of those punks was in his cell or the shower, no one could sit in his seat and certainly no black dared sit there, I'm serious!!! All of this taking place in front of a uniform and a large, bold-print sign in English and Spanish that read "No Saving of Seats Allowed"!!!

The first three nights I went in to catch the news I *stood* in the front, looking down the room at the old slave for some sign of support. Old slave ignored me, eyes darting. He wants to go home, so do I, but I don't want to leave anything behind. Since my father didn't bequeath me much to begin with, any further losses leave me with nothing. I sat right in the front the fourth night but I couldn't watch TV. I had to watch my back. The cop walked up and looked at me like I had lost my mind. The cons tolerated me (215 pounds and apparently a lunatic) for three days. On the fourth (or seventh day out) night of sitting, they attacked me. They *locked me up* afterward, and sent me back to San Quentin to stay. The 115* was so clearly racist that I think they removed it in San Quentin. If you ever get the chance, see what reason they have in my jacket for the 1962 transfer to San Quentin from Tracy.

So most of these inmates are sick, my friend, but who created the monster in them? They all stand right now as products of their environment. But in my humble opinion the inmates of these places are not quite as—well they aren't nearly as psychologically disturbed as the guy who calls himself a guard. They really could change roles without noticeable alteration in the qualitative factor of administrations. Any alteration would be positive.

United States prisons are the last refuge of the brainless. If the inmates are failures, at least they were reaching—most in very small ways, but some reach is certainly preferable to no reach at all. The cop, as I've stated before, is a guy who can do

*Bad conduct report form.

no other type of work, who can feed himself only by feeding upon this garbage dump.

What am I doing here, Fay? I fell into this garbage can in a narcotic stupor and they just closed the lid for good. Someone is going to be hurt, my friend, when it's over someone's going to be hurting, bad, and it won't be us. It won't be you. Be assured that your safety will always enter any defense move I make, your safety first, always. I was supposed to be gone from this place years ago, free, wrecking worlds, destroying the unrighteous, dying on my feet.

Pigs come here to feed on the garbage heap for two reasons really, the first half because they can do no other work, frustrated men soon to develop sadistic mannerisms; and the second half, sadists out front, suffering under the restraints placed upon them by an equally sadistic-vindictive society. The sadist knows that to practice his religion upon the society at large will bring down upon his head their sadistic reaction. Killing is great fun, but not at the risk of getting killed (note how they squeak and pull out their hair over losing even one).

But the restraints come off when they walk through the compound gates. Their whole posture goes through a total metamorphosis. Inflict pain, satisfy the power complex, and get a check.

How can the sick administer to the sick.

In the well-ordered society prisons would not exist as such. If a man is ill he should be placed in a hospital, staffed by the very best of technicians. Men would never be separated from women. These places would be surfeited with equipment and meaningful programs, even if it meant diverting funds from another, or even from all other sectors of the economy. It's socially self-destructive to create a monster and loose him upon the world.

But we can't cure with diagnoses, Comrade Stender—and I dig speaking with you like this. You can only listen, no back talk.

Breakfast is here. Power to the People.

Tuesday, March 24, 1970 (evening)

This monster—the monster they’ve engendered in me will return to torment its maker, from the grave, the pit, the profoundest pit. Hurl me into the next existence, the descent into hell won’t turn me. I’ll crawl back to dog his trail forever. They won’t defeat my revenge, never, never. I’m part of a righteous people who anger slowly, but rage undammed. We’ll gather at his door in such a number that the rumbling of our feet will make the earth tremble. I’m going to charge them for this, twenty-eight years without gratification. I’m going to charge them reparations in blood. I’m going to charge them like a maddened, wounded, rogue male elephant, ears flared, trunk raised, trumpet blaring. I’ll do my dance in his chest, and the only thing he’ll ever see in my eyes is a dagger to pierce his cruel heart. This is one nigger who is positively displeased. I’ll never forgive, I’ll never forget, and if I’m guilty of anything at all it’s of not leaning on them hard enough. War without terms.

Wednesday, March 25, 1970 (early morning)

I just reread the above paragraph, foul mood last night. It’s not light out yet, so I guess I can say tonight, but I’ve been asleep. There’s a Hawaiian on the tier who wants a transfer to Vacaville. He is playing crazy. His dementia takes the form of “nigger baiting,” especially when the bull is on the tier (who by the way enjoys the shit out of it)—none of the brothers say a word, however. This little boy blows the whole line. The other little boys laugh, the pig grins. I don’t get too upset at the little boy. He is a minnow—the upsetting point is that this Hawaiian has very large purple lips, skin tones darker than mine, and a very large wide nose. His hair is very nearly like my sisters’. This clown is talking about killing all the niggers. The pitiful jackass would die right beside me. I think what may be most bitter in a thing like that is the knowledge

that my enemies have turned the entire world against me. The shibboleths that defame me are now universal. Anyone who learns them is in (or out—depending).

How do you deal with the perverted, disease-bearing, voracious bastard who wants to cast his image over all things, eat from every plate at every table, police the world with racist shibboleths and a dying doctrine of marketplaces peopled by monopolies, top-heavy bureaus, and scum-swilling pigs to gun down any who would object?

The concept of nonviolent protest, whatever political forms it may take, presumes two things about the imperialist establishment that are so obviously historically unrealistic, so logically unsound, that the espousal of any purely nonviolent anti-establishment moan reduces one automatically to the absurd, and any strong espousal of the purely nonviolent anti-establishment policy reduces one automatically to a corpse.

The first presumption is mercy. It presumes the possible existence of mercy on the part of a breed whose heart is as cold as the snows. It presumes existence of a restraint mechanism that in other breeds and other animals precludes the harming of one's kind unless placed under the most extreme compulsions of self-preservation. But history shows no justification for so wild a presupposition. I refer you to Leopold II's Congo, the Indian wars of the last century, the Union of South Africa, Sharpsville, the Philippines at the turn of the century. I refer you to Germany during the depression and war years. I refer you to Vietnam! Just a cursory reading of history and just a glance about me now would show—that I could expect more mercy from a pack of Bengal tigers. Any claims that nonviolent, purely nonviolent political agitation has served to force back the legions of capitalist expansion are false. The theory of nonviolence is a false ideal. The Hindus failed *because* of this moral aspect in their characters precluding any large-scale organized violence. The forms of slavery merely changed for them. Of what value is quasi-politi-

cal control if the capitalists are allowed to hold on to the people's whole means of subsistence?! And in the case of India and foreign capitalists, have any of the people's needs been met? Do they still have race riots, do they still sleep in the streets? These people were betrayed by false leaders with false ideals. Compare India with China. They were both supposedly liberated at the same time, India may have had a year or more of what is loosely termed "political self-determination". China's problems in the late forties were ten times more severe, but today there is no one hungry in China. For the first time its population is united and organized under a government as decentralized and representative as a huge modern industrial based society can be. China, land of the coolie, slave labor, open-door policies, floor mat of the West—they're vying for first place in every important economic sector today. Remember the 1839 Opium War, the Boxer Rebellion. A trial of combat with China today would be Russian roulette with a fully loaded .45 automatic, self-destruction, suicide.

All of the third world political movements that are forcing the retreat of colonialism have learned to deal with the expeditionary armies of colonialism. There is no case of successful liberation without violence. How could you neutralize an army without violence?

The people of the U.S. are held in the throes of a form of colonialism. Control of their subsistence and nearly every aspect of the circumstances surrounding their existence has passed into the hands of a clearly distinct and alienated oligarchy. If today's young revolutionary vanguard are not merely entertaining themselves with a new kind of "chicken," a political form of bumper tag, if they seriously intend to step out front and take the monster to task, they should understand from the outset that the monster is merciless.

The second presumption contained in the concept of nonviolent political agitation is inherent in the statement of this policy, as it stands alone. The mere utterance of nonviolent policy statements *implies* that it is possible for one

to take the opposite course and pursue violence. But in our case this has not been proved. In all cases, there is a contradiction and a dangerous presumption in the statement and pursuit of nonviolent political policy, especially when the opposition is not so committed. The danger derives from the very realistic fact that the statement and pursuit of nonviolent tactics will always be mistaken for *weakness*, as these tactics stand alone. The contradiction is then revealed, in that power is expected to surrender to weakness.

Pure nonviolence as a political ideal, then, is absurd: Politics is violence. It may serve our purpose to claim nonviolence, but we must never delude ourselves into thinking that we can seize power from a position of weakness, with half measures, polite programs, righteous indignation, loud entreaties. If this agitation that we like to term as nonviolent is to have any meaning at all we must force the fascist to taste the bitterness of our wrath. Nonviolence must constantly demonstrate the effects of its implied opposite. The dialectic between Narodnik and Nihilist should never break down. One should not exist without the concomitant existence of the other.—Breakfast is here.—Long live the guerrillas!

Wednesday, March 25, 1970 (late)

I suspect that the pigs have stopped the correspondence form that I sent to your friend.

The four or five people who attacked the pigs last week—recall they had weapons (?), took the keys—they're out of the hole (isolation) already, over here with us. I don't, however, suspect foul play too strongly. The Mexican was beaten pretty badly. Just lit the forty-first cigarette.

The punks throw stuff at us through the bars when they are let out for showers. I mean foul stuff too. We each get a half hour a day, six days of the week, to shower or exercise in the limited space in front of our cells. The walks are segregated. Blacks are never allowed to walk or shower or even to come

out of the cells at all when the whites are out of their cells. The more perverse of "Hitler's Little Helpers" save their excretions to throw in our cells as they walk back and forth to their shower and exercise. The shit literally flies at us almost every day. The blacks don't even consider throwing excrement. We retaliate by shooting at them with little, crudely-made zip guns and powerful slingshots fashioned from the elastic on our shorts. If the pigs were interested in stopping this silly shit, they would integrate the shower walks. If they fear they would lose control that way, they could segregate the whole building. No whites or Mexicans on this floor at all.

To seize power for the people and relegate fascism to the history books the vanguard must change the basic patterns of thought. We are going to have to study the principles of people's movements. We are going to have to study them where they took place and interpret them to fit our situation here. We have yet to discover the meaning of people's war, people's army. The righteous people of the world who are struggling with the monster on the only terms that he can be fought must have many reservations concerning us, especially those of us who are black. What are the fierce and wonderful people of Vietnam thinking of us? Where is the real left wing? What has been done to us, that makes us fail to resist?

The successes of China, Cuba, Vietnam, and parts of Africa cannot be attributed to any innate, singular quality in the characters of their people. Men are social creatures, herd animals. We follow leaders. The success or failure of mass movements depends on their leadership and the method of their leaders. We must take our lessons from these people, reorganize our *values*, decide whether it is our personal desire to live long or to chance living right.

People's war, class struggle, war of liberation means *armed* struggle. Men like Hoover, Reagan, Hunt, Agnew, Johnson, Helms, Westmoreland, Abrams, Campbell, Carswell are dangerous men who believe that they are the rightful Fuhrers of all the world's people. They must be dealt with now. Can men

like these be converted? Will they allow anyone to maneuver them out of their positions of power while they still live? Would Nixon accept a people's government, a people's economy? How can we deal with these men who have so much at stake, so much to defend. Honesty forces us to the conclusion that the only men who will successfully deal with the Hoovers, Helmses and Abramses will be armed men. It's obvious to me that nothing of any consequence can be achieved while these men rule. Class struggle means the suppression of the opposing class, and suppression of the Amerikan General Staff, and The Corporate Elite. The moment this three-headed monster detects the danger contained in our ideas and ideals, he will react violently against us. Just the whisper of revolt excites in him a swift and terrible reflex, so swift we won't even know how we died.

Thursday, March 26, 1970

So, my friend, the terms have been established. That is the only way I will accept any more time in this life. I don't *want* to live any other way. I *want* my food and drink from the people's stash. I *want* to hide, run, and look over my shoulder. The only woman that I could ever accept is one who would be willing to live out of a flight bag, sleep in a coal car, eat milkweed, bloodroot, wild greens, dandelions, a rabbit, a handful of rice. She would have to be willing to run and work all night and watch all day. She would bathe when we could, change clothes when we could. She would own nothing, not solely because she loved me, but because she loved the principle, the revolution, the people.

I don't think this rotten society has produced any such wonderful creatures. There is a Cuban brother here on the tier. His folks left, but he supports the revolution. He can run some beautiful things about the people of Cuba when he'll talk and when I can understand him. The thing that fixes me best is how the revolution is gauged to operate on the family plan—

children with a role, women in the same roles as men, education standardized.

I remembered that those people had been some of the most corrupt in the Western world. Remember when the U.S. was in control, it was just like one of the Mexican border towns. The revolution brought all of those wonderful new people into existence. It will be the same here—right on—to the most beautiful conclusion.

Power to the People.

If they try to read this it will explain my somewhat damaged condition in court tomorrow.

You are my favorite person, Fay Stender, take care of yourself.

George