

Facts Behind Terror by Jeffrey Steinberg

Rebuilding the Black Liberation Army

The prison system is becoming a hot recruiting ground for terrorist organizations like the Black Liberation Army of police murderers, now being rebuilt.

Killing becomes the litmus test of sincerity...Because of these assumptions the lumpen proletariat and the maximum security prison come to be defined as basic new recruitment areas for socialist revolutionaries.

So wrote Alvin Goldner of the Institute for Policy Studies and the Transnational Institute in 1977. And that statement reveals what lies behind the recent pattern of prison breakouts and releases of former terrorists and police killers: there is a deliberate effort now ongoing to rebuild the terrorist Black Liberation Army.

The BLA was a group of so-called black revolutionaries who became notorious in the early 1970s for the systematic murder of police officers throughout the country. After the arrest of Joanne Chesimard (aka Assata Shakur), along with several other leading members of the BLA in 1974, it was believed that the BLA was destroyed. Now they are being re-born; the battle cry is the creation of a "new black nation."

The last known up front attempt to rebuild the BLA was in early April of 1978. At that time, New York City police officers were involved in a shootout with two persons suspected of committing a robbery—Eric Thompson and Mariano Gonzalez. Police discovered extensive dossiers on the BLA leadership in the trunk of Thompson's car and an arms cache in his apartment.

This effort began again with the Nov. 2, 1979 prison breakout of Joanne Chesimard known as the "soul of the BLA." Chesimard herself has stressed that all black people in jail were political prisoners and has called for their release. Beginning in January 1980:

*Three leading members of the terrorist Republic of New Africa (RNA) which is leading the fight for a "new black nation," were freed from federal penitentiaries in the South. The three—former President of the RNA Imari Obadele, Addis Adabba, and Karim Njabafundi—were imprisoned in 1972 on charges ranging from possession of stolen weapons to assault, federal conspiracy, and murder.

*A series of prison breakouts began, including at Rikers Island city prison in New York City, Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary in Pennsylvania and the aborted breakout at the Essex County Jail in Newark, N.J. on March 25.

The pattern of prison breaks follows the standard modus operandi of how such terrorist organizations are created, using hardcore criminals or fugitives indoctrinated in "liberation" ideologies while in prison "rehabilitation," or "cultural" programs.

In the most well-documented case, members of such terrorist organizations as the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) were re-

cruited from rehabilitation programs on the West Coast. At the time, those programs were run almost exclusively by members of the Revolutionary Union (now the Revolutionary Communist Party) a terrorist organization with a Maoist belief structure. It should be noted that H. Bruce Franklin, one of the founders of the RU, is now active in prison organizing and cultural studies at Rutgers University, just blocks away from the Essex County Prison.

The pattern of convict recruits also appears in the trial of James Johnson and Lloyd Jones for attempted murder of a New York City police officer. When the two were found guilty by Judge Roberts they started screaming, calling the judge a "capitalist hog" and Ku Klux Klan member. Johnson and Jones are being represented by Susan Tipograph, the lawyer for the Puerto Rican terrorist organization FALN.

Prison organizing is also being supported by the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, the above-ground support apparatus for the Weather Underground. The winter 1980 issue of their magazine *Breakthrough* focuses on the necessity of freeing all black, Hispanic and Indian political prisoners. Members of the Weather Underground were involved in an attempted prison breakout of two cult terrorists from the Well Spring Communion.

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