

ORESTES PENA

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Ex-spy says FBI 'dirty trick

Editor's Note: Secret FBI operations against radicals—like those described below by former undercover operative Joseph Burton—seem to have been carried out in New Orleans in the past few years.

A New Orleans couple in their 30s posed as anti-war radicals and supporters of Communist China in order to infiltrate and report on the radical movement here, as described in The States-Item Feb. 21.

Like Burton, the couple traveled around the country in connection with their FBI work. The woman accompanied Burton on trips to Canada, Burton has said. She also admitted going to China in 1971 in a group of American radicals, but actually working as an FBI spy.

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WASHINGTON — Despite assurances by the Justice Department that the Federal Bureau of Investigation's con-

counterintelligence program was halted in April, 1971, a former undercover operative says that the bureau continued as late as last June to employ program-style techniques against domestic political groups.

The former operative, Joseph A. Burton, told the New York Times in a series of recent interviews of activities he carried out for the FBI that appear similar to several of the categories of "dirty tricks" that characterized the counterintelligence program, or Cointelpro, effort.

Burton's account included examples of bogus documents, informants and sham "revolutionary" front groups used to disrupt a variety of political activities in this country.

He also told of "infiltrating" labor unions and, with other FBI undercover operatives, of reporting to the FBI on the Republican National Convention at Miami Beach in 1972, and of encouraging and assist-

ing demonstrations against the Nixon Administration over the Watergate scandals.

An FBI spokesman termed many of Burton's allegations "distorted or false" in a statement issued yesterday.

THE SPOKESMAN reiterated that the bureau's Cointelpro effort had not continued beyond April 1971, and maintained that the FBI had not instructed Burton to join or report on any labor unions and had no knowledge of his involvement in any "violent" demonstrations during the Miami convention.

Cointelpro's operation is expected to be investigated by the select committees that the Senate and House of Representatives have recently set up to examine intelligence gathering by federal agencies.

Cointelpro was described in a report by the Justice Department last November as a 17-year attempt to disrupt, expose or neutralize such

organizations as the Communist Party and the Ku Klux Klan.

In making the Cointelpro report public, William B. Saxbe, then the attorney general, disclosed that such activities "were implemented at various times during the period from 1956 to 1971, when all programs were discontinued."

Burton, who lives in Tampa, Fla., said that he and other undercover intelligence agents operated bogus "Communist" organizations, set up with the assistance of the FBI, to help them gain a foothold with radicals in their communities and with other revolutionary groups around the country.

FOR MORE than two years, Burton headed the "Red Star Cadre," ostensibly a pro-Communist Chinese organization that he said he formed in May, 1972 "at the direction of the bureau," and directed until he left the bureau's employ in July, 1974.

ed' radicals till '74

The FBI, he said, supplied him with everything from the name to operating funds to T-shirts, bearing a large red star and the legend "fight back," that he and his radical comrades wore to demonstrations.

Burtoton, a 42-year-old auctioneer and antique dealer, said he became involved with the FBI after he was invited by a co-worker at a Tampa janitorial service to join the Communist Party.

Burton said he advised the FBI's Tampa field office of the invitation and was visited the next day by two agents, who persuaded him to adopt a revolutionary guise and to try to infiltrate radical groups in the Tampa area. He said he was later asked to infiltrate groups in the United States and Canada.

The function of the "Red Star Cadre," he said, was to "make other organizations come to us and want to discuss

ideology."

He was successful in this, he said, as well as in attracting as members of his cadre a number of local radicals in whom the FBI was interested.

BURTON SAID he was later told by the FBI that his efforts in Tampa were part of a larger attempt by the bureau to find and cut off funds believed to be flowing to Maoist groups in this country from China.

As the fledgling Tampa group became known to other radical organizations around the country, Burton said he was called upon by the bureau to leave the city in connection with his work.

(Burton told The States-Item that he had come to New Orleans several times during the period he worked for the FBI, meeting with members of the "Red Collective," which described itself as a Maoist group here, and which Burton

said was in contact with his Red Star Cadre.

(A New Orleans couple who worked as FBI operatives were members of the Red Collective, but Burton declined to comment on whether the organization was controlled by the FBI.)

His first out-of-town assignment was to "cover" the demonstrations at the Republican National Convention in 1972 in Miami Beach where he and other Red Star members traveled at the FBI's expense.

Burton said Miami FBI agents "suggested that I try to get into one of the 'affinity groups' which ended up later 'trashing' the taxicabs" around the convention site.

"THE ONLY thing I helped to do," he said, "was incite people to turn over one of the buses and then told them that if they really wanted to blow the bus up, to stick a rag in the

gas tank and light it."

The protesters, he said, were unable to overturn the vehicle.

Asked why he had agreed to undertake such tasks in return for relatively little money or security, Burton, who never graduated from high school, replied:

"Most people work in intelligence because it gives you a sense of importance, a sense of being worthwhile and doing something worthwhile instead of mopping floors.

The experiences that followed the Miami trip, however, according to Burton, led gradually to frustration and, finally, to concern about the legality and propriety of what he and others were doing in the bureau's behalf.

"When the FBI came to me," he said, "I felt honored, the most trusted person in town. After I got to know them a little closer, I said, 'We got a monster running around in this country.' I hate to say that, but that's the way I feel about it."