

Visits Stir Cambridge

FBI Calls on Ellsberg Friends

By Sanford J. Ungar
Washington Post Staff Writer

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—Sam Popkin returned to his office at Harvard's Center for International Affairs on Monday, July 12.

He had been abroad, first in Hong Kong, then at a convention of political scientists in Germany, and missed the entire crisis surrounding newspaper publication of the Pentagon papers.

But he was not long in catching up.

Just after lunchtime that Monday, two FBI agents called on Popkin, as assistant professor of government, to talk about his good friends and frequent dinner companions, Daniel and Patricia Ellsberg.

Ellsberg has publicly acknowledged making copies of the secret Pentagon study on the war in Vietnam available to the press. Although he has already been indicted in Los Angeles for theft and unauthorized possession of government documents, a federal grand jury in Boston is considering further charges against him, the newspaper and any intermediaries.

Citing the grand jury investigation, the FBI agents stayed with Popkin for 90 minutes, alternating questions about the Pentagon papers with personal ones about the Ellsbergs.

Uncertain about his legal obligation to cooperate with the agents, Popkin says, he talked with them—"but I told them I didn't want to do anything to hurt Dan."

At about the same time, another agent from the Hyannis office of the FBI visited the Cape Cod summer home of Everett E. Hagen, director of the Center for International Studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Hagen, too, was questioned about Ellsberg—how Ellsberg had been selected as a senior research associate at the MIT Center

and, again, queries about his "personal qualities."

"I had a feeling," Hagen says, "that they would have liked me to say, 'Dan Ellsberg's kind of an odd person; he stands on his head in his office every afternoon.'"

Many other people, the prominent and the relatively obscure alike, have been approached in recent weeks as the FBI has combed through this city's two vast university communities in what appears to be a new, intensified investigation of the central figure in the Pentagon papers case.

The investigation has produced a rare suspense for an other wise lackadaisical Cambridge summer.

Usually, those contacted by the FBI immediately get on the phone to warn others that the agents may be coming. Few will speak to a reporter on the telephone, suspecting that their lines are tapped. Breakfasts, lunches and dinners are consumed with speculation and second-guessing about what the Boston grand jury may be doing, who will be subpoenaed next.

The case is almost constantly in the headlines of Boston's two semi-underground newspapers, which are widely read here. One of them, Boston After Dark, gave its readers a practical warning last week:

"IMPORTANT: If you are approached by FBI agents, you do not have to talk with them. Beware of lying to G-men. The Bureau assumes that those who lie are trying to protect someone. If you receive a subpoena to appear before a grand jury, be sure to contact a lawyer for advice."

Some approached by the FBI cooperate, some do not. Some will not say if they have, referring a reporter to university news offices with an angry shake of the head.

Among those most visited by federal agents are photocopying firms, which do a

booming business in a university town.

The MIT branch of the Gnomon Copy Service, a 10-minute walk from Ellsberg's office, apparently has been a special focus of the investigation. Agents have particularly inquired about people employed there last summer.

It is well-known that Ellsberg, like hundreds of others, is the academic community here, was a good customer a Gnomon.

But, as the FBI has undoubtedly learned in its interviews, it is difficult to establish what anyone copied at any particular time, since customers with private material are often permitted to operate Gomon's Xerox machines themselves at night.

Speaking over the unrelenting click of a photocopy machine last week, George Lye, manager of the MIT branch of Gnomon, stressed that he was none too eager to cooperate with the investigation.

"It's not for us to enforce the laws," he said.

Some of Ellsberg's personal friends say that they pointedly refused to talk with visiting agents. One, a free-lance journalist, found that they stopped contacting her when she insisted upon having a lawyer present for any interview.

Jane Pratt, an MIT graduate student who uses an office at the Center for International Studies to work on her doctoral dissertation about Vietnam, says she had several mysterious phone calls in the early part of the Ellsberg investigation.

People claiming to be newspapermen would call, asking to discuss Ellsberg with her, she said. But each one refused to leave his phone number or to provide the name of an editor with whom she might check his identity, she added.

Miss Pratt, who said she went sailing to avoid involvement in the investiga-

tion, suspects that the FBI was the source of those phone calls.

Others close to Ellsberg express a bemused disappointment that they have not yet been asked about him.

Wassily Leontief, a Harvard economics professor who supervised Ellsberg's studies, said he had expected a visit from the FBI when he heard about the investigation.

Leaving him out, Leontief said, "shows that it's a selective thing. This proves that it is not a very thorough investigation."

Of those known to have been contacted by the FBI who are willing to discuss it, Popkin's session appears to have been the most extensive.

He said that in personal questions, the agents stressed words like "emotions," "stability" and "psychiatric" as well as "unduly," "overly" and "unnecessarily." Like Hagen, Popkin said he had the impression that the agents were trying to elicit negative comments about Ellsberg.

Popkin said he feared the agents were trying to implicate him in the Pentagon papers case, too, with remarks like "Gee, professor, you know about the war. What do you think about this Vietnam mess?"

(Currently working on a book about the pacification program in Vietnam, Popkin has taken part with Ellsberg and others, including some authors of the Pentagon papers, in Harvard and MIT seminars on the war.)

Most typical of the agents' visit, he said, was a series of questions where they seemed to be exploring Ellsberg's motives for making the study available to the press.

"I guess Ellsberg must have done this for money," Popkin remembers one of the agents saying. He said he argued bitterly with the agent, pointing out that he did not think Ellsberg would do things that way.

"Well," countered the other agent as the argument subsided, "I guess he must have done it for glory."