

The Minutemen

[The Spirit of '66]

NESTLED IN THE UNDULATING, lake-dotted Ramapo Mountains of northern New Jersey is Camp Midvale, a recreation retreat for several generations of New York City leftists. The National Guardian held picnics on its unkempt lawns; baldish garment district socialists batted volleyballs over tattered nets while their thick-thighed wives splashed in a spring-fed pool; and last year fuzz-cheeked activists of the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs showed up for frolic and a round of bucolic caucusing.

On the early morning of October 30, 1966, bands of paramilitary Minutemen, garbed in outdoor clothing to blend with the swarm of hunters stalking the hills, set out with the intent, police said, of mounting a firebomb assault on Camp Midvale and two similar camps in nearby New York and Connecticut.

At the last minute, the superpatriots were intercepted by New York City police, who had had them under surveillance for 10 months. In simultaneous raids on Minutemen arms caches in the city and upstate, 110 state and local officers seized a massive arsenal of mortars, grenades, bazookas, machine guns, semi-automatic rifles, miscellaneous arms, and close to a million rounds of ammunition, that was weighed in by the ton: "We were concerned with a great loss of life," said Queens District Attorney Nat H. Hentel, who authorized the arrests and raids.

The abortive terrorist plot was the latest in a series that has marked Senator J. William Fulbright and former CORE leader James Farmer for assassination, and the United Nations Building for an infusion of lethal cyanide into the air conditioning system in order to wipe out hundreds of "communists and one-worlders" in one fell swoop. To the Minutemen, World War III commenced with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's second term when a socialistic tide began to swamp the corridors of governmental power and reduce the United States to a vassal state of international communism. Impelled by the motto "Words Won't Win—Action Will," they are sworn to establish a neo-Constitutional Republic, Minutemen style. As one recent Minutemen defector put it: "After you take their Five Phases of Training, you find that you want to overthrow the government by force and violence and do away with half the people in the United States."

As a conspiratorial apparatus, the Minutemen make

the Communist party look like a ladies' *kaffee klatsch*, yet somehow the vaunted security watchdogs of the FBI have remained quiet. Their lapse is probably due to J. Edgar Hoover's perpetual hang-up with the *bêtes noires* of the left. For instance, when Communist party ranks dwindled below 10,000 several years ago, Hoover seized upon the nascent DuBois Clubs as the fresh menace, touting them as "new blood for the vampire of International Communism."

In this year's appropriations testimony, released September 22, 1966, Hoover tagged Camp Midvale a "camp for Communist youth," and, ironically, may thus have goaded the Minutemen into attacking it. Although the G-men devoted considerable snooping time to Camp Midvale, Minutemen national headquarters at Norborne, Missouri, was attended only on a part-time basis by special agent Arnett of the Kansas City office.

In the same appropriations testimony, the prestigious FBI chief pooh-poohed the Minutemen, calling them a "paper organization" whose boast of over 25,000 members had been grossly exaggerated (however, he insisted that the Communist party "wields an influence and constitutes a security danger far out of proportion to its membership"). "We have penetrated this organization," he fatuously declared, "and our sources keep us posted on developments." Yet when New York authorities rounded up the Minutemen about to embark on their mission of destruction, Hoover learned about it in the newspapers.

Like other cursory observers, Hoover apparently clings to the original image of the Minutemen as an amalgam of harmless commie-haters with a commando complex. When the outfit was formed over six years ago, its intent was purely defensive—to fight a last-ditch guerrilla action against an expected invasion by Communist troops from abroad. But when the invasion failed to materialize, the Minutemen did an about-face and leveled their sights on the domestic enemy—the "ultra-liberals." They assiduously collected data on any person or group that smacked of liberalism. They have infiltrated numerous units of law enforcement and government, and groups such as SNCC and CORE. They have carried on campaigns of harassment against the "enemy," planted evidence damaging to him, and hatched plots to eradicate him. From coast to coast they have cached veritable arsenals against the hour of *Der Tag*.

by William W. Turner

LEGEND HAS IT that the Minutemen organization came into being quite spontaneously on a small Missouri lake in June of 1960. It was the height of the U-2 crisis, and a coterie of ten duck hunters was speculating on the outcome. "Well, if the Russians invade us," one quipped, "we can come up here and fight on as a guerrilla band." The idea struck a somber chord, and one of the hunters who was a Special Forces veteran dug out his training manuals. In deadly earnest, the group started "to prepare for the day when Americans will once again fight in the streets for their lives and their liberty."

The desperation movement proliferated rapidly, and soon maneuvers were being staged in San Antonio, Omaha, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Columbus, Newark and San Diego. Clad in camouflage suits, Minutemen squads clambered up ravines hurling de-fused grenades at an imaginary enemy, put up skirmish lines, blasted away at silhouette targets, and subsisted in the desert on cactus juice and lizard meat. To inquirers startled at the spectacle there was the stock answer: "We're just loyal Americans tired of being pushed around by the Communists."

Not even when deputies seized an arsenal of recoilless rifles, mortars and machine guns during a 1961 raid on an Illinois guerrilla exercise was there any clamor to clamp down on the Minutemen. Press and public continued to look upon them with bemusement as if they were a bunch of gung-ho types given to toting rifles and tearing around in jeeps. And Minutemen spokesmen applied the patriotic touch by citing the right of citizens to bear arms which dates back to Colonial days.

The shift of the Minutemen's gaze from the sea to the home-grown enemy was signaled by a 1961 manifesto proclaiming "our diplomatic war against communism has already been lost by bunglers or traitors within our own government." As the theorists saw it, the Constitution had already been superseded, for all practical purposes, by the United Nations charter. In a message to his followers that year, founder DePugh instructed that the Minutemen must "prepare to take any action—no matter how brutal—that may be required to renew the protection of the United States Constitution for future generations."

In drawing a bead on the native socialists, collectivists and liberals who were paving the way for a Communist millennium, the Minutemen found themselves in camp with the rest of the ultra-right. But they were able to dangle a lure that was irresistible to the more radical elements—the promise of direct, violent action. Extremists who had grown jaded on "debating society tactics" flocked to the rolls. Anti-Castro emigres with the dislodged zeal of counter-revolutionaries saw in the Minutemen a possible springboard for an assault on the homeland. Remnants of the Hungarian Freedom Fighters now

in this country found common cause. And jingoistic ex-U.S. servicemen frustrated by the static Cold War once again found an outlet for their military skills.

Although John Birch officials have publicly disavowed the Minutemen, DePugh contends that droves of Birchers have secretly joined his group. "Generally the hardest working members of the JBS are members of the Minutemen," he brays, explaining that recruits are encouraged to retain memberships in other right wing organizations in order to spread Minutemen influence. One of the episodes dutifully reported by New York police was a Minutemen-Bircher baseball game won by the former 1-0.

Despite a patina of respectable conservatism, the Minutemen have inevitably become shot through with the rabble of the radical right. Twenty American Nazis were absorbed *en masse*, although DePugh insists it was with the stipulation that they conform to Minutemen standards. Ku Klux Klanners abound, and there is a clutch of National States Rights Party adherents. The Minutemen coordinator for Pennsylvania, Roy Frankhauser Jr., and his New Jersey counterpart, Frank Rotella, are better known for their roles of state Grand Dragons of the Klan; it was in Frankhauser's home in October 1965, that the fanatically racist Dan Burros shot himself fatally when the New York Times revealed his Jewish heritage.

The expansion-minded DePugh, who has emerged as the charismatic leader of the paramilitary right, has brought practically all of the nation's paramilitary units under Minutemen hegemony. Although units may retain a separate identity, usually based on a fundamentalist religion tone, they function as integral parts of the Minutemen. In New Jersey, there are the Sons of Liberty, whose manual on garroting and other niceties of guerrilla warfare closes with a quote from Isaiah; in St. Louis, the Christian Soldiers, headed by ex-Marine Walter Peyson, convicted for illegal possession of a machine gun; in Illinois, the Counter-Insurgency Council of Richard Lauchli Jr., a Minutemen founder; and in New Orleans, the Paul Revere Associated Yeomen (PRAY).

Perhaps the largest Minutemen division is the Soldiers of the Cross, at whose Englewood, Colorado base evangelism is mixed with practice in karate, judo and the art of survival. The chief Soldier is Rev. Kenneth Goff, a former member of the Young Communist League who switched horses in the mid '40s by teaming with the ultra-nationalist, anti-Semitic Gerald L. K. Smith, and he now sits on the Minutemen national council. One of Goff's California compatriots, the Rev. Dallas Roquemore, was possessed of the singular theory that the Russians were slyly cornering the horse market in order to mount a Cossack-style attack on the west coast. Setting up bases in the Santa Ana range, he composed a text *Get Ye Up Into the High*

The

SPIRITS

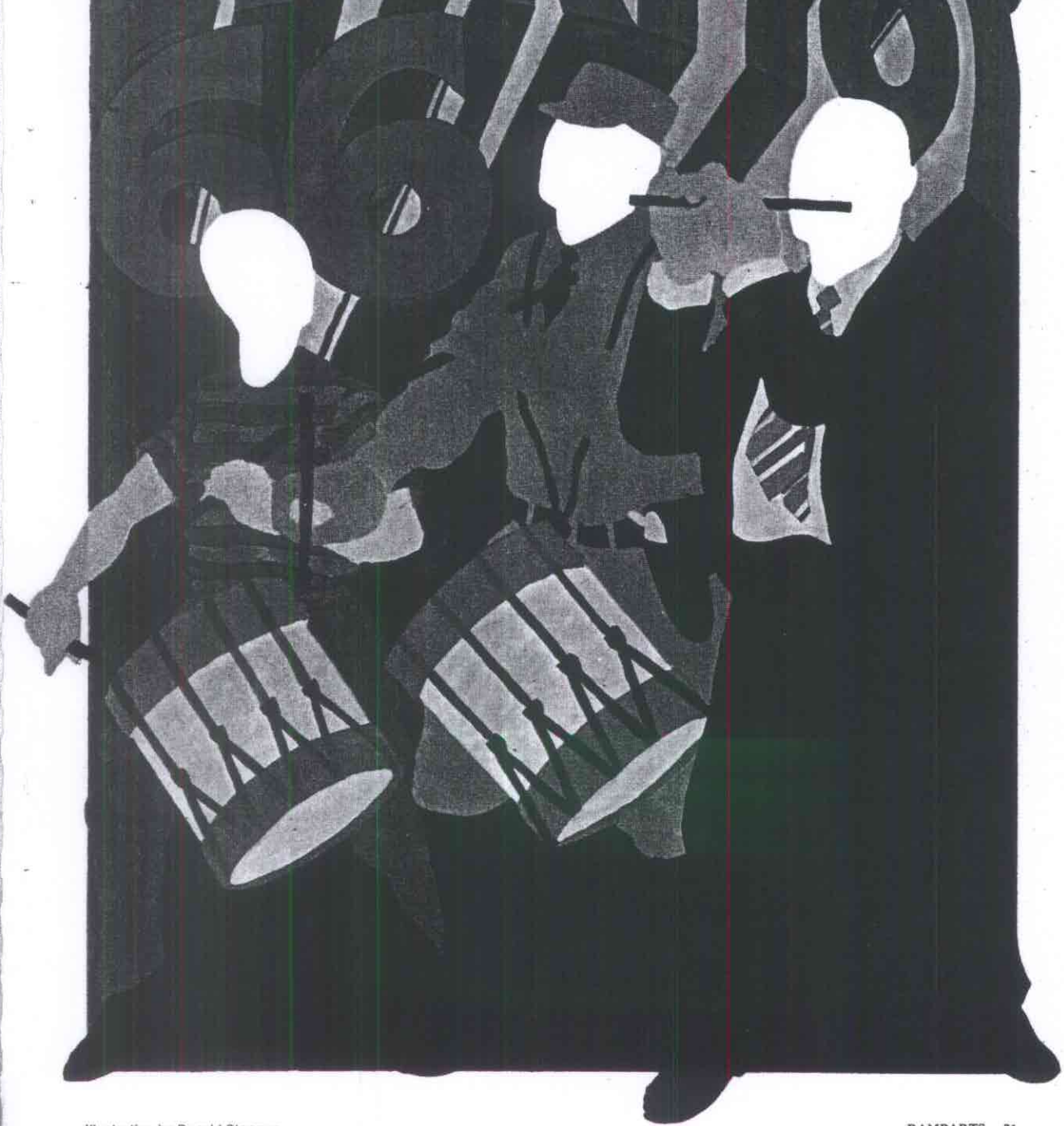


Illustration by Dugald Stermer

Mountains which, in proffering instructions on such grisly considerations as eye-gouging and the disposal of enemy corpses, suggests: "The dead bodies could be suspended from a tree by the legs, or any suitable showmanship, for an example to the enemy." Roquemore's lively imagination has been lost to the cause however; he was shot to death by one of his recruits whose alertness he was testing.

Another Minutemen affiliate, perhaps the most bizarre, is the church-paramilitary complex of Dr. Wesley Swift of Los Angeles, himself an erstwhile protege of Gerald L. K. Smith. Swift's Church of Jesus Christ-Christian has a string of "parishes" in California and Florida and a radio voice reaching an estimated million listeners. The church sponsors the Christian Defense League, one of whose members was arrested in 1964 in possession of an array of post-Biblical weaponry. Swift is closely allied with Colonel William Gale, a World War II leader of Philippine guerrilla bands who presently heads the paramilitary California Rangers, cited by the state attorney general as "an underground network for the conduct of guerrilla warfare." Gale apparently attempts to proselytize former servicemen; in 1964 the California American Legion revoked the charter of its Signal Hill Post when it was discovered many members had joined the Rangers. One Ranger, George J. King, son of a retired admiral, was convicted on firearms charges when he sold illegal weapons to state undercover agents.

Gale, who professes to be a minister in Swift's church, preaches hate: "You got your nigger Jews, you got your Asiatic Jews and you got your white Jews. They're all Jews, and they're all the offspring of the devil." In Florida, Swift minister Rev. Oren Potito, who protested the 1962 enrollment of James Meredith at Mississippi and was arrested when firearms were found in his car, readily acknowledges church-led "guerrilla warfare units." Perhaps Swift's most flamboyant minister is Connie Lynch, the peregrinatic Negro-baiter who affects a Confederate-flag vest. Lynch was credited by Florida authorities with spurring mob violence in St. Augustine in 1964; in 1965 he led the KKK parade in Bogalusa, Louisiana; and in 1966 he showed up in Chicago agitating against Negroes during the rioting. He holds Minutemen membership number C41412.

The governing body of the Minutemen is the national council, composed of DePugh, Rev. Goff, Troy Haughton of San Diego, DePugh's West Coast lieutenant, and seven others, including a Tucson insurance executive, a Spokane Air Force reserve captain, and a New Orleans PRAY member. The organization is divided into seven national divisions, each headed by a coordinator, and into local bands and teams. Local units are not informed of each other's identities, and members are cautioned not to dis-

close their affiliation.

The membership pattern follows population densities, DePugh says. "We have more members in New York City alone than in the Deep South." DePugh refuses to divulge the total membership, and the files at headquarters are chemically treated so they can be instantly destroyed. But in December 1965, a defector emerged from the murky recesses of the organization to shed considerable light on its present status.

GAUNT, SALLOW-FACED JERRY Milton Brooks, a 37-year-old self-styled adventurer, once convicted of extortion, joined the Minutemen soon after their inception in 1960 and became known to his comrades as "the rabbi." Although DePugh denies he was a formal member, Brooks brought out secret membership rolls and a fingertip knowledge that tends to support his role as a trusted aide, and his story has stood up under cross-checking by Missouri authorities. He has provided the first searching look inside the enigmatic organization.

In his squeaky, nervous voice, Brooks tells how he rushed to enlist in Illinois after reading of a Minutemen raid there. Transferred to headquarters in Norborne, Missouri, in 1962, he served as DePugh's intelligence and security officer until he became squeamish over the Minutemen's intent to overthrow the government. "The reason I was picked," he says, "is because I had a criminal record and was going to shoot a few people and shake down a few people for \$60,000 or \$70,000, another one for \$50,000."

Brooks places the active membership at 8000 but points out that adding the Soldiers of the Cross and the other groups under Minutemen direction leaps the figure to about 80,000 (G-man Hoover recently estimated the membership at 500). But numbers, Brooks warns, are not a true key to the outfit's strength. DePugh in fact rejects out of hand nine of ten applications. The real danger is the elite corps of 3500 who have survived the rigorous Five Phases of Training and taken an oath of loyalty to the Minutemen. This is the fanatical hard-core who dangle Crusader's Crosses inscribed "We Will Never Surrender" around their necks and who fully understand that to defect automatically brings the mark of death.

The Minutemen chief prefers to recruit lawyers, police, ex-cons, reveals Brooks, and the result is a heterogenous membership. By occupation, the ranks include a vice-president of a state Blue Cross program, a professor at Southern Illinois University, a Kansas City television personality, a Seattle merchant marine sailor, a Los Angeles cop and a Missouri bricklayer who affects a gold earring. Many are medical doctors—one, a Naval Reserve

officer, has stored 500 live grenades in his basement—and there is an inordinate number of gun shop owners. Practically all carry guns on their person or in their car.

Although dues are a nominal \$5 a year, the Minutemen seem to have achieved financial solvency. Some of the better-heeled members contribute generously, notes Brooks, and some of the big names in the right-wing galaxy have funneled funds into the coffers. Among these are several national council members of the John Birch Society, he discloses, as well as an oil tycoon and a retired military officer.

Brooks' career in the Minutemen is intriguing in its own right. The inchoate organization first dispatched him to Washington, Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, New Orleans and other cities to set up Minutemen chapters. In 1961 he drew a quixotic assignment to travel to Stanford University in California to spy on Russians attached to a Soviet book exhibition there. Later in Miami he recruited among the Cuban exile colony, signing up a former Batista cabinet minister who had fled with a fair chunk of the national treasury, and an Oriente Province large plantation owner whose property had been expropriated.

The rabidly anti-Castro Minutemen, the defector asserts, were champing at the bit to strike a blow against Cuba, and one in fact succeeded. Mounting an anti-tank gun procured through Minutemen channels—it had been originally obtained from Interarmco, the arms broker in Alexandria, Virginia which sells also to the CIA—on a fast cabin cruiser, he made a hit-and-run dash on February 3, 1965, into Havana harbor and pounded several shells into an oil tank farm.

In his terse, clipped rhetoric, Brooks told of an inscrutable front called the Anti-Communism League of the Caribbean, operating out of New Orleans, which he credits—with CIA help—with engineering the 1954 overthrow of the leftist Arbenz government in Guatemala. The League is headed by a man who is concurrently high up in Minutemen councils; the late W. Guy Banister, a former FBI division boss in New Orleans, reportedly was connected with both the League and the Minutemen. The League remains an arcanum that raises cogent questions, such as: does it serve as a hush-hush buffer between CIA and right-wing Caribbean insurgent cadres?

THE COMMAND POST of the Minutemen is Norborne, Missouri, a community of some 650 souls tucked into the rolling countryside 70 miles northeast of Kansas City. It is where Robert Boliver DePugh, the national coordinator, has his home and business, and the scene is one of incongruous tranquility. Strung along state highway 10, as it leads into Norborne, is a series of signs repeating the phrases of the

Hail Mary in the fashion of Burma-Shave jingles. The streets of town are narrow and the buildings seem built to three-quarters scale. Next to the shoebox quarters of the American Legion Post on Pine Street are the modest offices of the Biolab Corporation, DePugh's veterinary medicine firm. Biolab's net worth is reported at \$350,000, and its majority stockholders are two Jewish businessmen from Chicago.

At 43, DePugh's black hair is receding, but his taut features remain ruggedly handsome. The strain of running a thriving business on the one hand and an underground apparatus on the other shows in a pallor untypical of an outdoorsman. He speaks unhurriedly in the soft drawl of the region. His desk is cluttered with business correspondence and Minutemen literature; one wall of the office is stacked to the ceiling with pharmaceutical and biology texts mingled with political tracts and a primer on guerrilla warfare by Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

DePugh was born and raised in Independence, a Kansas City suburb, where his father recently retired from the sheriff's office. After a year's stint as an Army Signal Corps radarman during World War II, DePugh studied chemistry and genetics in college, although he fell short of a degree. His organizational talents first manifested themselves at Kansas State when he formed the Society for the Advancement of Canine Genetics which claimed 2000 members nationwide.

His political concepts took shape when he was in the Army. He came into contact with several radar scientists, he says, who seemed "not to hold allegiance to the same flag." Later, during the McCarthy hearings, he recalled those scientists and "wondered why McCarthy was being smeared for saying things I knew were true." DePugh was an early follower of Robert Welch but was drummed out of the Birch Society when he organized the Minutemen.

The normally taciturn chief becomes animated when he talks of bushwhacking and infiltration. "We feel an underground army in this country is going to be much different from anything existing before," he enthuses. "Different than guerrilla warfare in Vietnam, or Algeria, or the Belgian Congo. We have a vast numerical inferiority, but our asset is the technical competence of Americans." He credits the Minutemen with specialists in electronics, secret inks, demolition and chemical and biological warfare. "We have the most sophisticated and best equipped underground army movement this world has ever seen."

DePugh points out that the acquisition of arms and equipment is still an easy matter, since the enemy takeover is as yet incomplete. Military weapons and supplies can be bought from mail order houses, sports shops and arms brokers with no practical restraints. After the 1964 "Operation Desert Strike" Army games involving 100,000

troops, Minutemen scavenged the "battlefields" for abandoned materiel (west coast leader Haughton termed the operation a cover-up for a takeover by United Nations troops). Even fully automatic weapons forbidden by law are not unobtainable. Arms catalogs which offer machine guns with barrels legally welded to render them inoperable on one page, offer easily substituted new barrels on the next. And the Minutemen have their own ordnance experts capable of fabricating automatic weapons. "It is better to buy one lathe," reasons DePugh, "than a dozen machine guns."

In line with the DePugh shibboleth of "individual responsibility," members join the National Rifle Association to become eligible for at-cost rifles and handguns and free ammunition under the auspices of the U.S. Office of Civilian Marksmanship. Minutemen literature instructs them in do-it-yourself weaponry. One bulletin observes that "the advantages of a gun that makes no noise when fired are obvious," and goes on to detail the technology of silencers, the possession of which is outlawed.

The Minutemen Handbook contains lessons on such subjects as "Booby Traps," "Anti-Vehicular Mines," and "Incendiary Weapons Composition." The self-made saboteur can improvise dozens of lethal and infernal devices, for example:

The best set-up for making "Molotov Cocktails" is as follows. Using the small disposable type beer bottles, filled with a home-made napalm mixture of 2/3 gasoline and 1/3 "Duz," fill the bottles and cap them with an inexpensive bottle-capper available at most drug stores. Tape a regular "Tampax" sanitary device to each bottle with masking tape.

Methan gas (or nerve gas) is obtained when small slivers of pure teflon plastic are inserted in a cigarette. The results are always fatal and almost immediate.

ESPIONAGE AND INFILTRATION, DePugh believes, are equally potent weapons. In July 1965, apparently swept away by his own fervor, he was arrested on the complaint of two girls that he had tried to impress them into service as Minutemen Mata Haris. The girls, who passed a polygraph test, informed police that "DePugh told us he wanted us to seduce men in the high government. He told us he would take pictures and tape recordings and use them as blackmail to infiltrate the government."

Although DePugh minimizes the incident as a misinterpretation by the girls of a discussion of communist use of seduction, they did claim they were held incommunicado for a week by a Soldier of the Cross brandishing a machine gun. And in conjunction with DePugh's arrest, officers found a hoard of wiretapping equipment, land mines,

grenades and explosives. The top Minuteman is currently free on bond pending trials on contributing to the delinquency of a minor and illegal possession of "bombs and bombshells."

While all of this smacks of a Grade B movie, there is ample evidence that Minutemen spying is not all hollow bombast. An apparatus called the Minutemen Intelligence Organization is fairly professionally set up. Training tape B-2 stresses the "recruiting or placing of agents within the enemy ranks where inside information may be obtained, or where false information may be planted, or where enemy plans or programs can be misdirected." The curriculum blankets the espionage field as the tape announces that techniques must be applied in the spirit that "the end justifies the means."

DePugh boasts that he has planted infiltrators in such bodies as the Democratic Party, the American Nazi Party, and the FBI, which he feels has slipped from the grasp of Hoover, a dependable conservative, into the hands of "Stevensonian-type liberals" at the second echelon. Since the government is supposedly heavily infested with communists, governmental agencies are a special target.

The degree of success of the effort was graphically illustrated in the New York dragnet. Camp Webatuck, fancied by the Minutemen as a communist redoubt, had been mined with nine firebombs to be triggered by timing devices. According to the Queens district attorney, the sappers had been supplied information on the camp's layout by a state trooper who was a Minuteman. The trooper had also relayed to the Minutemen massive and detailed data on law enforcement agencies, electric power installations, and communications facilities. With two other Minutemen-connected troopers, he has left the force.

Equally startling was the news that one of the Minutemen under arrest was a reserve master sergeant in the Special Forces—the famous Green Berets—who apparently had fed back details of guerrilla training. The development dovetailed with statements in a New Jersey Minutemen internal bulletin, designated No. 9 and dated October 1965, which counseled members: "DON'T SHOOT NATIONAL GUARDSMEN. Many of them are already in our organization." Since a previous bulletin had described secret emergency procedures of the New Jersey National Guard, infiltration of the military in the region seemed to be a *fait accompli*.

DePugh smiles wanly when he lays claim to Minutemen penetration of the Black Muslims, CORE, SNCC, and peace groups. "If a Negro wants to join the Minutemen," he confides, "I tell him frankly: Well friend, you can be of real value to us due to your racial background. If you will have a very loose connection with us and keep your membership very secret then you can probably successfully join

CORE or the Black Muslims or one of the others, and the information you can provide will be of real service." None, he says, "have failed to recognize that this is the way to serve the cause of individual freedom."

In this direction also the Minutemen seem to have met with at least a modicum of success. Jerry Brooks relates that at headquarters he saw internal memoranda of the Communist party presumably filched by an undercover agent, and was aware of a Minutemen team led by a man using the cover name Bill Roberts which had insinuated itself into the Students for a Democratic Society chapter at the University of Chicago and the National Committee to End the War in Vietnam at Madison, Wisconsin. A companion cell at the University of Kansas was ferreted out by the editor of the liberal Kansas Free Press, Laird Wilcox. On Long Island the distribution of an inflammatory leaflet "Kill the White Devils" was linked to Minutemen who had made it look like the work of Negro militants.

TOSUPPLEMENT their cloak-and-dagger efforts, the Minutemen make it incumbent upon the membership to help identify "the enemy," keep tabs on him, and harass him. In its February 1964 edition, the monthly newsletter *On Target* admonished: "We must know our enemies by name, address and phone number. Their leaders must be subject to special scrutiny. We must know their habits, their likes, their strong and weak points. We must have a complete physical description of them. We must know the license number of their cars and where they are apt to hide in time of danger . . . We must show the left-wing professor and the pro-communist minister that liberalism is not always a bed of roses. There are penalties which they too must pay for selling their country out."

A steady stream of dossier material, including photographs, flows into Norborne, where it is assigned for indexing and collation. So far, the central files contain data on 65,000 individuals who have manifested an "ultra-liberal philosophy." Suspects may be pinpointed by their participation in peace movement picket lines and civil rights rallies, or by their liberal public statements. New members spend three tedious months as part of their First Phase of Training poring over some 600 "left wing" periodicals culling names. Vital statistics on suspects may be gained by pretext—a Minuteman posing as an insurance salesman, for example—subterfuge, or shadowing.

The criteria used to single out the enemy are loose, but some idea can be had from the fact that the Huntley-Brinkley television team is cited as the embodiment of ultra-liberalism and *The Nation* as "Socialistic," the second nastiest word in the Minutemen vocabulary. There

are, however, some 1500 persons the Minutemen have "verified" as members of the communist "hidden government" who supposedly are under constant surveillance and scheduled for assassination when the coup comes.

Curiously, the files contain not only such material as FBI license numbers and intelligence on B'nai B'rith and the National Council of Churches, but dossiers on Dr. Fred Schwarz and his Christian Anti-Communism Crusade and Billy James Hargis and his Christian Crusade, whose brands of conservatism are entirely too mild for the Minutemen. And current specifics on the KKK and Nazis are on tap should they be needed to carry out reprisals in the event of a double-cross.

Marking time until their leaders decide *Der Tag* has arrived, Minutemen carry on a well organized campaign of harassment. Anonymous telephone callers threaten "ultra-liberals" with death, and attempt to end their livelihood by asking employers, "Do you have a communist named John Brown working there?" Unordered goods have a way of piling up on liberal doorsteps, and in a Southern California twist, gasoline has a way of coating liberal swimming pools. The editors of *Ramparts* have been warned by "The California Minutemen" that time is short for changing their "nefarious ways." One Minuteman was permitted to resign from the postal service when it was learned he had sent threatening letters to persons on his route whose mail suggested they were liberals. To discredit civil rights and anti-Vietnam war demonstrations, Minutemen imposters participate wearing dirty clothing and acting as obnoxiously as possible.

The membership's adrenalin level is kept at peak by the brutish rhetoric of *On Target* (the masthead challenges: "We guarantee that all law suits will be settled out of court."). A December 1965 pep talk characterizing the Chicago race riots as a "warm-up for the big offensive" declared: "When the enemy is ready for all-out guerrilla actions, they will find it easy to get large numbers of pre-conditioned negroes [sic] to sabotage water works, blow up gas lines, etc." The December 1963 issue refused to mourn the death of John F. Kennedy. "We will not soon forget that he ignored the best interest of his country from the day he took office to the day he died . . ."

A few months before the assassination, *On Target* ran a macabre epitome addressed to 20 "Judas" members of Congress who had voted against HUAC: "See the old man at the corner where you buy your papers: He may have a silencer-equipped pistol under his coat. That extra fountain pen in the pocket of the insurance salesman that calls on you might be a cyanide gas gun. . . . These (Minutemen) patriots are not going to let you take their freedom. They have learned the silent knife, the strangler's cord, the target rifle that hits sparrows at 200 yards. Only

their leaders restrain them. Traitors beware! Even now the cross-hairs are on the back of your necks."

It has been chillingly demonstrated, however, that the Minutemen leadership is virtually powerless to restrain its charged-up patriots. The 1962 plot against Senator Fulbright was instigated by a fanatic from Dallas, pseudonym John Morris, who is now in a mental institution. Morris was obsessed with the idea that by periodically assassinating a member of Congress at a time and place publicized in advance, his colleagues who were not "voting American" would be terrorized and the Minutemen could ultimately "gain control of the government."

Morris sold his scheme to several Minutemen at a Kansas City "Freedom Rally" and Fulbright was selected as the first victim. Money passed hands, and Morris was ready to travel to Arkansas to carry out the assassination when DePugh got wind of the plan and squelched it, because, testified Brooks recently, he feared a killing would trigger an exhaustive probe of the Minutemen.

DePugh admits he had a talk with Morris but contends any imminent plot would have been brought to the attention of the authorities. "But I don't mean to imply," he hastens to add, "that if any member says we ought to kill this S.O.B. we're going to turn him in—there's too many people would agree with him."

The cyanide plot against the United Nations was hatched by a faction that considers DePugh entirely too tame. It reached the stage where Jerry Brooks, a former pest exterminator, actually obtained ten gallons of potassium cyanide for \$56. DePugh loyalists, probably without his knowledge, were incensed and drew plans to lure the faction's leader, who uses the name Bob Perry, to a room lined with butcher paper where he would be shot to death. To obliterate traces of the crime, the bloody paper would be burned, the body buried in a rural Missouri pre-dug grave, and the gun smelted. The plot and counterplot collapsed only when word leaked to the authorities.

ALTHOUGH THE MINUTEMEN have been discounted by a large segment of the public as kooks and buffoons, officials in several states are more than slightly alarmed. Virginia authorities uncovered a large quantity of explosives at a Minutemen training site. In Illinois, in 1964, investigators posing as agents of a South American country sprang a trap on Richard Lauchli Jr., who was ready to deal in illicit weapons—over 100 submachine guns, five .50-caliber machine guns, a 75mm recoilless rifle, mortars and sundry armament for \$17,000.

In Los Angeles in 1965, police raided two truckloads of arms and ammunition parked on a residential street and eventually linked them to Minuteman Keith Dwayne

Gilbert, sought for the theft of 1400 pounds of dynamite and later apprehended in Canada. Gilbert, once convicted of the unprovoked gun and club attack on a Negro motorist, was connected with Harold Schlapia, a Minuteman previously arrested when a stockpile of arms, ammunition and dynamite was discovered near Santa Barbara. Both were traced to the Erquiaga Arms Company in Los Angeles, where police seized 370 machine guns and a batch of silencers. Over the past two years, California attorney general Thomas Lynch discloses, officers have confiscated 800,000 rounds of ammunition, 400 machine guns, 10 anti-tank guns, and other warfare items.

The amount of lethal material that remains hidden can only be guessed at, and lately there has been a stir among authorities to find out. California has enacted a law forbidding private army maneuvers, but is powerless to prevent the accumulation of arms. Rep. Charles S. Joelson of New Jersey has been gathering evidence with a future inquiry in mind. There have been proposals that HUAC look into the Minutemen, an idea that DePugh publicly welcomes ("We have friends on the HUAC," he confides, although a member demurs: "That's a phony committee; they got a Jew on it.") Treasury Department T-men recently charged DePugh with illegal possession of an automatic weapon, for which he was convicted, but DePugh shrugs it all off as a "temporary annoyance."

DePugh has set in motion a Patriotic party which held its organizational meeting in Kansas City on the Fourth of July. The attempt to coalesce far right elements into a political party—and in the process broaden their own base—marks a departure for the Minutemen, who have always disdained elections as an exercise in futility. There is slim chance that its all-out effort to elect a "Patriotic President" in 1972 will even get off the ground. Not that it matters, for the Patriotic party does not follow conventional lines. Accompanying DePugh's tract Blueprint for Victory that serves as a platform is a questionnaire asking potential members whether they prefer political or underground activity. "Those who check 'underground,'" it cryptically noted, "will be contacted by a different means."

Still, the influential J. Edgar Hoover, who last year wangled the DuBois Clubs onto the attorney general's list of subversive organizations, shrugs off the subversive threat of the Minutemen. The "paper organization," he recently scoffed, has "just enough followers over the country so they can occasionally attract a headline, usually because of their preoccupation with violence or weapons of war." It was a sadly outmoded evaluation, and prompted Robert DePugh to gloat: "If he believes that, then it is a good indication the FBI has not penetrated our organization very far."