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INVISIBLE GOVERNMENT—PART I **Hughes' Power Felt**

(Editor's note: This is the first of a seven-part series on The Invisible Government, a detailed description of how one man has stood almost alone for six years against the Howard Hughes empire, CIA and a President, claiming his only crime was that he worked himself to the top of the Hughes empire and then quit with too much knowledge of the operation to be left alone.)

By **GERALD BELLETT**
SUN Special Correspondent

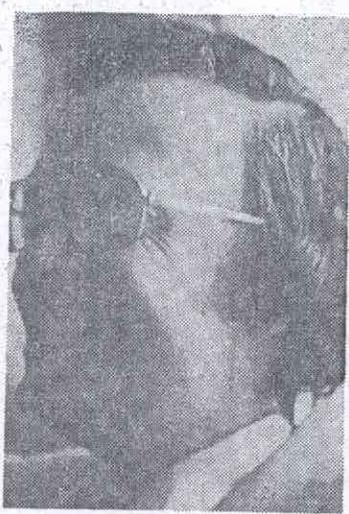
Anyone thinking of having a free-for-all with Howard Hughes, the CIA and the President of the United States should have a word with John Meier first.

The former Hughes aide would be the first to admit the prospects of surviving a fight with just one of that assembly would be slim. Taking on all three is to court annihilation.

And he should know because for a number of years he's been fighting this trio. Not that he's suicidal, he's just plain stubborn.

No one watching the fight can really

say what round it's in right now. It seems to be going on like one of those John L. Sullivan extravaganzas in which



JOHN MEIER
... Won't Lie Down ...

prizefighters measured rounds by the dozens.

Some would say that Meier stands about as much chance of beating his antagonists as a five-year-old has of knocking out Muhammad Ali and becoming world champion.

Looking at the scoreboard it seems hard to argue.

Meier has been run out of the country, his reputation is in tatters, he's been branded an embezzler and a thief and he's wanted for income tax evasion.

Right now he is living in Canada with his family, a wanted man, a fugitive from justice with a colossal \$1 million in bail hanging over his head if he's ever captured.

But the fight's not over yet. Meier just refuses to lie down. He claims he is innocent — a victim of a system that spawned Watergate and allowed the CIA to plot the deaths of foreign leaders.

What's more he says he will one day return to the U.S. and clear his name.

And while his opponents seem to have

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everything in their corner, Meier still appears to have a few punches left which the Hughes organization and the CIA don't want him to land. Meier has knowledge of things planned between these two super-organizations. He has documents which he claims would burst like a bombshell into the already shell-shocked American political system.

As to the charges against him, Meier's guilt or innocence will ultimately have to be decided in court but there is an oppressive amount of evidence that he has been systematically victimized, manipulated, harassed and spied upon during the last seven years.

How did it happen? Why did it happen? What is there buried deep within the enigma of the Meier case to explain what has happened to him?

Perhaps this series can give some of the answers; it can't give them all because so much is still hidden, both by Meier and the forces against him.

The answer might simply be that within the power circles of the U.S. when you rise to become a confidant of the mighty, when you know presidents by their first name and billionaires' doors are open to you, there is no way down. Like the Mafia, once you are in, it's for life, no one resigns and survives to tell the tale.

Meier resigned from Hughes in 1969 and from the day he did all seems to have gone wrong for him.

People in Nevada doubtless remember Meier as the glib, boyishly-handsome New Yorker who helped turn Las Vegas upside down along with the rest of the Howard Hughes entourage when they rolled into town in the middle Sixties.

In those days he was undoubtedly one of Hughes' most trusted and best liked aides. Apart from working on the computerization of Hughes' casinos he conducted delicate negotiations with the Johnson and Nixon administrations about getting the Atomic Energy Commission's nuclear testing program out of the state.

Awards and honors were showered on him by city and state. Abroad, the much coveted Christopher Columbus Award was given to him by the Dominican Republic for the environmental work

he'd done during the years prior to 1969.

Then as suddenly as he arrived, when he seemed at the height of his career, Meier quit. His resignation caught the horde of Hughes watchers by surprise. At the time the reason given was that he left to set up his own environmental foundation. Obviously the reason went deeper than that.

Meier now says he quit because he'd lost faith in Hughes and that the person he'd always idolized just didn't live up to his expectations. Another reason which only surfaced years later during the orgy of Watergate, when Meier travelled to Washington as a witness before the Senate committee, was the heavy involvement by Hughes with the CIA.

Agents were being passed into countries all over the world under the cover of working for Hughes, Meier told investigators. Meier discovered he was being used to pass these agents on to friends of his in Latin America. He said he wanted no part in this infiltration and this was another reason for quitting Hughes.

In fact, Meier was the first to blow the whistle on the Hughes conglomeration

providing a cover for the CIA in a story which appeared in the Canadian newspaper, The Columbian, in July 1974. At the time people took little notice of what he said. Only following the disclosure that Hughes had built the Glomar Explorer for the CIA to go fishing on the bottom of the Pacific for sunken Russian submarines did his early statement get any attention. Then there was a stampede by newsmen to Meier's suburban Vancouver home.

The events of Meier's three years with Hughes from 1966 to 1969 would form a story in themselves but it is the following years — the span from his resignation to today — that will be dealt with.

For within the past six years Meier has fled from the CIA, the Hughes organization, the Internal Revenue Service and Intertel which like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse have hounded his footsteps bent on nothing less than his utter destruction.

(Tomorrow: John Meier walks out of Hughes' empire but finds the empire is following him, right into a U. S. Senatorial election, in part two of The Invisible Government.)