

Talking with former FBI Agent William Turner

'The FBI is playing a psychological

EARL OFARI

The recent publication of the Media FBI documents has again brought the FBI to the forefront of national attention. The documents provide the public with an in depth view of the inside operations of the agency.

For the last half century, the FBI with the collusion of presidents, government officials, the congress, and the courts, has successfully prevented any outside scrutiny of its activities. This has insured the growth of an impregnable mystique about the agency.

No longer is this entirely the case, the Media documents help to sort the fiction from the fact about the FBI's operations. Even the most cursory reading of the documents reveals the FBI not as the principled guardian of the public welfare but rather as a petty, paranoid, racist organization headed by a medieval-minded bureaucrat.

The documents show that the FBI's prime concern still remains with catching communists rather than criminals. Fully 40 per cent of the documents involve political surveillance and investigation of movement groups and individuals; while 14 per cent of the documents involve draft resistance and desertion. Rounding out the figures are petty crimes such as interstate theft, gambling, robbery, etc.

With the main focus being on petty crime and political activism, it's not surprising that only 1 per cent of the documents deal with organized crime.

To better understand the FBI's background, operations, and the Media documents, I spoke with former agent William Turner. Active with the FBI from 1951 to 1961, Turner has authored an important book, *Hoover's FBI*, which presents a detailed look at the internal affairs of that agency.

EO: What prompted you to begin your protest within the FBI?

WT: When Bobby Kennedy took office as Attorney General, I started a palace revolt. I began writing congress asking for an investigation of the bureau. As a result certain officials began to note that the FBI had never been scrutinized by anybody: the congress or Attorney

(The Free Press will continue its publication of the Media, Pennsylvania FBI document collection next week)

warfare game'

General.

That was 11 years ago. It's only been within the last two years that anyone has begun to seriously look at the FBI and see what Hoover has created. I had the feeling when I was with the bureau that it was fast becoming a national police.

EO: In the ten years that you were an agent was there any other kind of rank and file discontent expressed?

WT: Many were concerned about Hoover's actions. They wanted him to retire and they welcomed an organizational shake-up within the bureau's administration. But no one ever seriously considered challenging Hoover, like I did. They felt it completely hopeless to level any criticism. A lot of them were, pretty right wing in their outlook, while others were considered moderate.

There were actually disagreements during the McCarthy era among the agents over McCarthy's tactics. However, there wasn't any on the part of Hoover. A former Justice Dept. official, Bill Hundley, summed up Hoover's attitude and how it dominates the bureau in a paper delivered last Fall at the Princeton conference. He said that in the early 1950's, when he was prosecuting under the Smith Act, if he asked an agent to cover a lead or get a piece of information on a radical political figure, they would have an answer on your desk within hours even if it meant going clear across the country.

When Bobby Kennedy came in, Hundley transferred over to the organized crime section. The attitude of agents who worked with that section was totally different. When he asked an agent to gather

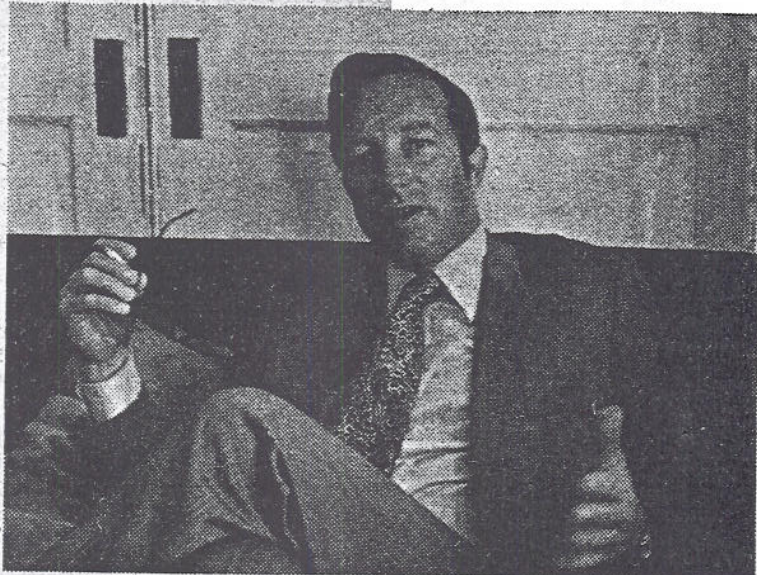
some information he would drag his feet and generally show his unconcern. Under Hoover the FBI has really never gone after organized crime. Their main preoccupation has been with petty criminals while at the same time greatly exaggerating the internal security threat.

EO: I understand that it is particularly good at blowing up its arrest figures around congressional appropriation time?

WT: The bureau is certainly vastly overrated. The whole thing about the top ten fugitive list is just a distraction. For years the people who were represented on that list were really human tumbleweeds. Petty robbers, a few murderers, unlawful flight fugitives. Today it has been expanded to 15 or 16 and most of them on there are the kids. In all that time Hoover did nothing about organized crime.

EO: Why do you think Hoover hasn't gone after organized crime?

WT: He wouldn't get the convictions, the publicity, or the prestige. There are also certain ties which can be pointed too. For example, Meyer Lasky and Jake Lasky in Florida



photos by Earl Ofari

Former FBI agent William Turner

used to own a gambling casino in Havana. A New York crime investigation report noted that one of the visitors to the casinos, a good friend of Meyer Lasky's, was Louis Rosenstell. Now Rosenstell is currently chairman of the board of directors of Schenley Industries. Previously, he had been an old bootlegger working with Joey Fusco, a Chicago mob member, who had a company called Gold Seal Liquors. Another man named Alfred Hart also was involved with Gold Seal.

Interestingly, Rosenstell was the man who set up the J. Edgar Hoover foundation, bought thousands of copies of Hoover's book, *Masters of Deceit*, and Overstreet's book, *The FBI and our Open Society*, and donated them to libraries. Hart, who is also one of Hoover's close friends, is now president of the Beverly Hills National Bank.

Hoover's circle of friends also takes in Clint Murchison, the multi-

millionaire Texas oil man. When Hoover goes on his yearly visit to the Del Mar race track he stays at the Del Char Hotel, and his bills are picked up by the Delhi-Taylor Oil Co., Atlantic Insurance Co., or one of the other Murchison owned properties. It's fairly common for all of those mentioned to come down and join Hoover.

EO: What about Right wing organizing within the FBI?

WT: This has somewhat been discouraged. A few years ago Hoover put out a directive that any agent who joined the Birch society would be arrested. This was really just a Hoover type public relations gambit, because he's a state of mind Bircher himself. But he has this great obsession with keeping the agency's image clean.

EO: What's the status of black agents?

WT: When I was with the bureau there were none. A few black employees were given the nominal title of 'agent.' One worked in Hoover's office as a cleaner, another served as his chauffeur. In L.A. there were two or three other blacks in the same position. These guys were given the simplest case loads, where you never get in a courtroom.

EO: The policy of black exclusion was subtle rather than official?

WT: Even among the clerical employees there were no blacks.

EO: Has there been any real change in that policy in recent years?

WT: Not really. *Ebony* magazine asked Hoover about the number of

black agents and he told them six which he proceeded to name. The official figure is now 1/2 of 1 per cent.

EO: How are they used?

WT: Much of their work is in the black community in a variety of roles ranging from surveillance to intelligence gathering.

There is a new category now designated as "racial informant ghetto." The problem with informants is that they're not on your payroll except on a cash and delivery basis. They haven't gone through your training school; they're really free-lancers. So naturally they are prone to fabricate. The more information they come up with the more money they receive.

EO: How widespread is the informant system?

WT: It's been built up tremen-

dously within the last decade.

EO: What kind of corporate ties are there to the FBI?

WT: Catha DeLoach was the number two man under Hoover. He was the bureau's liaison man with Capitol Hill and the agency's number one lobbyist. He then became head of the crime records division which is a euphemism for the publicity department. When he left the bureau he was appointed Vice President of Pepsico. He got the job with the assistance of Richard Nixon who used to be the company's attorney.

The problem with trying to define clear corporate and business connections is difficult because the FBI doesn't have lateral entry. You work your way up the bureaucratic ladder. The top officials have been in there many years. They didn't gain power like other government agencies through political and corporate manipulations.

EO: Is it a practice for corporations to donate funds to the FBI?

WT: The Ex-agents society gets some funds from diverse sources. Their influence is extremely great. Ex-agents hold a large number of important positions within the corporate structure. Within the legal structure there are federal judges and officials in the Justice Department.

For example, the Attorney General of California and Sheriff Pitchess in L.A. are both former FBI agents.

In the military there is Brigadier General Carroll, and prominent members of the Defense Intelligence Agency who are ex-agents. This whole network constitutes almost a second bureau and they do a lot of propagandizing.

EO: What about Hoover's dossier system?

WT: A lot of the information gathered comes from informants reports. If a person's name continues to crop up in connection with different movement activities then they'll probably open a file on them and actively investigate through credit checks, criminal record checks, etc.

EO: So those files aren't laying there dormant. They're actually working on them all the time?

WT: Yes, but there's a problem of logistics. They've only got 9,000 agents. Everybody in the movement thinks that they're being tapped bugged or followed, but it's just impossible from the standpoint of manpower for them to do this.

EO: What do you know about Operation Drognet?

WT: The FBI doesn't call it that. They call it the DetCom (Detention of Communists) program and they have what they call a security index. If you're on the index you're due to be rounded up if the program is implemented.

Nobody except Hoover and the Attorney General really knows how many thousands of people are on there. When the word is flashed in the bureau, then the agents with the aid of local police would go around with the arrest warrants which are already prepared and sealed in Washington, D.C., to pick up the people. The society of ex-agents has also been authorized to deputize some of its members to assist.

EO: Who determines when it would be implemented?

WT: The program was conceived under the McCarran Act by the Justice Dept. with the bureau as the enforcer. Now the bureau determines who goes on the security index and the Justice Dept. simply rubberstamps it.

EO: The Media files showed the extent of FBI surveillance ...

WT: The FBI is playing a game of psychological warfare. The Media documents contain instructions from the agents in charge of those in the field saying we have to keep interviewing, investigating, and stay visible. The goal is to exploit the paranoia in radical circles to make them think there is an agent behind every mailbox.

EO: Have you tied the FBI into your new book, Power on the Right?

WT: The American Security Council is a private organization that started in Chicago under Colonel McCormick of the *Chicago Tribune* and General Wood of Sears Roebuck. They started this mid-industrial library which is strictly a blacklisting collection of files. They get former FBI agents to run it for them. They've now got something like six million index cards and have gone into propagandizing and lobbying. For instance, they labelled all those senators who voted against the ABM system as "soft on national security."

EO: What kind of connections are there between the FBI and the CIA?

WT: We never had civilian intelligence until after World War II in this country. Hoover had an



operation in South America called SIS to trap Nazi agents. After the war, Hoover wanted to take over all overseas intelligence. Truman rejected the proposal and established the CIA. Since then a rivalry has developed between the two agencies. The CIA meanwhile has increased its domestic operations while the FBI has sent more "legal attaches" to American embassies in foreign countries, building up a foreign intelligence apparatus.

EO: What specific things are they doing in the area of domestic intelligence?

WT: Electronic surveillance has been greatly expanded. In Washington, all monitoring is done from the old post office building where the FBI has a field office. Hoover claims there are only 50 electronic installations nationwide, but it was discovered that there are 450 'special service lines' coming in from all over Washington, D.C.,

alone to the post office building. A source at the Chesapeake & Potomac phone company said that they could only be used for one thing. Hoover has tried to rebut these disclosures. He used the appropriations hearing last year for this.

EO: You say the FBI has increased its foreign operations?

WT: Foreign "legal attaches" serve a definite function. In Mexico City, 10 years ago, there were 40 agents all of them designated 'legal attaches.' Those 40 agents were running a nationwide network of informants throughout Mexico. It was a little FBI modeled on the same struc-

ture as here.

There are now 'legal attaches' in countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. They are very interested in the Third World. In New Delhi, India, they have an active operation. Of course, they have always maintained the "attache" system in places like Rome, Berlin, London, Paris, and Tokyo.

EO: Does the FBI bring foreign agents in and train them at their academy?

WT: They bring foreign police in for training. Most of the foreign intelligence agents here are probably brought in by the CIA.

EO: What about other FBI operations?

WT: Well, the FBI now has the National Crime Computerization Center with 1,400 police agencies around the country and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police tied into it. This is supposed to increase investigative efficiency. However, what their intent is and what they become could be two different things.

For example, in the early 1950's, the L.A. and the Detroit police force set up the Law Enforcement Intelligence Union to exchange information on organized crime. When Reddin became L.A.'s police chief he stated that civil insurrection and urban violence were the main threats to the nation's security and therefore it was necessary for the LEIU to move into intelligence gathering against political groups. So it was transformed into a political police.

There is every reason to suppose that the FBI's crime computerization center could go the same way.

EO: Is the FBI the only internal investigative and intelligence agency in the U.S.?

WT: I think the red squads of local police agencies are rapidly filling the function of national agencies. It's nothing today for members of the Chicago red squad to fly out to Berkeley to check on persons at demonstrations. There is a continuous exchange of information between each of these agencies.

EO: Have you tried to organize any counter group of concerned FBI agents or former agents?

WT: There are a few former agents like Robert Wall who recently wrote an article in the New York Review critical of the bureau, and Jack Shaw who has voiced criticisms. But there has been no real move to form any opposing organization. It would really be a small group. A lot of agents hate Hoover, but they won't say it in public.