

# INFORMERS THE ENEMY WITHIN

**N**obody has yet invoked the name of Franklin D. Roosevelt as the patron saint of the Watergate operation. Yet FDR, in 1940, authorized Robert Jackson, his attorney general at the time, to institute surveillance procedures as illegal and unconstitutional as those used by the Watergate conspirators.

From Roosevelt to Truman to Eisenhower to Kennedy to Johnson to Nixon—every President and every President's staff has carried out illegal and unconstitutional acts. It is essential to understand that fact lest the true dimensions of the Watergate conspiracy be lost in gloating over the welter of charges and countercharges about the stupid attempts of Nixon and his staff to cover up what they ordered done.

Roosevelt's rationalization for ordering procedures expressly prohibited by law was the "defense of this nation" from the Nazi threat. During the Truman Administration, fear of Communist subversion was the warrant for the continued use of wiretaps, bugging and the planting of informers inside dissident political groups. Herbert Brownell, Eisenhower's attorney general, approved the use of microphone surveillance, with trespass if necessary, because "considerations of national security and the national safety are paramount."

Similar motivations moved John F. Kennedy to continue along the same course. Indeed, Robert Kennedy, then attorney general, was a wiretapping enthusiast; Archibald Cox, Kennedy's solicitor general, who now heads the Watergate prosecution, also supported the legalization of wiretapping.

And Robert Kennedy's war on crime, personified in his relentless pursuit of Jimmy Hoffa, incorporated continuous violations of Hoffa's civil liberties by the "Get Hoffa" squad in the Justice Department. Robert Kennedy was convinced, genuinely, that Hoffa headed a "conspiracy of evil" directed against the U.S.; it followed, therefore, that Hoffa had to be fought with every weapon, including planting an informer with a long criminal record inside the Hoffa entourage during Hoffa's trial on a jury tampering charge. The informer was released from prison on condition that he supply the government with advance information on Hoffa's defense plans; the U.S. prosecutor in the case, who used the informer's advance information to help convict Hoffa, was James F. Neal, selected by Cox to head up the information gathering operation in the forthcoming Watergate prosecution.

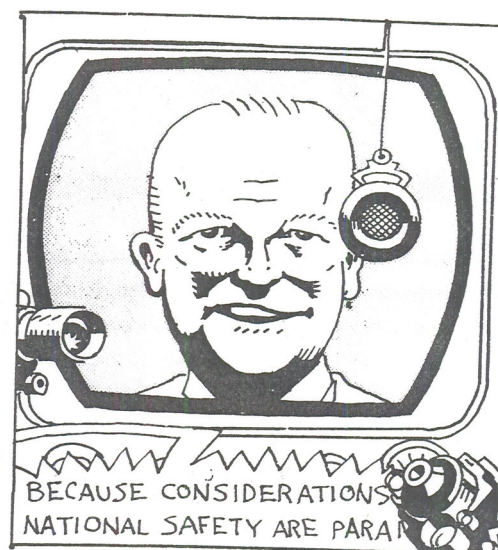
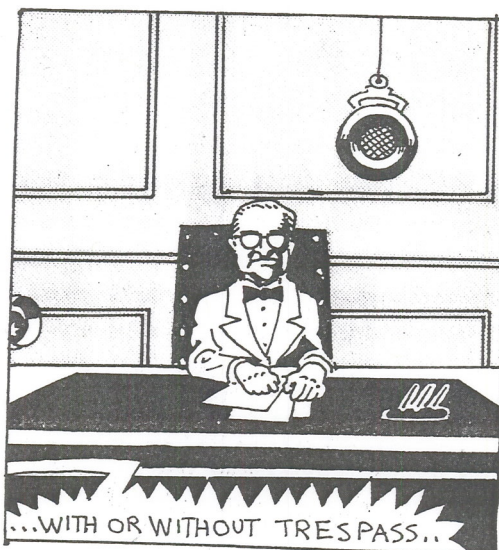
Lyndon Johnson's administration applied the same techniques, too, although when Ramsey Clark was attorney general he cut down the number of illegal telephonic surveillances. But the large-scale infiltration of radical, black militant, student and anti-war groups by informers carried on during the LBJ period was justified within the Administration because of a fear that "national security" was being menaced by race riots, violent demonstrations and social upheavals.

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**By Paul Jacobs**





It is natural, then, that within such a national atmosphere of fear, suspicion and distrust, often generated by the government itself, the Nixon Administration would also be fearful, suspicious and distrustful of its enemies, including those individuals and groups in the Democratic Party who had denounced Nixon so vigorously over the years. Or, at least, even if the leaders of the Nixon Administration were totally cynical about their real political objectives, the political milieu of the country was sufficiently paranoid that men like James McCord and Bernard Barker suffered no doubts when they were told to burglarize and bug the Democratic Party offices because the Party might be harboring disloyal elements. Would anyone be surprised to discover that John F. Kennedy had been assassinated because the anti-Castro forces were convinced that JFK and the Democratic Party had betrayed the cause of "freedom," deliberately, by reneging on the support that had been promised for the Bay of Pigs invasion?

If McCord and Barker seem genuinely bewildered by what has happened to them after being caught at the Watergate, they have a right to be confused. After all, McCord's work as a CIA security specialist—a euphemism for an expert on wiretapping—was not only sanctioned by the U.S. Government, but applauded by it: the former CIA agent received medals and commendations for carrying out precisely the same kind of activities that have now put him in jail. And Barker was a Bay of Pigs "hero," willing to risk his life at the command of his chief.

Both of them and their fellow conspirators have been trapped by the contradictions of an internal value system produced through their participation in what has been, until now, an institutionalized and accepted, even though reasonably secret, system of large-scale governmental political espionage.

That system depends on the willingness of the subordinates in it to suspend judgment, to abdicate all responsibility to their superiors, to follow orders without question. Once the system socializes its individual, human components, it takes on a life of its own; its success or failure

depends not on who makes the decision that an illegal act must be committed, but on whether the assignments are carried out properly, i.e., without those who do the job being caught or exposed.

The system also depends on the use of modern technology, which had produced wondrous, miniaturized electronic devices for unauthorized eavesdropping like those used in Watergate. But the system depends even more on the use of informers, the most ancient method both governments and private organizations use to procure information about dissident individuals and groups.

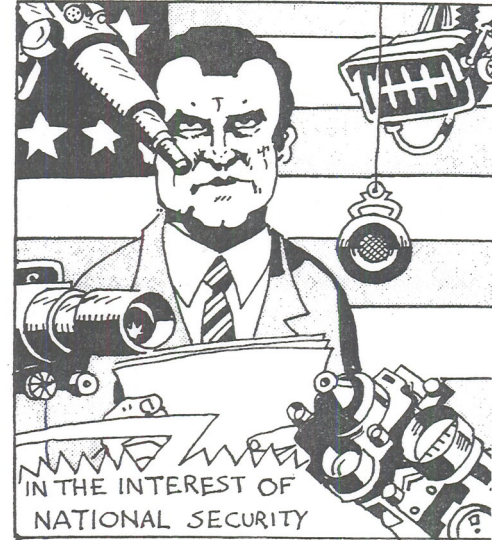
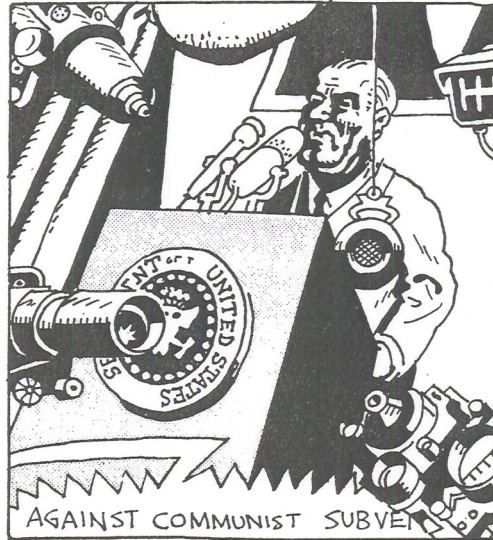
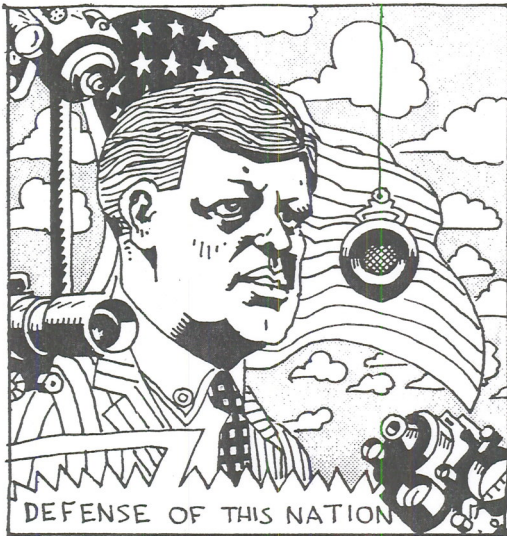
Curiously, although radicals have always been sensitive to the notion that informers exist and often paranoid about the dangers they present, the reality of the informers' role is largely ignored, even when the informers act as provocateurs.

I remember my own incredulous reaction when, in the 1950s, I accidentally had momentary access to a report filed by an informer about the League For A Revolutionary Workers Party, a Trotskyist splinter group of the '30s, to which I belonged along with maybe a dozen other members of the faith. The League's tiny membership (the length and sonority of such grouplets' names were always in inverse proportion to their size and importance) was capable of doing no more than meeting in a succession of dreary lower East Side lofts to conduct endless Talmudistic discussions on the Stalinist betrayal of the world revolution and the failure of the larger Trotskyist organizations to understand the true nature of Stalinism or even Trotskyism.

Yet our group, and presumably other formations of equally loony Marxist-Leninists, had been infiltrated by an informer whose weekly reports to the government warned that the LRWP was capable of overthrowing the government and seizing power at practically any moment!

«We should have been so lucky, for we had a hard time even putting out a monthly mimeographed bulletin. Could our informer have believed the nonsense I saw in the reports? If so, the informer was mad. Or perhaps the informer wanted money and the only way the government could be





RODRIGUEZ SPA

persuaded to maintain “Operation LRWP” was to build up a convincing case that we were indeed very dangerous. Maybe, too, the informer was getting jollies from the work, convinced that, if caught, the organization would take drastic action by inflicting punishment—the worst we could have done was to force the informer to read and report back on our critique of the Fourth International for its mistaken position on the internal crisis within the Ceylonese Socialist Party.

But some place in a musty government file, the names of every LRWP member are listed as having been members of a dangerous radical group. And the situation is much worse now than in the Thirties:

[LEGIONS OF INFORMERS]

It is impossible to make an accurate count of how many political informers, like the one who sat through those awful LRWP meetings, are operating in the country today. But the number must run into the thousands. At least 20 federal agencies, including the CIA, have been using such informers for many years. For long periods of time, the FBI established a minimum quota of four or five informants for each agent assigned to investigate racial groups. And in addition to the 20 federal agencies, military intelligence units have operated their own independent surveillance operations, also employing informers.

Many of the state police forces are likewise involved in political espionage and every large city police force has an intelligence unit which sends its informers into suspect political organizations.

Today’s widespread system of political surveillance and investigation of groups and individuals is based on an attitude, pervasive in law enforcement circles, which perceives the civil rights struggle, the anti-war efforts, the student and ecology movements and the militant minority groups as integral parts of an interlocking and overlapping conspiracy against law and order. The FBI’s justification for sending

informers into a conference of the well-known pacifist War Resisters League is characteristic of the conspiracy view: the informers were instructed to determine “whether or not there are any indications” that the conference would “generate any anti-U.S. propaganda.”

Who are the informers, these shadowy figures who live in a world of code name phone calls and mysterious meetings in parks and hotel rooms? How are they recruited? What motivates them into taking on such assignments? Two high-ranking police officials offer an answer of sorts in *The Informer in Law Enforcement*, the most authoritative police manual on the subject. “We take our informers where we get them,” they write. “Many of them are unsavory characters . . .” motivated by “fear,” “revenge,” “perverse, egotistical and mercenary motives,” plus “repentance or desire to reform.” And “demented, eccentric or nuisance type” individuals may also attempt to supply the police with information. Then complex psychological motives, money, or what police officers refer to as the “fear motive” provide other incentives for people to become informers.

The “fear motive” provides the police a simple and direct means of building up a pool of informers from among people who have been arrested for crimes: the police suggest that the arrested persons cooperate with them in exchange for, as the manual describes it, “a recommendation for a lesser sentence, a more favorable consideration for parole or probation, the acceptance of a plea to a lesser count in the indictment or through some other favorable action. . .” Put less delicately, the arrested person is allowed to go free or cop a plea in exchange for becoming an informer against others.

Charles Grimm, whom I met when I was producing a television program about FBI informers and provocateurs, was a prototype model for this type of informer. Grimm, a short, stocky young man, comes from a middle-class, white, Marine Corps family. He grew up in San Diego and received an athletic scholarship to the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. There he’d drifted into the drug scene, finally getting arrested by Tuscaloosa police officers, along with his



# "With me, there was no conscience, nothing involved. It was a job. I never lost one night's sleep over it."

girlfriend, who got busted for siphoning gas from a car.

"This one detective who was working narcotics in Tuscaloosa for the Tuscaloosa Police Department threatened me," Grimm said as we sat in the grass at Golden Gate Park, waiting for the film crew to get set up for the television interview. "He said 'I'm going to throw you in jail, you and your fiancée, if you don't cooperate with us.'

"Being afraid of jail as I am," Grimm continued, "I decided I'd better cooperate. I was supposed to bust people for dope and, of course, I had known people that had done it and so I went around and I talked to these people and eventually six of them did get busted.

"The police had me by the throat and they knew it and eventually the FBI came in and said, 'Listen, we want you to work for us, too,' and they also offered to pay me; but it wasn't the money so much, it was the fact that if I didn't do it they would nail me anyway."

The FBI wasn't interested in employing Grimm as a narcotics informer; he says they wanted "to know what was going on on campus, who the radicals were, to identify certain people from pictures because they had undercover agents walking around the campus and they were taking pictures of everybody and they wanted to know who these people were so they could label them and put them in a file and eventually bust them."

Charlie Grimm's fear of going to jail is understandable as the motivating factor which pushed him into becoming an informer and then a provocateur. The desire for money provides another strong impetus to accepting the informer's role. Louis Tackwood, a Los Angeles ghetto hustler and car thief, became a political informer for the Los Angeles Police Department primarily for the money.

The fast-talking, glib Tackwood insisted, when I interviewed him, that informing was a good job, giving those who work at it plenty of leisure time and reasonably high wages. And Tackwood jeered at the notion, expressed by Grimm, that informers suffer any qualms about betraying those who trust them.

"With me, there was no conscience, nothing involved. It

was a job, J-O-B. I never lost one night's sleep over it.

"I never worried about getting caught. It was the idea of the money, the free crime. Here's a cat, a person, me, who like has been successful in forming several organizations for crime. Here are the police officers telling me, hey, we want you to work for us—two things went through my mind then—money and I got a free hand to do anything I want to do."

Money for informers is plentiful, disbursed on a "cash only" basis. In the FBI, for example, an agent wishing to pay an informer puts in a requisition from a special account, receives a check made out to the agent, cashes the check at a bank and then gives the cash to the informer, getting a receipt for it.

The amounts informers are paid vary greatly, ranging from small disbursements—five or ten dollars—up to three or four hundred dollars, depending upon how good a source of information the informer has been in the past or the amount of risk involved in getting the information and its significance. In the FBI the top payment for a single informing job is normally \$300 in criminal cases and \$400 for political informers. Occasionally, however, that rate is exceeded: Boyd Douglas was paid nearly \$10,000 by the FBI for his work as an informer on Father Philip Berrigan.

And Robert Wall, an ex-FBI agent, reports that when Stokely Carmichael, then under FBI surveillance, came to live in a Washington, D.C. apartment, Wall's supervisor told him, "We've got to get Carmichael and we've got to put somebody in his hip pocket. Get an informant in there with him and money is no object. Offer them anything, promise them anything and we'll try to help you out if you can manage to do it." Wall did succeed in planting a woman informer inside the Carmichael household at a rather large cost to the government.

Such flexibility in money matters is essential for any agency using informers. Tackwood claims to have earned between eight and ten thousand dollars a year, on a piece work basis, with the amount of pay he got depending upon

(Continued on page 52)



on him was the only item missing.

The trial judge, U.S. District Judge Winston E. Arnow of Pensacola, was not impressed by any of this. Judge Arnow is a man of conservative mind. In pre-trial hearings, he banned television artists from his courtroom—and even ordered them not to sketch later from memory. (The ruling has been defied by CBS, provoking the judge to demand that the network show cause why it should not be held in contempt.) More important to the future of the Gainesville Eight, Judge Arnow was unmoved by the defense disclosures about the informers, the burglaries, and the possible links with Watergate. “There is nothing before this court but innuendo and supposition that does not even suggest government misconduct, much less prove it,” Arnow said.

“The government,” Arnow declared in a statement many may dispute, “is not on trial in this case.” ■

## INFORMERS

(From page 24)

how long the job took, how important was the information and how good he was in bargaining with the police.

“It would be like two merchants arguing over a piece of cloth. The one merchant would say \$100 and the buyer would say, oh \$75 and the other guy would say \$85. So we’d always barter back and forth and I’d say forget it and walk out. And the cops would say, ‘wait a minute, wait a minute, come on back, let’s talk about it.’” Tackwood says that even when he wasn’t working on a specific job for the police, he could always get some money from them.

But neither fear nor money are the sole reasons why people decide to pick such a peculiar way of life. Some informers and provocateurs like the excitement, the danger involved. They are convinced of their own brilliance, cocky about their ability to play the double agent role and enamored of the right to commit criminal acts with the sanction of the police.

And of course those who are convinced, totally, of their own patriotism and of how much the country is menaced by radicals, are proud to engage in any kind of act, including wiretapping, burglary and informing. Bob

Wall, the ex-FBI agent, recalls with distaste arguing with one of his fellow FBI agents about the dangers in using a Cuban exile informer who proposed setting fire to the office of a Washington group which he had infiltrated. “The informant was crazy,” says the ex-FBI man, “but the trouble was that the other agent was a fascist in his politics and was absolutely convinced that the Communist menace was going to take over tomorrow. So he let the informant go ahead and set fire to the building.”

### [DRASTIC NEW DEMANDS]

During the late '60s, all these types of informers, plus a few more, came into great demand to fill the shortage of people the government felt it needed to report about potential riot conditions in the black ghettos. The government officials, sociologists and urban specialists concerned with ghetto problems believed their information would come from “informants,” people either familiar over a period of years with a particular community or possessing particular insights which would enable them to communicate to others the sense, the mood of a community.

But the law enforcement agencies took on the assignment and to a police officer, an “informant” is an “informer,” with all the ugly connotations that word possesses. So when the recruiting drive for informers began, the police turned, naturally, to their usual resources among either criminals or borderline types, the fringe elements in the ghettos.

The use of criminal informants for spying on political and racial group wasn’t restricted to local police forces, either. When White House officials asked, in late 1967, for continuous reports on ghetto conditions, the FBI took on the task of providing the information. Initially, each agent assigned to a racial squad was instructed to recruit one racial informer. That task wasn’t too difficult since it was always possible to find some businessman in the ghetto willing to pass on rumors and gossip, in exchange for small sums of money. But then Hoover demanded an increase in the amount of information flowing into his office, so the agents’ informer quota was also

increased—first to three and, in some offices, to ten.

In February 1968, all agents in one FBI office received a typical memo from the agent-in-charge stating that “It is essential that this office develop a large number of additional racial informants and that we continue to add and develop racial informants and exploit their potential during the months ahead . . . Whether or not a riot does occur, the Bureau holds us responsible to keep the Bureau, the Department and the White House advised in advance of each demonstration. The Bureau expects this coverage to come through informant sources primarily. In addition, we must advise the Bureau at least every two weeks of existing tensions which may trigger a riot. This type of information can only come from a widespread grass-roots network of sources coupled with active informant coverage by individuals who are members of subversive and revolutionary organizations. . .”

Manifestly, it was impossible for each agent, almost all of them white, to find ten black informers. To help them in their task, the Bureau instructed them to try recruiting informers from among returning black military personnel, from among students, and to convert their criminal informers into racial ones. But even those techniques failed to provide enough information, although it certainly did provide a lot of petty criminals with a lot of easy money, earned through the simple expedient of making up wild stories about groups and individuals preparing to start riots in the ghettos.

And then in late July 1968, Hoover instructed “that all offices must now give serious and penetrative thought to methods for obtaining maximum productivity from the ghetto informants developed by each individual office.”

The new increased demand for informers put a heavy strain on the FBI agents. Many of them had found it impossible to recruit ten informers in any way and had complied with their orders by simply picking out of the phone book ten names which they listed as informers. And when the agents were ordered to get “maximum productivity” from their informers, the FBI men filed fictitious reports from their equally fictitious informers.

The new police interest in student



groups caused another great demand for informers, a demand which was met, in part at least, from among the conservative youth organizations. These groups supplied the police agencies with the names of students willing, for patriotic reasons, to infiltrate campus organizations and report back on their activities. Campus police forces and administrators also supplied the names of people willing, for patriotic reasons, to become informers.

Police officers themselves have provided an additional reservoir of potential spies. Most of the undercover policemen who masquerade as radicals or black militants or antiwar activists are young and inexperienced, assigned to undercover work while they are still in training and before they don a uniform and go out into the community where they will get to be known. These rookies are enthusiastic, anxious to please their superiors, and prone to take a glamorous view of such assignments. In addition, undercover work is widely considered a quick road to promotion: after Raymond Wood, a New York City undercover police officer, revealed an alleged plot by black militants to blow up the Statue of Liberty, he was promoted immediately to detective. It was only much later, at the militants' trial, that Wood's role as an instigator of the plot was exposed.

[INFORMERS PICK UP THE GUN]

Theoretically informers aren't supposed to participate in illegal activities. But to be successful, informers must maintain credibility in their masquerading role and that effort often requires making active efforts to block the entrance to a draft board headquarters, sitting down in the front ranks of a civil rights march, throwing rocks in a student demonstration, or shouting "Off the Pig" more loudly than anyone else at a demonstration protesting police brutality.

The seriousness of this problem emerges clearly from an FBI document stolen from the FBI office in Media, Pa. It points out that in a few instances, "security informants in the New Left got carried away during a demonstration, assaulted police, etc." The difficulty arises, according to the document, because while the FBI

wants its informers to "rise to the maximum level of their ability in the New Left Movement," it cautions that informers "should not become the person who carries the gun, throws the bomb, does the robbery or by some specific violative, overt act becomes a deeply involved participant. This is a judgment area and any actions which seem to border on it should be discussed."

But in the real world, where bureaucratic regulations and directives must be ignored or manipulated, informers often carry out illegal activities with the knowledge of police officers. And even when law enforcement agents disapprove of their informers' criminal acts, they continue to employ the informers and protect them from prosecution: the FBI agent responsible for Boyd Douglas's activities insists that although he did not know or approve of Douglas's efforts to recruit seven people for illegal activities, he would still employ Douglas as an informer.

One reason Robert Wall, who was an FBI agent for five years, working in security investigations, resigned from

the Bureau was because of the dilemma he, as an FBI agent, faced in these situations. "Officially, we always kept the informants to the line that we didn't want them to promote violence, we wanted them to be there and advise us of violence but we didn't want them to promote it or have them in the first line. In point of fact, however, when you have a small clique of people causing rock throwing, for example, and your informant is part of that group, he can't stand there and not throw rocks."

The process in which a law enforcement agency uses a police officer or an informer to encourage or plan actions which violate the law is itself illegal. Yet it goes on now, as it always has, when overly zealous police officers grow impatient because they have no excuse to arrest people who, in the police's judgment, are criminals.

How widespread is the practice of informers becoming provocateurs and encouraging or committing, repeatedly, illegal acts? The list of known instances include the following: one of the people most involved in encouraging the violence that accompanied the

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<input type="checkbox"/> Judy Garland	<input type="checkbox"/> Bob Dylan	<input type="checkbox"/> Greta Garbo	<input type="checkbox"/> Bette Davis	<input type="checkbox"/> Tallulah Bankhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Liz Taylor

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Chicago Democratic Party Convention was actually an undercover police officer; two members of a national peace committee who always tried to push the group into confrontations with the police were both police provocateurs; a young man who provided a bomb to blow up a Seattle U.S. Post Office was an FBI and city police informer; another FBI informer burned buildings at the University of Alabama; police agents tried to incite violence at Yale University during the demonstrations of May 1971; a Chicano activist in Los Angeles who attempted to provoke his group into terrible acts of violence was an informer for the Treasury Department; the Weatherman group in Ohio was infiltrated by an informer who won a position for himself through advocacy of the most extreme forms of violence; the Black Panther Party "Minister of Defense" in Los Angeles, who helped bring about a shootout with the police, was actually a police informer; a New York City undercover police officer tried to convince a veterans' peace group that it should use violent tactics; another police provocateur, who had vandalized a state college campus, attempted to convert a San Diego peace march into a pitched battle with police; in upstate New York, an informer, who was on the FBI payroll, tried to set up a class to teach students at Hobart University how to make and use bombs; informers working for the FBI and local police set up a bombing attempt in Mississippi in an effort to kill two KKK members; a Chicago police informer provided the false tip which led to the killing of two Panther leaders there; a police informer led an illegal SDS sit-in at an Illinois college and later—claiming he was a Weatherman—helped to hurl the president of the college off the stage; a police informer attempted to force a militant Seattle group into taking on violent activities; two men who had led the shutting of a massive gate at Ohio State University and set off a violent confrontation with the police, were officers of the state highway patrol; and the false report claiming guns were stored in the Black Muslim Temple in Los Angeles came from a paid police informer, who claims he was instructed to make the report so that the police who employed him would have

an excuse to raid the temple.

"Counter-intelligence" as it is loosely described within the "intelligence community" is another disruptive effort carried out by the informers and provocateurs. Here, the task is to skew an organization's basic political character, to change its direction even in a fundamental way, in order to either destroy it or disrupt the movement of which it is a part.

A classic case of such "counter-intelligence" was the letter allegedly sent by a black militant leader to an anti-war group planning a large-scale demonstration in Washington, D.C. The letter demanded that the anti-war group pay \$20,000 in advance as reparations for the damage that might occur in the Washington ghetto because of the possible violence resulting from the march. The letter's effect on the anti-war group was exactly what the forger-author, an FBI agent, wanted: a bitter controversy erupted within the anti-war movement straining relations between it and the black militants.

How many of the other harsh quarrels which tore apart so much of the radical movement during the '60s was a product of "counter-intelligence?" Were, for example, some of the acerbic disputes which characterized the New Politics convention in 1967 created by government agents to make certain that the group's possible effectiveness was thwarted from its start? The list of such possibilities is frightening, indeed.

#### [AN OMINOUS NETWORK]

**B**ut informers and provocateurs cannot survive without informees, including those who help bring on their own disasters. The historian Epictetus described how the tyrant Tiberias Caesar maintained his control over the Romans: "in this fashion the rash are ensnared by the soldiers in Rome. A soldier, dressed like a civilian, sits down by your side and begins to speak ill of Caesar, and then, you, too, just as though you had received from him some guarantee of good faith in the fact that he began the abuse, tell likewise everything you think, and the next thing is—you are led off to prison in chains."

And precisely because they are rash, many people "are ensnared"

today just as they were when the despot Tiberias ruled. During the recent past, loose and wild rhetoric about the need for violence was a characteristic of the radical movement, providing a milieu in which informers and provocateurs could flourish. Individual acts of violence were also carried out; store windows were smashed, police were assaulted and banks were bombed or burned.

Such actions provided provocateurs the opportunity to escalate the violence. In San Diego, California, an undercover police officer became a key member of activist racial and anti-war groups, trying always to push them into violent confrontations with the police. One of his innocent victims, arrested later because of false information supplied by the police agent, ascribed the spy's success in entrapping individuals to the fact that "he was a hard worker and once he gained the confidence of the people, began to influence those around him, the younger, more gullible members of the organizations, to criminal and sometimes violent activities. He usually tried to redirect anything from peace marches to peaceful demonstrations into situations which could have resulted in violence."

The "more gullible" people are, the more easily they can be "ensnared." And the informer-provocateur finds it even easier to operate when vanity is added to gullibility, when even people wary of infiltrators are so convinced of their own intelligence they believe they can not only spot the informers, but win them over to the other side.

But all the "rash" victims trapped by their own complicity in the provocateurs' plans represent only a small part of those injured by the vast and institutionalized network of political informers. Thousands and hundreds of thousands of Americans are not even aware of the ominous fact they have been under surveillance and are now listed on a three by five index card or in a computer's memory bank. And the Watergate investigation has illuminated, in sudden, sharp flashes, the even more ominous, threatening contours of a world in which those responsible for law enforcement believe political radicalism and racial militance do not develop from the American social conditions but are created by



enemy foreign governments.

James McCord acted as he did because he was convinced, by past training, of the accuracy of the reports he was given from what he described as "sensitive sources,": these reports asserted that "violence-oriented" groups were threatening life and property. Probably he never knew that in one of these allegedly "violence-oriented" groups, the "sensitive source" was a police informer, one of the men most vociferous in promoting violence in the entire organization.

"I was not there to think. I was there to follow orders, not to think," Bernard Barker, a committed anti-Communist, told the Senators to justify his participation in the Ellsberg and Watergate burglaries. But Barker did think—he was and is still convinced that what he did was "proper" to protect his vision of "national security."

And so we return, full circle, all around the mulberry bush, back to where we started. FDR and James McCord, both acting out of concern for the "national interest," both become involved in illegal and unconstitutional acts. During the '30s, an obscure, miniscule Marxist group to which I belonged was infiltrated by a government informer whose lies about the organization contributed to the later repressive atmosphere of the country. In the '70s, the same kind of lies were told by a government informer about the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, lies which were believed by James McCord.

Perhaps if Watergate does nothing else, it will strip the rhetoric from the reality, will reduce the verbiage to the essence of the matter: each administration in our government acts to protect *itself* from those it considers to be *its* enemies; each administration identified itself as *the* guardian of the national interest and each administration arrogates to itself the right to protect that interest in the ways *it* deems proper.

Yet, perhaps now the possibility exists that many Americans, seeing and hearing Watergate in its true garb of sanctimonious, hypocritical patriotism, will conclude, even reluctantly, that the institutions of government have become dysfunctional. If that happens, if Americans shake, if they lose the past certainty of their govern-

ment's absolute moral superiority and rectitude, it's conceivable that the Watergate revelations may help bring about a transformation of the same social system which produced the operation. ■

## FARMWORKERS

(From page 30)

workers to do the work of 20. Chavez instituted a hiring hall where workers were given jobs on the basis of seniority. Growers had to order labor through the hiring hall where the worker picked up his dispatch card. Without a dispatch card he couldn't work. While it had the effect of tightening the union's control over its members, the hiring hall also went a long way toward stabilizing the labor force. It was an essential and far-reaching change and as such was the primary cause of friction between growers and the union.

Growers usually cite two reasons for turning to the Teamsters. First, they claim that local UFW officials were antagonistic, spiteful, abrasive. Second, they say the union was administratively inept—an argument which even sympathetic reporters have accepted. Lionel Steinberg, the biggest grower in the valley and one of the two who signed with the UFW, has been widely quoted as saying that if the union had administered its affairs better, the growers would have rushed to sign new contracts.

Chavez doesn't think so. "The problem is we signed a damned contract and found the growers couldn't live up to the damned thing," he says heatedly. "We enforce our contracts. They know it. We came here in December for pre-negotiating sessions and they were ready to stab us in the back. They'd come up to me and say, 'Cesar, I have this little problem: I've got a foreman whose brother-in-law needs a job. Can you help us out?' I told them no, the seniority system doesn't work that way. Or they'd say, 'It's only a minor thing but do we have to have all those toilets out there in the fields?' The little things we didn't give in on. If we sign a contract we have to live up to it. They tried to fire union men without cause and we said, 'Shit no.'"

"We have over 500 grievances that

were never acted upon; that's the problem. The growers didn't want to handle any grievances. They just signed the contracts to get away from the boycott. They no more wanted those contracts than the man in the moon."

Chavez and other union officials concede that the union had growing pains. To expect a union of untrained, unskilled farmworkers to be transformed into a smooth-running organization overnight is too much to expect. As he says, "You know, 9,000 different people work in the Coachella Valley—some of them do thinning, pruning or picking. It's a damned mess, it's a shame how this industry works. We have to refashion the whole hiring pattern. It's going to change and maybe Coachella Valley will be the place."

One thing is certain: if the Teamsters win there won't be any changes. They epitomize a labor movement that has gone flabby from success and too often works for employers and not union members. Yet this has come to be taken for granted. In this case, moreover, the Teamsters are breaking up another union in their attempt to capitalize on the fears of the reactionary growers. The best example of this came in the early days of the Coachella strike when Teamster members shoved farmworkers back into the fields after they had heeded UFW calls to join the strike. It was a tragic scene that summed up not only the nature of the alliance between Teamsters and growers, but also the powerful forces Chavez faces.

A comparison of the UFW and Teamster contracts reveals minor differences in the basic wages and fringe benefits. The Teamster pacts have a base wage of \$2.30 for pickers, a ten-cent-an-hour employer contribution to the pension fund, employer-funded unemployment compensation and a health and welfare plan. The UFW has a base of \$2.40 an hour with higher wages for irrigators and tractor drivers, a smaller pension contribution and similar unemployment compensation and health plans.

It is on the question of control of the workforce that the real differences appear between the Teamsters and Farmworkers. The labor contracting system is not only countenanced but