

Secret Army on Trial

San Diego anti-communists face terrorism charges

RON RIDENOUR

Right-wing extremists with a paranoid fear of a communist takeover in the United States are preparing for guerrilla warfare in San Diego County. They have forged a group known as the Secret Army Organization (SAO) which has already begun to use violence against leftists and is said to have cadres in eleven western states.

Although these acts of violence, including shootings and firebombings have taken place since 1969, police authorities made no arrests until after the June 19, 1972, bombing of the Guild Theater. No one was injured, although the building was severely damaged. Subsequent raids conducted on SAO members' homes netted large quantities of illegal explosives, handguns and rifles, including an unpacked case of M-16 rifles. The market value of the weapons was estimated at more than \$60,000.

SAO member George M. Hoover was also arrested for the sniper shooting of Paula Tharp who was in the home of radical San Diego State economics professor Peter G. Bohmer on January 9, 1972. She was hit in the right elbow and suffered permanent damage.

Bohmer, who was not home, had previously been subjected to about 40 threatening phone calls and numerous incidents of violence. In many cases, death threats and literature were credited to the SAO. However, when Bohmer and the San Diego Door, a radical bi-monthly of 12,000 circulation, reported these and other acts of terror to the police, nothing was done to stop the violence.

Inspector Michael Sgobba, chief of the Investigations Unit ("Red Squad") of the San Diego Police Department, told the Free Press that the police had nothing to go on because, "We were not aware of the SAO. We didn't know what the underground group was doing as we hadn't infiltrated it. The FBI had infiltrated them but didn't tell us until after the Guild Theater bombing. The FBI figured they'd gone far enough then when they began bombing property."

The police say they are disgruntled with the lack of cooperation

from the FBI in finding those responsible for the two and one-half years of violence against leftists. Howard Berry Godfrey, FBI informer and agent provocateur for five years, kept the FBI abreast of the violence but the San Diego Police were in the dark, according to Inspector Sgobba.

The trials of the eight men and one woman charged in connection with the fire bombing of the pornography theater (some rightists are morally opposed to pornography) and the shooting of Paula Tharp are scheduled to begin this week.

At preliminary hearings of the nine arrested for the two acts of violence, the FBI and the District Attorney's chief witness, Godfrey, testified that he and Hoover had been surveilling Bohmer's home for the JAC, as was their custom, when Hoover took a 9 millimeter pistol from under the seat and fired two shots into the residence.

Godfrey said he didn't know that Hoover was going to shoot and as his SAO superior he ordered him to stop. Hoover left the gun in Godfrey's car and the informer turned it over to his FBI contact, Steve Christianson.

Christianson, said to be sympathetic to the Secret Army according to the Door, hid the gun under his couch for six months until the District Attorney's office learned of its existence by talking to Godfrey after the theater bombing. The agent has since left the FBI and cannot be found for comment but the FBI office denies knowing anything about the gun previous to the bombing.

Doug Porter, staff member of the Door, told the Free Press that a concerted campaign of terror has been waged since a radical movement began to stabilize in San Diego in late 1969. In the following scenario of violence reprinted from the Door, Godfrey's mark is indelibly stamped on it.

Sources for Godfrey's role include gas station attendant Calvin Fox, who is close to the SAO and who was approached by Godfrey to spy on reporter Gene Cubbison of the Independent Newspaper because of a story he wrote about the SAO; (please turn to page 3)

(continued from page 1)

defendants William F. Yakopec, accused of the theater bombing, Hoover, and Jerry Davis, Southern California regional director of SAO; and also from Godfrey's own grand jury testimony.

Godfrey has admitted to being a captain and commander of the local SAO and second in command of the California state section. Other rightists contend that Godfrey was a co-founder of it after the Minutemen were "destroyed by communists in the Justice Department." Godfrey said he had supplied information to the FBI almost daily for five years through three contacts: Christianson, Earl Peterson and Jordan Naylor.

Godfrey got started in the FBI like so many informers after he was arrested for a crime. He was charged with possession of illegal explosives in 1967. He had been sympathetic to reactionary groups already when asked to inform for the FBI. Charges against him were then dropped and he became an employee of the Fire Department. The department denied it knew about his FBI and SAO activities.

Fox says that he never trusted Godfrey because, "He would never look you straight in the eye." The worker also believes that the "whole SAO thing is just a 'straw army' the FBI has manufactured to get people who think that Nixon is selling out to the communists." He thinks that as in the Cuban invasion, the CIA may be involved as well.

While the right-wing thinks that the FBI is out to get it, the left points to the fact that no effort whatsoever was made to stop the right-wing terror against radical leftists during the entire two and one-half years. They think the FBI may have been using Godfrey to harass and collect information on radicals and allowing crimes of violence against radicals to be committed.

Yakopec's attorney, Frederick Hetter, who is with the American Civil Liberties Union, told the Free Press that Godfrey is an explosives expert and a locksmith. The Door has long claimed that those who broke into its offices and into the Street Journal some time before must have been a locksmith. The Door also pointed out that the last person to leave the Street Journal's office one of the nights it was broken into was John Paul Murray, then known by his police undercover alias as Jay King. It is not known if King and Godfrey worked together.

SEE ALSO THIS FILE, NYT 27 JUN 75

*SEE THIS FILE 28 JUN 73

SEE ALSO MISC II, CUBANS, 17 APR 70 (L.A. FREE PRESS) ET AL

SEE L.A. FREE PRESS, 6 JUN 70, THIS FILE