

A Report of FBI Operations Abroad

Washington

The FBI periodically dispatches American citizens on intelligence-gathering missions outside the United States, according to a 42-year-old Florida man who says he and others have been used for that purpose.

The man, Joseph Burton, an auctioneer and antiques dealer who lives in Tampa, said that for two years he posed as a Marxist in order to infiltrate revolutionary groups in the United States and Canada.

He told the New York Times that during that period he made "about ten" trips to Canada at the FBI's direction.

Another undercover opera-

tive, a woman with whom Burton occasionally worked, confirmed in a separate interview that she made a month-long visit to China nearly four years ago in connection with her work for the bureau.

The FBI, according to one of that agency's former high officials, has "no right to run (intelligence) operations in a foreign country—that's the CIA's jurisdiction."

But neither he nor legal authorities in and out of government who were asked about the practice could point to any statute prohibiting the FBI from gathering intelligence overseas.

A spokesman for the CIA said his agency would have

no comment on FBI operations.

James Murphy, a spokesman at FBI headquarters here, confirmed in a telephone interview that the bureau has in the past sent American citizens abroad for intelligence purposes, but he declined to discuss any individual instances of the practice.

He said it is the FBI's position, however, that the bureau is "not operational outside the country." Without confirming that either Burton or the woman, who asked to remain anonymous, had ever traveled abroad, he pointed out that neither was a special agent of the FBI.

Asked how he would describe the pair, Murphy replied that they were considered by the bureau to be "paid informants."

According to the former FBI official, the bureau maintains agents in a number of foreign capitals who serve as "legal attaches" and who have their offices inside American embassies.

He said their roles are officially limited to performing a "liaison" function with foreign police agencies and

that they are barred from "positive," or active, gathering of intelligence.

Burton, who headed a sham "revolutionary" group in Tampa called the "Red Star Cadre," which was set up as a front for his FBI work, told the Times in a series of interviews that he ended his relationship with the FBI last summer after becoming concerned about the legality of some of the tasks he had undertaken.

Burton's account of his activities, and that of his fellow operative, provide an uncommon insight into a little-known aspect of the FBI's operations at a time when that agency is coming under increasing scrutiny.

Last month, the Senate set up a select committee to examine intelligence-gathering by federal agencies, including the FBI and CIA, whose occasionally overlapping jurisdictions have created some difficulties in the past.

Although his forays outside the United States were confined to Canada, Burton said, "there was some talk of my going to Europe and also going to Albania."

He said also that he was asked by an FBI superior

whether he would "like to go to Mexico, walk into the Chinese embassy and say that you've got this organization in Tampa and that you want to work with the Chinese."

Burton, a large cheerful man whose vocabulary and expressiveness belie his lack of a high-school education, said he told the agent that he would not "insult the Chinese by trying to pull something that stupid on them."

During the Canadian trips, Burton recalled, his instructions were to develop contacts with members of the Canadian Communist party's pro-Chinese wing, and to report to the FBI on their activities, including any signs that the organization was passing funds from the People's Republic of China to Maoist groups in the United States.

On two of the trips, he said, he was accompanied by an American woman who had adopted a similar radical pose in the New Orleans area and who told him that she had visited the People's Republic of China to gather political intelligence for the bureau.

The woman, a 36-year-old

housewife and mother, confirmed that she spent four weeks in China in 1971 with one of the first groups of Americans allowed into that country after former President Nixon's announcement that he had accepted an invitation to visit there.

After being assured of anonymity, she conceded that she had entered China "before Nixon" as part of a "delegation made up of American radicals," and had made "four or five" trips to Canada as well.

The woman asked that her name and whereabouts not be disclosed for fear of reprisals from the left against her and her husband, a mathematician, with whom she had worked as a team for the FBI in penetrating leftist political organizations in Louisiana and elsewhere.

The reports she submitted to the FBI upon her return, she said, were filled out not only with information about her traveling companions, but also with her observations of Canton, Shanghai and Peking. The Chinese capital, where she said she was introduced to Premier Chou En-lai.

"I was concerned about everything," she replied

when asked what sort of information she supplied to the bureau in the reports. "I was a detail specialist."

Asked whether she now entertains any misgivings about her work for the FBI outside the United States, the woman left no doubt that she did not.

"— feel like I've put my life on the line for a good cause, and I don't feel like that all ought to go down the drain because someone wants to make a sensational story."

Both Burton and the couple from New Orleans pointed out repeatedly that they had worked virtually full time for the FBI.

Burton produced a letter from Nick Stames, the special agent in charge of the FBI's Tampa field office, under whom Burton worked, showing that in addition to travel and other expenses, he was paid \$2923 for his FBI work during the first seven months of last year.

The New Orleans couple said that during their service as undercover intelligence operatives they received an average of "about \$16,000" a year from the FBI.

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