

Thesis Provides Clues on Undercover Police

By DAVID BURNHAM

A rare look at the secretive New York police unit that collects intelligence about dissident individuals and groups has been obtained from a master's thesis written by a top police official and a subsequent interview with First Deputy Police Commissioner William H. T. Smith.

Except when one of the undercover agents testified in court, the Police Department traditionally has refused to even acknowledge the existence of what is widely known as "Bossi," an acronym from the days when the unit's name was the Bureau of Special Services and Investigation.

The widespread domestic intelligence-gathering operations of the United States Army are under investigation by Senator Samuel J. Ervin Jr., Democrat of North Carolina, but similar activities by local intelligence groups have seldom been examined.

Agency's New Name

The organization and operations of what is now called the Security Investigation Section of the New York Police Department was described in a thesis written three years ago by Inspector Anthony Bouza at the Bernard M. Baruch School of Business and Public Administration.

Inspector Bouza, now commander of the Planning Division for eight years.

Commissioner Smith agreed to discuss Bossi when informed that the Bouza thesis was available in the library of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

In his thesis, the inspector said Bossi's files contained one million cards bearing the names of persons or organizations mentioned in its investigations. He also said that Bossi had conducted 1,000 extensive investigations each year and that it had made 100,000 security checks each year for local, state and Federal agencies.

Rate of Convictions

In the interview, Commissioner Smith said that during the last five years the undercover agents assigned to infiltrate such groups as the right-wing Minutemen organization and the Black Panthers had been responsible for the arrest of 118 persons.

To support his contention that the intelligence unit had been extremely selective in its task of keeping the Police Department informed about "any situation that may pose a threat to the public safety," Mr. Smith cited the number of arrests, averaging about 20 a year, and the fact that about 90 per cent of them resulted in convictions.

The intelligence-gathering group was established in 1912



The New York Times
Inspector Anthony Bouza wrote thesis on Security Investigation Section.

as the Radical Bureau. It has continued since then under such names as the Neutrality Squad and the Bureau of Criminal Alien Investigations. And from May 13, 1945 until April 15, 1946, Inspector Bouza said it had the "deliberately misleading" name of Public Relations Squad.

There is evidence that Bossi has grown somewhat in the last few years. At the time of his thesis, Inspector Bouza said it had about 60 detectives and a handful of commanding officers. On Feb. 3, however, the Police Department published orders transferring Bossi from control of the chief of detectives to that of the first deputy commissioner. According to these orders, Bossi had a total of 90 men at that time.

Undercover Operation

This total does not include Bossi's undercover agents, and Commissioner Smith refused to disclose how many were now assigned to infiltrate various groups around the city.

At the beginning of the present Black Panther trial in Manhattan, it was disclosed that at least six police undercover agents had infiltrated that organization in New York.

The commissioner said the budget of all intelligence operations of the Police Department—including that aimed at organized crime and police corruption—came to about \$1-million a year. About \$660,000 went to Bossi, he said.

According to Inspector Bouza, the names of persons and organizations turned up in Bossi investigations "are documented and filed for future reference."

"This latter process," he wrote, "constitutes a huge bulk of raw data available for use in connection with the evaluation of the character and purpose of any active person or

organization. The files of the unit can be said to consist almost entirely of these references that now total about one million cards."

Commissioner Smith, questioned about the cards, said it was not known how many names were on them because one person or one organization could have many different cards.

"If a guy is involved in 40 incidents, his name will be on 40 cards," Mr. Smith said. The official noted that such names as Pope Paul VI or Billy Graham were filed in connection with one of Bossi's major jobs—protecting the lives of visiting dignitaries.

The commissioner said the file was not computerized and that its organization—which he indicated was somewhat cumbersome—was being studied for possible reorganization.

Both Commissioner Smith and Inspector Bouza contended that the intelligence gathering operation of Bossi was essential to the public safety.

"The legal pyramid upon which Special Services rests," Inspector Bouza wrote, "starts with the mandate of the Police Department to preserve the peace, prevent crime, protect life and property and enforce the laws."

'Potential for Abuse'

But Inspector Bouza conceded such operations presented problems. "Of necessity, intelligence agencies are secretive organizations that perform beyond the range of public scrutiny. This condition presents a great deal of working freedom and creates a potential for abuse."

Commissioner Smith said one way the Police Department tried to avoid such problems was to require undercover agents to contact their Bossi supervisors at least once a day for specific orders.

Inspector Bouza said the undercover men were recruited outside New York and that, to avoid discovery, they were not trained at the Police Academy, they had all their records held by their controller at Bossi and they did not know the identity of other agents.

He said that Ray Wood—the agent that infiltrated the group planning to blow up the Statue of Liberty—"never set foot in any police installation during the first months of his career as a policeman except as a person to be booked."

Foreign-Desk Operation

Inspector Bouza said Bossi was organized into different desks—a Cuban desk to keep track of various Cuban groups, a Dominican desk, a Middle European desk. He said the men assigned to each desk usually spoke the required language, read the appropriate newspapers and generally steeped themselves in its culture. Most Bossi detectives, he said, are college graduates.

In connection with keeping track of various dissident groups and individuals, Bossi is

responsible for protecting officials from United Nation delegates to the President.

Inspector Bouza outlined an elaborate 15-step procedure carried out when a President visited New York that began with advanced discussions with the Secret Service and included making dry runs to find possible obstructions, checking the proposed route 24 and four hours before the President drives and checking any hotel employee or other person likely to come into contact with the President.

Watching Labor Scene

Another job of Bossi's is to be aware of expiring labor contracts and be able to advise the Police Commissioner on which disputes could explode into violence.

"The role of the police during a labor dispute is a delicate yet complex one," Inspector Bouza wrote. "The safety of the public and the rights of the participants should be assured but any semblance of espionage or unseemly interference should be assiduously avoided."

In response to a question about the widespread belief that the Police Department and Bossi were more interested in left-wing than right-wing plots, Commissioner Smith cited the investigations of the American Nazi Party, the Minutemen and some South American groups.

"It doesn't make any difference whether the problem is in the left, center or right," he said.

"Only whether they plan to disrupt the normal operations of the public. We want to know, we must know, what is going on in the city—excluding bedroom stuff—so we can be prepared to protect the public safety."