

**THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**, persistent legal action by an NBC newsman, and the reluctance of the acting Attorney General to appeal a court order have brought about the disclosure that in 1968 J. Edgar Hoover privately mounted an FBI operation to "expose, disrupt and otherwise neutralize" the New Left movement and other political activists.

The revelation comes as something of a shock but is hardly surprising when viewed in the light of Hoover's highly exaggerated fears of Communists and revolution at that time of anarchistic activity, unlawful demonstrations, and violence which embraced the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy.

**THUS HOOVER'S SUCCESSOR**, FBI Director Clarence Kelley, defends the late director's secret police action and asserts that the government would have been "derelict in its duties" if it had not adopted those measures. But it is possible to respond that not the government, but J. Edgar Hoover alone, acting without consulting his superiors in the Department of Justice, directed this patent infringement on constitutional rights.

Kelley's prompt and fervent defense of the operation might well be interpreted as an indication that the FBI might have it in mind for future if not present use — but Kelley has said that perhaps some additional legislation may be needed to govern the FBI's activities where they bump into the Bill of Rights.

**IN THE ABSENCE** of such restrictive legislation it is possible — though highly improbable — that some future Goebbels installed as FBI director might take it on himself to convert that highly useful agency into a secret, repressive, governed and ungovernable Gestapo.