

**Running Head: The Elimination of Change**



*The Elimination of Change:  
A Lesson in Political Repression*

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## **Abstract:**

**Perhaps the best measure of true freedom within any state is the degree to which a person, or group of people, can voice opposition. A government's ability to tolerate dissent is in fact the best testimony available to measure its claims of upholding liberty. In a free and open society people are enabled to think and to question. Throughout American history, any time a group of people have effectively organized for change they have been persecuted, jailed, deported, or outright killed. Beyond the rhetoric espoused in democracy's name lies a grim reality in which the effective dissident is a threat to be eliminated. This paper will outline the tactics used, trace the history of political repression through its primary targets, and discuss the continuation of this policy under the USA Patriot Act. In a society where the citizenship does not know their past, to change our government we must recognize what it is willing to do to stop us.**

## **How: The Methodology of Repression**

**Repression does not need to be Orwellian. The telescreen does not have to flicker and the boots of the Thought Police will not be heard thumping up your stairs. However the specter of the state is always present. In a million ways they are watching. When you use your Easy Pass a digital record of your vehicular travel is accumulated in a data base. CCTV cameras record every major city's thoroughfares and public spaces. Cell phones of political dissidents are tapped and the Carnivore System watches what you write in your email<sup>1</sup>. While surveillance is still somewhat decentralized, the 911 attacks have led the government to believe that the American people are flexible enough with their civil liberties to allow a police state by any other name. This phenomenon has taken many forms and has been based on many excuses, but there is a methodology to be studied and guarded against. While the Left fixates on things like John Poindexter's proposed Total Information Awareness Initiative<sup>2</sup> and Operation Tips,<sup>3</sup> these are extreme examples well in line with the**

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<sup>1</sup> **The Soft Cage.** By: Christian Parenti.

<sup>2</sup> The Total Information Awareness initiative is a government funded program to consolidate all domestic intelligence gathering it into a massive database that could create profiles on potential terrorists.

<sup>3</sup> Operation Tips was a plan to create a system of public service informants that would report via a hotline on "suspicious" activity.

tenor of the times. There is a laundry list of tactics used by the security agencies of the Federal Government to “neutralize dissidents”. I will address the most effective.

## **General Surveillance**

**The FBI’s tactics in monitoring political dissidents are best summed up under Foucault’s panopticon:**

**A model of control in its ideal form, where the effects of power are constant even when its application may be intermittent. Surveillance achieves discipline and creates docile bodies by causing the subjects of observation to police themselves; that is, to make the right decisions by “internalizing the gaze” of their overseer (Parenti, 2003, p.136)**

**According to his theory it is not necessary to actually keep an entire population under surveillance to control them. All the state has to do is monitor a small percentage of the entire population selectively so that the citizen is never quite sure whether they are being watched. The FBI need only project omniscience and remain focused on eliminating high profile targets. What is essential is that the population remains paranoid and that individuals marked for surveillance are made to feel that they can make no sound that will not be recorded and that there is no where they can hide. The panopticon’s ultimate affect is to generate a constant state of fear; a fear of everyone around you and the constant belief that you are being watched. However, should a person choose to speak out in a way that is indeed effective, they can be certain that someone will be paying attention. The FBI has their hand on the pulse of the people.**

**The FBI does not limit itself to mere political voyeurism. Utilizing the cutting edge technology at their disposal the FBI is able to keep track of groups and individuals deemed threatening to the interests of the state with the over arching objective being their ultimate “neutralization”.**

A massive program of surveillance was carried out against organizations and individuals via wiretaps, surreptitious entries and burglaries, electronic devices, live “tails” and mail tampering. The purpose of such activities was never intelligence gathering per se, but rather the inducement of “paranoia” among those targeted by making them aware they’d been selected for special treatment and that there was “an FBI agent behind every mail box” (Churchill, 1998, p.39).

The government is not content simply to wait for concrete actions. The FBI’s chief line of work is to eliminate the suggestion of a threat. This has been accomplished through Counter Intelligence Programs (COINTELPROs): systematic actions designed to neutralize dissident political activity. According to activist/author Brain Glick:

When Congressional investigations, political trials, and other traditional legal modes of repression failed to counter the growing movements, and even helped fuel them, the FBI and police moved outside the law. They resorted to the secret and systematic use of fraud and force to sabotage constitutionally protected political activity. Their methods ranged far beyond surveillance, amounting to a home front version of the covert action for which the CIA has become infamous throughout the world (Glick, 1989, p.9).

A common line of thinking among the American people is that if one isn’t doing anything wrong then why would they mind being watched? This logic extends itself in their perception of monitoring dissidents. Most Americans feel that engaging in political activity will be constitutionally protected as long as the dissidents work within the system. As I will demonstrate throughout this paper, legal or illegal, subversive or mainstream, the state security apparatus seeks to keep all opposition under tight watch.

*A clear example of this was the internal Security Index. The internal Security Index was a roster of dissidents started in 1948 by the FBI under the veneer of the Red Scare. When Congress passed the Internal Security Act of 1950 the FBI had already begun compiling an index of thousands of “subversives” two years prior to*

**the Act being on the books. This presented a problem in the sense that the arrest list started in August 1948 granted broader powers of surveillance under vague terms invoked under “threatened invasion” or keeping watch over “dangerous” persons. The FBI’s index in the case of emergency detentions involved suspending habeas corpus, judicial review, and barred legal rules of evidence. Internal discussions took place between the Justice Department and the FBI as to whether the more restrictive 1950 Act would undermine national security by forcing them to drop hundreds of names of their list. In the end, the FBI opted to secretly maintain the 1948 list<sup>4</sup>.**

**At its peak in 1955, the FBI’s Security Index list of persons to be arrested in a national emergency included twenty-six thousand individuals including educators, labor union organizers, journalists, lawyers, doctors, scientists, and “individuals who could potentially furnish financial or material aid” to any enemy...by the time the Internal Security Act was repealed in 1971, twelve thousand persons were still listed on the Security Index (Goldstein, 2001, pg. 324).**

**This was a list of people under constant surveillance to be placed in internment camps in a single national sweep. In the event of major civil disturbance the very people likely to organize against the restriction of civil liberties were slated for internment. By 1971 the Security Index numbered at least 12,000 and a Reserve List had been created numbering as many as 200,000 secondary targets<sup>5</sup>. Not only were the dissident being watched: they were pre-selected for detention.**

**Both the Security Index and COINTELPROs could not have been successful without relying on vast amounts of information gained through selectively monitoring those that spoke out against the government. Every action engaged in, every dissident plotted against, was first based in act of general surveillance.**

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<sup>4</sup> **Political Repression in Modern America.** By: Robert Justin Goldstein. pgs. 322-324

<sup>5</sup> **Secret Intelligence: The Inside Story of America’s Espionage Empire.** By: Volkman, Ernst, Baggett, and Blaine. Pg.162.

## **Falsification of Correspondence**

**The objective of this tactic is to spread confusion and provoke hostility between organizations and individual targets. By generating letters from anonymous concerned parties as well as in the name of targeted leaders, the FBI has used this COINTELPRO to provoke violent confrontations and organizational splits<sup>6</sup>. These efforts continued-and in many ways intensified-when it became apparent that the resulting tension was sufficient to cause physical violence among group members (Churchill, 1998, p.40).**

**Building on the culture of paranoia this tactic greatly exacerbated already mounted tensions. From unnamed “concerned parties” letters went out implying intrigues, lack of faith from constituency, and impending threats of violence. Playing upon ego and insecurity the FBI was able to confuse rank and file while generating infighting among the leadership.**

**A clear example of this was evident in the COINTELPRO carried out against the Black Panther Party’s Chicago Chapter. By 1969, under the leadership of Fred Hampton, the Chicago Panther chapter was one of the largest and most active in the nation. Fred Hampton’s ability to build multi-racial, multi-class coalitions had led to the possibility of a merger with America’s largest street gang the P. Stone Rangers (numbering roughly 2000 ghetto youth). Had this merger occurred it would have doubled the size of the Black Panther Party. Special Agent in Charge of Chicago’s FBI Racial Matters Squad Marlin Johnson, working from information supplied by**

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<sup>6</sup> See Black Panther Party: a. SNCC/Panther split b. Newton/Cleaver split

**an infiltrator named William O'Neal, began a COINTELPRO designed to disrupt such a merger.**

**The Bureau, with the approval of J. Edgar Hoover, began mailing anonymous letters to Jeff Forte (head of P. Stone Rangers) implying that the Panthers were out to kill him. Simultaneously they mailed letters to Hampton implying the same. William O'Neal then set out to escalate the existing tensions going as far as provoking several armed confrontations between the two groups. As a result of these letters, the FBI destroyed the possibility of a merger and the politicization of the Rangers<sup>7</sup>.**

### **Black Propaganda Operations**

**To foster further distrust between organizations and to discredit groups in the eyes of their community the FBI launched this COINTELPRO to put out literature, broadsides, and cartoons that would serve to provoke hostility. FBI field offices would distribute this literature in an attempt to make an organization sound ridiculous or play one off another. Such operations were initiated whenever it seemed likely that a merger or alliance might occur<sup>8</sup> or would be used to initiate violence between groups competing for a similar constituency<sup>9</sup>.**

**Black Propaganda is crafted to give the impression that a specific group is responsible for antagonistic statements. Playing on racial, ideological, or class bias the object remains to create an atmosphere of hate and distrust.**

**A clear example of this was the COINTELPRO campaign of cartoons and statements supposedly put out by SDS to prevent a meaningful alliance between**

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<sup>7</sup> **Agents of Repression.** By: Churchill and Vanderwall. pgs. 65-66.

<sup>8</sup> See Black Panther and Students for a Democratic Society

<sup>9</sup> See Black Panther Party: United Slaves /Black Panther Party

them and the Black Panther Party. By 1969 SDS had close to 100,000 members on hundreds of campuses throughout the country<sup>10</sup>. As the premier New Left Organization, SDS sought to establish ties with the Black Panther Party in the spirit of building broad coalitions across race and class. Throughout the country the Bureau used the issue of race to divide liberation organizations engaged in common struggle. In Chicago, the FBI Field office under the direction of SAC Marlin Johnson began a COINTELPRO designed to sabotage the Rainbow Coalition Panther Fred Hampton was building between SDS, the Young Lords, the Black Panthers, and the Young Patriots. As is stated in a Bureau Memo authorizing the COINTELPRO on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1969:

The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the BPP are cooperating in several ways to exploit their common revolutionary aim. Together these organizations pose a formidable threat. Chicago has proposed that BPP informants be instructed to plant the idea that the SDS is exploiting the BPP...Chicago has made available some newspaper articles with the thought in mind of anonymous mailings. These articles question the SDS-BPP alliance (reprinted in Churchill, 2002, p.211).

The thrust of the COINTELPRO that would be adopted anywhere an SDS-Panther alliance looked promising was that SDS sought to use the BPP for grunt work playing off the heated racial tensions of the time. In Newark the FBI composed letters on behalf of the Newark SDS Chapter mocking Panther militancy and insulting its leadership<sup>11</sup>. In Detroit, where SDS and the Panthers were collaborating on the Radical Education Project<sup>12</sup>, the Bureau sought to plant statements to turn them against each other. In Philadelphia Hoover ordered: “that the office undertake specific counterintelligence activities including the generation of cartoons...to disrupt SDS within its area of operation (reprinted in Churchill,

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<sup>10</sup> **The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage.** By: Todd Gitlin

<sup>11</sup> reprinted in **The Cointelpro Papers.** By: Ward Churchill. p. 213

<sup>12</sup> The Radical Education Project was a publishing outfit through which much of the underground press was released to activists, organizers, and the community at large.

2002, pg. 187). The Bureau released an inflammatory cartoon stating to the effect that SDS sought to use violence to overthrow the government.

Using the race card manifested in cartoons, statements, and letters supposedly written by anonymous SDS chapter members the FBI repeatedly and successfully prevented long term BPP/ SDS cooperation. By July of 1969 such tensions came to a head at the United Front Against Fascism Conference in Oakland. After a minor disagreement over community control of the police the Panther representative stated:

SDS had better get their politics straight because the Black Panther Party is drawing some very clear lines between friends and enemies. And that we're gonna make it very clear that we're not going to be attacked from any of those motherfuckers...We'll beat those little sissies, those little schoolboys' ass if they don't straighten up their politics (Booker, 1998, pg.350).

A potentially powerful partnership had been reduced to absolute misunderstanding.

### **Grey Propaganda: Disinformation**

Grey Propaganda is information leaked to "friendly media" to indirectly shape public opinion about a group or individual. Using contacts in the mainstream press the FBI asserts creative control while in a sense painting the dissident an un-American or criminal. False information is circulated on the motives, methodology, and goals of a targeted group for two main reasons. First, if a group is painted as asocial, criminal, and a threat to the security of our country it becomes easier for the public to accept harsh repressive measures brought against the group. Second, Grey Propaganda helps facilitate the conviction of those brought to trial by prejudicing potential jurors.

A clear example of this was the COINTELPRO used against the Puerto Rican Independence Movement. In an attempt to stem the support for the

**nationalist movement the San Juan Bureau began releasing grey propaganda to the island press to paint the *independentistas* as amoral or communist.**

**The Cointelpro thus included a full scale disinformation component by which agents systematically planted articles and editorials (often containing malicious gossip concerning *independentista* leaders' alleged sexual or financial affairs) in "friendly" newspapers, and dispensed "private" warnings to the owners of island radio stations that their FCC licenses might be revoked if pro-independence material were aired (Churchill, 2002, p.72).**

**Every day people who were used to getting their information not from direct contact or political exposure but from the news, were misled into deeming all groups struggling for independence (radical ones like the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, socialist like the *Movimiento por Independencia Puertorriqueno*, or mainland issue driven like the Young Lords Party) all as violent, foreign dominated, terrorist organizations. With the local press firmly publishing FBI written "articles" it was not difficult to alienate the public from the movement.**

### **Harassment Arrests**

**Harassment arrests are encouraged to keep organizers tied down and deplete the resources of an organization by repeatedly having to pay bail bonds and legal fees. Individuals can be arrested for the most spurious of charges and can be held for long periods on trumped up charges. While courts may in fact throw out many of these cases the time consumed by repeated arrest as well the cost of defense has been used successfully against numerous organizations.**

**A clear example of this was visible in the government's neutralization of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Starting with its free speech actions the IWW had always been willing to take arrests. A common tactic was for IWW members to get arrested in bulk and engage in jail solidarity to overwhelm a given**

city's prison system<sup>13</sup>. The IWW exhibited a striking blend of radical utopianism while able to organize around the every day plight of the working class. By May of 1917 the Federal Government had had enough. Using the War as a justification police were instructed to arrest IWW members in bulk, as frequently as possible, where ever they should attempt to organize<sup>14</sup>.

Within a month, 2,000 IWW members were in jail awaiting trial. Mass trials were held: 165 IWW defendants were tried together in Chicago, 146 in Sacramento. Most were found guilty; many were sentenced to between ten and twenty years in prison. The Chicago trial of 165 Wobblies lasted four months...Fines in this one trial alone cost the IWW over \$2 million (Linfield, 1990, pg.62).

Even organizations with a mass base can only spend so much. By arresting leadership and then forcing an organization to repeatedly make bail; funds must be diverted from political action toward self preservation. This is a common tactic used repeatedly, and tragically, with much success.

## **Infiltrators and Agent Provocateurs**

To really know how an organization functions, to gain access to records, create profiles on key organizers, and directly influence the decisions made by a political organization; the state has always relied on infiltrators. Infiltrators are not generally actual agents of a government security agency. Instead they are an eclectic mix ranging from ex cons to activists who got caught. It takes a certain kind of person to engage in a line of work that involves gaining a person's trust and then setting them up to be imprisoned or killed. Infiltrators penetrate all types of organizations--liberal or radical, militant or pacifist, large or small. Any group that

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<sup>13</sup> **A People's History of the United States.** By: Howard Zinn. p.332

<sup>14</sup> **Strike!** By: Jeremy Brecher. p.116

is any way capable of attracting attention to either the righting of a social ill or the possibility of building a better society will be infiltrated. It is not a question of if, but when.

They spread rumors and make unfounded accusations to inflame disagreement among activists and provoke splits. They urged divisive proposals, sabotaged important activities, squandered scarce resources, stole funds, seduced leaders, exacerbated rivalries, provoked jealousy, and publicly embarrassed progressive groups. They repeatedly led zealous activists into unnecessary danger and set them up for prosecution (Glick, 1989, p.41).

While an infiltrator serves as informant gathering information; an agent provocateur is placed in an organization in order to disrupt it internally. Every successful COINTELPRO has used this method to disrupt and discredit targeted organizations.

A clear example of this was the case of Tommy Tongyai, or “Tommy the Traveler.” Tommy traveled from campus to campus throughout Western New York urging students to bomb government buildings, kill police, and engage in terrorist activity. Tommy supplied students with radical speakers, books, and films and even tried to start an SDS chapter at Hobert College. Constantly encouraging violence Tommy showed students how to use an M-1 rifle and build explosives. When several students at Hobert College took his advice and blew up an ROTC building he came out to testify against them. As a result nine students and faculty faced criminal charges and Tommy the Traveler walked<sup>15</sup>.

Infiltrators are not bound by the law. The degree to which they are able to ensnare and mislead is a testimony to their effectiveness. In movement’s built on idealism it is hard for many organizers to differentiate between enthusiasm and entrapment.

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<sup>15</sup> The Agent Provocateur as Folk Hero. By: Frank Donner. pp.250-251

## Front Organizations

A front organization is a political organization set up by the FBI to accomplish four separate objectives. First, front organizations can be used to spread disinformation. These formations put out statements on behalf of fictitious organizations designed to confuse the public about the objectives of a movement. A clear example of this was the Bureau's creation of Grupo pro-Usa Voto del MPI (roughly translated as "Group within the MPIPR in Favor of Voting to Achieve Independence") and the "Committee Against Foreign Domination of the Fight for Independence." These groups were formed during a period in the Puerto Rican colony's history where a referendum was being taken to determine its future political status. *Puertorriqueno* voters were thus confused by one group claiming that the independence movement was Havana inspired and another supposedly within the MPIPR contradicting themselves between rhetoric and tactics. As a result the referendum resulted in the "acceptance" of continued commonwealth status<sup>16</sup>.

The second objective of a front organization is to serve as a heightened form of agent provocateurism. Rather than the individual extremist urging radicals to violence, this second form of front group does it as a collective voice from which they can "argue from the left". An example of this was the Red Star Cadre.

One FBI provocateur based in Tampa, Florida, named Joe Burton created organizations all over the United States and Canada between 1972 and 1975. His home base group in Tampa was called the Red Star Cadre. Most of its far flung affiliates, but not all, presented themselves as Maoist; some were ostensibly pro-Soviet or pro-Cuba. The FBI used these front groups sometimes to disrupt legitimate revolutionary movements in the U.S., other times to unify with and spy on them (Lawrence, 1985, pgs.4-5).

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<sup>16</sup> Reprinted in *The Cointelpro Papers*. By: Ward Churchill. p.88

**This front organization was set up to denounce the work of organizations like Vietnam Veterans Against War (VVAW) and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) composed of non-activist types. Specifically intended to denounce coalitions between the New Left and veterans or the new left and workers as lacking militancy, the Red Star Cadre served the dual purpose of being able to “speak” for the radical left as well as to urge more moderate organizations’ to violent action<sup>17</sup>.**

**The third objective of a front organization is to carry out acts of violence that against the left. The best example of this is the Secret Army Organization (SAO). The SAO was created by the FBI to commit terrorist acts against the movement.**

**Howard Berry Godfrey, the Bureau’s operative within the Secret Army Organization in Southern California hardly contented himself with participation in the attempted assassination of Peter Bohemer. To the contrary, as Godfrey later testified, he had served as a conduit during 1971 and ’72 through which the FBI had pumped more than \$60,000 worth of weapons and explosives into the terrorist group. Further, he admitted to having provided not only the explosive device, but also the demolitions training utilized by the SAO in its June 19, 1972 bombing of the left-leaning Guild Theatre in San Diego (Churchill, 1990, p.224).**

**The SAO broke into and vandalized offices of leftist organizations and even compiled a list of left-wing activists to be liquidated. The FBI did everything they could to help the SAO with its “patriotic” mission<sup>18</sup>.**

**The final objective of front organizations is to set up chapters of a known political organization to discredit them politically, ensnare potential members, or place agents in leadership. During the first World War when the IWW was outlawed under the Espionage and Sedition Acts the Federal Government set up**

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<sup>17</sup> **War at Home.** By: Brian Glick. pp.27-28

<sup>18</sup> **The Cointelpro Papers.** By: Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall. pp.224-225

**fictitious Wobbly chapters to lure potential radicals in an arrest them<sup>19</sup>. In the 1960's Groups like SDS and the Panthers had chapters established by FBI agents and were thoroughly infiltrated to the point where agents held high ranking positions in the leadership<sup>20</sup>. The objective of this type of covert action is to so thoroughly embed agents in a given organization that like CPUSA; the general membership is debilitated and demoralized by internal counter intelligence. The end result is that a group of agents can pass their actions off under the name of the known political organization to discredit them with the community.**

### **Bad Jacketing**

**In this environment of heightened paranoia and constant harassment, a common theme has always been for a group to falsely accuse its members of being infiltrators or agents of the state. While obvious signs of an infiltrator may include a proclivity toward militancy or a failure to question anything about the operating structure of a given organization, for every time the movement thinks it has singled out an agent, there are ten times when the agent does the singling out.**

**This 'bad jacketing' technique, well known in prisons where guards are adept at turning members of a group against each other, also creates a pressure point. When a man is abandoned by his comrades because of a rumor slipped into the prison grapevine, when suspicion and rancor suddenly replace old loyalties, it is easier to turn him into a stoolie, the cooperative, compliant informer (Durden-Smith, 1976, p.104).**

**A clear example of this was the bad jacketing of Stokely Carmichael. A well know proponent of Black Power and ranking member of SNCC and then later the Black Panther Party, as part of an overall plan to disrupt the national leadership of the BPP; Carmichael was set up to look like an agent of the CIA. The FBI took a**

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<sup>19</sup> **Freedom Under Fire.** By: Michael Linfield. p.64

<sup>20</sup> **Agents of Repression.** By: Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall. pp.66-68

**twofold approach to this counter intelligence operation. First, they designed an informant report and filled it out in Carmichael's name. They left this bogus report in an associate's car for a co-organizer to find and thus presume that Carmichael had mistakenly dropped it. Simultaneously they had their informers spread rumors that Carmichael was an agent so that the report and rumors might succeed in bad jacking him<sup>21</sup>.**

**This operation was so successful that by 1970 Huey P. Newton denounced Carmichael as a CIA agent effectively neutralizing him as an organizer. Stokely Carmichael, who did more than any other single person to popularize Black Power thus providing an ideological basis for the BPP, was never connected with a government agency, but by that point his reputation in the radical community of America was ruined.**

## **Raids and Round Ups**

**When all else fails the state uses force. If endless counter intelligence operations do nothing to stem the tide of a movement; then the Federal government has always resorted to the physical disruption of the bases of operation. Like harassment arrests, the objective is not necessarily to make charges stick, but rather to provoke confrontations where a group's people power and resources are tied up. However, unlike arrests, raids and roundups offer a slightly more lethal equation. Where as the first operation ties up bail money, raids result in injuries, death, and life imprisoning charges. A whole lot can go wrong when a group of armed men rush unannounced into the office, hall, or home of a group of revolutionaries. In the**

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<sup>21</sup> **Agents of Repression.** By: Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall. pp.49-51

ensuing chaos, the agents of the state have left leaders dead, destroyed equipment used in legitimate political work, and seized files for intelligence purposes. This tactic has been used against nearly every large scale dissident organization or party in our nation's history.

A clear example of this was the Palmer Raids of 1920. After a prolonged period of political repression throughout the period of the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution had left the American power elite nervous of a similar set of events happening in the US. Although the Espionage and Sedition Acts had effectively crushed the beginnings of a potential class struggle with the mass arrest of the IWW's leadership over the course of the war, the Palmer Raids swept every known radical hub of the country rounding up between five and ten thousand people delivering a death blow to old left. Thousands were beaten badly and detained for months without being charged with a specific crime. Hundreds were deported to the Soviet Union<sup>22</sup>.

On the individual level, by mid 1920, most liberals and social reformers had been thoroughly intimidated. But the more lasting significance of the Red Scare (and the World War I repression) was its devastation of all the organizations that had been build up so laboriously for twenty years which were capable of providing leadership for any radical political or labor movement-the Socialist Party of America, the Industrial Workers of the World, the Non Partisan League, the Communist Party, and the California Labor Party (Goldstein, 1978, p163).

While the Raids had not turned up the revolutionary conspiracy Palmer had promised; it did insure that it would be a full twenty years before America would see a group of people effectively organizing for another shot at revolution.

## **Assassinations**

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<sup>22</sup> **The War on Our Freedoms.** Edited by Richard C. Leone and Greg Anrig. pp.30-31

**Every single revolutionary leader that was successful in their organizing has been put in jail, had to flee the country, or was killed<sup>23</sup>. From Haywood to Debs, from Luther to X, and from Newton to Davis; to successfully call for change (and have people listen) puts people at risk in way comparable to no other profession. Radicals and people of color are more likely to die. A primary directive of COINTELPRO directed against the Black liberation movement was to “prevent the rise of a Black messiah”. When legal means to discredit are exhausted, when the counter intelligence programs described above have failed, our government resorts to murder.**

**We can’t prove that Martin Luther King was assassinated by the Federal Government, but it is not hard for this writer to believe that his government was capable of it. The FBI did, after all urge King to kill himself before they released recordings of his marital infidelities to his wife and the press.<sup>24</sup> We can however demonstrate that the FBI worked around the clock to exacerbate tensions between Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam (NoI) until the group ultimately ordered the execution of its most famous member.<sup>25</sup> We can prove that Fred Hampton, the leader of the Chicago Chapter of the BPP, was drugged by an FBI informant and gunned down in his bed on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1969 in a raid coordinated by the FBI and Chicago Police Department.<sup>26</sup> An epitaph a mile long lists the names of dead American revolutionaries. From the IWW to the Panthers, the state has**

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<sup>23</sup> **Political Repression in Modern America.** By: Robert Goldstein.

<sup>24</sup> FBI memo reprinted in **Cointelpro Papers.** By: Ward Churchill. p.99

<sup>25</sup> FBI memo reprinted in **Cointelpro Papers.** By: Ward Churchill. p.102

<sup>26</sup> **Agents of Repression.** By: Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall pp.64-77

manipulated others, be they police, mobs, or other political organizations into committing the ultimate form of repression--death.

## **Who: The Targets of Repression**

In demonstrating the effectiveness of the American internal security apparatus we must look beyond the tactics employed and examine the human costs imposed upon the targets. There is a history in this country of radicalism and that history is one of toil and tragedy. To protect the “great American democracy” our government has never ceased in attempting to silence the organized dissident. In singular form the individual radical is peculiarity to be trivialized and tolerated; in plurality, the act of creating an adversarial organization is anathema to our government’s conceptions of “liberty.” In the eyes of the Federal government the act of getting organized is the transformation from freedom of speech to treason.

By looking at three historical examples of government repression this writer seeks to demonstrate the application of political repression in America. Looking at the radical labor movement of the early 1900’s, I will profile the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Looking at the Old Left period of the 1930’s-1950’s, I will profile Communist Party USA (CPUSA). Looking at the Black Power Movement of the 1960’s and early 1970’s, I will examine the Black Panther Party (BPP). Through these three examples one can see the previous section’s tactics applied.

### **The Industrial Workers of the World**

In June of 1905 a group of 200 socialists, union organizers, and anarchists from across the United States met in Chicago to found the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). What would become America’s most radical union, and arguably the

**greatest threat to the power elite of American in its entire history thus so far, was begun with the following statement:**

**The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, and abolish the wage system (IWW Preamble).**

**At the time of its creation, class struggle in America had reached an alarming peak.**

**The United States had far surpassed its Western European counterparts as an industrial power and “robber barons” like J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie had amassed incredible wealth via seemingly unbreakable trusts. The IWW advocated the creation of “One Big Union” combining syndicalist philosophy and revolutionary ideals. Their objective was not simply to gain better conditions for workers, but to create an organization that could eventually carry out a general strike capable of bringing American capitalist system to its knees.**

**The IWW’s greatest strength was its willingness to organize unskilled labor<sup>27</sup> regardless of sex, race, or national origin. While the American Federation of Labor (AF of L) admitted only skilled workers and was increasingly conservative in its approach and politics; the IWW challenged the very system itself. Its organizers urged workers to engage in direct action at the point of production and viewed every strike as a preparation for class warfare. In colorful blend of revolutionary rhetoric and practical industrial organizing, the IWW quickly became the natural leader of the radical labor movement developing in America.**

**The IWW first began to gain significant national publicity during the “free speech” fights of 1909-13, and with its tremendous victory in the Lawrence Strike of 1912 it became an object of hostility and fear unparalleled in American history since the Chicago anarchists of the Haymarket period. The general impression created of the IWW in the American press at the time and by many American**

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<sup>27</sup> **Solidarity Forever.** By: Bird, Georgakas, & Shaffer. pp.31-36

historians since is that the organization consisted of a band of reckless and dangerous men who spent their time destroying machinery, burning wheat fields and constantly preaching the most extreme forms of violence (Goldstein, 1978, p.82).

IWW organizers pioneered a variety of successful organizing tactics demonstrating imagination and relentlessness. In their free speech fights they engaged in a remarkable show of jail solidarity; flooding the prisons with members completely overwhelming the ability of the local law enforcement to process those arrested. Their slogan, “we’re in here for you, be out there for us” illustrated the IWW willingness to support their fellow workers. In the free speech battles that resulted from arrested IWW orators’ attempts to hold street demonstrations and recruit new members; the IWW repeatedly forced local ordinances banning freedom of speech off the books.<sup>28</sup> Between 1907 and 1916 the IWW held about thirty major free speech fights of up to six months duration, mostly in the Far West--all of them centered on the IWW’s right to recruit members at street meeting (Renshaw, 1967, pg.87). These battles brought the IWW national infamy and esteem. Their ability to agitate was crucial in allowing them to spread the word of industrial unionism and bring attention to the atrocious working conditions they organized against.

In 1912 the IWW led an effort to organize textile employees in Lawrence, Massachusetts which led to a strike of over 20,000 workers. Utilizing the method of multilingual strike councils the IWW enabled each of the numerous nationalities represented among the workers to democratically participate in strike management and decision making. Despite numerous physical confrontations between the

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<sup>28</sup> **The Wobblies.** By: Patrick Renshaw. pp.84-90

strikers, the death of several strikers, the framing of two key IWW organizers,<sup>29</sup> and the declaration of martial law, the IWW forced the American Woolen Company to settle.<sup>30</sup> In 1913 the IWW began a drive to organize migrant workers using the job delegate system of mobile agitators. This resulted in the creation of the powerful Agricultural Workers Organization 400 in 1915 which until the IWW schism in 1924 would account for a third of the IWW's total dues paying membership. With ingenuity and audacity the IWW organized hundreds of strikes and built locals in every industry imaginable. At their height in 1917 they had close to 100,000 members affiliated in one degree or another. Their victories and failures, trials and tribulations are too numerous to recount here. Suffice it to say that by 1912, President Taft had begun a federal investigation of their organization urging his Attorney General to find evidence of their "violent prone nature" and "organizational illegality."<sup>31</sup>

The IWW was attacked everywhere it reared its head. When local ordinances could not keep them from agitating, law enforcement brutalized and murdered strikers and set up key IWW organizers to be framed. Infiltrators were sent to infiltrate locals and instigate violence to discredit the organization. It seemed as though the IWW was everywhere. As the group made newspaper headlines across the country, the Federal government's Bureau of Investigation quietly began looking for ways to destroy America's most radical union.

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<sup>29</sup> Arturo Giovannitti and Joe Ettor were key organizers in the Lawrence strike who were put on trial for murder and eventually released.

<sup>30</sup> **Solidarity Forever.** By: Bird, Georgakas, & Shaffer. pp.56-58

<sup>31</sup> **Political Repression in America.** By: Robert Goldstein. p.89

**The IWW was under assault from its inception. Harassment arrests under a variety of local anti-IWW laws were unceasing.<sup>32</sup> Leaders like Joe Hill were framed for murder and executed.<sup>33</sup> Organizers were deported in masse.<sup>34</sup> Arrested organizers were handed over to mobs to be lynched.<sup>35</sup> Yet, despite all this persecution the IWW continued to grow. World War I gave the Federal Government the excuse it needed to crush the One Big Union.**

**As long as the IWW had floundered, its radicalism had been somewhat tolerable, and resistance to it had centered on local private enterprise. When the IWW began to prevail in some industries at a time when the war economy demanded a steady supply of basic raw materials and compliant labor, beleaguered employers called for Federal Intervention. They understood that only a national campaign could root out a decentralized organization like the IWW and that patriotic fervor could be used to facilitate their task (Bird, 1985, pg.11).**

**Interestingly enough, the IWW was by no means the most vocal of the leftist organizations in opposing the war. Unlike the Socialist Workers Party (by far the most anti-war of any organization of its time), the IWW remained neutral on the subject with few of its national leadership calling to halt the draft or disrupt war industries in the name of peace. While IWW rhetoric may have been directed against imperialistic ventures, the war was the pretext by which all class conflict in the United States was to be brought to a halt. The Federal raids which began on September 7, 1917 proceeded to round up all of the IWW leadership indicting them for conspiracy to resist the war effort under the Espionage Act of 1917. First, second, and third tier leadership were targeted in raids that continued throughout the war. In 1918 a huge trial in Chicago of 101 IWW leaders took place. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary a jury found every defendant guilty**

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<sup>32</sup> **Solidarity Forever.** By: Bird, Georgakas, & Shaffer. pg. 191

<sup>33</sup> **Political Repression in Modern America.** By: Robert Goldstein. p. 96

<sup>34</sup> See case of Bisbee Deportation pp. 187-88 in **The Wobblies.** By: Patrick Renshaw.

<sup>35</sup> See case of Wesley Everest pp.163-165 in **The Wobblies.** By: Patrick Renshaw.

sentencing every key national leader of the IWW to prison terms of ten to twenty years. By 1919 raids had netted virtually every person that had any connection to IWW leadership active or not. The Espionage Act of 1917, the Sedition Act of 1918, and numerous local criminal syndicalist laws made IWW membership in itself a crime. By 1919 the organization had been decimated in what was the largest concerted effort at that time to neutralize a group of organized dissidents. While the IWW would continue to exist in one form or another its ability to carry out meaningful labor agitation was finished.

## **Communist Party USA**

As the era of radical labor came to an end the era of the Red Scare began. Over the course of what became known as the McCarthy era, thousands were subpoenaed before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) and questioned as to their supposed communist leanings. All dissent was considered the work of an invisible foreign enemy directed from Moscow or Beijing. No indigenous dissent escaped the government's call that all change was in fact under communist direction. In this environment of political paranoia and Cold War hysteria, the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) attempted to organize the American working class. What is remarkable about CPUSA is not so much that it constituted a serious threat to the Federal Government as did the IWW; but instead that was so thoroughly infiltrated, discredited, and harassed that it has in effect a symbol of American repression.

The Communist Party was founded in 1919 as a left-wing splinter of the Socialist Party of America. By the time the Palmer Raids ended, CPUSA had gone

from being an above ground political formation with upwards of 27,340 members to an underground network of 8,220.<sup>36</sup> When the General Intelligence Division (GID) was recast as the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1924, J. Edgar Hoover began a series of programs to “keep a lid” on the CPUSA in order to sabotage possible inroads into labor union organizing and cap national membership. This did not stop the CPUSA from reaching upwards of 40,000 members during the Great Depression. Despite legislative attempts to thwart CPUSA organizing such as the 1940 Smith Act,<sup>37</sup> the Internal Security Act of 1950,<sup>38</sup> and 1954 Communist Control Act,<sup>39</sup> the CP continued to operate through front groups and made marginal political gains. Rhetorically the CP proclaimed itself a revolutionary party but for all intents and purposes it lacked the militancy of the IWW choosing to engage almost exclusively in propaganda work and legal labor organizing.

The Communist Party came under two major waves of repression, one based on law and one accomplished through counter intelligence. Congressionally, law after law was passed to isolate not only avowed communists, but those that might potentially sympathize with them.

A year and a half after World War II ended, President Truman issued Executive Order 9835, which initiated a comprehensive Federal Employees Loyalty Program. The Attorney General compiled a list of 275 “subversive” organizations; over 20,000,000 citizens were screened before the security program ran its course. Not one of the millions screened under this program was indicted for a crime. People accused of disloyalty were not given the right to hear the specific charges made against them by anonymous informers (Linfield, 1990, pgs.83-84).

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<sup>36</sup> **Political Repression in Modern America.** By: Robert Goldstein

<sup>37</sup> The Smith Act of 1940 was modeled after New York’s Criminal Anarchy Act of 1902 making it a crime to be a member of any group that sought the overthrow of the government by force. Of course, the Smith Act was based on supposed intention not necessarily deed.

<sup>38</sup> The Internal Security Act of 1950 granted the authority to deport, denaturalize, and exclude permanently “subversive aliens. As has been mentioned earlier in the paper; the Internal Security Camp also allocated resources for the creation of six internment camps for emergency detention of radicals.

<sup>39</sup> Also known as the McCarran Act, this piece of legislation among other things required all communist parties, publications, and front groups to register themselves as “subversive” in order to restrict their travel, right to dues process, and ability to organize except under tight subversion.

People dragged before loyalty boards or HUAC had their lives ruined, many ostracized from their communities with such accusations costing them their jobs. Leftist ideas of any kind were suspect. Questions posed to alleged communists ranged from reading Upton Sinclair to having sympathy for the under-privileged.<sup>40</sup> In what became the largest political witch hunt since the time of the IWW, informers were treated as heroes and the whole nation was in desperate fear of communist subversion.

As Congress dragged citizen after citizen before HUAC, the FBI after World War II was given free reign to hunt communists on their own. Between March 1947 and December 1952, the FBI conducted 6.6 million “security investigations” of peaceful citizens—more than 3,000 a day (Linfield, 1990, p.101). What the witch hunt did not accomplish in painting the CPUSA as agents of foreign subversion, the counter intelligence program did. While agents had infiltrated the CP since its creation, by 1956 J. Edgar Hoover began a specific program to destroy what was left of the party itself. On May 8, 1958, Hoover released the following memo to his field offices:

To counteract a resurgence of Communist Party influence in the United States, we have a program designed to intensify confusion and dissatisfaction among its members. During the past few years, the program has been most effective. Selective informants were briefed and trained to raise controversial issues within the Party. In the process, they may be able to advance themselves to high positions. The Internal Revenue Service was furnished the names of and addresses of Party functionaries...based on this information, investigations have been instituted in 262 possible income tax evasion cases. Anticomunist literature and simulated Party documents were mailed anonymously to carefully chosen members (FBI memo reprinted in Cointelpro Papers).

The objective of the counter intelligence program launched in 1956 was to create factionalism and infighting while at the same time targeting key members for

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<sup>40</sup> Freedom Under Fire. By: Michael Linfield. p.84

tax evasion proceedings that would force them to go to court. Anonymous letters were sent to Party members, false information was leaked to the press, meetings were disrupted, and the IRS targeted key party members for tax evasion. During the Eisenhower years the CP was virtually destroyed by infighting and agent provocateurs reduced by 1959 to a tiny sect of several thousand members; in which one out of every six members was believed to be an informant.<sup>41</sup> The CP operation became “in some respects a model for similar operations began against the Socialist Workers Party in 1961, “white hate groups” in 1964, “black nationalists” in 1967, and the “New Left” in 1968 (Goldstein, 1978, p.407).

In 1965 the FBI created a front group called “The Committee for Expansion of Socialist Thought in America” to further denounce the remnants of the shattered Party from the “Marxist right.” By 1966 a Cointelpro entitled “Operation Hoodwink” was unsuccessfully launched to provoke violence between the mafia and the CP<sup>42</sup>. By this time the CP had been reduced from 80,000 members in 1949 to less than 2,800 by 1966. Of these only half were active. The Justice Department later admitted in 1975 that during this time period a total of 1,388 separate COINTELPRO actions were carried out against CPUSA<sup>43</sup>. What was once the leading communist organization in the United States had been reduced to a pathetic shell split by ideological infighting and FBI intrigue.

## **Black Panther Party**

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<sup>41</sup> **Freedom Under Fire.** By: Michael Linfield. pg.136

<sup>42</sup> See FBI memo reprinted in **Cointelpro Papers** pg. 42

<sup>43</sup> **Cointelpro Papers.** By: Ward Churchill. pp.47-48

**In 1966 Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP) in Oakland California. A combination of Black Power and Maoism, taking its methodology from Robert Williams’s Deacons for Defense, the BPP by 1968 had chapters in every major American city focusing on community survival and armed self defense. There was something profoundly unnerving about the Panthers. While their numbers<sup>44</sup> would never come close to those of the IWW or CPUSA; by 1968 J. Edgar Hoover declared them “the single greatest threat to the internal security of the United States.”**

**The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was the logical culmination of the Civil Rights Movement’s failure to concretely build in the urban ghettos of the North. Unlike most other Black Power formations of their time the BPP encouraged partnership with White radical organizations and actively armed its members. Yet, it was not the Panther’s Maoist ideology, massive arsenal of weapons, or ability to organize gang youth into political revolutionaries that so frightened Hoover. It was their breakfast programs for children. Across the country Panther chapters operated bootstrap operations giving out food, providing free education, running clinics, and testing for sickle cell anemia. These community programs exposed the contradictions inherent in the American capitalist society where an elite few had billions while many in the black community didn’t even have enough to eat.**

**The BPP had a knack for sensationalism. Everywhere they went they made headlines. Their numerous stand-offs and shoot-outs with police across the country; their armed entry into the California State Capital building in Sacramento in 1967;**

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<sup>44</sup> Approximately 2,000 members as compared to the IWW’s 100,000 of the CPUSA’s 80,000.

**Huey Newton's murder of Officer John Frey, the ensuing trial and the Free Huey Campaign that followed; ex-convict Eldridge Cleaver's knack for bizarre and provocative antics; and men and women in black leather jackets and berets marching in parks and doing military drills were all events that attracted major media attention. The Panthers' call of "Power to People" inspired millions, both the in US and abroad, to stand up and organize against racism, the Vietnam War, and capitalist system itself. And it certainly made them a target.**

**The Panthers became the single greatest target of government repression in the 1960's.**

**Tactics directed against the Panthers included using informers and anonymous letters and phone calls to falsely suggest that certain Panthers were police informers, even though the FBI believed that Panthers had murdered members that it suspected of being informers...(the) FBI office placed anonymous calls to Panther leaders naming other members as informants, reinforced by rumors spread by an FBI informant in the BPP...Other FBI tactics included attempting to get landlords to oust Panther members and offices from their building; attempting to break up the marriages of Panthers; trying to foster discord between the Panthers and supporting groups, especially SDS; targeting for COINTELPRO actions persons who spoke in support of or gave money to the Panthers; and disseminating derogatory information to the press (Goldstein, 1978, p.525).**

**If the IWW repression was somewhat haphazard, and the CPUSA repression was a test run; the repression of the BPP was something not unlike an art form.**

**Everything that could have been used to destroy and discredit the group was utilized. By the end of 1969 all of the Panther leadership was in jail (Seale and Newton), exile (Cleaver), or dead (Hampton, Clarke, Huggins, Carter, and Hutton).**

**Raids and roundups of Panthers took place all over the country in 1968 and 1969. Offices were destroyed and shoot-outs between Panthers and police took numerous lives. In a 1968 shoot-out two days after the assassination of Martin Luther King, an unarmed Bobby Hutton, the Panther Finance Minister, was shot to death after turning himself over to the police. The SNCC/Panther merger was**

**sabotaged; and later that year Bobby Seale was arrested and tried with seven other leading New Leftists at the famous Democratic National Convention Conspiracy trial.**

**In 1969 three famous Panther leaders: Hampton, Huggins, and Carter were all killed as a result of COINTELPRO actions. Hampton was drugged by a police infiltrator named William O'Neal, and shot while asleep in his bed by the Chicago Police Department. The FBI had supplied the police with the exact schematics of the Panther House where Hampton slept.<sup>45</sup> In Los Angeles the FBI Field Office sent numerous inflammatory cartoons to the United Slaves (US) Organization and the LA Chapter of the Panthers and used FBI informants to provoke violent confrontations between the two groups. In a shoot-out at the UCLA Campus, US gunmen killed Panther leaders Jon Huggins and Bunchy Carter. The FBI took credit for this confrontation attributing it to their program.<sup>46</sup>**

**In 1970 the FBI initiated a plan to provoke a violent split in the BPP. By 1970 the primary leadership had been effectively neutralized with Bobby Seale (Chairman) and Huey Newton (Minister of Defense) in prison and Eldridge Cleaver (Minister of Information) in exile in Algeria. Cleaver had assumed leadership of the Party in 1967 when Newton was imprisoned after a shoot out with Oakland Police Officer John Frey. By 1971 Newton's political analysis had developed toward community self sufficiency<sup>47</sup> while Cleaver had fully embraced armed insurrection.**

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<sup>45</sup> **A People's History of the United States.** By: Howard Zinn. p.463

<sup>46</sup> **The Black Panther Party: State Repression and Political Prisoners.** By: Winston Grady-Willis p.370

<sup>47</sup> The ideology Huey P. Newton developed was called "revolutionary intercommunalism" and its basic analysis was that capitalism had evolved to the point where there were no longer really nations, but instead communities of either oppressed or oppressors. Newton argued that communities of the oppressed were inter-connected, internal colonies that could achieve liberation through self sufficiency.

The FBI fueled this ideological clash by generating nearly a hundred letters written to either leader allegedly from disgruntled Party members complaining of the other leader's incompetence and or self destructive political direction<sup>48</sup>. With an Ocean between them, each was convinced that allowing the other to remain would spell the destruction of the Party. As a result of this COINTELPRO Newton and Cleaver officially denounced each other splitting the Party to Eastern and Western branches effectively neutralizing either's ability to organize as a national political formation. The FBI was unconcerned with the Panther fratricide that erupted because of this program which resulting in deaths of over six panthers<sup>49</sup>.

By 1972 the Panthers ceased to exist as a national political formation when Huey Newton called all "loyal" Panthers back to Oakland to consolidate his power. The Cleaver faction went underground to form the Black Liberation Army, and everyone else who wasn't dead or in jail just plain walked. In arguably the most successful series of the FBI counter intelligence programs, by 1977 the BPP was no more.

## **Now: The Repackaging of Repression**

It is easy to demonize the radical. It is slightly harder to believe that the average citizen, non-affiliated and unorganized is also a target. Until the Soviet Union fell in 1991 the specter of communism was used to justify some of the most totalitarian abuses in our supposed bastion of western democracy. The IWW, the CPUSA, and Black Panther Party represented three distinct eras of social and

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. Senate Select Committee to Study Government Operations, *The FBI's Covert Program to Destroy the Black Panther Party*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1976 pp.200-207

<sup>49</sup> **The Black Panther Party: State Repression and Political Prisoner.** By: Winston Grady-Willis. pp.375-376

political upheaval and each demonstrated the Federal government's willingness to silence those that oppose it. The Internal Security Apparatus monitors all those that call for change, and does away with those that organize effectively for it. Thus far we have looked at how they do it and who they have done it to, but we are left with the most relevant question-- how do they do it now? We have to look at political repression through the lens of the War on Terror. We have to put it context of the current political climate. And we must analyze who are its modern targets.

## **The War on Terror**

Like the War on Communism, the War on Terror relies on a faceless enemy lurking around every corner to keep the American people transfixed in a state of constant fear. Every national crisis is somehow connected to it and every domestic plight remains secondary to the greater preventive mission. Nationalism is fervent and citizens rally around the flag consumed with hate for the external enemy and the suspicious alien population. Like the Red Scare era, all dissent is considered aid to the enemy and all protest becomes somehow un-American. Our President speaks in the rhetoric of liberty creating an "us versus them" culture where the world is painted black and white and our opponents are "evil". War is continuous. The working class and the poor are the first to bleed for the very system that keeps their class oppressed. The parallels are uncanny. And no one is paying attention.

The press says that "everything has changed." They say that 9-11 has somehow made this country a different place. The watchword of this new era is that "the constitution is not a suicide pact." Like the fight against the communists, the enemy is abstract. The villain of the day is rhetorically cast as the great proponent

**of the adversarial ideology (or in today's case, a tactic). In the end everything is exactly as it was before the attack; the name of our enemy may change, but the reason does not. It does not matter whether our fight is against communism or terror; the end result of either battle is always the consolidation of state power and the restriction of civil liberties.**

**Just as the IWW, CPSUA, and BPP were all depicted as tools of foreign powers, the targets of today's struggle will be painted by government and press as sympathetic to terrorism. However, while communism was vilified in the form of rogue states; those that engage in terrorism are not representing a country. There is no country of Al Qaeda. What is ultimately the most frightening about the War on Terror is that it is impossible to decide when it might end.**

**In this climate things like the USA PATRIOT ACT, Total Information Awareness, Operation Tips, and Bureau of Homeland Security seem like "logical" solutions toward stopping the terrorist threat. However, these repressive laws, policies, and intuitions were not invented after 9-11; they were envisioned long before hand and 9-11 gave the Federal government an excuse to institute them.**

**Under the USA PATRIOT ACT all intrusions on our civil liberties that have been in the past been labeled as abuses are now perfectly legal. Our phones can be tapped indefinitely; our emails can be read using Carnivore; our grades and medical records can be accessed; and the books we take out of the library can be used to presume our guilt. The right to "be left alone" has been come to an end.<sup>50</sup> The USA PATRIOT ACT eliminates due process. Those accused of terrorist acts can be held without being charged with an actual crime, held without access to a lawyer,**

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<sup>50</sup> **Under a Watchful Eye: Incursions on Personal Privacy.** By: Kathleen Sullivan p.128-139

and can be tried by military tribunals.<sup>51</sup> Like the Internal Security Act of 1950, the USA PATRIOT ACT grants the internal security apparatus of the state broad powers casting a wide net on terrorist and citizen alike.

The real question posed however is two-fold. Will these increased powers actually stop terrorism; and can we trust a bureaucratic, centralized government not to abuse this power? First, more does not necessarily mean better. The definition of a terrorist act runs the gamut from those that plan to blow up buildings to those that disrupt economic activity. As the British discovered with their country-wide installation of CCTV cameras; crime did not go down and IRA terrorism did not decrease.<sup>52</sup> There is also some doubt that one can even use military might to fight terrorism as the Palestinian Intifada seems to demonstrate. Even in a tiny country the size of Israel with some of the most sophisticated technology in the world, terrorist activity continues. Keeping a watchful eye on our citizens doesn't necessarily mean that terrorist attacks will cease.

Second, simply looking at history does not give this writer faith that our government will not use these new powers for its own political ends. The object of the state tends to be its own self-perpetuation. The more power the citizen entrusts to its government, the greater likelihood there exists for abuse. As Christian Parenti describes:

Let's face it: America is full of borderline, petty despots. They gravitate toward work as police officers, security guards, or supervisory bureaucrats like foremen, welfare case workers, and school principals. They have authoritarian personality structures straight from the pages of Marcuse. They thrive on sadomasochistic thrills provided by rules, rule breaking, and disciplinary action. They merge their own emotional agendas with the society's larger need for order and discipline along class, race, and gender lines. The new surveillance brings out the worst in this type, rewarding and

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<sup>51</sup> **The Least Worst Place: Life in Guantanamo.** By: Joseph Lelyveld pp.100-127.

<sup>52</sup> **The Soft Cage.** By: Christian Parenti pg. 116

nurturing their will to both submit and dominate just as it binds these local overseers to the larger structure of oppression (Parenti, 2003, p.120).

## **The Political Climate**

**The key difference between the repression of today and that of earlier generations is the relative strength of radical political formations. A person could read about communism and say social equality sounded like a good thing. No one is ideologically a terrorist. There is not a terrorist movement because terrorism is a tactic. Another chief difference is that communism was a movement that many believed would bring about a better and just society. Terrorism is a desperate form of warfare that truly is only embraced by a radical minority.**

**There is no parallel today in America to the IWW, the CPUSA, or the Black Panthers. While political formations exist bearing their names, there is nowhere near the amount of public support or interest in either their political programs or their goals. The left in America has been dead for roughly 30 years. This largely has to do with the lack of a unifying ideology. While the political movements we have examined were all influenced by Marxism; today's radicals exist in a sort of vacuum in many ways founded on political nihilism. While the movements we have examined had massive popular support, the left of today is cut off from any real community base. Another serious factor is that today's movement gravitates toward issue-based organizing often ignoring the broader holistic problem of the capitalist system itself. The modern left also lacks leadership and vision. Therefore, the job of repression is made easier. Rather than have to deal with hundreds of organizations mobilizing tens of thousands toward a complete revolution of the society, the FBI**

need only mark, track, and neutralize extremists emerging from the issue specific causes the left is now founded on.

## **Modern Targets of Political Repression**

It is virtually impossible to determine the extent to which the War on Terror has impacted the ability of the left to organize. With surveillance technology at the level that it is now and with the USA PATRIOT ACT legally enabling political repression to the extent that it does, it is not hard to imagine. We do, however, have proof that the War on Terror, like the war on communism, has become a pretext for clamping down on dissident individuals and organizations. In conclusion this writer would like to briefly examine the cases of Sherman Austin and the Organization.

Sherman Austin was the creator of Raise the Fist, an anarchist website which advocated revolution in America. Sherman's website was an incredibly popular tool for radicals to learn of each others organizing efforts, spread information, and link up to engage in political action. While the website was indeed militant, no where on it was the violent overthrow of the government advocated. In 2001 Sherman Austin had his house raided by the FBI, his computers seized, and his site was shut down. Someone had posted a link to a site where bomb making instructions were to be found.

When the case finally went to trial Sherman was sentenced to a year in prison and was the first American activist sentenced under the USA PATRIOT ACT. Most of the information used to convict him was obtained in apparent violation of 4<sup>th</sup> amendment rights, but because of the link he was convicted for

**advocating terrorist activity. In reality Sherman Austin was made an example of to demonstrate to would-be radicals what the US government can do. After serving a year in prison Sherman was placed on a special probation that forbids him from associating with anyone that seeks to change the US government. Sherman Austin is an example of the PATRIOT ACT applied to individuals.**

**The Organization is a small revolutionary group that by the summer of 2004 numbered roughly thirty members. Known in the activist community for reckless engagement of the police at demonstrations and willingness to engage in arrest able political action, the Organization's chief strength was its ability to organize the politically disaffected communities across race and class lines. While the Organization's rhetoric and literature called for revolution in the US, the group was statedly non-violent.**

**One year prior to the Republican and Democratic National Conventions, the Organization put out a call for the activist community to form a coalition to shut down the RNC through civil disobedience. It then proceeded to engage in high profile "outreach actions" which included taking over the MTV show Total Request Live and shutting down the Time Square and Harlem recruiting centers. Shortly after the group began negotiating with other organizations to begin these actions an agent provocateur named "Brian" joined the Organization. Brian's three favorite activities while working with the Organization were feeding its members alcohol, taking their pictures, and urging them to violence. Right before the Democratic National Convention protests began the leaders of the Boston and New York Chapters had their homes visited by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force to inform**

**them not to attend the upcoming protests. The respective organizers were informed that their group was being closely watched.**

**In the week leading up the RNC the safe house the Organization was using as a hub for the protests was staked out by the NYPD; and wherever any of the group's members went they were followed by the police. A day before the protest the Daily News ran an article putting the Organization number four on a list of five organizations<sup>53</sup> that sought to violently disrupt the convention. The article entitled "Anarchy Inc." stated that the group sought to burn down army recruiting stations and shut down the Brooklyn Bridge. Throughout the convention its members were followed and video-taped. By the third day of the RNC protests, nearly all the member of the Organization had been arrested.**

**While these tactics in no way destroyed the Organization's ability to function, it did neutralize any attempt the group might have made to engage in civil disobedience during the convention. When the Convention was over "Brian" disappeared. What is important to realize is that money earmarked for fighting terrorism was spent keeping track of a comparatively tiny group of non-violent student activists.**

**These are just two of the numerous cases of harassment, infiltration, and counter intelligence utilized against the modern left. When compared to earlier periods of political protest this may seem largely insignificant, but the modern left is hardly the threat previous movements were to the power elite. It is hard for us to gauge the level to which the modern left is being watched and disrupted, but it is**

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<sup>53</sup> The others were "Stop Huntington Animal Cruelty", "The Anarchist Black Cross", the "International Solidarity Movement", and the "No Police State Coalition."

apparent that old techniques are being utilized and the FBI still has its finger on the pulse of the dissident movement.

## Conclusion

When the Citizen's Committee to Investigate the FBI broke into the FBI Field Office in Media, Pennsylvania and made off with several boxes of files, the Cointelpro Era was made public by the press. It had turned out that between 1956 and 1971 the government had conducted CIA-style counter intelligence programs against American dissidents of nearly every political shade. From groups as moderate as the NAACP to groups as passive as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; from militant black nationalists like the Panthers to anti-war New Leftists like the students in SDS, not only had the government kept surveillance on thousands of individuals and groups, it had actively worked to destroy them. With this revelation made public and the Church Committee established to conduct a Federal inquiry on FBI misconduct, it was hoped that the Cointelpro era had been merely an excess of the time. Just as the GID had been turned into the FBI after the excesses of the 1920's, it was claimed and reasoned that the FBI would no longer engage in such a violent trampling of American civil liberties.

Don't worry, *everything is okay now*. No matter when or in what circumstances the bureau has been called to account, its official spokespeople and unofficial apologists can be counted on to queue up and say whatever is necessary to pass along the idea that, while there may have been "problems" or "errors" in the past, these have been corrected. There has never been, in such re-countings, any current reason for worry or concern. All has *already* been set right. This theme prevailed in the 1920's, in wake of the Palmer Raids. It was maintained in the '30s, after the worst of Bureau's union busting had been completed. It continued in the '40s, when the true extent of the FBI's surveillance of the citizenry began to be apparent. During the '50s, it held up even as the Bureau's linkages to McCarthyism were exposed. In the '60s, those who would pose uncomfortable questions concerning FBI activities were, like Martin Luther King, dismissed as liars and "paranoids". Even during the 1970's, as the COINTELPRO revelations were ushered forth, the myth was used as the Bureau's major defense. And in the end, as always, it held sway. Meanwhile, through it all, the apparatus of political repression which the myth was created to shield continued, essentially unhindered by real public scrutiny of any sort, to be evolved, perfected, and applied (Churchill, 1990, p.10).

Americans have a very short attention span. Most American young people do not know what a Wobbly or a Panther even is. They don't remember the witch hunts against communism. They may vaguely think of Russia when they hear the term, but they do not have the faintest idea what class struggle even means. Revisionists official and unofficial have reworked the past so as to gloss over these violations of our liberties. We point to the thousands that marched against the war back in 2003 and we tell ourselves that this is what a democratic country looks like--where anarchists can be anarchists in small numbers and the word revolution is best associated with hair products and Chevrolets. The lesson we need to draw from this is that the government is very willing and able to destroy those that stand up and organize against it. It has done it in the past and is willing to do it in the present. The difference today is that the movement is far weaker and the state repressive abilities legally and technologically are far stronger. If a viable revolutionary movement does manage to arise out of the Anti-War movement or the Global Justice movement, it must remember the lessons learned and the battles fought by previous radicals. Every single time a group of people came close to fundamentally altering the structure of this society they have been crushed. Our only hope is that despite the government's ability to crush individual organizations and silence individual radicals; there is one thing that no amount of repression can destroy. It is something that is passed generation to generation that fuels every group of dissidents that have ever been. The only thing they cannot kill is the burning desire to be free.

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