
The Truth About the FBI

How the Bureau was set up as a national gestapo

by Marilyn James

Culminating in Abscam-Brilab, the last several decades of the Federal Bureau of Investigation have been an endless series of unconstitutional excesses. If allowed to continue on its present course of subverting the American law enforcement system, the Bureau, under the guidance of FBI Director William Webster, will most assuredly become a national gestapo.

Americans need only look at the 55-year sentence handed Teamster Union President Roy Williams on March 31 to see the results of the FBI's gestapo tactics already in use.

The trade union president's conviction came just one year after the FBI railroaded a 23-year veteran of the U.S. Senate from Congress. On April 5 the witchhunting FBI's collaborators in court denied an appeal to former Sen. Harrison Williams of New Jersey. He faces a three-year sentence and a \$50,000 fine. He was convicted of a "willingness" to commit a crime that the FBI's own stealthily made films show he did not commit.

The Teamster president was convicted of *attempting* to bribe a U.S. Senator. The FBI spent an admitted \$1 million to tap Roy Williams's phones and, as in Abscam, relied on the testimony of a convicted criminal to make its case. The jury admitted the testimony was "confusing and contradictory." The political purpose of the trial was made clear when Justice Department officials reportedly offered Williams probation if he would agree to step down as the union's president. For refusing he was slapped with the 55-year sentence.

From the FBI's inception, historical investigations show that the Bureau at the very least has been nothing more than a political police deployed to destroy constituency-based political machines through the weaponry of blackmail, extortion, entrapment, and perjury. At most the Bureau is the means of Anglo-Soviet penetration and manipulation against U.S. interests.

The Bureau, which, until a 1935 congressional act, was called the Bureau of Investigation (BOI), was conceived in secrecy, and in defiance of the expressed will of the Congress of the United States. Congress became the first victim of the Bureau's blackmail, and of its frame-up efforts, carried out at the direction of President Theodore Roosevelt and his Attorney General, Charles J. Bonaparte.

In 1907 Bonaparte went before the House Appropriations Committee to request the creation of a permanent detective force for the Department of Justice (DOJ). He used the still

smouldering land-frauds scandal in which the General Lands Division of the Interior Department and several congressional members were found to have been involved in speculative ventures under the Timber and Stone Act of 1878. To conduct what was later found to have been a highly irregular investigation into the initial allegations of land fraud, Bonaparte had to "borrow" special agents from the Postal Service and Treasury Department.

Bonaparte's request for his own detective force was not received well by the congressmen. The House moved to ban the existing DOJ practice of "borrowing" agents. This it accomplished by amending the Sundry Civil Appropriations Act passed May 27, 1908.

The backroom birth of the FBI

In an attempt to sidetrack the amendment, President Roosevelt wrote to House Speaker Joseph G. Cannon, warning that "the provision about the employment of the Secret Service men will work very great damage to the government in its endeavor to prevent and punish crime. There is no more foolish outcry than this against 'spies'; only criminals need fear our detectives."

The *New York Times* rallied to the cause of Roosevelt and Bonaparte. Its editorials protested that the amendment was the work of the land fraud swindlers and that the "Representatives have, however unwittingly, become the tools of thieves. The Senators are duly warned."

A typical Chicago newspaper article that summarized the opposing viewpoint during the debates was published in the Congressional Record: "There is no desire for a general detective service or national police organization in connection with the federal government. On the contrary, there is in Congress an utter abhorrence of such a scheme. . . ."

The Congress, believing the matter settled and Roosevelt-Bonaparte checkmated, adjourned June 1, 1908. On July 26, acting at the direction of the President, Bonaparte issued the order that gave birth to the BOI. Upon its return, Congress was confronted with the Roosevelt-Bonaparte fait accompli.

The congressional response was both hostile and immediate. Investigations were launched by both houses into all federal investigative and police agencies, particularly the new DOJ detective force. Bonaparte was forced to appear before the House and was subjected to intensive confronta-

tion and grilling by the angered members.

At the same time, rumors and accusations were circulating that congressmen were being placed under surveillance and their personal papers and mail were being tampered with. Roosevelt publicly denied the charges. But, he admitted that “sometimes through the accidental breaking of such [a mail] package the contents were exposed.” The President then proceeded to publish the correspondence of one of his principal foes, Sen. Benjamin R. Tilman of South Carolina. The object lesson was not lost on the opposition, nor has the Bureau ever forgotten its effectiveness.

Impatient with the persistent, however feeble, cries against the abuses of the new agency, Bonaparte appearing before the congress for the last time on the matter in December 1908, declared: “Anybody can shadow me as much as they please. They can watch my coming in and my going out. I do not care whether there is somebody standing at the corner and watching where I go or where I do not go.”

Kentucky Congressman J. Swagar Sherley’s response to Bonaparte, was reportedly met with resounding applause by the House: “In my reading of history, I recall no instance where a government perished because of the absence of a secret-service force, but many there are that perished as a result of the spy system. If Anglo-Saxon civilization stands for anything, it is for a government where the humblest of citizens is safeguarded against the secret activities of the executive of the government. . . .

“The Fourth Amendment declares: ‘The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated. . . .’

“The view of government that called it into existence is not lightly to be brushed aside.”

The first menace

Despite being created by the executive branch, the BOI had no jurisdiction. It spent its first two years fighting to stay in the game. It was obvious to all that, then as now, the Bureau’s only relationship to law enforcement—retrieving stolen vehicles aside—is as a pretext for gathering information to be used in its jihad against its assigned targets and perceived foes. The FBI has justified its long history of gross abuses by pointing in each case to a “menace”—a threat to citizens’ safety or national security so grave as to exonerate even the Bureau. For the fledgling Bureau, “white slavery” was its first “menace” and its long-sought justification for its ongoing existence.

Bonaparte appointed BOI chief Stanley W. Finch jumped at the opportunity to enforce the Mann Act of 1910. Finch immediately realized that, given the appropriate climate, the enforcement of the Mann Act could also be used to justify requests for more funding and manpower. This tactic was liberally applied by later FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover.

The Congress, of course, saw no need for the Bureau to “purify [interstate] commerce” or to pile up “recitals of filth

and iniquity. . . and then run to Congress for more legislation.” The Congress rightly understood that the federal government should not be burdened with “dig up the private scandals of men.”

Finch’s response can now be considered classic Bureausque, in terms of handling Congress and other agencies. Finch appeared before the congress in 1910 and reported the following chilling state of affairs:

“Unless a girl was actually confined in a room and guarded, there was no girl, regardless of her station in life, who was altogether safe. . . . There was need that every person be on his guard, because no one could tell when his daughter or his wife or his mother would be selected as a victim.” Hoover would later acknowledge, “The average case concerns usually one man and one woman or two men and two women,” —not the gangbusting crime hunt of legend.

Pimps and madams were used as “informants.” Local attorneys were hired to spy on local brothels and keep a census on patrons and prostitutes. These local relationships were used to place agent “handlers” across the nation and turn citizens into the “eyes and ears” of the Bureau. The BOI agents refrained from direct action, but on occasion would threaten to furnish local police with evidence of a local crime to keep the network under control. The Mann Act authorization was frequently used to launch inquests into the personal morality of individuals not connected to criminal activity in any way. Their employers and neighbors were questioned. In this manner the Bureau’s massive bank of raw dossier material on thousands of citizens was initiated.

Also feeding the files was information gathered by the BOI’s primitive, but effective, wiretaps. No one was immune. A former FBI agent later recalled that during the 1930s, “When we were doing investigations under the White Slave Act, there was one dependable way to find out information about call girls, by wiretapping. And we didn’t hesitate a bit.” The records bear out that little of the information electronically gathered ever surfaced as evidence in a court of law. Rather, it continued to feed the “raw” data dossiers.

But As the Mann Act hysteria and arrests died down, the Bureau had achieved three major objectives: it had become a major bureaucracy with offices across the country and an established multimillion-dollar budget; it had secured a network of informants throughout the country, often themselves criminals; and, most importantly, it had its files, with information on thousands of American citizens, information that—without being criminal material—could be used to intimidate and coerce.

The World War I rampage

No better instance of the BOI’s irresponsibility and thorough disregard for the rights and interests of the American citizenry can be found than in its activities during World War I.

In the years before and during that war, British intelligence directed a concerted propaganda and dirty tricks cam-

paign to secure U.S. entry into the war on Britain's side, using such influence channels as Walter Lippman's *New Republic*. Attacks were leveled against German-Americans and German culture—including the works of such Germans who influenced America as Beethoven and Schiller.

One effective vehicle for this drive was the American Defense Society. Formed with Teddy Roosevelt as its honorary president, and the ever-present Charles Bonaparte (grandnephew of Emperor Napoleon I) as honorary vice-president, the ADS opposed German business in America, employment of Germans, and teaching of the German language in schools.

When the FBI's predecessor, the Bureau of Investigations, was created, it was obvious to everyone that, then as now, its only relationship to law enforcement—aside from retrieving stolen vehicles—was to use crime-fighting as a pretext for gathering information to be used in its political war against assigned targets and perceived foes. The Bureau's activities during World War I exemplify its thorough disregard for the rights and interests of the American citizenry.

This line was quickly taken up by the remnants of turn-of-the-century nativist movements. By the time of the 1914 outbreak of hostilities, the ADS had fueled jingoism and xenophobia with self-appointed vigilante bands throughout the country. In March 1917, BOI chief A. Bruce Bielaski seized upon this impulse to complement the Bureau's network of informants with an army of thugs. Winning approval from Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory, Bielaski announced the formation of the American Protective League as a civilian adjunct of the Bureau open to able-bodied, patriotic American men who wanted "to help their country."

Within three months, the APL grew to 100,000 members,

and swelled at its height to 250,000 in chapters nationwide. For \$1, the recruits obtained a shiny badge describing the bearer as a member of the Secret Service Division. Later, when scandalized officials of the Treasury Department—of which the Secret Service was a branch—protested that the badges would invite confusion between the leisure-time gumshoes and the real Secret Service, the badges were changed to read "Auxiliary to the United States Department of Justice."

However, while the BOI busily built its vigilante army, it abdicated all serious responsibility for America's wartime security, just as today it has failed to curb drugs and terrorism. While the Bureau's assistance was eagerly sought by other U.S. agencies engaged in wartime intelligence and internal security, the Bureau refused to cooperate. The BOI attitude—now well known by federal state and local law enforcement agencies across the nation—was that if it could not call the shots and grab the headlines, why should it share the burdens of responsibility? Instead, the Bureau used its extralegal apparatus founded on the APL to harrass law-abiding citizens, especially union organizers and immigrants.

The draft raids

Any doubts as to this harsh assessment of the Bureau's actions during the World War I are quickly dispelled when the Draft Raids of 1918 are examined. When the nation was in war full mobilization, the Bureau was fixated on broadening its responsibilities and those of its junior G-men. Still, the energy of the APL was not to be squandered on the national defense, nor would their targets be limited to unionists and immigrants. Now with full arrest powers, the APL watchdogs would be unleashed against any American male hapless enough to be caught in the BOI's first great dragnet.

On Aug. 5, 1918, Secretary of War Newton Baker wrote Attorney General Gregory, claiming that the "known desertion" from the first and second draft calls totaled 308,489 persons. How this figure was arrived upon has never been determined, but it provided the needed pretext for the BOI-APL draft raids.

The hunts began in earnest on Sept. 15. Thousands of the Bureau's special "deputies" were poised to descend upon suspected draft dodgers in cities throughout the country. Anyone who could not produce his draft card or birth certificate when challenged by the BOI-APL agents was rounded up and detained.

In the New York metropolitan area alone, 75,000 suspected "slackers" were arrested and jailed, 30,000 of them on the first day. By the second day of the New York City raids, the press began reporting the wholesale release of men arrested, and accounts of the horrible conditions of imprisonment began to filter out. In the end, it was admitted that for every 200 men arrested, at least 199 were mistakes; better than 99 percent would later be found to have been men who were visiting an area from out of town.

It should be noted that there was a mercenary quality to

the APL's cooperation. U.S. intelligence historian William Corsan reported that "in return for a promise from the Justice Department that they would have sole jurisdiction over slackers, APL members pledged to forego" a promised \$50 bounty per slacker. "On April 15, however, Attorney Gregory authorized 'expense reimbursements' of up to \$50 per slacker . . . in effect renewing the bounty hunter incentive."

The BOI's blundering may have resembled a Keystone Cops farce, but it caused incalculable damage—not only to the victims and their families, but to the nation. First, by whipping up a baseless claim that hundreds of thousands of young men were slackers, the morale of the nation in warfare was at least temporarily compromised.

But even worse, the BOI's *Nacht und Nebel* tactics brought the U.S. close to a police state. Many legislators rushed to the Bureau's defense, taking the attitude expressed in the Senate: "Is there a Senator in this body who would not willingly stay in jail a week, if necessary, in order to have justice meted out to even one such criminal."

Fortunately, not all congressmen had lost sight of the Constitution. One congressman, said, "In the west we have another name for that sort of procedure, although we use it against animals and not men. We call it a round-up, and even then the mavericks are cut out." The combined pressure of outspoken congressional critics, the press editorializing

against "mob rule" and "terrorism," and an outraged citizenry led the Bureau to back down.

Toward the end of the war, reports historian Corsan, the APL had become "too large and had been created from too many separate operations for anyone to control it. . . . Orders from. . . Washington were routinely disobeyed or ignored. For the remainder of the war, various segments of the APL abused their position through illegal wiretaps, arrests, harassments, violations of personal records, and general disregard of civil liberties. The Justice Department lacked the money and manpower to control the APL, or to do without it."

Although the APL was no longer used in the raids, it was preserved as an informant network, feeding illegally secured information—through illegal wiretaps, interviews, surveillance and "black bag jobs"—into the BOI's raw data "black files."

Perhaps the best contemporary verdict on the incidents was given by Senator Bandagee, who remarked at the time of the BOI-APL alliance, "If this great government. . . is to hunt down lawbreakers, it cannot with any consistency assume to act the part of the lawbreaker itself." As Cointelpro, Abscam, Brilab and a host of other "investigations" show, the FBI never learned that lesson.

To be continued.

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