

CounterPunch

September 16-30, 2006

Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair

VOL. 13, NO. 16

HOW TO SPOT AN FBI PROVOCATEUR

BY JENNIFER VAN BERGEN

This was not the first time I was approached by a spook, or the first time I have pegged one for what he was, but it was the first time I was approached by a man claiming to be an Iraqi-American. In the rush that usually occurs after one speaks publicly with several people waiting to chat, I tried to listen politely as I offered “Nabil” my attention. After five minutes, though, I found myself feeling bad for getting a little annoyed at him. He carried on about loving America and loving Iraq and seemed to be trying to hint at something beyond this – making vague references to what the U.S. was doing to Iraq.

Finally I said to him, “Why are you telling me this?” After all, I speak publicly about these things, so why did he feel he needed to tell me what I was already speaking about?

Unfortunately, I rarely recall specifics of what people say to me after I make a speech – or perhaps “Nabil” was being purposefully vague, because it seemed to me that he really wasn’t saying anything. Yet, he wouldn’t let me go. I told him several times that I needed to leave, as I had a long drive ahead of me.

Several other people wanted to speak to me, yet “Nabil” continued to follow me around and try to talk to me – about what, I could not discern.

Finally, I said that if things continued as they were in this country, it would eventually collapse. This seemed to deeply satisfy him. He said that people here didn’t care what happened in Iraq. They would care only if it hap-

(FBI continued on page 2)

Why We See Conspiracies (That Don’t Exist) The Physics of 9/11 (Part Two)

BY MANUEL GARCIA, JR

Five years after the events of September 11, 2001, conspiracy theories abound as an anxious public seeks to find a comprehensible story for that day and more broadly for their socio-political world. People need reliable foundations upon which to base the many assumptions and conventions they use to carry on their lives.

Half a century ago, public anxiety about the danger of atomic energy and the terror of thermonuclear war exhibited itself in sightings of flying saucers, and a fad of monster movies. C. G. Jung wrote about flying saucer sightings as an instance of “mass psychosis”: a “psychological infection” that spreads among people who lack sufficient understanding to rationalize fearsome political forces and unstable social conditions (*Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth*, 1958). Jung was sensitive to any indication that another “psychological epidemic” might erupt, as Nazism did, among a population whose government possessed awesome military power. Mass psychosis is a myth held in common, which releases the population from the “normal” restraints of rationality and international social conventions, so they can pursue their mythical vision. The ignorance — and the fears that spring from it as prejudices — of the entranced population is “projected” onto “enemies” whose destruction is sought in the irrational effort to eliminate the actual problem of psychological tensions, (1)

A more entertaining expression of popular anxiety is the monster movie. “Godzilla,” “Rodan,” “Them,” “The Thing” and many others safely frightened viewers with stories of monsters whose

introductions into human society were caused by atomic bomb testing, or were accompanied by radioactivity. For most Americans the major source of any knowledge of physics is probably this type of motion picture.

The myths we construct to express our understanding of the realities we are immersed in are limited by the range of our knowledge. When the myths are meant to cover over fears about forces beyond our control, they can be conspiracy theories. Consider these pairings of fears and rationalizations:

- * fear of political power/conspiracy theories;
- * metaphysical fear (fear of death)/religion, a theological conspiracy ;
- * fear of personal inadequacy/racism,
- * fear of strange cultures/ultra-nationalism

Certainly, so long as there are more than two people on Earth, conspiracies will occur. But too often we invoke a conspiracy in constructing our story of the world because we lack specific information about the sciences, economics, history and other relevant fields of specialized knowledge. Experience has shown that if the evidence allows for several explanations to a given problem then the hypothesis with the fewest assumptions is most probably correct. This principle is called Occam’s Razor and is attributed to the 14th-century English logician and Franciscan friar William of Ockham (c. 1295–1349) (2).

The events of September 11, 2001, were unsettling for many Americans because their existing myths were shattered;

(9/11 continued on page 3)

pened to them.

I left him then and only the next morning did it occur to me that what “Nabil” was trying to do was to goad me into making a declaration of some unlawful or violent intent. That was when it occurred to me that “Nabil” was a spook: a paid informant or an undercover operative.

My first thought was that the FBI must not keep very good records or train their operatives very well because they had sent numerous others on the same or similar missions. They had to know that I am a believer in nonviolence and in the rule of law – not to mention the United States Constitution. Anyone reading my articles must now this.

But more importantly, “Nabil”’s activities reveal a government policy that post-9/11 activists have long suspected: the FBI is not only monitoring peace activists but is working to entrap such people. Several recent cases offer further proof of this conclusion: the outing of paid FBI informant, “Anna,” in the West Coast “Green Scare” cases and the arrests of the Miami “Liberty City Seven” on the basis of an affidavit by an FBI operative. In both of these cases, the FBI clearly did more than infiltrate and monitor groups that might pose a threat to national security. In each case, the FBI goaded, provoked, provided funding

and materials, and in the Liberty Seven case even demanded the individuals sign a loyalty oath to al-Qaeda. In fact, so desperate was the FBI to capture the Miami miscreants that arrests were made despite the fact that the seven had all already walked away from the alleged conspiracy, which makes the case almost a sure loser for the government.

The FBI has monitored me at least since I first spoke out (post-9/11) at a town meeting in front of a panel of Muslim community members and overt FBI agents. A few weeks after this, a markedly taciturn and unfriendly man showed up at a Unitarian Universalist meeting at which I was asked to speak about the PATRIOT Act. This was a congregation of mostly senior citizens

Why is the FBI wasting time trying to provoke peace activists into making some unlawful statement?

who all knew each other, yet nobody knew the man who spoke to no one, sat and listened intently to my every word, and then rapidly disappeared.

Spooks have infiltrated groups I’ve chaired. One handsome man of uncertain ethnic origins showed up at a start-up meeting for the Bill of Rights Defense Coalition in South Florida. I was facilitating the meeting and caught this young man staring at me in rapt fascination more than once. Why would he be so interested in me? My youthful beauty? Sorry. My charming and electric personality? Right.

Well, when he saw me see him looking at me, he stopped his appreciative stares. Although he said he was from Pittsburgh, another member of the group who hailed from there found he knew nothing about the city. He never returned to our group. But he did start showing up at another group allied with ours and he continued to monitor that group for quite a while, until he showed up all in new all-black duds (imitating the Black Block anarchists, we supposed) at the FTAA protests in Miami and thereafter was never seen again.

These are hallmarks of spook behavior. Mark them.

Another young man joined the volunteers for a large forum we planned on dissent since 9/11. He professed no interest in politics, was entirely ignorant of most of the issues which concerned us, and disappeared shortly before the event, claiming he had decided to relocate and start a new life. Meantime, he had access to lists of speakers and volunteers.

Both of these men had never been seen before and were never seen thereafter.

Why my government is spending my tax dollars to monitor me, an up-right, loyal citizen who believes more deeply in the Constitution and laws of this country than do most U.S. officials sworn to uphold them. I was a patriot before it was popular to say so. I will defend free speech more strongly and at greater personal risk than most members of the ACLU (and I have proof of that). (I actually take the time to answer hate mail!)

If there really are so many horrible, dangerous terrorists out to get us, why, then, is the FBI wasting time and resources trying to provoke me into making some unlawful statement? Why are our intelligence agencies infiltrating meetings of peace groups, like the one in Lake Worth, Florida, that NBC News discovered was attended by the DOD? I attended that meeting and was one of its organizers and presenters. The subject was counter-recruitment. Is that a national security threat? Am I?

The only threat I or these other peaceful persons could possibly pose would be to government officials themselves engaged in violent or unlawful activities, in lying to the public, in engaging in wars of aggression, in unlawfully detaining and torturing people, many of whom have been shown to be completely innocent, and in evading and intentionally violating federal laws.

Why is the FBI not banging on their doors? Why is not the DOJ bringing charges against them? CP

Jennifer Van Bergen is a freelance journalist with a law degree. Her book “The Twilight of Democracy: The Bush Plan for America” is available on Amazon. She can be reached at jvbxzyz@earthlink.net.

Editors
ALEXANDER COCKBURN
JEFFREY ST. CLAIR

Business
BECKY GRANT
DEVA WHEELER

Assistant Editor
ALEVTINA REA

Counselor
BEN SONNENBERG

Published twice monthly except
August, 22 issues a year

CounterPunch.
All rights reserved.
CounterPunch
PO Box 228
Petroia, CA 95558
1-800-840-3683 (phone)
counterpunch@counterpunch.org
www.counterpunch.org