



# DEATH SQUADS IN THE U.S.: CONFESSIONS OF A GOVERNMENT TERRORIST

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NATIVE AMERICA

**D**URING THE first half of the 1970s, the American Indian Movement came to the forefront of a drive to realize the rights of treaty-guaranteed national sovereignty on behalf of North America's indigenous peoples. For the government and major corporate interests of the United States, this liberatory challenge represented a considerable threat, given on the one hand that Indians possess clear legal and moral rights to the full exercise of self-determination and, on the other hand, that their reserved land base contains substantial quantities of critical mineral resources. Upwards of half of all known "domestic" U.S. uranium reserves lie within the boundaries of present-day reservations, as do as much as a quarter of the high grade low sulphur coal, a fifth of the oil and natural gas, and major deposits of copper and other metals. Loss of internal colonial control over these items would confront U.S. elites with significant strategic and economic problems.

Predictably, the government set out to liquidate AIM's political effectiveness as a means of maintaining and reinforcing its system of administering Indian Country. For a number of reasons, the crux of the conflict came to be situated on the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation, home of the Oglala Lakota people, in what is now the State of South Dakota. Throughout the mid-1970s, what amounted to low intensity warfare was conducted against AIM in this remote locale by the FBI and a surrogate organization calling itself Guardians of the Oglala Nation (GOONs). Although the Bureau and its various apologists have consistently and vociferously sought to quash talk of any direct FBI relationship to the GOONs, contending that the claims of critics in this regard are unsubstantiable and wildly irresponsible, a major chink in their armor of "plausible deniability" has now appeared.

This assumes the form of Duane Brewer, former second in command of



GOONs AT WOUNDED KNEE (1973)—KEVIN BARRY MCKIERNAN

the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) police on Pine Ridge. Along with his superior in the constabulary, Delmar Eastman, Brewer served as head of the GOONs and participated directly in many of the organization's most virulent anti-AIM actions. In an interview, televised in part by PBS as a segment of a documentary entitled *The Spirit of Crazy Horse*, Brewer does much to nail down exactly how the GOONs were utilized by the FBI within a broader campaign to destroy AIM and "Indian militancy" more generally. His statements should go far in establishing that the federal government has employed outright death

squads within the borders of the U.S. as an integral aspect of its programs of political and social repression.

## The Pine Ridge Bloodbath

**D**URING THE THREE year period running from mid-1973 through mid-1976, at least 69 members and supporters of AIM died violently on Pine Ridge. More than 300 others suffered serious physical assaults, including gunshot wounds and stabbings, beatings administered with baseball bats and tire irons, their homes torched as they slept, and their cars run off the road. Houses and other structures as-

sociated with "AIM sympathizers" were also occasionally blown up, as were at least two automobiles. In their book, *Wasi'chu: The Continuing Indian Wars*, researchers Bruce Johansen and Roberto Maestas have determined that the politically motivated death toll on Pine Ridge made the murder rate for the reservation 170 per 100,000 during the crucial period.

They go on to note that, "By comparison, Detroit, the reputed 'murder capital of the United States,' had a rate of 20.2 per 100,000 in 1974. The U.S. average rate was 9.7 per 100,000, with the average for large cities as follows...Chicago, 15.9; New York City, 16.3; Washington, DC, 13.4; Los Angeles, 12.9; Seattle, 5.6; and Boston, 5.6. An estimated 20,000 persons were murdered in the United States in 1974. In a nation of 200 million persons, a murder rate comparable with that of Pine Ridge between 1973 and 1976 would have left 340,000 persons dead for political reasons in one year; 1.32 million in three. A similar rate for a city of 500,000 would have produced 850 political murders in a year, 2,550 in three. For a metropolis of 5 million, the figures would have been 8,500 in one year and 25,500 in three."

Johansen and Maestas go on to point out that the figures they are concerned with do not include the "normal" high rate of fatalities experienced on Pine Ridge and most other American Indian reservations in the United States. Rather, the "murder rate of 170 per

100,000—almost nine times that of Detroit—takes into account only deaths caused by the *physical* repression of Indian resistance." Nowhere in North America has there been a comparable rate of homicide during the 20th century. To find counterparts one must turn to contexts of U.S.-sponsored political repression in the Third World: "The political murder rate at Pine Ridge... was almost equivalent to that in Chile during the three years after a military coup supported by the United States deposed and killed President Salvador Allende...Based on Chile's population of 10 million, the estimated fifty thousand persons killed in the three years of political repression in Chile at about the same time (1973-1976) roughly paralleled the murder rate at Pine Ridge."

Under provision of the Major Crimes Act (18 U.S.C.A.—1153), murder on an Indian reservation is an offense falling under the jurisdiction of federal authorities, specifically the FBI. Not one of the murders of AIM people on Pine Ridge during the mid-1970s was ever solved by the Bureau, despite the fact that in a number of instances the assailants involved were identified by one or more eyewitnesses. In many cases, investigations were never even opened. When queried with regard to this apparent inactivity on the part of his personnel, George O'Clock, Assistant Special Agent in Charge (ASAC) of the FBI's Rapid City Resident Agency (under which jurisdiction Pine Ridge

falls) until mid-1975, pleaded "lack of manpower." At the very moment he spoke, O'Clock was enjoying the highest ratio of agents to citizens over a sustained period ever undertaken by the Bureau.

While professing to be too short-handed to assign anyone to apprehend the killers, O'Clock managed to find ample resources to investigate the victims. Some 316,000 separate investigative file classifications were amassed by the Rapid City FBI office regarding AIM activities during the 1973 siege of Wounded Knee alone. This enormous expenditure of investigative manpower made possible the filing of 562 federal charges against various AIM members during the second half of 1973. The result, after two years of trials, was a paltry 15 convictions—far and away the lowest yield of guilty verdicts to investigative hours invested and charges filed in FBI history—many of them on such trivial matters as "interference with a postal inspector in performance of his lawful duty."

The method inherent to all this was perhaps best explained in 1974 by Colonel Volney Warner, a counterinsurgency warfare specialist and military advisor to the FBI on Pine Ridge, when he observed that convictions weren't the point. By simply causing charges, however spurious, to be filed, Warner said, the Bureau was able to keep "many of AIM's most militant leaders and followers under indictment, in jail or [with] warrants out for their arrest," while the movement's financial resources were necessarily diverted to legal defense efforts. By pursuing such tactics, Warner maintained, AIM could be effectively neutralized as a political force: "the government can win, even if no one goes to [prison]." Meanwhile, what the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was to categorize as "a reign of terror" on Pine Ridge continued, unimpeded by interference from the FBI. To the contrary, all indications are that the Bureau not only encouraged, but actively aided and abetted it.

### The GOONs And The FBI

A NUMBER OF studies have concluded that the GOONs were responsible for the bulk of AIM fatalities on Pine Ridge. In those cases in which witnesses identified the mur-



JACK COLER AND RON WILLIAMS—FBI PHOTO

derers of AIM people, the culprits were invariably known members of the reservation GOON squad. That the GOONS had a tangible relationship with the federal government has been clear all along, given that the group was formed in late 1972 through a Bureau of Indian Affairs grant of \$67,000 to then Pine Ridge Tribal President Dick Wilson for purposes of establishing a "Tribal Ranger Group." From 1973 onward, funding of GOON payrolls seems to have come from the Wilson administration's misappropriation of block granted federal highway improvement monies (the "Rangers" were officially redesignated as a "Highway Safety Program" for this purpose). Most federal housing funds allocated to Pine Ridge during the two terms of Wilson's presidency also appear to have been devoted to rewarding members of the GOON squad for services rendered. Many of Wilson's relatives, as well as perhaps one-third of the BIA police force on the reservation, were quickly rostered as GOONS.

The *quid pro quo* seems to have been that Wilson would receive quiet federal support for running Pine Ridge as a personal fiefdom in exchange for his cooperation in an illegal transfer of the Sheep Mountain Gunnery Range—approximately one-eighth of the total reservation area—from Indian to federal ownership. The GOONS were necessary to quell resistance among traditional grassroots Oglalas to any such transaction. When AIM moved in at the request of the traditionals, the ante went up appreciably, and the GOONS shifted from intimidation tactics to death squad activities, pursuing not only their original objective but the federal goal of eliminating AIM as a viable political force as well.

On the face of it, the FBI's main complicity in the ensuing bloodbath was to look the other way as the GOONS went about their grisly work. This would be bad enough. However, there is ample indication that the Bureau's role was much more substantial. For instance, when, during the siege of Wounded Knee, U.S. Marshals on the scene attempted to dismantle a GOON roadblock (where an FBI man was continuously posted, according to Brewer)—the occupants of which Chief U.S. Marshal Wayne Colburn had

decided were uncontrollable and a menace to his own men—FBI counter-intelligence specialist Richard G. Held flew to the site to "straighten things out." Held informed the chief marshal that "the highest authority" had instructed that the GOON position would remain in place. Similarly, when several GOONS were arrested by Colburn's deputies, the FBI again intervened, causing the men to be released prior to booking.

More importantly, toward the end of the Wounded Knee siege—when Colburn was actively disarming the GOONS after it appeared possible that one of his men had been seriously wounded by a round fired by the Wilsonites at AIM members—those who had been relieved of their hunting rifles and shotguns which, until then, had comprised their typical weaponry suddenly began to sport fully-automatic, government-issue M-16 assault rifles. Military M-14 sniper rifles and an abundance of ammunition also made appearances among the GOONS. At about the same time, the Wilsonites experienced a marked upgrade in the quality of their communications gear, somehow acquiring military PRC-25 radios and other paraphernalia which allowed them to monitor federal police frequencies. To top it off, it appeared as if the GOONS' operational intelligence had undergone considerable improvement during the 71 days of the siege.

It has been substantiated that the U.S. military turned over no ordnance or other equipment directly to non-federal agencies during the siege of Wounded Knee. It is also clear that the U.S. Marshals, for reasons of their own, were genuinely attempting to reduce rather than enhance GOON weaponry. In any event, Colburn withdrew his personnel as rapidly as possible from Pine Ridge in the aftermath of the siege, leaving the FBI as the only federal force on the reservation until mid-1975. And, in the months following Wounded Knee—the period when the Wilsonites' activities became truly lethal—both the quantity and the quality of GOON firepower increased steadily. All things considered, it is widely believed among reservation residents—and several researchers have also concluded, by process of elimination, if nothing else—that the FBI not

only equipped, but provided field intelligence and overall command and control to the death squads operating on Pine Ridge from 1973 through 1976.

Not that the FBI/GOON thesis hasn't had its critics. The Bureau's own professional publicists have of course adamantly denied any such linkage, while "scholarly experts" like Athan Theoharis and Alan Dershowitz have argued persistently and vociferously in the FBI's behalf that all suggestions of direct Bureau involvement in GOON operations are circumstantial at best, relying on "innuendo" and "guilt by association" rather than hard proof. Those who have spoken to the obvious cause and effect pattern involved have been publicly dubbed "left wing McCarthyites," and author Peter Matthiessen has been on the receiving end of a frivolous but massive and prolonged lawsuit, ostensibly for "defaming the character" of David Price, an agent heavily involved in the repression of AIM. Comes now a major GOON leader to upset the polemical apple cart.

## The Brewer Revelations

**A**LTHOUGH MUCH is not addressed in the interview with Duane Brewer, what is included is quite explicit. With regard to how he and his underlings got along with the agents on Pine Ridge, he says "we had a pretty good relationship." Intelligence with which to conduct his anti-AIM operations was no particular problem because "the agents would come to my house" and "we could get information from them" whenever it was needed.

As concerns weapons, he states categorically that the Bureau provided the Wilsonites with Thompson sub-machineguns and M-16s: "Some of it was given, like I told you, in a little [undecipherable] in Rapid City where they would give you some weapons and in another location where they would tell you to come up with this amount of money and we'll turn all this over to you." "All this" included more than automatic weapons. Brewer itemizes Bureau provision of "Plastic explosives, det[onation] cord, [and] fragmentation grenades" to the GOONS. "We had M-16s," he says, ".30 caliber carbines, a lot of...military stuff." The



DICK WILSON AND TWO GOONS—KEVIN MCKIERNAN

method of delivery is instructive: "[Y]ou'd go to their room with this big suitcase and [they'd] show you a bunch of weapons, grenades, det cord, blasting caps, whatever, and give you some. 'Here, take this.' A couple guys I know of walked around with blasting, you know, blasting caps in their shirt pockets."

At another point Brewer explains that as a reward for his engaging in a fist fight with AIM leader Russell Means, an agent rewarded him with "a .357 magnum, 6-inch barrel...[worth] 300 and some bucks, brand new. Real nice. I carried that a long time." He also addresses the fact that the FBI supplied the GOONS with "armor piercing ammunition" which was "real expensive," so the gunmen could hit their AIM targets even if "they took cover behind a wall or something." This led to a question concerning "the best way to hit a house," to which the GOON leader responded: "Best way to hit it is probably just to, like I say, have your lookouts and when there is nobody around and it's nice and quiet, have your, like I said, your assault car with all the weapons in it. And do it from the road. Don't cruise up to the house because then you got return fire. Then you got a war. Most of the points of shooting up a house is just to prove that we didn't approve of [AIM] gathering, you know, and we want them to know that we're on our toes and watching them."

Clarification of the FBI's "inability to come to grips" with the wave of violent death is offered. Take, for example, one of the more mysterious homicides involved in the entire reign of terror on Pine Ridge, that of Jeanette Bissonette—a not especially prominent activist—on the night of March 27, 1975. Careful observers have always suspected the victim was mistakenly killed by a GOON sniper who confused her car with a similar one driven by traditionalist leader and AIM supporter Ellen Moves Camp. For its part, and for reasons it has never explained, the Bureau insisted the killing "must" have been done by "militants" and expended an appreciable amount of energy attempting to tie AIM leader Leonard Peltier to the crime. However, as Brewer sums up the matter: "I know there was [innocent] people killed during that time, like that Bissonette lady down in, near Oglala. We didn't do that type of stuff [ordinarily]. That was, must have been, a freak accident. They must have mistaken her for somebody else. I think that's what happened. But, you know, the weapon we used to kill that woman was also a weapon [provided by the FBI]."

Brewer also provides an interesting interpretation of what the FBI described as the "justifiable homicide" of OSCRO leader Pedro Bissonette (brother of Jeanette) at a police roadblock near Pine Ridge village on the night of October 17, 1973. He suggests that the killer, BIA police officer "cum"

GOON Joe Clifford, may have been not so much politically motivated as he was enraged by the fact that Bissonette had been romantically involved with his sister. In either event, the killing added up to murder rather than the "self-defense" explanation officially registered by the Bureau.

Brewer is also less forthcoming about the circumstances of the firefight on the Jumping Bull property near the reservation village of Oglala on June 26, 1975, an event which resulted in the deaths of an Indian man, Joe Stuntz Killwright, and two FBI agents, and led to the double murder conviction of Leonard Peltier. Careful analysts have for some time concluded that the two slain agents, Ron Williams and Jack Coler, appear to have been "running point" in an elaborate plan to provoke an exchange of gunfire with a group of AIM members who would then be quickly overwhelmed by a large force of BIA SWAT personnel and GOONS prepositioned in the immediate area. The incident was then to be used as a pretext justifying the introduction of a truly massive FBI contingent to Pine Ridge for purposes of breaking the backs of AIM and the traditionalists once and for all. In the event, the plan went somewhat awry, the two agents were cut off from their reinforcements and killed and the AIM targets escaped.

The Bureau and its supporters have countered that such speculations are nonsensical, that no such plan existed. The presence of perhaps 150 GOONS and BIA police near the remote location in which the firefight occurred was sheer coincidence. AIM, FBI media liaison Tom Coll initially claimed, was the group with the plan, having "lured" the agents into a "carefully prepared ambush" where they were fired upon with "automatic weapons" from a "sophisticated bunker complex," "riddled with 15 to 20 bullets" apiece, "stripped" and—in one version—"scalped." After finally admitting that none of this was true, the Bureau then switched to the story that it maintains to this day: Coler and Williams were merely attempting to serve a "routine warrant" on a 19-year-old AIM member named Jimmy Eagle and ended up being brutally murdered for their trouble. Brewer tells a rather different story: "The thing that we was to do was

## A Review Reversal?

The spreading of mythology useful to the FBI is hardly restricted to conservative circles. The same sort of thing occurs in progressive publications, often more effectively, given that progressives are reputedly far more critical of the Bureau than are their more establishmentarian counterparts. For instance, on November 13, 1989, *The Nation* published a review essay entitled "Doing Edgar Proud" by Diana R. Gordon. In her article, Gordon critiqued several recent books, each of them purporting to recount and analyze aspects of the FBI's long history of political repression in the United States. Among the titles included for discussion were "*Racial Matters*"; *The FBI's Secret File on Black America* by Kenneth O'Reilly, a protege of Bureau apologist Athan Theoharis. Also included was the 1988 South End Press release, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement*, by Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall.

Gordon is quite charitable to O'Reilly's extended and sometimes convoluted rationalization of many of the FBI's worst "excesses" against the civil rights and black liberation movements during the 1960s and 1970s. She says not a word about his pronounced tendency to parrot Bureau rhetoric in blaming certain victims of its COINTELPRO operations—most especially the "violence prone" Black Panther Party—for the fates which befell them at the hand of the Bureau. Nor does she comment upon the author's consistent downplaying of well-documented COINTELPRO techniques designed and employed to induce the very violence of which the Panthers were (and are still) accused. Instead, she concludes that O'Reilly's effort adds up to a "masterful study," a piece of "solid scholarship" to be read and believed by everyone concerned with the form and function of America's political police.

Churchill and Vander Wall fare rather differently under Gordon's handling. As she puts it: "They maintain, for example, that the F.B.I., 'either directly or through the Pine Ridge B.I.A.,' provided rifles and ammunition to the Indian goon squads—hired by the Oglala tribal chief [sic: she means Dick Wilson, then tribal president, an altogether different position] to ter-

rorize the movement. This seems unlikely, at least in the later years of the siege, when the F.B.I. wanted total control and was unwilling to support the B.I.A. police, whom it called 'untrained, poorly educated, and in some cases convicted felons'; under the circumstances, the Bureau would hardly have armed a group of undisciplined vigilantes." In other words, let the reader beware, the authors—whom she carefully defines as being activists *rather than* scholars, as if the two terms were somehow mutually exclusive—will mislead the unwary into believing all manner of wild "conjecture" about the U.S. having the characteristics of an actual police state.

Indeed. Perhaps in light of GOON/BIA police commander Duane Brewer's recently released revelations—and in view of other, similar, testimony now emerging from other former members of the GOONS—confirming virtually every aspect of Churchills' and Vander Walls' ("unsubstantiated" contentions about the Bureau's relationship to the Pine Ridge death squads, Gordon would like to rethink her rather vacuous dismissal of their book. For that matter, since it's becoming more apparent by the moment that the FBI has habitually engaged in precisely those practices "responsible" scholars such as Kenneth O'Reilly and his mentor have always claimed "overstate the case," she'll undoubtedly wish to revise her opinion of "*Racial Matters*" as well.

Being duped into the spreading of government disinformation carries with it a corresponding obligation on the part of progressives and progressive publications to correct the record, once the truth becomes known. Otherwise, there is really no difference between those who profess to be progressive and such unabashed proponents of the *status quo* as Pat Buchanan or the *New York Times*. Given that she was dead wrong in her assessments of the merits of both of the books in question, it seems only appropriate that Diana Gordon acknowledge the fact in writing, and that *The Nation* publish the result. There is, after all, nothing progressive or honorable about being used as a propaganda vehicle—no matter how unwittingly—for the agents of repression.

use CB radios, have people placed, positioned in different places, on hills and things. And we was going to have an assault vehicle go to about three houses that we figured they was at, and shoot them up...We would do the shooting, shoot the place up and make our run and go to Rapid City. Stay up over night, party around and then come back the next day, you know. Not be in the area when it happened. But, like I said, *we had three or four different plans* that we was going to use...[B]ut our intentions never were, was to go right down into that place. That was just one of the places that we was going to hit. We could have hit them

from the road, you know[emphasis added]."

A second variation of the plans was for Brewer's GOONS to shoot up some of the Jumping Bull houses, provoking a return of fire. A force of FBI agents and BIA SWAT team would then attempt to arrest the AIM members on the property, "and we [the GOONS] could cover for them on the way back. *We had three different plans*, I guess. We sat down there at the creek I don't know how many times and went over that [emphasis added]." In the event, however, Coler and Williams were sent in to get things rolling, but "we never really knew they had this, the Jumping

Bull Hall, the Jumping Bull place with all these warriors down there. And that's when they killed them agents." Asked why he and his men hadn't responded to Williams' radioed pleas, once the firefight had begun in earnest, for someone to "get on the high ground" adjacent to the Jumping Bull property and provide covering fire while the two agents withdrew, Brewer responded: "If we could have got ourselves into that position where we went to the top of that hill, they [AIM] would have had us before we got out of the, got to the highway, the way they were set up. That would have been a losing battle there."

## In the Spirit of Crazy Horse Returns

On May 20, 1991, Viking Press is scheduled to re-release Peter Matthiessen's *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*, perhaps the best all-round book written about the FBI's virulent repression of AIM during the 1970s, and the probable basis for an upcoming Oliver Stone film on the case of imprisoned AIM activist Leonard Peltier. The book has been suppressed since 1984 because of defamation suits against Matthiessen and Viking brought by former South Dakota Governor William Janklow and FBI Agent David Price, both named by the author as heavily involved in some of the worst offenses committed by the government against AIM members and supporters. In landmark first amendment decisions, both suits were finally dismissed as baseless by federal courts in late 1989 (see Ward Churchill's, "In the Spirit of Crazy Horse," Z, April 1990).

The original 600 page text will appear unexpurgated, but somewhat improved as the result of minor revision and updating by Matthiessen. A major expansion has also been added in the form of a 30 page epilogue in which the author reveals the results of personal interviews conducted during 1990 with the individual who actually fired the close-range shots—falsely attributed by the government to Peltier—which killed FBI agents Ronald Williams and Jack Coler on June 26, 1975. The exact reason these shots were fired is spelled out, and

the question of whether Williams and Coler followed Peltier's red and white van to their deaths (as agents and prosecutors contended during his trial, or a mysterious "red pickup truck" (as the government argued during the earlier trial of Peltier codefendants Bob Robideau and Dino Butler), is resolved once and for all.

Rumor has it that Oliver Stone's production company will begin shooting sometime this summer, with an eye towards releasing a cinematic version of *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* at some point in 1992. The book and film could help rally public support for Peltier to receive a new trial; he is currently embarking upon his third appeal process, the Supreme Court having twice declined to review the record of his case after negative rulings in the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals (see Churchill's "Leonard Peltier: The Struggle Continues," Z, April 1988). Less Likely, they could compel Congress to finally convene a serious inquiry into the massive and sustained violence directed by the FBI against AIM on Pine Ridge. More probably, we will see some sort of renewed effort at quasi-official censorship, using the courts as a vehicle, not for administration of justice with regard to either Peltier or offending FBI personnel, but to drive Matthiessen's book from the shelves once again and/or to block completion of Stone's movie.

At one point toward the end of the interview, Brewer was asked how he justified the sorts of things he'd been involved in as a GOON. Almost pensively, he acknowledged that, "There really isn't no justification for it. It's just what we done at the time, and there's no way you can go back and change what's already done." Exactly. And no number of evasions, withheld documents, denials, or other lies on the part of the FBI and its friends will make the truth of what the Bureau did on Pine Ridge any less true.

### Death Squads In The United States

THE FBI'S USE of outright death squads to accomplish the repression of AIM may be the most extreme example of its kind in modern U.S. history. It is nonetheless hardly isolated or unique in principle. To the contrary, ample evidence exists that the Bureau has been experimenting with and perfecting this technique of domestic counterinsurgency for at least 25 years. There can be little question at this point that the Ku Klux Klan, over-

lapped as it was with local police forces in the Deep South, was used by the FBI during the early-1960s against the civil rights movement. The same circumstances are at issue with regard to the Klan, in alliance with other neo-Nazis, murdering five members of the Communist Workers Party in Greensboro, North Carolina in November 1979.

Certainly, the special unit of State's Attorney's Police which assassinated Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in Chicago on December 4, 1969 was functioning as a death squad under Bureau control. Similarly, the Windy City was afflicted with a neo-Nazi/police/FBI/military intelligence amalgamation known as the "Legion of Justice" during the first half of the 1970s. No less striking is the combination, described at length by agent provocateur Louis Tackwood in *The Glass House Tapes*, of state and local police red squads with the Bureau's Los Angeles COINTELPRO section and area vigilante groups during the late 1960s, for purposes of physically destroying the "California Left." And then there was the Secret Army

Organization (SAO), developed under FBI sponsorship in southern California during the early 1970s for, among other things, the express purpose of liquidating key activists. Such illustrations might be continued at length, but the pattern is by now clear to anyone willing to face facts.

These realities should serve to inform and temper the understandings of activists and scholars alike, the former in terms of their appreciation of what they are up against as they struggle to achieve positive social change, the latter in terms of the paradigms by which they attempt to shed light on the nature of power dynamics in America. In either case, it is plain enough there is no longer any excuse for continuing the generalized self-delusion among progressives that such things are "anomalous" in the contemporary United States. True death squads are not only possible in the U.S., they have been a relatively common phenomenon for some time. It is well past the point where we need to have gotten the government's message, and to conduct ourselves accordingly. Z