

BOOK REVIEW

COINTELPRO

The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom

BY NELSON BLACKSTOCK

Cointelpro was FBI language for “Counterintelligence Program” which now has been at least partially uncovered but was at one time a highly secret attempt to disrupt the activities of American citizens which the FBI deemed to be counter to the best interests of the United States (read FBI?). What they disrupted were legal activities of political activists, anti-war leaders, black activists, socialists, and the like.

This volume presents facsimile copies of some of the letters and memos from the FBI files which show the depths of the harassment that was practiced, especially against socialists and particularly the Socialist Workers Party. The examples are accompanied by explanatory essays that were prepared for the socialist newsweekly, the *Militant*. Linguist and radical spokesman Chomsky offers an introduction which is really a twenty-one page essay, with numerous footnotes, in which he outlines the Cointelpro project within its historical perspective and for which he blames all levels of society—with a special swipe at the liberals.

Most of what is revealed in this book has already been made known in at least some newspapers but having it all in one book and so plainly documented results in a powerful and frightening reading experience. It is not clear that more of the same is not still going on to some extent and Chomsky claims that there will be little change in the near future until large numbers of people demand an end to this sort of oppression.