Course 1: How Social Transformation Occurs

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7. Infiltration

We describe the difference between an infiltrator and an informant. We explain the broad goals of infiltrators to gather information and disrupt and provide a list of tactics that are used. We explain how to recognize that an infiltrator may be present and what to do about it to both protect the organization and to confront the infiltrator.

Slides:

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<th>Goals of lecture</th>
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<td>After this lecture, you will be able to:</td>
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<td>• Explain the difference between infiltrators and informants</td>
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<td>• Know how to identify possible infiltration</td>
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<td>• Understand how to prevent or mitigate infiltration</td>
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<th>Infiltration</th>
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<td>Definitions:</td>
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<td>Infiltrators – individuals who insert themselves for the purposes of gathering intelligence or dividing, disrupting or misleading the group. Can be an amateur or a professional paid by law enforcement or a corporation. They usually have no prior connection to the group or true concern for the issues. They are motivated by ideological opposition, employment or money.</td>
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<td>Informers – members of the group who have been “turned” or induced to betray the group, whether to avoid criminal charges or for money. Some are simply people with addictions (alcohol, drugs, gambling debts) who are manipulated into talking. They are used to provide evidence against (former) colleagues, or to entrap them.</td>
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**Cautionary Advice**

- Avoid denial or refusing to believe potential infiltration
- Avoid getting angry and taking pre-emptive action
- Unfounded paranoia is not helpful to anyone but your opponent
- Accusations need to be grounded in facts

It is rare that there is clear proof you have an insider working against you. Ask: could the events that have aroused your suspicions be based on intelligence gathered through phone taps, bugs, electronic surveillance and so on? Eliminate alternatives before accusing

**Group Discipline**

- Always have proof before you make accusations. It is easy to convince yourself that a person is guilty because that is the basic premise you are working on. Be open to that you might have it wrong
- Witch-hunts based on insufficient evidence and vague rumors can destroy groups
- Do not even make joking accusations or spread gossip as rumors will be damaging
- People who constantly make such accusations need to be confronted
- Never go public on insufficient evidence - creates bad atmosphere, undermines credibility, creates someone who could become an informant

**Indicators of Infiltration**

- Things start going wrong
- Opponents seem to know what you are planning despite your precautions
- Constant internal disruption
- New faces at meetings acting dubiously
- Your opponents have a history of targeting groups
- Allied groups warn you of individuals that were problems for them

**Infiltrator Tactics: Gathering Information**

- Seek information on protests or plans to preempt, disrupt or do advance media to undermine
- Build profiles on participants for use to cause division, target legal actions, create informers
- Find weaknesses on participants or in the group they can use
- Create long-term relationships for ongoing information
- Share information with other enforcement groups or corporations

**Infiltrator Tactics: Causing Internal Dissent**

**Division:**
Make accusations or share false written statements, then spread rumor the accusations or letter is fake, causing back-and-forth finger accusations that are not provable

**Disinformation:**
Police (or other infiltrating body) falsely inform someone in group that there is an infiltrator to create paranoia and disruption.

**Specific Infiltrator Actions**

- Volunteer for tasks that gather information, i.e. planning, financial, membership lists, recycling paperwork
- Ask probing questions that seem intrusive, about areas where they are not involved
- Overgenerous with money, e.g. buying drinks or drugs to gain confidence; get people talking
- Have money without a job
- Are persistent in giving people rides home, especially going out of their way
- Regularly come to meetings but don’t attend protests or other events
- Don’t follow through on important tasks, even though capable of doing so

**Specific Infiltrator Actions**

- Commit group to expensive or divisive activities
- Are the middle of personal disputes
- Make public statements inconsistent with the groups messages
- Get involved in or take over media or social media pages
- Urge violence or breaking of serious laws
- Make false claims or exaggerating their role in other movements
- Leave for several days at a time
- Avoid answering questions about their personal lives
- Seem immunity from arrest or prosecution

**Social Media and Infiltration**

Social media makes it easy for infiltrators to join groups, to find information about people and groups and to cause disruption.

**Problem:**
- It is hard to verify people online.
- A person may use a false identity.
- Trolls - a real person whose goal is to antagonize or purposely spread misinformation.
**Social Media Strategies**

- Watch for fake pictures - do a search for source of photos
- Watch for recent account creation date
- Look for the number of followers – a small number or large numbers of followers in a short time
- Have different levels of security for FB and DM groups on Twitter, open groups and closed groups that are verified
- A lot of information can be gathered on groups by searching FB and Twitter feeds, no need for infiltration as much is open. Be careful what you make public.
- Check someone’s history on social media, e.g. www.AllMyTweets.net

**Preventing Infiltration**

**Interview:**
Welcome new people, get to know them, ask about their interests, why they are getting involved, how they heard about the group, if they know anyone in group, how aware they are about details of the cause.
Discreetly inquire about their background and personal life and check it out. Where did they go to high school, college, work? Cover stories are a mix of truth and fiction. Hard to lie all the time when being probed.
Do a video interview, e.g. why are you an activist, what brought you to get involved, how did you learn of this campaign.

**Observe:**
Note with whom they come to movement, how they arrived e.g. is car visible?

**Verify:**
Visit the home, meet the family of new people
Check with who they claim to know, watch if they pretend to be part of a group, i.e. hide in a group they are not part of
Check with other groups to see if they have had experience with the person.

**Protect:**
- Provide new people with training, skill them up, partner with a trusted member
- Do not expose new people to sensitive material
- Put processes in place to protect information
- Use security culture to limit who has information to key details and plans
- Get experienced legal advice
- Make public information or FOIA requests
- During actions, have trusted people with new people to prevent provocateur actions

**Exposing A Suspected Infiltrator**

**Document:**
Create a file to of suspicions events, statements to people, agent provocateur actions, look for patterns and inconsistencies, record dates, times and places.

**KEEPTHISINFORMATIONINASAFEPLACE, STOREDSURELY**
Set a trap, e.g. arrange an event and see if more police are in the area.

**Campaign for infiltration and surveillance to be outlawed at a national level**
- Make infiltration redundant - organize on as open, deep, and broad a basis as possible.
- A mass movement of tens of thousands, while more easily infiltrated, will be able to generate enough momentum to shift the political landscape despite infiltration.
Selections from Infiltrators, Informers and Grasses: How, Why and What to do If Your Group is Targeted, by the Accidental Anarchist

Some cautionary words

It really is an unpleasant task having to deal with informants, and often reactions get very emotional. Some people go into denial, refusing to believe it; others get very angry and want to take pre-emptive action. These are both natural reactions, but neither are helpful. If you get the presentation wrong you can end up breaking a group or cause a witch-hunt of an innocent individual. Unfounded paranoia is not helpful to anyone but your enemies. Indeed, paranoia is not part of the security process; it is an unhelpful state of mind often built on emotion. Your fears need to be grounded in facts and rational consideration to be part of your security in a useful way. You need to be able to back them up with more than vague hypotheticals that can justify any position you are taking.

Fortunately, the problem of insiders working against us is not as big as we might suppose, and those who sponsor them spread disinformation about the extent of it. It suits their purpose to keep people guessing. It is always good to remember there has been and remains a long history of successful campaigns and actions despite the informers operating inside our groups. It does not matter if your group is very open rather than closed and covert. There is still much that a skilled operative can do to cause disruption to make you ineffective. For example, planting false information such as at the Heathrow Camp for Climate Action’s plenary, or journalists deliberately twisting your unguarded words. Just because you have nothing to hide does not mean that you are going to be able to avoid the issue, it just means you have different methods to deal with dishonest intentions.

If there is one thing to take away from this is to always have proof before you start making accusations against someone. Witch-hunts based on insufficient evidence and vague rumours have ended up destroying groups. Calling someone a snitch is a very serious charge to lay at anyone’s door. The personal consequences can be a backlash against yourself, or even causing your group to split. It is never to be done lightly; do not mention it jokingly in conversation behind someone’s back as that is how nasty rumours begin. Even passing on accusations made by others without real factual backup or research is to be avoided.
Individuals who constantly make up this sort of accusation about those who disagree with them, or even on personal grounds, need to be challenged as this acts as to poison the group as a whole. This has been a deliberate tactic developed by state agents (acting both overtly and covertly) to disrupt enemies or dissident groups.

A classic example, dated now, was to forge a letter from one member of a group making allegations against another to cause internal dissent, and then spread rumours that the letter is a fake. Impossible to get to the bottom of, the result is a group that implodes trying to find out the actual truth, dividing along personal and political allegiances. Fortunately, this has become fairly obsolete, but it is an illustration of the levels that the State is willing to go to. Read Machiavelli. Disinformation from the police is also a factor to concern yourselves with. They are aware that a group closing in on itself, drawing away in paranoia and mistrust is effectively dead. So they will let it “slip” that some of their success has come from an inside source in order to create the divisions that allows them to break your group and individuals down.

Often it is guesswork or intelligence gathered from other sources such as listening devices and tapped telephones, carefully shaped to make it look like they know more than they do. Take care and tread carefully before making allegations, do not do their work for them. If in doubt, find independent people who have had experience dealing with informers and infiltrators and get advice from them before leaping to conclusions.

**Information gathering**

a) Volunteering for tasks which give access to important meetings and papers such as financial records, membership lists, minutes and confidential files, including typing up notes and ‘recycling’ the paperwork. Often they quite dull tasks so people are happy to pass them on to others despite how much they expose details of the group’s members.

b) Asking probing questions bordering on the intrusive, particularly about people’s personal details and actions questioner was not involved in. This allows them to build up a picture of people’s roles in the group.
c) Regularly being overgenerous with money, including financing stuff or buying people drinks and/or drugs to gain access to activists socially with the aim of gaining their confidence or just causing them to become talkative.

d) Being insistent on giving people lifts home, especially when it means they are going out of their own way.

e) Regularly praising key people to their faces.

f) Regularly coming to meetings, joining discussions in the pub, but never getting involved in the group as such.

**Disruption & discrediting**

  g) Not following through on, or completing, important tasks; or doing them poorly despite an obvious ability to do good work.

  h) Causing problems for a group such as committing it to activities or expenses without following proper channels; or encouraging the group to plan activities that divide group unity.

  i) Seeming to be in the middle of personal or political differences that are disruptive to the group.

  j) Seeking the public spotlight, and then making comments or presenting an image different from the rest of the group.

  k) Urge the use of violence or breaking the law, and provide information and resources to enable such ventures, but never quite get involved in the actions they have facilitated setting up. This depends closely on the nature & atmosphere of your group. Context is important here, especially how heavily monitored the group is.

  l) Charge other people with being agents, (a process called *snitch-jacketing*), thereby diverting attention from him or herself, and draining the group’s energy from other work.

  m) Recommending or bringing around people of dubious character.

  n) Where they have control over important information, they are obstructive in letting others sharing it in to the point important tasks are not able to be done.
o) Offering to supply key equipment which they do not follow through with, or else is of consistently poor quality.

**Inconsistency**

p) Having no obvious source of income over a period of time, or having more money available than their job should pay; eg. an expensive car.

q) Inconsistent about their background – lies at this level are hard to maintain completely, and slip-ups do occur; take note of inconsistencies and follow up any ‘facts’ they tell you.

r) Making false claims and exaggerating their roles in other movements.

s) Going out of their way to avoid answering questions about their home, family life, jobs.

t) Often disappearing for several days at a time – regularly happens with local police infiltrating as they have other work to do.

u) Have partners who suddenly disappear out of their lives as if they barely existed, to be replaced by someone in the group.

v) Live in houses that do not have feeling of being “lived in” – sparse details about themselves, lacking in photos, etc.

w) Seeming immunity from prosecution.

x) If the infiltrator is from the media they will often deliberately put forward mad ideas in order to create a more exciting response or story, in order to set up opportunities for their stories.

Remember, none of the above is by itself proof someone is an infiltrator. It may be that information is leaking through carelessness or surveillance on you. That someone is disruptive by nature, power hungry, or a pathological liar does not mean they are an informer, but they do need to be dealt with appropriately. There are also those people who are genuine control freaks and will disrupt if they cannot get their way within a group, and end up destroying it out of petulance rather than deliberate mischief. We do not cover it here, but it is a security issue in some ways as it causes others to become disaffected, feel
betrayed, etc. The main thing is not to let it continue unchallenged to the point it affects your group’s work.

Another source of information for State and companies are those who are security risk in themselves. That is, they do not have a personal sense of other people’s security or refuse to acknowledge it as an issue. Alternatively, they may not be able to help themselves from boasting to increase their stature or get very talkative when drinking with strangers for whatever reason. They may not actually realise they are a liability. Likewise, people aware of an action but not directly involved in it, rarely share the same sense of security in relation to it as those involved as they are not directly at risk. They can inadvertently jeopardise actions or activists as a result.

These people are not informers in the common sense, but the effect is the same. How the group deals with this will vary, but sometimes it will require a degree of harshness as there are more important things at stake. If it becomes known other groups will stop working with yours, or the group may split over the matter. This is a possibility where some members want to end their association with the individual, while others wish to continue working with them, whether because of personal history or political reasons. The best approach is transparency – discuss it out together rather than in small cliques.

**Initial Action & Gathering Evidence**

Once you are sure your suspicions have substance, check with a couple of others whom you trust to check you are not alone. If several of you feel the same way, all independently then that is a good sign there is something afoot. With them onboard, the next stage is to gather evidence to back up your suspicions.

1. Contact someone experienced for advice (legal and practical), or a professional group such as Buro Jansen & Jansen ([www.burojansen.nl](http://www.burojansen.nl)).

2. Put processes in place to protect sensitive material or planned actions; often if you close off the information supply your suspects have been accessing they may soon drop out anyway, solving one problem.

3. Create a file of question marks over the suspect(s), noting all the evidence you are gathering. This should include accounts of suspicious events and statements from people. It is worth doing this even if you have not identified particular
suspects as it helps identify patterns. Record dates, time, places, people present and other material that puts the event into context. Note disruption of actions, eg. the unexpected presence of police **Keep this safelystored, preferably encrypted or using codes – think of the danger of it falling into the wrong hands!**

4. Discreetly inquire about their background and personal life and check it out. This is probably the most important part of the investigation, and subtlety is paramount here to avoid tipping them off. Never discuss it openly on phones, email, etc, in case they are being monitored as well. It is very hard for infiltrators to lie consistently all the time, especially if you are probing in areas where they do not have a cover prepared. Remember, cover stories tend to be a mix of both truth and lies. Make notes of any inconsistencies, but allow for the fact that people often exaggerate anyway just to fit in. If several people are doing this (though not all at once!) then a better picture develops.

5. If they claim to be, or to have been involved in other groups, speak to them, maybe taking a photo in case the suspect has changed their name. Often when an infiltrator has been exposed in one group, they simply move onto other ones in related movements, using their experience and contacts to make the transition easier. However, watch out for other groups tipping off your suspect, so be careful if you are approaching third parties for help and ask them to stay silent.

6. Check out their claims by contacting their ‘employer’, or following them home. Something is probably amiss is when a person drives an old car to meetings, but can be found driving something much newer at home, or the place of employment cannot be found. If they are being secretive make excuses to visit their home, or arrange surveillance of them. More sophisticated operations will have these basics covered though. In some situations it is useful to distract the person and go through their possessions, including phones and computers, to see if there is anything incriminating – particularly useful at gatherings or meetings where there is limited time to evaluate someone. If you have access to where they live then check out their bins, diaries and personal spaces such as bedrooms, which often have giveaway clues (eg. a “vegan” with meat wrappers in the bin).

7. It is always useful to visit their relatives were possible. Infiltrators often try to keep family away from the group they are targeting, and in some cases it has been family who have let slip useful clues.
8. As you progress in confirming your suspicions approach others you implicitly trust to help build your body of evidence. We really emphasis caution here, as it is hard to prevent people’s suspicions from leaking into meetings and social events. However, if several people already suspect a person independently then that is a good sign you are on the right track – as long as it is not just on the grounds that the suspect is simply new and particularly keen or does not have great social skills. Beware also that jealousy might sometimes be a factor.

9. Be aware of people simply jumping on the bandwagon and agreeing with you uncritically. Constructive challenges to your assumptions are worth having; but at this stage it should be on a need to know basis.

10. Set a trap. “Arrange” an action or meeting that the suspect is informed of and check to see if there are any police or extra security waiting. If the subject is talking about their involvement with others in the group this may be tricky to organise. It needs to be planned carefully, and may need to be done more than once to catch the person out, especially if they are in for the long term as they will wish to avoid raising suspicion before they have had a chance to properly integrate with the group. Also one set of unexplained extra presence can be explained away as bad luck; more than once ceases to be coincidence, though it may be bad security practice on the behalf of the suspect such as talking openly over the phone about it – in which case you have a liability anyway. Avoid acting too out of character so as not to tip them off that it is a trap, or doing it in a way which may arouse suspicions from others in your group that there may be something worth investigating. Often in such a set up the suspect, if they are working for the State, etc., will back out rather than do something incriminating. Either way you know they are not up for it and not to be given trust lightly.

11. If you suspect you have an agent provocateur, consider getting them to incriminate themselves – have a dictaphone ready so when the opportunity arises you have evidence, in case anything is used against you in the future, that it was the infiltrator or the grass who tried to entrap you. Keep the recordings secure (not in your house) and make backup copies. Maybe talk to a lawyer you can trust. Most police infiltrators will try to avoid being active in anything that may be construed as illegal as this will compromise their evidence in court – especially if it can be argued they instigated it or had a chance to prevent it. Private
investigators will be less inhibited. This is an extreme action and we really cannot recommend that you carry a dictaphone around as it puts other, genuine, activists at risk. Never do it for genuine actions you are involved in. Plus if people notice you might be the one who ends up getting suspected. Only do this if you have a very strong belief that someone is attempting to set you up.

When investigating someone it is easy to convince yourself that they are guilty because that is the basic premise you are working on. Be open to being challenged that you might have got it wrong or that what you have assembled simply is not sufficient. So the last part of this stage is to bring in an outsider who can evaluate the evidence from an experienced and independent viewpoint without the same emotional attachment you have, and who has credibility with others.

You want your case to be as water-tight as possible, but saying that, it is often very hard to get that sort of evidence. Sometimes you can only ever be, say, 80% certain that you have the right person, in which case it is even more important to get an external review before going public. Never go public on insufficient evidence – what happens if you get it wrong! You could lose a person who could subsequently be turned against you, and you can end up creating a bad atmosphere in your group, disrupting your effectiveness. You also will lose credibility and may even have people turn on you. If you got it wrong, even before you go public, be prepared to admit it, especially if you have spoken to others. Make a point of going back to them and stress that the suspicions should remain confidential. Otherwise these things have a habit of getting out through careless talk, which does nobody any good.

**Exposing the infiltrator**

**Meeting with the suspect**

When you have gathered what you feel is sufficient evidence, the next question is the appropriate manner to act upon it. How this is done depends on the horizontal/vertical nature of your group. For hierarchical groups, speak to key people you feel can be trusted with the information and ask them how to proceed.
For non-hierarchical, grassroots groups, which we are focusing on, the best approach is to get the information out to the group as a whole, which you need to plan for. The first part is to arrange a meeting between a few of you with the suspect and put your evidence before them. Ideally bring in an outsider who had no knowledge of the suspect to act as facilitator and/or to make independent judgement.

Watch the suspect’s reactions and carefully note their explanations of the evidence. Be ready to listen and present calmly; it is not the time to go in all guns blazing and making accusations before the evidence is present. You need to keep in mind that they might actually be innocent, and that this process is going to be very insulting and upsetting for them. Avoid your own hubris.

However, normally, by this stage the evidence should be sufficient that their game is essentially up – though they may not actually accept that, which can result in arguments and them shouting that it’s all a hoax, that they cannot work under these conditions, and so on. If you are going to publicly expose them afterwards get a photograph of your infiltrator while you still can. Either way you need to be ready for their anger and for them to throw accusations back at you.

**Going to your group**

Next, arrange a full meeting of your group, and put the case before them. It is wise not to announce the true purpose of the meeting beforehand as others talking to your suspect may inadvertently tip them off. When talking about the meeting in advance do so only in the most oblique terms (eg. a “significant security issue has come up”).

Ideally the meeting challenging the suspect will take place shortly before the meeting with the group as a whole. If they do come to the meeting to defend themselves, they will be better prepared and change their story to adapt to the evidence, so you will have to challenge them on this – this is the main reason for having witnesses at the initial confrontation, and they should come to the group meeting as well. As with the initial meeting with the suspect it is important where possible to have outside facilitators and a clear sense of process. At the end of the meeting, ask the suspect to leave the room so the rest of the group can come to a consensus on which side they believe. It may be worth you leaving as well to
avoid claims of bias. If they agree with you, then ask the infiltrator to leave the group.

If there is no group meeting

There are two situations here. One is where the infiltrator has left still asserting their innocence. The other is that given geography, security etc, there are good reasons why it is not possible to call the group together physically. In both cases there are very good reasons for you to take immediate action. The infiltrator may attempt to get in first and poison the group against you, turning the tables so that it is you who ends up justifying your behaviour, not them. They may also make it a personal thing that affects the group dynamics. The other issue is that the sooner you begin dealing with the fall out the healthier it is all round.

The two key things at this point are:

(1) Primarily, providing straight away to your group the information to back your claims up. It is important that things are clear and transparent to ensure that you are not seen as abusing power.

(2) Also, you will undoubtedly have to explain to some group members why they have not been trusted with this information to date, as they may be hurt by the perceived lack of confidence in them.

Inconclusive evidence

If you cannot find strong proof for your suspicions, you need to approach the matter differently. A potential approach is to confront the person with your suspicions as it may be enough for them to back off, but be prepared for the situation to backfire and they deny everything (after all they may be innocent). Perhaps do it partially, to get them to confirm or deny a part of their story, doing it gradually rather than confrontationally so you can back off without raising too much suspicion if there is a material change or they have provided satisfactory explanations. Continue to monitor them if necessary.

Dealing with the fallout

Once the infiltrator has been exposed you need to protect your reputation and to repair the damage to your group:
(1) Consider going to the press to highlight the issue. The appropriateness of this depends on the nature of your group and is often better suited for more mainstream groups with a policy of staying within the law.

(2) Let other groups know through established channels. Publish a photograph of the person on relevant websites and other news services (magazines, Indymedia, etc.) so others are also able to identify the infiltrators. Exposing “burning”) an infiltrator like this can put them out of the job for good. Always substantiate your accusations. Send a letter to the groups you are connected with giving an explanation and what you are planning to do to minimize the problem. An example of how one infiltrator was exposed and advertised is the first “Notes from the Borderland” by Larry O’Hara, which deals with the activities of the infiltrator Tim Hepple/Matthews.

(3) Expect some uninformed backlash and loss of reputation, but it is better this happens than people finding out through rumour which will affect your credibility even more. The real danger you face here is rumours spreading unchecked and nobody being able to verify claims and counterclaims.

(4) Put in processes to prevent it happening again. This will help protect your reputation following any backlash over the exposure of the infiltrator. It is more important to be seen to acknowledge mistakes and being pro-active about rectifying them than trying to keep it secret. You can come away stronger as a group if it causes you to adopt better and more sustainable security practices.

(5) Change locks, passwords, protocols, etc. and analyse the effect on materials and campaigns they may have been involved with.

(6) There may be further questions relating to other individuals that the infiltrator has brought into the group, and time may need to be put aside to deal with this.

(7) Act to minimise the damage to your group. This is important to stop unnecessary paranoia and infighting that can arise – especially where some members do not fully believe the gathered evidence or where there have been relationships between the infiltrator and group members.
Some group members may not want to accept that they have been conned in this fashion and their objections may be based on this. Others may be deeply traumatised so you need as a group to come together for them. As important as anything else is to look after yourselves. It is horrible when it happens, so look after each other and deal with the emotional side of things so that you can come out stronger. Do not try and bury it away and pretend it did not happen. At least have a meeting to talk about it openly.

**New people**

Many people when they first get involved are often excited by what they have read and heard. They may not have had a chance to adjust to our security culture and needs. It does not make them spies, and jumping down their throats immediately – or not explaining the situation to them because you’ve gone into paranoid mode – does nobody any good. You are more likely to lose enthusiastic people.

What may seem obvious to us is only so because of our experience as activists; it may not be that way to an outsider so allow them that initial space. Explain to them first! We were all young, naïve and eager to take action once, so think back to what it was like then, and the mistakes that you made.

The main thing is to avoid letting paranoia take over. People do not join a group fully clued-up, so don’t expect them to be. A group with so much paranoia that it is it actually impossible to join is not going to go far. This sort of paranoia also prevents accurate instincts from developing. Saying that if they truly believed new people would put up with the paranoia and exclusion is a poor excuse and symptomatic of a group which is not dealing with security on a rational level.

If your group is genuinely concerned about new people coming into it, for whatever reason, then develop a process bringing them in, testing them and skilling them up. You can be cautious and welcoming at the same time. Wait until you get to know them before actually making pre-emptive judgements. If they still do not get it, then is the time to become somewhat more concerned. If your campaign is structured securely, a grass or infiltrator should only be able to achieve limited damage, plus you should not be exposing new people to sensitive material anyway. It is always good to visit people at their homes or just learn
about their backgrounds. Maybe even meet their parents if such an opportunity arises. This helps builds up trust.

**How to Spot an Infiltrator in Your Movement**

There has been a lot of talk about agent provocateurs and infiltrators into movements such as Fees Must Fall and other Leftist groups. This should not surprise us. It is clear that no movement would be devoid of plentiful infiltrators in this day and age and that some of them would be conspicuous on the picket line and found in organisational capacities within the struggle.

Throughout modern history radical movements such as the Black Panthers, Anti-Apartheid and Occupy have been plagued by infiltrators and agent provocateurs. But nowadays, when the matter of infiltrators or moles is suggested in the South African context there is a tendency to push it aside as exaggeration or paranoia and thus agents are given the space to carry on with their business without scrutiny. However the global problem of state funded agents is as rife now as it ever was, perhaps even more so, as neoliberal governments are intent on smashing any uprising, individual or organisation that threatens their share-based partnership with monopoly capital.

Based on observations and research, we have put together a lengthy composite of what traits and methods a modern day infiltrator would manifest. Of course, some of these traits may be those of an over enthusiastic member – but a combination of these traits should not be ignored.

This guideline list is not intended to create paranoia or sow divisions among activists, but to create an awareness around behavioral traits of people who are there to report back to business or government on the plans and activities of your movement or organisation.

1. A bogus activist or agent appears out of nowhere but becomes a best friend very quickly, ensconcing themselves into the targeted movement seamlessly.

2. They are quick learners and start to speak the language of the movement in a short space of time.
3. Their hairstyle and clothing quickly changes to adapt to the going trends.

4. Not long after they arrive on the scene something calamitous happens which injures the solidarity between members irrevocably.

5. This bogus activist is usually at the center of organising actions around the calamity.

6. It is through this that this person’s role is created and endorsed in the movement.

7. They have come with a mandate so they gravitate to and befriend people whom they can use to fulfill this mandate.

8. They look for the most vulnerable in this group and reach out to them, helping them with their material needs such as shelter, food a shoulder to cry on and lifts to direct action.

9. They use flattery, bolstering certain people’s self-image by casting them as the potential ‘leader’ and speaking of their leadership qualities.

10. The more useful a person can be to them the more flattery they apply.

11. Simultaneously they encourage their friends to do outrageous things to prove these attributes.

12. They set them up against other comrades – sometimes referring to others as agents.

13. The more people they can pit against each other the better their intervention.

14. They hone in on vain people who clearly want social recognition and celeb.

15. They may help to fund these aspirant individual’s fame-seeking social media campaigns, or connect them to people who can help.

16. They encourage their protégés to use these social media platforms to launch vitriolic attacks on people who need to be silenced or destroyed by government.

17. They encourage their unsuspecting foot soldiers to work in packs.
18. This means attacking an individual target as a pack – preferably on a public platform.

19. They themselves make suggestive comments, contradict themselves and spin outright lies on public platforms so casually that many do not notice. It takes a certain skill to spread rumors as truths.

20. They usually have high intelligence, are charismatic and play the role well – changing not only their dress code, but also language and philosophy to suit the occasion.

21. They are masters at mirroring the essence of the struggle and people who are genuine activists.

22. They display narcissistic tendencies and tend to name drop quite a bit.

23. Their tweets are more about themselves, their endless inner musings and navel-gazing, rather than the socioeconomic issues of the people they claim to represent.

24. Their educational history and work history is usually haphazard and not well presented.

25. Their Google profile is scant but they start to build up an online profile via the movement.

26. They disappear on many family-duty trips or overseas trips – not that you see the photos or hear about what went on much.

27. They are able to creep right into the inner workings of the movement and lay claim to all sorts of internal good work.

28. The mandate is to destabilise the struggle/org and create mistrust among the members.

29. They hone in onto the topics that are of legitimate concern to people in the struggle.

30. They pinpoint the most contentious issue and work with that – often building exaggerated constructs around the problem to create massive cleavages in the struggle.
31. Where once, members were able to negotiate terms of engagement and debate the problems, this person plays a big role in casting these issues as irreparable, and soon enough in-fighting replaces engagement.

32. This means that one side must be seen as victim to another side that is demonised.

33. Once the ‘victim and demon’ narrative has been entrenched the cracks begin to show.

34. They spend a lot of time engaging their group and new recruits to prove their theory.

35. This often involves their favourite form of narcotic and many late evenings sitting listening to them.

36. They use every single available opportunity to push their unwavering and monolithic framework no matter what the occasion or the agenda.

37. As such even events that are focused on a specific agenda will be derailed if their framework has not been included in the agenda.

38. If called out for derailing they will gaslight you with this term and use it against you – denying that it is a derailing – though everyone is indeed derailed, discombobulated disillusioned and depressed at the end of the disruption – with little will to continue the agenda initially planned.

39. Job well done. That was the intention no matter how loudly the agent and the minions claim otherwise.

40. Because they make use of legitimate concerns to push their destabilisation agenda it is very difficult to stand up to them.

41. They know there is an outrage and fundamentalist moralism that comes with certain topics and anyone who challenges this approach will be called an apologist or denialist or an assaulter.

42. This is called the weaponisation of legitimate narratives for ulterior motives and agents receive training in this field because it is so effective in breaking up unity in movements.
43. This is an injustice to those who developed sound theory which is then warped for maximum negative impact and sold to young minds as truth.

44. No matter how many authentic overtures you make to them to engage on the contentious issue, workshop it, write manifestos and codes of conduct to deal with the issues they will all be turned down.

45. It does not suit this agenda to solve the issue.

46. The mandate is to make sure the problem is perpetual until it breaks the movement.

47. Their methodology is to spread chaos as widely as possible not to create harmony.

48. They have a clear adversary and everything they do, or ask you to do, is to discredit or destroy their targeted adversary.

49. The adversary is usually the group or individual that gets things done on the picket line, can hold the masses together with impassioned revolutionary speeches, and tie up the state in demonstrations and direct action for months on end.

50. Those marked as adversaries are most often the people that are not answerable to the powers that be and push a more progressive ideology.

51. Socialism, Black Consciousness and Environmental Justice are the most threatening doctrines to neoliberal state because they directly challenge cultural imperialism, white supremacy as well as big business and the economic status quo in a profit driven world.

52. Their orders are to destroy these leader’s at all costs.

53. Reputational damage is a common strategy against leaders of movements.

54. It is no mistake that it is the strong male leaders of movements that are most often accused of sexual assault, rape and abuse with no evidence provided or police dockets and court cases to back this up.

55. An infiltrator is often at the center of these accusations.
56. This is a well-worn tactic and easy to push given the real problem of machismo, misogyny and abuse of women in a Capitalist world which encourages these binaries.

57. More often it is not about proving the rape but making sure the accused has a life sentence hanging over his head and he is never granted the opportunity to defend himself even when he has requested that a charge be laid against him.

58. The public buy the accusation as truth.

59. The colonial and contemporary construct of the Black male as sexually deviant and a rapist makes this the ideal vehicle to garner consent for the destruction and incarceration of the threatening black male.

60. No amount of pointing out how much of a disservice false rape allegations does to those who are actually victims of rape, will be entertained in this framework.

61. This is not to say that there are not times when the allegations turn out to be true or that abuse and patriarchy does not occur in movements. It does and should be reflected upon and corrected by the men in the organisations and movements.

62. Strong women leaders will be accused of being ambitious, dangerous, a publicity fiend and various unflattering terms. This is to delegitimise her role as a leader and cast doubt on her integrity.

63. In a nutshell these bogus activists perform different tasks which include attacking and/or disrupting legitimate groups, or creating a diversion with constructed propaganda in order to discredit the leaders, distract members away from the focus and involve them in time-wasting turmoil intended to prevent them from doing anything that enhances the common good.

64. These bogus activists are also used to implement hostile actions through hand-picked third parties so that it creates decoy politics that looks like a disagreement between two individuals or groups, or yet another violence between and by members. What this does is buy time for the other stakeholders.
65. Though this is government-funded infiltration it is difficult to prove any connection back to government operations and the mandate is to erase this connection through various methods.

66. The fact that they use legitimate and sensitive struggles and discourses to push their agenda, which is ultimately to destroy the struggle/movement/revolution from within, makes it very difficult to hold them accountable as the issues they work with are ‘untouchable’.

67. They often move to different locations of the national movement and wherever they have spent time they leave the movement in tatters.

**Personal Impact**

- Agents manipulate you into believing their doctrine, which they preach often and it is exciting to you because you can relate to what they are preaching.
- In fact you relate so much that you fail to notice how they are weaponising that doctrine while turning you into one of their minions in their own private bouncer squadron.
- You find yourself going all out to protect this person from critique.
- You will start to feel low-grade depression and a pit of anxiety in your stomach when you have been in the company of this person.
- This is a sure sign that you are being manipulated to act against your instincts.
- If you keep ignoring your truth, as they demand that you do, you may end up having a nervous breakdown.
- Once this happens you have become a threat to this person and are no longer useful. At this point, they will drop you with no compunction.

**Suggested Reading:**


**How to Spot an Infiltrator in Your Movement** by Media for Justice, 2017.

**Infiltration to Disrupt, Divide and Mis-Direct Are Widespread in Occupy** by Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers, 2012.

**Infiltration of Political Movements is the Norm, Not the Exception in the United States** by Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers, 2012.