



# THE FBI, COINTELPRO, AND TALLAHASSEE'S NEW LEFT



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## Abstract

As Cold War tensions tightened alongside a burgeoning, left-wing, student movement, domestic FBI opposition oriented itself against the New Left - a broad, young, abstraction of Marxist ideology opposed to Soviet-style governance, rooting itself on American collegiate campuses. The FBI's COINTELPRO (Counterintelligence Program) targeted New Left activity on university campuses throughout the nation. In order to properly detail the role that COINTELPRO had in subverting New Left activities in and around the Tallahassee area researchers examined internal FBI documents and memorandums, university archives, and underground newspapers. Using a timeline of events, researchers captured the escalating social and political controversies in Tallahassee and its respective universities, Florida State University (FSU) and Florida A&M University (FAMU). Using these resources, researchers were able to establish a clear intention by the FBI to infiltrate and suppress New Left activities in Northern Florida - utilizing methods of espionage and federal oversight. Research is currently ongoing to precisely detail and capture the full extent of FBI intervention, regarding COINTELPRO, in the Tallahassee area.

## Introduction

- In order to subvert the organizing efforts of the late-60s, emerging New Left - who sought to continue the dissemination of left-wing sentiment - the FBI employed a series of covert and illegal projects to survey and combat domestic left-wing activity
- Created in 1956 the FBI's counterintelligence program, COINTELPRO, aimed to suppress socialist and communist sympathies in the United States through espionage, illicit wiretaps, warrantless searches, and fraud.
- This research details the methods used to repress that exact, broad, New Left based within American universities. To further particularize these methods, researchers examined FBI intervention in Tallahassee, Florida, and its respective universities - Florida State University and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

## Methods

- Researchers adopted the use of *microfilm to display student-led publications covering on-campus activities, current events, and controversies* from the years 1965-1972
- Researchers created a *timeline of events* relating to on campus controversy, subversive New Left activity, and FBI intervention as a response
- Researchers probed, declassified, and reviewed *internal FBI documents* that particularly dealt with the repression of New Left activity in Florida; sourced from memorandums between the FBI's Albany and Jacksonville field offices, researchers were able to gain insight into the particular methods utilized by the FBI to target specific New Left activists and student groups by means of *violence and social threat*
- Researchers continue to make requests for the declassification of FBI documents, per the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

## Results/Discussion

Researchers preliminary findings indicate FBI interference and intervention occurred regarding New Left activity in the Northern Florida, Tallahassee region. Internal FBI documentation revealed to researchers the particular **targeting of New Left figures- including Florida State University students**. Internal FBI documentation revealed to researchers the particular targeting of New Left figures- including Florida State University students. Internal memorandums reveal **patterned espionage** into FAMU and FSU to combat Tallahassee's New Left as well as the **targeting of a particular FSU student through a fraudulent mailing campaign**. As such, the FBI imposed and participated in the subversion of the New Left by means of **threat, surveillance, and espionage**. Research is currently ongoing in order to extrapolate the obtained information as a component in the patterned repression of Tallahassee's New Left by means of the FBI's COINTELPRO.

## References

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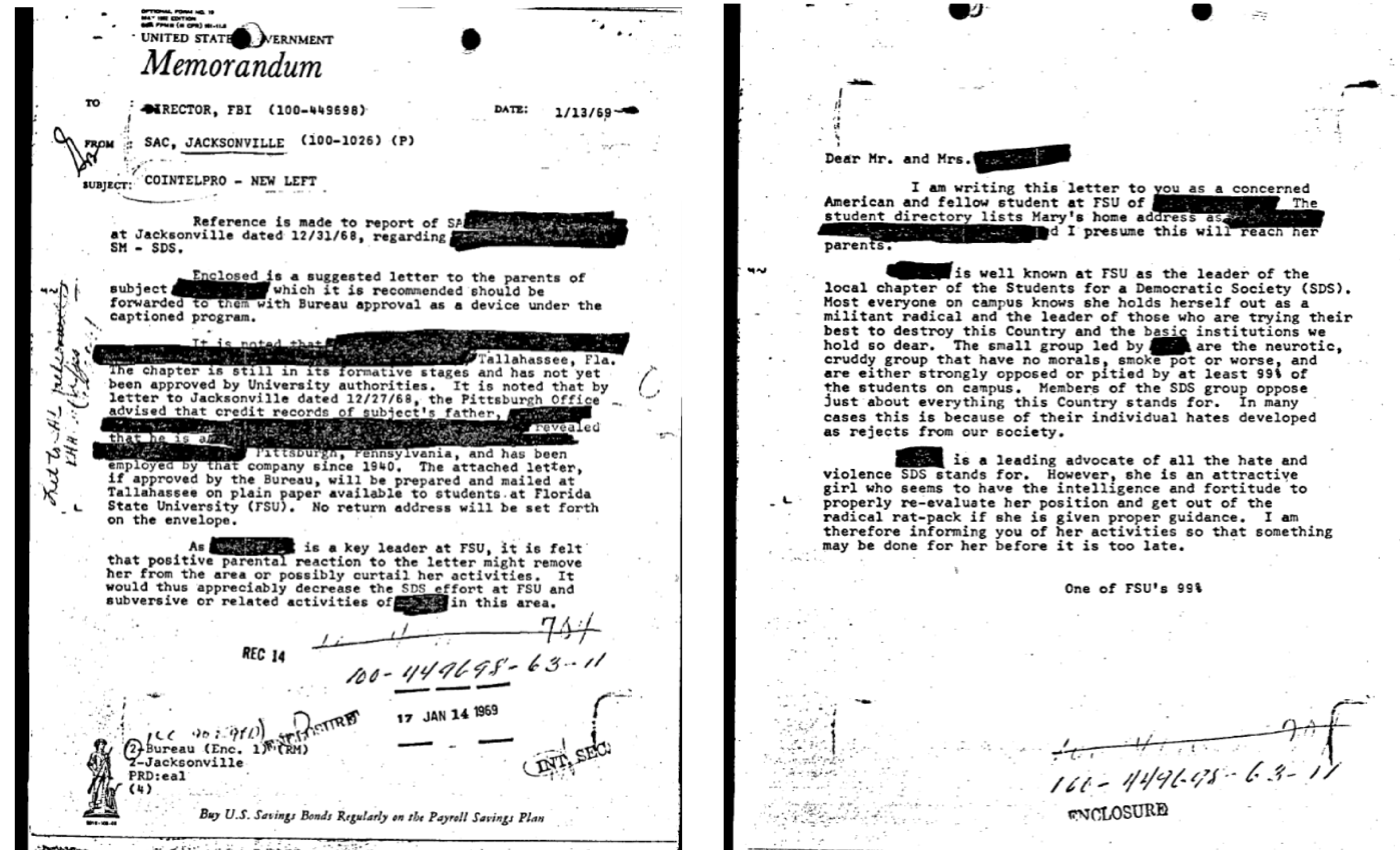
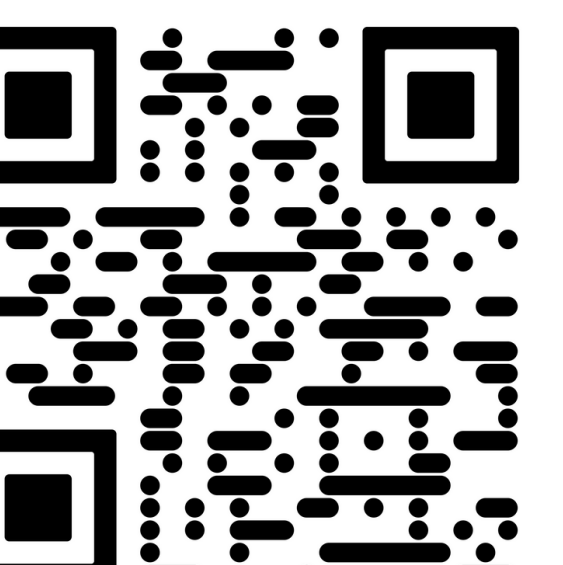


Figure 1, Left: Internal FBI Memorandum suggesting a contrived letter posing as an FSU student be sent to a prominent SDS member's parents. Figure 2, Right: Copy of aforementioned, FBI, letter sent to redacted prominent SDS members' parents.

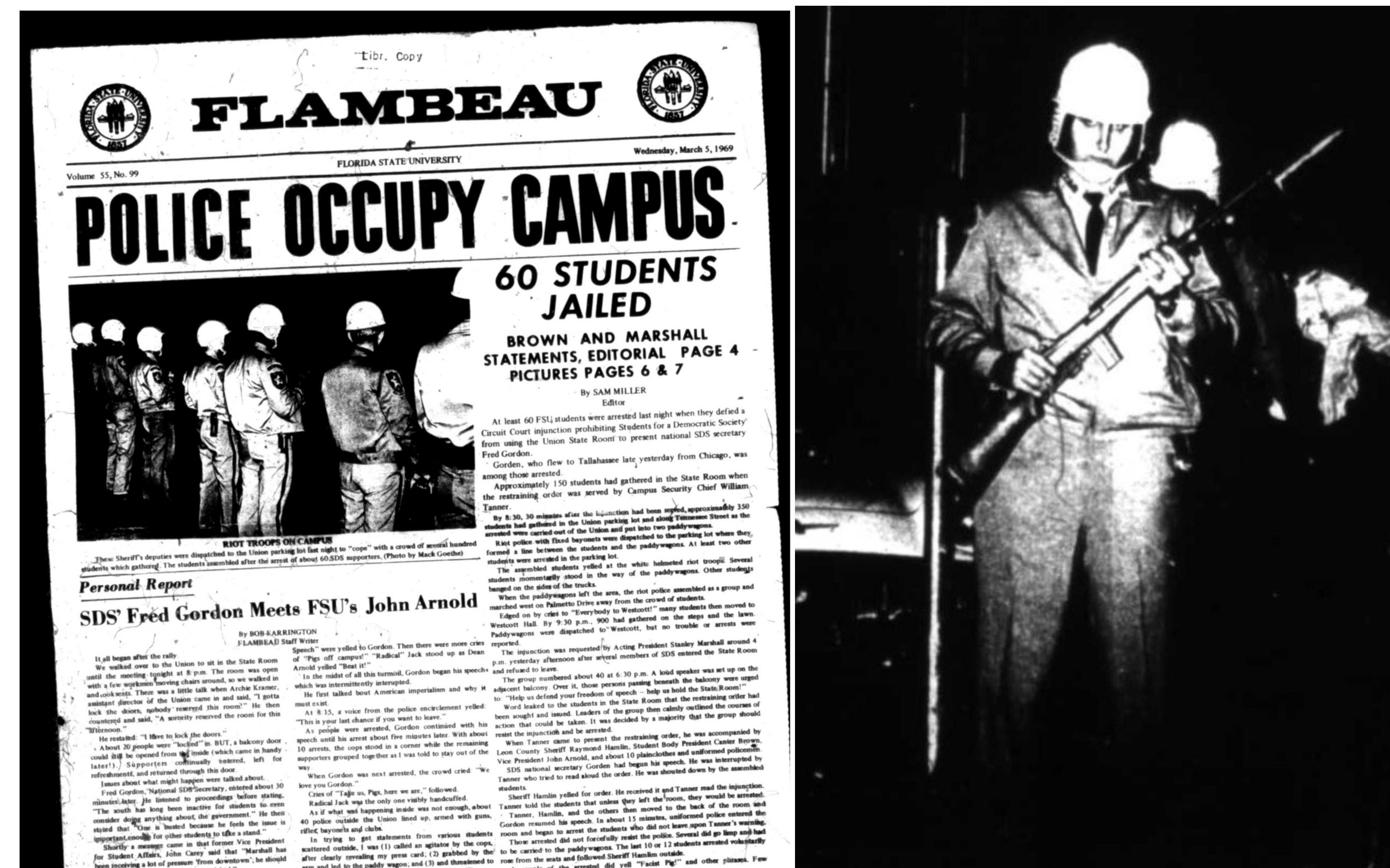


Figure 3: Capture of FSU's Flambeau, a student-led university publication, detailing FSU's "Night of the Bayonets" in which 60 students were jailed for participating in an "unlawful" SDS meeting.