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MAILER, NORMAN

ORG 1 Fifth Estate

ORG 1 CARIC

Butz, Tim

Peck, Winslow

Mailer Headlines Counter-Spy Pitch

By Louise Lague
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Norman Mailer didn't look much like a media heavy, slipping in the front door that way, in a baggy pin-striped suit. With his pale gray quasi-afro and watery eyes, he could have been just anyone from around the neighborhood in Cleveland Park, a place where free schools flourish in rumpus rooms and cars still bear raggy remnants of McGovern stickers.

But it was Mailer and he had come to make his announcement again. A year ago, Mailer threw himself a 50th birthday party at the Four Seasons and charged his friends \$50 to get in. At the end of the glittery, liquid and boisterous evening, a swaying, blood-shot-eyed Mailer announced he was starting the Fifthstate — a people's counterespionage organization designed to spy right back at the CIA and the FBI to keep the nation from "sliding towards totalitarianism."

THE EARTH didn't shake very much and people went home. The next day, a soberer Mailer said he was quite serious. But with the fuss over "Marilyn," nothing much came of Mailer's Fifth Estate in 1973. Here and there, he slipped it cautiously into his speeches at colleges, and came up with a more or less solid 150 volunteers.

Meanwhile, some former-agents, former-journalists and Vietnam Veterans had formed in Washington something called CARIC — the Committee for Action/Research on the Intelligence Community — with an eye to ending clandestine foreign intervention and domestic repression and staving off Orwell's Big Brother from 1984.

CARIC already has two programs under way. The Intelligence Documentation Center is a library of information on "U.S. intelligence and secret government operations available to journalists, researchers, scholars and concerned citizens."

THE COUNTER-SPY campaign is an attempt to organize groups on the local level to gather the information.

Mailer read about CARIC in the Village Voice, got together with CARIC coordinators Tim Butz and Winslow Peck, and a natural merger was born. CARIC was working hard but wasn't famous, Mailer was famous but not working hard.

The merger, now called The Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate, was announced Saturday night at a \$10-a-head wine and cheese party in the Newark Street home of Sam Smith, editor of the D.C. Gazette.

"I got into this because I'm in the D.C. Statehood Party," Smith said. "A lot of these people are." He gazed around at the houseful of anonymous young men in furthe necks, girls in black, and vociferous gray-

haired ladies with nametags. "We're all part of the central cause. The central cause still exists, in spite of what you read in the papers."

MAILER MOVED about, surrounded by circles of people, most of whom just wanted to stare at him. He was very placid, not at all the legendary Mailer who was once described as a fight looking for a place to happen. A man from the Committee to Investigate Assassinations pressed an old-fashioned copybook into his hands. Inside, the pages were filled with blue ball point long-hand. "My daughter wants you to read it," he said, "she's 24."

Mailer said he never reads manuscripts but would give it to a good reader he knows.

Finally he mounted a stair landing to speak. With one hand on the balustrade and the other gesticulating from the elbow, he spoke at great length about himself and his cause.

"This idea came to me through the aegis of an angel," he said. "This angel said: 'You are the dauphin. You must ride forth and bring this idea. You must save France.' The angel was a drunk and he meant America.

So I said 'Okay, anything to relieve my illimitable boredom.'"

"I think this pooling of resources is a fine idea," he said. "The people from CARIC have brains, pluck, energy and dedication. I . . . I am just Phineas T. Dauphin. If this remains my plaything, nothing will happen to it. I just want to be remembered as old Uncle Norman who had something to do with it."

HE PROMISED to tell a joke later and gave the landing to Winslow Peck. Peck talked more, people asked questions at great length.

"I don't have a husband now, but I'm living in the confided a middle-aged

woman in the hallway. "I'm a very bored radical right now, and I'd love to leave, but the person who brought me wants to ask Mailer something."

New York television director Paul Jacobs, in a "Trotskyite red" shirt and a shaven head, took the floor. He first complained that he didn't trust men with "two last names and tasseled Bass Weejuns without socks," then he analyzed what was wrong with the evening.

"People are starting other conversations. People are dying to leave. Mailer talked too long. This is the wrong audience. There's no social status to be gained here."

He started pitching for funds like a tent preacher, and girls circulated with silver Revere bowls, for the checks. Mailer put down his drink and wrote out a \$500 check right there on the newel post.

He never told his joke. The earth didn't shake very much, and people started to go home. Mailer was last seen cornered by a vociferous gray-haired woman with a name tag.