

Sept 14 55 Operation Deception 61M

IN the late 1980s, the Vancouver detachment of the RCMP wanted to get into the big-league game of going after drug dealers at the supply end of the pipeline, in Thailand. A thuggish paid informer in British Columbia's Lower Mainland, Glen Barry, pointed them to one Alain Olivier, a young drifter, labourer and small-time junkie originally from Drummondville, Que. The informer described him as a big fish, and the Mounties, with apparently few connections in Southeast Asia, decided to pose as major-league drug buyers, entice him into serving them, send him off to Thailand, ensnare him in a drug deal and then take him down. Net result: In 1989, one RCMP officer died accidentally and Mr. Olivier is serving life in a Thai prison for trafficking. The sting operation was a flop. It was also a travesty of justice.

The Globe and Mail broke the story in 1989, and the matter was subsequently investigated by the new RCMP Public Complaints Commission. Paul McEwen of the PCC conducted the inquiry into the operation, aptly code-named Deception, and his report alleged numerous examples of egregious abuse of power by the police.

According to Mr. McEwen's draft report, Deception was probably conceived of by, of all people, the petty informer Mr. Barry, and "it would appear that it was begun on a whim." What's more, "there was little, if any, reason to believe, initially, that Alain

Olivier was engaged in the drug business." Nevertheless, after Mr. Barry had falsely fingered Mr. Olivier as a big-time drug player with Asian connections, the full machinery of Canada's police swung into action, pressing Mr. Olivier into the service of the Mounties without his knowledge, and then, having created him, bringing him to ground.

Mr. McEwan's report continues: "Once the wheels had been put in motion and plans had been drawn up and approvals given, Operation Deception took on a life of its own. The major players decided that Alain Olivier, a drug user and perhaps small-time dealer with no criminal record, was expendable. He was induced to go to Thailand and once he had done what he was supposed to do, make the introductions, he was arrested by the RCMP, handed over to the Thai police and left to face a justice system which has little concern for human rights and imposes the death penalty for trafficking in narcotics, *the very crime created by the members of the RCMP who approved Operation Deception*" (emphasis added).

The final report released by the PCC was a much-watered-down version of these accusations. Why? Mr. McEwen told The Globe and Mail earlier this week, "I would have liked to see a public inquiry, and there should have been a public inquiry." There still could be. There should be.