

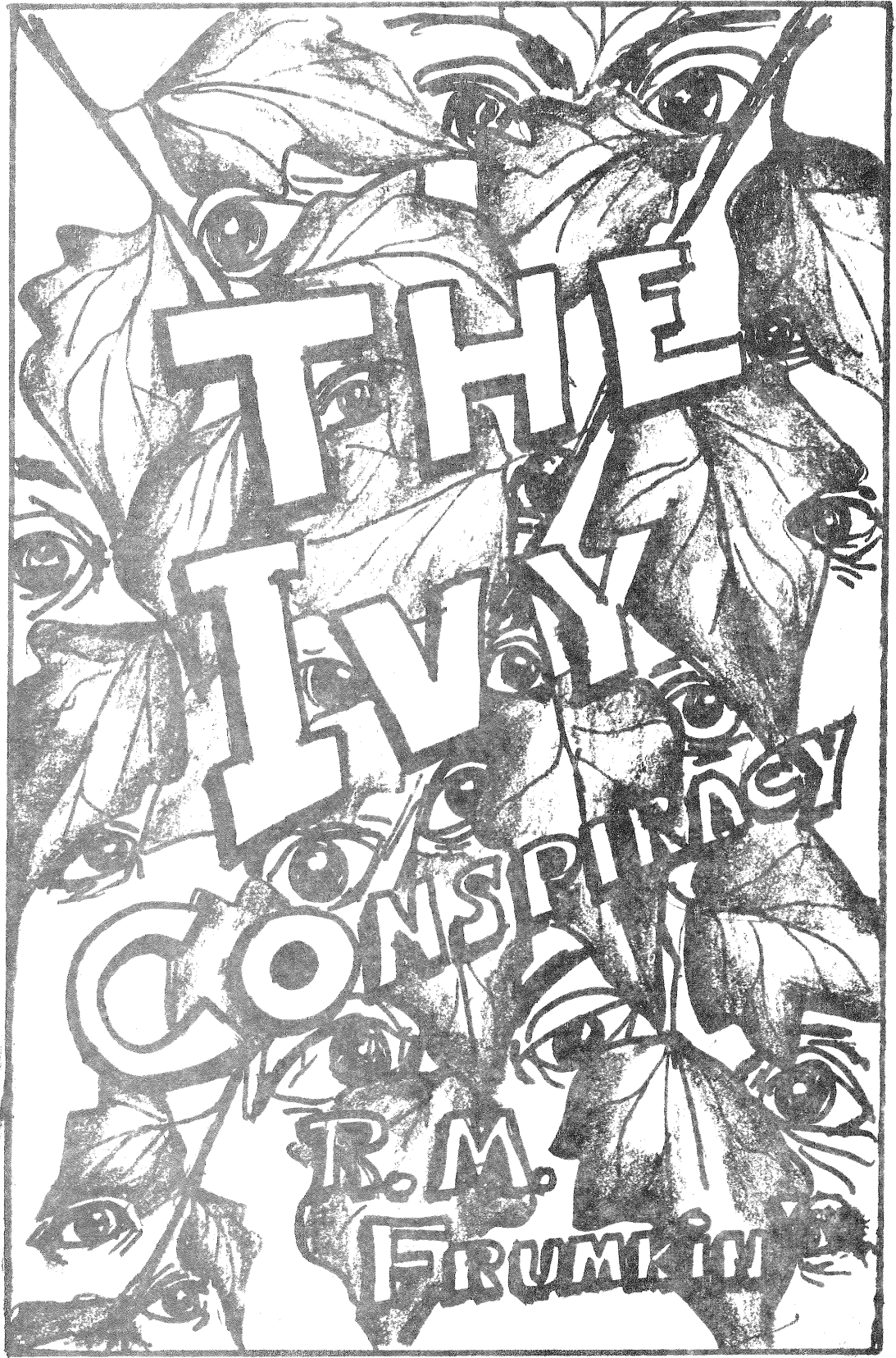
The Ivy Conspiracy:

The Anatomy of a Kent State University
Academic Assassination

By R.M. Frumkin

Foreword by Brian Martin

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Rough Draft of the Cover Design. — by R.M. FRUMKIN

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To Helen

whose love of justice
people and sense of justice
have enriched the lives
of all who knew her



Foreword

Robert M. Frumkin joined the faculty of Kent State University, in the US state of Ohio, in the late 1960s. In the 1970s, he was driven from his tenured post by the organised actions of colleagues and administrators. *The Ivy Conspiracy* is his account of these events.

The first question many readers will ask is why? Why was Frumkin the target? Those who subscribe to the assumption that the world is just will assume that Frumkin must have been to blame.¹ Having studied hundreds of stories of whistleblowing and bullying, I can only say that the world is all too often entirely unjust. In case after case, it is the honest, honourable and hard-working academics who get in the most trouble, if they are a bit different from the herd.

Frumkin was a socialist and an activist. He was a productive researcher (a possible trigger for envy). He taught his classes in an unorthodox fashion — compared to his colleagues — putting students at the centre of his pedagogy. Probably most threatening of all, he was willing to speak out about his colleagues' deficiencies.

Towards the conclusion of *The Ivy Conspiracy*, Frumkin lists over 20 different explanations for what happened. Even though he was at the centre of events, he has trouble determining how best to understand them. Being the target of attack provides a lot of first-hand information but makes it exceedingly difficult to gain perspective.

The Ivy Conspiracy is long and detailed. It starts engagingly enough with Frumkin's early experiences at Kent State University. Where it becomes the most detailed is in describing the formal hearings about charges against Frumkin, with extended extracts from recordings of the meetings.

This is an extraordinary record of an academic struggle. Frumkin is naturally inclined to present his own side, but he also is willing to document the case against him. The final 100 pages is taken up by the text of the charges laid against Frumkin.

These days, this might be called a case of academic mobbing. Mobbing is a term used to describe collective bullying at work, with one person the target of an entire group's scheming. Ken Westhues has written illuminating studies of academic mobbing.²

¹ Melvin J. Lerner, *The belief in a just world: a fundamental delusion* (New York: Plenum, 1980).

² Kenneth Westhues (ed.), *Workplace mobbing in academe: reports from twenty universities* (Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004); Kenneth Westhues, *Administrative mobbing at the University of Toronto: the trial, degradation and dismissal of a professor during the presidency of J. Robert S. Prichard* (Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).

The Ivy Conspiracy is one of the most detailed accounts of academic mobbing from its period. It shows the methods used and reveals the double standards of the attackers, who violated academic integrity in much more serious ways than their target, Frumkin. Most of all, it shows with unflinching clarity the difficulties in maintaining perspective while being the target of organised workplace opponents.

I first made contact with Bob Frumkin in 1984, when he wrote me about the Social Activist Professors Defense Foundation and its publication *Zedek*. I was interested because I was documenting cases of suppression of dissent. In the book *Intellectual Suppression*, I summarised several cases of radical US academics who had come under attack, based on accounts in *Zedek*.³

Some years after this, I guest edited an issue of the journal *Philosophy and Social Action*, and invited Bob to contribute. The issue contains two articles relating to his case: one by Avi Adnavourin about the case itself, and one by Bob about the personal impacts of suppression.⁴

Now, many years later, I am pleased to be able to make available the full story, *The Ivy Conspiracy*. For those brought up in the Internet age, it is important to realise there was a time before everyone had a personal computer. *The Ivy Conspiracy* was typed on a manual typewriter, and some of the pages are faint. It is not as attractive in appearance as many other documents.⁵

If Bob had been able to re-establish a career and make a bit of money, he would have had no trouble preparing a more polished version. As it is, though, it has extra authenticity, showing through the typescript signs of its production, an immense labour driven by the need to document and explain a gross injustice. If it helps others to make better sense of their own experiences, it will have been more than worthwhile.

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October 2010

³ Brian Martin, "Archives of suppression," in Brian Martin, C. M. Ann Baker, Clyde Manwell and Cedric Pugh, eds., *Intellectual suppression: Australian case histories, analysis and responses* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1986), 64–81, at 81.

⁴ Avi Adnavourin, "Academic assassination and a three-university plagiarism coverup: the case of Robert M. Frumkin," *Philosophy and Social Action*, Vol. 14, No. 1, January-March 1988, pp. 15–19; R. M. Frumkin, "The psychological and biosocial consequences of academic suppression," pp. 21–25.

⁵ Anyone wishing to convert the text to digital form is more than welcome!