

# The F.B.I. and Me

BY LYLE STUART

It took two years before the Federal Bureau of Investigation would release to me what they say is only a small portion of my F.B.I. files. Some 850 pages isn't much but it's all I could obtain to date without availing myself of costly court action.

The findings are frightening.

Beginning in 1948 I became a "security risk" because I wrote letters "in defense of the Congress of Industrial Organization and against keeping the Negro in his place." I was cited as a "possible source of inflammatory racial disturbances."

Three years later, I launched a controversial monthly tabloid newspaper, *Expose*. (The name was later changed to *The Independent*.) And with an article in the second issue of *Expose*, "The Truth About (Walter) Winchell," I became a personal enemy of John Edgar Hoover, alias The Director.

Each report on me went to him; his initials and personal remarks appear again and again.

The fun really began when I published the book *Inside the F.B.I.* by ex-agent Norman Ollestad. This was not just another political attack on America's secret police but rather an incisive look at the comic aspects of Hoover himself.

Agents were assigned to sit in TV studio audiences and heckle Ollestad and me; to write letters of protest to radio and television stations that dared to interview us about the book; to make offensive phone calls to studio executives about such programs.

Hoover personally approved all of it and commended the agents for their conscientious defense of the Bureau.

But this isn't what made the files frightening. The really scary thing is that

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in 850 pages there is less accurate information about me than a cub reporter could have gathered in a single day of digging. And yet, by any conservative estimate, hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in agent time to "case" me and my activities.

After years, an agent reported to the Director that "the leads are very hot and we are getting what we think will be definite evidence that he is an articulate member of the Soviet apparatus in the U.S. For example, we have learned of L.S.'s association with the son of Max Lowenthal, the F.B.I. critic. Lowenthal's son, by the way, attended Columbia University, the halls of learning for other Young Communists. The pieces of the jigsaw are beginning to fall into place."

Apart from the fact that I've been a critic of Soviet repression for years and am not a member of any apparatus, I have never met Max Lowenthal's son.

At another point Hoover pens "Good stuff!" on a report from an informer, "a known homosexual whose reliability has yet to be tested," who tells the F.B.I. that I am a "known homosexual who frequents midtown bars."

I don't happen to be a homosexual, but more important is the fact that I don't drink and don't recall ever setting foot in a midtown bar in my life!

Multiply this by about four thousand and you have an estimate of the number of errors of fact that appear in 850 pages. Report after report begins by noting that I have "attacked John Edgar and many

other government officials." Whereupon, after that, anything goes.

Pretty soon not only the F.B.I. but the C.I.A., the 108th Intelligence Corps Group of the U.S. Army and the Division of Intelligence Operations of the Third Naval District all had agents assigned to me.

And still they got nothing right.

My wife died in 1969. In 1971 a personal report to The Director notes that "Stuart resides with his wife at 105 Ashland Place, Brooklyn." I hadn't set foot in that apartment in a year. I lived in midtown Manhattan.

This is about the level of accuracy. It's worrisome. What if there *was* a security reason to know something about me?

But at least in one instance, my sentiments were known. An agent decided to show some initiative. He pointed out that I seemed to be on an intimate footing with Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and other leaders of the Cuban Revolution. He requested permission to interview me with the goal of "persuading him to become a double agent."

I wasn't even a *single* agent!

Back came Mr. Hoover's personal directive. At no time was I to be interviewed by any F.B.I. agent. Nor was any reply to be given to my letters to the Bureau. I had made my sentiments about Cuba clear, said Mr. Hoover, and "Stuart has shown that he will not hesitate to embarrass this Bureau at every opportunity."

At last, one point for accuracy!