

might occur. . . . Many Communists were arrested in a new acceleration of the French anti-Red campaign.

Mississippi continued its struggle to keep emancipation away from its doors. The state legislature enacted a measure providing separate civics textbooks for Negro school children which would eliminate instruction in voting and similar non-useful subjects. . . . In a dissent from a decision on taxes affecting interstate commerce, Justices Black, Frankfurter and Douglas said that Congress, and not the courts, should deal with the problem of "the constantly increasing barriers to trade among the states." . . . New York City policemen showed a coy reluctance to answer questionnaire cards asking if they were members of the Christian Front or "of any subversive, communist, bund or fascist club or organization."

## American OGPU

WHEN THE RUSSIAN OGPU and German Gestapo commit their raids, we shudder that any government should make such indecencies technically lawful. In our country, Congress and the Supreme Court forbid "dirty business" by law-enforcement officers. No federal detective, we assume, can take a man's papers from him without lawful warrant. No G-man, we assume, will descend suddenly on citizens, to rush them on a moment's surprise notice before a grand jury, with their books or records. Nor, we assume, would a federal agent get a man or woman into his office for a star-chamber examination, under the pretext of a subpoena requiring him to appear before a grand jury.

Nevertheless, these things were done by our own Federal Bureau of Investigation to the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade between February 6 and 10, 1940, in the civilized city of New York. At the same time the FBI launched raids against this organization in Detroit and Milwaukee—raids condemned by the Civil Liberties Union as "high handed," by Representative Coffee of Washington, who said they "smell bad," by the Michigan Conference for Civil Rights, by the conservative Milwaukee Journal and by many others. The Journal said in an editorial that the FBI gave the impression "of a Gestapo that can haul citizens off to prison and court in ignominy, imposing any kind of conditions the captors wish without accountability." The Journal added that chaining the captives made them look like "a chain gang being led away. . . . Why arrest a man at 4 A.M. who can be found any time during the day? And why handcuff him when his record or the offense charged . . . contains no intimation of a violent element? Is it that Chief Hoover and his men want to create a wartime hysteria in this country?"

The New York Times that they regarded their arrest of the young Christian Fronters on the charge of conspiring to overthrow the government "as a formality" (the quotation is from The Times's paraphrase) "that enabled the government to hold the men" for other purposes—a well known device not wholly alien to the device of protective custody.

A week before that, the Bureau's request for a special appropriation of \$2,500,000 to combat subversive activities by means of its spy and detective service was discussed by Representative Marcantonio. He called to the attention of his colleagues testimony given in support of the request by the Bureau's chief, J. Edgar Hoover. Marcantonio warned the House that Hoover's activities "constitute a real, serious menace to civil liberties." They "lay the foundation," he said, "for Palmer raids, for a Palmer system and for a Gestapo system in the United States." There is every reason to keep track of genuine foreign spies and saboteurs, but this can be done better if it is not confused with spectacular assaults on the rights of citizens.

Last September Hoover's nationwide protection of the country against subversive elements was well under way. He asked everybody, especially banks, business houses, railroads and local authorities, to help rid "America of those who desire to undermine the federal government." But he appears to suspect that some of the undermining is planned at meetings for which the local authorities themselves grant permits. He disseminated a suggestion received from one mayor that local authorities notify Hoover's bureau of every permit issued anywhere in this country for any public assemblage, "before the meeting starts." In other words, he is engaged in an effort to bring under the eye of his centralized detective service meetings in the parks and city streets anywhere and everywhere in America.

Hoover's talent for finding radicals illustrates what Representative Coffee said to the Michigan civil-rights conference about the current hysteria. "We're going simply crazy on this subject of Reds in the United States. We see Reds everywhere, under every bed and table." Hoover himself found a Communist issue in the attempt of the federal Civil Service Commission to require him to select from civil-service lists the additional agents he will hire in his attack on subversive activities. He charged that the Commission had previously tried to send him Communists, to work in the very midst of his detectives.

Now, while Hoover is getting additional millions from Congress, the protests against his type of law enforcement are piling up. His actions in Detroit will probably be investigated by Attorney General Jackson. The head of the latter's criminal division, John Rogge, in a straightforward speech to the Michigan conference, said that the whole incident is being studied.

been practised, but also to offset the fast-growing suspicion that the administration has deliberately embarked on an anti-Red campaign. Valuable as is the inquiry into this chain-gang incident, it should not mark the limit of the new Attorney General's investigation. He should study the whole record of the lawlessness of Hoover's bureau, and also the widespread salesmanship by which Hoover has made himself much too powerful to be easily curbed by a superior.

In foreign countries people are forced by their governments to submit to their Gestapos. In this country, Hoover has the voluntary support of all who delight in gangster movies and ten-cent detective magazines. Already, in the minds of many Americans, the great Department of Justice is merely its G-men. At every entrance of the massive building in which it is housed, the only placard for the visitor to read is one which directs him to the gory dime museum organized by Hoover at public expense. Hoover has been made known to young and old by radio, by newsreels, by motion pictures based on the propaganda he furnishes to script writers, by speeches and by the widespread franking of those speeches.

But the glamor that surrounds him also conceals the growth of a power inconsistent with our conception of democratic institutions. That power is exercised through the forty-odd branches the government maintains for his bureau throughout the country. Without interference from civil service, he picks and rules his detectives with an iron hand. Through his branch chiefs, he maintains close contact with federal judges and with federal prosecuting attorneys everywhere. And on almost any federal official, as well as any "Red," Hoover can have a dossier on government expense.

Last spring he had to come to Congress for a quarter of a million dollars he had overspent, as reported in *The New York Times*, "without authorization of law." Representative Woodrum of Virginia opposed Hoover's request for an appropriation of twice the amount of his overdraft on Uncle Sam. Woodrum said that he did not wish to "detract from the fine service" rendered by the FBI in kidnaping cases, "although I do not hang any halo about its head. . . . It has to abide by the law, and it ought to be the first one to live within the law." *The Times* reported that the application for double the amount unlawfully spent "was shouted down." But the House legalized the amount to which Hoover on his own authority had already decided to commit Congress.

Attorney General Jackson might well take to heart what was done toward combating wartime hysteria by some of his predecessors, whom he equals in courage and experience. One of the greatest of the Attorney Generals, Harlan Stone, now on the Supreme Court, reduced the Bureau to its normal size, after it had become swollen under William J. Burns, as it is now swollen under J. Edgar Hoover. When Herbert

whose greatest achievement was a thorough study of the lawlessness of law-enforcement officials. J. Edgar Hoover was then operating a small bureau, no more important than the modest, small, efficient secret services in the Departments of the Treasury and the Post Office. In those days the FBI was not an American OGPU. Its law-enforcement activities could be kept within the limits of law observance.

## That Debt Controversy

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT's recent defense of the fiscal policy of his administration, when he fired a whole arsenal of statistics at his newspaper interviewers at Hyde Park, has stirred up a counter-offensive of criticism among his opponents. The President's main points were that we should not worry so much about the growth of the national debt when we realize that during the period of its expansion, from the bottom of the depression, the national income has increased 71 percent, with comparable gains in other indices of our economic condition. Moreover, while the federal debt was increasing, other debts have been reduced, so that the total debt burden of the country is actually smaller now than it was in 1932. If we cut spending too drastically now, we are likely to encourage a recession, just as we did in the spring of 1937.

The first objection to be made was that by Thomas E. Dewey—that the President's figures on debt were wrong by about \$9,000,000,000. Mr. Dewey points out that the direct national debt increased about \$20,000,000,000 between 1932 and 1939, while, according to official figures, the debts of subordinate units fell only slightly. And if you take the sum of all debt—including indirect federal debt and private debt—the score is an increase of \$26,500,000,000 for public indebtedness and a decrease of \$17,500,000,000 for private. This adds up to a \$9,000,000,000 overall increase—and a \$9,000,000,000 error.

Mr. Dewey's imputation of error rests on the assumption that it is fair to use the gross federal debt—that is, not only the debt owed directly by the government but that owed by its independent agencies. But these agencies—like RFC, FHA, etc.—borrow money in order to relend it, and have offsets consisting of debts owed *them*. Mr. Dewey convicts the President of error, therefore, by the simple expedient of counting what are essentially the same debts twice—once when owed to the federal government and again when owed by it. He also overlooks gold and cash, against which part of the debt is offset.

*The New York Times*, evidently wary of this flaw in Mr. Dewey's logic, though not having the fairness to mention it, uses the net debt figure, but editorially boosts the supposed error to \$20,000,000,000 by leav-