

Our Lawless G-Men

THE secret police of totalitarian countries, whether Communist, Fascist, or Nazi, need refer to no statute books in order to investigate, arrest, or imprison. They, and not the law, decide what constitutes a crime. Our G-men, like those other G-men of the Gestapo and GPU, are beginning to act on similar principles. Our evidence for this statement comes from J. Edgar Hoover himself. His testimony last November and again in January before the House Appropriations Committee shows that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is engaging in activities for which it has no legal authorization. We believe it the Attorney General's duty to investigate and forbid the extra-legal activities of the FBI.

In September, 1939, the FBI organized a "General Intelligence Division," and when Hoover appeared before the House Appropriations Committee to ask a supplemental appropriation in November, he described the activities of this division. He said it had "compiled extensive indices of individuals, groups, and organizations engaged in these subversive activities, in espionage activities, or any activities that are possibly detrimental to the internal security of the United States." The detection of espionage is part of the bureau's duty, but what does Hoover mean by "subversive activities" and "any activities that are possibly detrimental to the internal security of the United States"? Either category can be as broad as the head of the FBI chooses to make it, and neither is made a subject for inquiry by any federal law. What is the purpose of these "extensive indices"? They have been arranged "not only alphabetically," Hoover explained, "but also geographically, so that at any time, should we enter into the conflict abroad, we would be able to go into any of these communities and identify individuals or groups who might be a source of grave danger to the security of this country. These indexes will be extremely important and valuable in grave emergency." That is, lists of persons he considers dangerous have been compiled by J. Edgar Hoover for a mass roundup in the event of war or "grave emergency." No such compilation is authorized by law. Is Hoover to act as an American Himmler?

Hoover's notions of what constitutes the "subversive" are sufficiently well known. They parallel the views of his greatest booster, William Randolph Hearst, and it is sufficient to say that they are broad enough to include among the "enemies to society" advocates of as mild a reform as parole. The words quoted are from Hoover's address in July, 1935, before the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Hoover's methods of operation were dramatically demonstrated the other day in Detroit when he chose five o'clock in the morning as the hour to rouse twelve reputable citizens of Detroit from their

beds and bring them into court in chains on charges the Attorney General several days later dismissed. The early-morning raid, as a means of striking terror into the victims, is part of the technique of every totalitarian secret-police agency. Some idea of the breadth of Hoover's ambitions may be obtained from the release he sent out last September suggesting that local authorities throughout the country, in granting permits for public meetings, notify the FBI of such meetings in advance. In September, Hoover testified, he wrote to many persons and organizations, including "banks, business houses, railroads," asking for their cooperation in the "general intelligence" work. The definition of "subversive" held by some bankers, business men, and railroad executives is apt to be a broad one, sometimes broad enough to take in the whole of the New Deal from Mr. Roosevelt down. Later in the same month Hoover issued a statement which invited the cooperation of citizens everywhere in "ridding America of those who desire to undermine the federal government."

This is not the country's first experience with either a General Intelligence Division or J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover was head of the General Intelligence Division from 1919 to 1924, when it was abolished by Harlan F. Stone, now a justice of the United States Supreme Court, when he became Attorney General. William J. Burns was then head of the FBI. The division played a part, according to Felix Frankfurter, in framing Sacco and Vanzetti. It compiled biographies, according to the Attorney General's report in 1920, "of all authors, publishers, editors, etc., showing any connection with an ultra-radical body or movement." The ramifications of the FBI's "general intelligence" work were protested by the American Civil Liberties Union in a famous report of May, 1924, entitled "The Nation-wide Spy System Centering in the Department of Justice." According to an article by Ray Tucker in *Collier's* for August 19, 1933, former President Hoover was among the dangerous radicals shadowed by the FBI in that period, and "at one time or another the bureau's files have contained reports on such prominent Americans as Justice Stone, the late Senator Thomas, Senator Wheeler, Senator Borah, Dean Roscoe Pound, Professor Felix Frankfurter, Professor Zechariah Chaffee, Jr., Frank P. Walsh, and John L. Lewis."

The FBI has now been granted \$10,000,000 for the next fiscal year, much of it to revive illegal practices of the kind that marked its conduct during the days of A. Mitchell Palmer and William J. Burns. That amount is roughly fifteen times as great as the bureau's appropriation in the year we entered the war, 1917. Congress has failed in its duty by voting that \$10,000,000 as a routine matter, consenting by silence to the continuation of activities totally at variance with American principles of government. The Attorney General must now

take steps to confine the FBI to its statutory job. That job is not to be a combination of Dick Tracy and Mrs. Dilling.

Trade Agreements Upheld

THE action of the House in deciding, by a vote of 216 to 168, to extend the Trade Agreements Act three more years would be wholly gratifying if it had not been taken on what appears to be almost entirely partisan grounds. While a few individuals broke party ranks and voted according to conviction, an overwhelming majority of Representatives divided strictly along party lines with apparent indifference to the basic issues of the controversy. From one point of view this is fully understandable. For many decades the tariff was the main, if not the only, issue which clearly divided the Republican from the Democratic Party. The Hull trade program is directly in line with the historic tariff policy of the Democratic Party, and therefore has been bitterly opposed by the Republicans.

This may explain but it does not justify such an overwhelmingly partisan vote on a matter of deep public concern. There is no such clear-cut division of interests among the rank and file of men and women who vote the Democratic or Republican tickets. It is true that most persons who live in the South would naturally, in view of the section's dependence on exports, be in the camp of the supporters of the Hull trade policy. And it happens that the South's Representatives in Congress are all Democrats. A similar identity of interest and party inspired New York City's Democratic Congressmen, for New York, as the country's chief port, stands to benefit substantially from an increase in foreign trade.

But on what basis, economic or logical, can the bulk of the Republican vote be justified? The assertion that the Hull trade program is ruinous to agriculture represents, as we have repeatedly shown in these pages, so gross a falsification of the facts that it is to be doubted whether it is believed even by Republican leaders. Similarly, it would be difficult to find any industry of importance which has been materially injured by the trade agreements. If such an industry existed, we should be deluged with "statistics" showing how the program was destroying American industry. On the other hand, several important industries have been materially aided by the trade pacts. In some cases these industries have been virtually unheard in Washington because the Representatives from the states in which they are located happened to be Republicans. Mr. Vandenberg, for example, as the senior Senator from Michigan, is acting in a manner that is fundamentally antagonistic to the best interests of the automobile industry when he attacks the Hull program.

Passage of the bill, under the circumstances, was a

foregone conclusion. The crucial vote was not on the bill itself but on the amendment introduced by Representative Crowther of New York to make all agreements contingent on approval by both houses of Congress. Adoption of such a provision, or the alternative proposal of Representative Coffee of Nebraska requiring Senate ratification, would have scuttled the entire program. It would have had the effect of reopening the whole question of specific tariff rates every time an agreement came up for ratification. History has shown that the result would be an orgy of log-rolling and vote-trading, with little, if any, progress in the direction of stimulating foreign trade. Equally indefensible was the amendment offered by Representative Disney of Oklahoma, which would have forbidden the American negotiators to make reductions in the excise duties recently applied on imports of copper, oil, lumber, coal, and vegetable oils. These "excise duties" are clearly tariff duties masquerading under another name, and very bad duties at that.

The bill for the extension of the Hull program now goes to the Senate, where it is believed that the Administration has sufficient votes to force its adoption in substantially its present form. Here party lines are not quite so strong, and it is to be hoped that the debate will be on a higher level than that in the House. But if we are to judge by some of the statements already issued by leading Senators, the prospects for an enlightened discussion are none too bright.

Can Britain Afford Chamberlain?

LAST WEEK, in a purely working-class London constituency, a district of docks and factories, an official Labor Party candidate who supported the war was elected to Parliament with 14,343 votes. Opposing him was Harry Pollitt, one of the ablest and most popular Communist leaders, and a member of Mosley's Fascist Party, both of whom denounced the "imperialist" war. They polled 966 and 151 votes, respectively.

The result of this by-election is a clear indication that the defeatist propaganda of the Communist Party is making little headway among the British working classes despite the freedom accorded to it. But as Ernest Davies points out in an article on page 302, the fact that the British Labor Party is supporting the war does not mean that it is satisfied with the Chamberlain government. On the contrary, the policies pursued by the government both at home and abroad are causing increasing restiveness.

The progressive elements in Britain, as represented by the Labor movement, and the conservative upper classes, from whose ranks the government is wholly recruited, seek the defeat of Nazism from quite different motives.