

# My Forty Years with the F.B.I.

by John Kenneth Galbraith

*The author's response to the most interesting set of government documents that has come his way, not excepting the Pentagon Papers*

**T**he graduate students with whom I associated in the Thirties were uniformly radical, and the most distinguished were Communists. I listened to them eagerly and would have liked to have joined both the conversation and the party, but here my agricultural background was a real handicap. It meant that as a matter of formal Marxian doctrine, I was politically immature. Among the merits of capitalism to Marx was the fact that it rescued men from the idiocy of rural life. I had only very recently been retrieved. I sensed this bar, and I knew also that my pride would be deeply hurt by rejection. So I kept outside. There was possibly one other factor. Although I recognized that the system could not and should not survive, I was enjoying it so much that secretly, I was a little sorry. ”

I wrote the above eight years ago for a volume celebrating the centenary of the University of California, to which I had proceeded for graduate study in 1931 after taking a degree in animal husbandry at Ontario Agricultural College. I am able to reproduce the item without going back to the original, for it appears in my F.B.I. file under the date September 17, 1971, just forty years after my original temptation. Government employment was not involved; on the undesirability of that, at the time, Mr. Nixon and I were in unnatural agreement. Rather, I had recently been nominated president of the American Economic Association, an honor often associated with longevity, and a member of the association had written to J. Edgar Hoover to say that while he did not expect any action, he did want Mr. Hoover to know that “the trend is of concern to many in the profession.” The director, who had much such help, replied six days later with a three-line letter of thanks beginning “Dear Dr.” and carrying possibly ten different initials according to clearance.

This mild item summarizes my response to the most interesting set of government documents that has come my way, not excepting the Pentagon Papers. My F.B.I. file is a massive thing, good for several days’ reading, and much more than that if you try to retrieve, as often you can, the names of informants, which, under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, have been blotted out to protect the donors from invasion of privacy and perhaps an occasional attempt to square accounts. The file cultivates a deep awareness

of paranoia, not one’s own but that of the large number of one’s fellow citizens who lived in fear of Communists and Communism and that of the even larger number who feared they would seem to be soft on Communism and in consequence be heaved out of their jobs. It tells, also, how difficult it was to decide what qualified an individual as a Communist or a dangerous radical or a person otherwise inimical to the system. Dubious personal traits, even a badly exaggerated ego, might serve. The file is unparalleled, in my experience, as a mine of misinformation. It proves, conclusively, that on the matter of being a security risk—perilous one day, safe the next—the age of miracles is not over.

While the impression of other people’s paranoia is great, my own was diminished by the fact that while the documents are full of deeply damaging intentions, virtually nothing unpleasant ever happened as a consequence. (But one can see how the only slightly more vulnerable must have suffered. It is good to be, however marginally, a member of the establishment.)

The files also prove, and here beyond the most pallid shadow of a doubt, that the government of the United States has, in these matters, a colossal capacity for wasting money. In 1950, some tens of thousands of old-fashioned dollars were spent investigating my fitness to continue in a job in which I had rendered no service, a job of which I was unaware until the investigation culminated one day in a request that I tell all details of my association with Mr. Corliss Lamont. Mr. Lamont, a neighbor, friend, radical, civil libertarian and son of a Morgan partner, was considered an especially dangerous companion for anyone employed without knowing it in a nonexistent job. On this, as on other matters, there is much that is very funny. There is also much that evokes one’s sympathy, even admiration, for the rank-and-file member and the down-the-line official of the F.B.I. who must struggle with these pathetic tasks. But let me begin at the beginning.

**M**y first jobs with the United States government involved only the most benign of relationships with the F.B.I., and at the outset none at all. In the early summer of 1934, on the way from Berkeley to Harvard, I stopped over in Washington and was promptly put on the payroll by a former professor as an associate economist

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*In a staged setting (opposite), the author poses with his real F.B.I. dossier. On the wall hangs J. Edgar Hoover.*



in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Economists were in short supply. The A.A.A. had, during this period or just before, enrolled a number of radicals of later fame, including Alger Hiss, Lee Pressman, John Abt, Nathan Witt and Nathaniel Weyl, as well as Jerome Frank, George Ball and Adlai Stevenson. As with the Berkeley radicals, I never at the time achieved the distinction that allowed me to know any of them.

In those days one went on the payroll without F.B.I. clearance, the F.B.I. being generally regarded as a law-enforcement agency, and I do not remember that I was even asked if I was a citizen, which I was not. Clearance was, however, required from James A. Farley, custodian and dispenser of Democratic patronage. His representative had an office on the top floor of the South Building of the U.S.D.A., and he called me up and made me affirm that I was a Democrat. This I did with good conscience. In southern Ontario everyone adored F.D.R.; certainly no one at Berkeley had been for Hoover.

I worked further on various public tasks in the next few years without being aware of the Bureau or vice versa. This changed in the summer of 1940, when I was employed by the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense. Elementary investigations were ordered, perhaps not unreasonably, to exclude spies from such posts. The resulting reports can be read with nearly undiluted admiration both of oneself and the investigators. At Berkeley and Cambridge, Princeton and the American Farm Bureau Federa-

tion in Chicago, all places of previous study or employment, the agents were told and faithfully reported that I was brilliant, an excellent writer, possessed of a keen sense of sportsmanship (something of which I was not then or thereafter aware), of a good personality, "not obnoxious," a good conversationalist and had no adverse credit record, in fact, none at all. It was said, no one being perfect, that the subject was "impressed with his own knowledge and importance" and that he was "too deep a thinker" for undergraduates. Also, a poor speaker.

From those earliest days one detects a tendency, highly developed in all later investigations, for one's friends to sense with precision what statement would be the most damaging to one's public career and then to volunteer, with great emphasis and some talent for invention, the precise opposite. Eventually there were to be numerous (by F.B.I. standards) derogatory items in the file, to which I will come, and while the good things disappear, the bad live on. Gresham's law operated relentlessly here. But more than half of the file by volume consists of extravagant attestations to whatever quality would most allay suspicion. Thus, during the 1940 investigation, the longtime chairman

of the Harvard department of economics, a conservative scholar of modest attainments named Harold Hitchings Burbank (he is easily identified from the context), was forced to concede, as a matter of simple intellectual honesty, that "the subject leaned as far to the left as President Roosevelt." But then he moved quickly to recoup. I was extremely loyal. I also had a fine military aspect—"commanding appearance due to his height of 5'6" [I am 6'8½"] and his dignified bearing."

Another Harvard professor went further and reported that I "was a conservative thinker and talker," and a Berkeley academician went all out and described me as "reactionary" and therefore "entirely desirable from every angle." One agent did pick up word that I was currently in Cuba with a nervous breakdown. My nerves at the time were fine; Cuba, although then a thoroughly respectable place for a holiday, I had never seen. The misinformation begins at the beginning.

A Princeton professor of economics advised the investigator that I was pretty doctrinaire in my views.... His description of me as doctrinaire was a near catastrophe, for it was heard as "doctorware" by the investigator and was held to imply that I was a follower of an otherwise unidentified subversive called Dr. Ware.

Needless to say, I was cleared, and in the next few years I had even more reason to love the F.B.I. and J. Edgar Hoover, for there was the small matter of a murder rap. One day in late 1941 or early 1942, I arrived at the Office of Price Administration to find two staff members waiting for me, their faces grey with anxiety. A few weeks before, the Navy, a major consumer of sponges for some arcane shipboard reason, had complained about the prices it was

having to pay. The two men had gone to Tarpon Springs, Florida, an acknowledged center of the industry, to hold hearings prior to setting a ceiling. The first hearing came to a violent end, the violence having been provoked by the local leader of the sponge fishermen, a man of Greek antecedents and forthright reputation named—here highly approximate memory replaces history—Nickolas Bolenkus. Further hearings were called and attended by no one because Nick's men were patrolling in a menacing way outside. Eventually Nick called in at the hotel to suggest, helpfully, that our men might just as well go back to Washington. They were accomplishing nothing in Florida. In the presence of numerous witnesses, one of my men told Nick that he was about to meet with a major misfortune at the hands of another individual bigger and just as tough as Nick himself. This man, he said—combining emphasis with imagination—was his boss, J.K. Galbraith. It was legal disaster that he had in mind, but that was not made clear. The threat delivered, the two price fixers left for Tampa and the plane to Washington. The evening before our meeting in the office, someone had called them from Florida. Earlier that day, Nick had stepped on the starter of his automobile, to which someone had wired



a very large charge of dynamite. Both the car and Nick were totaled. My men then remembered their threat.

I recall thinking at the time that my alibi was better than my worried friends imagined. But I put in a call to one of J. Edgar Hoover's acolytes at the F.B.I. and told him the situation. Toward noon, Edgar—as, believe it or not, we called him in those days—called back. A cursory inquiry had revealed that I was twenty-ninth in plausibility (that is my recollection of my rank) as suspected murderer among those persons who had been heard to threaten to knock off the late Nickolas Bolenkus. My men were greatly relieved, and I acquired a story that I have since told at least a hundred times. Not every Harvard professor has been involved, however remotely, in a gang killing.

Over the next nine years my relations with the F.B.I. remained pleasant and also fragmentary. In the closing days of the war and for some time thereafter, I was myself involved in investigatory activities. In 1944, President Roosevelt, having, as I've often said, mastered the first principle of modern warfare—which is that the claims of air generals as to what they are accomplishing have no natural relationship to truth—asked that a special study group, the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, be constituted to establish the facts. I became a director the following year, but this involved no new investigation of my background. However, I did become knowledgeable on economic conditions in Germany and Japan, and this led to my being given charge of economic policy in these countries (plus Korea and Austria) at the State Department in early 1946.

My years as a price fixer had been richly controversial. I was thought to enjoy severity for its own sake, which may have been true, and "radical theorist" was the term of opprobrium on which all of my critics eventually converged. My resignation from the O.P.A. in 1943 had provoked more applause from conservatives than I have achieved since. In consequence, the Civil Service Commission and the special security investigators of the State Department were moved to investigate. The State Department was not, in those days, a nest of radical theorists.

The job was not one I enjoyed. General Lucius Clay in Germany was not impressed with my guidance on economic affairs, and General Douglas MacArthur in Japan may not have been aware of it. The investigation as to my suitability for the task was not completed until after I had concluded, in the autumn of 1946, that I wasn't being useful and had left.

These investigators turned up the usual and numerous encomiums on my loyalty and conversational tendencies, and on my loyalty these were as eloquent as before. However, now there was some bad-mouthing from people whose prices I had fixed and people who disapproved on principle. One inventive adversary told a Civil Service investigator that Galbraith "was fired by the president and board of trustees from his job as professor at Princeton University because he was a Communist. He is a member of many Communist front organizations . . . a totalitarian . . . would be a whole lot more effective with a pick and shovel . . . [in the State Department] would be absolutely a menace." And an aged Princeton professor of economics advised the investigator that I was pretty doctrinaire in my views, "in favor of anything Russia was in favor of." The reference to Russia did not survive, but his description of me as doctrinaire was a near catastrophe, for it was heard as "doctorware" by the investigator and was

held to imply that I was a follower of an otherwise unidentified subversive called Doctorware, later promoted, academically, to Dr. Ware. For the next twenty years, whenever my file was examined, the superb testimony on my personality, garrulity and loyalty was never reproduced. Only the references to radical theory, to Dr. Ware and to the action of the Princeton president and trustees. In time, the F.B.I., having come into possession of the Civil Service files, sent an agent back to interview the informant who had told of



A picture taken as I greeted L.B.J. strongly affirms J. Edgar Hoover's mistrust of me.

my being fired from Princeton, who then denied all knowledge of my discharge. (As the university frequently advised the Bureau, I had been an assistant professor, and my three-year term had expired while I was on leave with the O.P.A.) The man also denied all other firsthand knowledge of my life and loyalty. He passed the F.B.I. on to his own source, an "investigator" for the Republican National Committee, and he denied all knowledge of any kind. Still, the impression remained permanently in the file that there was something very funny about my departure from Princeton. Perhaps it was thought that the Communists had somehow got to these informants, although here I am just guessing.

Another durable piece of information from these years came from a newspaper clipping. During the war it was charged that my controls on newsprint prices were drying up the supply. This a congressman had publicized as proof that I was a member of a "group [that] participated in 'an effort to curtail drastically the amount of newsprint available for the free press.'" This charge also survived; indeed, it was never disproved.

In consequence of the foregoing information, or such



as was by then available, and the controversy over my price-fixing, the Security Screening Committee of the Security Office of the Department of State on January 25, 1946, formally disapproved my appointment because it considered me a security risk and also because it felt that my being on the payroll would "draw sharp criticism of the department . . . [and] jeopardize certain programs and appropriations" because "it cannot be conceived that this applicant possesses qualifications which will in any way offset or compensate for the resulting damage to the department's prestige." I was then promptly and routinely appointed and did not know of this interdict until I got the file. The investigatory routine had already become silly. During the war I had worked closely with James Byrnes, who was Secretary of State at the time of the investigation, and with W.L. Clayton, Byrnes's undersecretary for economic matters. They knew me well; it was natural that they would ignore investigators who did not.

Nineteen fifty was the year when my relations with the Bureau became intimate and detailed. Of this I was also unaware. In 1948, I left *Fortune* magazine, where I had been an editor—*Fortune* had only a moderately more subversive reputation then than now—and returned to Harvard. During the summer of 1950, I was in Europe on vacation with my wife and son, and in Switzerland one day I received an urgent telephone call from the Economic Cooperation Administration in Washington (the backup organization of the Marshall Plan) asking if I would go to Frankfurt and Bonn and work out arrangements involving a joint German-American commission to examine the refugee problem, a matter on which I was deemed to have some special competence. It was several days before travel clearance arrived, and later, when back in Washington, I asked the man who had called me why, after all the urgency, all the delay. He told me that it was a time-consuming task to read my security file and that the man who had started on it had been transferred to another job before he got finished. During those summer days the file was, in fact, growing at a spectacular rate.

Early that year—on the twenty-third of February, to be exact—I had attended for a few hours a meeting at the Department of Commerce in Washington to consider the effect of the agricultural-subsidy programs on the economy. I had filed various forms to claim travel and compensation, matters I have never been inclined to neglect. Unknown to me, one of these had put me on the rolls of the Department of Commerce as a consultant when, as and if employed—which, since I was not again employed, was not at all. This, in turn, made me subject

What was wrong with the F.B.I. was the archaic, angry and, in the end, senile old despot who headed it and the people who were too frightened to retire him. Also the people, as at the White House, who used it for their own political ends. Also all who acquiesced in the scrutiny of subjective beliefs and attitudes.

to the deepening concern over the LOYALTY OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, as the investigative forms are headed—a concern then gathering force in response to the trials of Alger Hiss and the fear of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. A preliminary check by the F.B.I. turned up the alarming references to radical theory, Dr. Ware (still called Doctorware), the righteous action of the Princeton president and trustees, the conspiracy against the free press and a couple of items of real, if less than subversive, substance. At a congressional hearing in 1941, I had come to the support of a onetime Berkeley professor of mine, Robert A. Brady, who was under heavy fire for having had a book distributed in England by the Left Book Club. I had assured the committee that the Left Book Club, which specialized exclusively in works from well left of center, was the English equivalent, more or less, of the Book-of-the-Month Club. There was a large element of fantasy here; there is always a temptation to say whatever will tranquilize an aroused

committee and then to get out of the room. You never should. Further, in 1944, I had been active in the National Citizens Political Action Committee, a body organized by Sidney Hillman to work for the reelection of President Roosevelt. It unquestionably enrolled some very active Communists, an association that I'm glad to say I did not then (and still do not) believe permanently destructive. And we had been for the reelection of Roosevelt. Although the N.C.P.A.C. was not one of the proscribed organizations of the Attorney

General or even of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee, it had fallen under the ban of the relatively much less discriminating California Committee on UnAmerican Activities. Their list of subversives and subversive organizations had a kind of cadet standing and was regularly reviewed by Washington. All this was enough to cause the Department of Commerce, on March 28, 1950, to ask the Civil Service Commission to request the F.B.I. to convert the superficial check into what the F.B.I. calls an F.F.I.—a full field investigation. Frightened bureaucrats in Commerce and not the F.B.I., it should be noted, were responsible.

It was a very full investigation indeed, and it was this that must have run into the real money. Men were deployed, according to a later memorandum, in Washington, New York, Boston, Chicago, Newark (meaning Princeton), Newark again, Detroit, San Francisco (meaning Berkeley), Chicago, Richmond (meaning suburban Washington), Richmond again, Birmingham, Albany, Boston again and St. Louis. A request went to the State Department for research, via the consular offices, into my Canadian background and my activities while a student thirteen years before in England. "Should substantive informa- (Continued on page 172)



## Years with the F.B.I.

from page 126) tion be de- these countries] reflecting the part of the appointee, appreciated if signed state- obtained from persons fur- disloyal information." No mation, so attested, seems forthcoming. My book re- also read by a scholarly New York F.B.I. office and ot to "reflect any informa- be pertinent to this inves- single exception was a le Miller's *The Sure Thing*, ng to do with the witch- hat period, and this was closure with the New York t.

agent reported that "the morgue file of *The New* newspaper on the appointee l by the writer. The file any information reflecting y of the appointee to the ."

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the F.B.I. agents were with testimony on my loy- eches were even more ex- an in 1946, but now there nce. Before, the agents had yal I was; now they heard munist I was. Before, the ad led me to wonder how gh office in the American they conveyed the clear at I was in hard training ith H.U.A.C.

e, however, some nasty ng some new ones. A De- ing man with whom I had .P.A., after first stressing dislike in a very decent ed appointee as a 'fly-by- ist who seemed determined

to inject a Socialist trend in policies and directives of the Office of Price Administration." A Washington agent reported that Dr. J.B. Matthews, research director of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee and a formidable man in those days, had testified that "J. KENNETH GALBRAITH has had a connection with one of the Communist books, magazines and other literature, but it is not indicated as to exactly which publication GALBRAITH was affiliated." That book, magazine or other literature affiliation could only have been with *Fortune*. Other informants who had suffered under my manage- ment of wartime price control or didn't like it on general principle also got in a lick: "Screwball in economics" was one of the milder phrases from an infor- mant who added that I was "not a Communist but more of a fellow trav- eler." But here, and with no nonsense, I must again put in a good word for the Bureau. On August 21, 1950, as the F.F.I. was getting under way, a memo- randum was sent from Washington to all relevant offices advising that my ad- ministration of price control during the war had been viewed with distaste by "many people in this country, princi- pally members of Congress and business and industrial leaders" and that I had become a "very controversial figure." It then went on to say:

"This is being brought to the atten- tion of all offices conducting this inves- tigation because it is entirely possible that some witnesses may be inclined to give adverse information concerning GALBRAITH because they were not in agreement with his economic theories and policies and such testimony may be given intentionally or otherwise in such a manner to bear adversely upon his loyalty. It is therefore suggested that all offices be alert in securing testimony in this investigation because of GAL- BRAITH's background."

That was handsome, and I am led to remind the reader once more that this particular investigatory nonsense was instigated not by the F.B.I. but by the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, and immediately in this case by the Civil Service Commission and the Personnel Operations Division of the Department of Commerce, on be- half of the Commodities Division, Office of the Director, Office of Industry and Commerce, U.S. Department of Com- merce. To any of these who survive, a vulgar gesture.

The investigation ground on. On Oc- tober 19, there was a chilling note. As- sistant Attorney General James M. Mc- Inerney, now lost to fame, sent to the Civil Service Commission for the whole file "in connection with this depart- ment's consideration of the above en- titled case from the standpoint of pos- sible criminal prosecution under Title 18, Section 1001, U.S.C." This provision of the code punishes people who lie to federal officials. The Atlanta peniten- tiary did not beckon. The request seems only to have been a form letter used to keep the Justice Department in touch

with investigations and prepared to act in case those investigated did a snow job on the agents. I was safe; having been asked nothing, I had not lied.

Eventually in late December I did be- come witting, as the C.I.A. puts it. I received a letter in Cambridge from the Loyalty Review Board of the Depart- ment of Commerce, asking, in slightly peremptory fashion, that, as an em- ployee, I disclose my relationship with three men, one of whom I did not know; one of whom, E. Johnston Coil, was my closest friend; one of whom was Corliss Lamont. They also wanted to know about any membership in "subversive" organizations. I answered: friends are friends; dangerous organizations, none. (That my parsimony was a restraining factor I did not admit.) Then I asked, how come? I wasn't employed. My state- ment that I didn't hold the job was promptly accepted as a resignation from the job I didn't hold. The investi- gation, though incredibly still incom- plete, was brought to an end. Not quite, in fact. In ensuing years the files kept turning up the fact that I had resigned before my loyalty was established. This was bad.

**D**uring the Eisenhower years the risk even of unwitting nonemployment by the government was minimal, but this did not keep me out of the files. The Republic could be threatened in other ways, and my best effort involved a plot to collapse the stock market. This was accomplished one day in March, 1955, when I testified before the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency on conditions on Wall Street and a mini- boom that was then in blossom. During my testimony the market slumped—a total of some seven billion dollars in values was lost or, as some would have preferred, confiscated. There was the memorable headline EGGHEAD SCRAMBLES MARKET, and Walter Winchell went on the air to warn Senator Fulbright, then the chairman of the banking committee, that I had been a member of the Na- tional Citizens Political Action Commit- tee. "This outfit, Senator, is listed by the House UnAmerican Activities Com- mittee as a 'Red' front." (Winchell had the wrong committee, but he was not given to precision on such details.) Ful- bright was deeply unimpressed, but the message from Winchell did get through to Homer Capehart, Republican of In- diana, then ranking minority member of the committee. He hadn't been around the day I testified; now, on television, he demanded that I come back and ex- plain this plot. He cited a pamphlet on postwar reconstruction issued by the Na- tional Planning Association (an upright organization of businessmen, farmers, trade unionists and professors that still "functions") in which I was alleged to have said something agreeable about Communism. It wasn't all that agree- able; it couldn't have been, for my thoughts had been endorsed by Allen Dulles, who was by then head of the



C.I.A., and by Milton Eisenhower, a friend from my agricultural days and the brother of the President. I had heard that Capehart was going to unleash and had warned him that a reading of the document would show that it did not serve his purpose. However, though a generally pleasant man, Capehart was not unduly literate and was further handicapped by being deeply obtuse.

When Capehart's attack came, I was prepared. I shouted back with some vigor, and a day or two later, while attending a meeting at Purdue University, I questioned whether anyone so uninformed on my views should be allowed to represent the people of the state of Indiana. I noted, also, that the contents of the pamphlet had first been given as a lecture at Notre Dame. This made the Senator guilty by association of an attack on the leading Catholic university in the country and a monument to culture and football in his own state.

I sensed at the time that Capehart was struggling. I was right. The files show a desperate appeal to both the C.I.A. and the F.B.I. for help. The C.I.A. refused to assist. J. Edgar Hoover, who may, perhaps, have anticipated the Senator's need (timing here is difficult to establish), sent a *Washington Post* clipping to his men with a demand in what I judge to be the Hoover handwriting: "What do our files show on Galbraith?" There followed a frantic scramble for adverse informa-

tion. "At approximately 4:30 p.m. today I talked to XXXXXX [the X's mean the name is deleted in the file]. . . . At 5:30 p.m. I called XXXXXX. Special Memo Section complete a review of all references to Galbraith during the evening of 3/9/55. . . . At 8:50 a.m. I contacted XXXXXX." The contact was with Capehart or Capehart's contact, and the information he or it passed must have been a sore disappointment to Homer. The pamphlet that had seemed to him subversive could not be found in the Bureau files. It was noted that I had twice been investigated by the F.B.I. Of the first effort it was said, "Investigation favorable except conceited, egotistical and snobbish." This was not favorable but also not the kind of thing that would surprise a United States Senator. The second investigation—the F.F.I.—had yielded principally the fact that I had resigned from that nonemployment at Commerce before my loyalty was fully established.

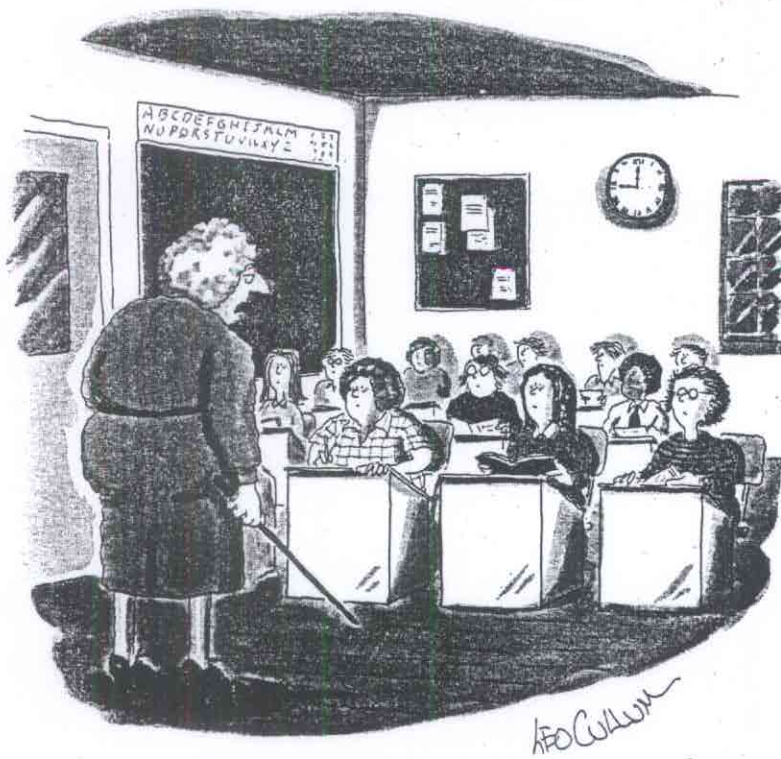
**H**oover's help to Capehart was highly improper, but once again the F.B.I. was more misused than misbehaving—misused this time not by frightened bureaucrats, such as those in Commerce, but by its own director. He is the one to blame, along with President Truman, who protected himself from right-wing criticism with these insane investigations—no other democracy needed them—and Kennedy and Johnson, who

should have retired J. Edgar long before God came to the rescue of the Republic.

The files in these years show a Hoover aberration that has not, I believe, been celebrated previously. In 1956, as earlier in 1952, I served on the speech-writing staff of Adlai Stevenson. In October of 1956, this came to the attention of one of Hoover's ever vigilant volunteer informants; he wrote urging and very nearly demanding that ghostwriters for candidates be subject to a proper measure of surveillance: "For some time it has been the custom to assign Secret Service men to protect the person of both principal Presidential candidates in Presidential election years. I believe that this procedure should be broadened so as to protect not only the bodies of the candidates, but their minds as well. . . . If a President [sic] has not the wish, nor the ability, to put his thoughts into his own words, the 'ghostwriter' becomes someone of enormous power. . . . It is of the utmost importance to the nation that 'the ghosts' be 'above reproach,' like Caesar's wife. . . ." I was one of the Stevenson ghosts who did not in this patriot's view come even close in purity to Mrs. Caesar, was one, in fact, who sent "chills down the back of any American with a knowledge of the left-wing conspiracy to take over our Republic."

There was, of course, some comparative logic in this concern. Were one out to get the free-enterprise system and had one a choice, one would write speeches for a Presidential candidate rather than be an unwitting and non-employed employee of the Commodities Division, Office of the Director, etc., etc., of the U.S. Department of Commerce. However, Hoover moved cautiously. He wrote to the Attorney General: "I am transmitting herewith a copy of a communication I have received from XXXXXX, who suggests that steps be taken to make available to [Adlai Stevenson] any information pertaining to the background of his alleged 'ghostwriters'. . . ." He went on to say that he had acknowledged the letter, "pointing out that this was not a matter within the purview of our responsibility, and I have advised him that I am calling his letter to your attention." I judge that nothing happened.

By 1960, however, Hoover had enlarged perceptibly his purview of his responsibility. In that year I was working (though not particularly as an alleged ghostwriter) for Kennedy. On July 5, taking note of this association, Hoover called for a full survey of the files, with emphasis, one judges, on anything adverse. With the commendable promptness that the director's wishes inspired, five pages of inspired misinformation were on his desk the very next day. The dishonorable discharge from Princeton was there, although by now it was subject to the aforementioned doubts. Commerce was now reported as saying that in my nonemployment there, I had been viewed as one of fifty-one "poor security risks," and my departure had been upgraded to a



"Good morning, children. My name is Miss Applegate. One false move and I'll kill you."

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precautionary act—a "voluntary resignation" had been obtained.

Hoover was also told that I was associated, as a Kennedy helper, with Arthur Schlesinger. There was mention again of Dr. Ware, and it was noted that in 1959, at the suggestion of Adlai Stevenson, "with whom he [Galbraith] was associated during 1952 and 1956 Presidential campaigns," I had "contacted" the Soviet Embassy. I had been associated with Schlesinger more closely even than with Dr. Ware; the approach to the embassy (unless for a visa) was news.

One learned also what fine distinctions the director could handle when it came to political views. He was told that mine were "left of center" but not "left-wing," "pink" or "leftist." And from the ever present and decent civil servant came the redeeming note: "Some who disagreed with his economic theories were insistent that while Galbraith's views were 'left of center,' Communism or Socialism could not and should not be imputed to Galbraith."

While my file does not show that my subversion ever, in the end, kept me off a public payroll, there was some modest pecuniary damage in these years. On one or two occasions people in the C.I.A. asked that I be invited to lecture to the "intelligence community." This was denied by higher authority on the grounds that I was a grave security risk, made worse by the danger that my instruction might provoke criticism from those who still remembered me on the Hill. I was also disapproved for a covert operation, this being a glorious convocation of liberal intellectuals in Milan in 1955—Hugh Gaitskell, Roy Jenkins, Anthony Crosland, Arthur Schlesinger, George Kennan and many others—that the C.I.A. was secretly funding. (We were told it was funded by a foundation.) But something went wrong here, for, in fact, I attended. After I published *The Affluent Society* in 1958, lower echelons of the United States Information Agency asked regularly for my services as a lecturer and for the book for their libraries. These requests, too, were firmly refused by more responsible authority. The risks to security and of political criticism were intolerable, although again there was a slip, for I remember giving a lecture under such auspices in Rome.

In this prosaic and excessively intellectual age, there are men and women who do not believe in miracles. Let all be clear; miracles of biblical magnitude still occur. These concern being a grave security risk. In one point of time you cannot give a lecture to the C.I.A. or for the United States Information Agency. The peril is too great. Twelve months later you can be responsible in a vast country for what these agencies do. No ceremony of purification or trial of epuration is involved. Only the continuing marvel of democracy. All this the history now proves.

The earlier investigations were prelude to the biggest investigation of all—

that of a putative ambassador. I knew, of course, that this was in progress. It occurred after I had moved into the White House in January of 1961, a fairly strategic location where security matters are concerned and one that required no investigation of any kind. Indeed, so far as the files show, the F.B.I. seems never to have discovered that I was ever there. One day in January, 1961, I ran into Adlai Stevenson, who told me he had just been quizzed at length about my loyalty. That impressed me, for earlier on that same day I had been asked about his. I remember telling the agent, who was very pleasant, that were Stevenson a subversive, this would rank as one of the more dangerously delayed discoveries of all time.

This investigation revealed another striking fact about the loyalty of government officials. There was considerable emphasis on the extreme sensitivity of the position I was to occupy. But if you are a member of the administration and about to become an ambassador, things go better. Adverse information disappears or even becomes favorable. Thus the Princeton discharge disappeared. So did Dr. Ware. My relations with Commerce were reexamined, my letter explaining that I had never been employed was unearthed, and my candor in admitting to my questionable friendships became, I would judge, a plus. All mention of the voluntary/involuntary separation from Commerce before loyalty adjudication disappeared. Instead it was noted with emphasis that President Truman had bestowed on me the Medal of Freedom for "exceptionally meritorious achievement" during the war, although, I discovered for the first time, "without palm." I had never missed the palm. My wife's family was now discovered and cited as being "of fine character, conduct and reputation and loyal Americans." One or two critics complained that I was "inexperienced in business," and there was, of course, the customary misinformation. My birthplace was given as Ottawa (it appears elsewhere as Toronto and a place on the Detroit River called Sandwich, which has since disappeared). I was described as deeply anti-Communist, which I am not; it was alleged that I sometimes said no in a tactless fashion, when, in fact, I have difficulty saying it at all. But the errors, like the slurs, were lost in the massive wave of applause. After reporting, among other things, that I had been described as "a great national figure of unquestioned ability," the F.B.I. became sated and concluded its report with the truly breathtaking statistic that "ninety-eight other persons were interviewed and commented favorably concerning the character, reputation and loyalty of Mr. Galbraith. They also highly recommended him for a position of trust and responsibility with the government."

The investigatory language, I should note, was as careful and stately as ever. A Boston report, dated February 15, 1961, advised that "... personnel, reference libraries, Boston Herald-Traveler and Boston Globe corporations, both firms which publish newspapers on a

daily basis at Boston, Massachusetts, made available information in the name of appointee, which has been utilized during this investigation."

The final report on the investigation was made on March 6, 1961. A week or two earlier I had heard in the Washington rumor underground that my appointment was in deep trouble on Capitol Hill—again on security grounds. Bourke B. Hickenlooper, a Republican Senator from Iowa and a devout, articulate and loquacious but not especially malicious defender of the system, was standing firm against me. He had learned that the State Department had once denied me a passport. An ambassador without a passport would never get on intimate terms with the leaders of the country to which he was accredited and could well be a nuisance around Washington. Hickenlooper wanted yet another F.F.I. President Kennedy told me he thought the whole business degrading. Then suddenly the clouds cleared. Hick, as he was called by numerous colleagues and constituents, had been appeased. I was puzzled, for I had never been denied a passport. The files explain the matter; it was only a slight problem in nomenclature, which anyone should have understood.

On February 23, 1961, an F.B.I. agent, checking into things at the State Department, reported back that the files there "disclosed that JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH was refused an American passport on 2/20/53 because he was a member of subversive organizations, based on a communication from the F.B.I. dated 12/19/51." The same report showed that shortly thereafter I was issued a passport. The first but not the second fact had been sent by some helpful soul to Hickenlooper. A few days later an agent went back to check again. All was made clear. "It was determined by S.A. [special agent] that this refusal notice does not signify or imply that passport was refused; it is a misnomer and merely serves as an administrative lookout notice for proper routing of mail within the Passport Office." Anyone should have known this. I went off to India.

There I found that *The Affluent Society* and my other books were still on the index. They could be risked in libraries only with the special permission of Washington. Few acts of my life ever gave me such a feeling of righteousness exercised power as the step I now took to declare my own writing safe for general use.

My association with the F.B.I. had now passed its peak, but it was a long while (in cost of photocopying the file, another ten or fifteen dollars) in decline. While back from India in 1961, I appeared on *Meet the Press* and was asked by one exceptionally handicapped reporter if I thought (as did Nehru) that India should deal with the Russians and Americans on the same moral plane. I said no and observed that an affirmative answer would endanger my security clearance. One of Hoover's



volunteer helpers wrote the President in distress—"Any loyal American would answer with an unqualified no"—and he sent the transcript to J. Edgar Hoover. However, in these months another unidentified but more persistent patriot in Birmingham, Alabama, went to the local office of the F.B.I. to tell them that I was in India to encourage the Communist take-over of the country, that I had already encouraged the Indians to take over Goa, that I had once praised the Russian "education system" in *The Saturday Evening Post* and that I had been responsible for a visit to India by Mrs. Kennedy. A broad-spectrum view of subversion. He identified me as Kenneth D. Galbreath. This intervention was taken very seriously; the Birmingham man, who claimed to have met me during the war, was accepted as an expert on my past. Thereafter, when any question arose, the F.B.I. went back to see him.

In 1963, I returned from India and spent another few weeks in the White House. Again no one alerted the F.B.I., although this time there might have been reason. I had been asked by the President to represent the United States in working out the basic arrangements for a new agreement on air flights between Canada and the United States. Until then, not having anything to give in return, the Canadians had been severely restricted in their flights to Florida, California and other American centers of sunshine and rest. In a highly irregular but extremely efficient gesture, Mike Pearson, then the Canadian prime minister and an old friend of mine, told Kennedy that for these preliminary findings and recommendations, since I had often praised myself as a onetime Canadian, I could be considered as representing Canada, too. So I did—a clear case of divided loyalty. Negotiating with myself, I readily reached agreement. The arrangement showed that loyalty, like being a security risk, can be an on-and-off thing.

The next burst of concern, considerable but hardly approaching that of 1961, came in the autumn of 1964. Lyndon Johnson appointed me that autumn to a board that was to oversee the poverty program, something that I had had a small hand in developing. Though I had been an ambassador, no risk could be run; association with the poor, far more than with diplomacy, has always brought out the strongest in left-wing tendencies. The files were searched and the field offices put to work once more, though now with a certain delicacy and restraint: "Assign to experienced personnel and conduct no neighborhood investigation unless some reason for doing so arises, at which time Bureau approval should be secured." The principal new discoveries were that I had served as an ambassador and also as a consultant on the "President's Commission on Heart Diseases, Cancer and Stroke (no dates indicated)." Of my Commerce nonemployment I had eventually been apprised; of this nonservice I did not hear until this year, when I got the file. The F.B.I. also learned that "the

appointee appeared to take pleasure in criticizing the Department of State and its policies while serving the department as our ambassador to India," and the man in Birmingham was visited by an agent in what the files call a "special inquiry." He now conceded, rather handsomely, that "he had no specific information that GALBRAITH [note the correct spelling] was ever a Communist or enemy agent." He did point out that in a photograph taken at the time of Nikita Khrushchev's first visit to the United States, I was shown standing next to Khrushchev, and he "suggested KHRUSHCHEV may have requested GALBRAITH's presence." Once again my appointment went through. However, I was detached in an administrative shuffle when I began making speeches against the Vietnam war.

**T**he war produced my last important encounter with the F.B.I. There were a few minor brushes unrelated to the conflict. In 1968, an internal memorandum had reviewed my novel, *The Triumph*. "The book primarily is a 'spoof' and satire against the State Department, Dean Rusk and American policy to uphold dictators in power for the reason of overthrowing Communism.... Several miscellaneous references are made to the F.B.I., but nothing of any pertinence. The references are not derogatory." The following year there were two commencement addresses in New England that the Boston S.A.C. (special agent in charge) thought worthy of mention. One speech attacked me and praised Hoover, and the speaker said in a further letter to the *Boston Globe* that "no student of Hoover's ever burned his country's flag, beat up his instructors or screeched obscenities at the school the day he graduated." The other speech was mine criticizing Hoover. The agent thought Hoover might want to send a letter of thanks to the first speaker and have a transcript of my speech, which the agent promised to get. Sometime earlier, President Johnson summoned me to Washington to work on some plans having to do (as I recall) with food for India. I met him at the plane at Kennedy Airport; he had been in New York with J. Edgar Hoover to attend the funeral of the wife of Emmanuel Celler, long the head of the House Judiciary Committee. I hadn't seen Edgar for many years; I thought he lacked affability, conveyed, in fact, a certain aspect of disapproval and mistrust. A picture taken as I greeted the President strongly affirms the point.

On October 6, 1969, around eight months after Mr. Nixon came to office, his counsel asked for information about me, none of which could have been for the purpose of offering employment. He was sent material that had gone over under the previous administration, and this causes me to end on a very nasty note.

On July 10, 1967, and again on December 6 of the same year, the White House asked the F.B.I. for information

and was wonderfully candid as to kind and purpose. The first request asked for a name check on Galbraith and three other individuals "who allegedly are endeavoring to raise money for the reelection, during the coming election year, of a number of 'dove' U.S. Senators." I had been so engaged, with much success. People who couldn't do anything else about Vietnam positively liked to give money. This highly improper request was filled, and as to the impropriety, the F.B.I. was not itself in doubt. Hoover carefully advised the White House that "a copy of this communication has not been sent to the Attorney General."

The later request in December from the White House was more specific as to what was wanted, for in responding, the F.B.I. said: "The following is being furnished in reply to your request for the results of any investigation conducted concerning the above individual [this being me] wherein information of a subversive nature was developed." My italics.

Once again nothing happened; as always in the government of the United States, evil intention is only marginally related to evil action, a fact of which those who are at all susceptible to paranoia should be aware. The memoranda submitted were, apparently, the previous crap. But no one at the White House had any business asking such questions for such purpose; whoever did is morally, if not legally, on a par with the Nixon men now in the minimum-security slammer. Nor had Hoover any business responding.

It leads me to a concluding thought. Once many years ago my wife worked with the F.B.I. as a language expert through a long trial of alleged Nazis in Newark. She was struck by the extreme decency of the individual agents and especially by their effort to establish the bias of anyone who was providing information adverse to a suspect. "We want to know their angle—what ax they have to grind." The same decency is manifest in my file, in the faithful reporting of favorable comment and the warnings that I have noted against those with an angle. What was wrong with the F.B.I. was the archaic, angry and, in the end, senile old despot who headed it and the people who were too frightened to retire him. Also the people, as at the White House, who used it for their own political ends. Also all who acquiesced in the scrutiny of subjective beliefs and attitudes—including those of us who responded tolerantly to questions about the loyalty of Adlai Stevenson, as though those questions were needed. Also, and perhaps most important, those who saw Hoover and his anti-Communism and the F.B.I. as instruments against liberals, and the officeholders, including the liberals, who went along out of fear. It is impossible not to have fun at the expense of the F.B.I. But I emerged from this vast mass of paper with the feeling, above all, of the need to distinguish between the people of the F.B.I. rank and file and the people who so egregiously misused them. #