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Frederick, Md. 21701
11/2/87

Editor
The New Yorker
25 W. 43 St.,
New York, N.Y. 10036

Dear Editor,

Reading Herbert Mitgang's article about the FBI's files on writers I got the impression that he does not really understand how the FBI files, how it hides what it wants to hide and where else it has the kind of information he appears to have gotten through a Freedom of Information Act request.

I've had considerable experience with the FBI under FOIA and have sued it often, always getting more information through litigation.

The FBI also has very large files on others in the media, especially publishers and including the networks.

If Mr. Mitgang thinks I can help him I'll be glad to.

My day begins with physical therapy but I'm almost always home for the rest of the day by 10:30 a.m.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg
301/473-8186

ANNALS OF GOVERNMENT

POLICING AMERICA'S WRITERS

FOR a great part of the twentieth century, the United States government has policed a number of writers—not only writers from other countries but American writers as well—and apparently the practice is continuing. American writers were watched for supposed crimes as serious as espionage and as vague as subversion, but few were aware of being watched at all. Documents I have obtained in the last several years under the Freedom of Information Act, and through other sources in Washington, reveal that these authors often came under suspicion because of what they chose to write about; because of writers' organizations they belonged to or writers' meetings they attended; because of petitions they signed or publications they subscribed to; or because of the places where they travelled. Among the writers who were subjected to scrutiny by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies are Nelson Algren, W. H. Auden, Pearl Buck, Truman Capote, John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Sinclair Lewis, Robert Lowell, Archibald MacLeish, John O'Hara, Carl Sandburg, Robert Sherwood, John Steinbeck, Thornton Wilder, Tennessee Williams, Edmund Wilson, and Thomas Wolfe. Files on these writers contain information compiled by the F.B.I. and, in addition, references and information from the Central Intelligence Agency, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the State Department, and the intelligence branches of the military services. Raw, and accusatory, files have frequently been made available to other government agencies, too.

Although there is no official stamp on what is written or printed in the United States, a censorious, anti-libertarian tone at times emanates from the White House and reverberates through the federal government. It has been particularly evident lately, in the Department of Justice under Attorney General Edwin Meese, whose jurisdiction includes the F.B.I. The attitude of the Reagan Administration toward the use of F.B.I. and other files can be measured by the fact that Ronald Reagan himself surfaced as a

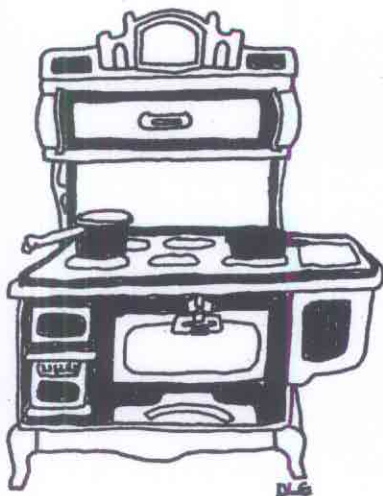
former F.B.I. source, with a code designation of his own—Confidential Informant T-10. Reagan has not bothered to deny a report—based on Justice Department records obtained under a Freedom of Information request—that originally appeared in the *San Jose Mercury News* on August 25, 1985. The documents revealed that at the time Reagan was active in the Screen Actors Guild—he served as the Guild's president for several years—he also worked as an informer for the F.B.I. Reagan's name first appears on an F.B.I. document from 1941, when an agent in the Los Angeles office cited him as a source with whom he had become "intimately acquainted." Another document mentions that in 1947 Reagan and his wife, the actress Jane Wyman, were interviewed by the F.B.I. about the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions. Reagan had quit that organization the year before, because its leadership was alleged to be Communist. The Reagans provided the F.B.I. with "information regarding the activities of some members of the [Screen Actors] Guild who they suspected were carrying on Communist Party work." The F.B.I. memorandum says, "REAGAN and JANE WYMAN advised for the past several months they have observed during Guild meetings there are two 'cliques' of members, one headed by [name deleted] and another by [name deleted] which on all questions of policy that

confront the Guild follow the Communist Party line."

Reagan was particularly active as an informant while he was Guild president. A 1947 F.B.I. report states, "Reagan said that he had been made a member of a committee headed by L. B. Mayer [Louis B. Mayer, the head of M-G-M] for the purpose of purging the motion picture industry of Communists." That committee was an outgrowth of the Thomas committee hearings in Washington and subsequent meetings of motion-picture producers in New York City. Representative J. Parnell Thomas, Republican of New Jersey, was chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1947. The report continues, "T-10 stated it is his firm conviction that Congress should declare, first of all, by statute, that the Communist Party is not a legal Party, but is a foreign-inspired conspiracy. Secondly, Congress should define what organizations are Communist-controlled so that membership therein could be construed as an indication of disloyalty. He felt that lacking such a definite stand on the part of the government, it would be very difficult for any committee of motion picture people to conduct any type of cleansing of their own household."

The dossiers show that some writers were kept under scrutiny for years. One thing the files do not disclose is that in some cases these records caused careers to be hobbled by studios and networks, and military service to be hampered. Since most of the authors did not know they were under surveillance, they could not challenge their accusers. In any event, despite the millions of dollars spent on investigative man-hours and record-keeping, none of the writers—more than fifty men and women—whose dossiers I looked into were ever convicted of any crime attributed to them by the F.B.I. or other federal agencies. Some were accused publicly and "tried" by newspaper columnists and editorial writers considered friendly to the F.B.I., who were given tidbits from the secret files, but the F.B.I. prevailed only in the press, not in the courts.

In nearly all the documents I obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, material—not only names



WHAT WENT WRONG?



R. Christ

but sometimes whole pages—is blacked out. The usual reason given for such censorship—or for denial of access altogether—is an exemption contained in a clause concerning the release of documents in Title 5 of the United States Code, Section 552 (b) (1). The exemption reads, “Information which is currently and properly classified pursuant to Executive Order 12356 in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy, for example, information involving intelligence sources or methods.” But there are a dozen other exemptions that can be used to censor material in a dossier.

The degree of compliance with my requests varied greatly both in respect to time and in respect to what was provided. Generally, there has been more delay and denial during the Reagan Presidency than at any other time since 1966, when Congress enacted the Freedom of Information statute. Sometimes the F.B.I. has been more helpful than the C.I.A. or the State Department. For instance, the State Department waited almost two and a half years before releasing a thirty-five-year-old document concerning Pearl Buck. In some cases, I am still waiting to receive records more than a

year after the F.B.I. acknowledged that such files did exist.

Executive Order 12356, signed by President Reagan on April 2, 1982, slowed down the declassification process and placed new limits on access to information. It superseded a 1978 Executive Order by President Carter. The Reagan order eliminated a Carter requirement that most documents be declassified within a specific period. It also eliminated a ban on the reclassification of documents and information already released; reversed a Carter provision that forbade the classification of a document after a request for it had been made; reversed a willingness to resolve doubts in favor of declassification; and curtailed declassification-review practices in the National Archives and other executive agencies and departments.

In October of 1986, the Freedom of Information Act was further tightened by President Reagan and his Attorney General. A revision of the act gave law-enforcement agencies new authority to withhold documents that, in their view, might compromise certain investigations. In one of the key provisions, agencies were given authority for the first time to refuse either to confirm or to deny that certain records existed at all. Fortunately, most of my requests under the act were made before this revision; even in cases where material was withheld or blacked out, I was at least informed whether a file did or did not exist. In effect, these changes have also caused a partial gutting of the 1974 Privacy Act, which came into existence in the wake of revelations about domestic surveillance and law-breaking during the Nixon Administration. Domestic spying did not originate with Nixon, of course. It became professionalized under J. Edgar Hoover, who was the director of the F.B.I. from 1924 until his death, in 1972. Hoover started his career in the Justice Department in 1917; two years later, he began providing Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer with research and analysis for the infamous anti-radical raids. The structure that Hoover built up, first in the Alien Enemy Bureau and later in the Domestic Intelligence Division, has never been dismantled.

THE F.B.I.'s dossier on Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) runs to a hundred and fifty pages; it had been heavily censored before I got a copy of

it. Lewis, the first American to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1930, was born in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, and frequently found his themes in small-town hypocrisy and puritanism. Then, in the nineteen-thirties, Lewis warned against homegrown Fascism in his novel "It Can't Happen Here." At least one memorandum in the Lewis file reveals Director Hoover's political predilections: the author was among those who were being watched by the F.B.I. because they supported President Franklin D. Roosevelt when he was running for a fourth term, in 1944.

The F.B.I. also took a peripheral interest in a book club because Lewis was involved with it. When the Readers Club was started, by the publisher George Macy, an F.B.I. report noted that on March 5, 1941, prospective members received an open letter on the stationery of "Clifton Fadiman, Sinclair Lewis, Carl Van Doren, Alexander Woollcott," along with a four-page circular. Over a year later, on July 17, 1942, the F.B.I. was still keeping tabs on the club. The documents reveal that under a number of false names the F.B.I. subscribed to the club to find out what was being distributed and by whom. The F.B.I.'s Birmingham office received two letters with pamphlets enclosed that solicited membership. "Since the letters were addressed to the fictitious names used by the Bureau for the subscriptions, it appeared that the publication 'In Fact' furnished a mailing list to 'The Readers Club,'" the report says. *In Fact* was a newsletter, edited and published by the muckraking journalist George Seldes, that started in 1940 and regularly criticized the shortcomings of the American press; it ceased publishing in 1950. The report on the book club continues, "From a review of these pamphlets, it appeared that 'The Readers Club' would be similar in operation to the well-known 'Book of the Month Club.' The Committee designated to select the books that were to be made available to the members of the club included Sinclair Lewis."

In 1947, according to the F.B.I. files, the bureau received a letter from a correspondent in Madera, California, calling Hoover's attention to Lewis's novel "Kingsblood Royal" and branding it "the most incendiary book" since "Uncle Tom's Cabin." An F.B.I. memorandum to Assistant Attorney General Theron L. Caudle says that the novel, published by Ran-



"I almost fell off the treadmill."

dom House, was deemed "incendiary" by an informant because "Lewis discusses the Negro question in a manner which, according to [name deleted], is intended to inflame Negroes against whites," and adds, "The book was stated to be 'propaganda for the white man's acceptance of the Negro as a social equal.'"

In 1951, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, then headed by Senator Patrick McCarran, Democrat of Nevada, was given material stamped "SECRET" and labelled "Re: Sinclair Lewis Security Matter—C." Senator McCarran was co-author of the McCarran-Walter Act, which is still used to bar foreign writers from the United States because of their political beliefs and writings. The Lewis paragraphs that might explain why he was a "C" (F.B.I. shorthand for "Communist") security case are blacked out. The material in the Lewis file says that "no refer-

ence should be made to the McCarran Committee, nor should there be any indication that the documents emanated from G-2"—Army Intelligence.

The documents included in the F.B.I. file reveal that G-2 had been carrying on a detailed investigation into Lewis's affiliations and writings for a long time—possibly even longer than the F.B.I. had. One reference stamped "SECRET" goes back to 1928. It shows that Lewis was a member of an international committee that endorsed an announcement sent out by the Viking Press concerning the publication of "The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti." In 1929, a censored source in Philadelphia reported to the F.B.I. that Lewis's name appeared in a list of members of a book committee of the American Society for Cultural Relations with Russia. A 1941 Los Angeles report to the F.B.I. names him as a member of various other committees

for cultural exchange with Russia.

The F.B.I. dossier includes a summary of a 1929 pamphlet, entitled "Cheap and Contented Labor," that was written by Lewis and was published by the United Textile Workers of America and the Women's Trade Union League of Philadelphia. In the pamphlet Lewis wrote, "There could only be one answer on the part of workers—a militant and universal organization of trade unions." In the same year that Lewis received the Nobel Prize, his name turned up before a House Special Committee to Investigate Communist Activities, because he was listed as a member and correspondent of the Federated Press, a news service that published *Labor News*. The committee also identified him as a member of the American Birth Control League, which published *Birth Control Review*. Four of Lewis's books—"Elmer Gantry," "Main Street," "Babbitt," and "Arrowsmith"—were listed as suspect because they were distributed by the Workers Library, an organization that put out cheap paperback editions for workers. In its catalogue the Workers Library was described as a means of "awakening, organizing, and leading the masses in their struggles against the bosses, against the misleaders of labor, and against the system that is at the root of exploitation, oppression, and war." It seems unlikely that anyone associated with the House committee had read the Lewis novels to see how their themes matched the aims of the Workers Library.

Lewis's name is flagged as a member of the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy and is also mentioned in a 1951 list of sponsors of the Motion Picture Artists (Spanish Aid) for medical help to the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War. His file shows that in 1937 his name appeared in an advertisement in the *New York Times* appealing for contributions to buy medical supplies for the American Base Hospital outside Madrid.

To the Lewis file in 1939 was added an article from *People's World* in which he praised his wife, the journalist Dorothy Thompson, for a written slap against the German-American Bund and its leader, Fritz Kuhn, who had conducted a pro-Nazi meeting in New York. Lewis is quoted: "These gangsters are trying to corrupt America. It is astounding that such meetings are permitted in this country. What will happen next?"

In 1950, Lewis came under surveil-

lance by the Office of Special Investigations, the Inspector General, Department of the Air Force. In a report stamped "SECRET" the Directorate of Intelligence, Headquarters U.S.A.F., notes, "The files of several reliable government agencies reflect SINCLAIR LEWIS to be a member and sponsor of many Communist-Front organizations, including The American Society for Cultural Relations with Russia, Motion Picture Artists Committee, North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy and The Medical Bureau to Aid Spanish Democracy."

By the middle of 1951, the Lewis file had become so detailed that the F.B.I. recommended that the material about him be placed in a "Correlation Summary." This summary showed "no information indicating that Sinclair Lewis has been involved in espionage activities or that any current espionage investigation is warranted." After tracking him for nearly a quarter of a century in his own country and in Europe, the F.B.I., the Army, and the Air Force had failed to catch their man doing anything illegal.

THE file on Pearl Buck (1892-1973), whose name appears in dossiers maintained by the F.B.I., the State Department, the Army, and the Navy, is even thicker than that on Lewis. Two hundred and three pages were released to me, and I was denied seventy-seven pages. Mrs. Buck's file begins in 1938—the year that she won the Nobel Prize—when, that September, Hoover invited her to take a special tour of F.B.I. facilities in Washington. In his invitation he mentioned that he admired her novel "The Good

Earth." The file does not reveal whether she ever took up his offer.

Mrs. Buck aroused the F.B.I. in 1941 and 1942, after the Bureau discovered that she had written a pamphlet, called "Freedom for All," for the Post War World Council—an organization based in New York that advocated racial justice and democracy. The pamphlet found its way into her F.B.I. dossier. In one section she wrote, "The discriminations of the American army and navy and the air forces against colored soldiers and sailors, the exclusion of colored labor in our defense industries and trade unions, all our social discriminations, are of the greatest aid today to our enemy in Asia, Japan." Mrs. Buck's remarks about race prejudice—she also wrote that after the Second World War ended, colonialism would also have to end, because "the deep patience of colored peoples is at an end"—caused the person who sent the pamphlet to the F.B.I. to scrawl "Sabotage" and "Lies" over her words.

Hoover and his associates seem to have equated Mrs. Buck's views on racial equality with Communism. Under the heading "Communist Affiliation" in her file, an F.B.I. memorandum states, "Although it is not believed from the information available that Mrs. Buck is a Communist, her active support of all programs advocating racial equality has led her to associate with many known Communists and other individuals of varying shades of political opinions." Moreover, her membership in the American Civil Liberties Union was listed under "Communist Front Organizations."

Mrs. Buck's mail was monitored. Her file reads, "On May 25 and July 4, 1944, the Office of Censorship advised the Bureau that Pearl Buck had received copies of the publication 'Voks' through the mail from Soviet Russia." A comic strip, too, was studied by the F.B.I. and became a suspicious fact in her dossier: "The East and West Association, of which Pearl Buck is President, cooperates in the preparation of a comic sheet entitled 'The Twain Shall Meet.' This copyrighted feature has for its purpose the featuring of understanding between peoples of the world. While no information has been received that this comic strip is Communist propaganda, it is definitely the type of material the Communist Party would capitalize on and use if possible."

The F.B.I. notes, in a memorandum dated February 27, 1952, from



the Philadelphia office to Hoover in Washington, "No interview is contemplated at this time since it is felt that such an interview of a person of Mrs. Buck's prominence might result in repercussions and adverse publicity for the Bureau." However, the F.B.I. refused to give up its opinions, as if to prove that the years spent in pursuing her proved something. Lacking a case, the file notes, "She was described as an outspoken person whose political sympathies at times paralleled those of the Communist Party."

Once her name was on record, the bureau kept track of her personal life. In 1958, she and her husband adopted an eight-year-old child who was half Japanese, half black. The F.B.I. saw fit to include in her file a clipping from the *New York Herald Tribune* about the adoption. In response to a name check of American Nobel laureates, the F.B.I. informed the White House about all the things it found suspicious about Mrs. Buck's beliefs: "This Bureau's files contain many allegations that Miss Buck in her writings and speeches has been against universal military training, militarism, racial segregation, and has been critical of the government of Chiang Kai-shek."

The censored pages in her file continued right up to her death. After I appealed to the Army for the denied material, the Army Intelligence and Security Command at Fort Meade, Maryland, released a copy of an anti-draft letter Mrs. Buck had written in 1952 on behalf of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Rear Admiral B. A. Harlow, Acting Judge Advocate General, in denying my appeal for access to the Navy's Pearl Buck documents, informed me, "Even after the passage of 34 years, release of the withheld information would jeopardize the Government's interest in preventing the unwarranted invasion of personal privacy of an individual about whom the Government maintains information in its files."

THE dossier on William Faulkner (1897-1962) is comparatively light—eighteen pages, part of which concerns his views on politics and civil rights. An F.B.I. document dated March 12, 1957—eight years after Faulkner received the Nobel Prize— informs an F.B.I. aide (a copy being sent to the State Department) that "no investigation pertinent to your inquiry

has been conducted" of "William Faulkner, born Sept. 24, 1897, New Albany, Miss." The document then quotes this information from the bureau's Faulkner file:

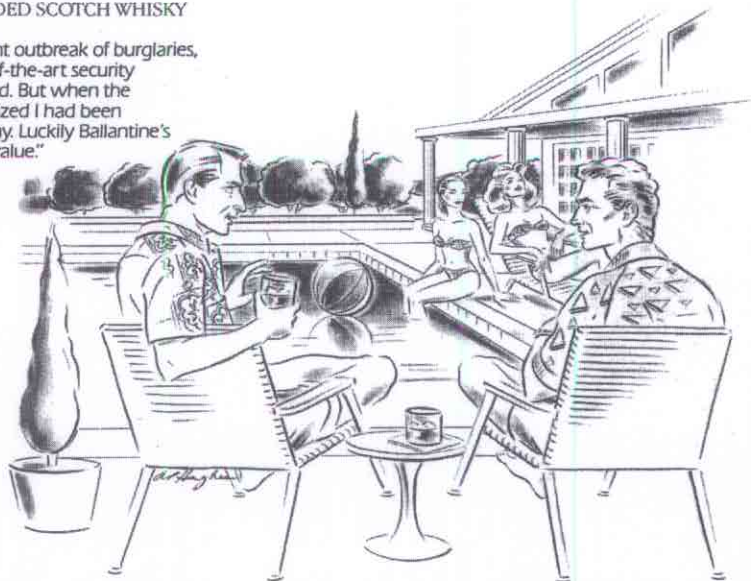
"A confidential informant who has furnished reliable information in the past advised in March, 1951, that the Civil Rights Congress headquarters in New York City had expressed their pleasure with the work of a committee of women which included the procuring of a statement from William Faulkner, Nobel Prize winner, in behalf of Willie McGee. It is to be noted that Willie McGee was convicted of raping a woman in Laurel, Mississippi, in 1945 and sentenced to die. Numerous appeals were filed, the last of which was to the United States Supreme Court in March, 1951, at which time the full Supreme Court refused to review the case. McGee was executed on May 8, 1951. The Civil Rights Congress had been designated by the Attorney General of the United States pursuant to Executive Order 10450"—designated, that is, as a Communist or Communist-front organization.

A name check was made on Faulkner in 1961 for Attorney General

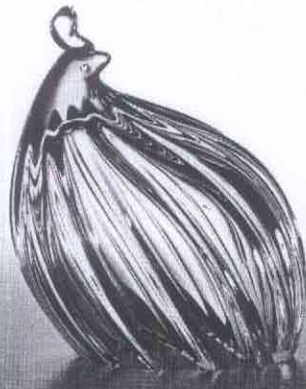
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Robert F. Kennedy. No reason for the name check was given, other than that the request for it originated with Richard N. Goodwin, then a member of the White House staff. It appears likely that Faulkner and other Nobel laureates were being scrutinized before being invited to the Executive Mansion. The information on Faulkner that was supplied to Attorney General Kennedy included Faulkner's statement in behalf of Willie McGee to the Civil Rights Congress. In addition, the name check included a list of a number of other Nobel laureates in various fields. Seven of them had previously received similar checks, and their names existed in the F.B.I. files; one woman was singled out as a "prominent Quaker pacifist."

THE F.B.I.'s file on Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961) apparently was opened in October of 1942, but there is evidence in the documents that the Bureau, the State Department, and other agencies had been tracking his activities when he was a correspondent and Loyalist supporter during the Spanish Civil War.

While Hemingway was living in Cuba, during the Second World War, he created what he called his Crook Factory. This was a group of twenty-six informants, six working full time and openly, and twenty undercover, to provide intelligence information for the American Ambassador in Havana and possibly to spot German submarines operating in the Caribbean. Hemingway used his fishing boat, the Pilar, for patrolling, and he received some help from the Embassy. The Crook Factory was dissolved in April of 1943, and replaced by military intelligence agents, but Hemingway continued to patrol on the Pilar, with machine guns and

grenades supplied by the Navy. Such activities apparently irritated Hoover, and in 1942 the F.B.I. began a campaign to discredit Hemingway. Hoover, the documents disclose, considered him not a patriot trying to help his country at war but a rival. The information that Hemingway turned up was downgraded by Raymond Leddy, the legal attaché in the Embassy, who was Hoover's man in Havana. Hemingway was accused of being a Com-

munist and a drunk. Furthermore, he had once committed the unpardonable sin of calling the F.B.I. "the American Gestapo." An F.B.I. memorandum in his file says, "Hemingway's investigations began to show a marked hostility to the Cuban Police and in a lesser degree to the F.B.I."

Of necessity, Hemingway's operation was political. His informants were recruited from among Loyalist refugees he knew who had fled the Franco dictatorship. He enlisted them to keep an eye on the pro-Franco Spaniards in Cuba, who sided with the Axis. Spruille Braden, the American Ambassador to Cuba, authorized Hemingway to set up his own network, gave him nearly a thousand dollars a month to pay his men, and arranged for him to receive an allotment of fuel, which was scarce. In his postwar memoirs Braden wrote that Hemingway had built up an excellent network and had done "an A-one job."

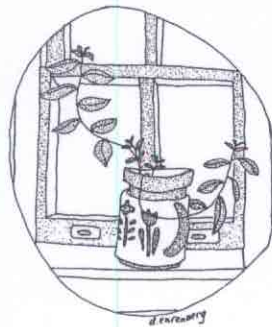
While Hemingway was watching the pro-Fascist elements on the island, Leddy was watching Hemingway. In the Hemingway file is a letter stamped "CONFIDENTIAL" from Hoover to Leddy, dated December 17, 1942, that says, "Any information which you may have relating to the unreliability of Ernest Hemingway as an informant may be discreetly brought to the attention of Ambassador Braden." Another letter from Hoover to Leddy says that Hemingway's "judgment is not of the best, and if his sobriety is the same as it

was some years ago, that is certainly questionable."

In 1943, Hoover asked D. M. Ladd, one of his top aides in Washington, for another memorandum on Hemingway. "Mr. Hemingway, it will be noted, has been connected with various so-called Communist front organizations and was active in aid-

ing the Loyalist cause in Spain," Ladd's report says. "Despite Hemingway's activities, no information has been received which would definitely tie him with the Communist Party or which would indicate that he is or has been a Party member. His actions, however, have indicated that his views are 'liberal' and that he may be inclined favorably to Communist political philosophies."

Hoover and his aides then decided to



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denigrate Hemingway as an intelligence rival by Red-baiting him. Hemingway's dossier includes a fourteen-page single-spaced and heavily censored memorandum, dated April 27, 1943, that contains the heading "Possible Connections with Communist Party." After calling Hemingway a "specialty writer" for the Communist *Daily Worker* and a "New York" writer—both descriptions were untrue—the memorandum says, "In the fall of 1940 Hemingway's name was included in a group of names of individuals who were said to be engaged in Communist activities. These individuals were reported to occupy positions on the 'intellectual front' and were said to render valuable service as propagandists. According to the informant, those whose names were included on this list loaned their efforts politically as writers, artists and speakers and traveled throughout the country supporting and taking part in Communist front meetings and in the program of the Party generally. They were alleged to be particularly active in the then paramount Communist Party objective, namely, defeat of the preparedness program."

The effort to link him to the Communist Party continued: "Hemingway, according to a confidential source who furnished information on October 4, 1941, was one of the 'heads' of the Committee for Medical Aid to the Soviet Union. This informant alleged that the above-mentioned committee was backed by the Communist Party." Again: "In January, 1942, it was reported that the American Russian Cultural Association, Inc., of New York City, put out a small pamphlet soliciting support. The name of Ernest Hemingway appeared therein as a member of the Board of Honorary Advisers. This group was purportedly organized to foster better relations between the United States and Russia."

The F.B.I.'s file notes that Hemingway took part in the Second American Writers Congress, on June 4, 1937, in Carnegie Hall, with Archibald MacLeish presiding. The F.B.I. was there, too. A "confidential source" reported at that time that "Hemingway was close to the Communist Party," but said he had "no knowledge of Hemingway's actual membership." Hemingway was also mentioned as a vice-president and member of the board of directors of the League of American Writers, Inc., "which is reportedly a Communist Front organization." In 1941, that organization

"solicited financial aid for those individuals" who had fought with the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War. Another "confidential informant" in the same year reported that Hemingway had "broken all ties with the Communists."

The section of the dossier which follows is labelled "Mexican Trip." It is totally censored—a strong indication that Hemingway was being watched by F.B.I. informants and probably Customs officials whenever he crossed an American border or travelled to Africa or Europe.

In 1943, a dispute developed between two Hoover aides, C. H. Carson and E. A. Tamm, about whether some sort of action should be taken against Hemingway. Carson recommended caution. In a memorandum he notes, "The Legal Attaché at Havana expresses his belief that Hemingway is fundamentally hostile to the F.B.I. and might readily endeavor at any time to cause trouble for us. Because of his peculiar nature, it is the belief of the Legal Attaché that Hemingway would go to great lengths to embarrass the Bureau if an incident should arise. In view of his prestige as a literary man, accepted by large sections of pub-

lic opinion in matters not related to writing, it is the recommendation of the Legal Attaché at Havana that great discretion be exercised in avoiding an incident with Ernest Hemingway."

Tamm did not concur. "I don't care what his contacts are or what his background is—I see no reason why we should make any effort to avoid exposing him for the phoney that he is," he states in a note, dated June 21, 1943, at the bottom of Carson's memorandum. "I don't think we should go out of our way to do this but most certainly if in the protection of the Bureau's interest it is necessary to meet him head-on, I don't think we should try to avoid such an issue."

Four years after the end of the war, the F.B.I. furnished a name check on Hemingway to the Secretary of Defense. It repeated much of the material about his hostility to the F.B.I.—saying that he had called the bureau "anti-Liberal, pro-Fascist, and dangerous of developing into an American Gestapo"—and noted his affiliations with groups that had supported aid to Spanish refugees.

The F.B.I. file also includes a 1959 memorandum from the Embassy in Havana to the State Department about

Hemingway's attitude toward Cuba and the Castro government. Returning to his house outside Havana in 1959 after a visit to Spain, Hemingway said that he hoped Cubans would not regard him as a "Yanqui" and that he "kissed" a Cuban flag. "Hemingway's remarks have been strongly played by *Prensa Latina*, and given wide publicity locally," Minister-Counsellor Daniel M. Braddock reports. "It is unfortunate that a person of his position and reputation should publicly take a position which displays either (1) strong criticism of his Government and compatriots, or (2) a remarkable ignorance concerning developments in Cuba since the first of the year."

In 1961, after Hemingway took his own life, the F.B.I. found it worthwhile to add to its file a comment by the columnist Westbrook Pegler, a Hoover favorite, from the *New York Journal-American* of July 19, 1961. "It has been my stubborn opinion that Ernest Hemingway was actually one of the worst writers in the English language during his time," Pegler wrote. "It can be conceded that he invented a 'style.' But to me it was an ugly style, so barren of ordinary literary embellishment or amenity that it

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was confused and often incomprehensible.”

JUST as the F.B.I. applied its own idiosyncratic standards in trying to judge Hemingway, its dossier on John Steinbeck (1902-68) reveals an effort to challenge Steinbeck’s Americanism and to judge him negatively because he wrote about social and economic justice. In the minds of Hoover’s agents, writing about such subjects made Steinbeck a radical, and suspect. The F.B.I. provided ninety-four pages from its file on Steinbeck but withheld twenty-three pages; the Army gave up twenty-one pages; the C.I.A., which had two documents, withheld them entirely, on the ground of “national defense or foreign policy.”

Steinbeck was one of the few American writers who suspected that F.B.I. agents were tailing them, but he had no idea of the extent of the surveillance. In his file is a letter he wrote to Attorney General Francis Biddle in 1942 that reads, in part, “Do you suppose you could ask Edgar’s boys to stop stepping on my heels? They think I am an enemy alien. It’s getting tire-

some.” Biddle forwarded the letter to Hoover, and Hoover replied that Steinbeck “is not being and has never been investigated.”

Such covering up was usual when Hoover was confronted by one of his theoretical superiors in the Justice Department. The phrase “has never been investigated” did not mean that Steinbeck was not being watched, and it certainly glossed over the fact that the F.B.I. had maintained a detailed record on him. It simply indicated that the Bureau had not rolled out its heavy artillery for a full-scale investigation. In the F.B.I. file on Steinbeck, this heading, dated March 10, 1954, appears: “Instances Wherein America’s Enemies Have Used or Attempted to Use Steinbeck’s Writings and Reputation to Further Their Causes.”

A number of examples are given of how Steinbeck’s books are dangerous to the republic. The file reads, in part:

Bureau files reflect that because many of Steinbeck’s writings portrayed an extremely sordid and poverty-stricken side of American life, they were reprinted in both German and Russian and used by the Nazis and Soviets as propaganda against America. . . .

Steinbeck’s book “Grapes of Wrath” was among the periodicals and books sold from the literature table at a Communist Party May Day meeting held on May 1, 1940, in Los Angeles, California [source censored].

A booklet announcing the courses of the Workers School of New York City, official Communist Party school, for the winter term, 1943, stated that the works of leading dramatic writers, including Steinbeck, would be used in the discussions of history of social institutions as they had been reflected by writers of all times.

The source was the California Committee on Un-American Activities, a Red-hunting body that smeared reputations with an even broader brush than the House Committee on Un-American Activities in Washington did; it was therefore a frequently cited source in the F.B.I. files.

During March 1945, a copy of a recommended reading list used by the American Youth for Democracy (cited by the Attorney General) indicated that listed books were available from the New Jersey State office of that organization at a discount. This list included Steinbeck’s “The Moon Is Down.” [The informant’s name is blacked out, but the source is otherwise listed as “state headquarters of the Communist Political Association, Newark, New Jersey.”]

The file does not mention that “The Moon Is Down” is about the Norwegian resistance to the Nazi occupation.

The Steinbeck file notes that the House Un-American Activities Committee was on record as saying that the National Maritime Union of America “toed the Communist Party line,” and the F.B.I. goes on to report, “These ships of the American Merchant Marine are being supplied with libraries for the seamen to read while at sea. . . . John Steinbeck’s ‘Grapes of Wrath’ is naturally present, as it would be in any Communist selection.” The file includes a statement made on June 2, 1953, by an admitted former Communist Party member, who testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee that “Steinbeck has done more through his novel about the agricultural workers than anyone else for the Communist Party.”

Steinbeck came under scrutiny even before he wrote “The Grapes of Wrath.” His file notes, “During the Fall of 1936 a group of liberal and communistic writers issued a call for a conference to be held in San Francisco, California, on November 13, 1936, which conference continued throughout the following day. This report indicated that one of the sponsors of this Congress was John

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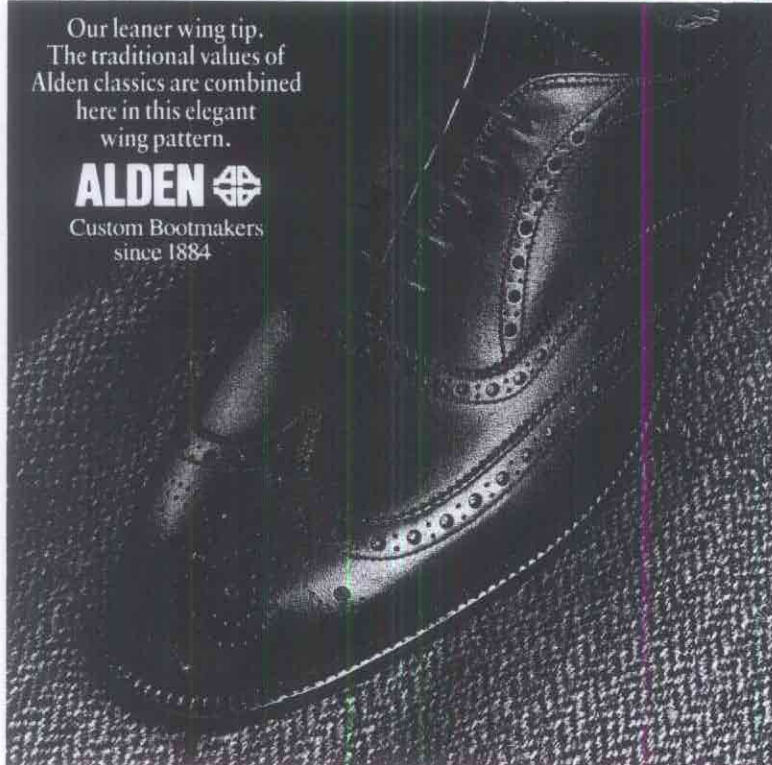
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Steinbeck." It was customary for the F.B.I. to make no distinction between liberal and Communist writers, so its report did not specify into which group Steinbeck supposedly fell.

Like most major American writers, Steinbeck belonged to writers' organizations. The file shows that he was a contributor—along with four hundred and seventeen other American writers—to a pamphlet called "Writers Take Sides," published by the League of American Writers in New York in 1938. These were letters in support of the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War. (A similar pamphlet, "Authors Take Sides on the Spanish War, 1937," was published by writers and poets of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. Among the many distinguished authors writing for the Spanish Republic and against the Franco insurgents were W. H. Auden, Samuel Beckett, Cyril Connolly, Ford Madox Ford, Aldous Huxley, Sean O'Casey, V. S. Pritchett, Herbert Read, and Stephen Spender.) Steinbeck was named president of one of the anti-Franco groups in this country. He was also one of the signers of a letter urging the United States to lift its arms embargo against the besieged Republic. The California Committee on Un-American Activities branded the Washington Committee to Lift the Spanish Embargo a Communist front.

How all this negative information affected Steinbeck personally emerged in 1943, when Army Intelligence was considering him for a commission. An investigation was conducted in Los Angeles (he was living in Sherman Oaks), and G-2 wrote in a 1943 memo to the Chief of Military Intelligence in Washington:

In view of substantial doubt as to Subject's loyalty and discretion, it is recommended that Subject not be considered favorably for a commission in the Army of the United States.

An earlier memo said of Steinbeck:

Subject has associated with individuals who are known to have a radical political and economic philosophy, and with some members of the Communist Party. . . . Subject received large volume of Communist literature and possessed books expressing radical political and economic views in his library.

The F.B.I. told Army Intelligence that Steinbeck subscribed to *People's World*. Among the sources of this information was the American Legion Radical Research Bureau in San Francisco; the Legion said "The Grapes of Wrath" had been branded Red propaganda.

Steinbeck was turned down, though his file shows that he had been employed in 1942, without pay, as a special consultant to the Secretary of War, and assigned to the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces. Then, as an unpaid writer, he wrote an official book on flying and training. After completing this assignment, he worked for the Office of War Information as a foreign-news editor, at an annual salary of thirty-six hundred dollars. Steinbeck told friends who were questioned about him that he was not a Communist, and that he was concerned about "the lower-class working people regardless of their particular political creed."

The writers' groups that Steinbeck belonged to made him suspect. The F.B.I. file listed the Western Writers Congress, the League of American Writers, and, most surprising of all, the widely respected National Institute of Arts and Letters, patterned after the French Academy, and now part of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

The Steinbeck dossier continued to expand after the war. At the beginning of the Cold War, Steinbeck wrote a series for the New York *Herald Trib-*

une, following a six-week tour around the Soviet Union, that became the basis for his 1948 book, "A Russian Journal." The F.B.I. comment reads, "It is noted that the articles criticized Soviet red tape and the Soviet Government but were favorable to the Russian people." Book reviews from the Communist *Daily Worker* and the anti-Communist *New Leader*, both unfavorable, were put in his file.

In 1961, the year before Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize, an F.B.I. interoffice memorandum made note of the contents of his novel "The Winter of Our Discontent." The memorandum headlined the fact that the F.B.I. was mentioned in the book. "At the beginning of the book he describes various persons of the town including one Stonewall Jackson Smith, the Chief of Police, whom he characterizes as being of above average intelligence for the town and who even took the F.B.I. training at Washington D.C.," the memorandum reads. The F.B.I. finds implicit criticism of the Bureau in an observation about the novel's plot: "While Steinbeck does not belabor the fact that the Chief of Police is F.B.I. trained, nevertheless a careful reader cannot fail to recall the

reference in the initial introduction to the Chief when his behavior concerning the indictments comes up."

In 1964, the F.B.I. passed along information about Steinbeck to the C.I.A. It reported that Steinbeck had visited the Soviet Union the year before, and a headline in the *Daily Worker* in New York had read, "Steinbeck in Moscow Impressed by Progress." Why the C.I.A. was interested in Steinbeck is not revealed.

In an internal memorandum in 1964, the F.B.I. reported that Steinbeck had been on the mailing list of the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, and noted that a "reliable source has described this organization as a communist-infiltrated organization in Japan." Another "reliable source" reported that in 1959 Steinbeck's literary agency, McIntosh & Otis, had been paid \$188.70 on his behalf by the National Bank of Bulgaria. And still another "reliable source" reported that Steinbeck "had received the sum of \$420 as an author's fee from the Soviet publication, *Novyi Mir*."

In 1968, the year Steinbeck died, the F.B.I. provided a name check on him to the White House. Its purpose can-

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not be determined, because, like much of the material in the Steinbeck dossier, the document is blacked out and stamped "SECRET."

CARL SANDBURG (1878-1967) had an Army Intelligence file of six pages, dating back to 1918, and an F.B.I. file of twenty-three pages. Sandburg, who received Pulitzer Prizes for both poetry and history and was given the Medal of Freedom by President Johnson at the White House in 1964, seems to have been considered dangerously liberal or worse by some government officials. In his early years, he was a Social Democratic Party organizer and a supporter of Eugene V. Debs; in the nineteen-thirties, he was a New Dealer; and in the nineteen-fifties he campaigned for Adlai E. Stevenson, a close friend, for President.

The first entry in Sandburg's file resulted from his having worked as a correspondent in Sweden for the Newspaper Enterprise Association, the feature-news syndicate, in 1918. When he returned to New York, in December of that year, all his notebooks, manuscripts, and books were seized by Customs, the Secret Service, and military officials. Much of this material referred to Finland and to Bolshevism in Russia. Sam T. Hughes, Sandburg's editor at N.E.A., protested the confiscation of his papers to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, calling it an act of censorship. Baker replied that Sandburg's luggage included "revolutionary literature," and added that he had also carried ten thousand dollars in drafts on behalf of Finnish revolutionaries. Hughes responded by saying that those who had taken Sandburg's property did so

because they thought his name was German, but his parents were of Scandinavian origin. He said that the authorities had harassed Sandburg after they learned that he had been a Socialist in his earlier days. Hughes also told Secretary Baker that he would instruct Sandburg to write exactly what he thought, regardless of censorship. Hughes wrote, "Isn't it fine for the Government to treat such a man like a dog of a traitor?" Eventually, Sandburg's papers were returned, but neither he nor his editor ever forgave the attack on their journalistic integrity. Army Intelligence did not forget Sandburg. Nearly seventy years later—and twenty years after his death—a file is maintained of the suspicious correspondence at the Army Intelligence and Security Command at Fort Meade, Maryland; and the F.B.I. also has a copy of this ancient dispute in its records. While Sandburg was writing and campaigning for causes and candidates he believed in, the file accusing him of being a courier for revolutionary literature was resurrected.

Sandburg's F.B.I. record shows that in 1941 an interoffice memorandum distributed among bureau officials noted that he had "manifested an unfriendly attitude" toward the F.B.I. at a luncheon in Chicago. In 1947, the bureau added to his file a clipping from the *Daily Worker* saying that a CBS documentary program called "Dear Mr. Lincoln" and based on letters to Lincoln found in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection in the Library of Congress had been written by Alan Lomax "with the advice of Carl Sandburg." That same year, the *Daily Worker* also reported that Sandburg had warned in a speech that if the "hate Russia" campaign continued it would lead to "the most terrible war in history," and his warning went into the F.B.I.'s file. In the same speech, the file shows, Sandburg praised Secretary of State George C. Marshall for his calm patience in dealing with the Soviet Union.

An F.B.I. memorandum written four months later was filled with factual errors about Sandburg. Whoever wrote the memorandum (the name was deleted from the files I received) said that Sandburg "was reported to be a well-known Communist in Chicago." It also said he owned a building there that was used as national headquarters for the Young Workers

League of America. Neither statement was true. In 1952, the F.B.I. prepared a dossier on Sandburg for the State Department, in which it named him as a sponsor of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in 1939, and stated that in 1942 he was listed in an advertisement in *The Nation* as a speaker at a dinner sponsored by the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee; that two years later he was a special guest at a concert in Chicago for the same organization; that in 1945 he was listed as a sponsor of the Midwest division of the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions; and that all these organizations had been cited as Communist fronts by the Attorney General or the House Un-American Activities Committee.

In 1958, again without qualification, the F.B.I. repeated all the derogatory information about Sandburg in its file while providing a name check to the United States Information Agency. That year, too, Sandburg was upgraded in the F.B.I. records, for he was involved in an "Internal Security—C" matter involving another person: name and description blacked out. This person had written a book and, the Sandburg file noted, Sandburg "reportedly will write the introduction to [censored]'s new book." Merely a report of a plan to write was considered worthy of note by the F.B.I. record-keepers.

In 1964, a "CONFIDENTIAL" page appeared in Sandburg's file, but it is almost totally blacked out except for a date, June 25, 1964, and the fact that he was born on January 6, 1878, in Galesburg, Illinois. Thus, when Sandburg was eighty-six years old, living quietly at home in Flat Rock, North Carolina, the F.B.I. was still watching him and keeping his dossier up to date.

THEODORE DREISER (1871-1945) has a dossier of two hundred and thirty-nine pages, but the F.B.I. withheld forty-one pages—more than forty years after his death. The documents released are censored; those from Navy files are totally blacked out. Dreiser was active in defending the American workingman and attacking the excesses of big industry. Most of his views were out in the open—on the printed page and on the platform. His file shows that in 1928 he was a member of an international committee to save Sacco and Vanzetti. During the Depression, he was active in the defense of mineworkers who were striking for their safety and livelihood.

Dreiser's reasoning was not always as farsighted as his novels might suggest. Discussing his book "America Is Worth Saving" in a radio interview ten months before Pearl Harbor, he absurdly equated the British Empire and Nazi Germany. This isolationist rhetoric, though it was not uncommon in parts of the country at the time, caused the F.B.I. to watch him more closely. In a censored memorandum, the word "Espionage" appears after his name. His confidential file card is labelled "COMMUNIST." After America entered the war, the F.B.I. policed what Dreiser wrote and said. A memorandum in his file states, "The subject is the well-known American novelist whose writings in recent years have had a definitely pro-Russian angle." Passages in the "CONFIDENTIAL" F.B.I. documents read like a Dreiser novel. The bureau has always relished gathering material about marital and extramarital conduct, and it comments that Dreiser was "indicted in 1931 in Bell County, Kentucky, for Criminal Syndicalism and Adultery." He had gone there to help striking miners and get material for a book. "Subject left State prior to indictment and it is believed same was dismissed for lack of evidence," the file continues. "Basis for adultery was the finding of DREISER and [name censored] in the same room at hotel but immoral relations are not known. DREISER claimed impotency. . . . When DREISER was still a young man of around 31 or 32 years of age, he separated from his wife. . . . He first came into prominence when he wrote 'An American Tragedy,' on which he made a great deal of money. After this success . . . his wife came to him and demanded some money for a settlement, which he gave her. [Informant] does not know how long [censored] has been living with DREISER but believes it has been a period of over ten years. . . . She has heard that [censored] is a former MACK SENNETT girl and has positively no literary acumen." In a 1943 letter J. Edgar Hoover himself noted that the matter of Dreiser's mistress was brought before the Attorney General, "who feels that the facts do not present a proper basis for investigation under the White Slave Traffic Act, particularly in the absence of commercialism." Hoover's effort to have Dreiser prosecuted for sex between two unmarried consenting adults came in the middle of the Second World War, when, presumably, the director had more important matters to pursue.

Near the end of the war, Dreiser

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"I switched. Mint chocolate chip is my favorite now."

was still being spied upon: it is noted that he was living in Hollywood, at 1015 North Kings Road, and that he had a gray 1940 Plymouth sedan, License No. 10Q334. An F.B.I. source reported that he "would obtain information as to any writing being done by DREISER." Apparently, the F.B.I. had a source inside Dreiser's house who reported to an informant (her name blacked out) about him. The F.B.I. agent reported that Dreiser was doing "very little writing and what little work he does put out is not in great demand by publishers." In May of 1945, seven months before Dreiser's death, an F.B.I. agent in Los Angeles reported a critical judgment on him: "A 'has been' in the literary field."

JOHAN DOS PASSOS (1896-1970), who started his writing career as a reformer and ended up as a conservative, has a government dossier of eighty-two pages. These came heavily blacked out; my appeal to the Department of Justice's Office of Legal Policy for more material and less censorship was denied. The proletarian views found in Dos Passos' "Manhattan Transfer" and his trilogy "U.S.A." changed in the last two de-

acades of his life; his 1961 novel "Midcentury" extolled the free-enterprise system.

The F.B.I. file on Dos Passos says that at one time he sympathized with the Soviet Union; that the anti-Fascist cause enlisted his interest during the Spanish Civil War; that he championed the rights of striking Kentucky coal miners during the Depression. "In Russia he was immensely popular as a 'proletarian' writer," the file notes. "Later his attitude became definitely anti-Communist." Despite his changed views, a 1951 document stamped "SECRET" described him as a "fellow traveler and sympathizer" and noted that he had a "connection with front organizations." These reached back to 1923, when a letterhead listed him as a member of the American Committee for Relief of Russian Children, and in that 1951 document the F.B.I. made a little list of other "front" organizations he belonged to. These included the American Civil Liberties Union, the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, the Citizens National Committee for Sacco and Vanzetti, the American Committee for Protection of Foreign-Born, and the American Friends of

Spanish Democracy. For the First American Writers Congress, held in New York in 1935, Dos Passos wrote a strong essay, in which he spoke of "a country that is organizing to build for socialism, instead of for the growth of the wealth and power of a few bosses."

In 1951, Dos Passos having moved to the right politically, the F.B.I., on a page stamped "SECRET," summed up its file material in a memorandum that concluded:

Recommendation: A review of the above information reflects that although Dos Passos was probably a Communist [the F.B.I. erred in this assumption] and subsequently a Trotskyite, he has in recent years become definitely anti-Communist. In view of this, it does not appear that an investigation of Dos Passos is warranted, and if you agree, no investigation will be instituted.

Nevertheless, when Dos Passos travelled outside the United States the F.B.I. continued to track him. A file on Dos Passos from the Shanghai Municipal Police was sent to the F.B.I. in June of 1951 and was disseminated to agents in the bureau's Security Division. (The Shanghai material is omitted from the pages I received.) The F.B.I. reports that "a confidential source of known reliability furnished the Bureau with information contained in the files of the Shanghai Municipal Police," and that these files included a letter dating back to 1933 from Dos Passos, in Paris, to someone (name censored) in Shanghai because Dos Passos was listed as a member of a committee formed to help defend two Shanghai Communists.

On June 3, 1952, two F.B.I. agents interviewed Dos Passos at his home, in Spence's Point, Virginia—the file shows that the F.B.I. was also maintaining a mail watch on the house—and reported their findings directly to J. Edgar Hoover. Dos Passos provided the agents with a political autobiography, which they wrote down for his file, noting, "DOS PASSOS informed that he was never a member of the Communist Party, although he related that he had close association with the Communist Party at various times." Though he named names, he prefaced his remarks by saying that since he was never a Party member the names were "based entirely upon his personal belief due to his dealings with the Communist Party." Dos Passos then mentioned John Reed, Max Eastman, Earl Browder, and other obvious

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names. He said that he had accompanied Theodore Dreiser to the Harlan, Kentucky, coal miners' strike in 1931 and had "got the impression that the National Miners' Union was controlled by the Communist Party." He added that the Communist Party was "interested in the... Group Theatre," in New York.

In this interview Dos Passos also said that during the Spanish Civil War he had tried to keep Communists out of the American Friends of Spanish Democracy, which supported the Loyalists against Franco's Fascists. In 1937, he went to Spain with Ernest Hemingway to make a pro-Loyalist film, "Spain in Flames," but his name did not appear in it, because, he claimed, the Communists were "down" on him. Later, he became interested in seeking a refuge for Leon Trotsky, because "Trotsky was getting a raw deal." The report of the interview concluded with the F.B.I. observation that Dos Passos was "coöperative but was hazy concerning details," and that he "offered further coöperation at any time it was necessary to contact him."

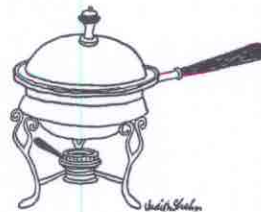
In 1960, Dos Passos discovered, quite by accident, that, regardless of his coöperation with the F.B.I., he was still the subject of federal scrutiny. A Treasury Department agent visited the *Washington Daily News* and asked to see Dos Passos' file in the newspaper's morgue. An enterprising reporter, Joseph Cloud, then questioned the Treasury agent. The agent said that his mission was "very hush-hush," and that he was trying to find out if Dos Passos had "recently changed his political ideology." When the reporter asked Dos Passos if he knew why the government was interested in his ideology, he replied, according to Cloud's story, which appeared in the paper on March 31, 1960, "I have no idea why. The F.B.I. might be interested in some of the many Communists I've known, but the Treasury—I just can't figure it out. It does sound as if the Federal Government now has 'Thought Police.' What rights does the Government have to investigate the political opinions of any private citizen? And if they want to know mine, why the hell don't they ask me?"

ON Thomas Wolfe (1900-38), I was able to obtain forty-one pages, but they were almost totally

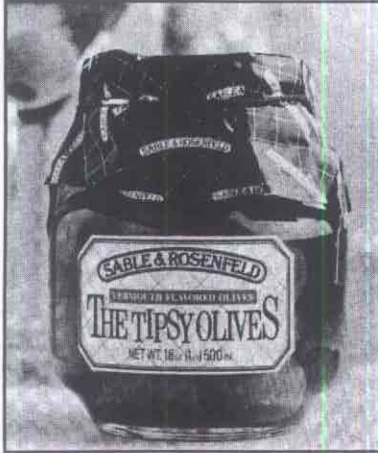
blacked out by the F.B.I. Forty-five additional pages existed in his file, but my appeal to the Meese Department of Justice—nearly fifty years after the author's death—that they be released, even if they were censored, was denied. On the basis of Wolfe's four autobiographical novels—"Look Homeward, Angel," "Of Time and the River," "The Web and the Rock," and "You Can't Go Home Again"—it is hard to imagine him as an enemy of the state. We know from news reports that his prewar travels in Nazi Germany came to the attention of the authorities because his writing was admired by some Germans, and that he admired them in return. Eventually, however, he wrote against Hitlerism. But none of this background can be found in his vetted files.

Strangely, in 1946, eight years after his death, and again in 1947, and yet again in the nineteen-fifties, his name turned up in censored secret files labelled "ESPIONAGE" and "INTERNAL SECURITY." From the fragmentary words in the blacked-out documents it can be surmised that Wolfe's writings were suspect because they appeared on reading lists of schools said to be under Communist control.

The reason that Wolfe's file was maintained after his death was that his novels had become a signal flag to the F.B.I. For example, in a 1945 report by its office in Kansas City, there appears a list of books headed "The following are the readings assigned by [name censored]." The list of suspect books includes John Hersey's "A Bell for Adano," Stephen Vincent Benét's "Western Star," Howard Fast's "Freedom Road," Edith Wharton's "The Age of Innocence," Sinclair Lewis's "Babbitt," Ernest Hemingway's "Short Stories," John Steinbeck's "The Grapes of Wrath,"



Richard Wright's "Uncle Tom's Children," and Thomas Wolfe's "You Can't Go Home Again." In 1947, a report by the F.B.I.'s Boston office noted that "Communist Party, U.S.A., Pamphlets and Publications" were sold at the Progressive Bookshop, 8 Beach Street, Boston. A flyer there was entitled "Give Books for Christmas," and among the books it listed which warranted suspicion were Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi," Howard Fast's "The American," Dorothy Baker's "Young Man with a



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Nearly a half century after Thomas Wolfe's death, his dossier has continued to be heavily censored, and his books, and those of other celebrated novelists, are listed as a "SECURITY MATTER"—presumably meaning a threat to the republic.

THE most curious case of censorship by denial which I encountered under the Freedom of Information Act concerned the novelist and short-story writer John O'Hara (1905-70). A file on him exists, but it was denied to me in its entirety. In response to my request, I received this letter, in June of 1986, from Emil P. Moschella, chief of the Freedom of Information-Privacy Acts Section, Records Management Division, of the F.B.I.: "After careful consideration, it has been determined that all material concerning Mr. O'Hara is exempt from release pursuant to subsection (b) (1) of the Freedom of Information Act. This subsection allows for the withholding of information which is currently and properly classified in accordance with Executive Order 12356"—that is, "in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy, for example, information involving intelligence sources or methods."

In appealing, I pointed out that nothing I could find in O'Hara's stories or journalism seemed to endanger "the national defense or foreign policy." On September 29, 1986, Richard L. Huff, co-director of the Justice Department's Office of Information and Privacy, affirmed the initial decision and continued to deny me access to the file. He added that a Department Review Committee would determine whether anything could be declassified; but I have not heard further and doubt if I will.

THE first National Book Award for fiction, given in 1950, went to Nelson Algren for "The Man with the Golden Arm." During his lifetime, Algren (1909-81), whose F.B.I. file contains five hundred and forty-six pages, kept the F.B.I., Army Intelligence, Navy Intelligence, and the State Department very busy. From the F.B.I. I received four hundred and thirty-one censored pages. My appeal for the missing hundred and thirteen pages was initially turned down by Mr. Huff, but later a few of them were

provided. Sometimes one can pick up fragments of information indirectly from different sections of the F.B.I. In Algren's case, I learned from my appeal that the author is the subject of one F.B.I. file in Washington and a second in the Chicago field office; that both are labelled "SECURITY MATTER—COMMUNIST," and that Algren was also included in the records of the Criminal Division.

After I had waited three years and a month, the State Department independently provided five pages of a file that it maintained on Algren. It had received a passport application from Algren in 1965 and again in 1968. Whenever Algren left the country, the department informed its Embassies from Mexico City to Moscow that he had done so and requested them "to furnish the Department with any pertinent information coming to their attention regarding Algren's activities." The Embassies were also warned that he had a record of "Communist Party front activity" from 1941 to 1952. (It is puzzling to know how the State Department concluded that he carried on such activity in 1944 and 1945, when he was serving as an Army litter bearer in Europe.) When Algren went to Asia in 1968, during the Vietnam War, the State Department noted that the purpose of his trip was an "assignment from *Atlantic Monthly*."

To the F.B.I., Algren was a "potentially dangerous" American. He was listed in the bureau's "Program for Apprehension and Detention of Persons Considered Potentially Dangerous to the National Defense and Public Safety of the United States." In 1942, J. Edgar Hoover himself wrote to the president of the Polish-American Council in Chicago (the letter is in Algren's file) informing him that a resolution the council had adopted condemning Algren's novel "Never Come Morning" would be made "a matter of record in the files of this Bureau." The council did not like Algren's Polish characters.

In 1949, four years after Algren completed honorable service in the Second World War, the Chicago F.B.I. office told the New York and St. Louis F.B.I. offices to check his Army record and find out where he was. By then, he was a well-known writer around Chicago and New York. When he was located, his correspondence was watched through a "mail cover" in Chicago, which noted the name and address of anyone who wrote to him. Copies were made of his

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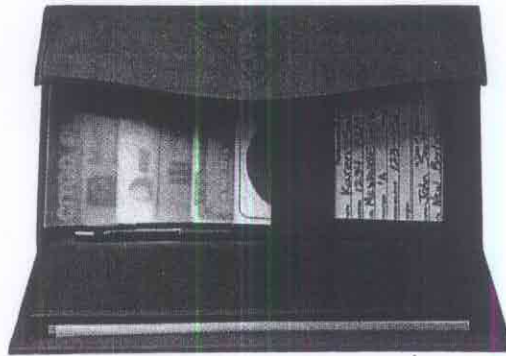
signature. F.B.I. agents in at least five cities devoted their energies to following his movements.

Algren was unafraid to lend his name to causes he believed in and to protest injustices he deplored, and, every time he signed a petition and every time his name appeared in the press, clippings of what he had to say and what was said about him went into his file. Writ large was his defense of the Hollywood Ten, the blacklisted screenwriters and directors, and his membership on a national committee formed in behalf of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Unnamed informants monitored whatever Algren wrote as a free-lance journalist and as a novelist, and passed the material along to the F.B.I. "Informant reported Algren wrote left-wing article for magazine *Holiday*," one entry reads. (*Holiday*, a nonpolitical travel magazine, introduced many novelists to travel writing.) Another informant describes him as the "Communist author" of "The Man with the Golden Arm" and "Chicago: City on the Make." The bizarre phrase "Communist tendencies" also appears in his file.

When Algren obtained a passport in 1956, he signed a statement that he was not a Communist. The Justice Department, according to his file, considered "possible prosecution of him for execution of non-Communist affidavit for State Department," but the matter was dropped for "insufficient evidence"—a phrase that is appended to a number of the accusations by unnamed informants in the F.B.I. dossiers. Before Algren left for Europe in 1949, his friends gave him a farewell party; it was noted by the F.B.I. In 1960, when he went to Spain, the F.B.I. cabled the American Legation in Madrid, gave it the name of his hotel, and asked the Legation to cable Washington and report on what he was up to. The legal attaché at the American Embassy in Paris also filed a report with the F.B.I. in 1960—at a time when Algren was being celebrated in the French press as one of America's most important writers. What the Embassy reported is censored.

J. Edgar Hoover thought Algren so important that he himself wrote a letter to the director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research in 1966 telling him that Algren was either travelling abroad or planning to do so. Details of Hoover's letter were blacked out a few years after Algren's death and re-

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main so in the material provided to me.

There is a fine irony in the F.B.I. file on Algren: he fooled the special agents (and kidded his friends) with an alias that was really an inside joke. The Bureau was obviously ignorant about anything that involved his writings or his literary friendships. After his affair with Simone de Beauvoir, the French writer and longtime companion of Jean-Paul Sartre, Algren used the name Simon de Beauvoir as his telephone listing. The 1954 telephone directory for Gary, Indiana, lists "de Beauvoir Simon 6228 Forest . . . Gary 8-2463." It has no listing for Nelson Algren. A memorandum in Algren's F.B.I. file notes that "Nelson Algren Abraham"—the name on his Army service record—used several aliases, including "Simon Beauvoir and Simon de Beauvoir."

SURPRISINGLY, Truman Capote (1924-84), who was far more of a social than a political activist, has a hundred and eighty-five pages in his F.B.I. file; only a hundred and ten pages were released to me. The C.I.A. has a file on him consisting of one document, and that was denied me. The F.B.I. said that Capote had "never been the subject of an F.B.I. investigation." However, he was identified in numerous files relating to other individuals and to various organizations. Despite the official statement that he was not investigated, a document stamped "SECRET" (the stamp was crossed out before his file was released to me in censored form) reads, "Investigation is presently being conducted to determine whether [blacked out] present activities warrant his being placed on the Security Index." Since so many pages in his file were withheld, I don't know whether Capote was indeed listed as a security risk.

Explaining the reason for some of the censored material, the F.B.I. said



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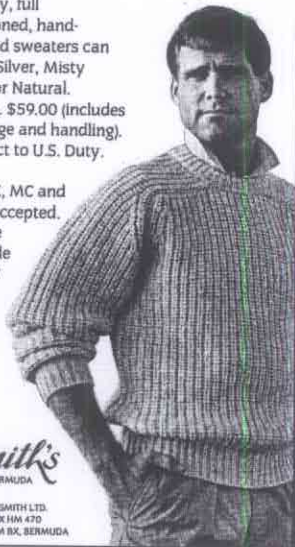
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in a letter to me, "Information has been deleted which originated with the United States Senate Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, Fair Play for Cuba Committee, January 6, 1961, in Executive Session. This information is exempt from disclosure since it is considered to be outside the purview of the Freedom of Information-Privacy Acts."

An F.B.I. memorandum on the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, dated November 21, 1960, includes Capote's name among those of Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, I. F. Stone, Norman Mailer, Kenneth Tynan, C. Wright Mills, and James Baldwin. The memorandum notes that J. Edgar Hoover requested "summaries" on the Fair Play for Cuba signers. A "CONFIDENTIAL" document in Capote's file declares that he "supports the revolution." The final entry in Capote's file is dated May 23, 1968, and originated in Los Angeles. It reveals that an informant was tracking someone who was known to Capote. This somewhat mysterious entry goes, "He was advised by Capote that [name censored] is staying in some friend's home in Palm Springs while he is rewriting some portions of his book [title censored]. Capote could not recall the name of the street but said it was some 'Circle' approximately one mile from downtown Palm Springs." The F.B.I. memorandum mentioned the Palm Springs Spa Hotel.

Capote was gifted, but the nature of his gifts hardly made him deserving of so lofty a political tag as "Security Risk." For the F.B.I. to track him, have his documents stamped "SECRET" and "CONFIDENTIAL," and study his writings is a particularly ludicrous example of the length to which its surveillance of authors has gone.

THE F.B.I. dossier on Thornton Wilder (1897-1975) consists of ninety-six pages, heavily censored; four pages were withheld. At various times, Wilder was suspected of espionage and of being a threat to internal security. One of the documents reveals that an "F.B.I. Watch" was kept on him as a "suspect" while he was serving as an Army Air Forces Intelligence officer in the Mediterranean Theatre during the Second World War. F.B.I. offices in Boston, Detroit,

Newark, and New York watched him. The bureau was particularly concerned with his associations and affiliations—especially with writers' organizations that took stands on such issues as aid for the Spanish Loyalists and activities against Nazi Germany. He came under suspicion because he openly supported causes that he believed sacred to freedom and literature.

In 1938, Wilder was among a group of thirty-six American authors who petitioned President Roosevelt to "sever trade relations with Nazi Germany and declare an embargo on all Nazi German goods"—an action noted in his F.B.I. file. Two years later, the F.B.I. tried, unsuccessfully, to link Wilder to a supposed case of espionage for Germany at a camp for Austrian refugees in New Hampshire. In addition to the license numbers of his two cars and the fact that he owned a house in Hamden, Connecticut, the F.B.I. reported that he was "on the Republican voting list" but had "boosted for President Roosevelt" in the 1940 election. In the end, the bureau had to conclude that there had been "no information received which would link subject Wilder with any espionage or subversive activities."

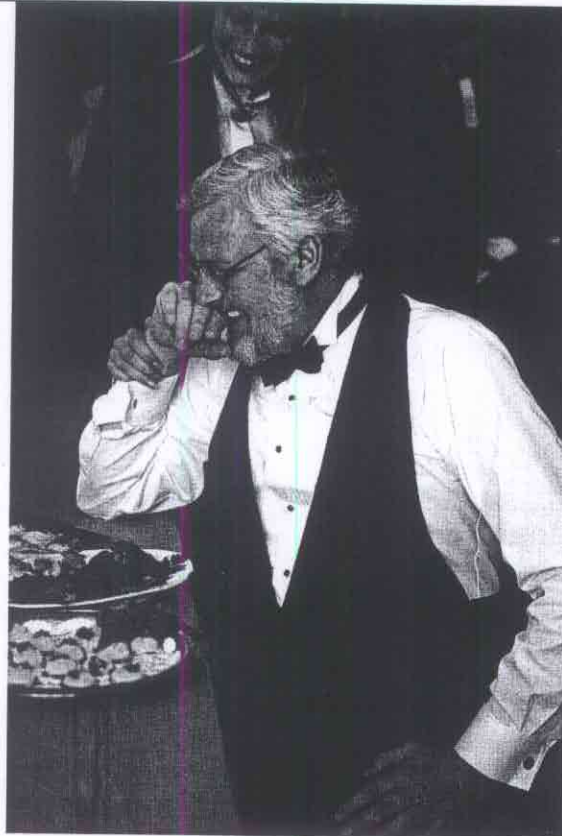
An article in the *Washington Times-Herald* in 1942 noted that Wilder was on the advisory council of the Writers War Board—a board that, the article said, "functions under the direction of the Office of Civilian Defense, and uses the government's free mailing frank of the 'Executive Office of the President,' [and] is participating 'unofficially' in the campaign of the Communists and other totalitarians." Furthermore, the article said, "Rex Stout, writer of murder mystery stories," who had a record as "a Communist fellow traveler [and] is one of the prize exhibits of the Dies Committee on un-American Activities," was chairman of the Writers War Board. This comprehensive smear, which found its way into Wilder's F.B.I. file, misrepresented the Writers War Board—an organization that included many writers who had volunteered their skills to aid the war effort.

In 1954, a detailed report stamped "CONFIDENTIAL" summarized Wilder's life and career but noted—as these F.B.I. reports so often did—"No investigation has been conducted by the Bureau of Thornton Wilder." The report said that Wilder was educated at Oberlin and Yale and Princeton; taught at the University of Chi-

cago; served in the First World War as a corporal and in the Second World War as a lieutenant colonel in Army Air Forces Intelligence; was a bachelor and a Democrat; and had won three Pulitzer Prizes—for “The Bridge of San Luis Rey,” “Our Town,” and “The Skin of Our Teeth.” Service in both wars was apparently insufficient as a proof of patriotism, for the file, which went back to 1933, said that Wilder had been affiliated with “Cited Organizations.” A number of the sources for such information are blacked out—an indication that the F.B.I. had plants inside the relevant organizations. (The Authors Guild and the Dramatists Guild, I discovered, had their own files.) One group that Wilder was said to be a member of was the National Committee of the American Committee for Struggle Against War, which was cited by the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1933 as a Communist front.

The file shows that Wilder was a participant in or sponsor of the Second National Congress of the League of American Writers, held in New York in 1937. In the “Writers Take Sides” pamphlet, Wilder is quoted as saying, “I am unreservedly for the legal government and Loyalist Party in Spain.” The League of American Writers was on the Attorney General’s list of supposedly subversive organizations. Wilder was also listed, in 1940 and 1941, as a national sponsor of the American Committee for Protection of Foreign-Born—another organization cited as supposedly subversive by the Attorney General.

Throughout the McCarthy years and afterward, Wilder was the subject of attention when he dared to sign anything at all, including statements in defense of other writers’ freedom to write. In 1948, according to a “CONFIDENTIAL” memorandum in the file, Wilder was one of the signers of a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives which protested “the methods employed by the Committee on Un-American Activities . . . under the chairmanship of Representative J. Parnell Thomas, in its examination of certain writers summoned to appear before it.” The memorandum continues, “This letter was sponsored by a group of members of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, an honorary organization of American writers, artists and musicians. The National Institute of Arts and Letters has been cited by the California Committee on



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Un-American Activities as a Communist front."

WHEN I received the F.B.I.'s file on the playwright Robert Sherwood (1896-1955), eighty pages, some of them totally blacked out, had been compiled by the F.B.I. itself, and nine pages were attributed to the White House. Sherwood's file indicates that in 1941, at a time when he was writing speeches for his friend President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and again during the Second World War, while he was serving as Director of Overseas Operations in the Office of War Information, he was under suspicion. In those years, J. Edgar Hoover built up Sherwood's file with material suggesting that Sherwood's activities in civil-liberties and writers' organizations showed him to be a Communist. In 1942, during the early part of the war, Sherwood was ranked as an "Internal Security—C" case. After the war, in the Truman and Eisenhower Presidencies, and right up to the year of his death, Sherwood was watched by the F.B.I. He was critical of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's policies in the name of national security. He also defended the rights of authors, including the blacklisted Hollywood Ten.

Again and again in the file, reference is made to Sherwood's activism in the theatre, his leadership in the Dramatists Guild, and the subjects and themes of his plays. Both the man and his writings were scrutinized. He was a member of the Playwrights' Company—a group of dramatists, founded in 1938, that included S. N. Behrman, Elmer Rice, Maxwell Anderson, and Sidney Howard. Parts of his F.B.I. file read like a list of credits in *Playbill*. An internal memorandum that was prepared for Hoover in 1941 lists Sherwood's plays, beginning with "The Road to Rome," and including "The Petrified Forest" and "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," and notes that in 1936 he was Secretary of the Dramatists Guild.

Sherwood's file mentions that, with Thornton Wilder, he was one of the thirty-six American authors who signed the 1938 letter calling on President Roosevelt to sever trade relations with Germany and to declare an embargo on German goods. That same year, he was reported to be a member of the National Council on Freedom from Censorship. This council, according to a witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee,

was affiliated with the American Civil Liberties Union, which the committee had identified as "a Communist-front organization." Three years before, according to a 1952 memorandum in the file, Sherwood had helped to develop the New Theatre School, "to write and produce agitational and propaganda plays." This school was an off-spring of the New Theatre League—"the mainspring of the Agit-prop... theatre movement," according to the memorandum. "The New Theatre League was cited as a Communist front by the Special Committee on Un-American Activities on March 29, 1944."

Also in the Sherwood file is a 1941 report from the American Legion saying that it was "considerably aroused" over radio broadcasts put on by the Free Company—a group formed by Sherwood, Orson Welles, and others to combat foreign propaganda in this country. The Legion called the group, the file shows, "un-American, Communistic," and said that it was "operating under the guise of appearing for free speech but actually was campaigning for the light of Communism and other subversive elements." Sherwood is said to be chairman of the writers' division of this group. Another page dealing with Sherwood's theatre activities says, "On [date blacked out] information was received from a confidential source that Robert Sherwood was a member of the Communist Party. The informant further advised that all plays going into any of the Army camps must be approved by the National Theatre Conference. Sherwood and one [censored], a Communist Party member, were the two men who approved the plays for the National Theatre Conference... The informant further advised that [censored], who was recently made president of the National Theatre Conference [censored], and Sherwood were all tied up with the old 'Chekov Conference' held at Moscow, Russia, for the purpose of discussing the use of the theatre for spreading Communist propaganda throughout the world."

In 1950, according to his file, Sherwood, along with a number of directors, producers, actors, and other writers, signed a telegram to Justice Robert H. Jackson, of the Supreme Court, asking the Court to reverse a 1948 decision against members of the Hollywood Ten for refusing to answer questions about possible Communist Party membership. By 1950, the



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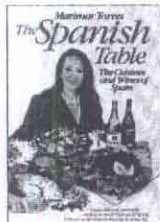
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blacklist by studios and networks was in full force.

In the case of Sherwood, and of other writers as well, the F.B.I. records could be contradictory and self-protective. Although the F.B.I. maintained, in a memorandum on September 10, 1942, that no investigation had been conducted on Sherwood, a memorandum from S. S. Alden, a section chief, to D. M. Ladd, an assistant director of the F.B.I., dated January 30, 1942, reads, "However, there is considerable derogatory information in the files relative to Robert E. Sherwood..." The F.B.I. passed these along, without qualification, to other government branches, including the White House.

In 1955, Sherwood made a speech to the Anti-Defamation League at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, in New York. Sherwood called the Eisenhower Administration's internal-security program, which included informers and wiretaps, a "heartless, soulless, callous tyranny," and said, "I think that we, the American people, the taxpayers who pay the salaries of [Secretary of State] John Foster Dulles and [State Department security chief] Scott McLeod... would like to know just when did we resolve that the rights of the individual American citizens should be subordinated and indeed destroyed by some undocumented interpretation of what some official tells us is national security." This speech was duly entered in Sherwood's F.B.I. dossier.

THE F.B.I. file on Tennessee Williams (1911-83) includes only seven pages, but they are telling. My appeal to receive additional information was denied on several grounds: some of the information consisted of "investigatory records compiled for law-enforcement purposes," I was told, or would involve disclosing "the identities of confidential sources and confidential information." During the McCarthy era, when Williams' plays were being staged all over the country, the F.B.I. maintained a file on him stamped "SECURITY INFORMATION—CONFIDENTIAL." Apparently, what made Williams a danger to the security of the United States, in the view of the F.B.I., was that his name had turned up several times in the *Daily Worker*. The bureau noted that "A Streetcar Named Desire," which first appeared on Broadway in 1947, was praised in a Communist Party newspaper. (The F.B.I. mistakenly called it a book, not

a play.) A year later, the F.B.I. file notes, Williams sent greetings to the Moscow Art Theatre, at a time when an effort was being made to exchange plays between the two countries; the Moscow troupe came to New York in 1965. In 1950, the *Daily Worker* again mentioned Williams, noting that he was among a group of "top show business cultural names"... who had been assembled to speak on a radio show condemning the jailing of the 'Hollywood Ten,'" and adding, "This radio show was refused by the major networks." The F.B.I. memorandum that reports this also reports that in 1951 a catalogue of the Dramatic Workshop and Technical Institute showed Williams to be a member of the institute's board of trustees. The memorandum adds that the workshop was cited as a Communist front by the California Committee on Un-American Activities. A 1961 memorandum in his file says that, in connection with an investigation made for the State Department, "the Bureau ascertained that Thomas Lanier Williams has the reputation of being a homosexual." Some of what follows has been censored, and then the file continues, "Further, the Office of Naval Intelligence, in a separate inquiry, secured statements from individuals who admitted participating in homosexual acts with Williams." The file does not reveal why the F.B.I. thought that Williams might be a threat to America's security.

ONE writer whose F.B.I. file was of particular interest to me was Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982), because during the Roosevelt Administration he held the highest government posts of any American writer. He was the Librarian of Congress from 1939 to 1944; director of the wartime Office of Facts and Figures from 1941 to 1942; assistant director of the Office of War Information from 1942 to 1943; and, in 1944 and 1945, an Assistant Secretary of State. MacLeish, a friend of the President, contributed to his speeches, as he did to the speeches of his friend Adlai Stevenson in Stevenson's 1952 and 1956 Presidential campaigns. MacLeish won the Pulitzer Prize three times for his poetry and his verse plays: for "Conquistador," published in 1932; for "Collected Poems," published in 1952; and for "J.B.," published in 1958. He was a kind of American poet laureate of New Deal social reform, democracy, and anti-Fascist activism against dic-

THE NEW YORKER

tatorships, from Franco's Spain to Hitler's Germany. His file shows that his views did not endear him to congressional investigating committees or to the F.B.I., which in a 1962 internal memorandum called him a "liberal of the New Deal type."

The MacLeish dossier contains more than six hundred pages, including a remarkable exchange of letters and memorandums, stamped "SECRET," between MacLeish and J. Edgar Hoover, which serve to expose the differences in thinking between the two officials—and, indeed, others in the government—on the subject of liberalism and witch-hunting. MacLeish, as director of the Office of Facts and Figures, could speak to Hoover as a Washington equal; Hoover, knowing that he was dealing with a friend of the President (and also that he had an ace in the hole: an existing file on MacLeish and his associations with writers' and anti-Fascist organizations in the nineteen-thirties), was cordially evasive. The exchange reveals a good deal about Hoover's political maneuvering and the F.B.I.'s attitude toward all authors who were under surveillance for their beliefs and writings.

The exchange began in January of 1942, a few weeks after Pearl Harbor, with a letter from MacLeish. Someone at the F.B.I. put a summary headline over this letter:

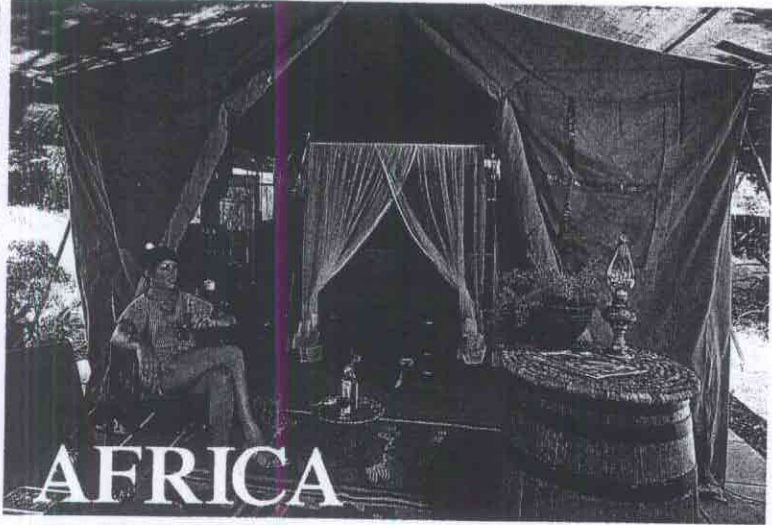
MACLEISH'S CRITICISM OF THE BUREAU AND ITS INVESTIGATIVE POLICIES

The letter reads, in part:

As reports on employees in the Office of Facts and Figures come to me through the Division of Investigation at OEM [Office for Emergency Management], I notice the recurrence of the phrase that the applicant is said to be "associated with various Liberal and Communistic groups." This suggests that investigators have been told to consider Liberalism as suspicious. Knowing your feeling on this matter, I am sure that no such instructions ever came from you.

For the sake of our reputation in the history books, don't you think it would be a good thing if all investigators could be made to understand that Liberalism is not only not a crime but actually the attitude of the President of the United States and the greater part of his Administration?

In the same way, I note the frequent recurrence of references to membership in organizations set up to aid the Spanish Republic in its fight against the Fascist Revolution of 1936. The implication is that people who were against the Nazis and the Fascists in '36 were suspect. Here again, and for the sake again of the reputations of all of us in the history books, wouldn't it be possible to instruct all in-



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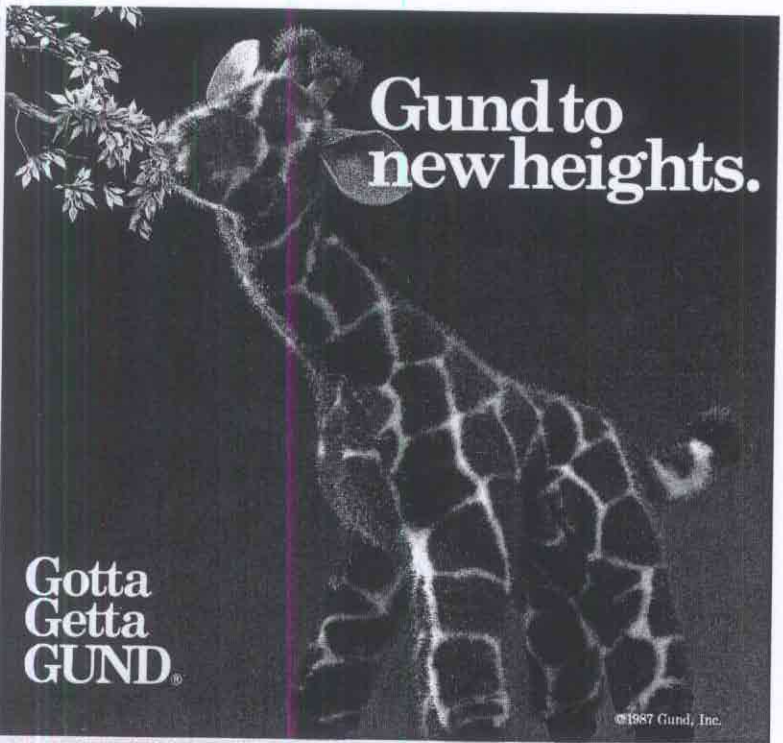
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investigators that the people we are at war with now are the same people who supported Franco in the Spanish civil war?

A week later, Hoover responded cautiously, by letter:

As you know, the F.B.I. is a fact-finding organization. The Special Agents who conduct and report on these and all other investigations, are trained and instructed to do so with absolute impartiality. These investigations are conducted primarily for the purpose of determining the patriotism, loyalty, and character of the individuals concerned. . . .

In the event an opinion is expressed by the person interviewed, the Special Agents attempt to obtain the basis for the opinion. It is true that in some cases biased or prejudicial statements may be made by some persons interviewed and comments by others may be objectionable or conceivably false. However, in the interest of obtaining available data for submission to the employing agency, all information, regardless of its nature, is fully and accurately reported as received and in no way do the individual comments reflect any opinions or the policy of the F.B.I.

In March of 1942, MacLeish sent a confidential letter to Attorney General Francis Biddle, Hoover's superior, and Biddle passed it on to Hoover. To Biddle, with whom he was on a first-name basis, MacLeish could speak more openly:

You have a lot to worry about these days and I hope I am the last man to add to your worries, but the whole business of the investigation of citizens offering their services to the government has at last gotten me down. Particularly in the case of writers and scholars and above all in the case of liberal writers and scholars the investigations have reached a level of humiliating absurdity which would be laughable if it were not often sinister.

Malcolm Cowley has been driven to resign from the Office of Facts and Figures by an attack carried on through Westbrook Pegler by, presumably, members of the Dies Committee or of the Dies Committee staff. Pegler very obviously had access to information in the possession only of the Dies Committee or the F.B.I., and I am certain the F.B.I. is not engaged in the business of trying its cases in the newspapers.

Now on top of the Cowley case come investigations of [name censored] and of [censored]'s which take the entire cake—frosting, candles, and all. I enclose [censored] letter, in which you may wish to read the two underlined sentences. I enclose also the interim report on [censored] in which you may wish to glance at the long list of items which are stated to reflect unfavorably upon [censored]'s character, reputation, and loyalty.

I ask you—can you beat it?

[Name censored]'s statement that F.B.I. investigators are "out of touch with intellectual currents" is a princely understatement. They seem not only to be out of touch with intellectual currents, they seem to be in other currents of a most suspicious nature—and I don't think I am seeing

things. For example, report after report coming to me links the words "liberal" and "Communist" as though in the opinion of the F.B.I. investigators they were the same thing. In report after report, support of the Spanish Loyalists against Hitler and Mussolini is put down as one of the worst of the black marks, and any association with Loyalist Spain is given as a basis of suspicion of loyalty to the United States.

I have already written Hoover about this general matter and have had a very pleasant but not precisely responsive answer from him. My suggestion to him was that F.B.I. agents ought to be given a course of instruction in recent history, American and other, to inform them of a few basic facts, such as the fact that this country is now at war with the men who attacked Spain in '36 and '37—such as the fact that President Roosevelt is a liberal—such as the fact that the founders of this country believed in and practiced democracy—and a few other similar simple items.

I agree with you that the present attack upon liberals in the government is dangerous. I think, too, that one of the most dangerous aspects of that attack is to be found in such documents as the enclosed "investigation" of [name deleted]. That investigators of [censored] should go to a notorious America First leader to inquire about [censored]'s loyalty and that investigators of [censored] should turn to [censored] for evidence leaves me absolutely breathless and flabbergasted.

Forgive this long rant. I know the whole thing makes you just as sick as it makes me. But can't we do something about it?

After Hoover was given a copy of MacLeish's letter to Attorney General Biddle, he wrote a secret memorandum to Biddle stating that the F.B.I. was a fact-finding agency, whose agents had an obligation to develop "a full and complete picture" of an individual's background without "coloring" its reports. Hoover denied that his Bureau was judgmental and added, "To use Mr. MacLeish's phraseology, I am left 'breathless and flabbergasted' by Mr. MacLeish's disregard of the facts."

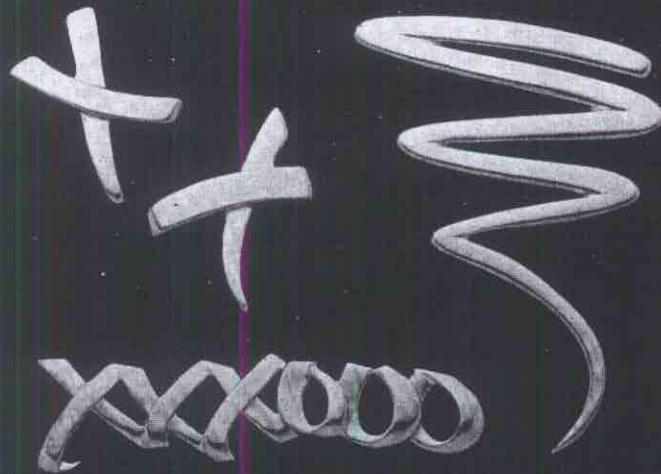
MacLeish followed up in April, 1942, with a letter to Biddle: "What is really involved is the education and experience of the investigators themselves." In the exchange with Hoover, MacLeish did not prevail. So ended that attempt to change Hoover's methods and his long-held convictions—going back to the early nineteen-twenties—in which liberalism was equated with radicalism.

One of the things that Hoover knew at the time but MacLeish evidently did not know was that the F.B.I. had been keeping a file on him. One of the first entries in that file, in September of 1941, noted that, as the Librarian of Congress, MacLeish was on the mailing list of the National Federation for

Constitutional Liberties and the Washington Spanish Refugee Relief Committee. Hoover asked his staff for more such suspicious data, and the Washington field division reported that it had derogatory information on MacLeish and his writings. The F.B.I. records show that in 1936 MacLeish contributed to the magazine *Common Sense* and was a sponsor of American Friends of Spanish Democracy; that in 1937 he was on the board of trustees of the New School for Social Research (which gave teaching jobs to a number of refugees from Hitlerism), was on a citizens' committee for the American Civil Liberties Union, and was a sponsor of Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade; that in 1939 he was a sponsor of the International League Defense Milk Fund and that in 1940 he was on the board of sponsors of the American Guild for German Cultural Freedom, an anti-Nazi group, was affiliated with the Second American Writers Congress, which had supported the Spanish Loyalists in 1937, and was a member of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies.

After the war, whenever MacLeish's name came up for a public-service job, including deputy chairman of the American delegation to UNESCO, in 1946, the F.B.I. repeated all his associations and added more information, indicating that the bureau was still keeping track of him. For example, he was listed as a sponsor for a dinner of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship and the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties. The F.B.I. records include quotations from the most rabid columnists, such as John O'Donnell, of the *Washington Times-Herald*: "The slippery fashion by which the fellow-travelers and the Roosevelt pinks have wormed their way into high positions . . . Poet Archibald MacLeish's Office of Facts and Figures—fuss and feathers it was merily called before suspicion grew of its sinister link with Moscow internationalists and native pinkos."

In 1962, MacLeish was being considered by the Kennedy Administration for appointment to the Advisory Committee on the Arts. This resulted in an alert from Hoover to F.B.I. offices all over the United States to dig up any information on him. "Determine from persons interviewed their opinion concerning appointee's loyalty from his written works," Hoover suggested. MacLeish was highly recom-



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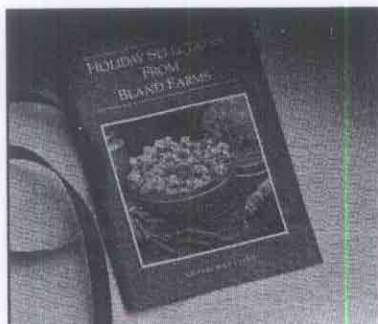
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mended by many people interviewed around the country, but President Kennedy was killed before the appointment was made. Nevertheless, the bureau's effort to discredit him involved scores of interviews and a rehash of old accusations about his liberalism. The most damning thing that the F.B.I. could come up with was the information that in 1928 MacLeish had been arrested for "illegal fishing on private property" in Massachusetts. The F.B.I. report notes that he was fined ten dollars, the fine was suspended, and he paid court costs of four dollars and thirty-five cents.

AN F.B.I. memorandum on Robert Lowell (1917-77) written in 1968 describes him as "a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who is very prominent in the literary field," and adds, "During 1965, he refused an invitation to the White House, because he did not agree with the President's foreign policy." This referred to the fact that Lowell, along with a number of other writers, declined to participate in President Johnson's first (and, as it turned out, last) White House Festival of the Arts and Humanities, during the Vietnam War. Those who protested to the President by telegram had a second name check on them ordered from the F.B.I. by the White House.

The information on Lowell that I received—thirty-two pages, heavily censored—notes that in 1942 he tried to enlist in both the Army and the Navy but was turned down because of poor eyesight. The next year, he decided to become a conscientious objector. He received a draft notice but did not report for induction. According to an F.B.I. summary of his case, he explained that "he no longer felt that the war was justified." In 1943, a United States District Court judge in New York sentenced him to a year and a day in the federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut, for failing to report for induction.

In 1965, Lowell was one of scores of signers of "Writers and Artists Protest," a letter against American policy and military engagement in Vietnam. The F.B.I. had checked his fingerprint files in its Identification Division to see if he had an arrest record other than his wartime prison sentence as a conscientious objector, and found none. Two years later, he again came to the F.B.I.'s attention, as one of the leaders—together with Norman Mailer, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and others in the arts and sciences—of the

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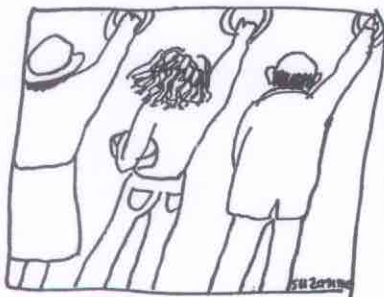
THE NEW YORKER

peace march on the Pentagon that year. The next year, a memorandum in his file notes, there were "numerous references to a Robert Lowell."

The file also contains a summary of a 1967 article in the *Times* saying that Andrei Voznesensky, the Soviet poet, had dedicated a poem to Lowell. Lowell had described Voznesensky as one of the great poets in any language, and was to read translations of poems by him during a recital at Philharmonic Hall, in Lincoln Center. No mention is made in the F.B.I. file of the fact that Voznesensky had written poems against anti-Semitism and was an outspoken advocate of greater freedom for publication of literature in his own country.

Whenever Lowell applied for a renewal of his passport, the F.B.I. kept track of his travel plans and his whereabouts. How closely he was followed abroad cannot be determined from his blacked-out file, but passport photographs that he had supplied were duplicated there. Several pages in the Lowell file were withheld in their entirety, "in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy."

W. H. AUDEN (1907-73) became a naturalized American citizen in 1946, but the F.B.I.'s file on him—thirty-one pages, only eighteen of which were made available to me—covers his activities before that time as well as after. In addition to information from the F.B.I., his file includes a few documents from the State Department, the C.I.A., and the Justice Department's Immigration and Naturalization Service. In 1945, the F.B.I. told the State Department's Visa Division that one of the contributors to an issue of *New Masses* in 1939 had been Wystan Hugh Auden, of 16 Oberlin Avenue, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. At that time, Auden was lecturing at Swarthmore College. This piece of intelligence appears in an F.B.I. file on him and an investigative report. A confidential memorandum entered in



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Auden's F.B.I. file in 1945 provides a biographical account of his schooling and friends and politics, and says that he belonged to "a group of young poets who were all strongly oriented to the left, some of them being orthodox Communists." Someone whose name has been censored said, according to the file, that "Auden was never in complete agreement with the Communist doctrine" but was "simply in rebellion against the opinions of the upper bourgeoisie into which he was born." In 1937, the file notes, Auden was an ambulance driver for the Loyalists during the Spanish Civil War. "He is married to Erika Mann, daughter of Thomas Mann," the report continues, "and in 1939 he came to the United States as a permanent resident."

The file includes the fact that Auden attended school with the British diplomats Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess. An article in the *Jerusalem Post*, dated June 18, 1951, is quoted as saying that Stephen Spender, identified as a friend of Auden and "another prominent ex-Communist," had had a telephone conversation with Burgess before Burgess and Maclean defected from the British Foreign Office and went to Moscow, in May, 1951. Going a step further, the file says that Auden was "believed" to be a Communist Party member in the early nineteen-thirties and a "contact" for the defecting British diplomats. British Intelligence did not link Auden to them or anyone else politically.

In 1965, Jack Valenti, one of President Johnson's assistants and political operatives, asked the F.B.I. for a name check on Auden, who was being considered as a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The F.B.I.'s response is omitted entirely from Auden's file. In any event, he was never given the award.

FROM the F.B.I. file on Edmund Wilson, fifteen heavily censored pages were released. The bureau had a second, smaller file on Wilson, which it refused to release at all—"in the interest of the national defense or foreign policy, for example, information involving intelligence sources or methods." Wilson seemed to me one of the writers least likely to have a file and, having one, to have it subject to censorship or to denial under the Freedom of Information Act. It is hard to imagine how "The Shores of Light" or "Memoirs of Hecate County" or "The Dead Sea Scrolls" could have

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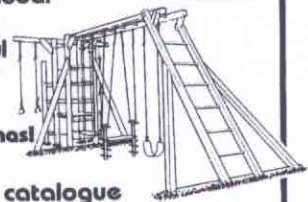
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caused problems for the United States.

The F.B.I. file that was released to me indicates no familiarity with Wilson's writings. It begins in 1951 as a "Security Matter—C." A report to J. Edgar Hoover from a special agent at the Boston F.B.I. office in 1951 says that Wilson was interviewed "in connection with an Applicant investigation" to check his background for the United States Information Agency. In the F.B.I. interview, Wilson said that he had visited Russia in 1935 and was interested in the future of the Soviet Union. Wilson also said he realized that "the Soviet Union under STALIN could never improve the plight of the masses and that the Russian Revolution had failed." He told the interviewer that he had long been a student of Marxism, and said, "I have a certain amount of Marxist writing equipment," by which he meant presumably that he had sources of research for his book "To the Finland Station" and other Soviet studies. The F.B.I. reported that Wilson "described himself as a Socialist who voted for Norman Thomas in the last Presidential election"—that is, in 1948.

Wilson's file shows that in 1953 the State Department sought information on him. The C.I.A. also requested a background check on him, in 1957. In reply, Hoover provided the data in the F.B.I. files based on the 1951 interview. The United States Information Agency received the same data for a 1963 background check, plus information that a confidential source supplied—a letterhead listing Wilson as a member of a civil-rights committee to defend James Kutcher. Kutcher, who in 1953 published a book called "The Case of the Legless Veteran," had been dismissed from a desk job with the Veterans Administration in 1948 because he was a member of the Socialist Workers' Party.

The F.B.I. file also shows that on May 10, 1961, Wilson's name appeared in a *Times* advertisement, signed by seventy people, that took the form of an open letter to President Kennedy. The advertisement urged the United States to give no further support to exile groups advocating an invasion of Cuba. That same year, the file notes, Wilson was among fifty signers of an affidavit to reduce the six-year sentence of Junius Irving Scales, an ex-Communist who had been convicted under the 1940 Smith Act, which prohibited "certain subversive activities," and was serv-

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ing his sentence in the Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary. President Kennedy commuted the harsh sentence in 1962.

In 1965, during the Vietnam War, Wilson was one of the signers of the "Writers and Artists Protest." A copy of the protest entered his file. A final note in Wilson's file said that, in connection with a name-check request by the White House in 1966, "the fingerprint files of the Identification Division of the F.B.I. contain no arrest data identifiable with captioned individual. . . ."

NOT long ago, I discussed the government dossiers on writers with Athan G. Theoharis, a professor of history at Marquette University, in Milwaukee, and the author of the forthcoming book "The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition," and he told me, "I can't say with certainty that similar espionage on authors and other Americans is not going on today. The bureau once tried to shape public opinion. Some, but not all, of the files were 'purified,' but I wouldn't be surprised if the F.B.I. was still pursuing some of the old cases. One thing about investigations: they never seem to die."

—HERBERT MITGANG

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