

NYTimes

# 'To Frighten and Stifle'

MAR 6 1972

By ROBERT JAY LIFTON

NEW HAVEN—All wars need lies, but some require that a whole people live in illusion. Though our Government has had increasing difficulty in maintaining the illusions of the Vietnam war, its harassment of supporters and sympathizers of the Harrisburg and Pentagon Papers defendants suggests how far it will go to keep trying.

Last Aug. 6, a fund-raising gathering for the Harrisburg legal defense was held at my summer home in Wellfleet, Mass., as a way of commemorating Hiroshima day. The event received public notice only through an oddly inane column on this page that had little to do with anything.

Most of the 200 or so guests felt that the occasion had a special kind of beauty. The F.B.I. did not share our enthusiasm.

Shortly after a local agent telephoned and asked to talk with me, "just to check on whether what I read in *The Provincetown Advocate* on Ellsberg's speech was accurate—you know, you never can tell about newspaper stories." He took my polite refusal to see him in apparent good grace. I was more troubled, however, when two guests told me of telephone calls and visits from the F. B. I. And when I heard of more of the same taking place in New York a couple of months later, my discomfort turned to anger.

I wrote to a number of Senators, raising four objections to the F. B. I. activity: their harassment of Ellsberg himself; their discouraging through undermining of constitutional rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of association and political dissent; their invasion of privacy of guests; and infringement upon my own individual rights. Senators Alan Cranston, Fred Harris, Abraham Ribicoff and George McGovern were particularly responsive, and initiated inquiries with the Department of Justice and the F. B. I. itself, to which J. Edgar Hoover responded with three letters, copies of which were eventually passed along to me.

Mr. Hoover admitted that "this bureau did interview a number of persons" who attended the gathering, but claimed that "the sole purpose of these interviews was to determine whether a speech given by Dr. Daniel Ellsberg made reference in any manner to the unauthorized disclosure to the press of the highly classified 'Pentagon Papers.'" He went on to deny "pressure of harassment," as well as "threats, actual or implied," adding that "at no time was inquiry made to them relative to Dr. Lifton, his po-

litical sympathies, or the political sympathies of the individuals interviewed."

But my own conversations and correspondence with people approached by the F. B. I. (at least six) told a very different story. Several of those approached had a strong sense of being threatened: One man, who declined to speak to the F. B. I., was told, "You know, there are two grand juries out on this case," which he took to be a threat of a subpoena—exactly what has occurred to several people who have declined to talk to F.B.I. agents. Another guest who regretted having submitted to agents' urgent demands that they meet in his office within a few hours, went on to convey something of the flavor of his experience:

"My whole feeling was one of intimidation. I felt that there was something un-American about my presence. Perhaps the idea behind it all is to frighten and stifle. Specific questions

asked concerned what Daniel Ellsberg said, who was present at the gathering, how many, what I knew about Dr. Lifton, who were the other speakers, etc. The request that I disclose names of friends and acquaintances that were present was shocking and caused me to wonder about who 'informed' on me. The comment that I was not being investigated may possibly be true, but it leaves me with just a little less freedom that I thought I had under the Constitution."

This revealing statement makes it very clear that much more than Daniel Ellsberg was being investigated. It also tells us a great deal about the psychology of intimidation. Who can disagree with the conclusion that "perhaps the idea behind it all is to frighten and stifle"?

Robert Jay Lifton is professor of psychiatry at Yale, and author of "Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima."