

The FBI, Franklin Roosevelt, and the Anti-interventionist Movement, 1939-1945.

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ABSTRACT

Between 1939 and 1945 the Federal Bureau of Investigation, headed by J. Edgar Hoover, monitored the political activities of President Franklin Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy critics. Hoover, whose position as FBI director was tenuous within the left-of-center Roosevelt administration, catered to the president's political and policy interests to preserve his position and to expand FBI authority. In his pragmatic effort to service administration political goals, Hoover employed illegal wiretaps, informers, collected derogatory information, conducted investigations that had the potential to discredit the anti-interventionists, forwarded political intelligence to administration officials, and coordinated some activity with British intelligence. This all occurred within a crisis atmosphere created with the onset of the Second World War, and it was this political dynamic that permitted Hoover to successfully cultivate his relationship with President Roosevelt. In the process, the administration's otherwise legitimate foreign policy opposition was regarded as subversive and some anti-interventionists' civil liberties were violated through intensive FBI scrutiny of their political dissent. Moreover, the FBI's surveillance marks the origins of the FBI's role in the later national security state.

Among those targets examined in this dissertation include Charles Lindbergh, the America First Committee, notable anti-interventionist senators and congressmen, the anti-interventionist press, and other prominent individuals who advocated American isolation from foreign war.

INTRODUCTION

From 1939 to 1945, J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) monitored the political activities of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's celebrated anti-interventionist foreign policy critics. Popular notions of the threat from a Nazi "Fifth Column" and sensationalized stories of German espionage led many Americans and government officials to suspect the motives of otherwise legitimate anti-interventionist foreign policy critics. Moreover, the bitter foreign policy debate provided the conservative Hoover with an opportunity to ingratiate himself with the politically left-of-center Roosevelt administration. By catering to the president's political and policy interests—in providing him detailed political intelligence on foreign policy critics—Hoover demonstrated his worth to the administration, retained his tenure as FBI director, and in the process secured increased authority and autonomy for his Bureau. FBI officials, in their efforts, utilized wiretaps, collected derogatory information, supplied public-opinion leaders with political intelligence, conducted investigations that had the potential to discredit Roosevelt's critics, and coordinated some activity with British intelligence. Among those targeted were Charles Lindbergh, the America First Committee, notable senators and congressmen, elements of the anti-interventionist press, and other leading figures in

the anti-interventionist movement. Throughout, Roosevelt valued these reports and made no complaints about the impropriety or civil liberties violations of J. Edgar Hoover's actions.

It was during this period when Hoover's FBI first used its resources in an expansive way to monitor, provide intelligence, and discredit an administration's political opposition. But while the FBI extensively monitored administration opposition, as it never had previously, the extent of the FBI's activity is characterized by its confined nature. Whereas the Cold War FBI used secret and illegal programs (the COINTELPROS) to contain its targets, the FBI during the 1939-42 period confined itself to the collection and dissemination of political intelligence and worked to silence administration critics by developing legal cases—utilizing the Smith Act, Foreign Agents Registration Act, conspiracy statutes, and (during wartime) the Espionage Act¹—or by initiating grand jury proceedings that, while nominally secret, might have discredited opposition efforts by casting doubt on their legitimacy. This activity, while confined, suggests that the FBI's role in the later national security state—executed while America advocated an activist foreign policy—lies in the pre-war foreign policy debate (the so-called Great Debate)—where a hidden agenda lay behind interventionist policy and where patterns of FBI behavior mirror those of the Cold War and national security state period.

Dating from 1940 the FBI established a relationship with British intelligence which, like the Bureau, had a vested interest in the political activities of the anti-interventionists. Whereas Hoover sought to develop legal cases against anti-interventionists, collect derogatory intelligence about them, and provide the White

House with political intelligence regarding their activity (all to satisfy White House political interests), British intelligence sought to hasten American entry into the war by disrupting and discrediting Roosevelt's foreign policy critics. The relationship between the FBI and British intelligence, which had existed on an *ad hoc* basis dating from the First World War, was made permanent from 1940 and continued to grow, extending into the Cold War years. The exact scope and nature of the two organizations' relationship cannot be ascertained fully owing to classification restrictions on relevant documents, but it is nevertheless clear that it was a close relationship. The closeness and origins of the relationship, moreover, further suggests that the FBI's role in the later national security state—where the FBI cooperated closely with Allied foreign intelligence agencies—had its origins during the Great Debate of 1940-41.

Hoover was limited to the above tactics during the Great Debate as he did not have the level of autonomy that he would during the Cold War, though he did have a greater level of autonomy than any time previous. Without an assurance that intrusive programs would never be discovered—something Hoover did not develop until the Cold War—he refused to employ such methods remembering the effects wrought on the Bureau of Investigation from discovery of other illegal tactics employed during the 1919-1920 Red Scare. These concerns are reflected in Hoover's efforts to curtail any criticism that his Bureau was involved in illegal activity and his public denials that the FBI collected non-criminal information during the Great Debate, despite the fact that FBI agents had employed illegal surveillance tactics and actively sought non-criminal intelligence.

The FBI director during this period demonstrated that he was, above all, a pragmatic bureaucrat. Beginning with the Coolidge administration in 1924, Hoover made himself useful to each succeeding administration by providing information each would find valuable. He was successful inasmuch as he held onto his high position in government longer than any comparable figure in American history—Hoover was FBI director from 1924 until his death in 1972, nearly fifty years. This pragmatism is significant when one examines the Bureau in the context of the New Deal era. Generally regarded as a watershed in the development of the welfare state, the New Deal reflected the precept of “big government” staffed by left-of-center politicians seeking proactive leadership in Washington. While on the surface it seems the political views of New Dealers and J. Edgar Hoover were at odds, the FBI director thrived during the Roosevelt administration. He succeeded in cultivating a close relationship with Roosevelt by using his pragmatism to manipulate the relationship between the president and the FBI. Hoover became a valued source of information on Roosevelt’s political enemies and useful in occasional attempts to undermine them.

Hoover’s pragmatism during this period, however, must be analyzed within the framework of the correlation between international crisis and growth of power. Hoover’s ability to increase FBI authority has, for the most part, been associated with some concomitant international crisis. The charged atmosphere created by international crises resulted in fears of domestic unrest, whether during the First World War era, Red Scare, Great Depression, Second World War, or Cold War. In each period, the FBI increased its power and authority, for different reasons, to deal

with perceived domestic subversion. During the Great Debate of 1940-41, foreign policy issues provided the impetus for extensive FBI monitoring of White House foreign policy critics who were popularly regarded as subversive.² This all took place in the context of a charged international situation that permitted Hoover to cater to President Roosevelt's domestic political concerns about overcoming his anti-interventionist opposition. Throughout the period, Hoover garnered increased authority and autonomy for his FBI. From this basis, the Cold War FBI was able to develop into a more intrusive national security apparatus.

Roosevelt's foreign policy critics during this period have popularly been dubbed "isolationists." The term "anti-interventionist," however, will be employed throughout this study. The word "isolationist" is too narrow a descriptor to be applied to Roosevelt's foreign policy critics who did not advocate isolation from foreign affairs but unilateralism in American foreign relations. Moreover, anti-interventionists themselves never used the word "isolationist," preferring instead "anti-interventionist" or "non-interventionist." It was Roosevelt's interventionist allies who propagated—successfully—the derogatory term "isolationist."

While Franklin Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy opposition included elements from both ends of the political spectrum—from the mostly conservative America First Committee to the leftist American League for Peace and Democracy—this study focuses on his mostly conservative and prominent critics who were associated with America First. Some non-conservatives are included but only inasmuch as they opposed the centralization of power in the presidency and allied themselves with America First. Anti-interventionists from other points on the

political spectrum are excluded primarily for three reasons. First, those associated with the America First Committee were best organized and posed the most significant political threat to administration foreign policy. Second, after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, American leftists and Communists wholeheartedly joined the interventionist cause; thereafter America First remained the only serious threat to administration political interests.³ Third, Hoover was a fervent anti-Communist with conservative political and social credentials, and his willingness to monitor those of similar political ilk for the left-of-center Roosevelt administration reveals his bureaucratic astuteness. Ever the master bureaucrat, Hoover realized his position in the Roosevelt administration was tenuous and he sought to preserve and expand it by catering to the White House's political and policy interests vis-à-vis the anti-interventionists.

As Hoover was of the political right⁴—like many anti-interventionists, particularly those associated with the America First Committee—the question arises whether he considered himself an interventionist? There is no definitive evidence, however, demonstrating Hoover's interventionist credentials. While Hoover may have been an interventionist, evidence suggests he was more of a pragmatist who worked to effect Roosevelt's political interests. Further, he may have regarded anti-interventionists as “subversives” or “un-American” because of the popular associations many had made between anti-interventionists and radical/fascist elements. This follows a popular outlook dating from the 1930s, and extending into the early Cold War, that identified Stalinism and Nazism as essentially similar totalitarian regimes. Hoover may have held such views and, coupled with popular

perceptions of anti-interventionists as witting or unwitting Nazi dupes, he may have regarded some fellow conservatives as domestic threats.⁵

The time period covered herein (excluding background material) ranges from 1939 to 1945. While the debate over intervention began in 1935 with the Neutrality Act, by 1939 Fifth-Column fears had achieved popular support in the United States creating a political dynamic in which many interventionists regarded “isolationists” as Nazi sympathizers. With the start of war in September, moreover, FBI agents began systematically to monitor anti-interventionist political activity and FBI officials forwarded political-intelligence reports on them to the White House. The *height* of FBI surveillance of anti-interventionists came in 1941 with debate over Lend-Lease and lasted until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. As this dissertation indicates, the Bureau’s surveillance did not end with American entrance into war, as it continued in some instances for the war’s duration.

This study makes use of previously classified FBI files. Only in the last few years have the FBI files on Charles Lindbergh, the America First Committee, and other prominent anti-interventionists, for example, been available for research. As a result, previous discourses about the Bureau’s political surveillance during this period have been tentative and incomplete. Furthermore, historians of anti-interventionism have either been only tangentially interested in FBI activity or have been unaware of intricate FBI programs and filing procedures. Historians of the FBI, while not unaware of other periods, have been disproportionately interested in the agency’s Red Scare days (1919-1920) or its Cold War activities. Much has been missed through these oversights, particularly the new information that reveals the

true extent of FBI surveillance activity from 1939 to 1945. As a result, FBI political surveillance during this important period has never received the full treatment it deserves.

The single most important source of information for this study lies in FBI files. All Bureau files created since 1924 have been retained by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and not deposited in the National Archives. For over seventy years, FBI files have remained the preserve of FBI officials who have opened their files to only a select number of “friendly” journalists.⁶ Only when amendments were made in 1974 to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) did researchers have access to these important documents. But with access comes restriction. Exemptions to the FOIA include classified material, privacy-rights related information, and anything revealing FBI sources and methods. With FBI officials’ subjective use of the black magic-marker, researchers are presented with sometimes heavily censored documents. In addition, it is the responsibility of the requestor to pay processing costs (at ten cents per page for files that can be thousands of pages long), which can become very expensive. Moreover, FBI under-staffing and budgetary restrictions have created long delays in the processing of requests (in 1996 the Bureau averaged 50 requests per day). It is not uncommon to wait years for an FOIA request to be finalized. Nevertheless, FBI records are a vital and important, if sometimes frustrating and tantalizing, source of information.⁷

The nature of FBI files to 1945, too, must be considered. Dating from his appointment as Bureau director in 1924, Hoover kept a “confidential” file “in which are kept various and sundry items believed inadvisable to be included in the general

files of the Bureau.”⁸ Concurrently, the FBI director continued and updated a system of “personal and confidential” letters wherein correspondence containing sensitive information, instead of being serialized in the Bureau’s central records system, were directed to Hoover’s personal attention. With this letter procedure and special office file, FBI agents continued to monitor political activity despite Attorney General Harlan Fiske Stone’s 1924 order to the contrary.⁹

Dating from 1940 Hoover created and revised procedures that ensured sensitive memoranda were not filed in the FBI’s central records system but filed separately. FBI officials were to use blue paper, and later pink paper, when writing a memorandum that was not to be serialized; those that were to be filed in the official files of the FBI were typed on white paper. Further, at the bottom of the document was the notation (or some derivation of it) stating: “Informative Memorandum—Not to be Sent to Files Section.” With this procedure, FBI officials were able to conceal the authorization of illegal FBI activity or compilation of sensitive or embarrassing information. Moreover, as these files were not part of the FBI’s official files, they could safely be destroyed at FBI officials’ discretion.¹⁰

Hoover maintained in his office two sets of “confidential” files. One was his Personal and Confidential file which Hoover’s executive assistant, Helen Gandy, destroyed after his death in 1972. She claimed in Congressional testimony that the file contained no official policy documents, an assertion that was later proved inaccurate. The other “confidential” file was Hoover’s Official and Confidential file which contained sensitive information on a variety of subjects and included some Do Not File memorandums. The Official and Confidential file was incorporated into

the FBI's central records system after Hoover's death. Another confidential file was maintained from October 1941 in the office of FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols and a fourth in the office of FBI Associate Director Clyde Tolson.¹¹

It is important not only to be aware of FBI separate filing procedures, but to understand FBI central-records-system filing classifications. FBI documents in the central records are referenced by three numbers (e.g. 65-11449-15). The first number indicates the type of case file—the number 65, for example, designates a case file involving “espionage.” The second number identifies the subject of the file, whether an individual or organization. The third number is called the serial, which, simply, is the number placed on each document in the file. Therefore, the example noted above cites document 15 of the Charles Lindbergh file (11449) which the FBI labeled an espionage matter. Other anti-interventionists targeted by the FBI and analyzed herein include:

The America First Committee—100, “Domestic Security.”

Senators Wheeler and Nye—62, “Administrative Inquiry.”

Representative Hamilton Fish—94, “Research Matters.”

Victory Program file—65, “Espionage.”

Ethel Brigham, Harry Elmer Barnes, and Laura Ingalls—100.

Clegg and Hince mission—66, “Administrative Matters.”

But while the file numbers suggest a specific type of investigation, the information within the file does not necessarily reflect this. The Charles Lindbergh file while nominally an espionage matter in reality reflects an interest in his anti-interventionist political activity. The file number, therefore, can be misleading on one level, and on

another is an indication to the historian of an avenue taken by FBI officials in their efforts to investigate the political activities of an individual or organization under the rubric of, say, national security.¹²

Beyond reliance on submitting an FOIA request to the FBI, one can find FBI documents in other repositories. For this dissertation, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library is one such important depository. The Roosevelt Library holds the unredacted reports that FBI Director Hoover forwarded to some administration officials. These documents reveal only one side of the Hoover-Roosevelt relationship inasmuch as they reveal only what Hoover forwarded to the White House (what he thought Roosevelt might find of value) and not all information held by the FBI. Moreover, these unredacted copies are useful in determining the content of some FBI files released via the FOIA. A researcher can ascertain some information that the FBI has redacted by comparing FOIA released FBI records with unredacted copies of the same document in, for example, the Roosevelt Library. The FBI's copy sometimes is referenced leading the researcher to the sources of information used in an FBI document forwarded to the White House. To understand more fully FBI officials' motives and priorities, then, it is necessary to compare Roosevelt Library copies with FOIA-released FBI files. Only then can one begin to understand the true dynamic of the FBI-White House relationship.

Other valuable sources of information include FOIA-obtained FBI records deposited in the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library. The Hoover Library holds the FBI files—sometimes not complete—of several key anti-interventionists, thereby not necessitating the submission of a duplicated FOIA request with the FBI.

Likewise, other repositories hold key FBI files including the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming (Harry Elmer Barnes file), Hoover Institution at Stanford University (Victory Program file), and the Roosevelt Study Center in Holland (America First Committee file). One can also view a limited number of popular FBI files maintained in the reading room at FBI headquarters in Washington, D. C.¹³ An even more limited number are accessible at the FBI's Internet website (<http://www.fbi.gov>).

Gaining access to records about the FBI's liaison with British intelligence present even greater problems for the researcher. The United Kingdom, unlike the United States, has no FOIA and virtually no primary material has been released regarding the British liaison with the FBI.¹⁴ American records regarding the operations of British intelligence are still classified and, by international agreement, will not be released without the express approval of the British government. Therefore, one must rely on scant or tangential primary sources and unverifiable and biased official histories and memoirs. Yet some American primary sources offer more than can be found in British archives. FBI records obtained via the FOIA and records culled from State Department files offer the only documentation about the FBI's intelligence mission to Great Britain during 1940-41. The only reference to this on the British side can be found in official histories. Further, the personal papers of Adolf Berle and, again, State Department files offer a limited number of primary documents that very broadly address the general origin and function of British Security Coordination. But enough documentation exists to piece together an indicative, if incomplete, picture of FBI-British intelligence liaison in America.

This dissertation makes historiographical contributions in three areas: the history of FBI political surveillance, the history of the anti-interventionist/interventionist foreign policy debate, and the history of the rise of the American national security state. Most historians of the FBI have focused either on its abuses during the Red Scare of 1919-1920¹⁵ or its political intelligence activities during the Cold War era.¹⁶ Some FBI historians have examined the FBI's political surveillance of Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy critics, but only as a small part of larger studies. Athan Theoharis briefly mentioned the FBI's monitoring of anti-interventionists in his broad study *Spying on Americans* (1978), in his biography of FBI Director Hoover, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (1988), and in his collaborative reference work *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (1999).¹⁷ Likewise, both Richard Powers and Curt Gentry in their biographies mentioned but only in passing that the FBI had monitored Roosevelt's critics.¹⁸

Some historians of anti-interventionism and Roosevelt's foreign policy also have only sketchily examined the FBI's surveillance of anti-interventionists. Their interests have concentrated on the politics of anti-interventionism, and while recognizing FBI political surveillance perhaps have neglected it through a lack of documentation. Wayne S. Cole has studied anti-interventionists more than anyone else and in his *magnum opus*, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists* (1983), he only briefly examined the FBI's surveillance.¹⁹ In his book *Storm on the Horizon* (2000), Justus Doenecke, too, only briefly noted the FBI's efforts.²⁰ Robert Dallek's broad survey

of Roosevelt's foreign policy, like Cole's and Doenecke's, offered only one passing reference to the FBI.²¹

A few historians, nevertheless, have examined the FBI's political surveillance of the anti-interventionists more directly than these broad studies. Richard W. Steele in his article "Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Foreign Policy Critics" (1979) attempted fuller coverage of FBI investigations into the anti-interventionists, but was limited by the inaccessibility (at the time) of FBI records. Steele focused on President Roosevelt and argued that he intentionally directed Hoover, citing his 1934 and 1936 directives, to investigate his anti-interventionist opponents in an effort to destroy them. As Steele's argument was based on only a limited number of FBI documents, Roosevelt papers, and congressional reports he placed too much emphasis on Roosevelt's machinations as distinct from J. Edgar Hoover's own priorities. Steele did not widely examine FBI monitoring of anti-interventionists and because his documentation was limited, he focused more on the White House than the FBI.²²

Charles Croog has analyzed the FBI's political surveillance of anti-interventionists in his article "FBI Political Surveillance and the Isolationist-Interventionist Debate, 1939-1941" (1992). Croog argued that Roosevelt and Hoover fully agreed upon the national security mission of the FBI and that the FBI's investigation of anti-interventionists was limited. In making this argument, Croog stated that FBI "resources were never significantly mobilized against Roosevelt's law-abiding opponents." Yet Croog's piece suffered from one major weakness. Like Steele, Croog employed only a limited base of evidence to support his

conclusions: his footnotes show that he used only a portion of the America First Committee FBI file, congressional hearings and reports. Croog thereby underestimated the true extent and nature of FBI political surveillance.²³

Kenneth O'Reilly examined the FBI's political surveillance of Roosevelt's foreign policy opponents in the context of the agency's New Deal expansion in his "A New Deal for the FBI: The Roosevelt Administration, Crime Control, and National Security" (1982). O'Reilly examined FBI institutional changes made during the New Deal in the areas of crime control and national security. While he used a slightly broader base of evidence than previous historians, when analyzing the FBI's monitoring of foreign policy critics he nevertheless concluded, contrary to Steele, that "the Roosevelt administration's purposes were essentially benevolent."²⁴

Athan Theoharis examined an aspect of the FBI's surveillance of the anti-interventionist press in his article "The FBI, the Roosevelt Administration, and the 'Subversive' Press" (1993). Making more extensive use of FBI files, Theoharis analyzed the FBI's monitoring of prominent members of the anti-interventionist press and the Roosevelt administration's desire to settle scores with them after the American entry into the Second World War. Theoharis concluded that a complete understanding of the episode could not be ascertained until further documentation is declassified.²⁵

My own articles on the FBI and the anti-interventionists, early results of my research, examined limited aspects of the FBI's political surveillance. In "FBI Political Surveillance and the Charles Lindbergh Investigation, 1939-1944" (1997), I argued that the FBI's investigative effort against anti-interventionists, in particular

Charles Lindbergh, were greater than previous historians had argued. Then, in “Informing FDR: FBI Political Surveillance and the Isolationist-Interventionist Foreign Policy Debate, 1939-1945” (2000), I furthered my argument by examining the FBI’s monitoring of the America First Committee, Lindbergh, and five wiretap targets. I concluded that secret FBI political reports to the White House helped Roosevelt to advance his conception of the nation’s national security interests.²⁶ And in “Franklin D. Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover, and FBI Political Surveillance” (1999), I argued for a lay audience that it was Hoover and not Roosevelt who initiated FBI monitoring of anti-interventionists, yet Roosevelt had made no complaints. These early conclusions were limited and served as a basis on which this present study was launched. Some aspects of my early work are expanded upon herein and more closely scrutinized.²⁷

Other studies deal with the FBI and political surveillance during this period in indirect ways. Roy Turnbaugh argued in “The FBI and Harry Elmer Barnes” (1980) that the Bureau targeted the anti-interventionist Barnes in an effort to enact vengeance for critical comments the noted historian had made about the FBI prior to the Great Debate. He did not analyze the FBI’s monitoring of Barnes as part of a larger effort against anti-interventionists.²⁸ Francis MacDonnell, in his book *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (1995), analyzed the FBI’s activity during this period but only insofar as it related to the perceived Fifth Column threat.²⁹ Barton Bernstein surveyed very briefly Roosevelt’s interest in FBI reports about his critics, but in the larger context of the abuse of executive authority dating from 1940.³⁰ And John F. Berens noted

Roosevelt's empowerment of the FBI but overlooked its monitoring of anti-interventionists in his broad and concise survey article "The FBI and Civil Liberties from Franklin Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter—An Historical Overview" (1980).³¹

This dissertation further makes a contribution to the historiography, in terms of the FBI at least, surrounding the origins of the American national security state. In his book *Shattered Peace* (1977), Daniel Yergin traced the origins of the national security state back to Woodrow Wilson and his conception of American internationalism. Dating from that period, Yergin argued, is American policy makers' conceptualization of security concerns in light of a perceived expansionist and ideological Soviet Russia.³² Frank J. Donner similarly identified the federalization of domestic intelligence in the First World War era and the period of the Russian Revolution. It was at this time, he argued, that the FBI involved itself in large-scale investigations of primarily left-wing dissenters yet he argued that the national security state is best demonstrated during the Cold War. And Athan Theoharis has examined the national security state in terms of McCarthyism, dating its origins with the Cold War which, he argued, along with President Truman's rhetoric and poor leadership permitted such abuses to be wrought. He furthered his argument in *Spying on Americans* (1978) where he argued that it was during the Cold War when the Congress deferred to the executive in matters of national security and tolerated secrecy as necessary to effect security policy.³³

This dissertation hopes to complement the work of FBI, anti-interventionist, and national security historians by examining the FBI's political surveillance of Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy critics from 1939 to 1945. FBI

political surveillance during this period was extensive, widespread, and sought to be responsive to Roosevelt's political interests. The extent of the Bureau's efforts reflected Cold War patterns of FBI behavior. FBI surveillance was also an important aspect to the bitter interventionist/anti-interventionist foreign policy debate that historians have overlooked or only partially analyzed. While we might not be able to determine definitively how the administration used the information Hoover provided, we nevertheless know the FBI's efforts were extensive and the administration made no complaints. FBI political surveillance during this period further reflects the origins of the FBI's contribution to the national security state inasmuch as for the first time the FBI extensively monitored an administration's critics under a domestic security rationale. Moreover, in their efforts FBI officials employed an array of intelligence tools including investigations, mail covers, informers, and wiretaps. The FBI's interests were not focused only on left-wing groups and individuals. During this period conservative and right-wing targets were monitored. In total, FBI efforts reflected a pattern of later Cold-War FBI behavior in monitoring, providing political intelligence, and employing investigations under the rubric of domestic security to develop legal cases against an opponent that could discredit their agenda. Regarding the FBI at least, this dates not with the Cold War but with the late interwar period. By catering to Roosevelt's political interests at a time of international crisis, Hoover secured his position as director and expanded FBI authority and power. It was from these pre-war origins that he was able to develop his Bureau into an even more intrusive and powerful agency during the Cold War.

This dissertation does not examine every anti-interventionist associated with the America First Committee whom FBI officials monitored. The lengthy time it takes and costs involved in gaining access to FBI files utilizing the FOIA makes such an effort prohibitive. But fortunately an all-inclusive effort, while ideal, is not necessary to analyze the general nature and scope of FBI efforts. This dissertation focuses selectively on some of the most influential anti-interventionists or those who were special FBI targets. Chapter one outlines the origins of the FBI, its evolution, and interest in “subversive” activities and political surveillance from 1908 to 1932. Chapter two analyzes the expansion of FBI authority under J. Edgar Hoover’s leadership from 1933 to 1939. Each increase in FBI authority is analyzed in the context of growing international threats and Roosevelt’s response to them, revealing that international tensions created a perceived domestic threat that enabled Hoover to secure greater FBI authority. Chapter three examines the FBI’s monitoring and investigation of Roosevelt’s most popular and influential foreign policy critic, the legendary aviator Charles Lindbergh, from 1939 to 1944. Chapter four analyzes the FBI’s monitoring from 1940 to 1945 of the best-organized anti-interventionist pressure group, the America First Committee. Chapter five focuses on Roosevelt’s three most influential anti-interventionist critics in Congress, Senator Burton Wheeler, Congressman Hamilton Fish, and Senator Gerald Nye. Chapter six analyzes for the first time the FBI’s probe into the leak of a top-secret War Department contingency plan to the anti-interventionist press in 1941 and 1942. Chapter seven examines three FBI targets whose investigations extended beyond the American entrance into war on 7 December 1941: the vocal Brigham family, the

historian Harry Elmer Barnes, and aviator Laura Ingalls. Chapter eight focuses on the FBI's liaison with British intelligence in America and the nature and scope of that relationship vis-à-vis the anti-interventionists.

* * *

The terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington, D. C. on 11 September 2001 and subsequent government reaction have brought new significance to this study. In reaction to these events, in an effort to safeguard the nation from further terrorist incidents, the Bush administration sought to suspend investigative restrictions placed on the FBI in the 1970s. Following Hoover's death in 1972 and revelations of intrusive FBI domestic surveillance activities, FBI investigations had been formally restricted to prevent the Bureau from investigating politically oriented groups. Some in the Bush administration, however, believed these restrictions impeded FBI counter-terrorism efforts by preventing the employment of undercover agents to monitor without probable cause religious and political groups.³⁴

Testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Attorney General John Ashcroft defended the Bush administration's anti-terror plan, which included a broad expansion of FBI wiretapping and investigative authority. He denied that American citizens' civil liberties would be restricted but added: "To those [critics] who scare peace-loving people with phantoms of lost liberty, my message is this: your tactics only aid terrorists."³⁵

While the attorney general might have claimed individual liberties would not be violated as in the past, the Bush administration's Anti-terrorism Act has created the potential for the FBI to resume a political surveillance role. In the current

atmosphere, past fears of the influence of “subversive activities” on American national security have been replaced with concerns over terrorist activities. With increased FBI investigative authority, and a concomitant increase in government secrecy (i.e., a tightening of FOIA standards and restrictions on access to presidential records), a revival of the FBI’s interest in domestic political surveillance is possible.³⁶ Evidence advanced in this dissertation demonstrates that the roots of such FBI activity are to be found during the anti-interventionist foreign policy debate when administration critics were regarded as witting or unwitting dupes of fascists. It was during this critical period that FBI officials acquired increased investigative authority and resorted to sensitive investigative practices like wiretapping—all in the name of combating “subversive activity,” but too often, in reality, with the prime objective of monitoring domestic political activity.

Notes

¹ The Smith Act of 28 June 1940 prohibited any individual or organization from advocating the violent overthrow of the United States government or membership with a group advocating such an action. The 1940 Foreign Agents Registration Act (amended from the 1938 version) required all foreign controlled groups to register with the State and Justice Departments.

² On the interventionist perception of anti-interventionists as subversives, see Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

³ The wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union did not end FBI surveillance of domestic communist and leftist activity. On the FBI's continued efforts in this area see Athan Theoharis, *Chasing Spies: How the FBI Failed in Counterintelligence But Promoted the Politics of McCarthyism in the Cold War Years* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 34-78.

⁴ Hoover was conservative both politically (though he never joined a political party) and socially. He was a strong anti-Communist and had the support of a large conservative constituency who, by the Cold War period, sought to dismantle the trappings of Roosevelt's New Deal. He was also a racist and intolerant of homosexuality.

⁵ See Thomas R. Maddux, "Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism: The American Image of Totalitarianism in the 1930s," *The Historian* 40 (November 1977): 85-103; Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930s-1950s," *American Historical Review* 75 (April 1970): 1046-64.

⁶ See for example, Kenneth O'Reilly, "Friendly Journalists' Access to FBI Files," *USA Today* 109 (September 1980): 29-31.

⁷ It literally takes years to win access to FBI files. FOIA requests are taken on a first come, first served basis. As of March 1999 (when my research was carried out) the FBI had a total of 8,500 requests pending which required the review (and redaction) of an estimated 1.8 million pages. Letter, John M. Kelso, Jr., FBI FOIA Section Chief, to Douglas M. Charles, 14 May 1999.

⁸ FBI memorandum as quoted in Athan Theoharis, "In-House Cover Up: Researching FBI Files," in Athan Theoharis (ed.), *Beyond the Hiss Case: The FBI, Congress, and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 45.

⁹ Athan Theoharis (ed.), *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 3.

¹⁰ Theoharis, "In-House Cover Up," 21-22.

¹¹ Theoharis, "In-House Cover Up," 45-46. See also Athan Theoharis, "The Problem of Purging FBI Files," *USA Today* (November 1978): 48-50.

¹² On FBI file designations, see the FBI's "Conducting Research in FBI Records" (1990) which is available from the Bureau's Office of Public Affairs or reprinted in Athan Theoharis (ed.), *The FBI: An Annotated Bibliography and Research Guide* (New York: Garland, 1994), 3-57.

¹³ The FBI's reading room, like the FBI's FOIA staff, is given low budgetary priority. One must make an appointment to use the facility, which resembles a large closet with movable shelves and a folding table for researchers to the side.

¹⁴ It should be noted that only very recently (2001) the British Public Records Office has begun to release a limited number of Security Service files. These files might provide insights into FBI liaison but their limited release occurred as this study was in the final stages of being written up.

¹⁵ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); David Williams, "'Without Understanding': The FBI and Political Surveillance, 1908-1941," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 1981), 2. See also David Williams, "The Bureau of Investigation and Its Critics, 1919-1921: The Origins of Federal Political Surveillance," *The Journal of American History* 68 (December 1981): 560-79.

¹⁶ Athan Theoharis, *Spying on Americans: Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); Frank J. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance: The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983); John Elliff, *The Reform of FBI Intelligence Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); David Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From Memphis to "Solo"* (New York: Norton, 1981); William Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Theoharis, *Spying on Americans*, 158-59; Athan Theoharis and John Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 149; Athan Theoharis, Tony Poveda, Susan Rosenfeld, and Richard Powers (eds.), *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999), 18-19.

¹⁸ Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Curt Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (New York: Norton, 1991).

¹⁹ Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 484-87, 530-33.

²⁰ Justus D. Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American Intervention, 1939-1941* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 276.

²¹ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 289-90.

²² Richard W. Steele, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Foreign Policy Critics," *Political Science Quarterly* 94 (Spring 1979): 15-32. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. commented on Steele's piece arguing that he had made overstatements and claimed Steele's article read more like a prosecutorial brief than an historical assessment. See his "A Comment on 'Roosevelt and His Foreign Policy Critics,'" *Political Science Quarterly* 94 (Spring 1979): 33-35.

²³ Charles F. Croog, "FBI Political Surveillance and the Isolationist-Interventionist Debate, 1939-1941," *The Historian* 54 (Spring 1992): 441-458.

²⁴ Kenneth O'Reilly, "A New Deal for the FBI: The Roosevelt Administration, Crime Control, and National Security," *The Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982): 638-58.

²⁵ Athan Theoharis, "The FBI, the Roosevelt Administration, and the 'Subversive' Press," *Journalism History* 19 (Spring 1993): 3-10.

²⁶ Warren Kimball was solicited to comment on my article for H-Diplo, the diplomatic history Internet discussion list. He praised my point that the origins of illegal surveillance for the White

House date back to FDR and not Nixon. He criticized me, however, for not adequately proving my contention that FBI political reports permitted Roosevelt to not worry about his domestic opponents as he had kept tabs on them. I may have overstated my case but I was also not clear in my argument. I should have stated that Roosevelt gathered sensitive political intelligence without his critics knowing about it, and this information, in part, allowed him to implement his conception of the country's national security needs. Warren F. Kimball, Review of Charles, "Informing FDR," 19 April 2000, H-Diplo discussion list, www.h-net.msu.edu.

²⁷ Douglas M. Charles and John Rossi, "FBI Political Surveillance and the Charles Lindbergh Investigation, 1939-1944," *The Historian* 59 (Summer 1997): 831-847; Douglas M. Charles, "Informing FDR: FBI Political Surveillance and the Isolationist-Interventionist Foreign Policy Debate, 1939-1945," *Diplomatic History* 24 (Spring 2000): 211-232; *idem*, "Franklin D. Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover, and FBI Political Surveillance," *USA Today* 128 (September 1999): 74-76.

²⁸ Roy Turnbaugh, "The FBI and Harry Elmer Barnes: 1936-1944," *The Historian* 42 (May 1980): 385-98.

²⁹ Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 157-83.

³⁰ Barton J. Bernstein, "The Road to Watergate and Beyond: The Growth and Abuse of Executive Authority Since 1940," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 40 (Spring 1976): 58-76.

³¹ John F. Berens, "The FBI and Civil Liberties from Franklin Roosevelt to Jimmy Carter—An Historical Overview," *The Michigan Academician* 13 (1980): 131-44.

³² Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1977).

³³ See Donner, *The Age of Surveillance*; Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970); Theoharis, *Spying on Americans*, 3-12.

³⁴ David Johnston and Don Van Natta, Jr., "Ashcroft Seeking to Free FBI to Spy on Groups," *New York Times* (1 December 2001).

³⁵ "Ashcroft Appears Before Senate to Defend Tactics," *New York Times* (6 December 2001); Neil A. Lewis, "Ashcroft Defends Anti-terror Plan and Says Criticism May Aid Foes," *New York Times* (7 December 2001).

³⁶ "Ashcroft Urges Caution With FOIA Requests," *Washington Post* (17 October 2001); Ellen Nakashima, "Bush View of Secrecy Is Stirring Frustration," *Washington Post* (3 March 2002); Athan Theoharis to Douglas M. Charles, 6 November 2001.

CHAPTER 1

The Bureau of Investigation and the Origins of FBI Political Surveillance, 1908-1932.

Following the Civil War, reflecting the rapid change from an agrarian to an urban-industrial nation, the United States government became more centralized. Government bureaucracy flourished in the Reconstruction Era and Congress passed new legislation to effect national rebuilding. The creation of the Justice Department in 1870 was one such innovation. The new department actively prosecuted the 1870 and 1871 Enforcement Acts which sought to protect the civil rights of freed slaves and “carpetbaggers” (as prescribed in the 14th and 15th amendments) from violent southern elements, such as the Ku Klux Klan. For the first time the federal government became involved in legal cases that previously had been the purview of the states.¹

The government’s prosecutions began in earnest. Justice Department attorneys hired detectives (called federal marshals) or used Treasury Department agents to investigate and collect evidence against the Klansmen. While the department’s investigative and conviction record was limited, the example set in terms of federal authority was a success. Beyond the Enforcement Acts, the Justice

Department acquired the responsibility to enforce new federal regulatory legislation: the 1887 Interstate Commerce Act regulated the railroad industry, and the 1890 Sherman Antitrust Act sought to curb monopoly. While this legislation reflected a newly activist federal government, the effects of the laws were limited. Given the government's limited objectives, no permanent investigative agency in the Justice Department was deemed necessary.²

Rather than create their own investigative division within the department, Justice Department officials relied upon the expertise of private detectives—notably the Pinkerton Detective Agency—or Secret Service agents borrowed from the Treasury Department. One drawback to this practice was the widely held public disregard for professional detectives in the nineteenth century. During the Civil War the Pinkertons, under General George McClellan, had acquired a reputation for shoddy reconnaissance; and during Reconstruction, southerners had regarded federal detectives as repressors. Moreover, the Pinkertons earned an anti-labor reputation during the late nineteenth century. During the 1892 Homestead Steel Strike, the manager of the Carnegie Steel Company, Henry Clay Frick, hired Pinkerton detectives to protect his plant and assist in strike breaking. A gun battle ensued between the strikers and Pinkertons, resulting in the deaths of six unionists and three detectives. When the smoke cleared the Pinkertons had lost and, moreover, had become equated in the popular mind as ruthless thugs.³

Following the Pinkertons' controversial involvement in the Homestead Strike, the Republican-controlled Congress reevaluated the government's association with the detective agency. Wanting to avoid alienating the electorate through any

association with the Pinkertons, Congress prohibited federal agencies from employing private detectives. The result of this legislation—the 1892 Pinkerton Act—forced the Justice Department to rely solely on the Treasury Department’s Secret Service to conduct their investigations.⁴

Relying on the Secret Service posed no serious problems for Justice Department officials as federal regulatory legislation was limited. But when Theodore Roosevelt acceded to the Presidency in 1901, following William McKinley’s assassination, the Justice Department’s responsibilities increased dramatically. Believing that government should be used to contain the destructive aspects of the burgeoning economy, Roosevelt sought to preserve corporate capitalism by regulating it. In 1902 he reinvigorated the Sherman Antitrust Act by directing the Justice Department to prosecute the Northern Securities Company, a giant railroad monopoly under the direction of James J. Hill and J. P. Morgan. U.S. attorneys charged the company with illegal restraint of trade, believing the monopoly had unfairly increased freight rates. The Justice Department’s prosecution was successful and the Supreme Court later upheld the verdict. The Justice Department also prosecuted the Chicago meatpackers, Standard Oil, and the sugar refiners for illegal restraint of trade. Yet as the government’s caseload increased, relying on the Secret Service for investigations proved inefficient. Justice Department officials thereby decided that the department needed its own professional investigators.⁵

In 1906 Roosevelt appointed Charles J. Bonaparte as attorney general. Realizing that changes were needed to ensure efficient prosecution of federal

statutes, Bonaparte began to reorganize the Justice Department. One important aspect of Bonaparte's plan was the establishment in the department of a permanent investigative division. In his 1907 annual report, Bonaparte proposed the creation of a Bureau of Investigation (BI) staffed with expert investigators, and in the following year he testified before an uneasy House Appropriations Committee advocating the creation of the BI. Contemporary scandals surrounding the use of government agents, however, caused Congress to hesitate acceding to Bonaparte's plan. An extended debate over federal investigative activity thereafter ensued.⁶

One event that contributed to Congress's concern was the conviction in 1908, by way of federal investigation, of two Oregon congressmen. The scandal had its origins seven years earlier during Roosevelt's first term when Secretary of the Interior Ethan A. Hitchcock discovered irregularities concerning the use of western public lands. Hitchcock referred the matter to the Justice Department who then borrowed Secret Service agents to investigate. Their efforts resulted in the conviction of more than a dozen people for conspiracy to defraud the United States government. Among those convicted were Senator John Mitchell and Representative John Williamson of Oregon.⁷

The use of federal agents to secure the indictment and conviction of two United States congressmen led Congress, in light of Bonaparte's request to create an investigative arm within the Justice Department, to hold hearings into the loaning of Secret Service agents. Congress's primary concern stemmed not only from the western land fraud case, but also from the Secret Service having overstepped its legal authority and engaged in other non-criminal investigations. (By statute, the

Secret Service was restricted to protecting the president and investigating violations of federal currency and counterfeiting law.) In March 1908 William Moran, assistant chief of the Secret Service, testified before the House Appropriations Committee and exposed some of the agency's non-criminal investigations. He explained to the committee that loaned Secret Service agents did not violate investigative restrictions because Treasury Department funds were not spent when an agent was on loan; instead the department borrowing the agent spent their funds.⁸

Outraged over the Secret Service's liberal interpretation of its charter, Congress focused on the issue of agent loaning. Voicing fears of a centralized secret police, the legislators became consumed in the issue. They were so preoccupied that consideration of Bonaparte's request to provide funds for a Bureau of Investigation was sidelined. Instead, the Congress amended its budgetary appropriations to ban the loaning of Secret Service agents to federal agencies. In so doing, Congress effectively hamstrung the Justice Department from conducting investigations as it had relied upon Treasury agents.⁹

While Congress was out of session, on 1 July 1908 Attorney General Bonaparte hired investigators and, with Theodore Roosevelt's mandate, established the Bureau of Investigation (renamed the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1935). Some historians have argued that Bonaparte willfully violated Congress's specific intention not to create the Bureau of Investigation. By the letter of the law, this is not accurate. Having been preoccupied with the issue over the loaning of Secret Service agents, Congress had not yet approved or denied Bonaparte's request for *appropriations* to create the Bureau of Investigation. On the other hand, the attorney

general did disregard the spirit of Congress's budgetary restrictions and its intent not to perpetuate the government's federal investigative role.¹⁰

Meantime, President Roosevelt attacked Congress for preventing Secret Service agents from working with other departments. Citing the western-land fraud case that involved the Oregonian congressmen, Roosevelt claimed, erroneously, that Congress had acted only to protect themselves from criminal investigation. He also blamed them for abetting lawlessness and hamstringing the Justice Department's mission. By painting their action in black-and-white terms, Roosevelt had politically outmaneuvered Congress. Whether or not the president intended it, his rhetoric had deflected the issue away from Bonaparte's creation of the BI. Instead, Congress was put on the defensive inasmuch as it sought to rebut the president's inflammatory accusations.¹¹

Congress defended itself by supporting the BI inasmuch as its creation did not involve the Treasury Department loaning Secret Service agents. Congress thereby retained its agent-loaning restriction while it concurrently demonstrated that it was not soft on crime, as the president had claimed during the 1908 election year. Nevertheless, Congress demanded an explanation for Bonaparte's independent action in creating the Bureau, and he appeared on the Hill to defend himself. Bonaparte did not attempt to persuade Congress to authorize a charter for the Bureau of Investigation. Instead he argued that Bureau agents would not engage in non-criminal investigations and would only concern themselves with anti-trust and interstate commerce cases. Bonaparte argued further that executive oversight and the employment of only professional investigators would preclude any potential

abuses of power. Bonaparte said he personally would review daily investigative summaries. Besides, he argued, if he failed there was always Congress and the judiciary. In short, by appealing to the Progressive ideals of rational and efficient administration of government, Bonaparte convinced Congress that the Bureau of Investigation would not trammel individual rights. To Progressives, abuses would best be managed not by Congress but by professionals within the Justice Department. Out of these origins was born the FBI whose powers would grow while oversight diminished.¹²

Despite the government's faith that Bureau activity would be effectively supervised, soon after its creation the organization's responsibilities rapidly expanded. This effectively diminished the attorney general's ability to monitor the Bureau closely. In 1910 Congress passed the Mann Act, or White Slave Traffic Act, which outlawed the transportation of women across state lines for immoral purposes. The law targeted prostitution rings, but soon was interpreted in a way to be applied to individuals. One target was heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson (an African American), who was arrested for escorting his white girlfriend across state lines. The law's authority fell under the rubric of interstate commerce, but was used instead to regulate perceived immorality. Moreover, the national character of the law necessitated an expansion of the Bureau of Investigation—outside of Washington, D.C—to ensure efficient investigation and prosecution. The Bureau, thereafter, became a truly national federal agency. The long-term effects of the Mann Act are important: the Bureau began to accumulate derogatory information on the private lives of citizens, both common and prominent.¹³

In 1919, another law increased the Bureau's federal law enforcement role. When automobile sales skyrocketed after 1916, Congress passed the Motor Vehicle Theft Act (Dyer Act). This law made the transportation of stolen vehicles across state lines a felony, thus empowering the Bureau of Investigation to investigate such transgressions. The act enabled the BI to become involved, for example, in the John Dillinger case after the gangster stole an automobile and crossed state lines in 1933. The Dyer Act helped to popularize the Bureau in the public image and, in conjunction with the Mann Act, centralized national law enforcement and made the attorney general's oversight role increasingly more difficult, if not impossible.¹⁴

* * *

Domestic internal security concerns during the First World War further increased the Bureau's power and role as a national police force. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, there were already fears in the United States that external influences would disrupt American society. America's growing nativist fears stemmed not from the war but from the depressed domestic economy since 1914. These fears were heightened when various German attempts at intrigue were discovered after 1914, including a fraudulent passport scheme and various acts of sabotage. President Woodrow Wilson helped to inflame the issue when, in 1915, he singled-out "hyphenated Americans" as the source of America's trouble and called on Congress to enact sedition legislation. While the Congress did not act on the president's wishes, the tone of Wilson's wartime-preparedness campaign encouraged an atmosphere whereby perceived disloyalty was harshly repressed.¹⁵

The Bureau of Investigation's surveillance activity increased dramatically following several insidious events. Between 1915 and 1917, for example, explosives were found aboard forty-seven shipping vessels bound for Allied countries. Moreover, when the munitions depot at New York's Black Tom Island exploded on 30 July 1916, followed by a similar explosion at the Canadian Car and Foundry Company at Kingsland, New Jersey, on 11 January 1919, Congress decided to act. In response, Congress authorized the president's prior desire for repressive legislation. In June 1917, Congress created the Espionage Act. This legislation made it illegal to obstruct the provisions of the 1917 Selective Service Act, to interfere with the American armed forces (fomenting disruption), and to steal government secrets with intent to aid the enemy. Later, the Sabotage and Seditious Acts of 1918—stronger measures yet—forbade public opposition to the government and war effort. Government officials also used the 1918 Alien Deportation Act to deport non-citizens who advocated the violent overthrow of the United States government.¹⁶

This legislation increased the Justice Department's responsibilities in the internal security area. In 1918, following passage of the Espionage, Seditious, and Alien Acts, the Justice Department formed the Alien Enemy Registration Section, or Alien Enemy Bureau. This agency concerned itself with the activities of German aliens, radicals, anarchists, and other perceived "subversives." It was in this section that J. Edgar Hoover began his career, and where he learned the wartime methods of administrative procedure which were used to bypass legal restraints. Hoover later employed what he had learned when he joined the Bureau of Investigation.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Investigation was busy enforcing the Selective Service Act, rounding up draft dodgers (called “slackers”) from April to September 1918. When apprehending alleged slackers, the Bureau cast a wide net. Despite the wartime emergency, the BI did not have adequate personnel to enforce effectively the conscription act. (During the First World War, the Bureau had at maximum 300 agents.) To assist agents in their round-up, Bureau officials forged a relationship with the private, Chicago-based American Protective League (APL). Chicago advertising executive Albert M. Briggs formed the APL in 1917, recruited a group of some 260,000 members, and volunteered to assist in internal security work. After some discussion, BI Chief Bruce Bielaski and Attorney General Thomas Gregory accepted Briggs’s offer to assist the Bureau, and APL members were issued badges that gave them the appearance of being official government agents. In their efforts, BI agents and APL volunteers rounded up anyone whom they believed was a draft dodger—many apprehended individuals were not “slackers” at all, but merely citizens who could not produce their draft cards. One authority has estimated that only one in two hundred men arrested was, in fact, a draft evader.¹⁸

In addition to apprehending citizens in the “slacker” raids, the Bureau officials monitored the political views of those they considered potential threats. Regarding these people as pro-German, BI agents monitored various United States Senators, former Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, the Hearst newspaper chain, the *Chicago Tribune*, Irish-American activists, and other prominent groups and individuals. Bureau agents monitored these targets because they held political views similar to those of Imperial Germany. The United States senators were

watched, for example, because they opposed the embargo on trade with Germany. In all, the Bureau of Investigation won some 2,000 convictions during the First World War, but none of those arrested was charged with espionage, sabotage, or collusion with the enemy. Instead, the Bureau's targets included unionists, socialists, and German and Irish political activists.¹⁹

The Bureau also began its surveillance of African Americans during the Wilson administration. When race riots occurred in 1917 and 1919, the Wilson administration suspected that radicals had agitated blacks to riot. Government officials long had been wary of the influence external radicals had on minorities. The administration ordered a survey of both black attitudes towards the draft and of radical subversion within the African-American community. By 1919, as fears of radical influence in the black population rose, Bureau surveillance of "the Negro Question" became routine. In their efforts to locate the source of radical influence, Bureau agents focused on the minority press. The African-American press, thereafter, was earmarked for having agitated "the Negro elements of this country to riot." Through time, Bureau surveillance of the African-American community increased.²⁰

* * *

Since before World War I, Americans had feared the importation of foreign radical ideas. These fears were exacerbated when, in November 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia put Communists in power. Soon thereafter, popular fears of a similar radical minority stirring revolutionary ideas appeared in the United States. In January 1919, after the signing of the armistice, Seattle shipyard workers (and

sympathetic workers in heavy industry) struck demanding better wages and fewer working hours. Seattle's mayor, Ole Hanson, had no sympathy for the workers' plight and instead equated them with revolutionary elements as seen in Russia. With the assistance of the police and federal troops he crushed the strike easily. Still other strikes cropped up in the steel and coal industries in 1919. (During 1919 some four million workers struck.) These strikes failed and the attempt to unionize only bolstered the popular perception that foreign radicals had inspired unionization efforts. While the strikers' motives may have been legitimate, any reconciliation to their viewpoint was quashed when several months later a series of mysterious bombings occurred.²¹

In April, post office inspectors intercepted numerous bomb-laden packages addressed to prominent politicians and business leaders. In subsequent months, similar mail-bombs exploded in Chicago, Seattle, Atlanta, and New York, killing or wounding numerous innocent people. One significant bombing occurred at the home of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, but the bombardier failed in his task and only succeeded in killing himself. The attempt so rattled Palmer that he decided to purge the country of radical influence. The serial nature of the Bolshevik Revolution, labor unrest, and bomb plots coupled with the International Workers of the World's (IWW) boisterous rhetoric and the appearance of other soviet regimes in Europe in 1918 and 1919, lent fear to an already wary public about insurgent foreign radicalism.²²

On 1 August 1919, Palmer created within the Bureau of Investigation a Radical Bureau—it was later renamed the General Intelligence Division (GID). The

GID investigated and collected information from numerous sources on the radical threat. To lead the GID, Palmer chose J. Edgar Hoover, who had transferred from the wartime Alien Enemy Bureau. Hoover organized the GID, creating a 200,000-card index file on radical groups, personalities, and publications. In addition, the GID maintained files on Senator Robert La Follette, settlement house leader Jane Addams, and various black nationalists such as Marcus Garvey. Operating under the authority of the wartime Espionage and Sedition Acts, the GID made sweeping arrests before this legislation expired—it expired with the formal cessation of war. The imminent termination of these laws did not alter the Bureau’s motivation, however, because officials had hoped peacetime sedition legislation would be enacted.²³

Because the government had to prove an individual planned the violent overthrow of the United States government, a difficult legal task, the Bureau of Investigation had a difficult, if not impossible, time pursuing radicals under federal legislation. As Director Frank Burke observed: “As the activities of aliens who are radically inclined are always most secretive in character, it quite often is next to impossible to prove actual membership with the organization alleged to be anarchistic.” An easier way to dispose of the radical aliens, officials determined, was simply to deport them. To achieve this goal, the Bureau of Investigation worked with the Department of Labor’s Immigration Bureau. Together, they could arrest and deport foreign radicals using the provisions of the 1918 Immigration Act. The legality of this arrangement, however, was questionable. The Labor Department and Immigration Bureau had the sole authority to deport aliens; the Justice

Department had no prerogative in this area. But the Bureau of Investigation was authorized to conduct dragnet raids on the pretense that alien organizations had violated federal law. Government officials favored dragnet raids because alien radicals could be arrested *en masse* and their organizations' papers could, at the same time, be seized. By mid-1919 cooperation between the Justice and Labor Departments had become very close.²⁴

Rather than taking the difficult prosecutorial route, GID chief Hoover and Immigration Bureau Commissioner General Anthony Caminetti sought to deport radical aliens through administrative means. But the two bureaucrats faced one further obstacle. In March 1919, Labor Secretary William B. Wilson changed an important aspect to the Immigration Bureau's deportation process. The Immigration Bureau's rule 22 permitted aliens to seek legal counsel in the deportation process, but not in the beginning. Being a strong civil libertarian, and citing fundamental fairness, Wilson altered rule 22 to allow aliens legal representation from the start of proceedings. This disrupted the Hoover-Caminetti plan inasmuch as the bureaucrats had relied upon the arrested aliens to incriminate themselves—by admitting radical beliefs or associations with radical groups—under interrogation, thus making them deportable. In most cases the interrogation process worked well because immigrants were not aware of their legal rights and therefore could be manipulated into incriminating themselves. But the radical aliens targeted by Hoover and Caminetti had the benefit of knowledgeable organizations that employed legal council to assist its members.²⁵

The difficulties for Hoover and Caminetti were underscored during the November 1919 dragnet conducted against the Union of Russian Workers. In its surprise raid, the Bureau of Investigation rounded up 300 members of the Union. But contrary to Bureau assumptions, the URW aliens were well informed of immigration/deportation procedures, because the URW had kept its members abreast of government policy. Refusing to talk, the well-informed aliens instead demanded legal counsel and thereby undermined Hoover's and Caminetti's self-incrimination strategy.²⁶

Caminetti, and other like-minded officials, thereafter decided that to ensure success the provisions of rule 22 had to be changed. Only then would they proceed with their planned raids against the Communist Party and Communist Labor Party. An opportunity to act presented itself one month later. On 30 December, Secretary of Labor Wilson departed Washington leaving Solicitor General John Abercrombie in charge of the Labor Department. Sympathetic to Hoover and Caminetti, Abercrombie restored rule 22 to what it had been before Wilson changed it, thus allowing federal agents to interrogate aliens without legal counsel. To further prevent access to legal representation, immigration officials inflated bail or allowed none at all.²⁷

With these procedural changes in place, the so-called Palmer raids began. On 2 and 6 January 1920, Bureau agents (coordinated from Washington by Hoover) raided both Communist and Communist Labor Party meetings. Government agents arrested some 10,000 persons across the nation, many of whom were not aliens or party affiliates at all. In so doing, many citizens' civil rights were violated. While

housed in inadequate detention facilities the prisoners were coerced to admit radical beliefs or associations. Despite the harsh and questionable methods government agents employed, the public response to the raids nevertheless was favorable.²⁸

On 26 January, learning of the procedural changes made to accommodate the deportation of aliens, Secretary Wilson restored his changes to rule 22. Moreover, concerned about the Immigration Bureau's liaison with the Bureau of Investigation, Wilson terminated their working relationship. The secretary and Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis Post then reviewed the arrest records of the detained aliens. Being more concerned with civil liberties than Hoover or Caminetti, Wilson and Post ruled that membership in the Communist Labor Party did not constitute grounds for deportation. Wilson and Post further distinguished between "conscious" and "unconscious" Communist Party members because many Socialists had been shunted to the more radical parties' membership rolls when the Communist Party split from the Socialist Party in 1919. So of the 10,000 netted, about 4,000 were arrested. Of these, only 556 eventually were deported.²⁹

The enthusiasm for Attorney General Palmer and the raids did not hold, however. Within weeks public opinion shifted and support for the raids disappeared. Several social reformist groups spoke out against the government's heavy-handed tactics, including the National Popular Government League (NPGL), the Interchurch World Movement (IWM), and the Commission on the Church and Social Service. Some government officials protested the action as well. A Pennsylvania U.S. attorney resigned in protest, and some immigration officials refused to cooperate with Bureau of Investigation agents.³⁰

Despite growing public displeasure with the raids and civil rights violations, BI officials were convinced that liberal senior Department of Labor officials had undercut the raids. Because the Bureau of Investigation had established friendly relations with Commissioner General Caminetti, the sudden intervention by Secretary Wilson and Assistant Secretary Post led BI officials to suspect their motives. Accordingly, J. Edgar Hoover ordered an investigation of Post, searching military intelligence records and IWW files to prove his radical sympathies. The investigation turned up nothing and a subsequent attempt by Congress to impeach the assistant secretary backfired and only highlighted the Bureau's abuses of power.³¹

The Bureau did not stop with its investigation of Post. Critics of the Bureau's raids became the focus of further secret Bureau investigations. After the NPGL published a critical pamphlet entitled *Report on the Illegal Activities of the United States Department of Justice*, Hoover ordered a "discreet and thorough investigation" of the NPGL. Bureau agents collected information that detailed the personal lives of the organization's leadership, the NPGL's financial sources, and the group's political activities and associations (notably its relationship with Post). The Bureau also investigated the political backgrounds of the twelve lawyers who had signed and supported the NPGL's pamphlet. Included among these were such esteemed lawyers as Ernst Freund, Felix Frankfurter, and Zechariah Chafee, Jr.³²

When the IWM and the Commission on the Church and Social Service publicly castigated the Palmer raids, they were targeted for investigation. Throughout, the Bureau focused on these various organizations' political

philosophies. BI agents never uncovered any information that confirmed the alleged radical sympathies of these groups or their members. Instead, the Bureau began what would become a long history of secret political investigations of those it believed were “subversive.” These post-Red Scare inquiries were just the start of future and more pervasive investigative efforts.³³

* * *

During the presidency of Warren G. Harding, the Bureau of Investigation became enmeshed in scandals that effected major changes in the organization. The Teapot Dome scandal was the largest of various illegalities committed by the so-called “Ohio Gang” of the Harding administration. The scandal centered on oil deposits located at Teapot Dome, Wyoming, and Elk Hills, California. The deposits had been set aside as naval reserves, but control of them was transferred to Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall. The interior secretary had been a wealthy businessman but lost his fortune in a Mexican mining venture, and in an effort to alleviate his misfortune, Fall secretly signed contracts that allowed two oil companies to tap the government’s oil resources in Wyoming and California. The secretary then accepted \$400,000 in “loans” from the owners of the two oil companies, Harry Sinclair and Edward Doheny.³⁴

In 1923 Montana Senators Thomas Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler (later a target of the FBI for his anti-interventionist politics) learned of Fall’s activity and decided to initiate a Senate investigation. Learning of the senators’ plans, however, Attorney General Harry Daugherty took preemptive action in an attempt to quash the inquiry. Bureau of Investigation Director William J. Burns dispatched agents to

Montana to unearth any derogatory information on Walsh and Wheeler. Agents in Washington, D.C., meanwhile, intercepted their mail, tapped their telephones, and broke into their offices. Daugherty and Bureau Director Burns, through political contacts, were even able to secure an indictment against Wheeler in Montana for alleged misuse of his office to obtain gas and oil leases for a friend. When the case went to trial, Thomas Walsh served as Wheeler's defense counsel. He easily exposed the indictment as a sham and won the case. Bureau agents were unable to find any incriminating evidence to use against Senator Wheeler, and instead their tactics were exposed during senate hearings later that year. What followed was a public outcry over the Bureau's illegal activity.³⁵

President Harding died before revelations of the scandals caused him any political harm. His successor, Calvin Coolidge, took steps to disassociate himself with the administration's illegalities. On 28 March 1924, President Coolidge demanded Attorney General Daugherty's resignation. In his place, the president appointed Harlan Fiske Stone, a conservative and highly respected reformist and dean of Columbia University Law School. Having been a critic of Daugherty's management of the Justice Department, Stone sought to implement high moral and professional standards and began to reform the department.

On 9 May, Stone fired Bureau Director William J. Burns. The attorney general then sought a respected administrator who could replace the disgraced Burns. Following a cabinet meeting, Stone discussed the matter with then Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. The commerce secretary consulted with his assistant (and former FBI agent) Lawrence Richey, and recommended Assistant FBI Director

J. Edgar Hoover to Stone. The attorney general believed in and trusted expert administrators and men of high moral standards not to abuse their offices. Despite Hoover's participation in the Palmer Raids and other Bureau abuses, with high recommendations Stone believed he was suited for the job. On 10 May, Hoover was invited to Stone's office where he was offered the job as interim Bureau director (Hoover was later made permanent director). Hoover accepted but insisted that he have full authority over Bureau hiring and promoting practices. To disassociate the organization from political patronage, Hoover wanted Bureau hiring and promotions to be based on merit.³⁶

As the head of a reformed Bureau of Investigation, Hoover was required to work within the attorney general's new guidelines. Stone disbanded the now-controversial General Intelligence Division (formerly headed by Hoover), banned the Bureau's use of wiretaps, and directed Hoover to investigate only violations of federal criminal statutes. Hoover publicly supported the new attorney general's guidelines and promised that Bureau agents would not collect political intelligence. Believing that the Bureau's past problems were rooted in a lack of professionalism and low moral standards, Stone trusted the new director. And at every turn Hoover sought to demonstrate to the attorney general his loyalty and trust.³⁷

Despite Attorney General Stone's guidelines, and Hoover's promises to adhere to them, the new director continued to monitor those he considered "radicals." This activity did not reach the scale of prior efforts—clearly it could not under the new guidelines—but it did continue. Hoover's only authority to investigate groups and individuals was if the target had violated a federal statute, but

the director thought he would be remiss if the Bureau ceased monitoring “subversive” organizations. Information acquired on such radicals might become useful at a later date, Hoover believed, especially if Congress enacted a peacetime sedition law.

To secretly gather political intelligence, Hoover devised several procedures that ensured confidentiality. Bureau agents continued to collect radical publications and newspaper clippings, attend radical meetings, and collect unsolicited material regarding radical activities. Because they were not pursuant to a federal indictment, these efforts technically did not constitute an official Bureau investigation. Additionally, after 1924 Bureau agents were instructed to use the misnomer “confidential source” (or a derivation of it) in their reports when in reality their source was illicit. Agents also worked in tandem with local police forces in their anti-radical investigations. The police units would then submit their data to the Bureau thereby ensuring BI “compliance” with Attorney General Stone’s restrictions.³⁸

In 1925, Hoover authorized the creation of an Obscene file. In this file was placed information of a pornographic nature—Hoover reportedly enjoyed such lurid publications—and information about illicit sexual activity. The secret collection of this type of intelligence not only assisted the Bureau in prosecuting obscenity cases, but also proved valuable either to curry favor with superiors or to discredit opponents.³⁹ Hoover further devised a procedure to relay sensitive intelligence about the personal and political lives of prominent Americans directly to his desk, thereby bypassing the Bureau’s central records system. These reports were labeled

“personal and confidential,” a designation that immediately routed the documents to Hoover where they were secretly filed in his office. Through these various procedures, Hoover was able to continue to monitor subversive activity while making a public effort to demonstrate his adherence to new department guidelines.⁴⁰

One of the targets monitored by the Bureau of Investigation between 1924 and 1933 was the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Originating from the First World War period, the ACLU was an early and vocal Bureau critic. In 1924 the group issued a report that criticized the BI’s investigative practices. Newly installed as director, Hoover rebutted the report’s charges in a letter to Attorney General Stone. The director explained that the Bureau of Investigation indeed had a file on the ACLU, but that it contained only unsolicited information. Despite Hoover’s denials to the contrary, the Bureau of Investigation, in fact, actively monitored the American Civil Liberties Union.⁴¹

The Bureau of Investigation monitored ACLU political statements by attending their meetings, monitoring demonstrations, keeping track of their litigation efforts, and tracking ACLU financial sources. The Bureau even employed an informer in the group’s executive board who provided information concerning ACLU policies and administration. Further, still, Bureau agents worked closely with local Red Squads—special anti-radical police squads—to gather political intelligence. Hoover even ordered two investigations of the New York chapter of the ACLU for making critical statements about the Bureau’s Mann Act prosecutions. These illegal investigate efforts culminated in 1931 with BI agents writing an ACLU history utilizing Bureau resources that documented the group’s political interests.⁴²

Bureau agents monitored others during this period. Among those targeted was William Z. Foster's Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). In 1922 the Bureau had pursued the TUEL in an effort to undermine the leftist labor group. By 1924, Hoover's monitoring became more circumspect but no less thorough. As with the ACLU, Bureau agents employed informers and collected all types of political intelligence. Another liberal group agents monitored was the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. Devoted to rallying public opinion in an effort to prevent the execution of the accused anarchists, agents closely scrutinized the Defense Committee's politics. By compiling monthly reports from field offices, the Bureau officials were able to acquire a cornucopia of information on legitimate political activity. This enabled Bureau officials to compile dossiers on targets, without external interference.⁴³

During the presidency of Herbert Hoover, the Bureau of Investigation began to service, on an *ad hoc* and limited basis, White House requests for political intelligence. Three senior White House aides made the requests: Hoover's aide Lawrence Richey, Press Secretary Theodore Joslin, and Presidential Secretary Walter Newton. The first White House request for political intelligence occurred in November 1929 when Richey requested an investigation of the anti-radical group The Sentinels of the Republic. Richey's concern stemmed from a letter the White House received from the Sentinels that criticized the president's privately funded Child Health Commission. Bureau agents compiled a report on the group but uncovering nothing substantial.⁴⁴

White House aides made subsequent requests for information on other groups, including the ACLU, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Foreign Policy Association, and the Moorish Science Temple of America. White House officials also expressed interest in minor right-wing organizations like the Federation of Lictor—suspected of being a fascist Italian front—and the American Citizens Political Awakening Association. One White House request involved critics of the Hoover administration. When the Navy League of the United States publicly criticized Hoover’s defense cutbacks, the administration solicited a Bureau investigation. In their efforts, Bureau agents searched Internal Revenue Service files and perused the League’s papers. But the largest effort undertaken by Bureau agents was its investigation of the 1932 Bonus March on Washington, D.C.⁴⁵

During the early years of the Great Depression, thousands of First World War veterans mobilized in an effort to alleviate their worsening economic condition. In 1924 Congress had promised the veterans a bonus of \$1,000 to be paid in 1945. Feeling desperate, thousands of unemployed veterans demanded early payment and, to demonstrate their seriousness, traveled to Washington, D.C., determined to depart the city only when granted their bonus. In the spring of 1932, the “Bonus Expeditionary Force” set up camp in the nation’s capital.⁴⁶

Fearful of economic-oriented popular protest, some government officials believed that radical elements—i.e. communists—were responsible for organizing the Bonus Marchers. Hoover already had one communist-sponsored veterans’ organization under surveillance since 1930. And when the 20,000 Bonus marchers

arrived in Washington, Hoover joined Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur in convincing President Hoover that the march was a communist plot. Trusting his subordinates' counsel, the president ordered the Army to disperse the veterans.⁴⁷

President Hoover was criticized widely for the harsh treatment the veterans received. Convinced the protest was communist-inspired, the president ordered the Bureau of Investigation to investigate to prove communist intrigue. Bureau agents attended protest rallies, monitored Bonus marcher activity, and, with the help of local red squads, investigated veterans' groups to determine communist influence. Nothing was discovered, however, that confirmed communist influence.⁴⁸

Out of Progressive-Era ideals of rational and efficient government, the Bureau of Investigation was born during the Theodore Roosevelt administration. As its responsibilities grew over time, the ability of the attorney general to oversee its activities was limited. This led to an abuse of power that only grew with increased responsibilities, wartime necessity, and a post-war Red Scare. Eventually, those abuses became public and administrative reforms were created to deal with them. Instead of ending the Bureau's ability to monitor political activity, the reforms only lessened them. Even still, the Bureau of the 1920s was small and not a significant investigative force. But this would change with the rise of another global emergency and another president named Roosevelt.

NOTES

¹ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 454-57. On the transformation of American society in the late nineteenth century, see Maury Klein, *The Flowering of the Third America: The Making of an Organized Society, 1850-1920* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1993); and Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967).

² Foner, *Reconstruction*, 457-59; Klein, *The Flowering of the Third America*, 97; Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 52-54.

³ David Williams, "'Without Understanding': The FBI and Political Surveillance, 1908-1941" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Hampshire, 1981), 27-28; Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *American Espionage: From Secret Service to CIA* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 18-19; William Serrin, *Homestead: The Glory and Tragedy of An American Steel Town* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 12, 74-85.

⁴ Athan Theoharis, "A Brief History of the FBI's Role and Powers," in Athan Theoharis, ed., *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999), 3.

⁵ John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1983), 77; John Morton Blum, *The Republican Roosevelt*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 74-75, 85-87.

⁶ David Williams, "'Without Understanding'," 30-31.

⁷ Don Whitehead, *The FBI Story: A Report to the People* (New York: Random House, 1956), 17-18.

⁸ David Williams, "'Without Understanding'," 32-34.

⁹ David Williams, "'Without Understanding'," 34-37; Athan Theoharis and John Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 43.

¹⁰ Williams, "'Without Understanding'," 38; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 43. Among those who argue that Attorney General Bonaparte willfully defied Congress include Lowenthal, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*; Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*; and Whitehead, *The FBI Story*.

¹¹ Williams, "'Without Understanding'," 39-41; Lowenthal, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 10-11.

¹² Williams, "'Without Understanding'," 44-47; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 43; John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Tyranny of Change: America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1920* 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 140.

¹³ Curt Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (New York: Norton, 1991), 114-115; Lowenthal, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 14-15; Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 60.

¹⁴ Theoharis, "A Brief History of the FBI's Role and Powers," 6-7; Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 189.

¹⁵ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2nd ed., (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 183-84; Michael J. Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combating the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 10, 14; Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New

York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 11-15, 23; Williams, "Without Understanding," 80. See also Harry Scheiber, *The Wilson Administration and Civil Liberties, 1917-1921* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960). Kendrick Clements argues that Wilson merely followed public opinion when supporting repressive measures in *Woodrow Wilson: World Statesman*, revised ed., (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 176.

¹⁶ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 44-45; MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes*, 16-25.

¹⁷ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 48; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 55; Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 69-73.

¹⁸ Joan M. Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1968), 17-26, 188-218; Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 62-63, 67. Army intelligence also took an interest in many of these same targets during the First World War period. See Roy Talbert, *Negative Intelligence: The Army and the American Left, 1917-1941* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 9-207.

¹⁹ Lowenthal, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 36-47; Theoharis, "A Brief History of the FBI's Role and Powers," 7. Paul L. Murphy argues that civil liberties first appeared as an issue in public policy dating from WWI in his *World War I and the Origin of Civil Liberties in the United States* (New York: Norton, 1979).

²⁰ Kenneth O'Reilly, "Racial Matters": *The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 9-17. See also Mark Ellis, "'Closing Ranks' and 'Seeking Honors': W.E.B. DuBois in World War I," *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992), 96-124; and Mark Ellis, "J. Edgar Hoover and the 'Red Summer' of 1919," *Journal of American Studies* 28 (January 1994): 39-59; and Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). For a general history of the race riots see William M. Tuttle, *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1970). See also Theodore Kornweibel, *Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); *idem*, *Seeing Red: Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

²¹ Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 58-68. See also Robert L. Friedheim, *The Seattle General Strike* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964).

²² Murray, *Red Scare*, 69-71. A thorough biography of Attorney General Palmer is Stanley Coben, *A. Mitchell Palmer: Politician* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

²³ Murray, *Red Scare*, 193-194; Theoharis, "A Brief History of the FBI's Role and Powers," 8. See also Kenneth O'Reilly, *Black Americans: The FBI Files* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1994) for the BI's investigation of black nationalists.

²⁴ William Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 208-12, 216-17.

²⁵ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 212.

²⁶ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 216.

²⁷ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 217.

²⁸ Lowenthal, *The Federal Bureau of Investigation*, 184, 199, 211-17.

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- ²⁹ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 222-24. See also Louis F. Post, *The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-Twenty: A Personal Narrative of an Historic Official Experience* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970).
- ³⁰ David Williams, "The Bureau of Investigation and Its Critics, 1919-1921: The Origins of Federal Political Surveillance," *Journal of American History* 68 (December 1981), 563.
- ³¹ Preston, *Aliens and Dissenters*, 225-26.
- ³² Williams, "The Bureau of Investigation and Its Critics," 567-74.
- ³³ Williams, "The Bureau of Investigation and Its Critics," 575-79.
- ³⁴ On the Teapot Dome scandal see Burl Noggle, *Teapot Dome: Oil and Politics in the 1920s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962); and J. Leonard Bates, *Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana: Law and Public Affairs, from TR to FDR* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 212-239.
- ³⁵ Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover*, 118-21; Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 129-33, 133-35; Burton K. Wheeler and Paul F. Healy, *Yankee from the West* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962), 213-45.
- ³⁶ Whitehead, *The FBI Story*, 66-67; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 84; Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 136-38.
- ³⁷ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 84-87.
- ³⁸ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 93-94.
- ³⁹ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 94-96; Ovid Demaris, *The Director: An Oral Biography of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Harper's, 1975), 93-95. See particularly, Athan Theoharis, *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 57-115.
- ⁴⁰ This filing procedure is discussed in Athan Theoharis, ed., *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 2-4.
- ⁴¹ David Williams, "'They Never Stopped Watching Us': FBI Political Surveillance, 1924-1936," *UCLA Historical Journal* 2 (1981), 7-9.
- ⁴² Williams, "'They Never Stopped Watching Us,'" 9-11. On Red Squads see Frank J. Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- ⁴³ Williams, "'They Never Stopped Watching Us,'" 12-14.
- ⁴⁴ Kenneth O'Reilly, "Herbert Hoover and the FBI," *Annals of Iowa* 47 (Summer 1983), 49-51.
- ⁴⁵ O'Reilly, "Herbert Hoover and the FBI," 51-57.
- ⁴⁶ See Donald J. Lisio, *The President and Protest: Hoover, Conspiracy, and the Bonus Riot* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974).
- ⁴⁷ Williams, "'They Never Stopped Watching Us,'" 15; O'Reilly, "Herbert Hoover and the FBI," 57-58.
- ⁴⁸ Lisio, *The President and Protest*, 238-50; Williams, "'They Never Stopped Watching Us,'" 15-16.

CHAPTER 2

The Roosevelt Administration, Foreign Policy, and the Expansion of FBI Authority, 1933-1939.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt acceded to the presidency in 1933, the Bureau of Investigation, for the first time since J. Edgar Hoover took its reins in 1924, was part of a politically left-of-center administration. One might think at first glance that Roosevelt had no room in his administration for a conservative figure like Hoover. Yet despite the contrast between Hoover's and Roosevelt's political identities, the FBI director enjoyed a close working relationship with the president and, over a twelve-year period, oversaw an incremental expansion of FBI authority. Their amicable relationship was not readily apparent, however, at the start of Roosevelt's term in office, but Hoover worked hard to serve the president and his political goals. Through helping the attorney general with his Crime Control Program and by fighting the perceived rise in crime during the Depression, by 1935 the FBI director had risen from obsequious bureaucrat to national celebrity. After acquiring this newly found fame, international conflict facilitated an increased role for the FBI in national security matters and, thereafter, made the director particularly indispensable

to the president. The net result was a transformation of the Bureau into a more powerful and greatly expanded agency.

Because Hoover was a Republican appointee—he became Bureau director, a position that was not protected by the civil service, during the Calvin Coolidge administration—he was susceptible to be replaced. And it was widely believed that this would happen. Hoover was not, however, without the political clout that would help him to retain his position. Hoover made multiple attempts to influence the incoming administration to retain his services within the Department of Justice. The first of several Hoover allies to advocate his retention was Supreme Court Justice Harlan Fiske Stone—the same man who in 1924 recruited him to lead the Bureau following the Red Scare scandals. While it is not clear whether or not Hoover had solicited Stone's help, in April 1933 the Supreme Court justice wrote administration advisor Felix Frankfurter praising Hoover's work. Former Assistant Attorney General Francis Garvan also wrote Roosevelt in support of Hoover, stating: "Do not let them lose you that boy, Hoover." In addition, the director lobbied local and state police organizations and conservative Democrats in Congress to support his re-appointment. Then, Hoover hired as replacements over one hundred FBI agents who were southern Democrats, ostensibly to muster support from conservative southern Democratic congressmen.¹

Despite these efforts to secure his job, Hoover's position as Bureau director was jeopardized in February 1933 after Roosevelt named Thomas Walsh his attorney general designate. There could have been perhaps no worse choice for attorney general, for Hoover, than the firebrand senator from Montana. Walsh had

served on the Senate committee that had investigated the Palmer raids and Teapot Dome scandal and, as such, was a longstanding critic of the Bureau and Hoover. Complicating matters, on 28 February Walsh announced that he planned to reorganize the Department of Justice through significant personnel changes. Hoover's prospects for continuing as director of the Bureau of Investigation seemed dim.²

Hoover did not give up hope, however. Sometime during the start of the Roosevelt administration, the FBI director discovered that several Democrats had asked Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a friend and colleague of Walsh, to oppose Hoover's reappointment. These Democrats believed that since Hoover was involved in the Bureau's 1924-25 attack on Wheeler (see chapter one), that on his own the senator could ensure Hoover's ouster. According to Wheeler, Hoover "got wind of this talk and came to see me" and denied any involvement "in the [past] reprisals against me." It seems clear that Hoover sought to mend his political fences, but ultimately the effort proved fleeting. On 2 March, while honeymooning in North Carolina, Senator Walsh died of a massive heart attack. The threat Walsh had posed to Hoover vanished but the FBI director nevertheless took steps to ensure that no questions were raised over the attorney general designate's untimely death. To allay any hint of scandal, Hoover dispatched agents to North Carolina to escort Mrs. Walsh back to Washington, D.C., and he ordered a thorough and documented medical exam on Walsh's body to rule out foul play.³

Homer Cummings, the president's new choice for attorney general, was an avid New Dealer and a man less concerned with Hoover's past than Walsh. But

while the threat to his job was diminished, Hoover continued shoring up his constituency. When he learned that Postmaster General James Farley was scheming to have Hoover replaced with his friend Val O'Farrell, the bureau director had Farley's telephones tapped and shared derogatory information regarding O'Farrell with Attorney General Cummings. Whether or not this action directly resulted in O'Farrell's name being withdrawn from consideration is unclear, but thereafter Hoover had Cummings's support. He also had the support of Roosevelt aides Edwin Watson and Stephen Early.⁴

Even after Cummings became attorney general, Hoover continued to ingratiate himself with his superior. An activist executive-department head, Cummings welcomed Hoover's cooperation and enlisted his support to advance the administration's crime-control program. Crime had become a popular issue during the Great Depression as there was a perceived breakdown in law and order and resultant perceived increase in crime. Whether it was celebrated kidnappings, bank robberies, or the adventures of gangsters, many people, notably New Dealers, believed that the crime issue had its roots in the inability of local police forces to deal with sophisticated (inter-state) and organized criminals. Like any good New Dealer, Cummings sought to use the popularity of the crime issue to involve the federal government in an area that previously had been the responsibility of state and local authorities. To inaugurate his crusade against crime, the attorney general first increased the Bureau of Investigation's legal authority.⁵

To expand the federal police force, President Roosevelt issued an executive order in June 1933 that combined the Prohibition Bureau (defunct with the repeal of

the Eighteenth Amendment), the Bureau of Identification (already under Hoover's control), and the Bureau of Investigation. The new and enlarged organization was renamed the Division of Investigation and, by late summer, it had all come under Hoover's direction. The organization's name would go through one more change in July 1935 when it became, permanently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation—a designation reflecting its more important role in the federal government.⁶

Before presenting Congress with his twelve-point crime-control program—twelve bills that would dramatically increase the federal government's role in national policing—Attorney General Cummings initiated an anti-crime public relations campaign to arouse public opinion and promote the FBI. During the first two years of the New Deal, public attention focused more on Cummings's pro-active activities while FBI Director Hoover remained largely unnoticed. One of Cummings's first innovations was to create a national "Public Enemies" list that took advantage of the public's interest in gangsters. It was the FBI's interaction with these popular criminals, however, that signaled the real start of the crime-control publicity campaign.⁷

Following the Kansas City Massacre of 17 June 1933, where one FBI agent was killed and two wounded while escorting escaped bank robber Frank Nash to jail, Attorney General Cummings publicly announced his anti-crime crusade. Labeling the shooting as a "declaration of war" against the federal government, Cummings ordered the FBI to solve the case. He used the opportunity to advocate passage of his bills, and in his efforts spared no rhetoric.⁸

The Bureau's first success in its anti-crime crusade came just one month after the Kansas City Massacre when oilman Charles Urschel was kidnapped. While Urschel played cards with his wife and several friends on a hot summer night in Oklahoma, George "Machine Gun" Kelly and an accomplice abducted Urschel at gunpoint. Authorized by the 1932 Lindbergh Kidnapping Law, legislation that federalized a kidnapping case if state lines were crossed (in this case Urschel's captors had transported him into Texas), the FBI entered the case. The Urschel family received a \$200,000 ransom demand a few days later which they paid and, the following day, Charles Urschel was returned unharmed.⁹

Unable to identify his abductors, Urschel instead provided FBI agents with minute details of his ordeal, such as a discussion his captors had with a gasoline station attendant about local crop conditions, farm sounds where he was held, the mineral taste of the farm's water, and the sound of an airplane passing overhead at two different times of day. From these details FBI agents were able to triangulate the most probable location where the Oklahoma oilman had been held. They did this by examining airline flight schedules and drought reports, which, when compared with the times of day Urschel had heard the airplane, allowed the agents to zero in on Machine Gun Kelly's family farm. Agents raided the farm and arrested one of the kidnappers and, thereafter having a suspect, on 26 September located Kelly and apprehended him. The case proved to be a public relations bonanza for Hoover and the FBI for, as the story goes, before being arrested Kelly quipped, "Don't shoot, G-men, don't shoot," forever labeling FBI agents as G-men. Cummings's public relations campaign made full use of the drama by touting the

FBI's scientific methods and exemplifying the Kellys as the type of criminals the federal government should target.¹⁰

Thereafter the FBI agents pursued a number of gangsters, some of whom became celebrities in Depression-era American popular culture. Among those the government pursued and used to advance its crime program, by publicizing FBI and Justice Department anti-crime achievements, were Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd, Lester "Baby Face" Nelson, Alvin "Old Creepy" Karpis, and Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker. But the most celebrated case, and the one that did more to promote and expand a federal role in law enforcement than any other, was that of John Dillinger.¹¹

During the spring and fall of 1933, career-criminal John Dillinger was involved in ten bank robberies and various other misdemeanors. He was arrested twice and both times, often with the help of friends, he managed to escape from prison. In Indiana, following his second jail break, Dillinger audaciously stole his jailer's car and drove it west into Illinois. By driving the vehicle across state lines, Dillinger violated the Dyer Act of 1919 and, as a result, brought the FBI in on the case. Attorney General Cummings made political capital of the event when he publicly outlined his Twelve Point Anti-Crime Program invoking the Dillinger case as an example for the necessity to increase the federal government's role in law enforcement.¹²

Just as Dillinger had twice eluded police and escaped from their jails on two separate occasions, he did so again with federal agents. On 31 March 1934, following an intense gun battle, Dillinger evaded capture in St. Paul, Minnesota, by

retreating through an unguarded rear door of a hotel. Less than a month later he again escaped capture by a rear entrance, this time of the Little Bohemia Lodge in northern Wisconsin. Dillinger's various escapes from federal authorities during the Great Depression made popular press. Nevertheless, Attorney General Cummings was able to publicize the setbacks arguing that Dillinger only reflected the seriousness of the crime problem.¹³

Mobilizing the Justice Department's public relations machine and painting the Dillinger case as an example of the federal government's commitment to fighting crime, Cummings argued that criminals like Dillinger made his Twelve Point Anti-Crime Program a necessity. The widespread publicity over the case (and others) created public and political support for Cummings's crime program. Indeed, on 6 May somebody purporting to be Dillinger wrote car maker Henry Ford thanking him "for building the Ford V-8 as fast and as sturdy a car as you did, otherwise I would not have gotten away from the coppers in that Wisconsin, Minnesota case."¹⁴ Few politicians in this atmosphere could oppose the federalization of crime control; their states' rights arguments carried little weight in such a political dynamic. Meantime, the attorney general worked behind the scenes to line up conservatives and New Dealers with his proposals and after the president publicly announced his support of the crime-bill package it was sent to the House floor.¹⁵

On 19 May 1934, Congress passed the first six of Cummings's proposed crime bills. By June it passed three more. The FBI, thereafter, was granted full arrest powers and was permitted to carry firearms. Moreover, the Bureau's jurisdiction was broadened to include apprehending escaped felons who crossed

state lines to avoid prosecution and to enter kidnapping cases automatically after a seven-day period. Interstate racketeering—by way of the telephone or mail—became a felony, and the Bureau was permitted to investigate bank robberies if the institution was a member of the Federal Reserve. These new laws, and others, greatly increased the Bureau's authority. The widespread publicity wrought from the pursuit of celebrated criminal figures brought the FBI into a new phase in its history as a truly national and popular federal organization.¹⁶

Having achieved success in its anti-crime crusade and having had its powers and jurisdiction greatly expanded, the FBI by 1934-35 was ready to assume new responsibilities when foreign threats increasingly caught the attention of President Roosevelt. With fascist aggression on the rise in Europe, Africa, and Asia, Roosevelt became more sensitive to the domestic threat those forces might sow in the United States. As the world moved closer to war, and as Roosevelt's foreign policy increasingly assumed a more internationalist perspective between 1934 and 1941, the FBI's role and authority in national security issues increased. The FBI's growth as a domestic intelligence agency can be linked to the increasing importance of foreign policy in American national politics during the 1930s.

* * *

Franklin D. Roosevelt by nature and experience was an internationalist politician. He was born into a wealthy and aristocratic family with whom he enjoyed summers in Europe. He began his formal education at Groton (and later Harvard and Columbia) where he debated the lively international issues of the late nineteenth century. The future president's upbringing, travels, and education

instilled in him a firm commitment to internationalism. This commitment is reflected in his service as President Woodrow Wilson's assistant secretary of the navy from 1913 to 1920 when he advocated an expansion of American naval power. As the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in 1920, Roosevelt championed passage of the Versailles Treaty and American membership in the League of Nations. His commitment to internationalism notwithstanding, Roosevelt was also a man of his time who abhorred war, believed that peace and prosperity were inextricably linked, and advocated a free hand for America in international relations.¹⁷

Beyond his internationalist perspective, Roosevelt was also a talented and savvy politician. Understanding the country's desire to turn inward following the onset of the Great Depression, Roosevelt decided, for political reasons, not to issue any kind of public statements on foreign policy. Later, as a presidential candidate, he even went so far as to disavow his previous support for American entry into the League of Nations, and made no important foreign policy pronouncements during his campaign. Roosevelt knew that given the severity of the domestic economy, he would never be elected president as an internationalist. Moreover, Roosevelt believed that before America could successfully lead in world affairs, it first had to effect relief at home. In part because he made no issue out of foreign affairs, Roosevelt won the support of a majority of anti-interventionists—who later would oppose his foreign policy—such as Senators Burton K. Wheeler and George Norris.¹⁸

Upon assuming the presidency, Roosevelt focused almost exclusively on domestic affairs; he made foreign relations of secondary importance. The devastating impact of the Great Depression in America necessitated the president's priorities. The gross national product had dropped from \$87 billion in 1929 to \$41 billion by 1933. In 1932 the jobless rate had exceeded 15 million, an unprecedented level in United States history.¹⁹ Thus, from 1932 to 1934 Roosevelt the internationalist acted as a nationalist, focusing his attention almost exclusively on economic recovery at home.

The new president's priorities were reflected in the makeup of his foreign policy team. Diminishing the importance of foreign policy during his first term, Roosevelt created a State Department that espoused both internationalist and nationalist views. As his secretary of state, Roosevelt chose the influential internationalist senator from Tennessee, Cordell Hull. Often setting foreign policy without consulting his secretary of state, Hull was picked more to satisfy Democratic politics than for his policy expertise. Thus, on the one hand Roosevelt had Hull who fervently believed in the benefits of reciprocal trade agreements, and on the other was Assistant Secretary of State Raymond Moley who advocated "a considerable insulation of our national economy from the rest of the world." In short, Roosevelt created an inconsistent foreign policy apparatus where major policy decisions were centralized within the White House so as not to disturb his domestic political agenda.²⁰

Roosevelt's disinterest in an internationalist approach for economic relief is evident in his handling of the 1933 London Economic Conference. Preparations for

the conference began late during the Herbert Hoover administration. The outgoing president had high hopes for the conference, believing the meeting could resolve the interconnected problems of war debts, disarmament, and currency stabilization. President Hoover lobbied the president-elect to go forward with the conference in hopes that the international economy could be stabilized. But Roosevelt and his aides distrusted Hoover's motives believing he wanted to commit the new administration to his now-discredited policies. Roosevelt made no firm promises to Hoover and, in the end, made no effort at all to ensure a successful conference. He sent a delegation to London that varied widely in its views and instructed them to not discuss war debts or disarmament. He also refused to allow them to make any agreements on currency stabilization. The president sought only the most basic and non-binding resolutions from which, some believe, he wanted to build stronger international agreements only after having restored American domestic prosperity.²¹

The incongruous American delegation made no progress at the conference. As historian Wayne Cole has observed, "the conference proved to be an exercise in futility characterized by confusion bordering on chaos."²² President Roosevelt further sabotaged the talks by dispatching Raymond Moley to London as his personal representative after negotiations had stalled. The episode raised hopes that Roosevelt had some plan for a currency stabilization *declaration* (not agreement) by dispatching Moley, but these aspirations were quickly dashed when Roosevelt later publicly announced that American domestic economic problems and solutions had priority over any international agreements. With this July "Bombshell Message" the conference effectively came to a close, but not for another few weeks. Secretary

Hull was able to continue talks if only to preserve hope that, in the future, some sort of international solution could be found. But none was effected during 1933.²³

Another failed international conference that demonstrated the United States's inability or unwillingness to partake in international peace efforts was the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Switzerland during 1932-33. When Roosevelt took office in 1933, the conference had already dragged on aimlessly for nearly one year. In May, Roosevelt attempted to jumpstart negotiations by sending a message to each of the conferees, endorsing disarmament. While none believed that an agreement at that juncture could be reached, the conference continued with renewed hope. Still, despite an attempt in October by Roosevelt to convince the French to begin limited disarmament—in hopes that Germany would follow suit—no agreement was reached. The plan had absolutely no chance of success as Nazi Germany was secretly rearming and, with the perspicacity to recognize that none of the other powers would actually disarm, Hitler pulled out of conference and quit the League of Nations on 14 October 1933. Without Germany's participation, the conference was rendered impotent and soon folded. In the United States, Roosevelt's failure to elicit any agreement seemed naïve at best and only served to strengthen his anti-interventionist opposition in the Senate which was adamantly opposed to U.S. involvement in European political affairs.²⁴

* * *

With the expansion of Nazi power and the spread of fascism and militarism across the globe in the early 1930s, some administration officials became concerned over the rise of fascist elements in the United States during the early 1930s.

Extreme right-wingers in America, such as the vocal German American Bund, denounced Roosevelt and the New Deal as communistic. In reality the ties between Nazi Germany and the small but highly-visible fascist groups were limited, though the perception of a possible threat was strong. Indeed, in 1934 and 1935 several books were published examining the popularity of American Fascism, such as Carmen Haider's *Do We Want Fascism?* (1934), Norman Thomas's *The Choice Before Us* (1934), Raymond Gram Swing's *The Forerunners of American Fascism* (1935), and Sinclair Lewis's popular novel *It Can't Happen Here* (1935).²⁵

Concern led Roosevelt on 8 May 1934 to call a conference between the attorney general, treasury secretary, labor secretary, and FBI and Secret Service chiefs to discuss the situation. At the conference, the president ordered the FBI to monitor American Nazis and Nazi sympathizers and to determine the extent of German influence among domestic groups. For the next two years the White House received regular reports on right-wing political elements as well as other sundry reports on administration critics. This moment was the first increase in FBI authority during the Roosevelt administration that had at its origin concern that a foreign influence threatened to disrupt domestic affairs.²⁶

* * *

Throughout Roosevelt's first term, he focused primarily on implementing his New Deal recovery program. By 1934, however, a new phase of American politics emerged: a period where the issue of intervention in European crises became paramount. But it was also a period where Congress played the central role in matters of foreign policy, working to restrict the executive. Their main concern was

how to deal with an expansionist Germany and Japan in relation to United States strategic and economic interests without becoming entangled in anything that might lead to war.

Amid growing post-war disillusionment over the purpose and effects of the Great War of 1914-18, various books appeared that helped feed negative popular perceptions of the war. In *Merchants of Death* (1934), Helmuth Engelbrecht and Frank Hanigen argued that American bankers and munitions manufacturers, in search of profit, purposefully compromised United States neutrality. This best selling Book-of-the-Month-Club selection (along with others) reflected the national mood. Historian Harry Elmer Barnes's book, *Genesis of the World War* (1926), previously had redirected blame for the war from Germany to the Allies and contributed to the public mood. Efforts by Dorothy Detzer, of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, also stimulated popular questioning of profiteering in war. Significantly, Detzer's lobbying, with the help of Senator George Norris, succeeded in convincing Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota to make an official inquiry into the issue.²⁷

The ambitious Gerald Nye was well suited to handle an investigation into the activity of the munitions industry and international bankers during the First World War. He was considered a crusader against anything that he considered an "evil." Being from rural North Dakota, Nye was openly hostile to financial and industrial-urban America, and perhaps because he represented agricultural interests, Nye viewed politics and foreign policy through an economic lens. After some minor difficulty in gaining Senate approval for his special committee, Nye moved headlong

in his investigation. He had President Roosevelt's endorsement by mid-May, and over the summer his committee conducted an intensive search into subpoenaed business records.²⁸

Significantly, during this period Senator Nye's views on the government's role in foreign affairs hardened. He became convinced that business interests were nothing more than war agitators and, more importantly, the senator believed government only succeeded in promoting international conflict which fed business (munitions and banking) interests. By December 1934, Nye focused his energy on the executive branch. He convinced himself that the presidency only served to bolster the munitions industry and, by 1939, he believed that the president's war-making potential was *the* major threat to American neutrality. Nye began to move away from his prior agrarian liberalism within the Republican Party to be allied with the hard-line economic conservatives who opposed Roosevelt's increasing centralization of power.²⁹

The so-called Nye Committee convened from 1934 to 1936 to determine the extent to which munitions makers and international bankers had influenced the Wilson administration in 1916. The committee examined countless documents, interviewed many witnesses—such as J. P. Morgan and Irene du Pont—but never found any firm evidence or proved any notion that these interests had influenced American participation in war. What the committee did do, however, was advance what some have called the “Devil Theory” of war. They and subsequent anti-interventionists cast blame for war on special interests and recommended limiting those elements they believed cultivated international conflict. The committee helped

popularize already conceived notions of the nature of war and, significantly, laid the groundwork for passage of America's neutrality laws which became central to America's foreign-policy debate to 1941. As historian Wayne Cole has observed: "Without the Nye Committee the neutrality laws probably would not have been adopted by Congress. And if they had been, they almost certainly would have been significantly different from what they were."³⁰

In their debate over neutrality legislation, the White House and Congress were at odds. Congressional anti-interventionists proposed a neutrality law that required a mandatory arms embargo while the president sought discretionary legislation. Reaching stalemate during the summer of 1935, anti-interventionist senators threatened a filibuster if no vote on neutrality was taken. Congressional leaders eventually agreed to a compromise that prohibited sales of munitions to belligerents once the president declared the existence of war (the discretionary compromise), banned belligerent submarines from American ports, and permitted Americans to travel on belligerent vessels at their own risk. Yielding to the country's mood, on 31 August 1935, President Roosevelt signed the bill but warned that its "inflexible provisions" might yet drag the country into war.³¹

The Neutrality Act's provisions were tested two months later. On 3 October Fascist Italy invaded the African nation of Ethiopia, signaling the start of global fascist military expansion. Two days later Roosevelt declared the existence of war and the Neutrality Act went into effect. The act's invocation was largely symbolic, however, as Africa was outside of American interests at the time, and the law in no measurable way affected Italy's or Ethiopia's efforts. And in terms of American

exports, policymakers were not prepared to sever the country's \$25,000 monthly export average with Italy in 1934, one that increased to \$583,000 the following year. Nevertheless, anti-interventionists were pleased with the legislation and the conflict in Africa only heightened debate on how to improve and extend the one-year limited act.³²

The Neutrality Act was due to expire early in 1936. Meantime, debate continued in Congress and out over how to extend the neutrality provisions. Many anti-interventionists believed that the Italo-Ethiopian War only demonstrated the necessity for increasing the use of embargoes. President Roosevelt again lobbied for greater presidential discretion in executing neutrality, but to no avail. His opponents believed that granting the president further latitude would only provoke war. In February, Congress extended the Neutrality law for an additional fourteen months, adding to its provisions a ban on loans or credits to belligerents. The loan and credit ban was in reality a redundant provision since the 1934 Johnson Act (sponsored by California Progressive-Republican Hiram Johnson) prohibited private loans to nations who had defaulted on their First World War debts.³³

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 raised further issues in the Neutrality debate and, significantly, in the national security area. From 1936 to 1939 forces under General Francisco Franco (aided by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy) battled the Loyalists who were fighting to preserve Spain's republican government (supported by Communist Russia). Roosevelt refused to invoke the Neutrality Act since, in this situation, the conflict was internal and not international. In accord with other European powers, however, Roosevelt did agree to a moral

embargo on arms shipments to either side. Nonetheless, some idealistic members of the American left saw in the Spanish Civil War a vital fight against the forces of fascism and, by 1937, organized volunteer units to aid the Loyalist forces. Contributing to concerns was the advent of the Fifth Column. In September 1936, one of Franco's lieutenants, General Emilio de Mola, announced by radio that four military columns had advanced on Madrid while a fifth column of agitators operated from within the city. Thereafter Americans grew increasingly concerned that foreign radical forces might disrupt American society from within.

* * *

Worried about the domestic ramifications of growing Nazi and Communist influence, as demonstrated with domestic fascists and heady American Leftists who were concerned about the course of the Spanish Civil War, on 24 August 1936 President Roosevelt called FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to the White House. According to Hoover's memorandum of the event—the only evidence of the meeting—the president “was desirous of discussing the question of the subversive activities in the United States, particularly Fascism and Communism.” Roosevelt informed Hoover that “he had been considerably concerned” about the activities of these groups and that he wanted to obtain “a broad picture of the general movement and its activities as may affect the economic and political life of the country as a whole.” The FBI director informed Roosevelt that there was no organization that gathered such intelligence but, Hoover pointed out, the FBI's 1916 appropriations statute “contains a provision that it might investigate any matters referred to it by the Department of State.” Piqued by Hoover's suggestion, but fearful of the plan being

leaked through State Department channels, Roosevelt asked Hoover to meet with himself and Secretary of State Hull the following day.³⁴

On the afternoon of 25 August, Hoover met with Roosevelt and Hull at the White House. The president stated his concerns to the secretary of state noting that “it was a matter which fell within the scope of foreign affairs over which the State Department would have a right to request an inquiry to be made.” Complying with the president’s wishes, Hull asked him if he wanted the request to be made in writing. Roosevelt dissented, stating that “he desired the matter to be handled quite confidentially.” The president’s directive authorizing the FBI to conduct “a broad picture” of the domestic political scene remained an oral one.³⁵

When implementing Roosevelt’s desire for a broad survey of Fascist and Communist movements, Hoover interpreted the president’s wording to initiate sweeping investigations of political activity. FBI officials thereafter monitored the activities of alleged Fifth Columnists, pro-Nazis and Communists, and then reported this information to the White House. Roosevelt valued these reports on radical groups and individuals such as the German American Bund, the Silver Shirts, the Knights of the White Camellia, Gerald L. K. Smith, Gerald Winrod, and William Dudley Pelley.³⁶

* * *

Meanwhile, with international events become increasingly more precarious—the Italian victory over Ethiopia, the Sino-Japanese War, Hitler’s re-occupation of the Rhineland, and civil war in Spain—American anti-interventionists sought to make their annual neutrality legislation a permanent fixture. As with the

1935 and 1937 acts, Roosevelt wanted discretion in applying the law's provisions instead of the blanket embargo anti-interventionists desired. But domestic political problems Roosevelt had experienced with his failed Judicial Reform Bill—the so-called Supreme Court “Packing Plan”—which alienated Southern Democrats, coupled with the economic recession of 1937, prevented the president from having effective influence over the shape of neutrality legislation. But Roosevelt did not fail to maintain some degree of flexibility. In exchange for provisions that outlawed Americans from traveling on belligerent ships and prevented the arming of American merchant ships, anti-interventionists accepted a cash-and-carry provision. Belligerents could buy American non-military goods if they paid for them in cash and transported the material themselves. The act only delayed the inevitable, however, as it indirectly encouraged the Axis powers inasmuch as they knew the United States would not intervene.³⁷

Other events during 1937 demonstrated the influence anti-interventionists held in determining the shape of American foreign policy. In October Roosevelt delivered his famous “quarantine speech” in Chicago. In the speech the president said that “When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread, the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the health of the community against the spread of disease.” He further announced, undoubtedly in reference to the ongoing Sino-Japanese War, that “War is a contagion, whether it be declared or undeclared.” Reporters pressed the president to clarify his statement, but he refused and continued to obfuscate. But the speech seemed to please both

interventionists, as calling for an active foreign policy, and anti-interventionists, as seeking to avoid war.³⁸

In 1938 an effort was made by Representative Louis Ludlow (Democrat, Indiana) to create a constitutional amendment that would have placed the country's war-making power directly with the people via referendum. While the initiative failed, it demonstrated the strong anti-war feeling of the American people and the obstinate power of the anti-interventionists. Meanwhile, in March, Hitler continued his advance by annexing Austria into the Reich. But it was the Munich Crisis of 1938 which determined the fate of western portions of Czechoslovakia and, indeed, the fate of the country as a whole. At this point, the anti-interventionist tide began to turn, though hesitantly. Roosevelt appealed to the European powers to negotiate the matter and when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to visit Munich, the president seemed satisfied. But when the Sudetenland was ceded to Germany, without any participation on the part of Czechoslovakia, and as Japanese aggression advanced in China, Roosevelt's attitude changed. He began work to build up American defense forces in 1938, recalled the American Ambassador from Germany following the *Kristallnacht* persecution of the Jews, and resolved by 1939 to revise neutrality legislation to effect some relief for the Allies.³⁹

Domestically in 1938, Americans became increasingly concerned about internal subversion at the hands of German spies. In February, FBI agents uncovered an extensive Nazi espionage ring in New York City. The ring had extended itself into the armed forces and defense industries, and their activities had been linked to the German government. The ring was undermined, however, at the

hands of Guenther Rumrich, an incompetent German-American agent. Rumrich was a ne'er-do-well who habitually found himself in trouble as an enlisted man in the United States Army during the early 1930s. A private citizen again by 1936, he had become enamored with First World War German espionage activity and after writing to the official organ of the Nazi party, the *Voelkischer Beobachter*, offering to provide information about the United States Army, he was recruited. Rumrich managed to collect a variety of innocuous intelligence for the Germans such as venereal disease rates among U.S. soldiers, but it was a connection the spy had in Scotland that led to his capture and the eventual exposure of the spy ring.⁴⁰

One of the ways Rumrich maintained contact with his German handlers was through correspondence. He was instructed to correspond with a fifty-one-year-old woman named Jessie Jordan in Dundee, Scotland, who acted as a screen for German espionage activity in the United States and elsewhere. In 1937 the British Security Service, MI-5, was alerted to the fact that Jordan, a widow of an Imperial German soldier, had received a large volume of foreign mail. The British Home Secretary issued a warrant permitting MI-5 to intercept her mail and soon established that Jordan was in league with German intelligence. MI-5 officials traced the source of her correspondence to an address in the United States and alerted FBI Director Hoover to the situation. FBI officials determined the writer was Rumrich. He was placed under surveillance but only arrested in February 1938 after he attempted to defraud the State Department of blank passports. In custody, Rumrich decided to cooperate with his captors. Shortly thereafter his espionage ring—as incompetent as it really was—was dissolved. Nevertheless, the case received banner headlines in

the United States and helped to foster a belief that Fifth Columnists had permeated the nation. Moreover, the cooperation with British intelligence had helped lay a firm basis on which the FBI would later develop a close working relationship.⁴¹

* * *

With the international and domestic situation unfolding as such in 1938, Hoover acquired yet more investigative freedom. Interested in the scope of the “so-called espionage situation,” Roosevelt directed Attorney General Cummings in October to survey the government’s investigative activities. In response to Cummings’s query, Hoover, when reporting the FBI’s activity, did not hide the fact that political investigations had been conducted. In fact, he urged an expansion of the Bureau’s investigative role. But he warned Cummings against seeking legislative authority for such an expansion, observing that any such request might draw criticism from people, in Hoover’s view, who did not understand the counter-espionage character of FBI investigations. The FBI director preferred to investigate under the Bureau’s appropriations statute.⁴²

Hoover’s resultant report to Cummings confirmed the political nature of some of the FBI’s investigations. Roosevelt was not disturbed by this disclosure and instead concluded, not surprisingly given his leadership style, that he could control Hoover’s actions. But the FBI director’s clever filing procedures negated the president’s ability to hold a tight reign on Hoover’s activities. At the same time, Hoover did not feel secure enough in his position to assert the Bureau’s influence to the extent that he later did during the Cold War. Nevertheless, he was able to

investigate matters with and without Roosevelt's knowledge and was able to employ illegal investigative methods.⁴³

Hoover took one more step in 1939 to ensure the FBI's sole authority to monitor domestic subversive activity. Upon learning of a plan to coordinate domestic surveillance through an interdepartmental committee, Hoover moved to disable the proposal. He impressed upon the attorney general that such a plan would cause interdepartmental chaos. Reminding Attorney General Frank Murphy (Cummings's successor) of the widespread civil liberties abuses during the First World War, Hoover argued that centralizing domestic investigations within the FBI could avoid the mistakes of the past. This clever civil libertarian argument worked and resulted in Roosevelt's secret order of 26 June 1939 placing all domestic investigations under the FBI, Military Intelligence Division, and Office of Naval Intelligence. More importantly, all domestic information collected by these agencies was to be coordinated with the FBI. This coordination later extended to local police units in September. Hoover now had almost exclusive control over domestic surveillance.⁴⁴

NOTES

¹ Athan Theoharis and John Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 111-12. Garvan quoted in Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 182.

² Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 112-13; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 180. Though he overlooks the FBI, on Walsh's appointment see J. Leonard Bates, *Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana: Law and Public Affairs, from TR to FDR* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 325-331.

³ Burton K. Wheeler and Paul F. Healy, *Yankee From the West* (Garden City: Double Day, 1962), 243; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 113.

⁴ Fred J. Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), 150-51; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 114-16.

⁵ William E. Leuchtenburg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 334; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 121.

⁶ Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 182-83.

⁷ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 122; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 186.

⁸ Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 183-4.

⁹ Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 159-60; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 186.

¹⁰ Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 160-63; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 188.

¹¹ For details on these cases see Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 158-59, 176, 183, 189-93; Curt Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (New York: Norton, 1991), 167-200; Don Whitehead, *The FBI Story: A Report to the People* (New York: Random House, 1956), 83-103; and Ralph de Toledano, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man in His Time* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1973), 102-13.

¹² Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 189-90.

¹³ Cook, *The FBI Nobody Knows*, 181-84; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 189-90.

¹⁴ Letter, John Dillinger to Henry Ford, 6 May 1934, FBI 62-29777-1338. Ford mailed the letter to FBI Director Hoover who ordered lab tests on the document to determine if the author was indeed John Dillinger, but in their efforts "No identifications were effected." Letter, Donald S. Leonard to Hoover, 21 May 1934, FBI 62-29777-1678; Letter, Hoover to Leonard, 28 May 1934, FBI 62-29777-1678.

¹⁵ Kenneth O'Reilly, "A New Deal for the FBI: The Roosevelt Administration, Crime Control, and National Security," *Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982), 642; Powers, *Secrecy and Power*, 190-95; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 125-26.

¹⁶ O'Reilly, "A New Deal for the FBI," 643.

¹⁷ Alan Brinkley, *Liberalism and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1-16; Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1979), 3-18; Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 3-5.

¹⁸ Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 18-20; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 17-27.

¹⁹ Gerald D. Nash, *The Great Depression and World War II: Organizing America, 1933-1945* (New York: St. Martin's, 1979), 7.

²⁰ Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 23-34; Irwin F. Gellman, *Secret Affairs: Franklin Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 20-38; Moley quoted in Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 52.

²¹ Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 51-57; Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 39-47.

²² Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 59.

²³ Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 60-64; Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 54-58; Gellman, *Secret Affairs*, 38-42.

²⁴ Dallek, *Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 66-70; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 65-76. On German foreign policy during this period, see Gerhard Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-36* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

²⁵ Carmen Haider, *Do We Want Fascism?* (New York: John Day, 1934); Norman Thomas, *The Choice Before Us* (New York: Macmillan, 1934); Raymond Gram Swing, *Forerunners of American Fascism* (New York: Julian Messner, 1935); Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1935). For the impact of these popular works on public perceptions of domestic fascism see Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 29-32.

²⁶ David Williams, "'They Never Stopped Watching US': FBI Political Surveillance, 1924-1936," *UCLA Historical Journal* 2 (1981), 21-22; Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 148-49.

²⁷ David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 387-88; Wayne S. Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 66-8. See also Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917-1994* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 65-83.

²⁸ Cole, *Gerald P. Nye*, 60-66, 69-73.

²⁹ Cole, *Gerald P. Nye*, 76-81.

³⁰ Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941*, 2nd edition (Chicago: Imprint Publications, 1990), 142-48; Cole, *Gerald P. Nye*, 101.

³¹ Justus D. Doenecke and John E. Wilz, *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941*, 2nd edition (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1991), 56-7.

³² Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 172-75; Lloyd C. Gardner, *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 93, 94.

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- ³³ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 397; Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 176-79.
- ³⁴ Confidential memorandum, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, 24 August 1936, folder 136, Official and Confidential files of J. Edgar Hoover, FOIA Reading room, FBI Headquarters, Washington, DC [hereafter cited as Hoover O&C].
- ³⁵ Confidential memorandum, Hoover, 25 August 1936, folder 136, Hoover O&C. See also Athan Theoharis, "The FBI's Stretching of Presidential Directives, 1936-1953," *Political Science Quarterly* 91 (Winter 1976-77), 649-72.
- ³⁶ Leo Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right from the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 184-87.
- ³⁷ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 400-01; Doenecke and Wilz, *From Isolation to War*, 63-4; Jonas, *Isolationism in America*, 198-99.
- ³⁸ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 405-6; Doenecke and Wilz, *From Isolation to War*, 69-70.
- ³⁹ Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 418-20.
- ⁴⁰ Secret World War II Espionage Summary, no date, FBI 65-37193-332, p. 25-34.
- ⁴¹ Nigel West, *MI-5: British Security Service Operations, 1909-1945* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), 98-100.
- ⁴² Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 152-3.
- ⁴³ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 153.
- ⁴⁴ Theoharis and Cox, *The Boss*, 154; Press Release, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to All Law Enforcement Officials, 6 September 1939, reprinted in Athan Theoharis (ed.), *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 184.

CHAPTER 3

FBI Surveillance of Charles A. Lindbergh, 1939-1944.

The outbreak of war in Europe on 1 September 1939 signaled an intensification of the Great Debate, which began in 1935 over neutrality legislation, between interventionists and so-called "isolationists" in the United States. Almost immediately one of the most controversial, most popular, and most effective anti-interventionist spokespersons emerged, using his celebrity to advocate American isolation from foreign war. This person was the famous aviator Charles A. Lindbergh. From the day he began his two-year political crusade to sustain an anti-interventionist foreign policy, and extending well into the war years, FBI officials monitored Lindbergh's political activities. In their efforts, FBI officials authorized a variety of surveillance means. Agents monitored and clipped press reports, attended Lindbergh rallies, monitored his speeches and recorded their content, investigated his personal and political activity (in the process collecting derogatory personal information), and possibly wiretapped his telephone line. In every instance, the interest of FBI officials in the aviator's activity did not stem from any suspicion that Lindbergh was involved in criminal activity. Their interest instead was to satisfy the political desires, as FBI officials understood them, of the Roosevelt administration.

At its core, the FBI's investigation of Charles Lindbergh's anti-interventionist political activity derived from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's pragmatic desire to ingratiate himself with the chief executive. The Lindbergh case is especially important since the FBI's interest dated from the outbreak of the war in Europe. In fact, FBI agents scrutinized Lindbergh longer than any other anti-interventionist. As such, the Lindbergh investigation offers insights into the evolution of FBI monitoring of anti-interventionist critics of the Roosevelt administration from 1939 to 1941—at the very time when “isolationists” became critical and influential opponents—to Pearl Harbor and into the war years. Hoover's ability to provide the White House with useful political information or develop evidence indicating illicit activity on the part of this most prominent of Roosevelt's foreign policy critics enhanced the Bureau's standing within the administration and illustrates a pattern of FBI activity most commonly associated with the Cold War FBI, suggesting the FBI's contribution to the national security state date to the Great Debate. This in turn substantially increased the FBI's authority and power.

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In 1927 Charles Lindbergh departed Roosevelt Field in New York and, thirty-three hours and thirty minutes later, landed at Le Bourget airport near Paris. In his single-engine airplane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, the aviator accomplished what countless others had failed to do: cross the Atlantic Ocean in a single, non-stop flight to capture the Orteig prize of \$25,000. His success in overcoming the mortal dangers of fog, storms, ice, and fatigue, made Lindbergh an instant international celebrity. People were enamored with his daring flight and only became more

awestruck when the twenty-five-year-old pilot showed no hubris during post-flight celebrations. He came to be regarded as an all-American boy with a down-to-earth personality and humbleness that defied the grandeur of his accomplishment. He had become a media hero. His achievement was captured on film, radio, and newspapers worldwide. To many, Charles Lindbergh was a god.¹

Lindbergh's newly found fame never fully dissipated. President Calvin Coolidge arranged passage back to America for the aviator and his airplane aboard the naval cruiser *Memphis*. Upon his arrival in the United States, Lindbergh was treated to numerous celebrations including a ticker-tape parade in New York City. He was awarded both the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Congressional Medal of Honor, awards traditionally presented by the president. He was even promoted to the rank of colonel in the Army Air Corps Reserve, the one reward he truly valued.²

Lindbergh's innate shyness and refusal to accept lucrative deals, that would have made him an instant millionaire, made him particularly attractive to the public. The aviator refused to market his name and accomplishment. He focused his energies, instead, on promoting aviation. For the remainder of 1927, Lindbergh flew a forty-eight state tour of the United States in the *Spirit of St. Louis* to promote aviation, a tour funded by Daniel Guggenheim, an advocate of aeronautics. The following year, Lindbergh flew his plane on a good-will tour of Mexico and South America. Eventually he donated his airplane to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.³

Lindbergh's fame and celebrity only increased with his marriage in May 1929 to Anne Morrow, the daughter of the financier Dwight Morrow who had been

a partner with J. P. Morgan and Company and, at the time, United States Ambassador to Mexico. The marriage received extensive press coverage in America and around the world. The couple's popularity increased when they embarked on survey flights together around the world mapping out possible airline routes, an avocation Charles Lindbergh felt uniquely suited to pursue. Anne's two best-selling books based on these journeys, *North to the Orient* (1935) and *Listen! The Wind* (1938), helped create in the popular mind, at least, a certain romance surrounding their lives. This public interest in the Lindberghs soon increased to unprecedented levels.⁴

On 22 June 1930, Charles and Anne Lindbergh's first-born child, Charles Lindbergh, Jr., was kidnapped from their New Jersey home and subsequently murdered. The case became an immediate international news sensation, and the family willingly cooperated with the press hoping thereby to ensure that their son would be returned. This had proved unrealistic, and the intense curiosity surrounding the case only served to alienate the Lindberghs. Having held the press in low regard for publishing inaccurate or sensationalized stories about their lives, the couple regretted the shadowing they were subjected to by story-hungry reporters. These concerns increased with the kidnapping case and resulting trial—the first of several “trials of the century” in America. So great was the stress on their lives during this ordeal, compounded as the story grew, that the Lindberghs decided to leave the United States and live in Europe. Only there, they believed, could they live in peace and escape an unwanted public spotlight.⁵

The Lindberghs found the solace they sought in Great Britain. They lived just south of London and valued that the locals allowed them their privacy. Living in England also allowed Lindbergh to travel extensively and survey the development of European aviation and politics. He visited France often and found disturbing the French government's inability to cope with Depression-era problems in any significant way. Visiting the Soviet Union in 1938 to survey Russian aviation, Lindbergh was critical of the poor state of the Soviet economy in comparison with other industrial countries. More significantly, between 1936 and 1938, the aviator also surveyed the state of German air power.⁶

Major Truman Smith, the United States Military Attaché in Berlin from 1935 to 1939, had arranged Lindbergh's tours of Germany. Upon learning from newspaper reports that Lindbergh had toured French aircraft facilities, Smith believed that Lindbergh's international celebrity might ensure similar access to German aircraft facilities. With Lindbergh's help, Smith hoped to get an estimate of German air power. After having checked with his superiors and with members of the German government, Smith gained approval, and then invited Lindbergh "in the name of General Goering and the German Air Ministry . . . to visit Germany and inspect the new German civil and military air establishments." The Major pointed out that, heretofore, access to German air power had been "highly secretive" but that German authorities "have become extraordinarily friendly to the American representatives and have shown us far more than . . . [the] other powers." The Germans, Smith believed, would be more than willing to show their air forces to Lindbergh than to anyone else. Major Smith assured Lindbergh that on this tour he

would not be besieged by the press. Lindbergh, who was “extremely interested” in Smith’s proposal, agreed to the request.⁷

Lindbergh actually made three separate tours of Germany, one each in the years 1936, 1937, and 1938. Each time he was invited back through the good offices of Truman Smith and the American Embassy in Germany. During these trips the aviator saw the best that Germany had to offer. He toured, among others, the Focke-Wulf and Henschel aircraft factories and the Daimler-Benz engine factory. He visited various German airfields and testing grounds, and even had the unprecedented opportunity to fly both the Messerschmitt 109 and the JU-87 Stuka dive-bomber. During these visits, German officials feted Lindbergh. They paid all his expenses while touting the power of the *Luftwaffe*. From these tours, Smith and Lindbergh, together, were able to draft a general intelligence estimate of German air power. Their 1 November 1937 report was sent to the War Department where it was read widely. It contended that Germany was ahead of both France and Great Britain in air power and soon would overtake the United States. Lindbergh was so concerned by what he had seen that in addition to helping draft the intelligence estimate he wrote Joseph Kennedy, the American ambassador to Britain, in London. He warned the anti-interventionist ambassador that Germany possessed a superior military force that, if provoked, would be dangerous: “I believe that a war now might easily result in the loss of European civilization.” Kennedy wired Lindbergh’s letter to the secretary of state in Washington.⁸

Lindbergh also tried to use his influence in Europe to promote his concerns about the strength of Nazi Germany. He urged both French and British officials to

improve their air forces and other defenses. From his tours of Germany, Lindbergh became convinced that a war between Germany and the other Western powers would only result in devastation and allow the Soviet Union to stand supreme on the continent. Yet, despite his high-level contacts including royalty, prime ministers, high-ranking military officials, and diplomats, he encountered, particularly on the British side, an unwillingness to listen to his arguments. His arguments in favor of avoiding conflict with Nazi Germany, however, as the historian Wayne S. Cole observed “may have encouraged appeasement policies at the time.”⁹

Making no headway in his efforts with European leaders, and with war looming in Europe, in April 1939 Lindbergh decided to return to the United States. The aviator did not immediately advocate nonintervention in the European situation. Offered employment or invited by various individuals and groups to comment on foreign affairs, Lindbergh turned down these offers. He did accept, however, an offer from the Chief of the Air Corps, General Henry Arnold, to serve as an active-duty officer (for a brief period) in the capacity of an air power analyst. Lindbergh surveyed and offered a set of recommendations to improve American air forces and served on several Air Corps committees including one to consider new technologies. His work also provided two opportunities to testify before Congress on American aviation research and development. At this point, this constituted the limits of his professional and political life.¹⁰

By late summer 1939, however, Lindbergh became more interested in events in Europe and America’s policies toward them. One of the aviator’s many contacts with prominent persons was William Castle, former under secretary of state in the

Herbert Hoover administration. At a dinner party one evening, the under secretary urged Lindbergh to use his celebrity and speak out against American involvement in European events. Hesitant to become involved in politics, Lindbergh declined the offer. Following outbreak of war on 1 September, however, he resolved to advocate American isolation from the European war. "I do not intend to stand by," he wrote in his journal, "and see this country pushed into war if it is not absolutely essential to the future welfare of the nation." He made arrangements through Castle to address the nation in a radio broadcast.¹¹

On the evening of 15 September Lindbergh read the speech he wrote himself—he preferred to write his own speeches and articles, sometimes to his detriment because no one lessened his tone—in his hotel in Washington, D.C. Titled simply "America and European Wars," Lindbergh's speech advocated insulation from the war insofar as by "fighting for democracy abroad we may end by losing it at home." The war had the potential, he argued, to destroy Western civilization as people knew it. This speech marked the start of Lindbergh's political campaign for American anti-interventionism and was praised by those in sympathy with the aviator's views and criticized by his opponents.¹²

Lindbergh continued to advocate nonintervention through several more radio broadcasts, one on 13 October on the theme of "Neutrality and War" and a third in 1940 on "The Air Defense of America." He also published a number of articles in *Reader's Digest*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Collier's*. The FBI almost immediately took an interest in Lindbergh's activity. At this point, FBI agents only monitored his public speeches and writings, which went no farther than advocating neutrality. FBI

officials' interest in the aviator stemmed from his "numerous remarks which bear upon his foreign or nationalistic sympathies."¹³

From September 1939 until April 1941, when the aviator joined the America First Committee, FBI agents only monitored Lindbergh's political speeches and writings. FBI agents either personally attended rallies where the aviator spoke or recruited informants to report on his speeches. The latter was used on 23 April 1941 when Lindbergh addressed the America First Committee in New York City. Obtaining a copy of Lindbergh's speech the informant annotated it with Lindbergh's spoken words. He marked on the document where the audience reacted and underlined key phrases. The informant also reported on who had attended the rally, the amount of money raised, and the size and breakdown of the listeners: "The crowd inside the hall was 50% middle class and . . . middle aged and the other half were young men and women of the emotional type."¹⁴

FBI agents also collected newspaper and magazine articles that reported on Lindbergh's activities. This technique of monitoring press coverage was a common FBI method of gathering intelligence on an individual or group and to identify other possible targets. Over two hundred articles were collected about Lindbergh from newspapers and magazines across the country, including among others: *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The Washington Post*, *The Washington Times-Herald*, *The Atlanta Post*, *The Oakland Tribune*, *Life* magazine, and *The American Mercury*. Agents from field offices nationwide sent these clippings to FBI headquarters where they were compiled and serialized. Private citizens also submitted a large number of news clippings, but these often duplicated the efforts of FBI agents.¹⁵

FBI officials also monitored extremist, right-wing publications that mentioned Charles Lindbergh. One such fascist periodical was the *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter* (published as *The Free American* in the United States). Bureau officials reviewed and indexed this paper for pertinent information regarding Lindbergh. In addition to extremist newspapers, agents also reviewed right-wing books, such as one German book entitled *Summary Report: Documents and Reports Illustrating German Contemporary History*. FBI officials' interest in the book was triggered by the "disproportionately large amount of space [it devoted] to Charles Lindbergh" and because the aviator was referred to as "the most outstanding American national hero."¹⁶

FBI agents were also interested in pro- and anti-Lindbergh correspondence. Concerned citizens wrote to the FBI, or other government agencies or officials, expressing concern about Lindbergh or providing information they believed would interest government officials. Inevitably, this correspondence was forwarded by the recipient agency to the FBI. As Lindbergh's political efforts increased, so too did the FBI's correspondence file. Lindbergh's political anti-interventionism led his critics to label him a Nazi sympathizer. This accusation was widely accepted by many public-spirited citizens who questioned Lindbergh's motives in light of his tours of Nazi Germany—where he was awarded a medal by high Nazi officials—and his strong anti-interventionist position. One concerned citizen wrote: "I don't understand why your department doesn't bind and gag that man Charles A. Lindbergh." Another advised the FBI: "[I]f he was investigated he would be found to be a 5th columnist and perhaps one of the world's highest paid spies."¹⁷

Letters written in opposition to President Roosevelt's policy or in support of Lindbergh proved to have greater significance. FBI officials were particularly interested in this correspondence. In May 1940, at Roosevelt's direction, Presidential Secretary Stephen Early forwarded to FBI Director Hoover "a number of telegrams" which were "in opposition to national defense." The White House had received the telegrams following a speech Roosevelt had delivered to the Congress on national defense. Early informed Hoover that "the President thought you might like to look them over noting the names and addresses of the senders." Then again, in June, Early forwarded to the FBI thirty-six telegrams received "expressing approval of Col. Lindbergh's [radio] address" that month on "Our Drift Towards War."¹⁸

Instead of merely "noting the names and addresses" of the correspondents, FBI Director Hoover ordered a search of the Bureau's files for any information on the writers. This information was then compiled in a memorandum forwarded to the White House "for your convenience and ready reference." President Roosevelt had not requested this memorandum. Rather, on his own authority, the FBI director provided this information. Nonetheless, the president made no complaints. His lack of concern over the FBI director's action can best be understood by his comment in May to Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. According to Morgenthau, Roosevelt told him over lunch: "If I should die tomorrow, I want you to know this. I am absolutely convinced that Lindbergh is a Nazi." Roosevelt also wrote Secretary of War Henry Stimson about Lindbergh: "When I read Lindbergh's speech [of May 20th] I felt that it could not have been better put if it had been written by Goebbels

himself. What a pity that this youngster has completely abandoned his belief in our form of government and has accepted Nazi methods because apparently they are efficient.” Hoover’s decision to brief the White House on the background of the president’s anti-interventionist critics marked a significant development in the Roosevelt-Hoover relationship, triggering an ongoing surveillance of the anti-interventionist movement. This was the first time that the FBI director, of his own volition, provided the White House with political intelligence on anti-interventionists culled from FBI files. Hoover exploited this opportunity of Roosevelt’s forwarding of the telegrams to report back to the president political information he thought Roosevelt would find of interest.¹⁹

As Lindbergh’s involvement in the so-called Great Debate increased, so too did FBI monitoring efforts. Through time the aviator’s comments became increasingly controversial while his popularity and influence among the public increased. In his 1939 article “Aviation, Geography, and Race” the flier’s controversial statements about race led many to believe he was pro-Nazi. Lindbergh had described the European war as one “within our own family of nations, a war which will reduce the strength and destroy the treasures of the White race.” He further wrote that survival depended on “a Western wall of race and arms which can hold back either a Genghis Khan or the infiltration of inferior blood.” Years later, well after the conclusion of the war, Lindbergh elaborated on these comments claiming he was not a racist but that he did believe in the superiority of races based upon their achievements in culture and technology. Since Lindbergh believed a war among Western nations would be a disaster for civilization in general, by allowing

Asian elements (i.e., Russians) to dominate the continent, he advocated a negotiated peace settlement in Europe. Such ideas, not surprisingly led many, including high officials in the government, to regard the flier as a Nazi or Nazi sympathizer.²⁰

For the most part, Lindbergh's main priority during 1940 was to promote the idea that the United States must remain out of the European conflict and, instead, concentrate on its own defenses. He called for a clear defense policy, one which, he argued, the government had never articulated. With a powerful and modern air force, Lindbergh continually stressed, with American air bases along the East and West approaches to the Western Hemisphere, the country would be impregnable to enemy attack. "With a firm and clear-cut policy," he told Americans in a national radio broadcast in May 1940, "we can build an air defense for America that will stand above these shifting sands of war." Lindbergh's argument resonated well with Americans in general and other anti-interventionists in particular. His government work and multiple tours of foreign air forces led many to see him as an authority on air power.²¹

The debate between interventionists and "isolationists" changed in late 1940, extending into 1941. During the 1940 presidential election, the debate centered on the need to ensure neutrality, although both sides held differing positions. Their differences included a conscription bill, opposed by some anti-interventionists but enacted into law as a defensive measure, and President Roosevelt's so-called Destroyers-for-Bases Deal, which was presented as beneficial to American security. In the fall of 1940, after the conclusion of the Battle of Britain and while experiencing shipping losses from German U-boats, British Prime Minister Winston

Churchill informed Roosevelt that British dollar reserves were dwindling. No longer, Churchill warned, could his country pay cash to buy American supplies as stipulated in the Neutrality Act of 1939, popularly known as “Cash and Carry.” Further, the 1934 Johnson Act prevented Americans from extending loans to countries, such as Great Britain, which had defaulted on their First World War debt.²²

To rectify this problem, without violating the letter of the law as defined in the Neutrality and Johnson Acts, President Roosevelt on 17 December announced a new policy. Roosevelt proposed that to ensure the British purchase of American supplies he would “eliminate the dollar sign” from further orders. The president called his idea lend-lease and employed the analogy of lending a garden hose to one’s neighbor to extinguish his house fire. In a fireside chat later in December, Roosevelt argued that the security of Great Britain directly affected American interests. He called for supporting Britain through a military assistance program and justified this as intended to ensure American avoidance of war. When presenting this plan to Congress during his State of the Union address in January 1941, the president couched his policy in a moving call for the preservation of the four human freedoms: the freedom of speech and expression, freedom from want, freedom of worship, and freedom from fear.²³

Anti-interventionists mobilized in opposition to the president’s proposal. Lend-Lease became a focal point for the president’s opposition. No longer advocating neutrality in European affairs, as they had previously, anti-interventionists now directly criticized administration policy. Concerns over the

consequences of this policy provided momentum for the America First Committee leading to its emergence as a national anti-interventionist pressure group. Charles Lindbergh, moreover, assumed a prominent role in this debate. Lindbergh was invited to testify before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who were considering the president's bill (the Lend-Lease bill had been submitted to both houses of Congress simultaneously). Lindbergh's appearances at these hearings were a popular draw. Lend-Lease, he argued, would weaken American defenses by sending needed supplies to Britain and would only lead to war and create "conditions in our own country as bad or worse than those we now desire to overthrow in Nazi Germany." His testimony and resultant lobbying efforts were closely reported by the press and even some anti-interventionists believed his positions to be too controversial.²⁴

In the end, the anti-interventionists failed to defeat the Lend-Lease bill as the Congress approved the bill on 11 March 1941 within comfortable margins. According to contemporary polls, over 72 percent of the public approved of the measure.²⁵ During the debate, moreover, Charles Lindbergh shifted his political tactics to criticize directly the administration's policy in sworn testimony before both the House and Senate. Then, in April, the aviator joined the America First Committee's national effort to oppose Roosevelt's foreign policy. Reflecting the intensity of sentiment about the nation's foreign policy course, President Roosevelt made a cursory remark at a press conference equating Lindbergh with the Civil War copperhead Clement Vallandigham (a northerner with pro-southern sympathies who was critical of President Abraham Lincoln). An insulted Lindbergh then sent

Roosevelt a public letter tendering his resignation from the Army Air Corps Reserve. In the midst of these tensions, FBI monitoring of Lindbergh intensified. Now that Lindbergh, already the most popular anti-interventionist, had joined the most influential and powerful anti-interventionist pressure group, the America First Committee, providing Roosevelt with political intelligence or working to undermine this critic became increasingly important to FBI officials.²⁶

Roosevelt might have compared Lindbergh to the Civil War era copperheads; others likened the aviator to Abraham Lincoln. FBI officials took interest in this comparison as it was said in relation to the president's Lend-Lease bill and uttered by right-wing extremists such as Gerald Winrod. An FBI memorandum abstracted a story from the right-wing Kansas newspaper *Publicity* that likened "Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh, by his courageous stand against 1776 [the Lend-Lease bill] may prove to be this nation's man on a white horse. Just the individual to ride roughshod into the nation's capitol in 1944 [an election year]." Seemingly confirming their view of Lindbergh as sympathetic to these elements, FBI officials noted "that to date, Col. Lindbergh has not objected to such use of his name."²⁷

FBI officials also monitored an America First rally in Philadelphia three months following the Lend-Lease debate at which Lindbergh was the principal speaker. FBI agents were dispatched to the rally and "circulated in the crowd without revealing their identities to anyone." The agents recorded whom spoke at the meeting and described the demeanor of the crowd as "orderly, though enthusiastic." The agent's report included a newspaper clipping on the rally, and concluded "that the America First Committee was gaining in strength and that

undoubtedly there were more people present for the America First Meeting than there were for the [Fiorello] LaGuardia protest meeting the night before.”²⁸

FBI officials were so interested in Lindbergh’s political activity following Lend-Lease that they took advantage of nearly any opportunity to gauge “his sentiments in connection with the international policy of the United States Government.” In October 1941 the head of the FBI’s Detroit field office, John Bugas, had learned from an informer in the Ford Motor Company of a letter Lindbergh had written to Henry Ford suggesting his “sentiments.” The part of the letter that most interested FBI officials read:

I am continuing to take an active part in opposing the propaganda and agitation for war. The country is still opposed to our entry, but I am not sure how long the people will be able to withstand the misinformation and propaganda that fills our press, our radio, and our motion-picture theaters each day. It is difficult to see how democracy can function intelligently or even survive without any accurate source of information to which the people can go, and from which they can base their decisions.

In August 1942 this information was incorporated in an internal FBI summary memorandum as evidence of Lindbergh’s political sympathies.²⁹

An opportunity to undermine Lindbergh directly, however, presented itself to FBI officials on 26 May 1941 when a Texas man, Marvin E. Rutherford, volunteered information to agents at the Bureau’s Dallas field office. An engineer and inventor, Rutherford held a variety of patents on mechanical devices. One of his inventions was at the center of his complaint to the FBI. In 1939 the engineer had designed a bulletproof self-sealing aviation fuel tank and had forwarded his designs to Charles Lindbergh who, at the time, was chair of the Air Corps’s New Device Committee. Having received no acknowledgement from the Air Corps about his plans—

Rutherford had sent them via registered mail—he returned to California to continue his work on aircraft mechanisms at the Lockheed laboratory.³⁰

While working in California, Rutherford read a newspaper article in the *Los Angeles Examiner* by General Henry Arnold of the Air Corps that described in detail a bulletproof self-sealing aviation fuel tank found within German airplane wreckage in England during 1940. Disturbed by this discovery, Rutherford concluded that Lindbergh, who at this time was roundly being criticized as pro-Nazi, had secretly passed his plans to Nazi Germany. He told FBI agents that the design, as laid out in the newspaper article, was nearly identical to the plans he had developed in 1939. He further reported that in 1941 the United States had only just begun production of this aviation fuel tank and that his designs had never been patented to prevent anyone else from copying them. Rutherford also claimed that unidentified persons had unsuccessfully attempted to steal other technological information from his home. The engineer further feared that his house was subjected to a “shake down” at the time he had mailed his designs to Lindbergh.³¹

When the special agent in charge of the Dallas field office forwarded this information to FBI headquarters, FBI Director Hoover solicited the Justice Department’s counsel. Having received this information from an unsolicited source, Hoover informed the assistant to the attorney general, Matthew F. McGuire, of this matter and asked “if you would advise this Bureau what action, if any, should be taken.” McGuire in turn solicited the response of the head of the Department’s Criminal Division, Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge. Berge reported back that “there is no evidence of a violation of a Federal criminal statute” and he

“suggested that no further investigation be made in this matter.” McGuire thereupon advised Hoover: “No investigation should, therefore, be made.” Hoover, in turn, then advised his Dallas SAC not to investigate “in the premises.”³²

From a legal standpoint, the issue seemed closed. The Justice Department had determined the evidence did not warrant an investigation and, indeed, the Espionage Act only went into effect after war was declared. Perhaps the Conspiracy statute could have been employed, but Justice Department attorneys found no actionable evidence. Despite this, however, the matter did not cease being investigated. Whereas the FBI had quit, Army intelligence continued the investigation. Hoover more than likely, the astute bureaucrat that he was, informed the Military Intelligence Division of the matter and let them investigate. In return, MID kept the FBI director apprised. Hoover undoubtedly had exploited presidential directives of 1936 and 1939 that required the FBI to take charge of “espionage, sabotage, and violations of the neutrality regulations” and to coordinate its intelligence with MID, Naval Intelligence, and the State Department. The end result was the probe continued as the FBI director succeeded in bypassing Justice Department restrictions, hoping thereby that a criminal case could be developed by MID.³³

On 31 October, Brigadier General Sherman Miles, head of Army intelligence, advised Hoover that MID officials had confirmed that Rutherford had sent his aviation fuel tank designs to Lindbergh via the Air Corps’s New Device Committee. With the assistance of the Post Office Department, MID officials had even located the individual who had received the package. By November, MID

officials concluded that Lindbergh had “received the plans but that no record is contained at the present time in the War Department files.” Further, according to the FBI documents, Air Corps officials had “written to Lindbergh requesting the plans or an explanation as to the disposition of them.” FBI documents do not indicate Lindbergh’s response. The investigation apparently proceeded nowhere and was closed. This incident nonetheless shows the lengths to which FBI Director Hoover went, bypassing Justice Department guidelines, to develop intelligence that could be useful to the administration. If FBI agents could have developed a case against Lindbergh he would have been publicly shown to be unpatriotic, if not treasonous, and thereby his credibility would have been undermined. As it turned out, this never materialized.³⁴

The Rutherford complaint was not unique to the FBI’s probe of Charles Lindbergh. In February 1942, the FBI’s San Francisco office reported that immigration inspector M. Bertrand Couch had filed a complaint similar to Rutherford’s. In 1930, Couch contended, he had sent Lindbergh plans for a “propellerless plane” invented by his friend Jim Allis. Couch sent the plans to Lindbergh, who at the time was an advisor to the Trans-World Airline, “for an expression of opinion as to practicality and commercial possibilities.” In January 1942, the immigration inspector had read an article in the *San Francisco Examiner* that described a jet aircraft (propellerless plane) used in Fascist Italy and he, like Rutherford, came to suspect Lindbergh’s motives. In this instance, however, the FBI took no action.³⁵

From 1940, FBI officials investigated leads that Lindbergh might have been involved with radical (i.e., fascist) organizations. To FBI officials these inquiries assumed particular significance by the summer 1940 when Congress passed the Smith Act which authorized prosecution of those organizations which advocated the violent overthrow of the United States government. In February 1940, FBI agents learned that Lindbergh was allegedly associated with the fascist group The New World Movement. The FBI's informer claimed that this group had "chosen Colonel Lindbergh as their world leader because of his youth, his prominence and other characteristics." The aviator was also rumored to be connected with the organization called the James True Associates, an anti-Communist and anti-Semitic group, whose leaders reportedly "referred to Lindbergh as their leader and a good man for the presidency." By August 1940, an FBI source reported that the German propagandist Dr. Friederich Ernst Auhagen, who had been convicted under the 1938 Foreign Agents Registration Act (for failing to register with the Justice Department as an agent of a foreign-controlled organization), stated that Lindbergh had been made a member of the Steering Committee of the American Fellowship Forum. According to Auhagen, the American Fellowship Forum was a "German propaganda unit" with some leading members who "advocated a Fascist form of government and one which would cooperate with the Nazi Regime."³⁶

Other groups with which Lindbergh was identified, and thus subject to FBI attention, included the National Copperheads, led by Ellis Jones (who had been convicted for sedition in 1942) and Robert Hoble, who "supported the policies and principles of Charles A. Lindbergh." FBI officials also monitored the fascists

Joseph McWilliams and Gerald L. K. Smith who regarded the aviator as a possible leader of their followers. According to one internal FBI memorandum, despite his name being associated with “numerous” subversive organizations “no charge could be made that he has had any direct connection with these organizations or groups.”³⁷

In addition to trying to develop information to prosecute Lindbergh, FBI officials also collected derogatory intelligence about him. Gathering such information had nothing to do with a violation of federal statutes. Its only possible value was that it could be disseminated to discredit Lindbergh. FBI agents usually culled such information from Bureau informers and then relayed it to FBI headquarters in a secure manner, such as Hoover’s “personal and confidential” system whereby sensitive data was sent directly to his office bypassing the Bureau’s central records system. One example of the collection of such derogatory intelligence occurred in June 1941 when W. G. Banister, the FBI’s special agent in charge (SAC) at Butte, Montana, advised Hoover that while Lindbergh was on a barnstorming tour in Montana during the 1920s he “lived in the home of a prostitute for a considerable time and associated with the prostitute’s pimp.” Banister noted that a photograph existed “showing Lindbergh with this woman and her pimp.” In addition, the SAC reported, Lindbergh had “tried to marry two different girls who were employed in a laundry.” And, worse yet, the aviator reportedly still owed a debt of thirty-eight dollars to a Butte boarding house.³⁸

Banister was also “reliably informed” that during Prohibition Lindbergh “should have been prosecuted on two different charges of bootlegging whiskey from Canada to Billings, Montana, by airplane.” Despite the dated character of this

information, Banister believed it could be useful. He wrote Hoover: "These charges, of course, are now outlawed by the Statute of Limitations, but I believe that it is still possible to obtain proof of the fact that he did bootleg whiskey." The United States Attorney Roy F. Allan, in Billings, Banister continued, "will furnish it, properly supported by affidavits, etc., to [pro-Roosevelt newspaper and radio gossip columnist] Walter Winchell."³⁹

Through another informant, FBI officials learned intelligence about the alleged state of Lindbergh's mental health. The data was gleaned from an informer who was associated with Lindbergh's close friend and colleague (they had co-authored a book together, *The Culture of Organs* [1938]) Dr. Alexis Carrel. The informer overheard part of a conversation between Carrel, who opposed Lindbergh's politics, and a psychologist over "the trend that Lindbergh's mind was taking." Carrel reportedly said that "Lindbergh hated the British and next to them he hated the United States." The informer was unable to report on the remainder of the conversation, but the information gathered was directed straight to Hoover via the "personal and confidential" system.⁴⁰

Why did FBI agents collect and FBI officials maintain this type of information? Clearly, none of the reported information involved any alleged criminal activity on Lindbergh's part; even the bootlegging charge, if true, was not prosecutable due to the statute of limitations. It would appear that the decision to collect and maintain this information had a deterrent purpose: to discredit Charles Lindbergh's character. Since his transatlantic flight in 1927, Lindbergh had developed a reputation as a shy, clean-cut, all-American boy. Such personally

derogatory data could tarnish this image. And FBI officials' very interest in the information reflects their desire to provide the Roosevelt administration with information that could be used against its political opponents. This supposition, however, cannot be confirmed by extant FBI documentation or with records that FBI Director Hoover shared with the White House. Given the meticulous system the FBI director had devised to distribute sensitive data, and given Roosevelt's long practice not to put anything controversial on paper, it remains possible that in fact Hoover had shared this information.

Extant FBI records, however, do document that sensitive information was sent to senior administration officials. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes was one of the administration's fiercest vocal critics of Charles Lindbergh. Ickes so detested Lindbergh, whom he labeled "a ruthless and conscious fascist, motivated by hatred for you [Roosevelt] personally and a contempt for democracy in general," that he kept an indexed file of all Lindbergh's speeches and writings.⁴¹ Ickes had access to FBI political intelligence that he received either directly from FBI Director Hoover or from the White House. In October 1941, for example, Hoover provided Ickes with a blind FBI memorandum summarizing information in FBI files on Guy Junemann, an associate of the right-wing Joseph McWilliams who had ties with Representative Hamilton Fish (a Republican) and the America First Committee.⁴² Ickes also had access to FBI information on Lindbergh and planned to use it confidentially.

In December 1941 Ickes wrote, and made arrangements to have published with the Vanguard Press, a scathing book about Charles Lindbergh. The book was

tentatively titled *The Strange Case of Mr. Lindbergh or Charles A. Lindbergh: A Failure in Americanization*. The Secretary claimed “to trace, factually and objectively, this young man’s fatal course.” For whatever reason, however, despite Ickes’s having received a contract from a publisher, the book was never published. Nevertheless, Ickes retained the manuscript in his papers and it offers an interesting insight into the use of FBI political intelligence, some of which had been obtained illegally by FBI agents.⁴³

The most revealing aspect about the FBI-Ickes relationship involving Lindbergh appeared late in the manuscript. Ickes recounted a *New York Mirror* story about a 17 December 1941 private dinner party that Lindbergh attended. He noted that Lindbergh spoke and blamed Britain for the outbreak of war, arguing that America First should wait, following Pearl Harbor, and attack Roosevelt’s policy when the time was right. “From a private source,” Ickes claimed to have further information on this subject. He wrote:

The party was held in the home of Edwin S. Webster, secretary of the New York Chapter of the America First Committee on December 17, and 50 people were present. Lindbergh addressed the gathering. He told them that the real danger was not Hitler but the Yellow Peril—China and Japan. He said that if Germany had been permitted (by Great Britain) to attack Russia before 1939, Hitler could have been the bulwark against the yellow races and the Russians. He said that the British and the ‘fools in Washington’ spoiled this plan. In conclusion he informed the group that although the America First Committee could not be active at the moment, it should take prompt advantage of the inevitable casualty lists to make the American people realize that they have been betrayed by Great Britain and the Roosevelt Administration. The[n], he said, the America First Committee would re-enter the political field and advocate a negotiated peace—favorable to Hitler.⁴⁴

This information is strikingly similar to a FBI report which Hoover sent to President Roosevelt on 13 February 1942.⁴⁵

The FBI's source for this information was a wiretap, authorized by the attorney general, of Ethel F. Brigham. A popular opera soprano during the 1920s and 1930s, Brigham, during the Great Debate, criticized Roosevelt as did her daughter, Barbara, who was chairperson of the Greenwich Village branch of the America First Committee's New York chapter.⁴⁶ The wiretap was initiated when Brigham was alleged to have threatened the life of the president, but what the wiretap yielded was a wealth of political intelligence on the anti-interventionists, including Lindbergh.

Although the attorney general had authorized this wiretap, it was still an illegal surveillance method. The 1934 Federal Communications Act, and two supporting Supreme Court decisions, outlawed the use of wiretaps to intercept communications by "any person" including federal agents. In May 1940, however, with the war crisis mounting President Roosevelt secretly authorized the use of wiretaps to avert "sabotage, assassinations, and 'fifth column' activities" but only insofar as matters concerning national defense which were limited to the activities of foreign nationals. (Brigham was an American citizen.) He authorized his attorney general to review and approve all proposed FBI wiretaps (FBI wiretapping practices will be discussed in depth in chapter 7). The Brigham wiretap was one such "authorized" device.⁴⁷

The dinner party Ickes alluded to took place on 17 December. FBI officials learned about the subject of that party from Brigham, who was in attendance, when she talked about it in a telephone conversation the next day. Brigham mentioned Lindbergh's "Yellow peril" remark and other information about the party. This

wiretap, moreover, was not the FBI's sole source of information. The FBI director had learned about this dinner party from the Military Intelligence Division who garnered a report from either Secretary of War Stimson or Assistant Secretary John J. McCloy. McCloy had received the report from an official in the office of the Coordinator of Information who got it from Reverend Leon Birkhead of the Friends of Democracy organization, an interventionist pressure group. Ickes's source conceivably could have been Stimson, McCloy, or Birkhead but other documentary evidence points to the FBI. On 13 February 1942, FBI Director Hoover sent a report, based on the FBI wiretap and MID information, describing the dinner party and Lindbergh's comments to the White House. Comparing the FBI report with Ickes's manuscript shows more similarities in specific information and layout of information in the FBI report than do the other documents on the dinner party. Given Ickes's previous access to FBI intelligence, the Bureau was most likely his source.⁴⁸

Secretary Ickes's use of FBI-collected information suggests that administration officials found Hoover's reports informative and, at times, did not hesitate to use the information to discredit administration opponents. Indeed, Ickes had planned to publish a book, based in part on FBI intelligence, with the sole purpose of discrediting Lindbergh's role in advocating American isolation from the Second World War. Ickes, moreover, was not the sole recipient of this information. In August 1942, Lindbergh was subpoenaed to testify for the defense at the sedition trial of the fascist William Dudley Pelley, leader of the Silver Shirts. To assist the prosecutors on their cross-examination of Lindbergh, FBI officials prepared a blind

memorandum (blind memoranda were written on plain nondescript stationery that did not record the sender or recipient) that summarized information in Bureau files that confirmed the aviator's "foreign or nationalistic sympathies." This summary included the intelligence gleaned (illegally) from the Brigham wiretap. Yet because Lindbergh's testimony was limited to twelve minutes on the stand, and because he offered nothing important to the defendant's case, Justice Department attorneys did not use the information in the FBI's summary to discredit him. These were not the sole examples of the use of FBI information and influence of the Great Debate. Further instances will be documented in subsequent chapters.⁴⁹

With the war effort mounting in 1942, FBI monitoring activity of Lindbergh lessened by year's end. But the aviator's actions still interested FBI officials. In November 1942, the curator of the Yale University Library informed FBI Director Hoover that his institution had acquired "a large collection of mail addressed to" Lindbergh dating from his anti-interventionist period. (The Yale University Sterling Library holds the still-sealed Lindbergh papers.) The curator offered to make them available to FBI agents. FBI officials welcomed this offer "in view of the possibility that it might be considered advisable to examine Lindbergh's mail in connection with any of the cases being investigated by the FBI." Hoover advised the Justice Department's War Policies Unit, but whether or not the documents were examined is unknown. Nevertheless, the interest highlights the continuing interest of FBI officials in Charles Lindbergh.⁵⁰

In time, however, FBI officials lost interest in Lindbergh's activity, as he ceased to be a prominent critic of the Roosevelt administration. This is reflected in

Hoover's response to an inquiry of the president. In 1944 the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, received a letter from a person who was "troubled about Charles Lindbergh's . . . whereabouts." President Roosevelt brought the matter to Hoover's attention and inquired how "Mrs. Roosevelt should answer this one about Charles Lindbergh." In contrast to his pre-war response when Hoover submitted to the president an extensive report, at this time Hoover merely suggested that the First Lady send a letter of acknowledgement and appreciation.⁵¹

What effect did FBI officials' secret investigation into Charles Lindbergh's political activism have on the aviator? FBI agents never developed evidence that could be used to indict Lindbergh (see chapter six for an additional effort) or to connect him with subversive organizations or foreign agents operating in the United States. And, although FBI agents had gathered derogatory intelligence that had the potential to discredit his moral character, there is no evidence that this information was directly employed. Nevertheless, the Bureau's efforts did have a measurable, if indirect, effect. As did other anti-interventionists, Lindbergh suspected that his telephone was wiretapped. He confided to his journal on 7 July 1941 a warning he had received about FBI wiretaps: "My main concern lies in knowing whether or not these [wiretap] tactics are being used by the Administration." On 16 July, after being subjected to yet another of Interior Secretary Ickes's invectives that Lindbergh had foreign connections, the aviator wrote a public letter to the president. In addition to demanding an apology from Ickes, which he never got, Lindbergh offered the president his "word that I have no connection with any foreign government." Conveying his suspicions that the government was investigating this

foreign connection charge, Lindbergh continued: "Mr. President, I will willingly open my files to your investigation." "[T]here is no question regarding my activities now," he wrote, "or at any time in the past, that I will not be glad to answer." Then in October, in one of his last public speeches, Lindbergh accused the government of subverting his civil liberties.⁵² While the aviator obviously did not understand the extent of the FBI's investigation, he did express some concern over its interest in him. Despite not ending or directly discrediting Lindbergh's anti-interventionism, FBI surveillance did have a chilling effect on him.

As Charles Lindbergh was one of the first anti-interventionists to speak out against U.S. involvement in the European war (dating from 15 September 1939), he became one of the FBI's first anti-interventionist targets. His case illustrates FBI priorities in the contentious political conflict between the anti-interventionists and the Roosevelt administration during period between 1939 to Pearl Harbor and beyond. From 1939 to April 1941, the FBI monitored Lindbergh's anti-interventionist speeches and the articles he wrote advocating neutrality. With the Lend-Lease debate of 1940-41, anti-interventionists, and particularly Lindbergh, began to criticize Roosevelt's foreign policy directly. The intense emotions this engendered are captured by Roosevelt's labeling Lindbergh a "copperhead" and the aviator responding in protest by publicly resigning his Air Corps commission. Moreover, when Lindbergh, at this juncture the most prominent individual who opposed Roosevelt's policy, joined the America First Committee, the most influential anti-interventionist pressure group, the FBI's investigation received renewed vigor. Apparently, the FBI director felt compelled to provide the

administration with intelligence or attempt to bring Lindbergh to trial, or at least before a grand jury, to further the political interests of the White House. The FBI's monitoring of Lindbergh continued after Pearl Harbor in response to rumors that he continued to oppose the president. When it became clear by late 1942 that he was not a threat to the administration, FBI officials lost interest in his activities. There is an apparent pattern in the evolution of FBI priorities. FBI agents might have monitored Lindbergh from the start of his anti-interventionist crusade, but his having been a direct threat to administration policy apparently triggered the intensity of their effort. FBI Director Hoover's willingness to cater to Roosevelt's desire to overcome his opponents when they threatened his interests increased his standing with the administration. Hoover's interest in Lindbergh further suggests that the FBI's role as a national security apparatus had its origins during the Great Debate. Lindbergh was viewed as a national security threat and agents attempted to develop evidence that could be used to discredit him, much like later FBI efforts against communist and leftists during the Cold War.

NOTES

¹ On the trans-Atlantic flight see Lindbergh's own Pulitzer Prize winning *The Spirit of St. Louis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953). The public reaction is captured poignantly in Frederick Lewis Allen's *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s* (New York: 1959).

² A. Scott Berg, *Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York: Putnam, 1998), 149-159.

³ Though he overlooks the scope of the FBI's investigation of Lindbergh, the best and most recent account of Lindbergh's life is A. Scott Berg, *Lindbergh* (New York: Putnam, 1998). A brief yet scholarly history based on sources except the sealed Lindbergh papers is Walter Hixson, *Charles A. Lindbergh: Lone Eagle* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996). See also Kenneth S. Davis, *The Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959); Walter S. Ross, *The Last Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). The literature written about Lindbergh is covered, up to 1986, in Perry D. Luckett, *Charles A. Lindbergh: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986).

⁴ Berg, *Lindbergh*, 225-32, 285-90.

⁵ For Lindbergh's disdain of the press see Berg, *Lindbergh*, 141-2, 281.

⁶ Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 25-30.

⁷ Letter, Major Truman Smith to Charles Lindbergh, 25 May 1936, Truman Smith papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library [hereafter HHL], West Branch, Iowa; Letter, Charles A. Lindbergh to Major Truman Smith, 5 June 1936, Truman Smith papers, HHL; Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 31-32.

⁸ Robert Hessen (ed.), *Berlin Alert: The Memoirs and Reports of Truman Smith* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1984), 113-14; 151-63; Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 31-40; Charles A. Lindbergh, *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 280; Letter, Charles A. Lindbergh to Ambassador Joseph Kennedy, 22 September 1938, Foreign Service Post Files, box 3, Record Group 84, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland; Telegram, Ambassador Joseph Kennedy to Secretary of State, 22 September 1938, in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers*, 1938, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955), 72-73.

⁹ Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 47-61. Cole's appeasement remark is on pages 48-49.

¹⁰ Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 65-69.

¹¹ Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 70-72; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 252-6.

¹² "Lindbergh's Appeal for Isolation," *New York Times* (16 September 1939), 9; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 252.

¹³ Charles A. Lindbergh, "Aviation, Geography, and Race," *Reader's Digest* (November 1939): 64-67; Charles A. Lindbergh, "What Substitute for War?," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1940): 305-7; Charles A. Lindbergh, "A Letter to Americans," *Colliers* (29 March 1941); blind memorandum re Charles A. Lindbergh, no date, FBI 65-11449-152.

¹⁴ Blind summary memorandum re Charles A. Lindbergh, 21 August 1942, p. 12-14, FBI 65-11449-15; letter and enclosures, Assistant FBI Director E. J. Connelley to J. Edgar Hoover, 14 May 1941, FBI 61-7566-2448.

¹⁵ On the FBI's practice of compiling public-source information see Frank J. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance: The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1980), 129. The clippings are located in the Lindbergh FBI file, 65-11449-Sub A.

¹⁶ Memorandum, Nazi Activities in the U.S.: *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter and Free American*, 21 September 1939, FBI 61-7566-1657 (among others); memorandum, German Propaganda: German Book Transmitted to FBI, 16 August 1940, FBI 61-7566-1915.

¹⁷ Letter, [deleted] to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 22 May 1940, FBI 65-11449-2X; Letter, [deleted] to J. Edgar Hoover, 4 August 1940, FBI 65-11449-6; Letter, Anonymous to FBI, 6 August 1940, FBI 65-11449-21; Letter, [deleted] to Attorney General Robert Jackson, 5 August 1940, FBI 65-11449-36.

¹⁸ Memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Stephen Early, 21 May 1940, Official File 10-B, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library [hereafter FDRL], Hyde Park, New York; memorandum, Stephen Early to J. Edgar Hoover, 21 May 1940, Official File 10-B, FDRL; memorandum, Stephen Early to J. Edgar Hoover, 17 June 1940, Official File 10-B, FDRL; memorandum, 17 June 1940, Official File 92, Charles Lindbergh, FDRL.

¹⁹ Personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Stephen Early, 26 June 1940, Official File 10-B, FDRL; personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Stephen Early, 2 August 1940, Official File 10-B, FDRL; entry for 20 May 1940, Henry Morgenthau Presidential Diaries, p. 563, FDRL; Letter, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Henry Stimson, 21 May 1940, Henry Stimson papers (microfilm ed., reel 101), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

²⁰ Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 80-82. For Lindbergh anti-Semitism see also Berg, *Lindbergh*, 361, 385-6.

²¹ Charles A. Lindbergh, "The Air Defense of America" radio address of 19 May 1940 in *Congressional Record* (20 May 1940), 3034-3035. See also Charles A. Lindbergh, "What Substitute for War?," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1940), 307-308; "Text of Lindbergh Address, 'A Plea for American Independence,'" *New York Times* (15 October 1940).

²² See Garry J. Clifford and Samuel R. Spencer, Jr., *The First Peacetime Draft* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1986); William L. Langer and Everett S. Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940* (New York: Harper, 1952); Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966).

²³ Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1939-1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 411-413.

²⁴ As quoted in Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 92-93. The best account of the Lend-Lease Act is Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act: Lend-Lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969).

²⁵ Justus D. Doenecke, *The Battle Against Intervention, 1939-1941* (Malabar: Krieger, 1997), 42-43.

²⁶ Letter, Charles A. Lindbergh to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 28 April 1941, Official File 92, FDRL; Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 480.

²⁷ Blind memorandum re Col. Charles Lindbergh, 2 May 1941, FBI 65-11449-64.

²⁸ Letter and enclosures, J. F. Sears to J. Edgar Hoover, 10 June 1941, FBI 65-11449-66. La Guardia headed the Office of Civilian Defense which sought to create American unity and discredit anti-interventionists. See Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 12.

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- ²⁹ Letter, John S. Bugas to J. Edgar Hoover, 20 October 1941, FBI 65-11449-94; Letter, Charles A. Lindbergh to Henry Ford, 2 August 1941, FBI 65-11449-94; summary memorandum re Charles A. Lindbergh, by D. Milton Ladd, 21 August 1942, p. 17, FBI 65-11449-154.
- ³⁰ Letter, Bernard H. Thomas, U.S. Department of Commerce, Patent and Trademark Office to author, 5 November 1993; Letter, A. P. Kitchin to J. Edgar Hoover, 27 June 1941, FBI 65-11449-74.
- ³¹ Letter, A. P. Kitchin to J. Edgar Hoover, 27 June 1941, FBI 65-11449-74. On the popular image of Lindbergh as a Nazi, see chapter 18 "Is Lindbergh a Nazi?" in Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 142-53. Cole concludes the aviator was many things but not a Nazi.
- ³² Memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Assistant to the Attorney General Matthew F. McGuire, 18 July 1941, FBI 65-11449-74; memorandum, Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge to Matthew F. McGuire, 26 July 1941, (FOIAed document) Wayne S. Cole papers, HHL; memorandum, Matthew F. McGuire to J. Edgar Hoover, 29 July 1941, FBI 65-11449-80; Letter, J. Edgar Hoover to SAC Dallas, 20 August 1941, FBI 65-11449-80.
- ³³ Strictly confidential memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Edward Tamm, 10 September 1936; Press release, J. Edgar Hoover to All Law Enforcement Officials, 6 September 1939, both reprinted in Athan Theoharis (ed.), *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 182-84.
- ³⁴ Confidential letter with attached memorandum, Brigadier General Sherman Miles to Lt. Col. J. Edgar Hoover, 31 October 1941, FBI 65-11449-99; memorandum, G. C. Burton to D. Milton Ladd, 26 November 1941, FBI 65-11449-104. On the Army's role in political surveillance see Joan M. Jensen, *Army Surveillance in America, 1775-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).
- ³⁵ Letter, N. J. L. Pieper to J. Edgar Hoover, 14 February 1942, FBI 65-11449-129.
- ³⁶ Summary memorandum re Charles A. Lindbergh, by D. Milton Ladd, 21 August 1942, pp. 8-11, FBI 65-11449-154.
- ³⁷ Summary memorandum re Charles A. Lindbergh, by D. Milton Ladd, 21 August 1942, pp. 18-21, FBI 65-11449-154.
- ³⁸ Personal letter, W. G. Banister to J. Edgar Hoover, 3 June 1941, FBI 65-11449-71.
- ³⁹ Personal letter, W. G. Banister to J. Edgar Hoover, 3 June 1941, FBI 65-11449-71.
- ⁴⁰ Personal and confidential letter, FBI Assistant Director Foxworth to J. Edgar Hoover, 10 February 1942, FBI 65-11449-128.
- ⁴¹ Letter, Harold Ickes to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 30 December 1941, President's Secretary's File, Justice Department, FDRL. Roosevelt agreed "wholeheartedly" with Ickes's assessment of Lindbergh. See letter, Roosevelt to Ickes, 30 December 1941, President's Secretary's File, Justice Department, FDRL.
- ⁴² Personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Harold Ickes, 31 October 1941, and blind memorandum re: Guy Junemann, 27 October 1941, Justice Department folder, Harold Ickes papers, box 205, Library of Congress [hereafter LOC], Washington, D.C.
- ⁴³ Harold Ickes, "Charles A. Lindbergh: A Failure in Americanization," unpublished book manuscript, p. 4, Charles A. Lindbergh folder, Ickes papers, LOC; correspondence and book contract between Harold Ickes and Vanguard Press, December 1941 through 1944, Ickes papers, LOC.

⁴⁴ Ickes, "Charles A. Lindbergh: A Failure in Americanization", pp. 207-9.

⁴⁵ Personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 13 February 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL; memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Francis Biddle, 13 February 1942, FBI 100-4712-284.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, 5 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-17; memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, 16 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-40; Ethel Brigham obituary, *New York Times* (28 September 1968), 33; personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 26 January 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁴⁷ Federal Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. 605 (1934); Majority Opinion, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, *Nardone v. United States*, 302 U.S. 397 (20 December 1937); Majority Opinion, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, *Nardone v. United States*, 308 U.S. 338 (11 December 1939); confidential memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Attorney General Robert Jackson, 21 May 1940, President's Secretary's File, Justice Department, FDRL.

⁴⁸ Confidential report re Ethel Brigham, P.E. Foxworth, 15 January 1942, pp. 30-1, 63, FBI 100-50729-19; Confidential letter and enclosures, Brigadier General Raymond E. Lee to J. Edgar Hoover, 15 January 1942, FBI 100-4712-270; memorandum and attachments, John J. McCloy to Henry Stimson, 12 January 1942, Henry Stimson papers (microfilm ed., reel 105), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 13 February 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL; memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, 13 February 1942, FBI 100-4712-334.

⁴⁹ Memorandum, K. T. [illegible] to Mr. Mumford, 5 August 1942, FBI 65-11449-152; blind and undated memorandum re Charles A. Lindbergh, [ca. 5 August 1942], FBI 65-11449-152; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 534.

⁵⁰ Letter, R. H. Simons to J. Edgar Hoover, 13 November 1942, FBI 65-11449-155; memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to L. M. C. Smith, 16 December 1942, FBI 65-11449-155.

⁵¹ Memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to J. Edgar Hoover, 3 September 1944, FBI 65-11449-158; Letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 6 September 1944, FBI 65-11449-158.

⁵² Lindbergh, *Wartime Journals*, 515, 600; letter, Charles A. Lindbergh to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 16 July 1941, President's Personal File 1080, FDRL; "Lindbergh Seeks Roosevelt Inquiry," *New York Times* (18 July 1941), 6; "Lindbergh Fears Loss of Liberties," *The Charleston Gazette* (4 October 1941) in FBI 100-4712-164. Historian Wayne Cole interviewed Lindbergh extensively and asked him about FBI wiretapping. Cole reports that Lindbergh did indeed believe the FBI had tapped his telephone. Letter, Wayne S. Cole to author, 12 December 1994; conversation with Wayne S. Cole, 14 July 1999, Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER 4

FBI Surveillance of the America First Committee, 1940-1945.

The FBI's investigation of the America First Committee began when the group became a national organization in late 1940. The Committee soon found its footing and made a name for itself over the Lend-Lease debate of 1941. Anti-interventionists that year directly criticized this administration policy and, in response, FBI scrutiny of their political efforts intensified.

FBI surveillance of the America First Committee reflects FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's pragmatism in seeking to provide the administration with political intelligence and at the same time working to discredit the president's critics at a time when the debate between the administration and anti-interventionists over the president's foreign policy initiatives was at its height. From the start of the debate, FBI officials supplied the administration with political intelligence on this newly organized political opponent, information that could be used to cast doubt on the group's legitimacy. By late 1941 these reports led Roosevelt to ask the Justice Department to initiate grand jury proceedings against the America First Committee over that organization's financial sources. Under the directorship of J. Edgar

Hoover who took an interest in satisfying Roosevelt's political interests, FBI officials worked to achieve this goal.

The origins of the America First Committee date from early 1940 when Yale University law student R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., formed the group as a student organization. Troubled by the events of early 1940 he had sought backing among his colleagues. Stuart won the support of Gerald R. Ford (the future president) and Potter Stewart (future Supreme Court justice), among others. By fall he had persuaded a number of prominent midwestern businessmen and leading Republican conservatives to organize his group on a national level, in part, to oppose the interventionist Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, led by newspaperman William Allen White. With this success, the America First Committee in September 1940 announced its formation and headquartered itself in Chicago.¹

The Committee's primary objective was to undermine public support for President Roosevelt's increasingly interventionist foreign policy. To promote this objective, Stuart enlisted Robert E. Wood, chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Company, to serve as Committee chairman. Other prominent personalities joined the committee, including Mrs. Burton K. Wheeler (wife of Senator Wheeler), Alice Roosevelt Longworth, and Charles Lindbergh. Not pacifist, the group had four principal aims:

1. The United States must build an impregnable defense for America.
2. No foreign power, nor group of powers, can successfully attack a *prepared* America.
3. American democracy can be preserved only by keeping out of the [current] European war.

4. 'Aid short of war' weakens national defense at home and threatens to involve America in war abroad.²

The America First Committee expanded rapidly with chapters opening in cities nationwide. It sponsored anti-interventionist speakers both at rallies and on the radio, published anti-interventionist literature, and supplied information to members of Congress. The America First Committee became the most influential and best-organized anti-interventionist pressure group in the country. When it disbanded in December 1941, the Committee had 450 local chapters and roughly 800,000 members.³

While the Committee declared itself to be nonpartisan, its membership was mostly of those who were politically conservative. Nonetheless, various radical groups endorsed similar political platforms and similar goals. These included Nazis, Communists (until the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941), and anti-Semites. While the Committee made efforts to distance itself from these elements, many Americans equated America First with these radical groups. The resulting popular perception thereby hindered the overall effectiveness of the organization.⁴

FBI officials also shared this belief that the Committee membership either held fascist sympathies or were dupes of the Nazis. As Bureau agents accumulated increasing amounts of information about the Committee's alleged fascist leanings—all of it unsubstantiated—FBI officials either believed these allegations or found it politically expedient to forward to the administration intelligence that suggested that its critics were indeed "subversive." At the start of this FBI investigation, FBI officials found very little evidence that the group in fact had subversive connections.

Indeed from time to time FBI agents gathered information that accurately suggested that the America First Committee sought to exclude extreme elements from its ranks. But as the foreign policy debate heated up, and as interventionist groups increased their anti-interventionist invective, the FBI's accumulation of material suggesting fascist links, unsubstantiated though this was, multiplied. A 1942 FBI summary report reflects this view of FBI officials of America First's development. This document began by conceding that the Committee's origins were "totally respectable" but had evolved into a haven for fascists. In any event, FBI Director Hoover, in his efforts to satisfy administration desires for political intelligence, invariably forwarded to the White House derogatory data about the president's foreign policy opponents.⁵

FBI agents became first interested in the America First Committee's political activity on 9 November 1940. The Birmingham, Alabama, special agent in charge (SAC) reported to FBI Director Hoover that an informer had alerted him to a radio program "apparently sponsored by the America First Committee" that had discussed the war situation. According to the FBI's informant, the questions raised and the answers given had "indicated to him that it was a Nazi inspired program [that] he thought might be part of German propaganda in this country." The Birmingham SAC accordingly submitted this information "in the event the Bureau desires the Chicago office to make any inquiry." While no further investigation was ordered, this report illustrates the early perception of FBI officials about the Committee's alleged fascist leanings.⁶

By December, FBI officials began to receive, though on a relatively limited basis, more intelligence about America First. On 16 December FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols, the head of the Bureau's Crime Records Division and in this capacity Hoover's informal liaison to the media and Congress, wrote a review of news reports for Assistant Director Clyde Tolson that indicated the America First Committee was "in favor of maintaining a strict cash and carry policy, a strict policy of neutrality, building adequate defense and that they *would not tolerate any Communists or Fascists* in the group."⁷

At this point FBI agents had developed only a limited amount of information on the America First Committee. This was not surprising, however, since the group had only just been formed and, until the introduction of the Lend-Lease bill, had focused on organizing itself and opposing the interventionist Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. When President Roosevelt announced his intention in December 1940 to create a new method to extend assistance to Great Britain, which became his Lend-Lease policy, however, the Bureau's interest in the Committee deepened owing to its vigorous opposition to the president's initiative. The first informative summary memorandum on America First was created for Assistant to the Director Edward A. Tamm on 29 January. This summary outlined the Committee's membership and particularly noted its political opposition to administration policies ranging from conscription, aid to Britain, and, most importantly, the Lend-Lease bill.⁸

For the America First Committee, the Lend-Lease bill became a focal point to which it devoted its energies. Committee chairman Robert E. Wood vowed that

his organization would oppose the presidential initiative “with all the vigor it can exert,”⁹ and mobilized resources nationwide in opposition to the bill. When the bill was formally introduced in Congress, Chairman Wood, former Undersecretary of State William Castle, and leading Republican Hanford MacNider (all prominent America First members) testified in the resulting congressional hearings in opposition to the measure. The Committee’s tactic was to mobilize public sentiment to influence congressmen to vote the bill down. The Committee accordingly sponsored hundreds of meetings, distributed newsletters and petitions, and paid for position papers in major newspapers, which were then reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, urging opposition. According to historian Justus Doenecke, by the end of February 1941, at the height of the Lend-Lease debate, the America First Committee had organized 648 “embryonic chapters” across the nation.¹⁰

Despite this opposition, the Lend-Lease bill passed the House of Representatives on 8 February by the comfortable margin of 260 to 165. The debate over lend-lease then shifted to the Senate with the America First Committee increasing its opposition. The Senate debate lasted until March and was one of the most heated in American history. Meantime, even though the White House received political updates from its congressional floor managers, FBI Director Hoover provided the administration with advance political intelligence both on the senators’ actions and the influence of America First during the Lend-Lease debate. On 21 February the FBI director informed presidential secretary Edwin Watson that through a “strictly confidential source” he had learned that “the debate in the Senate on the Lend-Lease Bill will last for about two weeks longer.” Eleven senators,

Hoover reported, planned to filibuster the measure in an attempt to undermine its passage.¹¹ This effort to keep the president informed on political matters reflects Hoover's interest in promoting White House political interests.

On 26 and 27 February, Hoover reported political intelligence "pertaining to the activities of John L. Wheeler [son of anti-interventionist Senator Burton Wheeler], Chairman of the America First Committee of Los Angeles" to White House aide Edwin Watson, Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, Assistant to the Attorney General Matthew McGuire, and Attorney General Francis Biddle. This report noted that Wheeler's wife, who was a member of the America First Committee, remarked about Lend-Lease that "the only way we can be safe is to see the pins knocked out from under Britain." Mrs. Wheeler was also reported to have "become imbued with pro-German sentiments because of her association with various individuals . . . [all of] whom are under investigation by this Bureau." The Bureau had also discovered that John Wheeler had accepted a \$2,000 check for his committee from an individual under investigation by the FBI.¹² In a second blind memorandum concerning John Wheeler FBI officials focused exclusively on the Los Angeles America First chapter. Their memorandum specifically focused on John Wheeler and his wife, but noted that the revisionist historian Harry Elmer Barnes had lectured, sponsored by America First, in Wheeler's area against the Lend-Lease bill.¹³ The content of these two documents confirm that FBI Director Hoover's intention when forwarding political intelligence to the administration was either to sustain or to help create a belief that the America First Committee had links with questionable individuals—those under FBI investigation or considered pro-German

by FBI officials. FBI agents concurrently collected exculpatory information—such as Louis Nichols’s memorandum to Tolson regarding the America First Committee’s efforts to exclude extremists. Nonetheless, Hoover chose not to pass this information to administration officials.

The White House valued Hoover’s political intelligence reports, both those pertaining to President Roosevelt’s anti-interventionist critics and radical elements. This is evident in Roosevelt’s brief letter to Hoover on 14 June 1940 “to thank you for the many interesting and valuable reports that you have made to me regarding the last few months.” The president thought Hoover had “done and are doing a wonderful job, and I want you to know of my gratification and appreciation.” In a response characteristic of Hoover’s efforts to ingratiate himself with the president, the FBI director wrote:

The personal note which you directed to me on June, 14, 1940, is one of the most inspiring messages which I have ever been privileged to receive; and, indeed, I look upon it as rather a symbol of the principles for which our Nation stands. When the President of our country, bearing the weight of untold burdens, takes the time to so express himself to one of his Bureau heads, there is implanted in the hearts of the recipients a renewed strength and vigor to carry on their tasks.

In noting the vast contrast between the Leader of our Nation and those of other less fortunate Nations, I feel deeply thankful that we have at the head of our Government one who possesses such sterling, sincere, and altogether human qualities.¹⁴

Satisfied with Hoover’s providing political intelligence reports, at the start of the Lend-Lease debate in the Senate, President Roosevelt soon requested that the FBI investigate an aspect of the America First Committee’s political activity. In late February 1941, Roosevelt learned of an America First Committee circular captioned: “Are you willing to give up democracy?” This document characterized Lend-Lease

as “a war dictatorship bill” that would bestow upon the president “absolute power.” Disturbed by the circular, on 21 February Roosevelt asked Stephen Early, his secretary: “will you find out from someone—perhaps FBI—who is paying for this?”¹⁵

Early forwarded Roosevelt’s request to Hoover. In response, on 26 February the FBI director ordered: “Get reply out to Early by tomorrow with summary of info on hand. If specific question not answered thereby tell him it is being checked and he will be further advised.”¹⁶ Then on 1 March, Hoover supplied Presidential Secretary Early with a blind summary memorandum on the America First Committee that outlined its leadership and, briefly, its financial sources which were reported to have originated “solely by voluntary contributions by those interested in the organization.”¹⁷

Hoover responded to Roosevelt’s request to “find out . . . who is paying for this” by launching an investigation into the sources of the America First Committee’s funds. The FBI director even intimated as much in a memorandum to Early stating: “With regard to the President’s request for information as to the *source of funds* of the America First Committee...”¹⁸ It is unclear, however, whether Roosevelt had wanted an investigation into the sources of the America First Committee’s funding or just to know who had financed the publication of the circular that labeled Lend-Lease a war dictatorship bill. The latter purpose seems logical. In any event, Hoover took a broader approach. At this point however, FBI officials had developed only limited information concerning the Committee’s finances. Unwilling to investigate further without approval, and perhaps reflecting

confusion as to the president's wishes, Hoover wrote Early: "If it is the president's wish that a more exhaustive investigation be made relative to the means by which the America First Committee is being financed, I hope you will not hesitate to call upon me to conduct such an investigation."¹⁹ At the time, Roosevelt did not request "a more exhaustive investigation." He did, however, in November 1941, by which time the Great Debate had settled into a stalemate.

The Lend-Lease debate was eventually settled when in March the Senate passed the measure and the president signed the bill into law. FBI officials, however, did not halt their surveillance of the America First Committee. On the contrary, on 19 March Hoover provided Roosevelt and the attorney general with "the contemplated plans of the America First Committee." According to FBI sources, the Committee had plans "to have Senators, Congressmen, and various peace and patriotic organizations travel throughout the United States to reach all areas for the purpose of opposing any plans the President might have in bringing this country into war." "Three Senators and several Congressmen," Hoover continued, would cover the northern United States while "a similar trainload of individuals" would cover the south. At the same time, a third group would travel east to west spreading the Committee's anti-interventionist message. Summing up the plan, Hoover reported that Committee chairman Robert Wood and Senator Burton Wheeler were slated to lead this campaign.²⁰

Hoover's information was correct and confirms his interest in anti-interventionist political activity. Shortly after passage of the Lend-Lease bill, despite the Committee having been in "financial straits," Senator Wheeler and others

began a tour of the country to mobilize support for their cause, their objectives publicized in a *Chicago Tribune* story of April 1941. The tour raised both funds to continue an anti-interventionist fight and to continue spreading the Committee's message.²¹

Interested in the extent of this campaign's success, and responding to Hoover's reports, in September Attorney General Francis Biddle requested that FBI officials monitor an America First Committee rally in Los Angeles at which Senator Wheeler would speak. Biddle was interested in the size of the crowd and how it reacted to Wheeler's comments. The resulting FBI report, sent both to Biddle and Roosevelt, estimated the crowd was numbered between eight and eleven thousand and as "very sympathetic and friendly toward the America First Committee and Senator Wheeler."²²

On 10 July, Hoover forwarded to the White House, by special messenger, an unsolicited report documenting one major source of funds for the America First Committee. Even though President Roosevelt had not requested another investigation into the Committee's sources of revenue, Hoover continued to pass on any information about the matter to the White House. His report, based on information provided by an informer, pointed to Joseph Patterson, owner of the anti-interventionist *New York Daily News*, and Robert McCormick, owner of the *Chicago Tribune*, as contributing "a lot of money" to the America First Committee. Patterson reportedly did not want it known he was donating "large sums" to the organization. In addition, Hoover reported that the Committee was also backing the anti-

interventionist publication *Uncensored* and provided the White House with a copy of this periodical.²³

In September, Hoover again forwarded information concerning America First's funds "to supplement the previous information concerning this group . . . in accordance with his [Roosevelt's] request of February 21, 1941." Roosevelt's February request might not have given the FBI *carte blanche* to investigate this matter. Furthermore, Roosevelt had never requested "a more exhaustive" investigation into America First's funding as Hoover had previously suggested (that is until November 1941). Nevertheless, Hoover continued to provide such data claiming that he only sought to keep the president "currently advised in matters of this kind." The particular financial information which Hoover forwarded stated that a large Jewish organization (unnamed), through the Guggenheim Foundation, had withdrawn its financial support from the America First Committee because of the group's "anti-Roosevelt" stance, efforts to embarrass the president, and espousal of "anti-Jewish propaganda." FBI agents were unable to substantiate any of these allegations, allegations that reflected popular notions of the Committee that were not always accurate. The type of information Hoover provided the White House nonetheless did help sustain the biases about the group held by many senior officials or in some cases even create them.²⁴

By mid-October, FBI officials had uncovered what they thought was another avenue to gather information as to the funding of the America First Committee. An FBI informer provided information about the congressional election in Wisconsin's first district where the local chapter of the America First Committee took part. The

Committee had supported Lawrence H. Smith against the incumbent and Smith won. In Wisconsin the law required “all organizations participating in political campaigns to file a detailed expense account.” According to the FBI’s informer, Wisconsin State Attorney John E. Martin planned to order the local chapter of the America First Committee to release its financial records pertaining to this election. FBI officials hoped to exploit this release to identify the source of the funds behind the America First Committee. FBI records, however, did not disclose what happened other than a notation that the Committee “has refused to comply with this law as of the present writing.”²⁵ The episode nonetheless shows the length to which Bureau officials would go to gather information to document a prosecution under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

FBI Director Hoover continued to supply the White House with political intelligence regarding the America First Committee throughout 1941, on the belief that the president might find these reports of interest. On 12 May, Hoover provided Presidential Secretary Edwin Watson with an advance copy of the polling data taken by Columbia Survey, a public opinion monitor, and due to be published eight days hence by *Look* magazine. The data involved Americans’ opinions regarding convoys, the draft, imminence of war (58 percent believed the U.S. would avoid war with Germany, and 73 percent believed war would be avoided with Japan), and towards the defense program (in this case a split opinion). Neither Roosevelt nor his aides commented on Hoover’s forwarding of this information. This submission nonetheless highlights Hoover’s continued effort to supply the administration with a variety of political intelligence.²⁶

In late August, Senator Claude Pepper, a Democrat from Florida and prominent critic of Roosevelt's foreign policy opponents, requested information about the America First Committee from Attorney General Francis Biddle. The attorney general forwarded the request to FBI Director Hoover. Normally unwilling to provide political intelligence to politicians unless they could be trusted, Hoover honored this request. Hoover forwarded to Biddle, who then passed it on to Pepper, an eleven-page blind summary memorandum on the America First Committee. The document, designated secret, reported on the group's origins, biographical sketches of its leaders and prominent members, as well as other sundry political intelligence on Roosevelt's opponents.²⁷

The following month, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, a frequent critic of the anti-interventionists, contacted FBI Assistant Director Edward A. Tamm to obtain information about America First. According to FBI documents, Knox's interest stemmed from a concern that the Committee was trying "to frustrate the National Defense Effort through manipulation of trade unions in bringing about labor disputes."²⁸ Convinced that subversive elements had contributed to labor troubles, Knox identified some of these in the America First Committee. Indeed, he confided to his diary on 28 May 1941: "One of the first things the President must do . . . is to take positive action against the various forms of subversive activity which is interfering with and interrupting and delaying our defense preparations. Unless his fine words are followed by firm action the last condition will be worse than the first."²⁹ On 3 September Tamm responded by forwarding to Knox "a blind memorandum containing information in our files with respect to The America First

Committee.” This blind memorandum was similar to that forwarded to Senator Pepper.³⁰

FBI officials took advantage of every opportunity to collect intelligence on the America First Committee. In February 1941 (although this was not reported to FBI headquarters until June) the head (SAC) of the FBI’s Kansas City, Missouri, field office contacted the editor of the city’s newspaper, *The Kansas City Star*, to obtain permission to search the paper’s files for information relating to America First’s activities. This review uncovered the following political comments made by leading anti-interventionists. Committee Chairman Robert Wood reportedly said, “Democracy is not going to work unless men stand up for their convictions.” Anti-interventionist John T. Flynn, a journalist who wrote about financial affairs and who “bitterly opposed the Administrative [sic] policy,” reportedly said the administration was pushing the country toward war. Lastly, a member of the local America First chapter reportedly said: “Nazism and Democracy could live side by side” and that the group had mentioned nothing “except in criticism of President Roosevelt’s foreign policy.” (The final paragraph of this FBI document has been redacted.)³¹

The Bureau’s best opportunity to gather intelligence on the America First Committee came in the first half of 1941 from none other than the Committee itself. In January and then again in March, in an effort to clear itself of the popular notion it was a subversive organization, the Chicago chapter invited the FBI to examine its files. Chester Bowles, an anti-interventionist New York advertising executive, suggested that every local chapter request FBI checks of their files to “keep its skirts completely clean so far as anti-Semitism and Fascism, either domestic or foreign, are

concerned.” While perfectly willing to have FBI agents collect intelligence on the Committee in confidence, as in the case to gather information from the files of the *Kansas City Star*, Hoover hesitated to have FBI agents publicly check the files of a group which opposed the Roosevelt administration. According to historian Justus Doenecke, however, the FBI eventually examined the Chicago chapter’s files (in June) but refused to check other chapters’ files. Word eventually spread among America Firsters of the Chicago chapter’s request which resulted in at least one government agency, the Office of Price Management, asking the FBI for the America First Committee’s membership list so that it could check the names against those of its new applicants. Hoover, according to FBI documents, told the OPM official that his bureau had no such lists.³²

By late 1942, with America already militarily involved in the Second World War, FBI officials were more than willing to share information with government agencies. In September a Treasury Department official, Samuel Klaus, solicited any FBI records concerning the America First Committee. (The reason for his interest is unknown, as the Bureau has redacted portions of the document.) In this instance, under the orders of FBI Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd, head of the Bureau’s Domestic Intelligence Division, an FBI report was given to Klaus that “had all identifying marks linking it with the Bureau obliterated therefrom.” From the FBI document number cited in the FBI memorandum, however, we know that the information had something to do with America First Committee records which FBI officials had somehow secured.³³

Director Hoover was sensitive to any suggestion or criticism directed at his Bureau that implied impropriety. He took any such charge seriously and took steps to either persuade individuals, like the OPM official, that the FBI did not collect non-criminal information or to silence any criticism of the Bureau that he deemed harmful to his and the FBI's carefully crafted public image. One such incident occurred in October 1941. On the seventh of that month, the FBI's special agent in charge of the San Diego, California, field office reported to Hoover that an America First speaker had charged and the *San Diego Union* had printed that the FBI had tapped the committee telephones and had perused its membership lists.³⁴

Because of the public nature of this charge of a crime (wiretapping) by an official of the America First Committee, and because a sympathetic newspaper had picked up the story, Hoover sought to contain the incident. Pursuant to Hoover's instructions, the San Diego SAC contacted the head of the city's America First chapter who, after talking with the agent, "expressed regret" over the wiretapping and files examination charge. The agent, upon learning who had made the public remarks, contacted that individual's source of information—America First's national director of field operations, Earl Jeffrey. Hoover then wrote both the editor of the *San Diego Union* and General Robert E. Wood, chairman of the America First Committee. In Hoover's own handwritten marginalia, he wanted to make Jeffrey "either put up or shut up." The newspaper's editor, upon receipt of Hoover's letter, publicly apologized to the FBI in print, and General Wood wrote Hoover an apology and included with his letter a copy of his reprimand of Jeffrey. Hoover successfully defended the Bureau here from any harmful publicity that it might have illegally

wiretapped the America First Committee's telephones or examined its membership rosters. But while Hoover may have publicly avoided revelations of improper political surveillance, we know that the FBI did, indeed, use wiretaps to collect political information on the Committee (see especially chapter seven) and examined files of certain organizations (including the America First Committee itself) for data concerning Roosevelt's opponent.³⁵

In August, FBI agents learned that the Chicago chapter of the America First Committee had allegedly written families with relatives in the armed forces to urge the soldiers to refuse to leave the country without explicit congressional approval. Chicago chapters had also allegedly urged wives of soldiers to write their congressmen to request their release from active service. Apparently, FBI officials' interest in this activity stemmed from provisions of the 1940 Selective Service Act outlawing the fomenting of disruption among draftees. Yet, the Bureau's informer had clearly pointed out that "under no circumstances would they [the America First Committee] allow any literature or letters be sent out to Draftees, their wives, or families which would in any way be detrimental to their morale." The America First Committee was only interested, the informer further claimed, in opposing legislation that might lead to war. FBI agents unsuccessfully tried to glean further information about this from other sources in the Communist Party, whom they suspected of conducting similar tactics. The purpose of this effort was based on a desire to develop a case against America First. The Committee was, and had always been, careful to operate strictly within the confines of the law and went to great lengths to distinguish itself from radical groups who endorsed similar political platforms. The

FBI might have had a responsibility to investigate suspected fascist organizations; nonetheless, given the unsubstantiated nature of the intelligence gleaned about the Committee and Hoover's interest in providing political intelligence reports to the administration, the motives of the FBI director do seem suspicious.³⁶

* * *

FBI officials were interested in any information that linked the America First Committee to fascist elements. As many Americans at the time, they uncritically believed the widespread innuendo—spread very effectively by interventionist groups—that the Committee was either sympathetic toward or an unwitting tool of fascism.³⁷ Such information was regularly forwarded in FBI reports to administration officials and had the effect of either bolstering already held beliefs about the group's alleged fascism or helping mold those beliefs. One report sent to FBI headquarters in July exemplifies the purposeful gathering of such derogatory information. This report noted that the interventionist publication *The Hour* had learned that the America First Committee had adopted the slogan "America for Americans," a term reportedly used by groups like the German-American Bund, Silver Shirts, and the Christian Front.³⁸ Such links seemingly confirmed that America First was fascist or, in the very least, suspicious.

Similar information suggesting that fascist groups worked with the America First Committee was forwarded to Hoover in July 1941 from newspaper and radio gossip commentator Walter Winchell, who had learned it from the Anti-Nazi League. When forwarding this information to Winchell, League officials stated: "you're welcome to use it in any way." Winchell forwarded the information to

Hoover, who was an intimate contact. Because the information concerned the New York City America First Committee and its alleged contacts with fascists from abroad, Hoover forwarded the information to the New York field office "for your information only." What, if anything, officials of the FBI's New York office did with the information purporting to show the fascist links of the America First Committee is unknown.³⁹

In November 1941, an FBI informer provided further information about an America First rally in Youngstown, Ohio, that pertained to the group's subversive character. According to the Bureau's memorandum on the meeting, one of the primary speakers, the Reverend Walter Klein, "condemned Godless Russia, President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and others favorable to this country's foreign policy." Bureau officials were particularly interested to learn that those attending the meeting "were urged to wire or write their Congressmen demanding that he oppose any change in the Neutrality Act." The FBI memorandum also noted "that no American flag was displayed anywhere in the hall and that the National Anthem was not sung." Further, "It was the opinion that the general makeup for the program was pro-Nazi with a few exceptions of women who were mothers having their sons in the service."⁴⁰

Such reports, suggesting that the America First Committee was in league with Nazi Germany, might have convinced some FBI officials that the America First Committee was subversive and thereby properly subject to scrutiny. In late November, FBI officials received a copy of a publication put out by the American Legion entitled: "Subversive Activities in America First Committee in California."

Since 1940 FBI officials had maintained a close relationship with the American Legion which continued until 1966. Members of this veterans' organization investigated, collected, and forwarded information on "subversive activities" to the Bureau. In this instance, the Legion provided a nineteen-page document that had the purpose "of preventing the misuse of sincere Americans by Nazis or other subversive persons operating through the America First Committee." The document outlined the America First Committee's links to subversive groups and individuals—according to the Legion's informers—and suggested that the Committee was being duped by fascists as a tool for Nazi propaganda.⁴¹

FBI officials took particular interest in the America First Committee chapters in Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York City. These were among the three largest chapters of the organization and generated a significant amount of intelligence for FBI officials, more than that generated by FBI surveillance of smaller America First chapters. FBI agents employed informers to gather intelligence on these three chapters. This reliance on informers proved significant given their questionable reliability, in general. And indeed the quality of the FBI's information on the America First Committee (in terms of accuracy and corroboration) is often suspect; FBI officials seemingly accepted the widely-held notion that the Committee was a dupe of fascist elements from abroad. Interventionist groups such as the Fight For Freedom Committee successfully promoted this view.

A Bureau informer who provided intelligence on the Washington, D.C., America First chapter reflects the popular view that the Committee was subversive.

The informer, whose name has been withheld in the released FBI records on privacy grounds, claimed “that in making application for membership in the America First Committee, he wrote down his affiliations with pro-Nazi and other subversive organizations to see what would be the reaction, and stated that they just smiled and nodded.” The informer continued that America First was a Fascist movement whose membership was “deeply polluted by the Fascist crowd.” In his view the “honest isolationists” in the Committee were vastly outnumbered by “anti-administration businessmen and industrialists with an overwhelming following of appeasers, Nazis, Fascists, and other enemies of the democratic way of life.” America First, the informer further claimed, was the nexus for a Fascist revolution in America as numerous subversive groups and over 130 congressmen were either “openly or clandestinely with the America First movement.”⁴²

Not all FBI agents reported that America First was fascist. The special agent in charge at Chicago, for example, reported, following the dissolution of the Committee after Pearl Harbor, that this “investigation to date has failed to reveal any indication that the structure of America First, has in any way, been used by foreign interests or individuals cooperating with foreign interests.” The agent continued, “There have been a few local Chapters . . . who have reportedly made available lists and pledged cooperation to certain radical groups but these have been isolated instances and in the opinion of persons interviewed, represented only a minute minority of the total membership.”⁴³

The special agent in charge of the FBI’s New York City office took a different view. He characterized the America First Committee as a Nazi tool. He

summarized the totality of the information collected by the New York office: “Such material tends to prove support of, or connection with the America First Committee by such known or alleged subversive organizations as the German-American Bund, Christian Front, Silver Shirts, Women United, Mothers’ organizations, Christian Mobilizers, American Destiny Party” among many other groups and extremist individuals. Not only did the America First Committee maintain no official links with any of these groups, but none of the information in his report—such as newspaper and magazine clippings from extremist publications that took a similar anti-interventionist political position as America First—proved such subversive connections. His reporting reflects an interest in any data that suggested subversive links maintained by the Committee.⁴⁴

* * *

In addition to monitoring the political activities of the America First Committee, FBI officials were also interested in the activities of African Americans and women’s groups associated with the organization. The FBI’s monitoring of those associations did not reach the scope of the Bureau’s subsequent investigations of these groups (mainly because blacks and women were small in number within the ranks of America First). This relatively limited interest fits into a pattern of concern over the activities of groups that senior Bureau officials somehow considered subversive. This characterization was not because of their involvement in illegal activities but their political views.

The America First Committee’s “Colored Section” or, more properly, the Charles A. Young Division of America First for Negroes, became a subject of FBI

files.⁴⁵ Because very small, and probably in the larger scheme of things inconsequential, FBI officials only generated one document (that we know of) about the Committee's African-American section which was based in Washington, D.C. Why would some blacks wish to advocate anti-interventionism? Historian Mark Lincoln Chadwin has written that many African Americans either opposed U.S. involvement in war preferring that the nation focus on solving race problems at home, or, during this period, simply had no political voice or were largely deferential to decisions made by white society.⁴⁶

One FBI report identified the head of the "colored" section, Dr. J. Finley Wilson, who was associated with the fraternal group Colored Elks of the World, and the section's secretary, Perry W. Howard. The report further listed the eighteen members of the division's general committee, primarily black ministers, lawyers, and other professionals. FBI officials were particularly interested in the division's distribution "of literature in colored circles requesting the colored population to petition their national representatives to discourage the United States from entering the European war." The division had encouraged African Americans nationwide to organize their own America First "colored" chapters. FBI officials reported this particular information in a blind summary memorandum forwarded to Secretary Knox in August 1941 in response to his request for information about the Committee based on the suspicion that the Committee sought to disrupt the defense effort by agitating labor disputes.⁴⁷

While a predominantly white, male and conservative organization, the America First Committee had a limited female makeup. The Committee employed

several prominent American women as speakers, and several served on the national committee or worked for it (two will be discussed in chapter seven). In addition, a number of right-wing women's groups maintained an informal relationship with America First. By and large, however, most women and women's groups maintained their own separate organizations owing to the dominance of men in the America First Committee. Nevertheless, FBI agents were interested that some women were members of America First and, in particular, in those women's groups who had any linkage, perceived or otherwise, with the committee. To FBI officials, any links with the America First Committee was tantamount to membership. This interest in the America First Committee's female makeup highlights FBI officials' interest in a multitude of targets who distinguished themselves by opposing administration foreign policy.⁴⁸

Despite the America First Committee's failure to recruit a significant female membership, just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, which ended the isolationist-interventionist debate, some of the Committee's leadership considered "enlisting" women's groups. Ruth Sarles, the Committee's liaison with Senate leaders, on 5 December was "not too sanguine as I look over the women's organizations." She feared that most of the leadership of women's groups held an internationalist (in effect opposing anti-interventionism) outlook and "With this sort of conditioning of the members' minds in years past, it would be surprising if it were at all easy to make headway in the non-interventionist behalf." The quick end of the Great Debate two days after her comments forestalled any future plans.⁴⁹

FBI officials did, however, monitor America First women's activity since 1940. An FBI memorandum listed some prominent female members, including Janet Ayer Fairbank, Kathryn Lewis, and Alice Roosevelt Longworth. FBI agent J. B. O'Leary specifically reported that the executive vice-president of the group Roll Call of American Women, based in Chicago, visited Washington, D. C., to present an Illinois congressman with 11,000 signatures of members who opposed the Lend-Lease bill and American intervention in the European conflict. O'Leary noted that the group had been formed in summer 1940 but merged with the America First Committee in December of the same year. By November, another FBI memorandum described a different women's group, Women Determined, as "nothing more than a subsidiary of the America First Committee."⁵⁰

Another FBI report filed by the New York City field office noted that the group Women United, the largest nationalist women's organization based in New York, had access to and was using the mailing lists of both the America First Committee and the Committee for No Foreign Wars. This report continued that Women United lacked funds to carry on its campaign, particularly a trip to Washington, D.C., to protest intervention in the war, but that the America First Committee planned to fund this event. The FBI's source identified the source of this America First funding as Mrs. Seth Milliken and Mrs. Grant Simmons, both of America First who had provided Women United with a total of \$3,000.⁵¹

In October 1941 FBI agents reported that Women United in New York had distributed notices of America First Committee meetings and advertised their own political trip to Washington to protest revision of the neutrality act. In addition the

New York SAC continued, Women United and We, the Mothers,⁵² another women's anti-interventionist organization, planned to merge with the America First Committee. FBI officials deemed important that the America First Committee employed aviator Laura Ingalls as a speaker. In 1942 Ingalls (see chapter seven) was prosecuted under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, the same legislation with which Bureau officials had sought to build a case against the America First Committee.⁵³

An FBI blind summary memorandum, sent to the White House, identified by name the female leadership of the Washington, D.C., chapter of the America First Committee. The memorandum outlined the political activity of Janet Ayer Fairbanks, and specifically that she was "Active in cause of women suffrage and politics; former member of the Executive Committee of the Democratic National Committee; was a member of the Women's National Liberty Loan Committee during the World War; has written several books."⁵⁴ FBI Director Hoover forwarded the same memorandum to Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox in September 1941, adding to the political information about America First that: "The [committee's] literature also makes an appeal to American mothers to aid the Committee for the purpose of preventing their sons from being embroiled in another European war." This memorandum further reported that America First speaker Catherine Curtis had founded the group Women's National Committee for Hands Off the Supreme Court and had helped form Women Investors in America, Inc.. Curtis had worked closely with the America First Committee, the FBI source

continued, with other women's groups associated with the Committee, and was reportedly "engaged in a telephone whispering campaign."⁵⁵

Another FBI memorandum summarizing the activities of the America First Committee in Washington, D.C., reported that Dorothy Detzer—of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and closely associated with anti-interventionist Senator Gerald Nye—"is said to consider herself the brain of the America First Committee." The Washington SAC described her as "instrumental" in the organization of the Committee, and that a speech on 16 March 1941 she had claimed that "the administration was dragging the United States into the war and that [a] fanatic new order in Europe could only be conquered [sic] by an alternative new order for the United States." While sketchy, the report reflects an interest in Detzer as a leading female anti-interventionist and one who, in at least the opinion of FBI officials, might have advocated a radical regime (i.e. a new order) to replace the Roosevelt administration.⁵⁶

FBI officials found the remark of another female member of America First's Washington, D.C., chapter, Isabel French, of particular interest, citing her comment: "We of America First believe that you can come to an understanding and do business with Hitler. The interventionists think you can't come to an understanding and do business with Hitler." A second female member of the chapter, Agnes Waters, was reported to have carried out an "anti-administration isolationist program" through letters and speeches that called for "the death penalty for President Roosevelt, as a traitor to his country."⁵⁷

The last reference to women and America First in the released FBI files was reported in 1942. The report on the America First Committee noted that “considerable dissention arose among members of the Women’s Division of the America First Committee” due to arguments over “individual beliefs.”⁵⁸

The above examples constitute the totality of FBI records about the America First Committee women, in general. FBI agents were interested in ascertaining the role of individual women but were specifically interested in the political activities and alleged links with the America First Committee. The paucity of references to women was consistent with the Committee’s overwhelming male character, particularly in most of its leadership positions. With the exception of some prominent America First women, most were regarded as concerned mothers whose only desire was to not see their sons killed in a foreign war. That FBI agents collected such information about these women’s political activities is nonetheless significant documenting an interest in the political views of various types of anti-interventionists. The common theme of FBI reports on the activities of women was their actual or perceived link with the America First Committee, President Roosevelt’s best-organized political opponent.

* * *

In October 1941, President Roosevelt requested that Congress revise the Neutrality Act to permit both the arming of merchant ships and to allow these ships to carry goods to British ports. The president’s goal was to increase the ability of the United States to provide the Allies with aid-short-of-war. Anti-interventionists, as historian Wayne Cole noted, concluded they could not defeat the president in a

political battle where the issue was defined in terms of aid-short-of-war. Instead, they attempted to present the issue as one of war or peace. The America First Committee urged the public, and members of the House and Senate to regard revision as an act that would lead either to war (if passed) or peace (if not). This attempt to alter the context of the debate failed. Nevertheless, the victory over the anti-interventionists was a narrow one and confirmed the continuing influence of the America First Committee in shaping public opinion. By November the Senate voted for revision by a count of 50 to 37, and the House by a vote of 212 to 194. Nonetheless the debate over intervention was far from settled. As Roosevelt speechwriter Robert Sherwood (and later chief of the Office of War Information) wrote concerning these times, "isolationist sentiment became ever more strident in expression and aggressive in action, and Roosevelt was relatively powerless to combat it. He said everything 'short of war' that could be said. He had no more tricks left. The hat from which he had pulled so many rabbits was empty."⁵⁹

But President Roosevelt had, in fact, one last rabbit in his hat. To end the stalemate reflected in the close vote over revising the Neutrality Act, Roosevelt opted for a companion strategy. On 17 November, the same day he signed the revised Neutrality Bill, President Roosevelt directed the attorney general to begin "a Grand Jury investigation of the money sources behind the America First Committee." Roosevelt hoped that the grand jury, and the resultant publicity, might serve to discredit his anti-interventionist critics. He opted for the grand jury idea out of frustration to "get any action out of Congress." Throughout 1941, FBI Director Hoover had periodically forwarded to the president reports of unsubstantiated

information suggesting the questionable sources of America First Committee's funding. Many interventionists in Congress and out believed that the America First Committee's funds originated from fascist sources. In reality, the Committee took careful steps to avoid taking money from individuals who might have a tainted background. America First officials, for example, refused to accept donations over one hundred dollars unless the source had been vetted. They even refused to accept a \$4,000 anonymous donation once until the contributor's identity was verified.⁶⁰

Hoover immediately sought to support the proposed grand jury inquiry. He first forwarded to Attorney General Biddle a summary memorandum of all Bureau information concerning the America First Committee.⁶¹ FBI officials further pursued a new lead. This lead originated in a sensational book in press at Harper and Brothers Publishers that claimed the German government secretly subsidized the America First Committee.⁶² The book was Michael Sayers's and Albert E. Kahn's *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (1942). Published by Harper's in mid-1942, Sayers and Kahn's book raised questions about the sources of America First's funding.⁶³

Sayers and Kahn recount examples of several suspicious characters associated with the America First Committee who had received money from German sources. The authors describe how prominent Ohio lawyer Frank Burch, who according to the authors had helped found the Akron chapter of America First, received \$10,000 from the German government to distribute pro-Nazi literature. Sayers and Kahn also suggest that Germany had funded the extremist paper *The Herald*, which regularly printed advertising for the America First Committee.⁶⁴

For several months FBI agents attempted to interview Russell Davenport, Sayers and Kahn's editor, to examine their research files. FBI officials tried time and again to arrange an interview with Davenport but this meeting was continually postponed due to constant scheduling conflicts and delays. Bureau and Justice Department officials concurrently weighed the available evidence. Attorney General Biddle, after discussing the matter with Harper and Brothers lawyer, Morris Ernst (also closely linked with the Roosevelt administration), suggested to Hoover that the evidence that America First had received foreign money was scant but seemingly "there is a good deal of evidence of interlocking management which might be the basis of registering under the [Foreign Agents] Registration Act."⁶⁵ (The Act, of 17 October 1940, required all foreign-controlled groups to register with the Justice Department.) Ernst emphasized that if it could be proved America First had received foreign money, the organization could be prosecuted for failing to register under the provisions of the Foreign Agents Registration Act.

Morris Ernst, the lawyer representing Davenport and Harper's Publishers, had a professional interest in discrediting the America First Committee. He revealed some of his thoughts long after the Sayers and Kahn lead in an 8 April 1942 letter he wrote President Roosevelt advising him of another discussion he had with Attorney General Biddle suggesting "aggressive action against American Fifth Columnists through the medium of Treasury Department tax returns of information from America First, Coughlin, et al." Then on 23 May, Ernst sent the president an extensive list of people who had contributed to the America First Committee which he had secured from "reliable" sources. When Ernst later learned that no one from

either the Justice or Treasury Departments was seriously pursuing the matter, he urged Roosevelt to continue the project. Despite Ernst's suggestions made in 1942 (after the seeking of Sayers' and Kahn's evidence), all along FBI officials were reluctant to undertake Ernst's plan owing to its public nature. In a 12 December 1941 memorandum FBI Assistant Director Edward Tamm recommended that the FBI avoid becoming involved in the type of effort Ernst long advocated because it "appears rather obviously to be an effort to curtail exposed and publicized facts relating to organizations such as America First—in fact that is probably the organization that was specifically in mind." Nothing ever came of the suggestions, but they illustrate the latent desire of some administration officials to discredit their opponents in the then heated political atmosphere, as well as the hesitancy of senior FBI officials to become involved in any action that would publicly be viewed as questionable and linked to the FBI. FBI officials preferred to work in secret.⁶⁶

Bureau officials nonetheless were keenly interested in the intelligence offered in the soon-to-be-published book. After some hesitation and still having failed to obtain interviews with the book's authors or the president of the publishing company, Justice Department officials decided to assign the case to the Criminal Division for possible prosecution under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.⁶⁷ Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, this effort was temporarily suspended.⁶⁸ The Bureau's investigation resumed with the start of the new year but FBI agents were not able to examine Sayers and Kahn's material until April 1942. By then the anti-interventionists had disbanded and FBI officials had serious questions about the reliability of both Albert Kahn owing to his alleged

connections with the Communist Party and the Anti-Defamation League, who had offered the use of its files in this matter, owing to its leftist nature. In any event, Bureau officials eventually evaluated the information “to be largely worthless.”⁶⁹

The FBI’s monitoring of the pre-war anti-interventionists, however, did not cease with the United States entrance into the war, the questionable assertions of Sayers and Kahn and the dissolution of the America First Committee to FBI officials remained a concern in response to the Committee’s announcement on 1 December 1941 to take an active part in the 1942 off-year elections. Their plan was to swing some close elections away from President Roosevelt. Indeed, on 13 February 1942 Hoover informed Roosevelt’s secretary, Edwin Watson, about the 17 December dinner party at which Charles Lindbergh was present (see chapter three). In addition to describing Lindbergh’s remarks at the meeting, Hoover advised the White House that Lindbergh had “indicated . . . [that] the America First Committee can again be a political force; that there may be a time soon when the Committee can advocate a negotiated peace.” Hoover also provided the White House with a twenty-one page summary memorandum on the “structure, activities, and connections of the America First Committee as it was organized prior to its allegedly going out of existence following our entry into war.”⁷⁰

FBI agents soon learned about the alleged secret activities of the America First Committee provided by an informer. On 26 February FBI Assistant Director Clyde Tolson reported to Hoover that Lindbergh at a dinner party in New York allegedly remarked that America First had gone underground. The FBI’s source claimed that Lindbergh believed that “this war hysteria will wear off and we will

come back.” In response, Hoover advised Tolson that “We ought to get to [the] bottom of this.”⁷¹

Then, on 16 March Hoover ordered senior FBI officials and SACs nationwide to continue to investigate the Committee and demanded a report from the SACs in fifteen days. As rationale to continue the probe, Hoover cited Lindbergh’s remarks that America First had gone underground and planned to surface later. According to the FBI director, the Committee was remaining active via “house parties . . . to keep alive contacts.” Hoover ordered that “The investigation along these lines should be immediately initiated following a review of the files in your office for background information and should be made in a discreet manner so as to cause no undue publicity.” Hoover urged agents to employ “confidential informants” as well as “sincere isolationists, who formerly were active in this Committee and who now realize the necessity for an all out national defense.” Agents, however, should be careful when approaching Committee members, as they might be associated with the alleged underground section of the America First Committee. The FBI Director based this investigation on the Foreign Agents Registration Act. FBI agents were “to ascertain whether the structure set up by the America First Committee is now being used by foreign interests, or by individuals cooperating with foreign interests, in such a manner as to interfere with the national defense effort.”⁷²

Special agents in charge at each FBI office nationwide initiated investigations in their geographic areas as to the status of the America First Committee. Some of the larger field offices, such as Chicago, submitted reports on

smaller cities that fell under their jurisdiction. FBI agents followed Hoover's orders by employing informers to gather their intelligence. They also chronicled the activities of local America First chapters dating from their origins. No SAC, however, uncovered anything to suggest that the America First Committee had gone underground in anticipation of reemerging later to become involved again in American politics. Instead, each FBI field office confirmed that all America First Committee chapters had disbanded.⁷³

The FBI's surveillance of President Roosevelt's most prominent organized foreign policy opponent, the America First Committee, reflects FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's motives and interests during the pre-war period. Hoover sought to satisfy administration political and policy interests by providing political intelligence to both policy makers and those who attacked policy critics; he also attempted to develop evidence which the administration could use to prosecute the America First Committee. At various times, FBI officials investigated the possibility of employing the provisions of the Selective Service Act or the Foreign Agents Registration Act to prosecute the Committee. They hoped to uncover evidence that the Committee had received funds from a foreign government (namely Nazi Germany) or, at least, had links to a foreign government through various extremist groups or foreign registered groups. If this could be proved, then the Committee could have been prosecuted for not registering with the Justice Department as a foreign-controlled or funded organization.

While the FBI had the responsibility to investigate possible violations of federal criminal statutes, none of the Bureau's information regarding the America

First Committee in any credible way uncovered evidence of a crime. Rather, the intelligence was garnered from informers whose credibility was questionable, and whose bias was clear, and whose information was mostly inaccurate. On more than one occasion FBI agents received exculpatory information that demonstrated that the Committee had made a concerted effort to exclude extremists from its ranks and to conduct its affairs in a legal manner.

Did, then, FBI officials believe that the America First Committee was a subversive organization or a dupe of the fascists? Was their purpose only to *kowtow* to the administration's perceptions along these lines by providing official FBI reports to that effect? Neither question can be answered definitively. No released document explicitly confirms that senior FBI officials believed that the America First Committee was controlled by subversive elements. Nonetheless, numerous documents imply such a belief. Nor is there any explicit evidence to confirm that FBI officials passed on their reports while, perhaps, not truly believing in their accuracy. Hoover's statement in March 1942 to interview anti-interventionists "who now realize the necessity for an all out national defense" suggests, but does not prove, that Hoover was an advocate of intervention. What is clear is that FBI Director Hoover willingly provided political intelligence to the White House regarding its opponents and sought to develop any possible legal avenues that might lead to the prosecution of Roosevelt's opponents.

Hoover interpreted Roosevelt's somewhat ambiguous request early in 1941 to "find out who is paying for this [leaflet]" as a reason to launch an investigation into the Committee's financial resources. Roosevelt never requested such a probe

until late in 1941. Thereafter, Hoover provided updates on the Committee's allegedly sinister funding until in November 1941 when President Roosevelt directly requested a probe into the group's funding. Hoover's interest in the America First Committee's financial backing, and reports to the White House on it, may have influenced the president to pursue that investigative avenue.

FBI officials may have been as caught up in the hype and distortions created about the anti-interventionists as were many Americans. And as FBI agents accumulated more and more information suggesting that the America First Committee had fascist leanings or was a foreign controlled organization, they may very well have believed their own data seeing a subversive pattern in it. Later, when political tensions were at their height, it may have seemed prudent to try to develop a legal case against the Committee using this suggestive data. In any event, Hoover's effort to monitor and then provide political intelligence to administration officials on the America First Committee amidst and following the Lend-Lease debate, his providing of unsolicited reports on the alleged sources of the Committee's funds, his attempt to link the committee to fascist elements or foreign governments, and his interest in groups somehow linked to the Committee illustrates the FBI director's pragmatism. During the isolationist-interventionist foreign policy debate he provided the administration with information that fed into the political interests of the president while working to develop legal cases against the president's anti-interventionist political opponents.

NOTES

¹ Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-1941* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), 10-13; Justus D. Doenecke (ed.), *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-Interventionist Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 7, 87-88.

² Cole, *America First*, 13-15; America First aims as quoted in Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 381.

³ Justus D. Doenecke, *The Battle Against Intervention, 1939-1941* (Malabar: Krieger Press, 1997), 9.

⁴ Doenecke, *In Danger Undaunted*, 16-17. For the Committee's effort to distance itself from "Nazis, Bundists, Fascists, Silver Shirts, Christian Frontists, et cetera," see letter Robert E. Wood to Edgar B. Stern, 17 June 1941, Robert E. Wood papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library [HHL], West Branch, Iowa. An example of the America First Committee's conservative character can be found in: letter, Henry Regnery to Roy Cullen, 19 March 1953, Robert E. Wood papers, HHL.

⁵ Report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384.

⁶ Letter, E. P. Guinane to J. Edgar Hoover, 9 November 1940, FBI 100-4712-1.

⁷ Memorandum, Louis Nichols to Clyde Tolson, 16 December 1940, FBI 100-4712-3. Emphasis added.

⁸ Memorandum re America First Committee, J. B. O'Leary to Edward A. Tamm, 29 January 1941, FBI 100-4712-6. The Bureau followed this memorandum up with a more detailed, yet still limited, description of America First and its leaders. See memorandum re America First Committee, 7 February 1941, FBI 100-4712-10.

⁹ Robert Wood quoted in Doenecke (ed.), *In Danger Undaunted*, 22.

¹⁰ Doenecke (ed.), *In Danger Undaunted*, 23; America First Committee Washington News Letter #1, 31 January 1941, reprinted in Doenecke (ed.), *In Danger Undaunted*, 226-27.

¹¹ Personal and confidential letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 21 February 1941, Official File 10-B, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library [FDRL], Hyde Park, New York.

¹² Personal and confidential letter and blind memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Edwin Watson, 26 February 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL; personal and confidential letter and memorandum, Hoover to Adolf A. Berle, 27 February 1941, FBI 100-4712-7X; personal and confidential letter and memorandum, Hoover to Matthew F. McGuire, 27 February 1941, FBI 100-4712-7X; personal and confidential memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Attorney General, 27 February 1941, FBI 100-4712-14X.

¹³ Blind memorandum re America First Committee, 3 March 1941, FBI 100-4712-17X.

¹⁴ Letter, Roosevelt to Hoover, 14 June 1940, Official File 10-B, FDRL; letter, Hoover to Roosevelt, 18 June 1940, President's Personal File 4819, FDRL.

¹⁵ America First Committee circular, FBI 100-4712-18; memorandum, Roosevelt to Early, 21 February 1941, FBI 100-4712-18.

¹⁶ Handwritten note on routing slip, Hoover to K. R. McIntire, 26 February 1941, FBI 100-4712-18.

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- ¹⁷ Blind summary memorandum re America First Committee, no date, FBI 100-4712-18; memorandum, Early to Roosevelt, 4 March 1941, Official File 4330, FDRL.
- ¹⁸ Letter, Hoover to Early, 1 March 1941, FBI 100-4712-18. Emphasis added.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 19 March 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL; personal and confidential memorandum, Hoover to Biddle, 19 March 1941, FBI 100-4712-20; blind memorandum, 19 March 1941, FBI 100-4712-20.
- ²¹ Letter, Robert E. Wood to Herbert Hoover, 8 July 1941, Robert E. Wood papers, HHL; *Chicago Daily Tribune* (21 April 1941). For an itinerary of some of the tours see letter, Robert E. Wood to R. Douglas Stuart, 16 April 1941, and Robert L. Bliss to All Chapters, 14 April 1941, America First Committee Papers, Box 57, Hoover Institution Archives [HIA], Stanford University.
- ²² Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 27 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-170; report, SAC Los Angeles to Hoover, 3 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-158; memorandum, Hoover to Biddle, 8 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-158; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 13 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-158.
- ²³ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 10 July 1941, and blind memorandum, 10 May 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ²⁴ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 22 September 1941, and blind memorandum, 22 September 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ²⁵ Memorandum, D. A. Flinn to Mr. Kramer, 13 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-203.
- ²⁶ Letter, Hoover to Watson, 12 May 1941, President's Secretary's File, Justice, FDRL.
- ²⁷ Confidential memorandum, Biddle to Hoover, 28 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-127; confidential memorandum, Hoover to Biddle, 3 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-127; confidential and secret blind summary memorandum re America First Committee, 29 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-127.
- ²⁸ Memorandum, Assistant Director Edward A. Tamm to Hoover, 3 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-132.
- ²⁹ Entry for 28 May 1941, Frank Knox Diary, Papers of Frank Knox, box 1, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. See also Francis MacDonnell, *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 80-81; Joan Jensen, *Army Surveillance in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 217.
- ³⁰ Memorandum, Kramer to Tamm, 3 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-154; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Knox, 3 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-154; confidential and secret blind summary memorandum re America First Committee, 29 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-154; letter, Knox to Hoover, 8 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-135.
- ³¹ Report, America First Committee, by SAC Kansas City, Missouri, 18 June 1941, FBI 100-4712-75. On Flynn see Ronald Radosh, *Profits on the Right: Profiles of Conservative Critics of American Globalism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 197-273.
- ³² Letter, Chester Bowles to R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., 28 November 1941 in Doenecke (ed.), *In Danger Undaunted*, 107-8; Justus D. Doenecke, *Storm on the Horizon: The Challenge to American*

Intervention, 1939-1941 (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 276; Cole, *America First*, 117-18; letter, A. H. Johnson to Hoover, 4 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-411; memorandum, D. M. Ladd to Hoover, 27 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-179; memorandum, D. M. Ladd to E. A. Tamm, 17 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-202; memorandum, Clyde Tolson to Hoover, 24 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-165; memorandum, Louis Nichols to Tolson, 1 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-175.

³³ Memorandum, J. K. Mumford to D. Milton Ladd, 16 October 1942, FBI 100-4712-472.

³⁴ Confidential letter, SAC San Diego to Hoover, 7 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-186.

³⁵ Letter, Hoover to editor, *San Diego Union*, 17 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-183; letter, Hoover to Wood, 17 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-186; letter, Wood to Hoover, 22 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-204;

³⁶ Letter, SAC FBI Chicago to Hoover, 30 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-129.

³⁷ See Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 208-231; Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention, 1940-41* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953), 104-130; Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 142-56.

³⁸ Memorandum, D. Carrie to Mr. Kramer, 12 July 1941, FBI 100-4712-91.

³⁹ Letter, Walter Winchell to Hoover, 22 July 1941, FBI 100-4712-92; letter, Hoover to E. J. Connelly, 30 July 1941, FBI 100-4712-92.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, D. A. Flinn to R. P. Kramer, 25 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-238.

⁴¹ Personal and confidential memorandum, Lawrence A. C. Smith to Hoover, 22 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-238X. On the FBI's liaison with the American Legion see Athan Theoharis, "The FBI and the American Legion Contact Program, 1940-1966," *Political Science Quarterly* 100 (Summer 1985): 271-286.

⁴² Report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384.

⁴³ Report, SAC Chicago to FBI HQ, 29 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-397.

⁴⁴ Report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 11 July 1942, FBI 100-4712-443.

⁴⁵ There are only two very brief references to African Americans in the America First Committee: Cole, *America First*, 28; Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 186.

⁴⁶ Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 186. See also Kenneth O'Reilly, "The Roosevelt Administration and Black America: Federal Surveillance Policy and Civil Rights During the New Deal and World War II Years," *Phylon* 48 (1987): 12-25; Patrick Washburn, "J. Edgar Hoover and the Black Press in World War II," *Journalism History* 13 (Spring 1986): 26-33; *idem*, *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Neil Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, rev. ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993); Rayford Logan (ed.), *What the Negro Wants* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

⁴⁷ Memorandum, K. R. McIntire to Mr. Kramer, 7 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-112; blind summary memorandum, 29 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-154; letter, Perry W. Howard to Katrina McCormick, America First Committee in DC, 16 September 1941, America First Committee papers, box 241,

HIA. The Bureau had investigated J. Finley Wilson in May 1917 for alleged subversion when he allowed German propagandists to place articles in his newspaper, the *Washington Eagle* in 1915. See Mark Ellis, *Race, War, and Surveillance: African Americans and the United States Government During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 120.

⁴⁸ Most historians have been interested in the so-called “mothers’ movement,” a group of women who were strongly to the right of the America First Committee. See Laura McEnaney, “He-Men and Christian Mothers: The America First Movement and Gendered Meanings of Patriotism and Isolationism,” *Diplomatic History* 18 (Winter 1994): 47-57; Glen Jeansonne, “An Antiwar Movement That Was Not A Peace Movement: The Mothers’ Crusade Against World War II,” *Peace and Change* 24 (January 1999): 29-47; Glen Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers’ Movement and World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). For assessments of the more mainstream women’s movements see Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917-1994* (Newark: Rutgers University Press, 1997), chapter 5; Susan Dion, “The FBI Surveillance of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1945-1963,” *Journal for Peace and Justice Studies* 3 (1991): 1-21.

⁴⁹ Letter, Ruth Sarles to Page Hufty, 5 December 1941, America First Committee papers, box 239, HIA.

⁵⁰ Memorandum, J. B. O’Leary to Edward A. Tamm, 29 January 1941, FBI 100-4712-6; memorandum, D. A. Flinn to R. P. Kramer, 7 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-223.

⁵¹ Report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 11 July 1942, FBI 100-4712-443; Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, 124-27.

⁵² On the group We the Mothers Mobilize for America see Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right*, chapter 7.

⁵³ Report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 11 July 1942, FBI 100-4712-443.

⁵⁴ Letter, Hoover to Early, 1 March 1941, and blind memorandum re America First Committee, 1 March 1941, FBI 100-4712-18.

⁵⁵ Blind memorandum re America First Committee, 29 August 1941, FBI 100-4712-154; report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384. Laura McEnaney notes that this was a common appeal of women in the anti-interventionist camp. See McEnaney, “He-Men and Christian Mothers.”

⁵⁶ Report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384.

⁵⁷ Report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384.

⁵⁸ Report, America First Committee, 9 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-354.

⁵⁹ Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 446-453; Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), 382-83.

⁶⁰ Memorandum, Roosevelt to the attorney general, 17 November 1941, President’s Secretary’s File: Justice Department, FDRL; Cole, *America First*, 117, 126.

⁶¹ Memorandum, Tamm to Ladd, 21 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-230; memorandum, Hoover to the attorney general, 22 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-210; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 4 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-309; memorandum for attorney general re America First Committee, 4 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-309.

⁶² Memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 21 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-231.

⁶³ Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (New York: Harper's and Brothers, 1942). FOIA redactions do not reveal the author's names but other evidence proves that this was the book that had interested Bureau officials. The names of the authors are deleted in FBI documents, but they do reveal that the authors' information about the sources of America First's funds was located at the offices of *The Hour*, a confidential newsletter that devoted itself to exposing Fifth Column activities. Albert Kahn, one of the book's authors, was the editor of this newsletter. Despite the redacted nature of the documents acquired by my own FOIA request, these names were publicly released in some of these identical documents released to historian Wayne Cole. Letter, SAC New York to Hoover, 25 April 1942, FBI 100-4712-344; letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 2 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-345; memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 21 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-231. For Cole's copies of these documents refer to his papers at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library in West Branch, Iowa.

⁶⁴ Sayers and Kahn, *Sabotage!*, 235-36. Historian Wayne Cole noted that Burch was never an officer in the Akron chapter and that he did not contribute any money to the organization. See Cole, *America First*, 124.

⁶⁵ Memorandum, Tamm to Ladd, 21 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-230; memorandum, Hoover to Tolson and Tamm, 21 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-220; memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 22 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-221; memorandum, Hoover to Tolson and Tamm, 24 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-228; memorandum, Hoover to Tolson and Tamm, 24 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-216; memorandum, Hoover to Tolson and Tamm, 22 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-217; memorandum, Hoover to Tolson and Tamm, 21 November 1941, FBI 100-4712-219.

⁶⁶ Letter, Morris Ernst to Roosevelt, 8 April 1942, President's Secretary's File—Ernst, FDRL; letter, Ernst to Roosevelt, 23 May 1942, PSF—Ernst, FDRL; letter, Ernst to Roosevelt, 10 June 1942, PSF—Ernst, FDRL; memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to Hoover, 12 December 1941, Martin Dies folder, Official and Confidential Files of J. Edgar Hoover.

⁶⁷ Memorandum, Hoover to Assistant Attorney General Berge, 2 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-240; memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 2 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-243; memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 2 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-244; memorandum, Tamm to Ladd, 4 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-245.

⁶⁸ Memorandum, Lawrence M. C. Smith, Chief, Special Defense Unit, to Hoover, 23 December 1941, FBI 100-4712-264.

⁶⁹ Letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 2 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-345; letter, SAC New York to Hoover, 14 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-342; memorandum, Frank W. Crocker to Hoover, 1 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-343; letter, P. E. Foxworth to Hoover, 2 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-345.

⁷⁰ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 13 February 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁷¹ Memorandum, Clyde Tolson to Hoover, 26 February 1942, FBI 100-4712-302; memorandum, D. M. Ladd to Hoover, 5 March 1942, FBI 100-4712-302. See chapter three for another dinner party which Lindbergh attended that interested FBI officials.

⁷² Memorandum, Hoover to senior FBI officials, 16 March 1942, FBI 100-4712-320; memorandum, Hoover to all SACs, 16 March 1942, FBI 100-4712-320; telegram, Hoover to all SACs, 11 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-349; telegram, Hoover to all SACs, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-374; telegram, Hoover to SACs Detroit, Miami, Butte, Philadelphia, 13 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-417.

⁷³ Report, SAC Cincinnati to FBI HQ, 25 April 1942, FBI 100-4712-337; report, SAC Huntington, WVA to FBI HQ, 27 April 1942, FBI 100-4712-341; report, SAC Phoenix to FBI HQ, 28 April 1942, FBI 100-4712-342; report, SAC Springfield to FBI HQ, 8 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-346; report, SAC San Diego to FBI HQ, 9 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-354; report, SAC Norfolk to FBI HQ, 12 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-355; report, SAC Seattle to FBI HQ, 11 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-357; report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 13 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-358; report, SAC Kansas City, Missouri to FBI HQ, 15 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-362; report, SAC Little Rock to FBI HQ, 18 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-363; report, SAC Jackson, Mississippi to FBI HQ, 18 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-364; report, SAC Dallas to FBI HQ, 18 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-365; report, SAC Denver to FBI HQ, 18 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-367; report, SAC Grand Rapids to FBI HQ, 16 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-368; report, SAC Indianapolis to FBI HQ, 17 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-369; report, SAC Memphis to FBI HQ, 22 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-371; report, SAC Des Moines to FBI HQ, 22 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-372; report, SAC Louisville to FBI HQ, 20 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-373; report, SAC San Juan to FBI HQ, 21 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-375; report, SAC New Haven to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-376; report, SAC Oklahoma City to FBI HQ, 25 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-377; report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-378; letter, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-380; report, SAC Salt Lake City to FBI HQ, 25 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-382; report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384; report, SAC Baltimore to FBI HQ, 27 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-385; report, SAC Houston to FBO HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-386; report, SAC Los Angeles to FBI HQ, 27 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-387; report, SAC Sioux Falls to FBI HQ, 27 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-388; report, SAC Providence to FBI HQ, 27 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-389; report, SAC Milwaukee to FBI HQ, 27 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-391; report, SAC San Antonio to FBI HQ, 28 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-392; report, SAC Charlotte to FBI HQ, 27 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-393; report, SAC New Orleans to FBI HQ, 28 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-395; report, SAC Juneau to FBI HQ, 25 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-396; report, SAC Chicago to FBI HQ, 29 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-397; report, SAC San Francisco to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-398; report SAC St. Louis to FBI HQ, 28 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-404; report, SAC Newark to FBI HQ, 30 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-405; report, SAC El Paso to FBI HQ, 4 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-467; report, SAC Richmond to FBI HQ, 2 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-408; report, SAC Philadelphia to FBI HQ, 6 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-409; report, SAC Buffalo to FBI HQ, 2 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-410; report, SAC Omaha to FBI HQ, 12 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-419; report, SAC Portland to FBI HQ, 5 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-420; report, SAC Butte to FBI HQ, 13 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-427; report, SAC Kansas City to FBI HQ, 22 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-428; report, SAC Detroit to FBI HQ, 22 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-429; report, SAC San Diego to FBI HQ, 25 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-432; report, SAC Miami to FBI HQ, 23 June 1942, FBI 100-4712-433; report, SAC Milwaukee to FBI HQ, 6 July 1942, FBI 100-4712-440; report, SAC Baltimore to FBI HQ, 8 July 1942, FBI 100-4712-442; report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 11 July 1942, FBI 100-4712-443; report, SAC Pittsburgh to FBI HQ, 1 September 1942, FBI 100-4712-458; report, SAC Salt Lake City to FBI HQ, 12 September 1942, FBI 100-4712-459; report, SAC Des Moines to FBI HQ, FBI 100-4712-460; report, SAC Salt Lake City to FBI HQ, 22 September 1942, FBI 100-4712-462; report, SAC De Moines to FBI HQ, 28 September 1942, FBI 100-4712-463; report, SAC Birmingham to FBI HQ, 1 October 1942, FBI 100-4712-465; report, SAC Cleveland to FBI HQ, 9 October 1942, FBI 100-4712-466; report, SAC San Diego to FBI HQ, 3 October 1942, FBI 100-4712-467; report, SAC Sioux Falls to FBI HQ, 15 October 1942, FBI 100-4712-470; report, SAC Indianapolis to FBI HQ, 14 October 1942, FBI 100-4712-471.

CHAPTER 5

FBI Surveillance of Congressional Anti-interventionists: Burton Wheeler, Hamilton Fish, and Gerald Nye.

J. Edgar Hoover's FBI took an interest in the political activities of prominent anti-interventionist congressmen and senators during the foreign policy debate of 1939-1941. While there were many legislators who caught the FBI's interest—insofar as Hoover could (and did) report their political activities to the White House—a select few in particular attracted focused FBI scrutiny. Republican Congressman Hamilton Fish of New York, Democratic Senator Burton Wheeler of Montana, and Republican Senator Gerald Nye of Nebraska represent the most important congressional anti-interventionists whom Bureau officials monitored. These three individuals are the focus of attention here because they were among the most influential “isolationists” in Congress and as such FBI officials monitored their personal and political activity to service White House political interests.

Significantly, FBI interest in these legislators' anti-interventionist politics was limited compared with, for example, Charles Lindbergh and the America First Committee. Hoover was particularly careful when investigating Wheeler, Fish, and Nye because they were powerful and influential government officials. If an FBI

probe into the activities of important government officials had been discovered, Hoover's tenure as Bureau director would have become vulnerable. Yet if White House officials asked him to monitor or investigate the political activities of influential congressional anti-interventionists, Hoover, buttressed with an executive request, approved FBI investigations. Additionally, Hoover collected and filed information gathered in confidence about anti-interventionist legislators whether or not the White House had solicited it and, moreover, some of this information he forwarded to White House officials.

During 1941, Hoover provided the White House with information concerning the general political activities of the anti-interventionist bloc of the United States Senate. His forwarding of such information to the White House increased during 1941 because it was in that year that Lend-Lease became a central issue in the interventionist/anti-interventionist foreign policy debate. With the issue over aid-short-of-war dominant in Congress, Hoover catered to Roosevelt's political interests, acting as a significant source of information.

On 21 February 1941, for example, Hoover reported to the White House that a "strictly confidential source" informed him that the Senate debate on Lend-Lease would "last for about two weeks or longer." Hoover also reported that eleven senators had "pledged themselves to filibuster in opposition to this Bill."¹ In August, Hoover forwarded another "memorandum of a highly confidential information" to the White House concerning Senate anti-interventionists. This memorandum reported information about alleged attempts by some individuals "to influence members of the isolationist bloc in the Senate to acquiesce in the

Administration's foreign policy."² A third memorandum Hoover forwarded to the White House, again in August, reported three pieces of information: "the attitude of certain members of the United States Senate regarding the expenditure of funds in behalf of the British under the Lend-Lease Act, the Congressional investigation regarding the use of cinema for propaganda purposes, and the current gasoline shortage."³ In September, when Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle requested "any information which might have come to our [the FBI] attention concerning the attitude of Congressional groups toward the President's international relations or foreign policy," Hoover forwarded to him a confidential memorandum. The FBI memorandum reported that, according to FBI sources, the president had nothing to worry about from Congress until the next elections. At that point there would likely be "some influential opposition" to the administration's policy. This memorandum further observed that the Senate Appropriations Committee was growing increasingly concerned over how the British were spending Lend-Lease funds.⁴

Roosevelt undoubtedly received from various sources many reports on the political activities of his anti-interventionist congressional opponents. The FBI's reports probably would not have been regarded as a unique information source. The FBI reports *are* significant, however, inasmuch as they do not reflect FBI officials' interest in criminal activity but an interest in servicing the administration's desire for political intelligence on its anti-interventionist critics. Far more important than the FBI's providing of general political information on the United States Senate was the FBI's investigation into certain members of that body and of the United States House of Representatives. The FBI's interest in Wheeler, Fish, and Nye

demonstrates Hoover's interest in developing information on Roosevelt's opposition that might be used to discredit them and, thereby, undermine their political influence.

* * *

Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a Democrat from Montana, was one of the president's greatest anti-interventionist critics and, despite not being a conservative, sided with the mostly conservative America First Committee to defeat Roosevelt's increasingly interventionist foreign policy. Wheeler was most aptly described as a western progressive politician. In 1932 he supported Roosevelt for president because "he is by far the most progressive" and thus viewed the New Yorker as the Democratic Party's "best bet."⁵ After Roosevelt's election to the presidency, Wheeler supported the New Deal and consulted the president on legislative matters. This political alliance, however, began to fade especially after Roosevelt's 1937 "court-packing" scheme and the increasing prominence of the foreign threat. By the start of the debate over intervention, historian Wayne Cole observed, no other senator was more prominent a critic of Roosevelt's foreign policy than Wheeler. The bitterness between the president and senator was great and is reflected in a comment Wheeler had made about Roosevelt's foreign policy in 1941. He referred to Roosevelt's Lend-Lease policy as "the New Deal's triple A" foreign policy—it will plow under every fourth American boy." The president responded to Wheeler's remarks saying that they were the "rottenest," most "dastardly," and "unpatriotic," thing he had ever heard.⁶

Because Wheeler was associated with the America First Committee—the Committee funded many of his speeches and rally appearances, and the senator’s wife was a Committee member—FBI officials scrutinized his political activity. As a prominent critic of the administration, any information Hoover provided about Wheeler to the White House was taken with interest. But FBI officials had long had an interest in Senator Wheeler. During the Teapot Dome scandal of 1923-24, Bureau agents (under Director William J. Burns) had attempted to discredit the trouble-making senator who had initiated a Senate inquiry into the activity of the Justice Department and Bureau of Investigation. By 1933, according to Wheeler, Hoover called on the senator in an effort to retain his position as FBI director in the new Roosevelt administration (see chapters one and two). In 1938, following the fallout from Roosevelt’s so-called court-packing scheme, FBI Assistant Director Tamm noted in a memorandum (reflecting FBI officials’ continued interest) that Senator Wheeler had lost his influence over Montana federal relief projects “as a disciplinary measure for his action in the Supreme Court fight.” During the foreign policy debate of 1940-41, moreover, FBI officials took an interest in the senator’s anti-interventionist political activity as he opposed the president.⁷

FBI officials long had been concerned with Wheeler’s views of the FBI and their suspicions continued. In May 1940, an FBI agent clipped an article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that reported critical statements Wheeler had made about the FBI’s character. Reacting negatively to President Roosevelt’s 1940 proposal to transfer the Immigration Bureau back to the Justice Department, Wheeler had commented that the FBI was staffed by “a lot of cheap, two-by-four detectives.”

Then in June, the SAC from Seattle reported that an anonymous caller had stated that Senator Wheeler had been critical of the FBI. The unidentified caller said that he had the ability to “shut Wheeler up” and inquired as to the Bureau’s interest in this information. While the identity of the phone caller was never established, his call was reported to FBI headquarters and Hoover was advised about it. In May 1941, the special agent in charge (SAC) of the Buffalo, New York, FBI office reported to Hoover that during an America First rally Senator Wheeler had made critical comments about the FBI. The SAC reported that Wheeler had “expressed an opinion that many U. S. citizens might hesitate to express their anti-war attitude because they are ‘afraid of the F.B.I.’”⁸

In September 1940 Hoover received information that by 1941 had evolved into a far-reaching investigation involving Senators Wheeler, Nye, and Representative Fish. The FBI’s New York City SAC reported that direct mail advertiser Henry Hoke, publisher of *The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising*, had accused some senators and congressman of illegally distributing franked envelopes (congressmen had the right to mail speeches and other information to constituents postage-free). These envelopes, containing anti-interventionist literature, allegedly were then sent to German Americans who mailed them out *en masse* to influence the public. Hoke singled out the late Farmer-Labor Senator Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota, Democratic Senator Rush D. Holt of West Virginia, Senator Gerald Nye, Republican Representative J. Thorkelson of Montana, and Representative Hamilton Fish of using their franked envelopes in this manner. Hoover forwarded this information to the Justice Department’s Neutrality Law Unit, and while at this time

it did not cause any great concern, by 1941 it evolved into a controversy for the anti-interventionist congressmen that suggested (by association) that they had links with German agents.⁹

In October 1940, Hoover forwarded to the Justice Department a report containing information about the congressional frank and Senator Wheeler. The matter involved two-dozen pieces of mail bearing Senator Wheeler's frank that had been delivered to a post office in Manchester, Connecticut. This franked mail contained anti-interventionist literature, reported a clerk at the post office, that was addressed to persons of German descent in Manchester. At least one franked envelope was addressed to the leader of the local Bund organization. Hoover reported this incident to the Justice Department "in view of the fact that this information was officially reported to a representative of this Bureau." The FBI did not have jurisdiction to investigate a matter involving the mail, yet Hoover's reporting of it confirms his interest in reporting to the administration any derogatory information, even if unsubstantiated, about Roosevelt's critics.¹⁰

Hoover forwarded political intelligence to senior administration officials in the White House, Treasury Department, and State Department that suggested (but did not prove) that Senator Wheeler had connections with the German embassy in Washington. The FBI director reported that the wife of a former German embassy counselor was preparing information for Senator Wheeler and Democratic Senator Millard Tydings about a statement Adolf Hitler had made on disarmament. Hoover included in his memorandum the observation that she claimed to be "working with Mrs. Wheeler on this 'America First' organization." This information, though

uncorroborated, suggested to senior administration officials that Wheeler and other anti-interventionist foreign policy critics had ties with Nazi Germany. Such information lent credence to popular perceptions that anti-interventionists were subversives and may have bolstered this view among officials in the White House. By providing such unsubstantiated information, Hoover was placed in good stead with the administration.¹¹

By 1941, Senator Wheeler again became associated with the franking issue, and this time it had far-reaching political implications. The investigation involved a German propaganda scheme, utilizing the congressional frank, to increase isolationist sentiment. While the FBI did not have investigative jurisdiction, it nevertheless collected information about the franking issue and forwarded it to the Justice Department. The FBI's investigation started first with Senator Wheeler, then with Senator Nye and, more significantly, with Representative Hamilton Fish.

While the franking controversy only blossomed into a national issue between interventionists and anti-interventionists in the summer of 1941, Senator Wheeler's name had been associated, as already shown, with franking misuse since late 1940. In February 1941 Wheeler took steps to determine who had misused his frank. Wheeler contacted Hoover with two concerns. He forwarded to Hoover a set of letters he had received from the German Friend Society of Houston that claimed the senator was a Nazi agent. Wheeler requested an FBI investigation because he thought the letters were either written "by a pro-Nazi" or in an effort to embarrass him. (Wheeler's motive in forwarding this information to Hoover might have been an effort to counter administration beliefs that Wheeler was sympathetic to or a dupe

of the Nazis.) Wheeler's second concern regarded the frank. He reported to Hoover that someone had used his frank, without his knowledge, to mail petitions from an organization called American Defenders. Wheeler discovered the use of his frank when the post office had returned a misaddressed letter to his office. Wheeler told Hoover that he was "extremely anxious to ascertain whether someone is using my franked envelopes illegally, and whether someone is using my name in this connection."¹²

Hoover referred Wheeler's complaint to Lawrence Smith of the Justice Department's Neutrality Laws Unit. Smith responded that the alleged misuse of a congressional frank fell under the jurisdiction of the Post Office Department and not the FBI. If Wheeler's franked envelopes had been stolen from his congressional office, Smith continued, the matter was then one for the Washington, D.C., metropolitan police. Hoover relayed these details to Wheeler, and there appeared to have been no follow-up investigation involving Senator Wheeler, but just weeks later Wheeler's name again appeared in FBI documents regarding the misuse of his frank.¹³

The FBI's SAC in El Paso reported to Hoover that a local resident had reportedly received from Senator Wheeler "a large box of envelopes bearing government franks, and not addressed." The SAC reported that each franked envelope contained a speech and signed letter from Wheeler that denounced Roosevelt's Lend-Lease bill and suggested the president sought dictatorial powers. The recipient of these franked envelopes apparently had addressed and mailed them to citizens of Clayton, New Mexico, which the FBI's informant believed had

violated postal codes. Moreover, the informant demanded an FBI investigation because the literature from Wheeler was “un-American” and because the woman who had addressed the franked envelopes was “outspoken in her sympathy for Germany.” The informant also claimed that Senator Wheeler had sent similar unaddressed, franked envelopes and literature to others. When the informant was told that the FBI had no investigative authority, the informant threatened to write Senator Carol Hatch (Democratic senator from New Mexico who sat on the Judiciary Committee) to demand an FBI investigation. When Hatch’s name was invoked, Hoover reported the incident to the Justice Department. How it was resolved is not recorded in extant FBI documents, yet Senator Wheeler’s name nevertheless continued to be associated with franking abuses.¹⁴

By the late spring and early summer of 1941, the franking issue had evolved from isolated incidents into a national political issue. At that time, direct-mail advertiser Henry Hoke had written Senator Wheeler’s office accusing him of misusing his congressional frank. Hoke wrote a long brief that outlined Wheeler’s misdeeds and accused him of “aiding the Nazi plan by allowing the use of [the] franking privilege for the dissemination of disruptive propaganda.” Wheeler responded to the charge by writing the man who had delivered Hoke’s letter to him, A. H. Becker of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Wheeler denied that he had sent anything other than his own speeches under his frank and he questioned why Hoke had ignored the interventionists’ use of congressional frank.¹⁵

Hoke responded by writing Wheeler directly, addressing each point the senator had made to Becker. But Hoke was not content to restrict his concerns about

Wheeler through personal correspondence. On 24 July Hoke published a condemnation of Wheeler, entitled "War in the Mails." The article outlined in detail Wheeler's alleged misuse of his frank.¹⁶ When the interventionist Fight For Freedom Committee learned of the charges they also attacked Senator Wheeler and wrote the postmaster general's office to request the franking privilege be limited.¹⁷

In June, *Detroit News* reporter Blair Moody telephoned FBI headquarters to learn if the FBI had investigated Wheeler's abuse of the congressional frank. Moody had probably learned of the franking issue from Hoke who had widely publicized it. Because FBI officials had no jurisdiction to investigate the matter, Assistant Director Clyde Tolson reported to Hoover "that I could very definitely tell him that no such investigation is being made by this Bureau." Tolson could make this claim as the Bureau only collected information about the franking abuse and did not, technically, conduct an official FBI investigation.¹⁸

The issue became more acrimonious when on 24 July Secretary of War Henry Stimson learned that several active-duty soldiers had received postcards from Senator Wheeler urging them to write the president to demand he avoid war. Stimson consulted Roosevelt on issuing a press statement about the postcards, and then publicly stated that Wheeler had come "very near the line of subversive activities against the United States, if not treason."¹⁹ Wheeler responded to the charge on 28 July and denied that he had attempted to influence the opinions of American soldiers. He explained that over a million franked postcards had been sent to a commercial mailing list and that only three postcards mistakenly had been mailed to the soldiers. Realizing his error, Stimson publicly apologized to the

senator, but the controversy did not end. Wheeler's involvement might have ended, but the franking-abuse issue shifted to Senator Gerald Nye and Congressman Hamilton Fish.²⁰

An FBI informant, who had close ties to Senator Nye, reported on 8 October 1941 that the senator said the widespread use of the congressional frank "was perfectly regular; that the franking has been done by everyone and there is no exception here." The informant also reported Nye's opinions regarding Roosevelt's "determination . . . to get into war." Due to the source and sensitivity of this political intelligence FBI Assistant Director Edward Tamm concluded that "this info should not be transmitted outside [of the] Bureau." (The FBI document reporting this information, furthermore, was filed in J. Edgar Hoover's secret office file.)²¹ On 13 October 1941 Hoover wrote Attorney General Biddle that another informant reported that Senator Nye had been sending a great deal of franked mail to people beyond his constituency. While the informant did not know all the details, he thought it was serious enough to report to the FBI. Hoover, in light of the developing franking abuse story, forwarded the information to the Justice Department.²²

Interventionists initially believed prominent anti-interventionist legislators had abused their franking privilege while anti-interventionists denied that they had misused their frank in a way that aided Axis propaganda. In reality, German propagandists had been involved in a scheme to utilize the congressional frank. On 29 July 1941, the German chargé d'affaires in Washington reported to the German Foreign Ministry that:

In recent months the mass dispatch of postcards has proved to be particularly effective as a propaganda action which can be carried out very quickly and suddenly and which is to be directed at as large a group of persons as possible who do not have much intellectual training. Therefore through the agency of the [Embassy] press officer the mailing of about a dozen cards, each in 100,000—in words a hundred thousand—to a million copies has been organized and financed. They contained sarcastic attacks on Roosevelt and the warmongering members of his Cabinet, reminders of his campaign promise to keep America out of war, a reference to the American blood sacrifices in the World War, an appeal to American mothers, and they asked recipients to write or telegraph in this sense to their representatives in Congress and the White House. As all of the postcards had the letterhead of the American Congress or of the members of Congress concerned and contained mainly material which was taken from purely American sources and also appeared in one form or other in the official "*Congressional Record*", our hand was not in any way recognizable. Alarmed by the success of this campaign of postcards, the interventionist press is already starting to attack their being sent through Congress, but so far without success.²³

The chargé d'affaires further reported that Senator Burton K. Wheeler had been targeted. He also reported the argument between Secretary Stimson and Wheeler as reflecting the successful cultivation of infighting.²⁴

George Sylvester Viereck led the German black propaganda operation. Viereck was born in Germany and became a naturalized United States citizen in 1901, yet he retained strong Teutonic sympathies. During the First World War he received support from the Imperial German government to distribute pro-German propaganda. With commencement of the Second World War, Viereck registered himself with the State Department as a paid agent of the German government, as was required by the 1940 Foreign Agents Registration Act. Viereck received financial backing through the German Library of Information, which served as a propaganda agency of the German government, and edited their periodical, *Facts in Review*.²⁵

Viereck moved from New York City to Washington, D. C., in early 1940 the better to carry out his propaganda duties. Viereck then found employment as speechwriter in the office of anti-interventionist Senator Ernest Lundeen. After the senator was killed in a plane crash later that year, Viereck found employment with congressman Hamilton Fish. It was from this position that the German agent was able to manipulate the congressional frank for his own uses.²⁶

Viereck was introduced in July 1940 to George Hill, a forty-five-year-old clerk who worked in Fish's congressional office. Beginning his covert relationship with the clerk, Viereck told Hill that he wanted to use Fish's frank to have one of Senator Lundeen's speeches mailed to constituents because Lundeen's office was unable to handle the large amount of speech reprints. From this initial recruitment of Hill, Viereck manipulated Fish to have anti-interventionist literature distributed more widely than a lone senator or congressman could have done on his own. The German plan was to support the anti-interventionist political position because it sought to keep America from contributing to the war effort. But Viereck was circumspect in his relationship with Hill. To keep Congressman Fish or anyone else from discovering the covert relationship, Viereck kept in contact with George Hill via a third party, an anti-interventionist publicist named Prescott Dennett.²⁷

Dennett was the treasurer of the Make Europe Pay War Debts Committee, an organization that had among its leading members Senator Lundeen and Senator Robert Reynolds of North Carolina. Viereck gathered anti-interventionist literature that he believed would best sway Americans from advocating intervention and forwarded it to Dennett's office where it was sent to George Hill. Hill then worked

to have the material inserted into the *Congressional Record*, ordered thousands of reprints of the items (including anti-interventionist speeches made in Congress), and sent them back to Dennett in franked envelopes. Dennett was then able to mail the literature out to whomever he wished using Fish's postage-free congressional frank. Among the organizations that unwittingly distributed Viereck's propaganda was the America First Committee.²⁸

While the German propaganda effort was creative, it was minimally successful and limited. All Viereck managed to accomplish was a wider distribution of anti-interventionist literature which, in any event, did not cause any major reassessment of Americans' view of the Allies. Besides, since late 1940 the America First Committee had already been conducting a much larger and well-organized effort to prevent American intervention in the European war. Nevertheless, the revelation of a link between German propagandists and leading anti-interventionists, no matter if the anti-interventionists were unsuspecting, was a boon to interventionist groups like the Fight For Freedom Committee. Such groups would use the event to discredit the anti-interventionists by accusing them of being Nazi dupes. The franking abuse controversy only confirmed to some that the anti-interventionist movement was subversive.

In September 1941, a federal grand jury, led by prosecutor William Maloney, began an investigation into German propaganda and "other subversive elements" in the United States. Simultaneously, *Washington Post* reporter Dillard Stokes took up the matter of the congressional frank, which had been publicized by interventionist groups. He revealed the link between Dennett's office and Congressman Fish's

office as well as the fact that some of the franked mail had been sent to America First. The increased publicity led police to seize franked mail from the Washington America First chapter on 25 September for use in the grand jury probe. Thereafter, the propaganda machine between Viereck, Dennett, and Hill became public.²⁹

Because Congressman Hamilton Fish had been linked to Viereck's propaganda machine through his clerk, George Hill, both were called to testify before the federal grand jury. Hill, when interviewed, lied about his connection with Viereck and his delivery of franked mail sacks. He was prosecuted in early 1942 for perjury and received a sentence of two to six years in prison. George Viereck was convicted for not revealing the full extent of his activities to the State Department under the provisions of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Fish was asked to testify before the grand jury but refused on the grounds of congressional immunity, forcing the prosecutors to subpoena him. The result of this was another propaganda boon for the Fight For Freedom Committee who publicly asked Fish why he refused to offer testimony, suggesting he had something to hide. When the congressman finally testified he revealed nothing of importance to the investigation except his ignorance of the goings on in his congressional office. While the FBI had no jurisdiction in the investigation, it did monitor the grand jury investigation. The Justice Department's Criminal Division requested Hoover provide information regarding Hamilton Fish for use in Maloney's probe.³⁰

The reluctance of the FBI to take part in the franking privilege investigation and instead remain content to collect information about it may go beyond jurisdictional issues. The facts are not entirely clear, but it appears that Hoover and

William Maloney, the federal prosecutor in the franking abuse case, had personal differences. Their conflict seems to have stemmed from Maloney having made critical comments about Hoover for not taking more of a role in the case. Hoover resented the implication, which apparently was repeated to news reporters Drew Pearson and George Allen and broadcast nationwide, and thereafter refused to assist Maloney. Maloney phoned Hoover, stating that his comment had been taken out of context and that he only wanted the FBI in on the case. He said that he resented the misunderstanding and wanted to rectify their differences. Hoover, however, wrote: "It is too late now for me to deal with Maloney on this. He has gone too far & done irreparable harm to the FBI. He has talked and criticized the Bureau to parties outside of the Dept. & his statements are absolute lies." Hoover ordered Assistant Director Tamm "to make certain that we do everything proper to thoroughly handle all aspects of this case so as not to give this whelp any real basis for howling." This rift seems to explain why the FBI did not take more interest in the case. Always sensitive about any derogatory comments about himself or the FBI, Hoover often refused to cooperate with individuals who publicly criticized or opposed his Bureau.³¹

At several other points, concerned Americans solicited the FBI to take action against Senator Wheeler for his opposition to White House foreign policy. (No one ever wrote the FBI in support of Wheeler.) Hoover forwarded such requests to his superiors despite their unsubstantiated nature. The forwarding of such data contributed to a negative view of the senator and his political dissent. In late July 1941, for example, the Women's Roosevelt Democratic Club of Los Angeles wrote

the FBI director accusing Wheeler of having taken a \$100,000 bribe when he worked as a United States district attorney in Montana following the First World War. (This resurrected the charge made against Wheeler in the 1920s when Attorney General Daugherty sought to discredit him.) The group claimed Wheeler had accepted the bribe in return for dismissing charges of white slave trafficking. Intent on pressing the charge, in addition to writing Hoover the women's group also sent a telegram to the attorney general demanding a prosecution on the basis that "Senator Wheeler's propaganda to our soldiers foments a dangerous and improper attitude in our armed forces, imperiling their morale." Hoover forwarded this information to the Justice Department seeking direction. In response, Assistant to the Attorney General Matthew McGuire wrote: "In view of the fact that the [bribery] charge would be barred by the Statute of Limitations, no investigation of the matter should be undertaken."³²

Throughout 1941, following passage of Lend-Lease, Senator Wheeler and other prominent congressional anti-interventionists toured the United States under the auspices of the America First Committee giving speeches to mobilize anti-interventionist sentiment. The attorney general, in September, became interested in an America First Committee rally in Los Angeles where Senator Wheeler was to speak. Interested in how the crowd reacted to Wheeler's speech Biddle requested that FBI agents monitor the event. Hoover dispatched agents to the rally and reported to the attorney general and the White House that the crowd "was very sympathetic and friendly toward the America First Committee and Senator Wheeler."³³

In late December 1941, Hoover received an unsolicited document that portrayed Wheeler as a subversive. This document was a legal brief prepared by the New York law firm of Phillips, Nizer, Benjamin, and Krim that accused the senator of having accepted \$25,000 from German diplomats to oppose American intervention. Wheeler was also accused of violating the 1917 Espionage Act for revealing in July the government's plans to occupy Iceland. Lastly, the document accused the senator, as many others by this point, of illegally using his congressional frank to distribute information. Again, Hoover forwarded the document to Justice Department for their attention.³⁴

While the documentation is scant, it appears that by February 1942 Attorney General Biddle had at least considered the charges as laid out in the legal brief, particularly the accusation of Wheeler's having accepted German funds. Biddle requested Hoover's opinion as to whether the department should "make a further investigation." Hoover's reply is not contained in Wheeler's FBI file, but a document dated 28 February to Wendell Berge, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, confirms that Berge had asked Hoover if the FBI had any information or made any inquiry regarding the various charges. Hoover responded that the FBI had not made an investigation into the charges. In any event, the language employed by administration officials suggests that they regarded Wheeler as subversive and acting, if unwittingly, at the behest of the German government.³⁵

While Hoover forwarded unsolicited political intelligence reports to the White House and Justice Department (for some reports see chapter four), in at least one instance the White House requested information from the FBI regarding

Wheeler. The White House's interest centered on some off-the-record remarks Wheeler had made on 14 January 1942 to *Milwaukee Journal* reporter Laurence C. Eklund. Wheeler made comments that, coming so soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, concerned some. Wheeler claimed during an interview that the disaster in Hawaii was far worse than the administration had revealed, and that the administration was too receptive to British influence. Wheeler also had referred to the secretary of the navy, Frank Knox, as a "big blatherskite"—a foolishly speaking person. Disturbed by the comments, the editor of the *Milwaukee Journal* wrote the White House. William J. Donovan, director of the Office of Coordinator of Information, also alerted the president to Wheeler's words as well as Frank Knox, who commented to Roosevelt: "It constitutes the most shockingly reckless, treasonable talk that I have ever seen."³⁶

On 26 January Stephen Early, Roosevelt's secretary, wrote Hoover asking him to verify the veracity of the letter from the *Milwaukee Journal* to determine if Wheeler's remarks were accurately reported, and whether anyone else could verify the senator's comments. Early noted that "we would like very much to know" these facts and he requested an FBI "report."³⁷

Pursuant to the White House request, Hoover ordered FBI agents to verify the requested information. FBI agents in Milwaukee interviewed the newspaper staff. FBI Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd reported to Hoover that in addition to confirming the veracity of the report on Wheeler's alleged remarks, it was learned that Wheeler had also "rambled on at great length in a very bitter manner against the

President, Secretary Knox, and England to the extent that Eklund finally had to terminate the interview himself.”³⁸

Hoover reported this information to Early on 3 February but added to Ladd’s comments, which were included in the memorandum: “the Senator’s feelings [about the president, Knox, and Great Britain] were apparent by his facial expressions as well as his remarks.”³⁹ What the White House did with this information is unknown. Burton Wheeler’s FBI file, however, contains further documents regarding this exchange of information but the FBI has withheld them—some are internal FBI memoranda, one a document originating with the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, and 14 pages withheld in their entirety.⁴⁰ What information is contained in these cryptic documents is unknown and, until they are made public, the full extent of the FBI’s and administration’s interest in this information will remain unknown. We can conclude, however, that the White House was interested in the political statements of a leading anti-interventionist senator and Hoover provided such information to the White House. This sharing of political intelligence confirms Hoover’s interest in satisfying the political desires of the White House.

The best way to understand the FBI’s monitoring of Senator Burton Wheeler is to examine it in comparison with that of other prominent anti-interventionists. Whereas Charles Lindbergh, for example, was the most prominent, popular, and controversial of Roosevelt’s anti-interventionist opponents, and thus subject to much public vituperation, Wheeler was more circumspect. The senator was, without doubt, a leading and important anti-interventionist but he was also in a position of power and influence. He did not make the same controversial statements as

Lindbergh had that focused public attention on his every word, nor did he have the widely celebrated and popular background as the famous aviator. This explains why Hoover only thoroughly investigated Wheeler's activities if he had a White House solicitation.

Significantly Wheeler had a past political relationship with Hoover. During the aftermath of the 1919-20 Red Scare and Teapot Dome scandal, Wheeler was at the forefront in investigating the Justice Department and the Bureau. Wheeler was well aware of Hoover's activities as head of the General Intelligence Division and its activities in the mass round-up and violation of many people's civil liberties. With this in mind, Hoover probably held back in his investigation of Wheeler, not pursuing it with the elan he had with Lindbergh. At the time, Hoover did not yet hold the autonomy and influence that would make him untouchable; only with the Cold War and successive presidents would he create such a context in which to operate.

* * *

Proponents of intervention most criticized Representative Hamilton Fish during the Great Debate of 1940-41 for his association with George Hill and, by implication, George Viereck. While the FBI did not have jurisdiction in the matter of the franking privilege controversy or have any desire to work with the prosecutor, it had investigated the prominent and vocal congressman for other suspicious activities. FBI agents monitored Fish's political activity, tried to develop derogatory information on the congressman, and forwarded political intelligence to the administration to service its political interests.

Hamilton Fish was a Republican congressman representing President Roosevelt's home congressional district in the United States House of Representatives. In many ways he was Roosevelt's political nemesis—most significant was the fact that he was an anti-interventionist Republican operating out of the president's home district. Both were from distinguished patrician families in the Hudson River valley. His great grandfather, Nicholas Fish, served as a colonel in the Revolutionary War and allied himself with Alexander Hamilton. Fish was also the grandson of President Ulysses S. Grant's distinguished secretary of state—and shared his name—whose family long had involved themselves in politics. Congressman Fish, also like Roosevelt, had attended Harvard University where he studied law (Roosevelt later studied law at Columbia), and graduated at the top of his class (Roosevelt did not). During the First World War he served as a company commander of the 369th Infantry Regiment, a unit of African Americans (Roosevelt served as assistant secretary of the navy). For his war service he won the Silver Star and French Croix de Guerre. In politics, Fish the Republican and Roosevelt the Democrat were at opposite ends.⁴¹

In 1919 Fish was elected to Congress and, partly as a result of his service with an African-American military unit, he garnered limited support among the minority population. Fish used this constituency to support some minority interests by advocating anti-lynching legislation and the erecting of battle monuments to commemorate the contribution of black soldiers. Having broad interests in war veterans, Fish advocated and supported the creation of the American Legion. But he was best known during the 1930s for chairing a congressional committee that

investigated communist propaganda in the United States, the so-called Fish Committee. A staunch anti-Communist, Fish opposed the Roosevelt administration in its recognition of the Soviet Union.⁴²

FBI officials took interest, significantly, in Fish's opposition to administration foreign policy, particularly as he served as the ranking minority member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. From the start, Fish opposed Franklin Roosevelt as president. He opposed the New Deal because of "its socialist nature" and he perceived dangers in Roosevelt's centralization of presidential power both as regards the New Deal and foreign policy. As the congressman later wrote in his memoirs: "Roosevelt, I believed, was starting us down the road to socialism and dictatorship."⁴³

An FBI summary memorandum reflects FBI officials' interest in Fish's foreign policy position: "A brief glance at his voting record on foreign policy issues," the memorandum records, "indicates his feelings in this regard and reflects his isolationist trend of thought." This memorandum listed Fish's opposition to foreign policy legislation from military appropriations in 1938 to Lend-Lease and conscription, none of which had anything to do with a violation of any federal statute and thereby justifying FBI interest. Perhaps best reflecting FBI officials' view of those who opposed administration policy, particularly the Lend-Lease Bill which marked the peak of the Great Debate between anti-interventionists and Roosevelt, this summary memorandum focused particularly on Fish's view of Lend-Lease:

On another occasion he referred to the Lend-Lease Bill as 'a dictatorship-war-bankruptcy bill...a slick device to further regiment

America...the betrayal of the Constitutional power.' He claimed the bill would be 'the death knell of Republican Government and virtually the end of Congress.'⁴⁴

FBI officials included other political intelligence about Fish in this summary memorandum. They took careful note of Fish's connections with the Committee to Keep America Out of Foreign Wars and the America First Committee. His various anti-interventionist comments made at rallies or in print before either of these committees was noted. FBI officials also noted each instance when Fish's name was printed or one of his comments was reported in the German-language newspaper *Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter* or other radical publications. This FBI's summary memorandum confirms that FBI officials had an interest in the political activities of congressman Fish as he was a prominent and influential opponent to the administration's foreign policy.⁴⁵

In May 1942, during off-year elections and still concerned about the anti-interventionist Fish, the White House learned of some political gossip regarding him and requested an FBI investigation. In Fish's congressional district a committee was organized to oppose his re-election, headed by Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb from Garrison, New York. After a discussion with Webb, Franklin A. Schriver of Middletown, New York, wrote presidential secretary Edwin Watson informing him that Fish had received and endorsed checks amounting to several hundred thousand dollars under suspicious circumstances. Watson directed the unsubstantiated information to Hoover who ordered an investigation. FBI agents interviewed Mrs. Webb as well as her confidant, Henry Hoke (who had publicized the franking-privilege abuse charges). Mrs. Webb reported that she learned that Fish had accepted two checks

totaling some three thousand dollars from a German caviar retailer named Sturm. FBI agents also interviewed Hoke who added that Fish had accepted checks in 1940 totaling \$2,500 from the Romanoff Caviar Company. But, Hoke added, these checks were in the possession of the Treasury Department “in connection with an income tax violation.”⁴⁶

When reporting back to the White House, Hoover advised that the Bureau’s investigation of the caviar company “is being afforded vigorous attention.” The FBI director noted that G. F. Hansen-Sturm, the caviar businessman, had discussed neutrality issues with Hamilton Fish and, moreover, had requested that the congressman send five thousand copies of a speech to his business associate, Ferdinand Hansen. After Viereck’s use of Fish’s frank to spread anti-interventionist literature, Hoover regarded this connection with Fish as suspicious. He ordered an investigation of those connected with the caviar company “in connection with a violation of the Act of 1938 as amended [Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1940] requiring the registration of agents of foreign principals.” Hoover advised that “in the event additional information deemed of interest to the President is developed, it will be called to your attention.”⁴⁷

FBI officials then sought to develop the case to provide the White House, even after Pearl Harbor and the dismemberment of the anti-interventionist bloc, with political intelligence on the associations of his prominent critics. Meantime, Congressman Fish had learned of these charges and subsequent FBI questioning of Webb. Fish also had learned that “some FBI man had knowledge of, or had shown some checks” to one of his constituents. Fish phoned Assistant to the Director

Edward Tamm inquiring whether FBI officials “knew anything about the matter.” Tamm told Fish that he would look into the matter. Returning Fish’s call, Tamm informed the congressman that the FBI had “no information about any such checks in the amounts or any similar amounts to those he mentioned and have been conducting no investigation.” Tamm suggested to Fish that people often confuse other federal investigative agencies with the FBI and that he should check with those bodies. Fish, nevertheless, explained to Tamm that “the check was a forgery if it existed, and it was put out for political purposes.”⁴⁸

Tamm might have denied that FBI agents had investigated the matter, but one month prior Hoover had sent a personal and confidential letter to the White House specifically about these checks. Given the sensitivity of the investigation, Tamm refused to acknowledge the Bureau’s investigation of Fish, particularly as it (and Hoover’s forwarding of information to the White House) occurred during an election year. What most interested FBI officials, however, was whether, in fact, an FBI agent had revealed FBI interest in Fish’s checks or, even worse, had shown them to one of Fish’s constituents. Tamm and Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd inquired with the FBI’s New York field office and Albany field office about the matter. The Albany field office reported no knowledge of the incident but the New York field office reported its involvement in the investigation. Significant portions of Tamm’s memorandum have been redacted by the FBI and do not reveal what the field office reported. In any event, the matter illustrates the Bureau’s interest in servicing White House requests for political intelligence and their concern about

keeping these efforts from the public, especially from the president's congressional opposition.⁴⁹

In August 1942, FBI officials again focused on Fish's political activities involving a cash payment but also connections to a right-wing foreign dictator. On 6 August the *Washington Post* reported that Congressman Fish had received a payment of \$25,000 from General Rafael Trujillo, the right-wing military dictator of the Dominican Republic. According to the *Post*, Fish had received this money in July 1939 but had only declared \$22,000 on his income tax return and thereby committed income tax evasion. The newspaper further reported that Fish had received some of the money directly and some in the form of oil stocks.⁵⁰

FBI Assistant Director Ladd advised Hoover when the *Washington Post* story broke that no information concerning the payment existed in FBI files. Ladd ordered an expedited and "complete survey" of FBI information concerning Fish and promised Hoover a report. Ladd eventually reported that the FBI had no information relating to the payment in its files.⁵¹

Meanwhile, Fish responded to the *Washington Post's* story stating that the payment from Trujillo was a professional fee for handling an oil-speculation deal and that by law he was not required to claim the money on his 1939 tax return. Fish explained that he had lost the money in oil stocks and had returned the remainder to Trujillo. Fish also denied having been under Internal Revenue Bureau investigation.⁵²

What seemed to interest FBI officials most, however, was the relationship between Fish and Trujillo. Coming so soon after the Viereck-Hill franking

controversy and popular notions that anti-interventionists—in particular Hamilton Fish—were themselves fascists or dupes of the Nazis, the fact that Fish had a relationship with Trujillo, a right-wing foreign dictator, concerned high-level government officials. FBI officials learned that Fish had visited the Dominican Republic as part of a congressional goodwill visit in March 1939. Then in July 1939—when the payment to Fish had occurred—Trujillo visited the United States, as a private citizen, and was feted by the Pan-American Society in New York City. Hamilton Fish served as the principal speaker at this banquet and, according to FBI officials, had said: “General, you have created a golden age for your country...and, as I am proud to repeat at this time to a United States audience, you will go down in the history of your country as a builder greater than all the Spanish Conquistadores together.” Though the comment was made in 1939, by 1942 it had taken on new significance to FBI officials.⁵³

Assistant Director Ladd prepared a summary memorandum on Fish “as of possible interest to you [Hoover] and other Bureau officials, and for the purposes of future reference.” FBI officials’ main interest, the memorandum confirms, was the cash payment Trujillo had made to Fish. In another cryptic FBI memorandum—large portions of which have been redacted under the provisions of the FOIA—Tamm reported that the New York FBI field office was due to report on Fish and Trujillo. The information probably had to do with Trujillo’s visit to New York City in 1939 and Fish’s meeting with him there. Tamm wrote that the information would be developed immediately “in order that any further information in this case may be

immediately brought to the attention of the White House officials.” By 1942 Hoover kept the White House well informed as to Fish’s political activities.⁵⁴

There is no indication that the White House had solicited any of this information about Fish from the FBI, but it had received related information from Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles. Welles informed Roosevelt about Trujillo and Fish on 27 July before the *Washington Post* story had been published. Apparently, the federal grand jury that had examined Fish’s connection to the franking case had come across information about Trujillo’s payments to Fish. Maloney, the federal prosecutor handling the case, brought the information to Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle’s attention as it had to do with money Trujillo had received from a German source (which turned out to be nothing more than a business transaction) which Trujillo had then paid to Fish. Berle concluded there had been no wrongdoing, but Under Secretary of State Welles nonetheless forwarded Berle’s memorandum about Trujillo and Fish to the president. This, perhaps, satisfied the president’s interest in Fish and he thereby did not request an FBI inquiry.⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that in 1951 Fish learned from a friend that the Justice Department had listed him as a fascist in the 1930s/40s. Concerned over these allegations during the height of McCarthyism and what information the FBI might have on him—Fish considered himself a strong anti-Communist—the former congressman visited FBI headquarters to request access to his file. FBI official L. L. Laughlin interviewed Fish, advising him that FBI files were confidential and therefore not open to external review. While not permitted to view his FBI file, Fish

offered further details about the controversy with Trujillo. According to Fish, Internal Revenue investigators had approached him and claimed that he had violated the law by not declaring the Trujillo checks on his income tax return. Fish stated that he eventually convinced the investigators that no law had been broken but he concluded that the Internal Revenue Bureau's investigation was nothing but a Roosevelt administration effort to "get him."⁵⁶

In late summer 1942, the White House asked Hoover to look into another matter concerning Hamilton Fish. On 22 August, Colonel Herman Beukema of the United States Military Academy, wrote Presidential Secretary Edwin Watson that Fish possessed a photograph of Roosevelt's Hyde Park library that showed a British flag displayed above an American one. According to Beukema, Fish thought the photograph could be used to "hang the President" politically. Sensitive to this report, Roosevelt directed his other secretary, Marvin McIntyre, to "have the F.B.I. look into this." Hoover reported that the photograph was actually a sketch of the president's library, as photography was not permitted at Hyde Park, and that according to Fish's confidants he believed it could be used "if he wanted to cause a lot of damage to President Roosevelt." FBI agents learned, however, that Fish refused to "use" the sketch. As compared to accusations that Fish consorted with foreign governments, this matter seems inconsequential. Nevertheless, it is representative of the type of political intelligence provided to the White House upon request. By providing such data, Hoover catered to Roosevelt's political interests and demonstrated to the administration his FBI's value.⁵⁷

The last reference to Fish in extant FBI files that relates to his anti-interventionist politics regards an investigation that the FBI's New York field office conducted in 1944. A political opponent of Trujillo claimed that Fish had accepted a \$200,000 bribe from the dictator to write a favorable report about the Dominican Republic for Congress. In their investigation, FBI agents discovered no evidence to substantiate the bribery charge and, as a result, "No prosecutive action was taken in this matter."⁵⁸

Due to jurisdictional issues and personal animosities with the prosecutor, Hoover had avoided direct involvement in the franking privilege investigation. Nonetheless he continued to monitor Fish's political activity. FBI agents monitored Fish's foreign policy positions, took note of his opposition to Roosevelt, and investigated his various connections with anti-interventionists. Moreover, Hoover serviced White House requests for information about Fish's political and personal activity. Suspecting he was under FBI surveillance, Fish received a firm denial from FBI officials that the Bureau had monitored his activities. Yet FBI officials tried to develop information on Fish, which was then forwarded to the White House, that suggested he had connections with foreign governments. All of this confirms Hoover's interest in monitoring Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy critics, whatever their political persuasion, to cater to the president's political and policy concerns. Fish was a prominent congressman and this affected the Bureau's surveillance of him.

* * *

FBI officials scrutinized Senator Gerald P. Nye, a Republican, because he was a prominent and influential congressional anti-interventionist. Hailing from North Dakota, Nye, who was influenced by Midwestern agrarian radicalism, became a Republican to be successful in North Dakota politics. His biographer, Wayne S. Cole, concluded that Nye really never fit well into the molds of either the Republican or Democratic parties. He opposed urbanization, which both parties supported, and he backed only two Republican presidential nominees during his career, one being Herbert Hoover. From 1933 to 1934 Nye stood politically to the left of the New Deal inasmuch as he believed Roosevelt did little to ease the plight of farmers. But Nye's politics evolved and reflected, Cole observed, the shift among anti-interventionists from those identifying themselves with the political left to those of mostly conservative political credentials. What these conservatives opposed, primarily, was the centralization of power within the executive branch of government, an innovation that they regarded as inimical to a states' rights tradition.⁵⁹

Senator Nye was one of the most vocal anti-interventionist spokespersons and was central to the development of American neutrality policy between 1934 and 1941. With the publication in 1934 of Helmuth Engelbrecht's and Frank Hanigen's *Merchants of Death*, which argued that American bankers and munitions manufacturers had led the United States into the First World War in search of profit, and the influential lobbying of Dorothy Detzer of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Senator Nye was convinced to investigate why America had entered the war. His special committee, the so-called Nye Committee, convened

from 1934 to 1936 and investigated the influence banks and munitions manufacturers had on the Wilson administration. Nye, in particular, concluded that the executive branch had only fed the driving force behind the munitions industry through its war-making power. It was at this point that Nye shifted politically to become allied with economic conservatives who opposed Roosevelt's centralization of power. Moreover, Nye's committee aroused public interest in the issue and contributed directly to the proposal and adoption of the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937 that attempted to isolate the United States from another world war.⁶⁰

The first FBI memorandum regarding Senator Nye and his anti-interventionism was made in October 1939 when the FBI's Los Angeles field office received unsolicited information suggesting that Senator Nye was "in the pay of the German government" and a spy. The accuser, whose name the FBI has withheld under provisions of the FOIA, informed the Los Angeles office that from the content of Nye's speeches—he believed they were pro-Nazi—and on the opinion of a San Francisco chiropractor, he believed that Nye was a spy. Despite the speculative nature of the complaint, an FBI agent interviewed the informer (not always a routine procedure) and only then decided the charge was baseless. While FBI officials did not develop this first charge accusing Nye of involvement with pro-German elements, later, as the interventionist-anti-interventionist debate heated up, they looked more closely at charges brought against him.⁶¹

In 1940, as the seriousness of the international crisis began to increase, FBI officials' interest in some of these unsolicited charges increased. In January and February 1940, an attorney from Moorhead, Minnesota, James M. Witherow, wrote

Hoover urging him to have FBI agents interview two men—D. H. McArthur and John Andrews—who had worked for Senator Nye in Washington. Witherow claimed the two had “very intimate knowledge” regarding German and Japanese officials who had visited Senator Nye’s office. He also claimed that at one point the German Embassy had sent a secretary to Nye’s office who gained access to the senator’s files. Witherow further claimed to have worked with “the American intelligence services” during the First World War to help uncover German domestic espionage. Claiming to be familiar with German methods, Witherow claimed that it was a German tactic to use secretly an opponent of the White House to attack an administration’s policy. This, he believed, is why Senator Nye had become vocal about the munitions industry through his 1934-36 Nye Committee hearings.⁶²

Unlike the first charge against Senator Nye, Hoover took this one more seriously. He probably paid more attention to Witherow’s complaint because, as a lawyer, Witherow was a respectable citizen and his complaint, as compared to the 1939 one, seemed more believable. Whatever Hoover’s motivation, he wrote in the margin of Witherow’s letter: “Refer to Mr. Kemp [of the Justice Department] and ask what action we should take.” Alexander Holtzoff of the Justice Department responded that “it is his definite opinion that no investigation should be conducted of Senator Nye on the basis of that letter.” Yet because Witherow had mentioned alleged activity on the part of the German Embassy having access to Nye’s files, Holtzoff suggested (and FBI officials’ agreed) that a copy of Witherow’s letter be sent to the State Department.⁶³

While Holtzoff advised FBI officials not to initiate an investigation based on Witherow's letter, with a White House request Hoover ordered an investigation. An FBI document confirms that FBI agents collected information that bore on Nye's political activity. On 18 June 1940, after his secretary had received information from retired Democratic Senator Smith Brookhart, presidential secretary Stephen Early requested from Hoover a careful and thorough investigation of a matter concerning Nye and his associates. Brookhart had advised the White House that a Washington, D.C., private detective, Henry Grunewald, was "in cahoots" with Senator Nye. Grunewald had allegedly delivered two checks totaling \$8,000 to Nye which, Brookhart had learned from D. H. McArthur (Nye's former secretary), had originated with former Secretary of War (and anti-interventionist) Harry Woodring. While at Nye's office, Grunewald reportedly would phone Woodring. FBI officials also had learned from Lieutenant Colonel C. M. Busbee, an Army officer assigned to the Military Intelligence Division (MID), that Brookhart had learned from a friend—who worked for military intelligence during the First World War—that Grunewald was head of German intelligence in Washington.⁶⁴

As the White House had solicited the investigation, Hoover ordered that it be given "continuous and preferred attention." FBI agents interviewed Senator Brookhart, Nye's former secretary D. H. McArthur, and Major Thomas C. McDonald—Brookhart's military friend. FBI agents focused on the statements provided by McArthur and McDonald because Brookhart's information was hearsay. McArthur confirmed that Grunewald had regularly visited Senator Nye's office "to pick up pieces of information which he could capitalize on." (Grunewald, in

addition to being a private detective, was a Washington political operative.) McArthur also stated that Grunewald had delivered cash to Nye's office, money that he believed had originated from Woodring. McDonald, when interviewed, stated that he believed Grunewald's secretive nature indicated to him that he might be head of a German espionage system in Washington. Moreover, McDonald witnessed a conversation in German between Grunewald and Colonel Edwin Emerson, whom McDonald claimed had worked for German intelligence during the First World War. From these observations, McDonald told FBI agents, he concluded that Grunewald was a German spy. FBI officials sought to confirm these suspicions and whether Grunewald had liaised with Nye and Woodring to take full advantage of their influence.⁶⁵

Serendipitously, Grunewald, in his capacity as a political operator, regularly reported political information to FBI officials. At one point, Grunewald, taking advantage of this relationship, invited FBI agents to his apartment to determine whether his telephone had been tapped. FBI officials "believing this was a good opportunity to closely scrutinize Grunwald's apartment" dispatched agents to Grunewald's apartment on 2 July 1940. But, as FBI agents reported, "Nothing was observed in the apartment . . . which would indicate that he was pro-German or anti-American in any manner in his sympathies."⁶⁶

Hoover concluded that the early investigations surrounding Grunewald, Woodring, and Nye had "failed to develop any substantiation of any of the charges made." Nevertheless, Hoover admitted that "As a matter of fact, all information developed relating not only to Senator Nye but to Mr. Woodring and Mr.

Grunewald, has been of a negative nature.” Hoover then reported the results of this “negative” information on Grunewald, Nye, and Woodring not only to Early, who had requested the probe, but to the attorney general, assistant to the attorney general, and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau.⁶⁷

Whatever Grunewald’s role in a White-House solicited FBI investigation, Hoover valued the information obtained from the private detective. Grunewald, in his capacity as a Washington political operator, maintained links with prominent personalities (significantly some of Roosevelt’s political opposition) such as Nye, former White House aide Thomas Corcoran, and conservative and politically-active businessman Henry Marsh. Grunewald also regularly provided FBI officials with political intelligence, information that was received without hesitation. By 1941, more importantly, as the Great Debate intensified, FBI officials were informed by Army intelligence, again, that Grunewald “was the pay-off man for German agents in the United States” and that he was their liaison to various peace and subversive groups. Assistant Director Ladd determined that MID “was merely resurrecting old information in view of the fact that the Bureau had previously investigated the same allegations.” Nevertheless, using this information FBI officials established a wiretap on Grunewald’s telephone.⁶⁸ The wiretap remained in effect from 4 June 1941 to 3 September 1941.⁶⁹

Wiretapping was not a legal surveillance method. Since passage in 1934 of the Federal Communications Act, and until the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act permitted wiretapping with a warrant, the interception of wire or radio communications by anyone was illegal. Later this Act was upheld by two

companion Supreme Court decisions, *Nardone v. US* (1937 and 1939). In May 1940, however, with the war crisis mounting President Roosevelt secretly authorized the use of wiretaps to avert “sabotage, assassinations, and ‘fifth column’ activities” but only in cases concerning national defense and “of persons suspected of subversive activities against the Government of the United States, including spies.” Roosevelt wished to limit this activity, however, by keeping it to a “minimum” and limited “insofar as possible to aliens.” He authorized the attorney general to review and approve all proposed FBI wiretaps.⁷⁰

However, the attorney general in 1940, Robert Jackson, decided to leave it to the FBI director to maintain the record of these wiretaps. Hoover did this by keeping a “memorandum book” of attorney general-authorized wiretaps. By placing this responsibility with Hoover, Jackson effectively diminished the attorney general’s oversight role regarding wiretaps because he knew only of those wiretaps that Hoover reported to him. In fact, FBI officials could, and did, authorize wiretaps on their own authority without informing the attorney general.⁷¹

The exact number of wiretaps authorized by FBI officials is not known, but some can be documented. Wiretaps that were not authorized by the attorney general were not recorded in Hoover’s memorandum book, instead they were recorded on authorization cards that were maintained in the secret office files of Hoover’s lieutenants. In 1954, for reasons that are unknown, fifteen wiretap-authorization cards from the 1940s that had been filed in FBI Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd’s office were transferred to the secret file of Assistant Director Louis Nichols. Even more curious, wiretap-authorization cards routinely were destroyed every six months

yet these cards escaped destruction. In any event, the cards document the fact that the FBI had developed a level of investigative autonomy.⁷²

Through the Grunewald wiretap, FBI officials gathered no information about the private detective's alleged involvement in espionage. Instead, they accumulated critical comments some administration officials had made to Grunewald over the telephone. In September 1941 Grunewald had a conversation with former White House aide Thomas Corcoran during which Corcoran referred to Navy Secretary Knox as an "incompetent four-flusher," and dismissed Naval intelligence officers as an "awfully snooty bunch." Corcoran also commented to Grunewald that he believed Roosevelt only surrounded himself with "stuffed shirt" individuals. FBI agents also intercepted a conversation Grunewald had with Woodring concerning his desire to work with the pricing commission. These examples demonstrate that the Grunewald wiretap instead of revealing Grunewald's alleged espionage contacts instead served as a unique source of political intelligence for Hoover. (See chapter seven for another FBI wiretap that served as a source for anti-interventionist political intelligence.) Yet beyond gathering political intelligence from the Grunewald wiretap, Hoover also received political information from the detective himself.⁷³

In August 1941, Henry Grunewald provided Hoover with political intelligence regarding Senator Nye and Hoover forwarded it to the White House. Upon providing the information, Grunewald had asked that it not be sent to the White House. Hoover evidentially decided otherwise. At a meeting Grunewald had with Senator Nye, he learned from the senator that in July Nye had been approached by an individual who told him that if he were to "fall in line with the Administration

and the foreign policy of the Administration, he could probably write his own political ticket at the next Republican convention.” It had been suggested to Nye that he not “vindicate” Roosevelt’s policy but issue a call for unity among Americans. Later, Nye was told that if he were to join Roosevelt “there would be \$50,000 at his disposal forthwith.” Additionally, Grunewald reported that Nye suspected that Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes had wiretapped his telephone. Hoover sent this information to the White House marked “strictly conf[idential].”⁷⁴

Later in August, Grunewald again provided Hoover with political intelligence he gleaned from Senator Nye, and again Hoover offered it to the White House. Grunewald reported Nye’s observation that some anti-interventionist senators were concerned over the British spending seven billion dollars of Lend-Lease funds. Nye stated that the Senate would thoroughly investigate British spending before it approved additional dollars to Great Britain. Grunewald also provided information regarding the proposed Senate investigation into Hollywood’s support of interventionism. Nye said that “a thorough [Senate] inquiry will be made into the entire motion picture industry in order to show that the Administration has been using the movies as a vehicle to propagate information about the war.” Grunewald also learned from Nye that Senator Francis Maloney, an anti-interventionist Democrat from Connecticut, intended to make an issue out of the national gasoline shortage by claiming the administration created it as a public education campaign about the seriousness of the international situation. All of this intelligence Hoover forwarded to the White House as “highly confidential information.”⁷⁵

Not all information acquired from Grunewald was forwarded to the White House, however. On 8 October, during the congressional brouhaha over the franking misuse, Grunewald telephoned Hoover's secretary, Helen Gandy, and provided political intelligence he had gotten from Nye. Among other items, Grunewald reported that Nye believed his nationwide speaking tour, funded by the America First Committee, was successful. He also reported that Nye believed the use of the congressional frank was not an abuse because everyone in the Congress used it widely. Lastly, Grunewald reported that Nye believed "there is a determination on the part of the President to get into war, and he feels this will happen." Yet, Assistant Director Tamm concluded: "In view of [the] nature and source this info should not be transmitted outside Bureau."⁷⁶

Hoover felt secure in exploiting an FBI source of sensitive information provided the source would not become public. Hoover also would only investigate an influential public target—such as a government official—with documented authorization. He never risked exposing FBI investigations or sensitive sources without good reason. An example of this occurred in November 1941 when Attorney General Francis Biddle, after receiving derogatory information about Nye's connections, solicited Hoover's opinion. Francis P. Miller, of the vehemently interventionist Fight For Freedom Committee, wrote Biddle claiming Nye had accepted \$10,000 from a foreign government and had links with suspicious individuals. Responding to Biddle, Hoover commented only that the Bureau had never investigated Nye, despite public charges to the contrary, and that the only inquiry made into Nye was in response to a June 1940 White House request. Hoover

advised Biddle that Miller's charges were "of a very delicate nature, [and] I thought you might wish to discuss the matter personally with the President before coming to a decision." In his effort to service Roosevelt's political interests, Hoover would not reveal to the attorney general that his Bureau had continually monitored Senator Nye's political activity. Instead, he bypassed the civil-libertarian Biddle and dealt directly, most times, with the White House.⁷⁷

Nye's political views and activities were not Hoover's only interest. As he had with Senator Wheeler, Hoover monitored Nye's views of the FBI. In December 1941 FBI officials had learned that Nye and Senator John Overton—a Democrat from Louisiana—had planned to survey the Senate in an effort to gauge the level of support for a possible investigation of the FBI for failing to sufficiently investigate cases of domestic sabotage. Concerned about any criticism directed at the FBI, Hoover dispatched Assistant Director Ladd to speak to Nye at his Senate office. Nye denied that he had planned an investigation of the FBI but explained to Ladd that the rumor had originated with "our misguided Jewish friends" whom Nye believed supported the interventionists. Ladd's report, containing this sensitive political intelligence, was not filed in the Bureau's central records system but in J. Edgar Hoover's secret office file where it remained undisclosed. FBI officials' effort to contain any criticism of the Bureau reflects Hoover's goals during this period: to service the Roosevelt administration's interest in political intelligence and to protect the image of the FBI.⁷⁸

Even after the United States entrance into the Second World War on 7 December 1941, Grunewald continued to provide Hoover with political intelligence

originating with Senator Nye. On 17 December Grunewald reported that Nye said many anti-interventionist senators and congressmen had become “perturbed and upset” about the continuation of the grand jury probe into the franking privilege controversy. These legislators believed that the prosecutor, William Maloney, only sought to capitalize personally on the issue. Furthermore, Nye stated that his group could not understand why Roosevelt had allowed the franking probe to continue and that they had planned to send a representative to speak to him about ending it. There is no indication that this information was forwarded to the White House, but Hoover nevertheless continued to collect such political intelligence despite the anti-interventionists having disbanded and rallied behind the war effort.⁷⁹

Hoover continued to provide the White House with political intelligence on his anti-interventionist foreign policy critics even into 1942. On 28 May, he forwarded to the White House and Justice Department a letter Senator Nye had written to Horace Hasse—a former member of the America First Committee who later organized the group Americans for Peace. Nye had written in his letter, which Hoover had obtained from “a confidential source” (Grunewald?), that he was “satisfied that at the ripe time there can be a rebirth [of the America First Committee] that will be in the full and complete interest of America.” Nye was concerned about the future of the country and, in particular, the “inefficient conduct of the war.” Hoover reported that Hasse “is the subject of an intensive investigation by the FBI to determine whether he has violated the provisions of the Sedition statutes.” White House officials found this sensitive information important enough to “file in safe.”⁸⁰

While Hoover may have publicly rejected claims that FBI agents had investigated Senator Nye, agents had, in fact, monitored Nye's political activity and directly investigated the senator when solicited by the administration. The White House's request to investigate the Nye-Grunewald-Woodring matter led Hoover to a wellspring of political intelligence on Roosevelt's critics that emanated from Grunewald and his high-level political contacts. Hoover cultivated his contact with Grunewald, going so far as to establish a wiretap on his telephone (whether or not the attorney general authorized it, which was required, is unclear), and used some of this collected information in political reports to the White House. But not all information Hoover collected was sent to the White House. If the source of information was not secure, meaning that it could be revealed, Hoover hesitated. Additionally, he would not initiate an investigation unless it could be carried out in secret, thus not showing publicly that the Bureau had involved itself in political matters, or he would authorize an investigation only if directed to do so from superiors—thus having documented proof protecting his actions.

* * *

An examination of the FBI's monitoring of Senator Burton Wheeler, Congressman Hamilton Fish, and Senator Gerald Nye—all three prominent and influential foreign policy critics of President Franklin Roosevelt—demonstrates the political motivation behind FBI Director Hoover's efforts. Even with the impediments of classification restrictions and having to obtain FBI files via the FOIA, we gain an important understanding, if incomplete, of the FBI's priorities and role in the Great Debate over entrance into the Second World War. Hoover sought

to provide the Roosevelt administration with political intelligence regarding its prominent and influential anti-interventionist foreign policy opposition. In so doing, Hoover proved his worth to the administration, retained his tenure as Bureau director despite holding a different political philosophy than the president, and increased his FBI's power. Yet unlike his confidence regarding some of Roosevelt's other political opponents, such as Charles Lindbergh or the America First Committee, Hoover trod carefully when monitoring and investigating the political activities of members of Congress. Hoover had not yet established himself as an unassailable internal security bureaucrat nor created for his FBI the level of autonomy that would permit him to investigate freely. While he did create a certain level of autonomy, it was not sufficient enough for Hoover to risk his Bureau being exposed if a congressman had learned of Bureau surveillance of his activity, but he did monitor congressional opposition and did report these political activities to the White House whether solicited or not.

The FBI's monitoring of Burton Wheeler demonstrates best Hoover's qualified willingness to monitor a member of Congress. Wheeler had a past history with Hoover dating from the Red Scare of 1919-1920. Wheeler knew of Hoover's work in the mass round-up of suspected radicals and the abuses wrought by the old Bureau of Investigation. Wheeler was also influential, it appears, in the decision to retain Hoover as FBI director when Roosevelt ascended to the presidency in 1933. Yet Wheeler was also a long-term critic of the Bureau, being subjected to investigation following revelations of abuses during Teapot Dome and other FBI-directed criticisms through the years. Moreover, with an activist Congress that was

not deferential to the president during the pre-war years, it is understandable that Hoover did not investigate Wheeler, Fish, or Nye with the vigor that was spent on a controversial figure like Lindbergh. Whereas Hoover placated administration political interests to safeguard his and the FBI's position, Congress too could not be ignored.

Hoover's concern is documented by his interest in any critical comments made about the Bureau or any expressed concern that the FBI was, indeed, investigating an anti-interventionist. Thus Hoover's interest in Wheeler's 1940 comment describing FBI agents as two-by-four detectives and his statement to the fact that some anti-interventionists feared expressing themselves because of the FBI. This is also reflected in FBI Assistant Director Tamm's denial to Fish that the FBI had investigated the matter of Fish's receipt of suspicious funds, despite FBI agents having investigated and Hoover having reported the matter to the White House a month earlier. Even Fish's concern dating from the 1950s that the FBI had monitored his anti-interventionist politics suggests a concern among FBI officials over exposure, if a latent one. Nye's suspicion that Interior Secretary Ickes had wiretapped the senator's telephone would have suggested to Hoover that these legislators were, in the very least, wary of any intrusive activity on the part of the executive branch and this would have led Hoover to exercise restraint.

The congressional franking privilege controversy involved Wheeler, Nye, and Fish. It also involved an actual German propaganda operation aimed at distributing anti-interventionist literature in an attempt to influence American public opinion. But while Hoover was content to monitor the developments in this case

and to compile unsolicited information about it, for two reasons he did not involve the FBI actively, as far as we can ascertain, in the investigation. One, the Bureau did not have jurisdiction in the matter as it involved an abuse of federal mail regulations (a purview of the Post Office Department investigators). Two, Hoover was at personal odds with William Maloney, the federal prosecutor conducting the grand jury inquiry into the matter. The FBI director felt he had been publicly criticized by Maloney and thereby refused to offer FBI cooperation beyond that information which he had already forwarded to the Justice Department. Yet when some piece of information cropped up about the franking abuse, such as that Henry Grunewald had provided to Hoover regarding Nye's opinions of the matter, Hoover filed the information—sometimes it was filed in his secret office file due to the sensitivity of the source.

Hoover was most comfortable in initiating an FBI investigation of a congressman when the White House solicited one. Likewise, if the FBI had received public, unsolicited charges against one of the congressmen, Hoover reported the complaint to his superiors and if they advised an investigation then he would proceed. With some type of authorization to legitimize an FBI investigation, and thus insulate Hoover from public charges in the event the matter became public, he felt secure to investigate. This attitude is clearly demonstrated by the attorney general's request that FBI agents monitor a Wheeler speech in California to gauge the public's reaction to him in 1941. It is also reflected in Presidential Secretary Early's request that Hoover check into the veracity of the *Milwaukee Journal's* charge that Wheeler had made scurrilous comments about the administration during

wartime. The White House request that the FBI investigate Fish's receipt of checks during the 1942 off-year elections, as well as reports forwarded to the White House regarding Fish and Trujillo and the former's having a photograph of the president's library, are representative of Hoover's catering to administration requests. Likewise, the White House's 1940 request to investigate the Grunewald-Woodring-Nye spying charge was promptly executed for the president.

FBI Director Hoover was content to refer unsolicited intelligence regarding congressmen to his superiors for direction. Whether Hoover received authorization to investigate or not, this was, indirectly at least, a means by which derogatory information was reported to senior administration officials and may have sustained negative views of otherwise legitimate foreign policy opponents. More importantly, Hoover also forwarded unsolicited intelligence to the White House but only if the source was safeguarded. Thus, Hoover reported to the White House Nye's political comments or news about the political activity of the Senate acquired from Henry Grunewald.

Taken as a whole, the effort to service administration interest in the political activity of its anti-interventionist opposition, while perhaps confined at least regarding congressmen, reflects Hoover's priorities during the Great Debate. He had an interest in protecting his assets and expanding the FBI's role and power. This he did with great success, building for himself a basis on which the FBI would blossom into a more powerful and influential Cold War internal security agency.

NOTES

¹ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, 21 February 1941, Official File 10-B, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library [hereafter FDRL], Hyde Park, New York.

² Personal and strictly confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 14 August 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

³ Personal and strictly confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 28 August 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁴ Letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Adolf A. Berle, 3 September 1941, in Adolf A. Berle Diary, 7:1 (microfilm ed., reel 3), pp. 221-23.

⁵ As quoted in Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 18-19.

⁶ Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 467-8. There is no published biography of Senator Wheeler. On his life see Burton K. Wheeler with Paul F. Healy, *Yankee From the West* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962); John Thomas Anderson, "Senator Burton K. Wheeler and United States Foreign Relations" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1982).

⁷ Memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 28 March 1938, FBI 62-30399-351. Wheeler had led the fight among progressive Democrats against Roosevelt's Supreme Court plan. Wheeler saw the president's tactic as totalitarian.

⁸ Personal and confidential letter, J. T. Madigan to Hoover, 17 May 1941, FBI 100-4712-48x; "Wheeler Denounces FBI As '2-by-4' Detectives," *Philadelphia Inquirer* (31 May 1940) in Wheeler FBI file, number unreadable; memorandum, R. P. Kramer to Clegg, 1 June 1940, FBI 62-55261-3.

⁹ Personal and confidential letter, SAC New York to Hoover, 7 September 1940, FBI 65-6030-21; memorandum, Hoover to Lawrence M. C. Smith, Chief, Neutrality Law Unit, 16 October 1940, FBI 65-6030-21; personal and confidential letter, SAC New York to Hoover, 15 August 1940, FBI [number illegible, but in Nye FBI file].

¹⁰ Memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 18 October 1940, FBI 65-6030-3; Personal and confidential memorandum, Hoover to Assistant to the Attorney General Matthew F. McGuire, 30 October 1940, FBI 146-7-3963; letter, SAC New Haven to Hoover, 10 October 1940, FBI 65-6030-4.

¹¹ Blind memorandum, 31 December 1940, FBI 65-28688-115X1 attached to: personal and confidential letters, Hoover to Edwin M. Watson, Secretary to the President, Treasury Secretary, and Adolf A. Berle, 31 December 1940, FBI 65-28688-115X1.

¹² Letter, Wheeler to Hoover, 4 February 1941, FBI 62-55261-6; letter, The German Friend Society of Houston to Senator Burton K. Wheeler, 20 January 1941.

¹³ Memorandum, Matthew F. McGuire, the assistant to the attorney general, to L. M. C. Smith, Neutrality Laws Unit, 17 February 1941, FBI 62-55261-9X; letter, Hoover to Burton K. Wheeler, 10 February 1941, FBI 62-55261-6; letter, Hoover to Burton K. Wheeler, 6 March 1941, FBI 62-55261-9X; Letter, Hoover to SAC Houston, 6 March 1941, FBI 62-55261-11.

¹⁴ Letter, SAC El Paso to Hoover, 20 March 1941, FBI 62-55261-12; memorandum, Hoover to McGuire, 27 March 1941, FBI 62-55261-12.

¹⁵ The FBI obtained copies of the Wheeler/Hoke correspondence from an unsolicited source in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The FBI has withheld this person's name under provisions of the FOIA. Letter, [deleted] to Hoover, 28 July 1941, FBI 62-55261-26; letter, Wheeler to A. H. Becker, 7 July 1941, FBI 62-55261-26; letter, Henry Hoke to Wheeler, 16 July 1941, FBI 62-55261-26.

¹⁶ Henry Hoke news release, 24 July 1941; Henry Hoke, "War in the Mails: An Explanation of the most Gigantic Direct Mail Fraud in the History of Advertising"; all in FBI 62-55261-26.

¹⁷ Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 213.

¹⁸ Memorandum, Assistant Director Clyde Tolson to Hoover, 10 June 1941, FBI 62-55261-21.

¹⁹ As quoted in Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 470-71.

²⁰ Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 471.

²¹ Do Not File memorandum, Helen Gandy to Hoover, 8 October 1941, Official and Confidential Files of J. Edgar Hoover [hereafter Hoover O&C], folder 80, Henry Grunewald, FBI HQ, Washington, D.C.

²² Memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 13 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-207.

²³ Telegram, chargé d'affaires German Embassy Washington to German Foreign Ministry, 29 July 1941, in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, series D, vol. 13 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1964): 234.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 234 n. 2.

²⁵ Michael Sayers and Albert E. Kahn, *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 168-173.

²⁶ Sayers and Kahn, *Sabotage!*, 181-84.

²⁷ Sayers and Kahn, *Sabotage!*, 186-7.

²⁸ Sayers and Kahn, *Sabotage!*, 187-8; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 472.

²⁹ Memorandum, Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge to Hoover, 26 May 1942, FOIAed document, Justice Department in Wayne S. Cole papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library [hereafter HHL], West Branch, Iowa; Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*, 471-72; Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 214-15.

³⁰ Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 65-29514-33, pp. 14, 17-20; memorandum, Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge to Hoover, 6 June 1942, FBI 65-29514-22; Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 215. Unfortunately the FBI has withheld large portions of the summary memorandum regarding Fish as well as a memorandum sent to the White House regarding Fish on FOIA privacy grounds, resulting in an incomplete understanding of their interest.

³¹ Do Not File memorandum, Helen Gandy to Hoover, 28 October 1941, Hoover O&C; memorandum, Gandy to Hoover, 28 October 1941, Hoover O&C.

³² Letter, Emily Denison, President Women's Roosevelt Democratic Club to Hoover, 28 July 1941, FBI 62-55261-25; telegram, Women's Roosevelt Democratic Club to attorney general, 25 July 1941, FBI 62-55261-25; letter, Hoover to Denison, 2 August 1941, FBI 62-55261-25; memorandum, Hoover to Assistant to the Attorney General Matthew F. McGuire, 2 August 1941, FBI 62-55261-25; memorandum, McGuire to Hoover, 11 August 1941, FBI 62-55261-28.

³³ Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 27 September 1941, FBI 100-4712-170; report, SAC Los Angeles to Hoover, 3 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-158; memorandum, Hoover to Biddle, 8 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-158; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 13 October 1941, FBI 100-4712-158.

³⁴ Memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 30 December 1941, FBI 62-55261-35; memorandum of Facts, Law and Exhibits re Senator Burton K. Wheeler, FBI 62-55261-35.

³⁵ Memorandum, Attorney General Francis Biddle to Hoover, 2 February 1942, FBI 62-55261-37; memorandum, Hoover to Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge, 28 February 1942, FBI 62-55261-44.

³⁶ Letter, Richard S. Davis, *Milwaukee Journal*, to Roosevelt, 14 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40; interview memorandum of Laurence Eklund, no date, FBI 62-55261-40; memorandum, William J. Donovan to Roosevelt, 22 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40; memorandum, Frank Knox to Roosevelt, 23 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40.

³⁷ Memorandum, Stephen Early to Hoover, 26 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40.

³⁸ Letter, Hoover to SAC Milwaukee, 27 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40; memorandum, D. M. Ladd to Hoover, 31 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40.

³⁹ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Early, 3 February 1942, FBI 62-55261-40; blind memorandum re Burton Wheeler, 3 February 1942, FBI 62-55261-40; personal and confidential letter, SAC Milwaukee to Hoover, 31 January 1942, FBI 62-55261-40.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, Louis B. Nichols to Clyde Tolson, 12 February 1942, FBI 62-55261-42 [all text deleted]; Justice Department, Criminal Division document, no date, FBI 62-55261-44 [entire document withheld]; memorandum, K. R. McIntire to Mr. Mumford, 17 October 1942, FBI 62-55261-45 [all text deleted]; 14 pages of documents withheld in their entirety, FBI 62-55261-45.

⁴¹ Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33. On Fish's background see his short and politicized memoir *Hamilton Fish: Memoir of an American Patriot* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery, 1991), 3-31. Studies on Fish are scant. See Richard Kay Hanks, "Hamilton Fish and American Isolationism, 1920-1944" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Riverside, 1971). The political rift between the president and Fish is evidenced by Roosevelt's invocation of Fish's name during the 1940 presidential campaign. Roosevelt stated, to the delight of a crowd in New York City, that "Great Britain would never have received an ounce of help from us if the decision had been left to [Congressmen Joseph] Martin, [Bruce] Barton and Fish." A chant of Martin, Barton, and Fish soon became a popular and negative political slogan. Quoted in Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 185.

⁴² Fish, *Memoir of a Patriot*, 32-9; summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33, pp. 3-6.

⁴³ Fish, *Memoir of an American Patriot*, 56.

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- ⁴⁴ Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33, p. 7. It is important to note that the summary memo surveys all information maintained in the “official” files of the FBI and not, necessarily, all information maintained on Fish which could have been maintained in one of J. Edgar Hoover’s various secret office files.
- ⁴⁵ Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33.
- ⁴⁶ Confidential memorandum for Edgar Hoover, 4 May 1942, Official File 10-B; letter, Franklin A. Schriver to Watson, 23 April 1942, Official File 300 New York, FDRL; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Secretary to the President Edwin M. Watson, 13 May 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ⁴⁷ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Secretary to the President Edwin M. Watson, 13 May 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ⁴⁸ Memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 22 June 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-3.
- ⁴⁹ Memorandum, Tamm to Ladd, 22 June 1942, FBI 65-29514-23; [second] memorandum, Tamm to Ladd, 2 June 1942, FBI 65-29514-23.
- ⁵⁰ “Secret \$25,000 Fee Paid to Hamilton Fish by Foreign Power; U. S. Investigating,” *Washington Post* (6 August 1942); Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33, p. 15.
- ⁵¹ Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 6 August 1942, FBI 65-29514-[illegible]; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 8 August 1942, FBI 65-29514-25..
- ⁵² Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33, p. 16.
- ⁵³ Summary memorandum re Representative Hamilton Fish, 26 September 1942, FBI 94-4-3997-33, p. 16-17. It should be noted that as part of his Good Neighbor Policy Roosevelt, too, had met Trujillo in 1939 when he visited the U.S. When critics brought up the fact that Trujillo was a dictator, Roosevelt reportedly responded: “He may be an S.O.B., but he is our S.O.B.” Quoted in Thomas G. Paterson, *et al.*, *American Foreign Relations: A History*, vol. 2, 4th ed. (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1995), 188.
- ⁵⁴ Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 4 September 1942, FBI 65-29514-[illegible]; memorandum, Tamm to Ladd, 5 September 1942, FBI 65-29514-32.
- ⁵⁵ Letter and enclosure, Under Secretary of State of State Sumner Welles to Roosevelt, 27 July 1942, President’s Secretary’s File, Confidential File, State Department, FDRL.
- ⁵⁶ Memorandum, L. L. Laughlin to A. H. Belmont, 17 February 1951, FBI 65-29514-45.
- ⁵⁷ Letter, Herman Beukema to Watson, 22 August 1942; memorandum, Roosevelt to McIntyre, 3 September 1942; confidential memorandum, McIntyre to Hoover, 4 September 1942; personal and confidential memorandum, Hoover to McIntyre, 9 September 1942; personal and confidential memorandum, Hoover to McIntyre, 6 November 1942, all in Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ⁵⁸ Memorandum, L. L. Laughlin to A. H. Belmont, 17 February 1951, FBI 65-29514-45.
- ⁵⁹ Wayne S. Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye and American Foreign Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), 3-4; 49-54.

⁶⁰ Cole, *Senator Gerald P. Nye*, 60-120. For more detail on Nye's work with his committee and the Neutrality Acts see chapter 2.

⁶¹ Letter, SAC Los Angeles to Hoover, 10 October 1939, FBI 65-6030-1.

⁶² Letter, James M. Witherow to Hoover, 31 January 1940, FBI 65-8799-2X; letter, Witherow to Hoover, 24 February 1940, FBI 65-8799-2X; letter, Hoover to Witherow, 14 March 1940, FBI 65-8799-2X.

⁶³ Letter, James M. Witherow to Hoover, 31 January 1940, FBI 65-8799-2X; letter, Witherow to Hoover, 24 February 1940, FBI 65-8799-2X; memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to Hoover, 18 March 1940, FBI 65-8799-2X.

⁶⁴ Memorandum, Early to Hoover, 18 June 1940, Official File 10-B, 146-A, FDRL; memorandum, Mrs. John Frece to Early, 18 June 1940, Official File 10-B, 146-A, FDRL; memorandum, C. M. Busbee, MID, to Acting Chief of Staff, G-2, 25 June 1940, FBI 87-2755-287.

⁶⁵ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Early, 27 June 1940, Official File 10-B, 146-A; affidavit of D. H. McArthur, 27 June 1940, FBI 65-6165-[-?]. While the document number is unreadable, it can be found in Wayne S. Cole's papers at the HHL. Memorandum, Hoover to Early, 8 July 1940, Official File 10-B, 146-A, FDRL; memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 9 July 1940, FBI 65-6165-12; memorandum, Hoover to McGuire, 9 July 1940, FBI 65-6165-12.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, Hoover to Early, 8 July 1940, Official File 10-B, 146-A, FDRL.

⁶⁷ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Early, 9 July 1940, with attached memorandum, 8 July 1940, Official File 10-B, 146-A, FDRL; memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 9 July 1940, FBI 65-6165-12 [with attached 8 July memo]; memorandum, Hoover to McGuire, 9 July 1940, FBI 65-6165-12 [with attached 8 July memo]; letter, Morgenthau to Hoover, 17 July 1940, and personal and confidential letter with attached 8 July memo, Hoover to Morgenthau, 9 July 1940, Henry Morgenthau Diaries, Vol. 283, pp. 188-197, FDRL.

⁶⁸ Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 7 February 1945, FBI 87-2755-287 It is also interesting to note that Grunewald was again wiretapped in 1945-46.

⁶⁹ Do Not File memorandum, Spear to Foxworth, 17 May 1941, FBI 62-116758; Do Not File memorandum, Timm to Foxworth, 6 June 1941, FBI 62-116758; Do Not File memorandum, Fitch to Foxworth, 25 July 1941, FBI 62-116758.

⁷⁰ Federal Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. 605 (1934); Majority Opinion, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, *Nardone v. United States*, 302 U.S. 397 (20 December 1937); Majority Opinion, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, *Nardone v. United States*, 308 U.S. 338 (11 December 1939); confidential memorandum, Franklin D. Roosevelt to Attorney General Robert Jackson, 21 May 1940, President's Secretary's File, Justice Department, FDRL.

⁷¹ Athan Theoharis, "FBI Wiretapping: A Case Study of Bureaucratic Autonomy," *Political Science Quarterly* 107 (1992), 106.

⁷² Fifteen wiretap authorization cards, Wiretapping folder, Official and Confidential File of FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols, FBI HQ, Washington, D.C.

⁷³ Personal and confidential memorandum, [deleted] to Tamm, 3 September 1941, FBI 65-6165-42.

⁷⁴ Memorandum, Hoover to Tamm, 7 August 1941, in FBI files relating to Senator Nye, Cole papers, HHL [this document is probably from the Henry Grunewald FBI file, but the document number is

unreadable]; personal and strictly confidential letter with attached memorandum, Hoover to Watson, 14 August 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁷⁵ Personal and strictly confidential letter and attached memorandum, Hoover to Watson, 28 August 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL; Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 2 September 1941 and memorandum, Grunewald to [Hoover?], both in FBI files relating to NYE, Cole papers, HHL. It should be noted that the files Cole obtained are neither marked as to their exact origin and are not complete.

⁷⁶ Do Not File memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 8 October 1941, Hoover O&C.

⁷⁷ Memorandum Biddle to Hoover, 27 November 1941, FBI 62-42901-12; letter, Francis P. Miler to Biddle, 26 November 1941, FBI 62-42901-12; memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 6 December 1941, FBI 62-42901-12.

⁷⁸ Do Not File memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 5 December 1941, Hoover O&C.

⁷⁹ Do Not File memorandum, Gandy to Hoover, 17 December 1941, Hoover O&C.

⁸⁰ Memorandum with attached letter by Nye, Hoover to Rowe, 28 May 1942, James Rowe Papers, FDRL; personal and confidential letter and attached letter by Nye, Hoover to Watson, 30 June 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

CHAPTER 6

The FBI, the Victory Program Leak, and the *Chicago Tribune*, 1941-1942.

On 4 December 1941, the *Chicago Tribune* and its sister paper the *Washington Times-Herald* published a sensational story that reverberated in the already bitter anti-interventionist/interventionist foreign policy debate. Just three days prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the anti-interventionist newspapers reported on a top-secret War Department contingency plan, the so-called Victory Program. Carried under the banner headline "F.D.R.'S WAR PLANS!," the story seemed to confirm the darkest suspicion of the anti-interventionists who saw the plan as evidence of Roosevelt's duplicity and intent on leading the United States into the European war. Interventionists, on the other hand, viewed the revelation as traitorous behavior on the part of Roosevelt's critics.

The political consequences of this leak triggered a FBI investigation to identify who had leaked this top-secret contingency plan to the *Chicago Tribune*. As the chief federal law enforcement agency, the FBI was delegated the responsibility, instead of the military, for determining who had leaked the document. In the ensuing FBI investigation, FBI Director Hoover spared no effort and, indeed, the affair reflected his pragmatism whereby in return for placating administration desires

he gained increased authority. He likely pursued the matter with such *élan* as some high-ranking members of the Roosevelt administration avidly sought to hold the anti-interventionists responsible for the leak, which was an embarrassment to the government. But the leak of the plan was not the national security breach that some thought; rather as a contingency plan only, its revelation only served to embarrass the administration and give political fire to the anti-interventionists. By servicing administration interests, Hoover placed himself in good stead with leading officials in the administration during turbulent times. While the plan was revealed just days before the American entrance into the Second World War, and thus this momentous event was overshadowed in the public mind at least, it nevertheless stirred deeply held emotions on both sides of the foreign policy debate, even into 1942. The investigation, moreover, reached and involved many prominent members of the anti-interventionist community that included one United States representative, two United States senators, a host of military officers, Charles Lindbergh, Henry Ford, and reporters and staff from the *Chicago Tribune*. Moreover, until now, the FBI's investigation in this episode has never before been fully documented.¹

The person most responsible for developing the Victory Program, and the man who became a primary focus of FBI investigators, was Army Major Albert C. Wedemeyer. A brief sketch of Wedemeyer's biography will illustrate why, later, he became the focus of government investigators and why he came to some of his beliefs and why he acted as he did. A native Nebraskan of German extraction, Wedemeyer received a traditional Jesuit education steeped in ideals of duty and obligation. Following his graduation from high school Wedemeyer received an

appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1916 from Senator George W. Norris. (Norris would become an influential anti-interventionist senator during the Roosevelt administration.) With the crisis of the Great War of 1914-18 and America's late entrance into the conflict, Wedemeyer graduated early from the academy but never participated in any combat. In the post-war years, as a newly minted junior officer, Wedemeyer studied infantry tactics and became a military instructor and, later, assumed command of an artillery unit.²

Wedemeyer served in a variety of capacities from 1923 to 1934. After spending three years in the Philippines as an infantry officer, he became a staff officer—a job that embarked him on a distinguished career. In Washington, D.C., China, and the Philippines (again), Wedemeyer learned the finer details of army staff work. His efforts won him, in 1934, an appointment to the Command and General Staff College in Leavenworth, Kansas, where he graduated with honors. The college's commandant was so impressed with Wedemeyer's work that he nominated him to study European military tactics in Germany at the *Kriegsakademie*, the German Staff College. In 1936, Wedemeyer left for Germany.³

During his two-year study in Berlin, Wedemeyer learned much in the way of war-making and war preparation. But his trip, while decidedly useful in expanding his understanding of preparedness, in later years led investigators to question the officer's loyalties amidst popular notions of Nazi intrigue among America Firsters—which included Wedemeyer. During his brief tour in Germany, Wedemeyer was afforded special privileges not commonly granted foreign visitors. He participated in German military maneuvers at one point, commanding an anti-tank company. He

cultivated personal relationships with several high-ranking members of the German military including Claus von Stauffenberg, Major Ferdinand Jodl—brother to Hitler’s later army chief of staff—and the then-current chief of staff, Ludwig Beck. Wedemeyer learned much about German preparedness and strategy from his German contacts. His tour proved to be so valuable that upon its conclusion he submitted a report in 1938 to General George Marshall, then chief of the War Plans Division. Undoubtedly impressed by this report, Marshall later elevated Wedemeyer to the War Plans Division in May 1941, by which time Marshall had risen to chief of staff.⁴

Wedemeyer’s time in Germany may also have contributed, in some way, to his later anti-interventionism. Writing in 1958, Wedemeyer stated that during his stay in Germany he had “discerned a great deal of truth about Communist aims, practices, and methods unknown or ignored in America until recently.”⁵ He had also come to regard Nazi Germany in a positive fashion. “[M]y two years experience with the German people in general and the military pedagogy in particular had caused me to render favorable reports concerning them.”⁶ Wedemeyer saw in Nazi Germany a bulwark against Communist Russia. To him “the German search for *Lebensraum* did not menace the Western World to anything like the same degree as the world-wide Communist conspiracy centered in Moscow.” Wedemeyer’s views as such shared a common thread with those of another ardent anti-interventionist, Charles Lindbergh. Both Wedemeyer and Lindbergh had spent time in Nazi Germany from 1936 to 1938, and both were impressed with what they had seen. Moreover, both authored favorable reports on German progress. Both men

subsequently became targets of FBI investigations due, in part, to suspicions cast by their time spent in Hitler's Germany.⁷

Following passage of the Lend-Lease Act in March 1941, the American government was faced with the task of arranging procurement of war-related material for Great Britain. The War Department was delegated responsibility for determining the projected needs under the new Lend-Lease program. Having no direction in the matter from higher authorities, War Department personnel set about developing various plans to cope with Lend-Lease needs. In his effort to develop a viable scheme, Under Secretary of War Robert Patterson sought an estimate of the overall needs of possible wartime American industry from the administration. On 18 April he requested from Secretary of War Stimson "a decision as to the ultimate munitions production required by the War Department so that appropriate plans can be started."⁸

According to the official history of the Victory Program, Secretary Stimson wholeheartedly agreed with the under secretary's desire for more specific direction. Nonetheless, the War Department continued to fumble about on developing a plan for which military officials had no national strategic goals or estimates. No progress was made until President Roosevelt, on 9 July 1941, finally stepped in and issued a directive to the secretaries of war and navy to explore "at once the overall production requirements required to defeat our potential enemies." The official history suggests that Under Secretary Patterson's executive officer, General Burns, the War Department's liaison to the White House, had influenced Lend-Lease supervisor Harry Hopkins to bring pressure to bear upon the White House for

direction. Whatever the manner of events, Roosevelt's directive, after a period of confusion, put the department on track.⁹

Soon thereafter, responsibility for drawing up a global wartime contingency plan devolved from the secretary of war to General Marshall to General Leonard Gerow of the War Plans Division—those responsible for creating military plans—and finally to Major Albert C. Wedemeyer. As Wedemeyer later pointed out, never before had American military authorities devised such an all-encompassing plan. “It meant traveling on uncharted seas without a compass toward a fatal Shangri-la,” Wedemeyer wrote, “since no national aims or strategic objectives were given us.” Despite this impediment, Wedemeyer was authorized to coordinate with other government departments to acquire the information he needed. Due to the project's sensitivity, however, all work was carried out in secrecy. The Navy had concurrently drafted its own estimates that were subsequently added to the larger plan developed by the War Department.¹⁰

Wedemeyer was an ironic choice to develop a war plan that was to be designed “to defeat our potential enemies.” For during the American inter-war years, Albert Wedemeyer was a confirmed advocate of American isolation from foreign war. He was convinced from his broad reading on war and national strategic planning that American involvement in a second worldwide conflict would lead to national devastation. Despite his underlying political sympathies, Wedemeyer's Jesuitical sense of duty kept him focused on his assigned task. “It was my job,” he wrote years later, “to anticipate developments and continuously make plans so that

my country would be prepared for any contingency which fate, politicians, or power-drunk leaders might precipitate.”¹¹

Working with a staff of six, Wedemeyer set about developing a national plan for wartime production estimates. But the major lacked two key pieces of information to create a coherent plan: a national wartime objective and a military strategy to realize that objective. Without such direction from the administration, which was never formally decided upon in 1941, Wedemeyer could not arrive at any useful figures. Therefore, he drafted his own assessment of national objectives and submitted this statement to Secretary of War Stimson for approval. Stimson approved the major’s statement and Wedemeyer set about creating the Victory Program, a plan that was based on the assumption that the United States should “eliminate totalitarianism from Europe and, in the process, to be an ally of Great Britain; further, to deny the Japanese undisputed control of the western Pacific.”¹²

The War Plans Division staff worked diligently on the Victory Program throughout the summer of 1941. In a relatively short period of time (from July when Roosevelt requested a national estimate to September when the Army’s plan was submitted) Wedemeyer and his staff completed their task. A vast number of government resources were used to create a politico-military plan of a scale never before seen in American history. Between 20 and 25 September the completed plan was distributed to the highest-ranking members of the War Department and, later, it was given to the president. But Wedemeyer’s sense of accomplishment was dashed when, on 4 December 1941, the fruits of his top-secret labor received banner headlines in two of the nation’s most prominent anti-interventionist newspapers.¹³

* * *

Following the *Chicago Tribune's* and *Washington Times-Herald's* (which was loosely connected to the *Tribune*)¹⁴ published account of the Victory Program on 4 December, Wedemeyer's life became markedly uncomfortable. He vividly recalled that morning when he arrived at his office in the Munitions Building:

I sensed at once an atmosphere of excitement. Officers were milling around and there was a buzz of conversation which ceased abruptly as my secretary, in visible agitation, handed me a copy of the *Washington Times-Herald*. The room was silent and all eyes were fixed upon me as I read the screaming banner headlines ... I could not have been more appalled and astounded if a bomb had been dropped on Washington.¹⁵

The developer of the top-secret contingency plan had cause to be worried, for he was responsible, to a large degree, for its security. The newspaper story, written by the *Tribune's* Chesly Manly, gave details of the plan, including its estimates for a 10,000,000-plus-men combined armed force consisting of an 1,100,000-man Navy, a 150,000-man Marine Corps, a 6,745,000-man Army, and a 2,050,000-man Army Air Force. Additionally, the article reprinted in its entirety President Roosevelt's 9 July memorandum authorizing the plan to his war secretaries. Quoting extensively from the Victory Program, the anti-interventionist paper concluded that the plan proved that Roosevelt had no intention of keeping American armed forces within the Western Hemisphere, as he had previously promised. The story became an immediate political sensation.¹⁶

Anti-interventionists depicted the revelation as a smoking gun. To them, the Victory Program was clear-cut evidence that Roosevelt had been maneuvering the country into war. Anti-interventionists planned to use the revelation to their advantage. Ruth Sarles, director of the America First Committee's speakers bureau,

wanted to distribute the plan across the country “in tens of thousands.” She hoped “that every speaker who goes on the platform for AF [America First] will denounce it in ringing terms, that all will hammer ‘No AEF’.”¹⁷ The Republican anti-interventionist congressman H. Carl Anderson of Minnesota remarked to an America First representative that the publication “vindicates what we have been saying right along. A blind man could see through it all.” Republican Dan Reed of New York predicted that “When this story gets around to the people it will strengthen our cause greatly.”¹⁸

Interventionists, on the other hand, viewed the contingency plan leak in strikingly different terms. Senator Carter Glass of Virginia, honorary chairman of the rabidly interventionist Fight for Freedom Committee, commented that “the freedom of the press was never intended to extend to people who treasonably make public army and navy secret plans.”¹⁹ “It was a scandalous thing to have happen,” Secretary of War Stimson noted in his diary, “and was typical of the mental attitude of the isolationists at that time.”²⁰ And whereas the anti-interventionists hoped to use the Victory Program to stimulate opposition to Roosevelt’s foreign policy, Stimson had a related, if opposing, objective: “The thing to do is to meet the matter head on and use this occurrence if possible to shake our American people out of their infernal apathy and ignorance of what this war means.”²¹

The White House was also deliberating what to do about the matter. On the morning of 4 December, according to Secretary Stimson’s diary, without having consulted with the president, White House Press Secretary Steven Early held a press conference. Early stated that no one in the White House but the president had

knowledge of the Victory Program. When asked if there were any conflicts of interest for other papers to reprint the Manly story without violating voluntary censorship restrictions, Early replied: "I don't think anyone would be correct in printing it unless they got it from a government source, unless they attributed it to the paper that built the story." He added, "I consider the press is operating as a free press and the responsibility in this case is more on government than the press, if the story is true." This prompted a further question as to whether the White House considered the publication as treasonable or unpatriotic. "Your right to print," Early replied, "is unchallenged and unquestioned."²²

At the War Department that morning, Secretary of War Stimson recorded that officials there, such as Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, had "very long faces." To him "nothing more unpatriotic or damaging to our plans for defense could very well be conceived" than that done by the anti-interventionist press. Concerned about Early's comments at his press conference earlier that morning, Stimson immediately phoned Roosevelt. The war secretary criticized Early's feeble comments at his press meeting and, according to Stimson, Roosevelt agreed with Stimson. The whole issue of the leak, Stimson claimed, caused the president to be "full of fight." Apparently sensing Roosevelt's mood, Stimson suggested prosecuting those involved in the leak under the Espionage Act. Roosevelt "was delighted to hear this" because he had previously been advised that no violation of the act had occurred. In the meantime, the president directed "that we should not answer any questions about it at our press conferences and that the first action taken

should be the arrest of those responsible for the disclosure, including if possible the managers of the newspapers.”²³

After further deliberation, Stimson, the following day, concluded that the president’s policy of not speaking out on the leak was wrong. The secretary of war drafted a press statement, phoned the president, and read it to him. Advising the president that the War Department had a press conference that morning and that he “didn’t want to duck such an important matter,” Stimson asked for permission to make a public statement. Roosevelt agreed and authorized Stimson’s statement.²⁴

Both Roosevelt and Stimson had scheduled press conferences with Roosevelt’s slated to go first. Preferring to allow his war secretary to comment, the president told reporters that he had nothing to say but referred reporters to Stimson. Stimson, accordingly, found his press room “jammed as never before—people standing up all around me.”²⁵ Stimson offered reporters a more forceful and positive statement followed by two questions. He outlined the War Department’s responsibilities:

It does not preclude the study of possible eventualities, one of the primary duties and responsibilities of the War Department. . . . Failures to make such studies would constitute a serious dereliction on the part of the responsible military authorities. The object of the study referred to by the press was to determine production requirements. . . . We are not preparing troops nor have we asked for funds for an A.E.F.

What would you think of an American General Staff which in the present condition of the world did not investigate and study every conceivable type of emergency which may confront this country, and every possible method of meeting that emergency? What do you think of the patriotism of a man or newspaper which would take those confidential studies and make them public to the enemies of this country?²⁶

At a Cabinet meeting later that day, President Roosevelt informed his department heads on his recent decision to comment. While the Cabinet was in line with the president, not all agreed fully with Stimson's public statement. Harold Ickes, ardent opponent of the anti-interventionists, found it to be "entirely too defensive." Vice President Henry Wallace agreed with the statement but objected to the questions following it. In any event, Stimson was not deterred. To him, the "extremely weak" comments of Press Secretary Early "which virtually condoned the publication of the statement [Victory Program] on the basis of Freedom of the Press" justified his action.²⁷

Much of the Cabinet meeting was spent discussing whether to prosecute those responsible for the Victory Program leak. Ickes urged the president to go forward with prosecutions against the *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Times-Herald*. The question whether the Espionage Act offered an avenue to exploit was settled, to the Cabinet's satisfaction, when Attorney General Francis Biddle defended such action. Following the meeting, Stimson pressed Roosevelt to pursue charges of conspiracy against those involved. The secretary demanded that the charges should be broad and not narrowly focused because, he thought, "it is vitally important to make . . . a great State prosecution to get rid of this infernal disloyalty which we now have working in the America First and in these McCormick family papers." Roosevelt also met privately with the attorney general. Biddle confidentially advised the president that he and Hoover had learned "that at least one copy [of the Victory Program] had been handed to a Senator and that Wheeler was talking about investigation." Keenly interested in this information, Roosevelt

promised not to share the details with any other cabinet members. Given the charged atmosphere created with the leak, Biddle probably feared the worst if unsubstantiated information was leaked from the White House. In any event, the FBI was authorized by Attorney General Biddle to investigate.²⁸

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, in this politically charged episode, found an avenue to cater to the political desires of some administration officials—to seek retribution against administration critics—by investigating their activities. He brought to bear the full resources of the FBI. The FBI had jurisdiction and not the military due to an agreement of June 1940 on the division of labor among the various intelligence agencies. On 4 December, Hoover accompanied by FBI Assistant Director Edward Tamm, met with Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox and other high-ranking Navy Department officials to discuss the Victory Program leak, the Navy's contribution to it, and how the report had been distributed. Revealing his priority to focus on the administration's policy critics, Hoover further inquired of the Navy officials "as to whether any dissension or opposition had been expressed toward the plans." Other than disagreement on whether the plan was practical, the officers could offer no information on internal opposition to the plan itself. Navy officials gave Hoover a registered copy of the Victory Program to assist FBI investigators.²⁹

Using their copy of the Victory Program, FBI officials immediately compared the actual contingency plan and the one published by the anti-interventionist press. The FBI's investigators focused on the thirty-five quotations reported by the *Washington Times-Herald* and *Chicago Tribune*. Each quotation

was examined with utmost care and any inconsistency between the two documents was laid out in full detail. While FBI officials found numerous minor and insignificant discrepancies—such as a misplaced comma or an omitted word—they nonetheless came to the conclusion that the press had indeed had access to the secret Victory Program.³⁰

General Gerow concurrently informed Wedemeyer that the president had ordered an investigation. Wedemeyer replied that he had not divulged any secret War Department documents, but, he later wrote, “I could not be certain that I had never neglected to exercise proper precautions.” Gerow, having worked with Wedemeyer who by now had been promoted to colonel, and having known him personally, expressed his trust in the man. Given Wedemeyer’s known anti-interventionist political sympathies and the very fact that he was responsible for piecing together the plan, others suspected him of guilt. Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, still new in his position, that day called Wedemeyer to his office for a discussion. While the colonel stood at attention, according to Wedemeyer, McCloy said to him: “Wedemeyer, there is blood on the fingers of the person who is responsible for the release of this top secret war plan to the newspapers.”³¹

Shortly afterwards, on 9 December, Wedemeyer was visited, not unexpectedly, by two FBI officials, one of whom was Edward Tamm, Hoover’s second in command. Wedemeyer was understandably concerned. Years later, in 1957, he described the event. While the passage of time had undoubtedly colored his memory of the event’s details, he conveyed his lasting bitterness. “When Edgar Hoover, Thams [*sic*, Tamm], Genau and other FBI men descended upon me in my

office, at that time in the Munitions Building, about December 1 [*sic*], 1941, I was confused, worried, and a little bit angry.” He described the incident: “[FBI agents] descended upon me like vultures upon a prostrate antelope.”³²

Despite his vivid description of the FBI officials’ visit, Wedemeyer described Tamm as “so courteous as to be disarming.” The FBI assistant director asked whether Wedemeyer knew how the War Department’s security protocols had been breached. He also inquired how Wedemeyer had ensured the security of the sensitive documents under his care. Wedemeyer evaluated this first meeting with FBI officials as centering on evaluating his “sincerity and sense of responsibility.” He conveyed his concern that he may have been careless at some point, but otherwise Wedemeyer claimed not to have any sense of guilt.³³

At a subsequent interview, FBI agents asked how Wedemeyer disposed of the final copies of the Victory Program. At one point Wedemeyer confused the dates when he gave Secretary Stimson his copy of the plan. This was not surprising, however. Since the plan was completed on 10 September but not fully assembled (with the Navy portion) and distributed until 25 September, Wedemeyer’s confusion reveals no important inconsistency. To FBI officials, who regarded the anti-interventionist colonel as a prime suspect, however, this slip was a red flag. Suspecting that the Victory Program had been leaked during this September period, they concluded:

Colonel Wedemeyer was very ill at ease during this interview and several times fell back upon the old adage, ‘I could not remember,’ and seemed to be thinking up excuses for himself and his actions. . . . [A]s it was not until the middle of October, 1941, that Colonel [Richard] Scobey received instructions to finally assemble and produce the entire document, Colonel Wedemeyer becomes responsible for any leakage up to that date.³⁴

In a subsequent interview FBI agent Joseph Genau questioned Wedemeyer about his time in Germany. Genau asked whom Wedemeyer had befriended in Germany, particularly in high-ranking military circles. He then asked whether the colonel had corresponded with any of these German friends. Wedemeyer replied that when the war broke out, his German correspondence had dwindled. The FBI agent also inquired whether Wedemeyer had attended any Nazi Party meetings from 1936 to 1938. Wedemeyer answered in the negative, conceding that had he been given the opportunity he would have attended out of “curiosity” to observe firsthand the “mass psychosis and unusual spectacle.”³⁵

Agent Genau then turned to Wedemeyer’s contacts with the anti-interventionist movement. He asked: “Do you have any contacts with a person or persons within the America First Organization [*sic*]?” “Yes,” Wedemeyer responded, “I have several friends connected with that organization: Mrs. [Robert] Taft, John T. Flynn, Senator Wheeler, and Colonel Lindbergh. I haven’t seen them for some time because I’ve been too busy.” When asked if he sympathized with the efforts of the America First Committee, Wedemeyer responded: “In many ways, yes.”³⁶ To FBI officials these ties were a significant investigative lead as Hoover’s FBI had an interest in and history of providing political intelligence on such prominent policy critics.

This answer prompted further questions about Wedemeyer’s connections within the America First Committee. Genau was particularly interested in Wedemeyer’s connection with Charles Lindbergh. Responding to a series of questions, Wedemeyer admitted to having first met Lindbergh in Germany during

his tour there in 1938 and to have met with Lindbergh “occasionally” back in the United States. Genau was also interested in Wedemeyer’s statement that “I respect him and agree with many of his ideas concerning our entrance into the war.” Genau thereupon inquired when he had met with Lindbergh in America, the most recent meeting only having been, Wedemeyer said, one month past. Wedemeyer’s only response was to say his visits were purely social and that when together they discussed national and international politics. Nevertheless, to FBI officials Wedemeyer’s link with Lindbergh—the most popular and influential of Roosevelt’s critics—only served to cast further suspicions on the colonel.³⁷

* * *

On 6 December, after having verbally briefed Biddle to prepare him for his 5 December Cabinet meeting with Roosevelt, Hoover submitted his preliminary report to the attorney general. The FBI director advised Biddle that “from the system employed in the handling of secret documents in the War Department it is impossible to accurately and exactly” determine who had leaked the Victory Program. Nevertheless, to service administration interest in the matter, the FBI director continued to dig deeper to identify the perpetrator. He proposed two courses of action to the attorney general. First, Hoover suggested calling a grand jury inquiry to interrogate the suspects under oath. The resultant publicity, Hoover warned, might embarrass the administration. Hoover’s second recommendation, and the one he advocated due to the sensitivity of the matter, was “to de-emphasize the inquiry which is being carried on concerning this matter, and to have it appear that the inquiry is in a quiescent status.” The second option, Hoover counseled, would

enable the FBI to locate the “officer or person” who had leaked the plan. The attorney general apparently chose the latter option, but the first was considered at a later date.³⁸

At this very early stage in the investigation, Hoover advised Biddle, the FBI had learned from two “thoroughly reliable confidential informants” that the Victory Program plan “had been furnished by one of the highest ranking officers of the War Department to an isolationist Senator.” Hoover continued: “The copy was allowed to remain in the Senator’s possession over night and a number of typewritten copies of the plan were prepared.” The FBI informant further reported that “certain members of the General Staff of the War Department were not at all in sympathy with the Administration’s apparent plans or preparations for war.” According to the Bureau’s source, this group of officers regarded their superiors as “boneheads” and they held little respect for their abilities.³⁹

A second “reliable and dependable” informant who “was rather closely associated with certain aspects of the publication of this story” reported that the Victory Program plan had been obtained “on the Hill” from “a General Staff officer of the War Department.” The informant could not, however, identify this officer. The newspapers involved, this informant further reported, were anxious that an official investigation would be conducted of the leak to lend publicity to the fact that Roosevelt has a war plan. The newsmen, the informant continued, had hoped that the story would spark an “insurrection” among the General Staff that would result in a scandal “of greater proportion than the Dreyfus case.” In light of these details, FBI

officials, while not able to prove their suspicions did, in fact, suspect that Wedemeyer had leaked the plan.⁴⁰

“There was ample evidence to suggest my guilt,” Albert Wedemeyer wrote newsman Walter Trohan in 1953.⁴¹ On the face of it, the circumstantial evidence of a disgruntled “isolationist” within the inner-circle of the War Department pointed directly to Wedemeyer. But this suspicion could not be proved, as an FBI agent reported:

The facts and circumstances surrounding the preparation and handling of this report in the period between the date the President requested it on July 9th and the time when it was actually submitted to him on September 25th, and the comparatively wide distribution of 35 mimeographed copies of the report subsequent to its distribution by the Secretary of the Joint Planning Board, make it impossible to establish any evidence or manifestation of guilty conduct on the part of this officer [Wedemeyer] at this time.⁴²

Wedemeyer, nonetheless, remained under suspicion. First, Wedemeyer, by this time a lieutenant colonel, was suspected because of the time he had spent at the *Kriegsakademie* between 1936 and 1938. While not sufficient to cast doubt on his loyalties, information purporting that he was “most pro-German in his feelings, his utterances, and his sympathies” along with his connections with Charles Lindbergh did, in fact, lead FBI officials to suspect his motives. FBI officials had further learned that Wedemeyer “engaged in a rather heated discussion with fellow officers at the War Department concerning his lack of sympathy with the administration’s international program.” He was “opposed to the Lend-Lease program” and “is otherwise very isolationist in his statements and sympathies.” But more to the point, the investigators cited the fact that Wedemeyer “has had constant access to the plans for the Iceland Expedition and the proposed capture of the Azores, both of which

projects have been the subject of premature publication in certain [anti-interventionist] newspapers.”⁴³

While their circumstantial evidence led FBI officials to suspect Wedemeyer, they tried to identify the officer who had passed the Victory Program on to an unnamed “isolationist” senator who then offered the story to the *Chicago Tribune*. When the FBI’s special agent in charge of the Detroit, Michigan, office, John Bugas, informed Washington of a possible lead, Hoover proceeded with it. Bugas telephoned FBI Assistant Director D. Milton Ladd, the head of the FBI’s Domestic Intelligence Division, that a source had overheard a conversation between Charles Lindbergh, automobile manufacturer and fellow anti-interventionist Henry Ford, and Harry Bennett (Ford’s director of personnel, labor relations, and plant security). During this conversation, Lindbergh reportedly said “he was obtaining considerable information from an Army officer.” This officer, whom Lindbergh had visited in Washington, D.C., had provided the aviator information concerning the Army and Navy. The FBI’s informant also claimed that Lindbergh and the officer in question held similar political beliefs.⁴⁴

Instructed to interview Bennett about his conversation with Lindbergh, Bugas reported back that Ford was concerned over Lindbergh’s assertions about military strength and his appearing to be an authority without having first-hand knowledge. Ford admonished Lindbergh that American military leaders had to know better than he about technical and military strength of the armed forces. Lindbergh, however, disputed Ford by stating “that he was getting a great many of his facts from the people holding high positions in the Army.” Bennett recalled

Lindbergh having named one such officer but could not remember the name. Bennett did recall, however, that from time to time Lindbergh visited this officer at the War Department “whose views were in line with Lindbergh’s and who would usually furnish Lindbergh with information concerning these matters.” Regarding the Victory Program leak, Bennett said nothing was mentioned to indicate Lindbergh knew of it.⁴⁵

FBI Assistant Director Tamm thereupon directed Bugas to interview Henry Ford. Wanting to avoid any misconceptions when interviewing the avidly anti-interventionist Ford, Tamm instructed Bugas to treat him courteously. Bugas emphasized his own personal acquaintance with Ford. When Tamm informed Hoover of this development, the FBI director scribbled on the memorandum: “Press this & let me know result.”⁴⁶

Hoover thereupon briefed the attorney general about the Bureau’s plan to interview Ford to discover the name of Lindbergh’s military contact. “If Ford gives us the information concerning Lindberg [*sic*],” Hoover advised Biddle, “who is the source of Ford’s information, my idea is to have two of our best men see Lindberg [*sic*] and call upon him to give us the information he has.” Should Lindbergh refuse, FBI agents would confront him with the fact Ford had identified this officer (assuming that Ford could and would do so). Continuing, Hoover postulated that, however Lindbergh responded, “we can then give consideration as to whether he should be called before a Grand Jury.” Hoover urged that Lindbergh “should either be made to put up or shut up.” Agreeing with Hoover, Biddle observed that if

successful the effort “might give the President a chance to clean out some ‘brass hats’” from the War Department.⁴⁷

The following day Hoover received a report on the Ford interview. Detroit Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Bugas advised the FBI director that Ford had invited Lindbergh to Detroit to discuss the aviator’s “attitude towards the Jews.” At the time, Lindbergh had made some anti-Semitic remarks, particularly in a now-infamous Des Moines speech where he labeled Jewish elements as war agitators. When asked whether Lindbergh had mentioned Army or Navy war plans, Ford could not recall Lindbergh making any comment about that. Hoover’s plan, which rested on Ford’s information, seemed to have fallen through.⁴⁸

Ford’s failure to provide useful information did not deter FBI officials, however. SAC Bugas again interviewed Ford’s director of plant security, Harry Bennett, to see if he could recall any of the details about the Ford-Lindbergh conversation. While Bennett could not recall the name of the officer whom Lindbergh had “frequently” contacted for his information, he did remember that Lindbergh was apprehensive about maintaining this contact. Instead, Bennett reported, Lindbergh sought as a contact a man named Major James Higgs. Bugas advised Hoover that “Bennett believes that Higgs would know the name of Lindberg’s [*sic*] principal contact.” Bennett offered to ask Lindbergh directly who his source was, but was admonished by Bugas not to take any action without prior FBI approval.⁴⁹

On 20 December, FBI Assistant Director Edward Tamm interviewed Higgs in the presence of two officials from Army intelligence. Reporting the results to

Hoover, Tamm identified Higgs as from the National Guard, and not a regular Army officer. Higgs was employed in the War Department as a public-relations expert, serving in the office of General Henry “Hap” Arnold, chief of the Army air corps. Tamm found it “interesting to note” that Higgs had been a newspaper reporter in St. Louis, Missouri, when Lindbergh was there in 1927. In any event, Tamm asked the public-relations man whether he had seen the original document. Tamm doubted Higgs’s denial to having seen the plan, observing that Higgs’s job was to publicize the Air Corps in an attempt to gain recruits. The FBI agent believed that Higgs had to have known Air Corps estimates were he to carry out his assigned task. Tamm further asked Higgs about his relationship with Charles Lindbergh. While Higgs claimed to know “Colonel Lindbergh” only in a formal manner, Tamm did not believe him since the major referred to Lindbergh several times by his nickname, Slim. Despite having interviewed Higgs for a lengthy period, Tamm was unable to develop anything “of an affirmative nature” regarding the War Department leak. Nevertheless, the assistant FBI director concluded that “it appears definite that Higgs has been involved in some War Department politicking [sic] or sculduggery [sic] about which he is considerably worried.”⁵⁰

While FBI officials tried—in vain—to identify the name of the military officer who had provided an “isolationist senator” with the Victory Program, agents were hard at work identifying the suspicious senator. The Bureau had two Democratic senators in mind: Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana and Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts. Wheeler was suspect almost immediately given the fact that earlier in the year, in July, he had publicly revealed a proposed military

plan to send an American expeditionary force to Iceland. Wheeler had also informed the press about British expectations that the United States would become involved in the war and “disappoint[ment]” that America was not.⁵¹ Walsh became a suspect in January 1942 when an unidentified FBI informant (whose name the FBI has withheld) reported a rumor that Walsh had received one of the thirty five mimeographed copies of the War Department plan and had made it available to a reporter of the *Chicago Tribune*. The FBI’s informant had left employment with the *Washington Times-Herald* over a dispute with the paper’s publisher, Mrs. Eleanor Patterson, McCormick’s cousin. Probably enjoying the idea of some form of retribution, the informant reportedly was “tickled to death” to assist the FBI and believed that Walsh and Chesly Manly, the author of the controversial *Tribune* article, enjoyed a close relationship.⁵²

Interestingly, the FBI was almost on the mark with its suspicions as to Chesly Manly’s source for the Victory Program plan. FBI officials had initially suspected the prominent anti-interventionist Senator Wheeler but they decided to focus on Senator Walsh, instead, as the prime candidate because agents had similar uncorroborated information as to his guilt. They were wrong. Burton Wheeler—who in the early 1950s admitted his role and in 1962 publicly stated as much—in fact provided the Victory Program to Manly.

Wheeler’s role began on 8 June 1940, the day after he had delivered a nationally broadcast radio speech in which he urged Americans not to panic over the rapid pace of events in Europe. According to Wheeler, an Army Air Corps officer—a captain—visited him at his Senate office. Wheeler did not know the man, but

decided to listen to what he had to say. (Wheeler never identified this officer.) The unidentified Air Corps captain offered to provide the senator with official military figures, and on this occasion informed Wheeler that the American air forces were completely inadequate to face world powers such as Nazi Germany. The officer intimated that any government official who stated otherwise was lying. For the time being, this is all the officer provided Wheeler, but their relationship became a lasting one.⁵³

After several subsequent meetings with the Air Corps captain, Wheeler finally received from him the bombshell information about the Victory Program. In September 1941, the captain informed Senator Wheeler that the president had assembled a master plan for an American expeditionary force to Europe. Fascinated by this new information, Wheeler asked if the captain could secure a copy of this plan. The captain agreed to Wheeler's request, but he was unable to do so until 3 December. That day, he delivered the Victory Program plan to Wheeler at his home "wrapped in brown paper and labeled 'Victory Program.'" Curious as to why the captain would expose this top-secret document to someone not in the executive branch, the captain replied: "Congress is a branch of the government. I think it has a right to know what's really going on in the executive branch when it concerns human lives." Wheeler kept the plan overnight to study it.⁵⁴

"As I scanned its contents," Wheeler subsequently wrote, "my blood pressure rose." The senator believed that in light of the way the neutrality acts, lend-lease, and the destroyers for bases deal had been presented as measures designed to avoid American participation in war, revealing this Victory Program would undercut those

arguments. Wheeler wanted to prove to the American public that if the country continued on its present course, war was inevitable. He did not believe that revealing the top-secret plan violated the law. Because it was only a contingency plan of production requirements, and was not an operational war plan, he saw no reason not to inform the American public of the government's plans.⁵⁵

Wheeler decided the best way to publicize the Victory Program was to ensure its publication in a paper sympathetic to the anti-interventionist cause. He decided to show the plan to the Washington correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*, Chesly Manly, because "I liked Manly and knew his paper would give the plan the kind of attention it deserved." When presented with the document that night, according to Wheeler, Manly was "startled and fascinated." The two men met at the senator's home "for several hours" at which time Manly copied the most important sections of the plan; the document had to be back at the War Department the following morning. The next day, 4 December, the story went public.⁵⁶

* * *

During the initial phase of the FBI investigation, FBI officials sought to identify the military officer who leaked the contingency plan and the public official to whom it went. They investigated those prominent anti-interventionists—whether in the public or military sphere—who might be the perpetrator or perpetrators. FBI agents tracked down information that suggested the complicity of a United States senator. Investigators also interviewed those directly responsible for writing the story: journalist Chesly Manly, *Chicago Tribune* managers, and others associated with the so-called "isolationist" press.⁵⁷

FBI and G-2 (military intelligence) officers subjected Chesly Manly to lengthy interrogations. They attempted to persuade the newspaper correspondent to reveal his source and the details surrounding the leak. Manly, however, refused to cooperate on the grounds of freedom of the press. The investigators continued to press him to identify his source by constantly rephrasing their questions. Each time, however, Manly answered: "I am not at liberty to answer any question that goes to the source of my information." FBI agent Genau pressed Manly further, asking him if his source was "above patriotism?" Manly denied the matter had anything to do with patriotism. Changing tactics, the interrogators asked him to reveal which numbered copy of the Victory Program he had seen. Knowing this could reveal his source, as each copy was charged out to a particular individual, Manly refused to answer. Time and again the FBI and Army investigators prodded him and even employed some hyperbole:

There is . . . a deadly earnestness to get to the bottom of this and we are trying to clear you and your paper of this espionage. It is definitely, until you prove to the contrary, a possible case of espionage. I can tell you this, that if it ever got out to the public—even a rumor—that there were copies of the document you had several weeks prior to Pearl Harbor, they would tear down that building in Chicago, and you know it. That's just the type of hysteria we don't want in this case.

Manly assured the investigators that no espionage had taken place. Reporting to Secretary of War Stimson on the interview, the interrogators stated that Manly, in their view, had obfuscated during the questioning. Stimson noted that "it looks as if my old friend Wheeler was pretty close to trouble."⁵⁸

On 10 December 1941, army intelligence officers also interviewed the publisher of the anti-interventionist *New York Daily News*, Joseph Patterson, and

shared the fruits of their effort with the FBI. The Army interviewers hoped that Patterson's connections with the *Chicago Tribune* would lead to useful information regarding the leak. Unlike Manly, when asked about the contingency plan revelation Patterson admitted: "A Senator called [i.e., telephoned] Mr. [Arthur S.] Henning, manager of the Washington Office of the Chicago Tribune . . . and through this medium had Mr. Henning this story." Unable to identify the senator, Patterson informed investigators that McCormick had standing orders to find any stories that could be used to scoop the *Chicago Sun*, a paper set to go into print for the first time on 4 December 1941.⁵⁹

Following Patterson's lead, on 6 January 1942, FBI and Army investigators located and questioned Arthur Henning who was in Washington, D.C. Henning refused, however, to reveal the source of the Victory Program leak. When asked whether he was under directions to scoop the *Chicago Sun*, Henning, amused at the suggestion, replied: "This thing just happened. It was a providential occurrence . . . I received no instructions from my superiors." Henning admitted to having seen a copy of the plan made by his source but added that his source "had a legal right to have the plan in his possession." When asked whether the source originated from Capitol Hill, Henning said: "These ridiculous things may be dismissed from your mind."⁶⁰

FBI and Army investigators found Henning's attitude and information of seeming importance. Following their initial interview, the investigators again questioned McCormick, this time about Henning. Denying any knowledge of

Henning's sources, McCormick nonetheless agreed to ask Henning, in some way, to help the investigators without violating the confidentiality of newspaper sources.⁶¹

FBI agents again questioned Henning on 12 January 1942. Prefacing their interview by asking whether Colonel McCormick had talked with him about assisting in the investigation, Henning answered in the affirmative. But he refused to divulge any further information. Asked if anyone in government or Congress had supplied the plan, Henning replied: "I must refuse to answer the question. The individual who had it got it legally and properly. I must protect my source and will not give my source away if I can possibly help it."⁶²

At this point the FBI's investigation seemed to have stalled. FBI Assistant Director Tamm advised Hoover that "we should not mess around with kid gloves in dealing with Arthur S. Henning . . . or for that matter with Colonel McCormick." Tamm recommended calling Henning, McCormick, and Chesly Manly before a grand jury to reveal their source "or be cited for perjury or misconduct." The FBI director agreed, adding: "[W]e have ourselves largely to blame because of unaggressive handling of case by our own people." Hoover seems to have blamed others for the apparent failure of his original investigative plan, that of investigating quietly. Deciding to change investigative tactics to discover who was responsible for the leak of the Victory Program, and thus placate administration political desires, Hoover wrote Attorney General Biddle on 27 January. Reviewing some of the Bureau's leads, Hoover noted that hundreds of people had been interviewed, but due to the procedures used at the War Department for handling secret documents it was "impossible" to determine who could have possibly leaked the plan. Hoover pointed

out that “a minimum of 109 persons” had “legitimate” access to the contingency plan (he noted a similar number had access to it in the Navy Department). In addition to these, Hoover wrote, the number of authorized people having access to the plan—War Department personnel often shared documents without charging them out each time—“is legion.”⁶³

The FBI director then outlined the FBI’s effort to that date. He disclosed that an investigation into a rumor that Congressman Philip A. Bennett of Missouri paid a War Department clerk for this information had turned up nothing. He also noted that the Bureau’s “extensive investigation” to determine if Charles Lindbergh had relayed the information to the newspapers via “personal friends or contacts” in the War Department had similarly failed. Furthermore, FBI investigations of those War Department officers who were regarded as “anti-British, anti-Administration, or otherwise out of sympathy with the Administration’s international policies” had unearthed nothing. Hoover also reported the results of the inquiries with Manly, Henning, and McCormick.⁶⁴

Because his tactics had unearthed no information, Hoover informed Biddle that he would discontinue further investigation. He recommended, instead, “that consideration be given to the initiation of a grand jury inquiry into the facts in this situation.” He specifically suggested subpoenaing Arthur Henning and Chesly Manly before the grand jury to force them to reveal their source. Hoover noted that “Every indication is that this source will be a Congressional one.” An attempt could then be made “to compel” the congressional source to reveal who in the War Department had delivered the plan.⁶⁵

Having exhausted all avenues of inquiry by following his option of 6 December to employ a low-key investigation, Hoover now advocated the use of a grand jury to discover the source of the War Department leak. The original plan having failed, and in an effort to provide the administration with answers, Hoover suggested aggressive tactics. This was not Hoover's first proposal to utilize grand jury proceedings. He advocated use of a grand jury when, for example, Charles Lindbergh seemed to be a promising lead in the case. And while Hoover proposed to halt the investigation, this did not occur. FBI officials followed up any leads they had obtained following 27 January and conducted a large number of interviews. Meantime, the administration dragged its heels in deciding on the case. With the country at war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December, and no firm suspects to indict, the administration hesitated.

The FBI's determination to locate the persons who were involved in the leak is further documented by a cryptic and heavily redacted FBI document. On 13 February 1942 FBI Assistant Director Ladd reported to Hoover on his conversation with Senator Gerald Nye. Ladd mentioned that there was a great deal of speculation in the Senate about the FBI's investigation; that members of the Senate Military and Naval Affairs Committees and certain "isolationist" senators were under investigation for suspicion of leaking the Victory Program. According to Nye, Chesly Manly had told Senator Burton Wheeler "that if this investigation continued to involve these various Senators [notably Wheeler and Walsh] he, Manly, would expose the entire thing, advising as to the source from which he obtained the material." FBI officials' response to this disclosure is unknown as the remainder of

the document has been completely blacked out. Manly's concern seems evident. Throughout the investigation FBI agents nipped at the heels of the senator who was responsible but agents were unable to confirm their suspicions. Manly knew this and, in a seeming bit of anger, wanted to go public with the information. Cooler heads prevailed in the end and he did not.⁶⁶

For the next two months (February to March) FBI agents continued to write up investigative summaries and conduct interviews. They particularly interviewed military and civilian employees in the office of the secretary of war. From what Bureau personnel had learned, somebody in the upper echelons of the War Department had provided the plan to a member of Congress. Intent on exploring every possible avenue available to them—until the administration decided on whether to go forward with grand jury proceedings, which would attract press coverage despite the proceedings being secret—FBI officials conducted extensive interviews. They interviewed Henry Stimson's personal secretary, Elizabeth Neary, as well as thirty-two other people. Among the common questions asked were whether the interviewee had access to the Victory Program and whether or not he or she knew anyone in the United States Senate or House of Representatives. None of the subjects revealed anything of use to FBI investigators.⁶⁷

Having heard nothing from Biddle, on 2 May Hoover again wrote the attorney general to inquire what the administration had decided to do. Hoover informed Biddle that all relevant reports had been submitted to the Justice Department's Criminal Division and, he asked, "whether the Bureau should close its file on this case or whether you contemplate taking some further action." While no

reply exists in the Victory Program case file, on 4 May the FBI director wrote across his copy of the memorandum he sent Biddle: "File may be closed."⁶⁸

This did not, however, end the matter. By June 1942, the administration had decided to consider indicting and prosecuting those involved in the Victory Program leak. This decision did not stem out of some sudden reconsideration of the evidence, however. Near the time of the Battle of Midway in 1942, the *Chicago Tribune* published a story written by Stanley Johnson that contained information about Japanese naval strength in the Pacific. Concerned that information in this article had come from official government sources, the administration sought to indict the *Tribune* and Johnson for printing "seditious" material. While the government's attempt to indict the newspaper and reporter ultimately failed (because they could not establish what damage the article had done), the excitement raised over the issue renewed consideration of possibly taking action on the Victory Program leak. On 17 June Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge requested from FBI Director Hoover the summary report of the leak investigation.⁶⁹

With a prosecutorial spirit reinvigorated during the fast-moving events of 1942, FBI officials outlined their evidence and how a prosecution, under the Espionage Act, would be conducted against those involved in the leak. The Bureau suggested prosecuting Chesly Manly, Arthur Henning, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Washington Times-Herald* under three sections of the Espionage Act of 1918. One section of the Act criminalized the possession of a government plan relating to national defense matters with the intent to distribute it to an unauthorized person. According to FBI officials, Manly and Henning were liable inasmuch as they

provided the newspapers with the Victory Program. The newspapers' actions were also deemed unlawful since they made the plan available to the public. A second section of the Act criminalized the copying of a government national defense plan with the intent to use the information to the detriment of the United States or to the advantage of a foreign power. Bureau officials believed the suspects had intended either to injure the United States defense effort or to aid a foreign power. The third section punished the acquisition of government plans knowing the very act was a violation of the law. In a memorandum dated 17 June, a FBI official detailed the evidence available to suggest the defendants knew the plan "would be used to the injury of this country and to the benefit of a foreign nation." As witnesses the Bureau chose Albert Wedemeyer and fifteen others to testify to various sundry facts. On this basis, then, the FBI recommended prosecution of Manly, Henning, and the two newspapers.⁷⁰

While their reason is unrecorded, Justice Department attorneys decided against pursuing this case. With the tide of war shifting somewhat in mid-1942 after the Battle of Midway, and with other more pressing matters occupying the White House, interest in pursuing the matter had dissipated. The case was put to rest in July and FBI agents compiled a closing report. While this closing report does not indicate the Bureau's final conclusions about the leak, a 1952 memorandum on the case does. This document confirms that FBI officials had suspected a Brazilian Army officer, General Goes Monteiro, who "visits Washington frequently" and had contacts with members of the anti-interventionist community. The Bureau's source for this suspicion was an unidentified informant. In any event, FBI officials were

never able to determine who leaked the Victory Program to the anti-interventionist press. While correctly suspecting Senator Wheeler, agents proved unable to develop any evidence to implicate him. Despite this failure, FBI officials' efforts to satisfy administration desires for action against the anti-interventionists—advocated by Roosevelt, Stimson, Ickes, and Biddle—to discover who was responsible for the leak enhanced their standing with the president and senior administration officials.⁷¹

FBI efforts to discover the source of the leak and, if possible, develop evidence to prosecute those involved were prodigious. FBI agents interviewed hundreds of persons associated with both the War Department and the anti-interventionist press. Confidential informants were engaged, one of whom was a disaffected former employee of the *Washington Times-Herald*. FBI officials were particularly interested in Albert Wedemeyer because he was both involved in the development of the plan and associated with elements of the "isolationist" community who adamantly opposed administration policy. Given both the administration's and the FBI's concern about Lindbergh since 1941, he featured prominently in this investigation even though all information about his alleged role was circumstantial. Anti-interventionist Senators Wheeler and Walsh also became suspects, as did Missouri Congressman Bennett. And, of course, the *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Times-Herald* and their respective associates—Manly, Henning, and McCormick—were of central interest. Unable to discover who had leaked the Victory Program, by January 1942, realizing that investigating the matter in a non-public manner had failed, Hoover advocated employing a grand jury to pressure those involved and provide the information desired by administration

officials. By then Hoover had concluded that the FBI's unassertive methods had led to this investigative failure and now was willing to advocate more aggressive means. Subpoenaing those whom FBI officials suspected knew the identity of the source, as Tamm noted, would render them liable to be indicted for perjury or obstruction of justice. By changing tactics, Hoover believed he could satisfy the desires of administration officials and not appear to have failed in their eyes. But with the war effort mounting, passions over the contingency plan leak faded. The last opportunity presented itself with the Battle of Midway leak. The failure then to indict the *Chicago Tribune* and Stanley Johnson for publishing this article on Japanese naval strength at the Battle of Midway in 1942 effectively ended any effort to uncover the Victory Program leak. Throughout, FBI officials' efforts highlight one of Hoover's overarching concerns to placate administration political desires—in this case to exact some form of retribution on those political opponents who published a story while not harming national security but being highly embarrassing to the White House. In this case again, the pragmatic FBI director, despite failing to develop evidence to warrant prosecutions, worked to satisfy those in the Roosevelt administration who sought retribution. He continued to pursue this course after Pearl Harbor as FBI officials worked to develop evidence to prosecute those anti-interventionists whom the administration considered seditionists, as will be seen in the following chapter.

NOTES

¹ The leak of the Victory Program has been referred to countless times in books and articles, and there are two books that describe the creation of the plan itself (see below). The only works that describe the FBI's investigation are Albert Wedemeyer's memoir, which only concerns his involvement, and a sketchy and speculative article by Thomas Fleming. See endnote 71.

² Charles E. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1990), 6-7.

³ Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future*, 7-9.

⁴ Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future*, 9-11.

⁵ Albert C. Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York: Henry Holt, 1958), 10.

⁶ Letter, Wedemeyer to Walter Trohan, 27 November 1953, Wedemeyer papers, box 139, Hoover Institution Archives [hereafter HIA], Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

⁷ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 10-12; Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the Battle Against American Intervention in World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 33-37.

⁸ Memorandum, Under Secretary of War Robert Patterson to Secretary of War Henry Stimson, 18 April 1941, reprinted in Mark Skinner Watson, *United States Army in World War II, the War Department, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 332.

⁹ Letter, Roosevelt to Secretaries of War and Navy, 9 July 1941, reprinted in *ibid.*, 338-9.

¹⁰ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 16-17; blind memorandum, Publication in Chicago Tribune and Washington Times-Herald of Army and Navy Estimate of United States Over-All Production Requirements, 5 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-23.

¹¹ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 14.

¹² Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future*, 60-62; interview with General Wedemeyer, 24 April 1987, quoted in Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future*, 63.

¹³ Blind memorandum, Publication in Chicago Tribune and Washington Times-Herald of Army and Navy Estimate of United States Over-All Production Requirements, 5 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-23. For detailed histories of the compilation of the Victory Program see Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future* and Watson, *Prewar Plans and Preparations*.

¹⁴ Robert McCormick's *Chicago Tribune* was loosely connected, by familial ties, to papers of similar political ilk. Joseph Patterson, his cousin, founded the *New York Daily News* and his other cousin, Cissy Patterson, was publisher of the *Washington Times Herald*. See Richard Norton Smith's *The Colonel: The Life and Legend of Robert R. McCormick* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

¹⁵ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 15-16.

¹⁶ *Washington Times-Herald*, 4 December 1941.

¹⁷ Letter, Ruth Sarles to R. Douglas Stuart, Jr., 6 December 1941, America First Committee papers, box 239, HIA.

¹⁸ General Report, Fred Burdick, 4 December 1941, in Justus D. Doenecke (ed.), *In Danger Undaunted: The Anti-Interventionist Movement of 1940-1941 as Revealed in the Papers of the America First Committee* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 436-38. This compilation of documents is an extremely useful resource. The America First Committee papers are still woefully unorganized and, thus, very difficult to research without spending an inordinate amount of time sifting through hundreds of vaguely marked boxes and folders.

¹⁹ Letter, Senator Carter Glass to Bishop Henry W. Hobson, 8 December 1941, Fight for Freedom manuscripts [hereafter FFF], box 10, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

²⁰ Entry for 24 February 1942, Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, 37:155 (microfilm ed., reel 7), Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut.

²¹ Entry for 4 December 1941, Stimson Diaries, 36:74 (microfilm ed., reel 7).

²² Notes of Stephen Early press conference in confidential report, Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1942, FBI 65-399454-3.

²³ Entry for 4 December 1941, Stimson Diaries, 36:73-4 (microfilm ed., reel 7). On the Roosevelt administration's and FBI's concerns with the "isolationist" press see Athan Theoharis, "The FBI, the Roosevelt Administration, and the 'Subversive' Press," *Journalism History* 19 (Spring 1993): 3-10. For an analysis of Roosevelt's use of mass media to advance his foreign policy agenda see Richard W. Steele, "The Great Debate: Roosevelt, the Media, and the Coming of the War, 1940-1941," *Journal of American History* 71 (June 1984): 69-92.

²⁴ Entry for 5 December 1941, Stimson Diaries, 36:75 (microfilm ed., reel 7).

²⁵ Entry for 5 December 1941, Stimson Diaries, 36:75 (microfilm ed., reel 7).

²⁶ Statement made by Secretary of War Stimson, 5 December 1941, reprinted in Watson, *Prewar Plans and Preparations*, 359.

²⁷ Entry for 5 December 1941, Stimson Diaries, 36:76 (microfilm ed., reel 7).

²⁸ Entry for 5 December 1941, Stimson Diaries, 36:76 (microfilm ed., reel 7); Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 3: 659; notes on 5 December 1941 Cabinet meeting, 1941 Cabinet meetings folder, Francis Biddle papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library [hereafter FDRL], Hyde Park, New York.

²⁹ Memorandum [for file], author unknown, 4 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-16. The FBI has withheld several pages of this document and, thus, the author cannot be determined.

³⁰ Memorandum [for file], Attorney General Francis Biddle, 6 December 1941, Biddle papers, FDRL; memorandum for the Director, Detailed Analysis of the President's War Plan as Quoted in Newspaper and Compared with the Original, J. A. Cimperman and Duane L. Traynor, 4 December 1941, FBI 65-39935-17.

³¹ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 21; letter, Albert C. Wedemeyer to Walter Trohan, 27 November 1953, Wedemeyer papers, box 139, HIA.

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- ³² Letter, Albert C. Wedemeyer to Burton K. Wheeler, 22 August 1957, Wedemeyer papers, box 139, HIA; letter, Albert C. Wedemeyer to Chesly Manly, 22 August 1957, Wedemeyer paper, box 139, HIA.
- ³³ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 22-23.
- ³⁴ Report, by Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1941, FBI 65-39945-3, pp. 28-30.
- ³⁵ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 32-33.
- ³⁶ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 34-35.
- ³⁷ Wedemeyer, *Wedemeyer Reports!*, 40-41.
- ³⁸ Personal and strictly confidential memorandum, Hoover to the attorney general, 6 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-19.
- ³⁹ Strictly personal and confidential blind memorandum, 5 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-19.
- ⁴⁰ Strictly personal and confidential blind memorandum, 5 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-19, p. 4.
- ⁴¹ Letter, Albert C. Wedemeyer to Walter Trohan, 27 November 1953, Wedemeyer papers, box 139, HIA.
- ⁴² Strictly personal and confidential blind memorandum, 5 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-19, p. 4.
- ⁴³ Strictly personal and confidential blind memorandum, 5 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-19, pp. 4-5.
- ⁴⁴ Memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to Edward A. Tamm, 9 December 1941, FBI 62-19253-304.
- ⁴⁵ Memorandum for Mr. Tamm, by D. Milton Ladd, 9 December 1941, FBI 62-19253-304.
- ⁴⁶ Memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to J. Edgar Hoover, 11 December 1941, FBI 62-19253-304.
- ⁴⁷ Memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Clyde Tolson, D. Milton Ladd, and Edward Tamm, 12 December 1941, FBI 65-11449-105. Lindbergh's name was commonly misspelled by many Americans.
- ⁴⁸ Memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to J. Edgar Hoover, 13 December 1941, FBI 65-11449-113. On Lindbergh and the Jewish issue, see Wayne S. Cole, *Charles A. Lindbergh*, 157-163, 171-185.
- ⁴⁹ Memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to J. Edgar Hoover, 13 December 1941, FBI 65-11449-113; personal and confidential letter, John S. Bugas to Edward A. Tamm, 13 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-14.
- ⁵⁰ Memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to J. Edgar Hoover, 27 December 1941, FBI 100-12691 [?]. The complete document number is unreadable, suffice it to say the memorandum is included in the file on the Victory Program leak: file 65-39945. Transcript of Higgs interview in report, by Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1941, FBI 65-39945-3, pp. 35-48.
- ⁵¹ Confidential War Department memorandum, Grenville Clark to Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, 4 December 1941, FBI 65-39945-26; memorandum, Assistant Director Louis Nichols to Robert E. Wick, 25 January 1952, FBI 65-39945-62.

⁵² Personal and confidential letter, Assistant Director P. E. Foxworth to J. Edgar Hoover, 20 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-35; memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to Edward A. Tamm, 21 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-[?]; personal and confidential letter, S. K. McKee to J. Edgar Hoover, 22 January 1942, FBI 100-3709-[?].

⁵³ Burton K. Wheeler with Paul F. Healy, *Yankee From the West* (New York: Double Day, 1962), 21.

⁵⁴ Wheeler and Healy, *Yankee From the West*, 32. Wheeler suspected that a senior officer in the War Department had authorized the Victory Program's release to him. According to newspaperman Walter Trohan, Wheeler believed that Army Air Corps General Henry Arnold—who was sympathetic to the anti-interventionists—was at the center of the release. Albert Wedemeyer, however, strongly disagreed with Trohan's belief. See letter, Walter Trohan to Albert Wedemeyer, 25 November 1953 and letter, Albert Wedemeyer to Walter Trohan, 27 November 1953, Wedemeyer papers, box 139, HIA.

⁵⁵ Wheeler and Healy, *Yankee From the West*, 32-33.

⁵⁶ Wheeler and Healy, *Yankee From the West*, 33.

⁵⁷ The Justice Department had been interested in the utterances of the anti-interventionist press because it believed the press either wittingly or unwittingly participated in Axis propaganda and thus undermined defense efforts. Biddle wrote that "Whether this is deliberately contrived by seditious elements or is the honest view of patriotic but blind Americans is of minor importance; the result is the same." See memorandum, Domestic Propaganda, no date, Biddle papers, FDRL; memorandum, Content Analysis of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 19 May 1942, Biddle papers, FDRL.

⁵⁸ Personal and confidential letter, S. K. McKee to J. Edgar Hoover, FBI 65-39945-1; statement of Chesly Manly, 23 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-1; Entry for 24 February 1942, Stimson Diaries, 37:155 (microfilm ed., reel 7).

⁵⁹ Report, by Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-3, pp. 33-34.

⁶⁰ Report, by Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-3, pp. 50-52.

⁶¹ Report, by Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-3, pp. 52-53.

⁶² Report, by Joseph A. Genau, 15 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-3, pp. 53-57.

⁶³ Memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to J. Edgar Hoover, 14 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-4; personal and confidential memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to attorney general, 27 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-26; Blind memorandum, 27 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-26X.

⁶⁴ Blind memorandum, 27 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-26X, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Blind memorandum, 27 January 1942, FBI 65-39945-26X, p. 6.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, 13 February 1942, FBI 65-39945-32. Wheeler has written that he did not believe the FBI had investigated his role in the leak. Senator David Walsh, however, told the Montana senator that "he was tailed for several days." See Wheeler and Healy, *Yankee From the West*, 36.

⁶⁷ For these interviews see the 218 page confidential memorandum by Joseph A. Genau, 24 March 1942, FBI 100-3709.

⁶⁸ Personal and confidential memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to attorney general, 2 May 1942, FBI 65-39945-41; letter, J. Edgar Hoover to Special Agent in Charge, Washington, D. C., 11 May 1942, FBI 65-39945-40.

⁶⁹ Memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to William D. Mitchell, 17 June 1942, FBI 65-39945-42; memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to attorney general, 17 June 1942, FBI 65-39945-47; memorandum, Wendell Berge to J. Edgar Hoover, 17 June 1942; memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Wendell Berge, 19 June 1942, FBI 65-39945-51; memorandum, J. Edgar Hoover to Wendell Berge, 31 July 1942, FBI 65-39945-55; Athan Theoharis, "The FBI, the Roosevelt Administration, and the 'Subversive' Press," *Journalism History* 19 (Spring 1993), 8.

⁷⁰ Memorandum, D. Milton Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover, 15 June 1942, FBI 65-39945-43; memorandum re news article in Chicago Tribune and Washington Times-Herald, author unknown, 15 June 1942, FBI 65-39945 4[?]; memorandum, L. L. Tyler to D. Milton Ladd, 17 June 1942, FBI 65-39945-50; blind memorandum re Pertinent Articles in Chicago Tribune, 17 June 1942, FBI 65-39945-50.

⁷¹ Memorandum, Robert E. Wick to Louis Nichols, 25 January 1952, FBI 65 39945-62. In a highly speculative article, novelist Thomas Fleming has postulated that the Roosevelt White House intentionally leaked the Victory Program to "bait Hitler" into pursuing war with the United States. There is no evidence at all to suggest this hypothesis. Fleming probably came to this conclusion from his talks with Wedemeyer who told him: "I have no evidence, but I have always been convinced, on some institutional level, that President Roosevelt authorized [the leak]." See Thomas Fleming, "The Big Leak," *American Heritage* 38 (December 1987): 65-71. For Fleming's interview with Wedemeyer see "How FDR May Have 'Goaded' Hitler," *San Francisco Chronicle* (3 December 1987). Similarly, William Stevenson erroneously claims that the Victory Program was a fabrication created by British intelligence and slipped to the unwitting Senator Wheeler. See William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid: The Secret War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 298. There is much mythology surrounding British intelligence in America before the U.S. entrance in the war. For a historiographical assessment see Douglas M. Charles, "American, British, and Canadian Intelligence Links: A Critical Annotated Bibliography," *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (Summer 2000): 259-69.

CHAPTER 7

The FBI Surveillance of Anti-interventionists Extending Beyond Pearl Harbor: The Brigham Family, Harry Elmer Barnes, and Laura Ingalls.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent United States entrance into the Second World War, FBI officials continued to monitor some anti-interventionists who in their view were subversive. Although the anti-interventionist movement had rallied behind the war effort after 7 December 1941, these particular persons received special FBI attention owing to their controversial political stances or statements. In the context of a newly inaugurated war, FBI officials concluded that their views constituted a threat. FBI officials continued to rely on the Foreign Agents Registration Act to recommend indicting an individual either for not registering as an agent of a foreign government or for advocating the overthrow of the United States government by force or violence (a tenet of the Smith Act). Three targets demonstrate this concern. Ethel Brigham and her family were vocal ultraconservative anti-interventionists who were closely associated with the New York chapter of the America First Committee. For FBI officials the Brighams became a cornucopia of political intelligence regarding the president's foreign policy opponents. FBI agents continued to monitor Harry Elmer Barnes, the noted

revisionist historian, who even after the declaration of war criticized the White House. FBI officials sought to develop a sedition case against him. Laura Ingalls, the noted aviator and controversial America First speaker, continued to speak out against the administration and was eventually prosecuted for violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act, the only anti-interventionist to be successfully prosecuted. In all three cases, Hoover's effort serviced President Roosevelt's political interests, dating from 1940, to silence his anti-interventionist critics. Now that the country was at war and the crisis atmosphere was great, Hoover continued to forward political intelligence reports to the White House and to develop cases against the president's critics. Extant records indicate that Roosevelt and other administration officials from December 1941 did not respond to Hoover's forwarded information. With new priorities following the American entrance into the war, the White House was probably preoccupied with other pressing matters. Nevertheless, Hoover continued his previous pattern in monitoring and investigating Roosevelt's foreign policy critics on his own with no objection from the White House.

* * *

One anti-interventionist target whom FBI agents monitored before and after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was Ethel Brigham and her family. The FBI's investigation of Ethel (and her family), a vocal ultraconservative in her politics, proved to be a valued source of political intelligence on the anti-interventionists. The principal means by which the Bureau collected this political intelligence was a wiretap of Ethel Brigham's telephone. Hailing from New York City, the Brighams (but particularly Ethel and her daughter Barbara) were associated with the

Greenwich Village branch of the America First Committee's New York chapter with Barbara serving as the branch's chairperson. The Brighams, moreover, were prominent persons. Ethel was a leading opera and concert soprano in the 1920s and 1930s, singing in London, Berlin, and New York; Barbara was a leading America First figure in her chapter; Ethel's son Daniel was a foreign correspondent for the *New York Times*; and daughter Constance was an actress who performed on Broadway. The FBI's monitoring and gathering of political intelligence on the Brighams corresponded with a broader pattern of monitoring Roosevelt's prominent foreign policy critics.¹

The vice president of the United States, Henry Wallace, brought the Brighams to the attention of the Justice Department on 3 November 1941 after receiving a telephone call about them from a friend. Wallace's confidant, whose name the FBI has redacted in the released FBI files, said he had "a lead concerning the activities of the America First Committee" that might include an assassination plot on Roosevelt's life. While at a hotel in Washington, D. C., the vice president's friend had met somebody in the Brigham family or a friend of theirs (it is difficult to determine from the FBI files owing to extensive redactions) and was invited to tea at the Brigham's apartment the next time he was in New York City. Soon thereafter, this person had visited the Brighams in New York for tea and, afterwards, had accompanied them to the cinema. After the film Ethel and Barbara had bought a newspaper that contained a story that reported that Roosevelt had placed the United States Coast Guard under the authority of the Navy. This, reportedly, enraged the two women who exclaimed Roosevelt "ought to be killed for taking such action"

and that “he would be killed before long.” The informant had subsequently learned that the Brighams were supposedly associated with an organization, which FBI officials later learned was named the One Gun Club, that allegedly had 500,000 members and planned a revolt if Roosevelt took the country into war.²

Upon receiving this information, an FBI official placed the Brighams on “loose surveillance” that was to “be handled very discreetly.” FBI Director Hoover concurrently notified the Secret Service of these charges, as it was this agency’s responsibility to protect the president and investigate threats made against his life. On 4 November 1941 Hoover explained the situation to the attorney general and requested authorization to wiretap Ethel Brigham’s telephone. Since 1934 with the inception of the Federal Communication Act the use of wiretaps was illegal. In 1940, however, Roosevelt had secretly authorized their limited use, with the attorney general’s approval, in national defense cases (see chapter 5 for the details on wiretapping authority). The attorney general acceded to Hoover’s request and on 10 November FBI agents installed a wiretap.³

The wiretap, however, was not the Bureau’s only source of information about the Brigham matter. To gather “more detailed information concerning the identity and activities of” the Brighams, FBI agents consulted the Credit Bureau of Greater New York as well as the Brighams’ local postal carrier to learn details about them, including that Ethel and Barbara worked at the local America First Committee chapter. FBI agents thereupon placed the chapter under surveillance and monitored the activity of the two women there. Agents further checked with the Automobile Registration Bureau to confirm the ownership of the car the Brighams had been

driving. Finally, on 13 November agents initiated a mail cover—a surveillance method of recording the names and addresses of senders and recipients of mail—on the Brighams but it proved to be unproductive.⁴

The FBI wiretap remained in place until 30 December with a single seven-day interruption. In a memorandum to the attorney general, Hoover reported that on 12 November he had temporarily suspended the wiretap “inasmuch as it revealed that Mrs. Brigham had been interviewed by Federal agents with respect to the [assassination] matter.” Hoover advised the attorney general that because Secret Service agents had directly confronted Brigham and questioned her, “the possibility of obtaining additional information, either through the technical surveillance [wiretap] or through Mr. [deleted, but Wallace’s friend] is extremely doubtful.” Hoover nonetheless advised his superior that FBI agents would continue to develop this information “as opportunity is presented” and on 19 November the wiretap was re-established.⁵

It is unclear whether the attorney general was aware that Hoover continued the wiretap. The FBI director’s statement that the wiretap would afford no further useful information coupled with his statement that the Bureau would try to obtain further information “as opportunity is presented” suggests that the attorney general may not have known of the wiretap’s continuance. Did Hoover find the Brighams such a tantalizing source of political intelligence that he did not want to discontinue the wiretap? Given the Brigham’s ultraconservative character and vocal nature did he purposefully mislead the attorney general by implying that the tap proved worthless insofar as the original wiretap justification had been effectively removed

when Secret Service agents interviewed Brigham? Was Hoover's instruction then based on his conviction that the Brigham's views made them a threat? Or did the attorney general understand, given Hoover's use of the word "temporary," that the wiretap would be continued? We may never know for certain. In any event, the Brigham wiretap continued for the remainder of 1941.

What is clear is that in the nine communications and one summarizing report from New York SAC P. E. Foxworth to Hoover concerning the fruits of the Brigham wiretap, all the reported information concerned the political activity of the Brighams and other anti-interventionists. When briefing Hoover on the information obtained through this wiretap, Foxworth used the euphemism "from a confidential source that is known to the Bureau" when, in fact, he meant electronic surveillance. Substituting the word wiretap with the confidential-source phrase enabled Foxworth to conceal the Bureau's use of a sensitive and illegal (even though authorized by the attorney general) wiretap. A reader of this report (if publicly compromised) would assume the phrase meant a human source of information, not a technical one. In a personal and confidential letter⁶ of 18 November, Foxworth revealed that FBI officials had learned of the Secret Service's interview of Brigham through the wiretap. Foxworth further reported that Brigham had refused to participate in a political demonstration sponsored by the anti-war group Women United. The group's plan to burn Roosevelt's campaign pledges, Brigham concluded, could trigger an "unfavorable reaction it might have upon the America First Committee." (Women United was a group to the right of the America First Committee which FBI officials also believed to be subversive.) Brigham had discussed a campaign

conducted by her chapter, Foxworth continued, to urge congressmen to vote against neutrality revision. In his concluding paragraph, Foxworth noted that no further information had been developed either regarding an assassination plot or to identify any other organization with which the Brighams were associated. Only political intelligence had been gleaned from the wiretap.⁷

On 25 November Foxworth sent a letter and teletype message to Hoover both, again, originating from “a confidential source known to the Bureau” (i.e., the Brigham wiretap). The New York SAC reported in his letter that Brigham had used the German expression “Das ist gut” over the telephone while speaking to a person with a “decided German accent.” Foxworth further reported that Brigham had a conversation about the America First Committee possibly becoming the American Party, a political party that would only support anti-interventionist candidates. This information was deemed important enough to send immediately to Hoover via FBI teletype. Among other sundry political information, Foxworth reported that Ethel’s nephew, Phillip, who was a member of the Coast Guard (apparently a reservist), frequented a club called the German-American Place. Phillip reportedly disliked wearing his Coast Guard uniform which prompted Ethel to remark: “He will have a good time at the German-American with that damn thing on!” Again, nothing but political information was reported with some of this included in a later report to the White House.⁸

Foxworth’s letter and teletype of 25 November regarding the information gleaned from the wiretap, moreover, piqued Hoover’s interest in Brigham and led him to request “a comprehensive report.” Rather than submit a comprehensive

report, on 13 November Foxworth directed Hoover's attention to a five-page letter he had sent Hoover the day following his request in which he had promised a report in the near future. The letter summarized the fruits of the wiretap from 25 November to 2 December. This included some anti-Semitic remarks made by Brigham as well as personal information regarding her friends and family. She also discussed political matters involving the New York chapter of the America First Committee, particularly the fact that "the America First Committee was constantly in touch with the anti-war leaders in Congress and that they refused to sponsor any movement of that kind [forcing a war vote] when there was no chance of it being successful." Brigham also discussed on the telephone that she knew of a man who saw the president every two weeks and suggested that he may be used to deliver messages from America First to the White House. This information was later reported to the White House.⁹

On 13 December, Foxworth sent two letters to Hoover reporting on the wiretap. The first covered the usual political intelligence of Brigham's America First activity, specifically her negative opinion of Roosevelt following Pearl Harbor and the closure of the Greenwich Village chapter. FBI officials were particularly interested in Ethel's fitful remark to Barbara following the United States entrance into war: "Where is that One-Gun Club that's going to do something?" This information was later reported to the White House.¹⁰

Foxworth's second letter of 13 December reported that FBI agents had successfully cultivated an informant based on information developed through the wiretap. FBI officials learned that a woman had visited the Brighams and became

involved in a heated political discussion with Ethel over U.S. involvement in the war. The Brighams' guest, apparently, did not agree with Ethel's politics. Later, FBI agents recorded Ethel stating over the telephone that "what's bothering me now is what that little bitch will do to me, but I swear by all that is holy that if she does try anything I will call up the wives of the men she has been having in her room." Foxworth's letter to Hoover thereafter states that "Arrangements were then made to interview Miss [deleted] personally." FBI agents obtained from the newly-recruited informant further details about the Brighams and, most significantly, a list of their associates. Hoover forwarded this list to the White House.¹¹

On 16 December Foxworth reported more of the Brighams' comments about their politically-vexed house guest turned FBI informer. Ethel Brigham reportedly stated that the leaders of the country had nothing to lose in the war and that when she finally saw "Roosevelt's four sons on a battleship headed for battle then she will 'Whoop it up.'" Brigham added that, nevertheless, the sons would never be in danger. The remainder of Foxworth's letter, much of which is heavily redacted, reports the activities of persons associated with Brighams whom FBI officials suspected of being Irish Republicans. The exact details of these individuals and the FBI's interest in them cannot be ascertained due to deletions in the document. Yet, the information bearing on the Brighams personally was of a political nature.¹²

In a teletype message of 19 December, Foxworth notified Hoover of information developed from the Brigham wiretap regarding the America First Committee and Laura Ingalls, the anti-interventionist convicted under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Having intercepted a conversation between Emil Morosini,

a New York lawyer whom FBI agents believed subversive, and Barbara Brigham, FBI officials learned that Morosini “was horrified to learn of Laura Ingalls’ arrest as a non-registered [foreign] agent.” He asked Barbara whether the America First Committee of New York could raise the \$7,500 bail for Ingalls. Barbara expressed concern inasmuch as she had worked with Ingalls and that Ingalls’ arrest was “a slap” for the America First Committee. Hoover reported this political intelligence to the White House early in 1942.¹³

The following day, in a subsequent teletype message to Hoover, Foxworth reported other political intelligence gleaned from the Brigham wiretap, in this case regarding Charles Lindbergh. Foxworth learned that Brigham had attended a dinner party at the home of Edwin S. Webster, secretary of the America First Committee’s New York chapter, where Lindbergh was present. Lindbergh reportedly urged America Firsters to rally behind the war effort, yet Brigham said he “seemed discouraged as the govt has no plan nor does it know for what it is fighting.” This information was included in a political intelligence report to the White House separate from that sent regarding the Brigams. (See chapter three for more detail.)¹⁴

With the discontinuance of the wiretap at the end of December 1941, SAC Foxworth submitted to FBI headquarters on 15 January 1942 a summary report on the Brigham investigation. The eighty-nine page report, labeled “INTERNAL SECURITY-G[ermany],” recapitulates the information Foxworth had forwarded to Hoover in his nine previous personal-and-confidential letters. The SAC continued to employ euphemistic language such as “confidential source known to the Bureau”

when writing of wiretap-procured information. A section of his report was devoted exclusively to information gathered about prominent persons, such as Lindbergh, much of which has been redacted. The report again documents the vast amount of political intelligence FBI officials garnered about Brigham, the America First Committee, and some prominent anti-interventionists. The only information concerning a threat involved the One Gun Club, an organization that FBI officials believed advocated the overthrow of the United States government. But all intelligence gathered about this group was derived from heated conversations among the Brighams, who were prone to make wild, emotional statements when agitated. In any event, the vast amount of information forwarded to Hoover (and then to the White House) dealt with political matters concerning Roosevelt's foreign policy critics.¹⁵

Hoover had two primary concerns subsequent to receiving Foxworth's comprehensive report. He directed the SAC that "It is imperative that the possible existence of an organization of such considerable proportions [the One Gun Club] advocating revolution be exhaustively investigated." But, Hoover warned Foxworth, insofar as one of the group's alleged associates was affiliated with a New York City law firm, the investigation "should be handled in a most discreet manner." Hoover's second concern was to ascertain the identity of the person whom Barbara Brigham mentioned over the telephone as having seen Roosevelt twice a week who allegedly hated the president as much as the Brighams. In these matters Hoover demanded immediate action and regular reports.¹⁶

Meantime, on 26 January Hoover sent a detailed memorandum to the White House on the Brighams. In his cover letter to Presidential Secretary Edwin Watson, the FBI director stated that one of the Brighams had threatened the life of the president—the basis of the investigation. Hoover then mentioned that Ethel Brigham knew an acquaintance of the president who saw him biweekly. Hoover advised Watson that the FBI memorandum listed possible names of this individual who knew the president, names that were ascertained from the Brigham investigation. The attorney general also received a copy of the memorandum, though in his cover letter to Biddle Hoover only referred to the threat against the president. No mention was made of the wiretap on either of these documents to the White House or the attorney general.¹⁷

The memorandum forwarded to the White House and attorney general was based on the nine letters and SAC Foxworth's summary report. By far, most of the information in these documents had been obtained from the Brigham wiretap. Some of the names which Hoover listed had been provided by the informant who had been recruited in the course of the Brigham wiretap. The memorandum listed a number of prominent anti-interventionists, including Charles Lindbergh, Laura Ingalls, and Catherine McCormick. Not surprisingly, the reported information reflected the White House's interest in the ongoing political activities of its anti-interventionist America First opposition even though the organization had disbanded following 7 December 1941.

The Brigham wiretap afforded further political intelligence that, along with information from other sources, Hoover forwarded on 13 February a second

unsolicited memorandum to the White House. This memorandum was based on information developed from various sources and reported that the America First Committee had planned to reemerge politically under Charles Lindbergh's leadership. Hoover believed that at the present time the group had gone underground. This information was based on intelligence gleaned from the Brigham wiretap and information supplied to the Bureau by Army intelligence. Later, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, in his scathing book manuscript on Lindbergh, utilized this political intelligence (inaccurate though it was). The book was never published but this particular information originated from the FBI memorandum. (See chapter three for the full story.)¹⁸

SAC Foxworth, moreover, continued to investigate the One Gun Club and its possible link to a plot against Roosevelt. Both of these avenues of investigation involved the Brighams and were supplemented by FBI physical surveillance and recruited informants as the wiretap had been discontinued. An FBI report of 2 March 1942 and a confidential FBI letter of 18 May 1942 illustrate the sources and information gathered subsequent to the discontinuance of the Brigham wiretap. At some point after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, while attending the play "The Land is Bright," Ethel Brigham was alleged to have made "a violent outburst" against Roosevelt and his foreign policy. To FBI officials these comments were "un-American." FBI agents located cast members and audience members from the play and interviewed them about Brigham's comment. One informant stated that "There was no question in anyone's mind at the theatre as to the attitude of Mrs. Brigham, she being a boisterous advocate of isolationism and strongly opposed to

the President and his Foreign Policy.” Nothing about the One Gun Club had been learned in this case and, again, only political intelligence was reported.¹⁹

Through contacts at the State Department, FBI agents were able to ascertain Brigham’s travel history. They contacted what one FBI official described in a 19 May 1942 FBI report as a “confidential informant” who provided Brigham’s passport records. FBI officials learned of her travels throughout Europe and some personal and descriptive data. FBI agents also followed up leads from Pennsylvania that Brigham had “subversive tendencies” but uncovered nothing of value.²⁰

Despite their inability to develop information by monitoring the Brigham family after discontinuing the wiretap, FBI officials continued to believe that the Brighams had information relative to the One Gun Club. This continued belief was precipitated by a memorandum given to FBI agents in New York claiming that one of the Brighams (probably Barbara) “definitely knows” of the existence of the One Gun Club, financed by millionaires and secretive in nature. The information outlined in the memorandum was speculative and not based on firm evidence. Nonetheless, some FBI officials recommended reinstating the Brigham wiretap to develop information on this organization because, in their view, most of the Brigham’s house guests belonged to subversive organizations, and in particular the One Gun Club.²¹

On 4 June 1942, a senior FBI official (probably Ladd) reauthorized the Brigham wiretap. Significantly, Ladd or Hoover did not seek the attorney general’s approval to reinstate this wiretap, but authorized it on their own authority (and thus violated Roosevelt’s 1940 directive that all wiretaps be authorized by the attorney

general). This action was based “under the original authority granted by the Attorney General.” Attorney General Francis Biddle had originally authorized the wiretap on the fact that a threat had been made against the president. The continuance of the wiretap in 1942 had nothing to do with a threat made against the president, suggesting that FBI officials may not have been confident that Biddle would have re-authorized the wiretap. Indeed, Biddle later wrote in 1962 that he “was not in the habit of approving wiretaps” and that he believed it was a “dirty business.” This action further reveals that FBI officials had gained a level of autonomy enabling them to employ surveillance methods that, while illegal, needed authorization from superiors. Furthermore, FBI agents never developed any information about a threat to the president or that confirmed the existence of the One Gun Club. The wiretap and other sources of information instead uncovered only political intelligence about the America First Committee, its members, and associates, all under the rubric of a domestic security investigation.²²

The Brigham wiretap was resumed on 24 June. Following FBI procedure the wiretap was assigned a “symbol number” (the code-identification for wiretap or microphone surveillance targets). The precise symbol assigned to Brigham has been deleted in FBI documents released under the FOIA. The symbol then became part of the Symbol Number Sensitive Source Index (now called the National Security Electronic Surveillance Card File), a centralized finding aid identifying the targets of specially sensitive FBI wiretaps and bugs. When citing the symbol number in their correspondence and reports, FBI agents would not reveal that their source was a wiretap. Regarding Brigham, FBI agents either just cited the symbol number or,

more often than not, referred to the wiretap as “Confidential Informant [deleted, but symbol number].”²³

New York SAC Foxworth found the Brigham wiretap profitable. On a weekly basis he submitted reports on information obtained from the wiretap and he requested continuance of the wiretap from Hoover because “information of value was obtained from this source.”²⁴ Interestingly, the wiretap reports are not included in Brigham’s FBI file along with the wiretap continuance requests—which utilized the euphemism “Confidential Informant [deleted].” These sensitive reports were more than likely filed in one of the secret office files maintained either by Hoover or by other senior FBI officials. A letter of 12 August from Hoover to Foxworth does document that weekly reports were submitted with the requests for continuing the wiretap, and further that Hoover had ordered the continued submission of weekly reports on the Brigham wiretap and “on all such confidential informants.”²⁵

The extant wiretap reports reveal no new information about a subversive organization but continue, in the words of SAC Foxworth, to “reveal additional anti-Roosevelt, anti-Semitic, and continued isolationist attitude on part of Ethel and Barbara Brigham.”²⁶ In July, moreover, FBI officials reported one piece of information obtained through the wiretap to the administration. The information involved an intercepted conversation between Ethel Brigham and an unidentified individual. Ethel stated that she had learned from an “underground” source that Britain and Germany had been meeting secretly in Belgium which would leave the United States “holding the bag.” These uncorroborated comments were obtained from a telephone conversation and were never substantiated. Further, given the fact,

admitted to by FBI agents and associates of the Brighams, that Ethel Brigham was apt to make exaggerated and wild statements, the comments should have held no weight. But given the crisis atmosphere in 1942 and Hoover's practice of reporting information to the White House, he concluded that this information was of some value to his superiors. On 20 July Hoover forwarded this particular information to the attorney general, Harry Hopkins (by this time Roosevelt's close advisor), the head of MID, and Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle. The recipients were not informed that the information had been obtained through a wiretapped conversation.²⁷

FBI agents continued until 26 October to monitor the Brighams' telephone conversations, with weekly approvals, when the wiretap was discontinued.²⁸ During this period nothing was developed about any subversive organization called the One Gun Club. Instead, FBI agents continued to collate political intelligence, much of it very caustic. On 17 July, for example, FBI agents overheard Ethel state that "the President is unable to stand on his own feet, let alone think, and that he is only the front man for the Jews who are desirous of getting a ring around the world and want to smash the United States." On 5 August she reportedly referred to Roosevelt as "that idiot at the helm of this country" (this is the only reported information gleaned from 5 August). On 16 August she referred to Roosevelt's refusal to utilize Charles Lindbergh's services after the United States had entered the war—in April 1941 Lindbergh had resigned his Army Air Corps commission as a colonel—as "part of the crookedness . . . of the President." These examples are representative of the type of information FBI agents developed during the course of this wiretap. All of it was

vitriolic, emotional, and sometimes anti-Semitic. And despite nothing being developed about the One Gun Club, Hoover continually approved the wiretap's use because, as Foxworth said in his requests, information "of value" had been collected.²⁹

The final paragraph in the last report on Ethel Brigham, dated 1 July 1943, indirectly summarizes the investigation's nature. It reads:

Since the long investigation conducted with regard to Mrs. Ethel Brigham and her family has not indicated that they are engaged in any un-American activities, and since their rabid and vicious statements have been considered harmless by unprejudiced Americans who have had frequent opportunity to judge the background and character of this family, the collateral leads set out in the above referenced report are being disregarded and this case is being closed in the New York Field Office.³⁰

The investigation of Ethel Brigham and her family demonstrates that FBI officials had, in fact, gathered political intelligence about anti-interventionists from a wiretap and forwarded some of it to the White House. The investigation and wiretap may have been initially based on the premise of a threat against the life of President Roosevelt—a threat that when examined closely does not seem credible. Nonetheless, the wiretap only yielded information of a political and personal nature about the Brighams, the America First Committee, and prominent anti-interventionists like Charles Lindbergh. Interestingly, in October 1941 Hoover denied to Robert E. Wood, chairman of the America First Committee that the FBI "directly or indirectly at any place in the United States tapped the wires, interfered with the mails, or checked the membership lists of the America First Committee." We know, now, that Hoover's statement is untrue.³¹

The value of this wiretap as a source of political intelligence is further demonstrated by FBI officials' continuing it after Secret Service agents had

interviewed Brigham, which dispensed with the issue of a threat against Roosevelt. This value is further underscored by the decision of a senior FBI official to re-authorize the wiretap in 1942 without the attorney general's sanction, thereby violating Roosevelt's 1940 directive requiring such advance approval. Instead, FBI officials re-authorized the tap on the basis of the attorney general's original consent, but the continuance had nothing to do with a threat made against the president. The re-established wiretap again only produced political intelligence. SAC Foxworth thereafter requested weekly re-approval of its use from Hoover, claiming valuable information was being gathered but as FBI documents show, only political intelligence was collected.

Conceivably other anti-interventionists had been wiretapped or that information about them had been gathered from wiretaps that indirectly bore on anti-interventionist activity. This conclusion, while speculative, is nonetheless probable. Given Hoover's intricate filing procedures and use of euphemisms in FBI reports that hid the fact that a wiretap was a source, we may never know the full extent of FBI wiretapping and the full amount of political intelligence gathered. Extant FBI records prove the use of some wiretaps and allude to others, but a great deal of sensitive FBI files routinely were destroyed as FBI policy or were destroyed following Hoover's death in 1972. While we might not fully comprehend the scope of FBI employment of illegal wiretaps, we do know they were used.

* * *

Harry Elmer Barnes was a prominent American revisionist historian, sociologist, criminologist, and social critic. He received his Ph.D. in history from

Columbia University in 1918, and held academic appointments of many institutions. He is well known for his widely-read college text books *World Politics in Modern Civilization* (1930), *A History of Western Civilization* (1935), and *An Intellectual and Cultural History of the Western World* (1937). But he is best known for his revisionist tract *Genesis of the World War* (1926) which redirected blame for the war from Germany to France and Russia. In total, Barnes published over thirty books and hundreds of essays. When he joined the chorus of anti-interventionists in the late 1930s, Barnes's reputation made him an articulate and prominent critic of Roosevelt's foreign policy.

While Barnes held politically liberal views and initially supported the New Deal, and freely spoke out in support of them, his historical revisionism about American involvement in the First World War underpinned his criticisms of New Deal diplomacy. He considered himself a person holding liberal beliefs yet sided with the mostly conservative America First Committee—he served as one of their speakers—to oppose the foreign policy of President Roosevelt. He also served as a vice-chairman for the Keep America Out of War Congress and was an editor of the anti-interventionist newsletter *Uncensored*. His siding with conservatives, who saw a threat in Roosevelt's centralization of power, alienated Barnes from his usual publishers. Publisher D. C. Heath, for example, wrote Barnes in 1941 that due to the “somewhat hysterical times” they felt “that we ought not to undertake your book, no matter how good the book.” Instead, he began to publish with conservative presses, criticizing American entrance into World War II and the events leading up to Pearl Harbor. The conservative Caxton Press published his Second World War revisionist

book, *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace* (1953). He also published essays later in conservative periodicals such as the *National Review*.³²

FBI officials monitored Barnes's activities dating from 1936 (to 1944), but more intensively when he became a spokesperson for the anti-interventionist movement. Historian Roy Turnbaugh has explained the FBI's monitoring of Barnes as a reaction to his criticism of the Bureau. (Barnes claimed the FBI propagated its image during the 1930s and that it was not the efficient, expert organization that Hoover claimed.) Turnbaugh concluded that when Barnes became a critic of Roosevelt's foreign policy, FBI Director Hoover used this opportunity to enact retribution. At one level this conclusion has merit. Nonetheless, the FBI's investigative effort regarding Barnes, as with other prominent anti-interventionists, extended beyond vengeance. FBI officials (and many Americans) viewed the anti-interventionists as un-American, subversive, or unwitting tools of the Nazis. Barnes, who seemingly thrived on the controversial, was no exception. His unabashed comments—both verbal and written—about Roosevelt's foreign policy, the FBI, and the war situation in Europe led FBI officials to regard him as un-American or subversive. This, coupled with Hoover's effort to curry favor with the Roosevelt White House, best explains the FBI's interest in this prominent anti-interventionist foreign policy critic.³³

FBI officials first became interested in Barnes in February 1936 when he commented disparagingly about the Justice Department's and FBI's war on gangsters. An FBI agent in Scranton, Pennsylvania, had attended a lecture Barnes gave on crime and reported that Barnes said neither the attorney general nor Hoover

had done anything to stop racketeers. He reportedly said the two had “hoodwinked the public with a lot of cheap publicity in the tracking down of a few criminals.” Barnes went on to describe John Dillinger (and others) as, in reality, small-time criminals and not the important or dangerous ones. After reporting these comments to Hoover, an FBI agent wrote a memorandum on Barnes that summarized his professional life. In explaining Barnes’s criticism of the FBI, the agent concluded: “Because of his Communistic tendencies, it can be readily seen why he has antagonisms toward the Bureau, probably dating back to the Bureau’s activities many years ago [presumably its activity during the Red Scare of 1919-20].” Barnes, however, always denied that he was a communist. In April 1941, for example, he wrote the Indianapolis branch of the American Legion to protest their condemnation of him as a communist.³⁴

In November 1936 Barnes again criticized the Justice Department and FBI along the same lines as his address in February. In an address at St. Louis Barnes claimed that the FBI only sought “small fry” criminals, ignoring the more sophisticated organized criminals, and thereby threw “dust into the eyes of the public.” FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols recommended in a 9 December memorandum:

While it might be advisable to ignore Barnes, nevertheless I feel that such remarks as set forth above should not go unchallenged as they are derogatory and convey the impression that Barnes is attempting to discredit our Bureau, and I feel that his hand should be called, particularly when he by innuendo questions our honesty. Therefore, it is suggested that some vigorous representative of the Bureau interview Barnes and ask him for any information or evidence that he has as to the “10,000 most dangerous criminals who scorn to steal less than \$10,000 at a time” whom “the Federal Department of Justice does not choose to meddle with.” Then if Barnes is unable to furnish any accurate information regarding them which come

within our investigative jurisdiction, it is suggested that he be summarily placed in his proper place. It is believed that it would be inadvisable to write him a letter. However, if the above course is not deemed desirable, then I would like to suggest that the Director consider the feasibility of quoting Barnes in some future address as illustrative of the hoity toity professors who are so impractical and who really are undermining good law enforcement rather than bolstering it.³⁵

Senior FBI officials apparently decided not to pursue this course of action against Barnes.

FBI officials lost interest in Barnes until 1940. In December of that year, FBI agents found his name in the files of an unnamed communist group as having in 1933 endorsed the magazine *Soviet Russia Today*. He was also listed in these files as having been a member of the National Commission for Defense of Political Prisoners, and in 1935 as a board member of People's Lobby, Inc.. An FBI agent noted in a 17 December memorandum, labeled "internal security," that as Barnes had been previously "connected with questionable activity in the District of Columbia, a preliminary investigation is being made for the purpose of ascertaining his present whereabouts." FBI officials were interested in "his present activity and whether or not he is engaged in any form of un-American activity." For unspecified reasons, Hoover ended this specific inquiry in January 1941, but did not lose interest in Barnes altogether.³⁶

During 1941, FBI officials received unsolicited information concerning Barnes's alleged subversive activities. In June an unnamed informant wrote the FBI stating that Barnes was a fifth columnist and a Nazi mouthpiece in the United States. Then in July another unnamed informant wrote the FBI to accuse Barnes of having been "mixed up with radical and semi-radical affairs throughout the world." The

writer listed Barnes's various jobs and associations which, to him, suggested he was a communist. And in December, a Military Intelligence Division official forwarded an Army intelligence report to the FBI that described Barnes as "a dangerous man." The cited evidence, however, involved the professor's anti-administration public comments. In July 1941 Barnes, coincidentally, had denied to a friend that he had ever been a radical. He then stated that, in fact, "the FBI has been consulting me frequently this spring about appointments to their force." (Barnes was a noted criminologist.) None of these charges, however, were substantiated. Taken as a whole they seemingly confirmed for FBI officials (and others) that Barnes was a subversive and thereby an internal security threat. These accusations, along with his continued criticism of the administration, later led government officials in 1943 to develop a sedition case against the professor.³⁷

Other than notations in the America First Committee FBI file during 1941 and 1942, the FBI file on Barnes curiously contains little information about his activities between 1941 and 1942. Barnes first became a focus of FBI officials in 1943 when his critical utterances about the administration drew government attention. One FBI document dated 23 December 1942, however, precedes the 1943 sedition case against the professor. During that month an FBI informant in Kansas City, Missouri, advised that a social science course offered by a Professor Trimble (who was associated with America First) at Kansas City University in 1942 was using a textbook written by Barnes entitled *Social Institutions*. The informant believed that as the book was published after 1942, Barnes was attempting in it to discredit the Roosevelt administration. A Professor Manheim referred to the book as

“obnoxious and . . . not the type of literature for college freshmen.” The informant further claimed that in a chapter entitled “Prejudice: Propaganda and Censorship” Barnes “uses a subtle style and cleverly insinuates that Roosevelt is attempting to set up a pro-Facist [sic] government in this country.” To the chagrin of the informant, Barnes also had listed one of George Sylvester Viereck’s books in his bibliography. The SAC in Kansas City informed FBI headquarters that he would follow up this information by interviewing the informant and collecting passages from Barnes’s book. Hoover, however, ordered the agent not to follow up the lead because in his view it was “unnecessary.”³⁸

Barnes became aware in 1942 of concerns about his textbook *Social Institutions*, published by Prentice Hall. The editor at Prentice Hall, S. E. Carll, who was possibly interviewed about the book by FBI agents and listed as an unnamed confidential informant in FBI reports or who had caught word of FBI interest in the book, wrote Barnes and asked him to carefully review the statements he made in this, and other, textbooks. The editor stressed that he did not believe Barnes was guilty of sedition, but warned him that some impressionable student could show the book to his/her parents who would not understand the context of Barnes’s statements. Carll stressed that the parents may “take exception to it and consider it their patriotic duty to report the book to the FBI. Then your trouble begins.” The editor wrote that his example was merely “hypothetical” but added that “strange things can happen in times of stress.”³⁹

Following the United States entrance into the Second World War, the Roosevelt administration investigated, arrested, and prosecuted a number of

individuals for making seditious utterances. According to one Justice Department document, the government planned to use provisions of the Espionage Act, Smith Act, and the seditious conspiracy statute against “disloyal utterance.” Francis Biddle, Roosevelt’s civil-libertarian attorney general, has noted that he ordered the release of a number of these individuals and dropped their prosecutions. Biddle refused to allow a rehash of the First World War prosecutorial abuses. Among those released, for example, was Ellis O. Jones who had said Roosevelt should be impeached for asking Congress to declare war. The Roosevelt White House itself even sought to silence some members of the press utilizing the Smith Act, but Biddle prevented such an abuse. Others who were more pronounced in their radicalism were also prosecuted. These individuals included Gerald Winrod, William Dudley Pelley, Lawrence Dennis, Joseph McWilliams, George Deatherage, and Elizabeth Dilling. FBI Director Hoover, sensing the White House’s interest in prosecuting some of its critics prior to Pearl Harbor, tried to develop information that could be used to warrant indictments against the president’s critics for sedition (or under some other federal statute). Harry Elmer Barnes was one such individual.⁴⁰

FBI agents began in 1943 to develop information on Barnes in hopes that the Justice Department could prosecute him “under the Sedition Statutes.” An FBI report of 23 January 1943 from Albany, New York, records the FBI’s view of Barnes. The Albany SAC claimed that Barnes was “long associated with Communist Front Organizations and isolationist movements. [He was] reported as strongly anti-British and noticeably opposed to President Roosevelt and [the] present

administration.” The SAC also cited a newspaper account of a Barnes speech that was critical of President Roosevelt. An FBI agent was immediately dispatched to interview the newspaper reporter who had written the piece to confirm its accuracy.⁴¹

FBI agents interviewed numerous persons to determine Barnes’s political views dating from 1942. In September 1942, the Albany SAC reported, Mrs. Regine Kurlander offered the Albany office unsolicited information on Barnes. She had met him in Cleveland and through conversation determined that Barnes “gave every indication of being completely Fascist and no longer a liberal.” She noted that Barnes claimed Roosevelt had planned Pearl Harbor to deliberately maneuver the country into war. Kurlander further reported Barnes’s disparaging comments about Winston Churchill and Chiang Kai-Shek.⁴²

FBI agents then followed up with a search of FBI files, which indicated Barnes had been a speaker for the America First Committee and editor of the anti-interventionist periodical *Uncensored*. Various interviews of newspaper reporters who had covered some of Barnes’s speeches were conducted, as well as some speech attendees, to determine their content. In each instance the interviewee noted that Barnes had made negative comments about the Roosevelt administration and its foreign policy.⁴³

An FBI report of 9 March described Barnes as a subversive and thereby liable for prosecution under the sedition statutes. An FBI confidential informant (likely from Kansas City University), designated “A-1,” criticized Barnes as an academic who “debunks and criticizes everything called ‘Americanism.’”

Confidential informant A-1 also regarded Barnes as “a short sighted rationalist who would go so far as anarchy; he is pedagogically dangerous.” But while the informant may not have believed Barnes was a Fascist, he nevertheless believed him to “be inclined to Socialism and Communism.” Lastly, the informant commented on one of Barnes’s college textbooks, *Social Justice* as “bad for the students because it presents a too one-sided viewpoint and criticizes American ideals and traditions to the extreme.” To FBI officials, all of these points about Barnes suggested that the professor was a seditionist.⁴⁴

FBI agents, in addition to monitoring Barnes’s speeches following the American entry into the Second World War, sought out specific information about Barnes himself. FBI agents traveled to Barnes’s hometown, Cooperstown, New York, and interviewed people there. An FBI agent interviewed the Cooperstown assistant postmaster, J. Gilchrist, and inquired about where Barnes lived and the content of the professor’s mail—nothing “unusual” was reported. An agent also interviewed the director of the Cooperstown branch of the New York State Historical Association who reported that after a speech given to the group, Barnes’s reputation in the community plunged. Questioning the town clerk, N. E. D. Gilmore, about Barnes, FBI agents learned that he “is extremely sincere in his opinions.” FBI agents also interviewed the village commissioner, mayor, and several individuals all of whom commented on Barnes’s politics. To them he was critical of the Roosevelt administration.⁴⁵

On 20 April, Hoover assembled four FBI reports on Barnes—dated 23 December 1942, 23 January, 9 March, and 30 March 1943 (all outlined above)—

which he then forwarded to Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge of the Justice Department's Criminal Division. Hoover asked Berge to review the information FBI agents had developed and to report back to him if it qualified as "a violation of the Sedition Statutes and if you believe further investigation is warranted." Berge responded that the information developed by FBI agents did "not suggest that prosecutive action under the Sedition Statutes is warranted." The assistant attorney general advised that no further investigation appeared necessary. Hoover then advised the Albany SAC to discontinue the probe, adding that should further information on Barnes, "of a seditious nature," be received it should be reported to him.⁴⁶

FBI agents continued to report information about Barnes to Hoover. In May, an FBI agent in Kansas City attempted to ascertain "the phraseology of certain passages" from Barnes's book *Social Institutions* because they "strongly indicated the subject's anti-American sentiment." The agent was unable to accomplish this task, however, as his informant—a student—no longer attended the class using the textbook and no longer had a copy of it. Then, in June, the SAC in New York reported that Barnes was an officer of the American Council on Public Affairs, a member of the National Committee of International Juridical Association, and a Communist Party speaker. All of this information, some of it speculative, suggested to FBI officials that Barnes was a seditionist on account that he had "expressed [a] very pessimistic attitude toward [the] U.S. notwithstanding the outcome of the war."⁴⁷

One last report was filed on Barnes in July 1943 regarding suspicions that he was a seditionist and thereby subject to prosecution. The FBI's Albany, New York, field office interviewed one of Barnes's colleagues, the president of Union College in Schenectady, Dr. Dixon Fox. Fox was asked about Barnes's speech before the New York State Historical Association (having been present) inasmuch as FBI officials believed it suggested that Barnes was a seditionist. Fox's good character and standing as a college president apparently put FBI and Justice Department officials at ease. Dr. Fox stated that he had known Barnes for twenty-five years and while he thought Barnes was somewhat anti-British he nevertheless believed him "to be entirely open." Fox added that Barnes had the "disposition causing him to take the side of the minority in most disputes." This statement was enough for FBI officials to consider the case against Barnes for sedition closed and they proceeded with it no longer.⁴⁸

The foreclosure of the FBI's effort to develop evidence that could be used to prosecute Harry Elmer Barnes for sedition did not end FBI interest in the anti-interventionist historian. In December 1943 Barnes decided to apply for a government position as a business consultant with the Office for Emergency Management of the War Production Board. Such a job, during wartime, required an FBI background check and, again, Barnes's former status as an anti-interventionist foreign policy critic of Roosevelt was focused upon. Upon checking the Bureau's files for general information about Barnes, an FBI agent resurrected Barnes's 1936 criticism of the FBI and submitted it to senior FBI officials. Upon reading the

memorandum, Hoover scribbled on the document: "See that he is thoroughly investigated as he is obviously a foul ball."⁴⁹

Hoover ordered a widespread investigation with field offices across New York state, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C. The FBI director wanted the matter "vigorously investigated."⁵⁰ Each field office reported to FBI headquarters with background information from their files or investigations, much of it duplicative. Nothing new was reported. Each report covered Barnes's various organizational memberships, comments made in speeches or in his writings, or information that had been reported under the Bureau's previous investigation for sedition. The New York field office offered the most detailed information, unsurprisingly, as it was central to the sedition inquiry. Indeed, the New York SAC reported on 9 February that Barnes was "a dangerous man" due to his "superlative egotism, and lastly on account of his flair for the spectacular." The SAC also reported that Barnes hated the United States government and "would either have some part in our government or go to jail."⁵¹

FBI Director Hoover forwarded selected data to George Gould, assistant director for investigations of the Office for Emergency Management, culled from the FBI's long investigation of Barnes. On 26 February, Hoover forwarded to Gould three copies of the New York SAC's 9 February report on Barnes. This report, among all the field office reports submitted to Hoover, contained the most derogatory data regarding Barnes. Then, in a confidential 17 March letter to Gould, Hoover informed the OEM official that Barnes had made critical comments regarding the Justice Department's efforts to curb crime in 1936. He said Barnes

claimed big business had a part in protecting large, modern crime syndicates and, moreover, that the Justice Department had “hoodwinked the public by tracking down second rate criminals like Dillinger, a poor hunted boy, who was denied his constitutional right to surrender.”⁵²

Barnes’s FBI file provides no indication of the decision of the Office for Emergency Management. But historian Roy Turnbaugh, who has studied Barnes’s life, writes that despite the FBI’s negative investigative reports Barnes had been hired by the Prison industry as a consultant before the FBI’s reports were finally submitted.⁵³ This FBI effort nonetheless demonstrates Hoover’s desire to service the Roosevelt administration’s political interests. FBI agents had investigated Barnes regarding him as a seditionist during a period when the government actively sought former critics for prosecution. But this effort involved more than an FBI vendetta against Barnes for his 1936 derogatory comments about the Bureau. Barnes was a prominent foreign policy critic of the Roosevelt administration and was closely associated with the America First Committee, working as one of their speakers. He was also a man of convictions who spoke out against the wrongs he saw in society, whether they were social problems or political ones that he identified in the Roosevelt administration. As a man who was often involved in controversy—a man who often spoke out for the underdog, as one of his colleagues commented to an FBI agent—it is not surprising that Barnes fell under FBI scrutiny for sedition and, later, when FBI agents conducted background checks for a government job his anti-interventionist and anti-FBI comments were further scrutinized as unfavorable.

Given Barnes's various statements, FBI officials viewed him predictably as "un-American."

* * *

Laura Houghtaling Ingalls was a noted female aviator during the 1930s, winning \$2,500 in an air race from New York to California and establishing a number of female flying records. Moreover, like Charles Lindbergh, she was a colorful and controversial speaker on behalf of the America First Committee. But unlike Lindbergh and others associated with the America First Committee, Ingalls was the only America-First individual to have been successfully prosecuted for violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act—the law which FBI officials used time and again to develop information against Roosevelt's foreign policy critics. Her indictment in December 1941 and subsequent prosecution became a black mark on the legitimacy of the anti-interventionist movement. Yet among sincere anti-interventionist foreign policy critics—those identified with the America First Committee and not radical fringe groups—Ingalls's prosecution was an exception.⁵⁴ Some America First members may have held controversial views regarding Nazi Germany and American entrance into the European war, but they never acted on them. Ingalls's naiveté regarding Nazi Germany—she admired German "efficiency" and rebuilding in the 1930s—led her to accept money from a German embassy representative to supplement expenses she had incurred while making anti-interventionist speeches for the America First Committee. While she had violated the law, as stipulated in the Registration Act, her motives do not appear to have been insidious, nor was Nazi influence among members of the America First Committee

significant. Ingalls was, indeed, a lawbreaker but her story is significant in two ways. First, it reflects the goal of FBI officials in regard to anti-interventionists—to develop information that might be used to prosecute foreign policy critics under the Registration Act or Smith Act. Two, her case stood out in FBI officials' minds (and others) as representative of the average anti-interventionist. Indeed, her case became a model for possible later prosecutions of those associated with Ingalls, particularly individuals associated with the America First Committee.

Ingalls first came to the attention of FBI officials but not for her controversial statements about the administration's foreign policy. The catalyst then was her inquiry to work for the FBI. In August 1939, shortly after the outbreak of war in Europe, Ingalls was unable to find work as a female pilot in the military or airline industry. She decided to write Hoover asking to “work for you though the medium of my airplanes and perhaps serve my country as well—something I long to do; even though I am a woman—even in times of peace.” When FBI Assistant Director Harold Nathan rejected Ingalls's offer, the aviator renewed her offer, commenting that there must be some position for a woman of her talents.⁵⁵

Hoover frowned on employing Ingalls, however. FBI officials had noted a 29 September 1939 article (just thirteen days after her renewed offer) in the *New York Times* that Ingalls and Catherine Curtis,⁵⁶ whom the FBI viewed as “allegedly Fascist in her leanings and affiliations,” had unsuccessfully petitioned the U.S. Senate to conduct a hearing on the war. Having failed to convince the Senate to hear their ideas, Ingalls flew low between the Capitol and White House to drop anti-war pamphlets. By doing this Ingalls had violated restricted airspace and had

temporarily lost her pilot's license. Because of her associations and violation of restricted airspace (and undoubtedly from a degree of male chauvinism), Hoover declined Ingalls's second offer to work for the FBI.⁵⁷

By 1941, after Ingalls had become a popular speaker for the America First Committee—some considered her the “heroine” of the Committee, whereas Charles Lindbergh was the “hero”—FBI officials began to take a new interest in Ingalls.⁵⁸ FBI officials' interest then centered on her role as a controversial opponent of Roosevelt's foreign policy. In April and July 1941, an FBI informant notified the Bureau that in order to obtain a visa for a planned trip to London and Berlin, Ingalls had made an appointment to meet the German minister plenipotentiary and chargé d'affaires at the German embassy, Hans Thomsen. Ingalls had reportedly, and naively, hope to initiate peace between the countries.⁵⁹

Again, in August, an informant reported that Ingalls had discussed the possibility of flying to Germany “on a good will tour to tell the German people that the Americans are not obtaining the truth.” To arrange this tour, Ingalls contacted Dr. Hans Borchers and Captain Fritz Wiedemann, German consular officials in New York and San Francisco, respectively. When reporting this information about her German contacts, the FBI's informant also noted that Ingalls had stated:

Germany is a building country. America is in chaos. The Germans have the best brains in the world and are the finest organizers. You will be surprised to see what they intend to do in Africa. They have scientific minds and there isn't a lazy bone in the body of a German.

Up to this point, FBI officials had only developed information that revealed Ingalls's admiration for alleged German efficiency and her naïve belief that she could be a mediator of peace and understanding between the Axis and Allies.⁶⁰

Also in August, according to an FBI informant, Ingalls traveled to Washington, D.C., where she became more closely involved with German officials. Through a third party, Julia Kraus, who worked for the District of Columbia, Ingalls had arranged to meet Baron Ulrich von Gienanth, second secretary of the German Embassy, to further her plans for a goodwill tour. She had met with von Gienanth twice in September, once receiving a package of German propaganda pamphlets. The content of the meetings is unknown, but Ingalls had made arrangements that would later lead to her prosecution under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.⁶¹

Ingalls worked for the America First Committee as a speaker at its various rallies nationwide, but the Committee agreed only to pay her traveling expenses. Apparently Ingalls had decided to use her new contacts in the German embassy to secure further funds to supplement that paid by the America First Committee because, Ingalls had said, she could not continue to speak with America First without increased funding. In October, therefore, Ingalls made arrangements whereby von Gienanth agreed to pay her \$250 per month as a means to supplement the travel expenses the America First Committee offered. She came to the figure of \$250 because, according to Ingalls, she would make approximately \$300 a month as a flight instructor.⁶²

Before FBI officials learned the details of this arrangement, they believed Ingalls might have passed information about American national defense to the German embassy. In September Hoover notified his SAC in New York to continue the investigation and he notified Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle of the connection with the German embassy.⁶³ Meantime, FBI agents kept Ingalls under

surveillance. They followed her movements by day to keep track of her whereabouts. A 10 October memorandum from J. K. Mumford to FBI Assistant Director Ladd—head of the FBI’s Domestic Intelligence Division—states that Ingalls had been “limiting her activities to her apartment and to calling at the America First Committee offices only.” A second FBI memorandum suggests the possibility of a wiretap. But if FBI agents had wiretapped Ingalls, an admittedly speculative conclusion, they would not have been able to use any information gathered from the wiretap against the aviator in trial. Wiretapping was an illegal surveillance tool that Roosevelt authorized only for national defense cases (intelligence purposes) not for use in court.⁶⁴

The second memorandum, dated 16 December, reports that the FBI’s primary problem regarding Ingalls “is that most of the information in the possession of the Bureau has been obtained from highly confidential sources which are not competent evidence in the event of a trial.” FBI officials had maintained the practice of referring to wiretaps as “confidential sources,” as was demonstrated in the case of Ethel Brigham. The same memorandum also states that “information developed today indicates that Laura Ingalls has made numerous efforts to contact von Gienanth by telephone and has threatened to come to his home. On one occasion he hung up the telephone during the conversation....” It is conceivable that Ingalls had been wiretapped or that information about her had been obtained indirectly via a different wiretap (possibly on the German embassy). This information would not have been admissible in a court of law.⁶⁵

When war broke out between the United States and Germany, von Gienanth broke off contact with Ingalls. FBI officials knew of the contact between Ingalls and the German embassy and on 15 December inquired of the Justice Department whether she “should be taken into custodial detention at this time.” Hoover was told not to arrest Ingalls. Instead, he submitted FBI reports concerning her to the Justice Department’s Criminal Division who advised that sufficient evidence did not exist to link Ingalls with von Gienanth. But a breakthrough was made in the case when Ingalls’s intermediary, Julia Kraus, confided to FBI agents that von Gienanth paid Ingalls to supplement her speech-making efforts for the America First Committee. FBI agents also obtained some telegrams sent by Kraus to Ingalls that indicated the receipt of money. They then interviewed Ingalls who did not hide the fact that she received the money, and was subsequently arrested.⁶⁶

Meantime, Hoover dispatched a memorandum on Ingalls to the White House. In the blind memorandum, he outlined the Bureau’s case up to that date.⁶⁷

The Justice Department had sought to charge Ingalls with violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act as she had accepted money from an official of the German embassy to fund her speechmaking efforts with the America First Committee. According to the law, this made her a paid agent of the German government and had not registered herself with the State Department as such an agent. United States attorneys had planned to charge her in two ways: one, for failing to register as a foreign agent; two, for conspiring to violate the Registration Act with von Gienanth. Wendell Berge, head of the department’s Criminal

Division, decided to proceed only with the first charge since it was the safest route to conviction.⁶⁸

On 23 December a federal grand jury indicted Ingalls for failing to register as a paid agent of the German government inasmuch as the money she received had been used by her to influence public opinion—via her speeches—in a matter of public policy.⁶⁹ Defending herself during the resultant trial, Ingalls cited the offer of her services to the FBI in 1939, an offer Hoover rejected. But given Hoover's public statements asking citizens to assist the Bureau in its work, according to Ingalls's lawyer, she set about on this premise "to engage in counterespionage work." In short, Ingalls's defense was that she had been working all along to gather intelligence from the German embassy. The defense impressed neither the prosecutors nor Hoover, who commented: "Of all the silly clap trap this takes the prize." FBI officials became concerned on 3 February, however, when they learned that FBI agents had used a third party, Mrs. Ralph Revilo who was looking after Ingalls's apartment, to enter her Los Angeles residence and remove documents. The field office was censured by FBI headquarters, although it was determined that the documents were not central to the prosecution's case. In any event, the trial was held from 9 February to 13 February 1942, and a verdict of guilty was returned. Ingalls was thereby sentenced to serve eight months to two years in prison.⁷⁰

Following her conviction, FBI officials decided to look more closely at Ingalls's connection with the America First Committee to ascertain whether others associated with her and the group could be prosecuted. The FBI's special agent in charge at the Washington, D.C., field office noted that in the course of gathering

evidence from Ingalls's apartment, with a search warrant, a list of committee chairpersons, speakers, and speaking dates was found. The agent noted that the Washington, D.C., field office was holding this information since the listed individuals "are believed to be proper subjects for investigation." Moreover, the agent continued, "In the event of an investigation of the America First Committee[']s activities, the above information would be of considerable value." Hoover responded to the SAC ordering him to include the Ingalls material in the field office's summary report on the America First Committee, which at the time FBI officials had believed was attempting to reemerge in politics (see chapter four).⁷¹

Ingalls's viewpoints about Nazi Germany and about her ability to prevent a destructive war might have been naïve. She had broken the law and suffered the consequences. Despite being a member and popular speaker for the America First Committee—she made over fifty speeches from the summer of 1941 until American entrance in the war—Ingalls's case was atypical. Most America First members and speakers did not associate with German officials nor accept money from them. Ingalls's acceptance of money to supplement her America First travel expenses further confirmed her naivete, but to FBI officials (and others) her action typified the inherent disloyalty of the America First Committee. Indeed, Hoover's tactic to develop evidence that anti-interventionists violated the Espionage Act, Foreign Agents Registration Act, Sedition Statutes, or some other law succeeded in Ingalls's case. Her prosecution might have bolstered FBI officials' views that Roosevelt's

anti-interventionist foreign policy critics were subversive and thus subject to investigation.

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The FBI's investigations and monitoring of the Brighams, Harry Elmer Barnes, and Laura Ingalls demonstrates Hoover's interest in promoting the political interests of the Roosevelt administration. From the Brigham wiretap and investigation FBI officials had gathered valuable political intelligence about Roosevelt's foreign policy critics that was then incorporated in three political intelligence reports to the White House. The FBI's investigation of Barnes illustrates the Bureau's interest in developing information about anti-interventionist critics subsequent to Pearl Harbor that could be used to prosecute them under the sedition statutes. Barnes was a prominent anti-interventionist, respected historian, but not a seditionist. As a controversial figure he, as many prominent anti-interventionists, was viewed as a subversive. The Laura Ingalls investigation and prosecution demonstrates the Bureau's (and administration's) view of anti-interventionists as subversive, confirming the validity of their perceptions even though her case was atypical of America Firsters. Thus FBI officials desired to use the Ingalls case as a template for further prosecutions of anti-interventionists associated both with the America First Committee and Ingalls. To them, the success of the Ingalls prosecution under the Foreign Agents Registration Act validated FBI perceptions of anti-interventionists as a whole and FBI tactics—which might have included wiretaps.

FBI officials might have believed the Brighams, Barnes, and Ingalls were dangerous subversives, and given the crisis atmosphere this is not surprising. The FBI's monitoring of them nevertheless demonstrates Hoover's political agenda. Hoover had a long interest in satisfying the political and policy desires of President Roosevelt. He succeeded in this whether in providing valuable political intelligence on his foreign policy critics, or working to develop evidence that could be used to prosecute some former critics. Despite no documented response from administration officials regarding Brigham, Barnes, or Ingalls, Hoover's continued efforts to monitor and investigate Roosevelt's foreign policy critics (and to report on their activities) suggests a course of action the White House had no intention of impeding. In his efforts Hoover employed illegal surveillance methods, whether wiretaps or mail covers. All of these efforts had at their basis an interest in catering to White House interests that placed Hoover and his FBI in good stead with the administration. The use of these intrusive tactics suggests that the FBI's origins as a national security agency (part of the national security state) had its origins with the Great Debate. A pattern is evident in the extent and tactics FBI officials employed against the anti-interventionists (such as illegal wiretaps) that mirrors those employed against communists and leftists during the Cold War. By utilizing such means, the end result was increased authority for the FBI, a basis upon which Hoover built the FBI into an even more powerful and autonomous agency.

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- ¹ See Ethel Brigham's obituary in *New York Times* (28 September 1968), 33. On the New York chapter of America First see Michele Flynn Stenehjem, *An American First: John T. Flynn and the America First Committee* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976).
- ² Confidential report, SAC P. E. Foxworth, New York City, 15 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-19; personal and confidential memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 3 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-1; memorandum, Edward A. Tamm to D. Milton Ladd, 3 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-2; memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 3 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-3.
- ³ Memorandum, Kramer to Ladd, 4 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-4; letter, Hoover to Frank Wilson, Chief of Secret Service, 4 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-4; letter, Wilson to Hoover, 5 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-5; memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 4 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-4 [There is a notation in Brigham's FBI file that Hoover's 4 November memo to the attorney general authorizing the wiretap had been removed permanently to the National Security Electronic Surveillance File in 1973]; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 5 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-17.
- ⁴ Confidential report, SAC P. E. Foxworth, New York City, 15 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-19.
- ⁵ Personal and confidential memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 15 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-7; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 5 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-17.
- ⁶ FBI policy required letters to Hoover marked "personal and confidential" to be directed immediately to his desk and not directly into the Bureau's central records system. See Athan Theoharis (ed.), *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1991), 2-4.
- ⁷ Personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 18 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-6.
- ⁸ Personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 25 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-8; FBI teletype, Foxworth to Hoover, 25 November 1941, FBI 100-50729-10.
- ⁹ Special delivery air-mail letter, Hoover to SAC New York, 2 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-10; personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 3 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-9; personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 13 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-11.
- ¹⁰ Personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 13 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-11.
- ¹¹ Personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 13 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-12.
- ¹² Personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 16 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-14.
- ¹³ FBI teletype, Foxworth to Hoover, 19 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-13.
- ¹⁴ FBI teletype, Foxworth to Hoover 20 December 1941, FBI 100-50729-16.
- ¹⁵ Confidential report, Foxworth to FBI HQ, 15 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-19.
- ¹⁶ Confidential letter, Hoover to Foxworth, 24 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-19.
- ¹⁷ Personal and confidential letter and attached blind memorandum, Hoover to Watson, 26 January 1942, Official File 10-B, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library [FDRL], Hyde Park, New York;

memorandum with attached blind memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 26 January 1942, FBI 100-50729-20.

¹⁸ Personal and confidential letter and blind memorandum, Hoover to Watson, 13 February 1942, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

¹⁹ Report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 2 March 1942, FBI 100-50729-23; confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 18 May 1942, FBI 100-50729-25.

²⁰ Report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 19 May 1942, FBI 100-50729-26; Report, SAC Philadelphia to FBI HQ, 20 May 1942, FBI 100-50729-27.

²¹ Letter and accompanying memorandum, Foxworth to Hoover, 21 May 1942, FBI 100-50729-28; memorandum, J. K. Mumford to Ladd, 3 June 1942, FBI 100-50729-30; memorandum, Hoover to Foxworth, 9 June 1942, FBI 100-50729-31.

²² Memorandum, Mumford to Ladd, 3 June 1942, FBI 100-50729-30; Francis Biddle, *In Brief Authority* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), 166, 168.

²³ Memorandum, E. G. Fitch to Ladd, 6 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-35; Athan Theoharis and John Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 9-10.

²⁴ See personal and confidential letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 27 June 1942, FBI 100-50729-33; letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 7 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-34; letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 14 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-36; letter, Foxworth to Hoover, 18 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-38.

²⁵ Letter, Hoover to Foxworth, 12 August 1942, FBI 100-50729-42. The reports are missing from the requests cited in note 24 except 14 July.

²⁶ See report, SAC Foxworth to FBI HQ, 14 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-37.

²⁷ Letter, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 14 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-39; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 16 July 1942, FBI 100-50729-40; memorandum, Hoover to attorney general, 20 July 1942; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Hopkins, 20 July 1942; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to General Kroner, 20 July 1942; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Berle, 20 July 1942; all in FBI 100-50729-40.

²⁸ Memorandum, E. G. Fitch to Ladd, 26 October 1941, FBI 100-50729-53.

²⁹ Confidential letter, SAC Foxworth to Hoover, 4 September 1942, FBI 100-50729-47; confidential letter, SAC Foxworth to Hoover, 22 September 1942, FBI 100-50729-49; letter, SAC Foxworth to Hoover, 2 October 1942, FBI 100-50729-50; confidential letter, SAC Foxworth to Hoover, 20 October 1942, FBI 100-50729-51; confidential letter, SAC Foxworth to Hoover, 18 October 1942, FBI 100-50729-52; report, SAC Foxworth to FBI HQ, 10 December 1942, FBI 100-50729-54. It is interesting to note that following the wiretap's discontinuance, reports regarding Ethel Brigham were, in addition to labeled "internal security," labeled "custodial detention." FBI officials apparently regarded Brigham as some type of security risk placing her on the FBI's emergency detention list. On custodial detention see Athan Theoharis, *Spying on Americans: Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), 40-64.

³⁰ Report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 1 July 1943, FBI 100-50729-60.

³¹ Letter, Hoover to Wood, 17 October 1941, Box 60, America First Committee papers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

³² Letter, Frank W. Scott to Harry Elmer Barnes, 31 January 1941, Harry Elmer Barnes papers, box 27, American Heritage Center [hereafter AHC], University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming. On Barnes see Justus D. Doenecke, "Harry Elmer Barnes," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 56 (Summer 1973), 311-323; Doenecke, "Harry Elmer Barnes: Profit of a 'Usable' Past," *The History Teacher* 8 (February 1975), 265-276.

³³ Roy Turnbaugh, "The FBI and Harry Elmer Barnes: 1936-1944," *The Historian* 42 (May 1980): 385-98. See also Roy Turnbaugh, "The Quest for Truth and Justice: Harry Elmer Barnes" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1977).

³⁴ Letter, SAC Philadelphia to Hoover, 10 February 1936, FBI 100-6715-X; memorandum, R. Joseph to Tolson, 14 February 1936, FBI 100-6715-X1. (The Harry Elmer Barnes FBI file can be found in his papers, box 196, at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.) Letter, Barnes to Homer Chaillaux, 18 April 1941, Barnes papers, AHC; letter, Chaillaux to Barnes, 6 May 1941, Barnes papers, AHC.

³⁵ Memorandum, Louis Nichols to Mr. Joseph, 9 December 1936, FBI 100-6715-X2.

³⁶ Report, SAC Washington DC to FBI HQ, 17 December 1940, FBI 100-6715-1; letter, Hoover to SAC Washington DC, 7 January 1941, FBI 100-6715-1.

³⁷ Letter and enclosure, Hoover to SAC Washington DC, 23 June 1941, FBI 100-6715-3; memorandum, K. R. McIntire to Mr. Kramer, 3 July 1941, FBI 100-6715-4; blind memorandum re Harry Elmer Barnes, 3 July 1941, FBI 100-6715-4; letter and enclosure, Colonel J. T. Bissell to Hoover, 5 December 1941, [FBI document number missing but in Barnes FBI file]; Letter, Barnes to Ralph Tije, 6 July 1941, Barnes papers, AHC. Patrick Washburn discusses the government's pursuit of some of its more vocal critics after 1942 for sedition in "FDR Versus His Own Attorney General: The Struggle over Sedition, 1941-42," *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (Winter 1985): 717-24.

³⁸ Report, SAC Kansas City to FBO HQ, 23 December 1942, FBI 100-6715-6; letter, Hoover to SAC Kansas City, 2 February 1942, FBI 100-6715-6. See also the Justice Department's un-redacted copy of this report in file 146-28-840, box 103, Classified Subjects File, Record Group [RG] 60, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], College Park, Maryland.

³⁹ Letter, S. E. Carll, editor, Prentice Hall, to Barnes, 25 April 1942, Barnes papers, box 28, AHC.

⁴⁰ Memorandum, Assistant Attorney General Wendell Berge to Biddle, 24 March 1942, Francis Biddle papers, FDRL; Francis Biddle, *In Brief Authority* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1962), 234-5; Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 533-34; Washburn, "FDR Versus His Own Attorney General," 717.

⁴¹ Report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 23 January 1943, FBI 100-6715-8; report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 23 January 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA; memorandum, Hoover to SAC Albany, 2 March 1943, FBI 100-6715-8.

⁴² Report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 23 January 1943, FBI 100-6715-8; report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 23 January 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴³ Report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 23 January 1943, FBI 100-6715-8; report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 23 January 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴⁴ Report, SAC Kansas City to FBI HQ, 9 March 1943, FBI 100-6715-10; report, SAC Kansas City to FBI HQ, 9 March 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴⁵ Report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 30 March 1943, FBI 100-6715-12; report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 30 March 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, Hoover to Berge, 19 April 1943, FBI 100-6715-12; memorandum, Berge to Hoover, 26 April 1943, FBI 100-6715-14; memorandum, Hoover to SAC Albany, 14 May 1943, FBI 100-6715-14; memorandum, Hoover to Berge, 19 April 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA; memorandum, Berge to Hoover, 26 April 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴⁷ Report, SAC Kansas City to FBI HQ, 13 May 1943, FBI 100-6715-15; report, SAC New York City to FBI HQ, 7 June 1943, FBI 100-6715-16; report, SAC New York City to FBI HQ, 7 June 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴⁸ Report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 30 July 1943, FBI 100-6715-17; report, SAC Albany to FBI HQ, 30 July 1943, file 146-28-840, box 103, RG 60, NARA.

⁴⁹ Letter, Dallas Dort, Office for Emergency Management, to Hoover, 8 December 1943, FBI 100-6715-17X; memorandum, G. C. Callan to Ladd, 19 January 1944, FBI 100-6715-17X.

⁵⁰ Memorandum, Hoover to SAC New York, 19 January 1944, FBI 100-6715-17X; memorandum, G. C. Callan to Ladd, 22 February 1944, FBI 100-6715-2[5?].

⁵¹ Report, SAC New York to FBI HQ, 9 February 1944, FBI 100-6715-24; memorandum, SAC New York to Hoover, 17 April 1944, FBI 100-6715-39. For the various FBI reports from the listed field offices, see Barnes's FBI file, serials 100-6715-18X to -38.

⁵² Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to George Gould, 26 February 1944, FBI 100-6715-35; confidential letter, Hoover to George Gould, 17 March 1944, FBI 100-6715-35; memorandum, Tamm to Hoover, 12 February 1944, FBI 100-6715-37; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 22 March 1944, FBI 100-6715-34.

⁵³ Turnbaugh, "The FBI and Harry Elmer Barnes," 397.

⁵⁴ Fringe critics were prosecuted in the same manner as Ingalls, but she was not on their par. These include William Dudley Pelley, Fritz Kuhn, and Gerald L. K. Smith, all of whom were confirmed anti-Semites and leading figures in pro-Nazi groups.

⁵⁵ Letter and resume, Laura Ingalls to Hoover, 20 August 1939, FBI 100-34712-1X2 ; letter, Nathan to Ingalls, 25 August 1939, FBI 100-43712-1X2; letter, Ingalls to Nathan, 13 September 1939, FBI 100-43712-1X2. (The Ingalls FBI file can be found in Wayne Cole's papers at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.)

⁵⁶ Catherine Curtis later became a speaker for the America First Committee. She also became head of one of the right-wing mother's organizations that opposed the war, Women Investors in America.

⁵⁷ Letter, Hoover to Ingalls, 2 October 1939, FBI 100-34712-1X2; blind memorandum re Laura Ingalls, 9 September 1941, FBI 100-34712-8.

⁵⁸ For the heroine comment see Michael Sayers and Albert Kahn, *Sabotage! The Secret War Against America* (New York: Harper's, 1942), 209.

⁵⁹ Blind memorandum re Laura Ingalls, 9 September 1941, FBI 100-34712-8.

⁶⁰ Blind memorandum re Laura Ingalls, 9 September 1941, FBI 100-34712-8.

⁶¹ Blind memorandum re Laura Ingalls, 18 December 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁶² Blind memorandum re Laura Ingalls, 18 December 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁶³ Personal and confidential letter and blind memorandum, Hoover to Berle, 9 September 1941, FBI 100-34712-8; Letter, Hoover to SAC New York, 12 September 1941, FBI 100-34712-8X; letter and FBI report, Hoover to Berle, 16 September 1941, FBI 100-34712-9.

⁶⁴ Memorandum, J. K. Mumford to Ladd, 10 October 1941, FBI 100-34712-20.

⁶⁵ Memorandum, D. A. Flinn to Ladd, 16 December 1941, FBI 100-34712-64. Hoover might even have used information obtained from a wiretap and submitted it to the Justice Department for prosecutive purposes, or used wiretap information in the development of criminal evidence. During the late 1940s this had happened with the Judith Coplon case, and it was deemed fruit of the poisonous tree and not admissible in court. See Theoharis, *Spying on Americans*, 100-106.

⁶⁶ Memorandum, D. A. Flinn to Ladd, 16 December 1941, FBI 100-34712-64; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 17 December 1941, FBI 100-34712-50; memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 18 December 1941, FBI 100-34712-6?.

⁶⁷ Personal and confidential letter and blind memorandum, Hoover to Watson, 18 December 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

⁶⁸ Memorandum, Ladd to Hoover, 19 December 1941, FBI 100-34712-98; memorandum, M. Neil Andrews to Wendell Berge, 19 December 1941, file 146-6-162, RG 60, NARA.

⁶⁹ Indictment, United States v. Laura Ingalls, 23 December 1941, Washington, D.C., file 146-6-162, RG 60, NARA.

⁷⁰ Memorandum, Nichols to Tolson, 27 January 1942, FBI 100-34712-152; memorandum, Flinn to Kramer, 3 February 1942, FBI 100-34712-138; closing report on Laura Ingalls case, M. Neil Andrews, 16 February 1942, file 146-6-162, RG 60, NARA.

⁷¹ Letter, SAC Washington, D.C. to Hoover, 11 March 1942, FBI 100-34712-175; letter, Hoover to SAC Washington, D.C., 26 March 1942, FBI 100-34712-175.

CHAPTER 8

The FBI, British Intelligence, and the Anti-interventionists, 1940-1942.

Dating from 1940, British intelligence established a relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and thereafter played a covert role in the anti-interventionist/interventionist foreign policy debate. Because of a dearth in documentation we cannot definitively ascertain the scope and nature of British intelligence operations in America. But available evidence shows that the agency dubbed British Security Coordination (BSC) sought to discredit and disrupt the political activities of Charles Lindbergh, the America First Committee, Burton Wheeler, Hamilton Fish, and others. The lack of firm documentation has also lent itself to the rise of a popular and sensational mythology surrounding the BSC's activity, and particularly the role of its leader, Sir William Stephenson. Extant evidence, however, demonstrates less heroic aspects of BSC's history, including its interest, parallel with the FBI's, in the activities of Roosevelt's foreign policy critics (indeed many of the same targets). New evidence furthermore suggests that the relationship between the FBI and British intelligence played a part, heretofore ignored in favor of other theories, in convincing President Roosevelt that the United States needed centralized intelligence.

The records of the British Security Coordination—the umbrella organization that represented the British Security Service (MI5), Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), Special Operations Executive (SOE), and Political Warfare Executive in America—reportedly were destroyed at the end of the Second World War after the organization’s official history had been written.¹ Destroying the documentary record gave BSC partisans a golden opportunity to write history their way, and to minimize the role of the FBI. Stephenson had recruited various authors including an academic, two journalists, and a short-story essayist to write an uncritical history.² This official BSC history remained classified until it was published in 1998.³ Before then, unofficial apologists dominated the literature about BSC and Stephenson. H. Montgomery Hyde—a former BSC official—published a version of the official BSC history at Stephenson’s urging entitled *The Quiet Canadian* (1962). Hyde borrowed freely from the BSC history when writing his account, which followed the original text more or less faithfully, but exaggerated Stephenson’s importance. Hyde also published a memoir of his role with BSC entitled *Secret Intelligence Agent* (1982). In 1976, with the assistance of Stephenson, Canadian journalist William Stevenson published a sensational account of Stephenson and the BSC, *A Man Called Intrepid*, which perpetuated a dewy-eyed mythology about BSC. All of these works dealt in some manner with the FBI’s relationship with BSC, but none was verifiable.⁴

While the official BSC history is not referenced—needless if BSC records were destroyed—it nevertheless presents a generally accurate account, if written in a flattering and triumphal manner, of the BSC’s work in America. To be sure, the BSC history must be used carefully. But there is no reason to doubt, beneath the

uncritical prose, the official history's general veracity. Some of the facts examined and conclusions drawn in 1945, when the history was written, can be verified or reflect perceptions about anti-interventionists that are contemporaneous to 1945. The official history, therefore, is a useful original source in understanding one aspect of the FBI's relationship with the BSC. Utilizing available archival sources, FBI files, and other varied sources, we can ascertain at least a limited understanding of the relationship between the FBI and BSC in the context of their interest in the president's foreign policy critics.

* * *

The relationship between the FBI and British intelligence dates at least to the First World War when it liaised with Sir William Wiseman, the British intelligence representative in America.⁵ During the Second World War, the FBI maintained limited and unofficial contact with Captain Sir James Paget, the British Passport Control Officer, who from 1937 was the representative for British intelligence in America. (British intelligence officials previously preferred that Paget coordinate with the State Department.)⁶ The FBI also maintained limited contact with the British Purchasing Commission. By 1940, the more influential William Stephenson replaced Paget as passport control officer. Stephenson established an intimate and official relationship with FBI Director Hoover and built his British Security Coordination organization in New York.⁷

William Stephenson was born and raised in western Canada. When the First World War commenced in August 1914, he was a student in Winnipeg but joined the military and eventually became an officer and pilot. Stephenson distinguished

himself as a fighter pilot and won various British and French commendations. Stephenson also won at this time the world amateur-lightweight boxing championship. After the war, Stephenson became a successful businessman with a variety of high-level contacts. His contacts in the steel industry, particularly in Germany, made him invaluable to the British government. He was able to provide Winston Churchill and Lieutenant Colonel Claude Dansey of SIS (who regularly sought out businessmen for intelligence purposes) information on German war preparations and munitions. After Churchill became prime minister in 1940, Stephenson was recruited by SIS and, given his high-level contacts in America—such as with the wealthy Astor family of New York who were also friends of the Roosevelts—he was selected as Britain’s intelligence representative there.⁸

Stephenson made two trips to the United States in 1940. It was during the second trip that he established himself as the British passport control officer. This first voyage to America, however, occurred in April 1940 after efforts by Hamish Mitchell, of the British Purchasing Commission, failed to establish liaison with the FBI. Mitchell sought FBI assistance to protect British war materials from saboteurs through FBI plant-protection surveys and employee name checks. The FBI and the State Department—the latter represented by Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, head of the Interdepartmental Intelligence Conference—reacted coolly to Mitchell’s proposal and no liaison was effected. (Berle later reacted unfavorably to Stephenson’s intelligence operations in the United States.)⁹

Sir Stewart Menzies, head of SIS, had recruited Stephenson to travel to the United States to establish “a high-level liaison with the Federal Bureau of

Investigation.”¹⁰ Stephenson established contact with Hoover through a mutual friend, the boxer Gene Tunney.¹¹ Yet before Hoover would establish formal ties to a foreign intelligence organization that was to operate on American soil, he demanded authorization from President Roosevelt. Berle opposed liaison with British intelligence while Hoover sought to monopolize this liaison, and so wanted to bypass State Department channels. Stephenson, given this situation, obtained Roosevelt’s imprimatur through Vincent Astor. An intimate friend of both Roosevelt and Stephenson, Astor later served as an intelligence coordinator in New York for the White House. Roosevelt, it appears, happily endorsed Stephenson’s desire for FBI liaison directing that “There should be the closest possible marriage between the FBI and British Intelligence.” Roosevelt’s approval of liaison between the FBI and BSC is confirmed by Robert E. Sherwood, former Roosevelt speechwriter and chief of the Office of War Information, who wrote in 1948: “There was, by Roosevelt’s order and despite State Department qualms, effectively close co-operation between J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI and British security services under the direction of a quiet Canadian, William Stephenson.”¹²

Stephenson, Tom Troy has ascertained, had at least one fourteen-hour meeting with Hoover to work out the details.¹³ He then returned to Great Britain and reported on his mission to establish close cooperation with the FBI. On 21 June 1940, Stephenson returned to New York City aboard the SS *Britannic* to formally build the BSC.¹⁴ As no meaningful British intelligence organization existed in New York, Stephenson had to build one. He had already made contact with Hoover, which was imperative for him to operate on American soil, but Stephenson also

maintained a number of high-level contacts in America and Canada. These individuals included William Donovan, who headed the American Office of Coordinator of Information and later the Office of Strategic Services, and British Ambassador Lord Lothian. Locating his organization in Rockefeller Center on Fifth Avenue, Stephenson was assisted by fifteen security officers and forty-five support personnel. Stephenson sought three goals for BSC: to monitor enemy activity, to prevent enemy sabotage of British property, and to promote the interventionist political position in America.¹⁵

Most important to Stephenson at this early juncture was his liaison with Hoover. The BSC history's characterization of Hoover is accurate and confirmed by recent studies of the FBI director. The BSC history describes Hoover as "in no way anti-British, but in every way pro-FBI. His job is at once his pride and his vanity. These facts are emphasized because they are fundamental to an understanding of the course of BSC's relationship with the FBI, which did not run smoothly throughout."¹⁶

Hoover, according to the BSC history, was indispensable in establishing British intelligence in America and not until just before Pearl Harbor did the FBI-BSC relationship deteriorate. The BSC history states that "Hoover could hardly have been more cooperative" in assisting Stephenson's organization from 1940. Indeed, Hoover is credited for giving British Security Coordination its name. Hoover also had invited one of Stephenson's lieutenants, H. Montgomery Hyde, to tour FBI headquarters to learn about FBI methods. The BSC history further states that Hoover permitted the BSC to use an FBI radio channel to communicate with

SIS headquarters in Great Britain. Not until early 1941 did BSC approach the FBI about establishing an independent radio transmitter. Hoover, reportedly, also ordered his agents to cooperate with BSC in every way.¹⁷

Undoubtedly, there were many interactions between the FBI and BSC. But the precise nature and scope of this relationship cannot be determined until records are released in both America and Britain. The British government has released nothing relating to BSC operations in America or its cooperation with the FBI. Only fragmentary evidence proves that liaison was effected. The FBI also has not released any unredacted FBI files on the two organizations' relationship, and will not release files without British approval. Historian Francis MacDonnell, author of *Insidious Foes: The Axis Fifth Column and the American Home Front* (1995), for example, submitted a Freedom of Information Act request to the FBI requesting access to correspondence between FBI officials and senior Roosevelt administration officials regarding BSC and Stephenson. He also requested access to correspondence between FBI officials and Stephenson. MacDonnell received hundreds of pages of documents, all of which were heavily redacted, leaving only one or two words undeleted. But the FBI also withheld hundreds of pages of documents in their entirety. Irrespective of the redactions, the FOIA request confirms that a large base of documentation exists—in this case merely reflecting inter-government correspondence—in FBI files about Stephenson and the BSC.¹⁸

Some interaction between the FBI and British intelligence can be documented. In a personal and confidential letter of 28 May 1941 to the White House, Hoover reported that “the British Intelligence Service has advised that . . .

nationwide attempts at sabotage may be expected during the Decoration Day week end.”¹⁹ The FBI’s interaction with British intelligence, moreover, suggests that Hoover may have played a part in convincing President Roosevelt of the necessity for establishing a centralized American foreign intelligence organization, a function that Hoover had hoped to secure for the FBI. Previously, credit has been given solely to William Donovan, who had made two trips to Great Britain and had submitted a report to Roosevelt on the value of centralized intelligence.²⁰ But in late 1940 and extending into 1941, representatives of the FBI visited Great Britain, surveyed its intelligence apparatus, and Hoover submitted a report (in March) to Roosevelt that pre-dated Donovan’s (in April).

The official BSC history states that Stephenson “afforded him [Hoover] opportunity for studying the organizational prerequisites of secret intelligence work.” Stephenson supposedly “made arrangements in the autumn of 1940 for two of Hoover’s senior officers to visit SIS headquarters.”²¹ Two representatives of the FBI indeed traveled to Great Britain in the autumn of 1940, but only one was a senior FBI official, Hugh H. Clegg—assistant director of the Training and Inspection Division. The other, Lawrence Hince, was an FBI agent who had volunteered to serve as Clegg’s assistant. Whether Stephenson alone had arranged for the trip, as the BSC history suggests, cannot be confirmed, but it is conceivable that he had some hand in the arrangements. FBI records indicate that the FBI’s mission was “to make a survey not only of intelligence matters but all matters dealing with functions of police in times of national emergency.”²²

On 30 October Assistant Secretary of State Berle, Roosevelt's interdepartmental intelligence coordinator, approved the FBI mission to Great Britain.²³ Early in November the State Department issued passports to the two FBI men and at 1:00 AM on 23 November they departed Washington for Jersey City. In New Jersey, as no space was available on the clipper ships to London, they boarded the American Export Line ship *Excalibur* for Lisbon, Portugal, whence they traveled to London. Arriving in London on 1 December, Clegg and Hince proceeded, in the words of Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, "to study methods of handling intelligence and internal security."²⁴

Clegg and Hince studied British intelligence for two months, departing London at the end of January 1941. The two FBI representatives had access to high-level British intelligence officials, permitting them to study the organization and methods of the Secret Intelligence Service, Security Service, and Government Code and Cypher School. In making periodic reports to Hoover, Clegg used the State Department's confidential code. One decoded cable to Hoover outlined the broad survey of Clegg's and Hince's inquiry. They had examined in detail British intelligence and counterintelligence, censorship, evacuation, air-raid defense, policing methods, handling of foreign nationals, industrial and plant protection, the communication of intelligence, conscription investigations, emergency custodial detention, Fifth Column investigations, and various civilian defense and emergency procedures.²⁵

The official history of British intelligence during the Second World War indicates that Clegg and Hince, who are unnamed in the history, "In February 1941

[sic] . . . were received as pupils at SIS's London office." There, they were able to scrutinize the British effort in deciphering Axis codes.²⁶ Historian Bradley F. Smith concluded that the FBI mission to Great Britain led to a closer relationship between the FBI and SIS, resulting in FBI agents being permanently attached to SIS. This relationship, however, according to Smith, resulted not in an increased understanding between American and British cryptanalytic officials but to further misunderstandings that had plagued the early cryptanalytic intelligence relationship between the two allies. But whatever the effects the mission had on cryptography, it nevertheless confirms the increasingly intimate relationship established between the FBI and various elements of British intelligence.²⁷

In addition to having contact with high-level British intelligence officials, Clegg and Hince were present when in January 1941 President Roosevelt despatched Harry Hopkins, an intimate advisor, to Great Britain in an effort to cement British and American relations. The president and Churchill had been at odds inasmuch as the prime minister did not know, in the days just prior to the formulation of the lend-lease policy, what Roosevelt's precise intentions were. Hopkins spent five weeks in Great Britain helping to foster intimate relations between Roosevelt and Churchill, a task he succeeded in accomplishing. In London, Hopkins met with a variety of government officials, many times dining with them. It was at one such occasion, a dinner Lord Beaverbrook, minister of aircraft production, hosted for Hopkins at the Claridge Hotel, that Hopkins came into contact with Clegg and Hince. The two FBI representatives observed the success with which Hopkins presented himself and charmed his hosts and reported this information to Hoover. The FBI director, in

turn, forwarded a report to the White House regarding Hopkins's success at this particular dinner party.²⁸

Before their return to Washington, Clegg and Hince cabled a preliminary report to Hoover on the results of their inquiry. In their opinion, the FBI representatives reported:

Examination and observation in detail here demonstrate that your [Hoover's] investigation for national defense covering sabotage, plant survey, espionage, and methods of dealing with suspects, are far superior [than British efforts], and follow effective programs and policies, as successful results show here. Nevertheless, the authorities here would consider it absolutely necessary that the Bureau should have control of the border and port examination stations which control the arrival of suspects and aliens.²⁹

Clegg and Hince might have regarded the FBI's work in domestic national security cases as superior to that in Great Britain, but their mission had led to greater liaison and understanding between American and British intelligence organizations. Moreover, Clegg and Hince had learned much about the organization and operations of MI5, SIS, and British cryptography. Upon their return to the United States, Hoover collected this information in two memoranda and forwarded them to the White House.

Hoover forwarded the first report on 5 March and the second the following day. In the first document, Hoover outlined information "obtained from high ranking officials of the British intelligence services" regarding economic warfare and readjustment. The memorandum described British plans to disrupt Axis lines of supply, steel production, foodstuffs, fuel supplies, and other vital war materials. The British had hoped, Hoover continued, to effect economic disruption through legislative, diplomatic, and military means. Their ultimate goal, however, according

to Hoover, was “to be in a position at the end of the war to organize the world, particularly Europe, on an economic basis for the purposes of rehabilitation, profit, and the prevention of the spread of Communism.”³⁰

Hoover’s second memorandum to the White House outlined for the president “the intelligence organizations and methods of the British.” Hoover’s report critically examined, in particular, the British Security Service. He noted the size of the service and its primary weakness: MI5 had no supervision over the police organizations that conducted their investigations. Hoover praised the service’s duplication of its files which, he noted, had already ensured their survival when the London office had been bombed. But, he reported, Clegg and Hince had discovered “while reviewing the files of the Security Service” that the organization’s lack of control over the police had led to many delayed and inadequate investigations. Plant security surveys also proved inadequate to Hoover who cited the British devotion of three hours to a survey whereas FBI agents conducted them over days or weeks. Hoover also described the Security Service’s use of agents, both undercover and official, to monitor suspicious groups and individuals as well as its maintenance of watch lists. Lastly, Hoover surveyed the organization’s use of wiretaps, mail covers, hidden cameras, and other means to monitor foreign diplomatic agents.³¹

The second half of this memorandum outlined the organization and general activity of the British foreign intelligence organization, the Secret Intelligence Service. Hoover noted that British officials believed that if the Security Service and SIS were combined, a more effective organization would be had. As a separate organization, however, Hoover outlined for Roosevelt the SIS’s nature. The British

government did not officially acknowledge the existence of the SIS, Hoover wrote, yet its appropriation was \$14,000,000. Hoover then described the intelligence role of station chiefs, contacts with foreign police forces, military observers, the role of wireless stations, and the cover of passport control officers (the cover Stephenson employed). Then, Hoover outlined the general counterespionage tactics SIS used in foreign countries from surveillance to microphones. Lastly, Hoover noted the ease, as compared to the US, with which the SIS employed sensitive investigative techniques such as mail covers, the interception of wireless transmissions, wiretaps, and the interception of telegrams or cables.³²

Clegg's and Hince's survey mission to Great Britain and Hoover's report to the White House on British intelligence predated the better-known William Donovan mission to London and subsequent report to Roosevelt that is generally credited with convincing him to create a central foreign intelligence organization. Donovan had made two trips to London, the first in July 1940 at the behest of the White House to survey the Fifth Column situation and the state of British defenses. He again traveled to London as part of a wider tour of Europe and the Middle East from December 1940 to March 1941. Donovan's mission was to ascertain the economic, military, and political situation in the Mediterranean region. In London, at the conclusion of his tour, and before returning to the United States, Donovan made a survey of British intelligence—in particular the SIS and SOE—and consulted with the British-intelligence chiefs.³³

Back in Washington, Donovan wrote a four-page memorandum in April describing “the instrumentality through which the British Government gathers its

intelligence.”³⁴ He wrote that the United States should create a foreign intelligence organization using the British system as a guide. He suggested it should be controlled by the president, be secretly funded, and be the only organization to collect foreign intelligence. Later, Donovan visited the White House and personally advocated the creation of such an agency which Roosevelt eventually acceded to in July 1941 creating the Office of Coordinator of Information (COI) and placing Donovan at its charge. The COI was directly responsible to the president and served to coordinate foreign intelligence. But in June 1942 COI was reconfigured to become the Office of Strategic Services whose mission was widened to the collection of foreign intelligence and special operations.³⁵

Hoover’s report to the White House, dated 6 March 1941, had outlined the organization and methods of both the Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service. Donovan’s memorandum arrived a month later and, in essence, reflected the same information as Hoover’s memorandum. It is conceivable that the Clegg and Hince mission to Great Britain in 1940-41—predating Donovan’s second and most recognized trip to London to survey British intelligence—and Hoover’s report to the White House on their activities may have *contributed* to convincing Roosevelt to establish an American foreign-intelligence apparatus, the COI. Hoover, it should be noted, in addition to establishing the FBI as the sole American domestic-intelligence organization, had an interest in expanding the FBI’s role to include foreign intelligence and operations. At the president’s request, Hoover had already created in the FBI a Special Intelligence Service that operated in Central and South America to fight German espionage and to collect economic and political

intelligence that was “encyclopedic in scope,”³⁶ and he had hoped to enlarge this role. Hoover failed in this bid, but not for want of trying.³⁷ The important point to be made, however, is that convincing Roosevelt to establish a central foreign intelligence apparatus resulted not from one man’s mission to London and subsequent report, but from multiple sources. The issue, which involved much inter-agency competition, is encapsulated in an FBI memorandum dated 29 November 1941. According to the document, Donovan had a meeting with Clegg in 1941 where he mentioned his last encounter with him over Christmas-day breakfast in London in 1940. Donovan told Clegg that he was proud for having helped “to pave the way in England for FBI representatives to obtain valuable information concerning most confidential matters.” On the bottom of the memorandum Hoover penned: “If I recall correctly I think we were there before the Colonel arrived.”³⁸

* * *

In its official history, the BSC claimed that the America First Committee had legitimate origins but then degenerated into “a pro-German association.”³⁹ In 1941 this viewpoint was a common perception. FBI officials also believed America First had evolved into a pro-Nazi group.⁴⁰ The BSC’s assessment of America First further claimed that the group “appealed to pacifists, haters of Roosevelt, haters of Great Britain, anti-Communists, anti-Semites, admirers of Germany, American imperialists, devotees of big business, and those who hated Europe.”⁴¹ While the America First Committee had some members who variously fit these criteria, it was not a pacifist organization and the Committee worked to exclude extreme elements from its ranks. Yet the BSC opinion of the Committee’s makeup corresponds with

the contemporary interventionist opinion of America First. This confirms that the information contained in the official BSC history, while self-aggrandizing, is accurate inasmuch as it reflects how contemporary interventionists regarded anti-interventionist political activity.⁴²

Other aspects about the America First Committee are inaccurate in the official BSC history, but reflect contemporary assumptions regarding the organization. According to the BSC, the America First Committee had in early 1941 seven hundred chapters and nearly one million members. Historian Justus Doenecke, a leading scholar of the anti-interventionist movement, has calculated America First numbers at 450 chapters and 800,000 members. The BSC history also claims that in 1941 Charles Lindbergh had emerged as the Committee's leader. While Lindbergh may have been the Committee's most popular and controversial speaker and member, he was not its leader. Other views of America First contained in the BSC history include a belief that it had been infiltrated by German agents who then turned the group "more openly anti-British and pro-German." As evidence, the history cites a speech Lindbergh had given just prior to Pearl Harbor where he pointed out three war-agitating groups: the British, the Jews, and the White House. These examples illustrate contemporary interventionist viewpoints, many of which were also held by FBI officials, that are reflected in the official BSC history.⁴³

Given that the America First Committee was considered a dangerous organization, BSC head Stephenson is said to have "perceived the potential menace of the America First Committee." To deal with the threat, Stephenson had "despatched [agents] to each part of the country to attend its meetings, to keep track

of its new members and to ponder upon new and effective ways of instigating counter-propaganda.”⁴⁴ There is no documentation to confirm the claim that BSC agents, like FBI agents, were used to monitor the America First Committee, but there is no reason to doubt it. One British goal was to bring the United States into the war as quickly as possible and a powerful anti-interventionist group, such as America First, opposed that end. What must carefully be analyzed, however, are the claims made in the BSC history (and elsewhere) regarding BSC tactics to disrupt the America First Committee.

The BSC, according to its history, took three avenues of attack against the America First Committee. BSC tactics involved using the press to charge America First of having ties with Germany, cooperating with interventionist groups, and developing information about the alleged illegal activities of the Committee. It is conceivable that the BSC may have had access to sympathetic newspapers or liaised with them via a third party, but no direct evidence confirms this. It has been established that at least one interventionist group had access to British officials, as will be seen below, but the extent of BSC efforts to develop incriminating information to use against the America First Committee is unknown.

One interventionist organization, the Fight For Freedom Committee, sought out and maintained a relationship with British officials. When Fight For Freedom was formed in 1940, one of its principal members—Dr. Henry Pitt Van Dusen, a theology professor at the Union Theological Seminary and graduate of Edinburgh University—sought liaison with the British embassy. With the assistance of Aubrey Morgan, a British official from the British Information Service in New York, Van

Dusen contacted Ambassador Lord Lothian. Van Dusen and Lothian agreed that Fight For Freedom would work with the assistance of the British embassy.⁴⁵

Historian Mark Lincoln Chadwin has found that the Fight For Freedom Committee acted as a liaison between the British embassy and British Information Service and the interventionist press. Van Dusen's close cooperation with the British embassy, in helping them to distribute British propaganda to the press, was a violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Fight For Freedom, by the letter of the law, had acted as an agent of foreign power. Indeed, Laura Ingalls had successfully been prosecuted under this law for accepting money and propaganda from the German embassy. It was unlikely, however, that Fight For Freedom would have been prosecuted as its interests were in line with the administration's foreign policy goals.⁴⁶

As Fight For Freedom served as a liaison between, particularly, the British Information Service and the interventionist press, it is possible that BSC was involved (perhaps secretly). The British Information Service was headquartered, like the BSC, in Rockefeller Center suggesting that the two organizations had ties. It is conceivable that the BSC cooperated with the information service to forward pro-Allied information to the interventionist press.

The BSC history described one example of press cooperation involving Congressman Hamilton Fish. The BSC history claims that British agents were involved in obtaining and publicizing the checks Fish had allegedly received from the German businessman G. Hansen-Sturm. The FBI had looked into the matter in 1942 (see chapter 5), interviewing Henry Hoke who was involved in revealing the

story. Hoke, the BSC history claims, had cooperated with BSC in another matter “as an American friend.” It is possible that Hoke had received the information about the checks from BSC and offered it to the committee formed to oppose the re-election of Fish; this committee brought the matter to the attention of the White House who then involved the FBI. Yet there is no supporting documentary evidence to confirm this supposition.⁴⁷

The BSC history further claims that BSC persuaded Fight For Freedom to attend a speech Senator Gerald Nye delivered in Boston on September 1941 where the group distributed leaflets accusing him of being a Nazi appeaser. BSC also credited itself for having Fight For Freedom buy advertising space in a Boston newspaper stating the same, as well as persuading local radio stations to deny Nye air time. The BSC prompted Fight For Freedom, according to the BSC history, to target Congressman Fish. Fish had delivered a speech in Milwaukee and during his concluding remarks somebody handed him a note stating: “Der Fuehrer thanks you for your loyalty.” Newspaper photographers captured the scene and published it. These examples, according to the BSC history, were representative of the BSC’s “more direct action” against the America First Committee and its speakers.⁴⁸

The BSC history recounts one failed attempt at “direct action,” however. At a 30 October 1941 America First rally at Madison Square Garden, BSC agents targeted speaker Charles Lindbergh. BSC agents created duplicate tickets to fill the America First crowd with interventionists, particularly Fight For Freedom members. Some interventionists were to arrive early and others later to disrupt the seating of legitimate America-First ticket holders. Unfortunately for the BSC, attendance at

the rally was low and the illegitimate attendees were seated in vacant seats thereby increasing the rally's already low attendance. Historian Michele Flynn Stenehjem has discovered that John T. Flynn of the New York America First Chapter directed that the tickets for the rally be specially stamped. By stamping the tickets prior to their distribution, according to Stenehjem, illegitimate ticket holders were ushered to an out-of-way section of Madison Square Garden.⁴⁹

There is no verifiable evidence to prove that the BSC had persuaded or directed Fight For Freedom (or other interventionist groups) to disrupt America First Committee rallies. It is possible that BSC sought to influence this type of behavior, but it is equally possible that these groups employed disruptive tactics without prompting. In his book *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-44*, Thomas Mahl claims that the Fight For Freedom Committee was, in fact, a front for BSC. He further argues that Henry Hoke (among many others) was a BSC agent. Mahl provides no evidence beyond speculation to support his contentions, reflecting the persistence of the mythology surrounding the activities of British intelligence in America. Fight For Freedom indeed had contacts with British representatives, but it does not follow that they were a front organization. Until verifiable documentation is available, all that can be concluded is that BSC played a role—the scope as yet undefined—in attempting to disrupt the America First Committee.⁵⁰

In another matter that also had interested FBI officials, the BSC history claims that an “American friend” and BSC agents had revealed the abuse of the congressional frank involving Senators Wheeler, Nye, and Congressman Fish.

While the BSC history does not name the “American friend,” the relevant paragraph in the history leaves no doubt the person alluded to is Henry Hoke (see chapter 5):

For this campaign [revealing the congressional franking abuse], the cooperation of an American friend was enlisted. He worked on his own, in his own time and with his own money, while BSC provided him with information, guidance and extra funds. By profession he was a ‘direct mail advertising specialist’. His clients consisted of those commercial companies who wished to be told about new and better methods of advertising by mail.⁵¹

The official BSC history suggests that after Hoke developed the franking information BSC agents more thoroughly probed the issue. The agents allegedly discovered that mailing lists from the German Library of Information and a particular type of addressing machine had been used. The BSC history then claims that agents investigated and discovered that George Hill and George Sylvester Viereck headed the propaganda campaign. Whether BSC agents had actually played a leading role in this episode is unknown, but it appears that their alleged efforts may not have been predominant. Hoke investigated and pushed the issue, particularly with Senator Wheeler, and even the BSC history admits that he had worked on his own with, perhaps, limited assistance from the BSC. After Hoke had publicized the issue, in September 1941 a federal grand jury was convened to investigate the issue. Concurrently, *Washington Post* reporter Dillard Stokes investigated on his own and wrote a series of sensational stories about the franking operation. The Fight For Freedom Committee also pressed the issue.

All that the BSC history lays claim to regarding the frank is found in the above sources, leading one to the conclusion that the BSC history exaggerates its role. It is probable, however, that BSC had an interest in the franking issue and may have lent some type of support to Hoke, but others clearly had the issue in hand and

successfully pushed the case. The most sensational claim in the BSC history, however, is that in its effort the BSC had unraveled Fish's political career. The history claims that because the franking story had made its way into a book published during Fish's 1944 re-election campaign, and as his political opponents had used it, Fish's political career had been destroyed. As the BSC history states, Fish "attributed his defeat to Reds and Communists. He might—with more accuracy—have blamed BSC." This claim seems unreasonable given the variety of groups and individuals who pressed the franking issue and attacked Fish.⁵²

One claim concerning BSC activity and the anti-interventionists that is bogus involved the leak of the Victory Program (see chapter 6) to the *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Times-Herald*. Not mentioned in the official BSC history, the account of the BSC's role in the Victory Program leak appeared in William Stevenson's *A Man Called Intrepid*, the sensational account of BSC head William Stephenson and his organization. Stevenson claims in *A Man Called Intrepid* that Senator Wheeler was, indeed, the person who had leaked the Victory Program to the anti-interventionist press, believing it to be the smoking-gun evidence with which Roosevelt had intended to lead America into war. Further, Stevenson claims that to the Germans, revelation of the Victory Program was a "fantastic intelligence coup." Yet, Stevenson writes, in reality the Victory Program was a "plant," a creation of the BSC's Political-Warfare Division. The Victory Program, according to this account, was pieced together "out of material already known to have reached the enemy in dribs and drabs, and . . . some misleading information."⁵³

With the United States on the verge of war with Japan in late November 1941, BSC allegedly slipped the phony Victory Program to Senator Wheeler via a young military officer. The BSC's goal was to have Wheeler publicize the plan and thereby goad Hitler into declaring war on the United States. The faked Victory Program was to stand as evidence, once publicized in the press, of Roosevelt's intention to wage war on Nazi Germany. According to Stevenson, the leak successfully led Hitler to declare war on the United States on 11 December 1941 and was the vehicle to that end.⁵⁴

This account of the BSC's alleged role in creating and slipping the Victory Program to the unwitting Wheeler who, in turn, had it published and brought the United States to war with Germany is erroneous. The Victory Program was a genuine War Department contingency plan drawn up under the direction of Albert Wedemeyer. When it was leaked to Wheeler and subsequently published in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Washington Times-Herald* on 4 December 1941, an intensive FBI investigation ensued to discover who had leaked the sensitive document (see chapter 6). Any notion that the Victory Program was a bogus document concocted by BSC is fiction.

But some continue to press the notion that the Victory Program was intended to incite Hitler into declaring war on the United States. Thomas Fleming, in his recent book *The New Dealers' War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Within World War II*, accepts that the Victory Program was genuine. Yet he believes that Roosevelt intentionally leaked the Victory Program to Wheeler, sensing imminent war with Japan, to goad Hitler into declaring war and thereby achieving for

Roosevelt the realization of his Europe-first policy. Conceding that “there is no absolute proof” to support his claim, Fleming nevertheless believes the charge “fits the devious side of Franklin Roosevelt’s complex personality.” Fleming offers no verifiable evidence that supports his case.⁵⁵

Irrespective of the FBI’s and BSC’s interest in the Victory Program leak of 4 December 1941, the two organizations’ relationship began to falter at this time. FBI and BSC relations began to deteriorate just prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the origin of this deterioration was bureaucratic. Hoover had successfully established FBI primacy in domestic intelligence matters and he sought the same in the field of foreign intelligence. Obstructing this goal, however, was William Donovan. Donovan had previous experience in intelligence and, more importantly, maintained contacts with influential persons such as Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, President Roosevelt, and William Stephenson. With these contacts, Donovan was in a strong position to establish for himself a leading role in American foreign intelligence. A 31 July 1941 FBI memorandum notes Hoover’s concern following the colonel’s appointment to head the COI. Hoover acquired information from informant Henry Grunewald about congressional opposition to Donovan’s appointment. According to Grunewald, Hoover had congressional support to head COI but the other intelligence agencies, who were “jealous of Hoover and the Bureau,” opposed him.⁵⁶

While liaison with Hoover was vital for Stephenson in 1940, his mission also required him to establish relations with other high-level administration officials. This resulted in a new and perhaps more intimate relationship between Stephenson

and Donovan than on which Hoover would have approved. It was this relationship, in light of Hoover's quest for a foreign intelligence role for the FBI, that led to a deterioration of FBI-BSC relations inasmuch as Hoover no longer maintained exclusive liaison with BSC. The COI-BSC relationship threatened Hoover's foreign intelligence goal because Donovan was Hoover's primary competitor in running foreign intelligence.

The official BSC history suggests that Hoover "resented Donovan's organization [COI] when it was first established because he feared that its interests would clash with the authority of the FBI, particularly in Latin America." Hoover, thereby, "attacked" BSC because it was Donovan's "mainstay" in keeping COI operational. Hoover's resentment of BSC at this juncture appears to extend beyond the FBI's already established authority and its operations in Latin America. The deterioration was bureaucratic inasmuch as the FBI no longer monopolized the BSC relationship and it was this that threatened Hoover's desire to extend the FBI further in foreign intelligence. The BSC history also suggests this, stating: "Basic to them all [Hoover's attempts to embarrass BSC] was his resentment that the FBI no longer had a monopoly of collaboration with British Intelligence." If Hoover were to involve the FBI in foreign intelligence beyond Latin America, he would have needed the support (he had the liaison) with British intelligence. Hoover's hope that the FBI would assume a greater foreign intelligence role—beyond that which it had already established in Latin America—over a limited concern with COI and Latin America, is the most likely explanation for the worsening FBI-BSC relations.⁵⁷

According to the BSC history, Hoover's rift with BSC lasted a year and a half. The history further states that the FBI director's displeasure with BSC was not openly stated but expressed behind the scenes, yet another accurate Hoover characteristic. Just how Hoover sought "to embarrass BSC" is not explained in the official history because the story "would be merely tedious and probably misleading." But the official history does suggest that one example of misunderstanding between Hoover and BSC was over a time-lag in providing the FBI with up-to-date intelligence on Latin America, where Hoover's SIS was operating. Apparently considerable time passed when transferring intelligence from Latin America to London to the FBI, and Hoover believed that BSC had purposefully withheld information from the FBI. Commenting on Hoover's character, the official history observes correctly that he "is the kind of man who does not bow easily to the inevitable—that is at once his strength and his weakness—and it took a long while to convince him that he could not succeed in his determination to exclude BSC from contact with other US Intelligence agencies." While we may not know the exact details of this rift, the BSC history states that Hoover eventually accepted the BSC's liaison with other agencies and held no "bitterness" toward BSC.⁵⁸

* * *

Our understanding of the precise nature and scope of the FBI's liaison with British Security Coordination (and more broadly with British intelligence) remains limited. Until the British and American governments release more substantial documentation we will have only an incomplete understanding of the agencies'

relationship. Yet a paucity of evidence does not preclude an analysis of the FBI's and BSC's interest in the anti-interventionists. Evidence exists, particularly in the form of the BSC's official history, which hints at the BSC's role in disrupting the activities of the America First Committee, Charles Lindbergh, Hamilton Fish, Gerald Nye, and others. The official history offers neither a complete nor a detailed analysis, and despite its sometimes misleading nature and triumphal tone, it should not be dismissed out of hand. Many of the events discussed in the official history, which was written in 1945 and only published in 1998, had in fact occurred. The history also reflects popular assumptions and perceptions about the anti-interventionists dating from 1940 by those who advocated intervention. It therefore has some value to the analysis of BSC's interest in Roosevelt's critics because one can ascertain the BSC's, and thereby British intelligence's, view of anti-interventionists and gain a limited insight into how they dealt with them.

Independent sources establish the veracity of some information contained in the official BSC history. Robert Sherwood's 1948 memoir corroborates the official history's claim that Roosevelt had directed the FBI to maintain close cooperation with the BSC. Further, state department documents and FBI files confirm that two FBI representatives traveled to Great Britain to study its intelligence methods, a claim (if vague in detail) made in the official BSC history. Independent sources—Adolf Berle's diary and H. Montgomery Hyde's memoir—also establish that the FBI permitted the BSC to use its wireless transmitter to contact superiors in London. The history's description of Hoover's personality and priorities, too, is accurate and confirmed by recent academic biographies of the FBI director.

Some contemporary perceptions and biases about anti-interventionists in the official BSC history are also borne out. While these perceptions are factually inaccurate, they reflect assumptions BSC officials made about anti-interventionists. The history suggests, for example, that the America First Committee was originally organized as a legitimate pressure group but degenerated through time into a pro-German outfit. FBI officials (as well as some prominent interventionists) also held this view. Further, the BSC history's view of the America First Committee's composition reflects popular perceptions of the organization. Interventionists believed that the Committee fostered pacifists, fascists, and anti-Semites despite America First's concerted effort to exclude these elements from its ranks. Other perceptions of America First reflected in the BSC history involve its leadership. Many Americans in 1941 mistakenly believed that Charles Lindbergh singularly led the Committee during its existence, yet the famous aviator was only a member and popular (if controversial) speaker for America First.

BSC efforts to disrupt the anti-interventionists and its involvement in the congressional franking scandal, as elucidated in the BSC history, must be critically examined. The official history claims that BSC maintained links with the interventionist press and interventionist pressure groups to discredit and disrupt anti-interventionists, but the nature and scope of these links are not clear. One historian has already established that the Fight For Freedom Committee maintained a relationship with British officials and acted for them as a conduit to the interventionist press. The BSC history, moreover, claims that BSC maintained a relationship with Fight For Freedom, but the nature of the relationship is not

elaborated upon. It seems likely that the BSC may have used its contact with Fight For Freedom as a conduit to the interventionist press. Yet it is not clear how BSC maintained a link with Fight For Freedom. It seems possible that the relationship may have been covert. Historian Mark Lincoln Chadwin has documented that Fight For Freedom had links with British officials but nowhere does he mention British intelligence. It is possible that BSC used a third party, such as the British Information Service or the British embassy, as its link to Fight For Freedom. (This covert link may have been pragmatic, as a means of passing information, rather than manipulative.) And thus the BSC history, in its triumphal tone, claims that Fight For Freedom's tactics were, in fact, the BSC's.

The BSC's involvement in the congressional franking case also appears to be exaggerated. Henry Hoke, the "friend" of BSC, may have had contacts with BSC in his efforts to publicize the abuse of the frank. Thomas Mahl assumes that Hoke was a BSC "agent," but there is no evidence to substantiate this claim. Furthermore, the BSC history's claim that its agents had developed the case, assisted the U.S. federal prosecutor, and publicized it seems overstated. The Fight For Freedom Committee, journalists, a federal grand jury, and others developed and publicized information about the franking abuse and Congressman Fish. While the BSC probably worked to develop information which could have been used to discredit anti-interventionists, their efforts as outlined in the history seem to have only replicated or complemented the efforts of others.

What conclusions can be drawn regarding the FBI's and BSC's relationship during the interventionist/anti-interventionist foreign policy debate? Clearly there

was close liaison between the two organizations and they both sought to develop information on President Roosevelt's foreign policy critics. Indeed, Edwin Webster of the America First Committee's New York Chapter wrote Senator Nye in October 1941 with concerns that "a British agency [sought] to frame the America First Committee and discredit them." He feared the British goal was to call America First "to account for subversive activities."⁵⁹ But a dearth in documentation prevents a complete understanding of the scope and nature of this relationship. Further, their relationship broke down over bureaucratic infighting regarding American foreign intelligence and intelligence liaison. Hoover sought to create a foreign intelligence role for the FBI but had competition with Donovan who, with high-ranking and influential contacts and being a member of Roosevelt's social circle (Hoover was a social introvert), was in a better position to secure the job for himself. Stephenson and BSC suffered Hoover's resentment thereafter when Donovan established liaison with British intelligence. This was a roadblock that hindered Hoover's desire to enter into foreign intelligence and thereby led to a breakdown in FBI-BSC relations.

The FBI's development of a close working relationship with British intelligence further reflects its role in the growing national security apparatus. Dating from 1940 and extending into the Cold War era, the FBI's relationship with British intelligence increased to become part of what has been termed the "special intelligence relationship" between the British and American governments. This early liaison, therefore, reflects one aspect of the FBI's origins as part of the later national security state. It was from this foundation, laid during the pre-war period and in the context of the interventionist/anti-interventionist foreign policy debate,

that the FBI developed into a more intrusive and internationally connected national security agency.⁶⁰

NOTES

¹ On the writing of the official BSC history and destruction of its records see David Stafford, *Camp X: SOE and the American Connection* (London: Viking, 1986), 251-57.

² David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (London: Little, Brown, and Co., 1999), 157-8.

³ *British Security Coordination: The Secret History of British Intelligence in the Americas, 1940-45* (London: St. Ermin's Press, 1998). Hereafter cited as *British Security Coordination*.

⁴ H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Quiet Canadian: The Secret Service Story of Sir William Stephenson* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962). This book was published in the United States as *Room 3603: The Story of the British Intelligence Center in New York during World War II* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Co., 1963). Hyde, *Secret Intelligence Agent* (New York: St. Martin's, 1982); William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid: The Secret War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976). In 1978 the FBI reviewed Stevenson's book and observed that its "greatest flaws lie in its historical exaggeration, adulatory portrait of INTREPID (in heroic, superhuman proportions) and certain factual inaccuracies." Secret Supplemental Book Review, R. J. Gray, Jr. to W. O. Cregar, 22 August 1978, FBI 105-25621-9

⁵ See W. B. Fowler, *British-American Relations, 1917-1918: The Role of Sir William Wiseman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁶ Letter, Vincent Astor to Franklin Roosevelt, 18 April 1940, President's Secretary's File—Vincent Astor, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library [FDRL], Hyde Park, New York.

⁷ Nigel West, "Introduction," in *British Security Coordination; Thomas Troy, Wild Bill and Intrepid: Donovan, Stephenson, and the Origin of CIA* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 36.

⁸ Biographical information on Stephenson can be found in Hyde, *Room 3603*, 5-24. See also J. L. Granatstein and David Stafford, *Spy Wars: Espionage and Canada from Gouzenko to Glasnost* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 77-78.

⁹ Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid*, 36-37.

¹⁰ *British Security Coordination*, xxv.

¹¹ Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid*, 39; Hyde, *Secret Intelligent Agent*, 82.

¹² *British Security Coordination*, xxv. The official BSC history does not identify Astor by name. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper's, 1948), 270. Hyde borrowed the phrase "quiet Canadian" from Sherwood. On the Roosevelt-Astor intelligence relationship see Jeffrey M. Dorwart, "The Roosevelt-Astor Espionage Ring," *New York History* (July 1981): 307-22.

¹³ Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid*, 34.

¹⁴ Letter, British Ambassador to U.S. Secretary of State, 15 June 1940, State Department Central Files, Record Group 59, 702.4111/1608, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]; letter, assistant to the treasury secretary to secretary of state, 19 June 1940, RG 59, 702.4111/1608, NARA.

¹⁵ Memorandum, Winthrop Crane to Adolf Berle, 29 November 1941, RG 59, 800.01B11 registration/1140, NARA; letter and list of BSC employees, Crane to Gordon, 12 February 1941, RG 59, 800.01B11 registration/1209, NARA; letter, R. L. Bannerman to Clark, 6 February 1941, RG 59, 841.01B11/191, NARA; letter, Berle to Sumner Welles, 31 March 1941, RG 59, 841.20211/23, NARA; *British Security Coordination*, xxvi-xxviii.

¹⁶ *British Security Coordination*, 3. For Hoover's character see Athan Theoharis, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Free Press, 1987); Curt Gentry, *J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets* (New York: Norton, 1991).

¹⁷ *British Security Coordination*, 3-4; memorandum for file, Adolf A. Berle, 3 September 1941, Adolf Berle diary, 2:110 (microfilm ed., reel 3); Hyde, *Secret Intelligence Agent*, 82-84, 184, 203.

¹⁸ Email, Francis MacDonnell to Douglas M. Charles, 4 July 1999; email, Francis MacDonnell to Douglas M. Charles, 2 August 1999.

¹⁹ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 28 May 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.

²⁰ See Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), 100; Arthur Darling, *The Central Intelligence Agency: An Instrument of Government, to 1950* (University Park: Penn State Press, 1990); Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA* (Frederick, MD: University Press of America, 1981), 40; Stewart Alsop and Thomas Braden, *Sub Rosa: The OSS and American Espionage*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 9-17; Allen W. Dulles, *The Secret Surrender* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 4-9; Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, *The Real CIA* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 14-17.

²¹ *British Security Coordination*, 4.

²² Memorandum, Hoover to Tolson, Clegg, and Tamm, 12 November 1940, FBI 66-HQ-2047; memorandum, Hince to Hoover, 6 November 1940, FBI 67-11757-264.

²³ Letter, Justice Department to Adolf A. Berle, 30 October 1940, RG 59, 102.31/168, NARA. This document is missing in the State Department Decimal File, but see summary in RG 59 Purport List, reel 973-436.

²⁴ Letter, Hoover to Ruth Shipley, Chief of Passport Division, State Department, 13 November 1940, FBI 67-6524-435; letter, Hoover to Shipley, 8 November 1940, FBI 67-11757-265; memorandum, Clegg to Hoover 18 November 1940, FBI 66-2047-1449; memorandum, Clegg to Hoover, 22 November 1940, FBI 66-2047-1450; Strictly confidential telegram, Sumner Welles to American Legation, Lisbon, 20 November 1940, RG 59, 102.31/178A, NARA.

²⁵ Telegram, Clegg and Hince to Hoover, 20 January 1941, RG 59, 102.31/191, NARA; memorandum, S. J. Tracy to Hoover, 14 January 1941, FBI 66-2047-1459.

²⁶ F. H. Hinsley, *et al.*, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, vol. 1 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1979), 313.

²⁷ Bradley F. Smith, *The Ultra-Magic Deals and the Most Secret Special Relationship, 1940-1946* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1992), 55.

²⁸ David Stafford, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Men of Secrets* (London: Little, Brown, and Co., 1999), 48-50; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, 248-50.

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- ²⁹ Letter and paraphrase of Clegg and Hince telegram, Berle to Hoover, 21 January 1940, FBI 66-2047-1458; telegram, Clegg and Hince to Hoover, 20 January 1940, RG 59, 102.31/192, NARA.
- ³⁰ Personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Watson, 5 March 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL; blind memorandum, 3 March 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ³¹ Personal and confidential letter and memorandum, Hoover to Watson, 6 March 1941, Official File 10-B, FDRL.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid*, 48-61; 77-92.
- ³⁴ As quoted in Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid*, 115.
- ³⁵ Troy, *Wild Bill and Intrepid*, 115-133.
- ³⁶ Memorandum, Sherman Miles, head of MID, to Hoover, 23 July 1940, War Department files, Records of the Special and General Staffs, RG 165, 9794-186B/3, NARA; personal and confidential letter, Hoover to Miles, 3 August 1940, RG 165, 9794-186B/4, NARA.
- ³⁷ Theoharis, *The Boss*, 186-191. See also John Bratzel and Leslie Rout, *The Shadow War: German Espionage and U.S. Counterespionage in Latin America during World War II* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1989).
- ³⁸ Memorandum for the director, 29 November 1941, FBI 62-64427-76.
- ³⁹ *British Security Coordination*, 71-72.
- ⁴⁰ Report, SAC Washington, DC to FBI HQ, 26 May 1942, FBI 100-4712-384.
- ⁴¹ *British Security Coordination*, 72.
- ⁴² For the contemporary interventionist view of America First see circular-letter, Henry W. Hobson, 3 November 1941, box 1, Fight For Freedom manuscripts, Seeley Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey. See also Wayne S. Cole, *America First: The Battle Against Intervention* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1953).
- ⁴³ *British Security Coordination*, 72-73; Justus D. Doenecke, *The Battle Against Intervention, 1939-1941* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Press, 1997), 9.
- ⁴⁴ *British Security Coordination*, 73.
- ⁴⁵ Mark Lincoln Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 41-2.
- ⁴⁶ Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 74, 100, 102, 138-39, 143.
- ⁴⁷ *British Security Coordination*, 73, 75.
- ⁴⁸ *British Security Coordination*, 74.
- ⁴⁹ *British Security Coordination*, 74-75; Michele Flynn Stenehjem, *An American First: John T. Flynn and the America First Committee* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1976), 163-64.

⁵⁰ See Thomas E. Mahl, *Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939-44* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998).

⁵¹ *British Security Coordination*, 75.

⁵² *British Security Coordination*, 75-80; Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 470-73; Chadwin, *The Hawks of World War II*, 213-15. Thomas Mahl claims, again with no evidence beyond speculation, that BSC had subverted Fish's political career. Mahl, *Desperate Deception*, 107-136.

⁵³ William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid: The Secret War* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 298.

⁵⁴ Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid*, 299-300.

⁵⁵ Thomas Fleming, *The New Dealers' War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the War Within World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 1-48. See also Fleming's article "The Big Leak," *American Heritage* 38 (December 1987): 65-71.

⁵⁶ Do Not File memorandum, RP to Hoover, 31 July 1941, folder 80, Henry Grunewald, Official and Confidential Files of J. Edgar Hoover, FBI Headquarters reading room, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁷ *British Security Coordination*, 47-8.

⁵⁸ *British Security Coordination*, 48-50.

⁵⁹ Letter, Edwin S. Webster to Gerald Nye, 23 October 1941, box 1, Gerald Nye papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.

⁶⁰ On the special intelligence relationship between Britain and the United States, see Jeffrey T. Richelson and Desmond Ball, *The Ties that Bind: Intelligence Cooperation Between the UKUSA Countries* 2nd ed. (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Smith, *The Ultra-Magic Deals*. See also Douglas M. Charles, "American, British, and Canadian Intelligence Links: A Critical Annotated Bibliography," *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (Summer 2000): 259-69.

CONCLUSION

A close examination of the FBI's surveillance of Charles Lindbergh, the America First Committee, Senators Burton Wheeler and Gerald Nye, Congressman Hamilton Fish, those associated with the Victory Program investigation, the Brigham family, Harry Elmer Barnes, and Laura Ingalls confirms the underlying political nature of the FBI's effort. J. Edgar Hoover sought in each instance to cater to the Roosevelt administration's political and policy interests—that being to monitor the political activity of its anti-interventionist foreign policy critics and, if possible, discredit them. In the Ingalls case, even though the FBI had a responsibility to investigate a true violation of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, underscoring its effort was a desire to develop a successful prosecution of not an espionage agent but one the president's foreign policy critics. Further highlighting the political nature of this investigation is the fact that FBI officials did not seek a similar case against the interventionist Fight For Freedom Committee who, as Mark Lincoln Chadwin has shown, similarly violated the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The Bureau's concern with the administration's political interests is further underscored in the Victory Program leak investigation where FBI officials focused,

almost exclusively, on anti-interventionist critics to satisfy the desires of some high-level administration officials to hold them responsible.

FBI surveillance efforts against the anti-interventionists were widespread, thorough, and responsive to Roosevelt's political desires. FBI agents employed the use of informers, illegal wiretaps, mail covers, official investigations, perused organizations' private files, collected derogatory intelligence, provided public opinion leaders with FBI-obtained political intelligence (using blind memoranda), and sought to develop cases against anti-interventionists that would have discredited them in the courts. Hoover also recommended to his superiors the use of the grand jury that, while nominally secret, invariably drew public attention and pressure that could serve to cast doubt on the legitimacy of Roosevelt's critics. The FBI's surveillance was not limited nor were Roosevelt's purposes "essentially benevolent."¹ Instead, they reflected an intensive FBI investigative effort and a disregard by Roosevelt for his political opponents' civil liberties. Taken as a whole, FBI surveillance during this period reveals similar patterns of FBI behavior that occurred during the Cold War (i.e., use of illegal wiretaps, widely disseminating political intelligence to public opinion leaders, and extensively monitoring White House critics). This pattern suggests that the Bureau's origins as a national security apparatus date to the period of the Great Debate.

In return for satisfying administration political interests, Hoover obtained increased authority for the FBI from the White House. When Attorney General Cummings sought to publicize the crime issue during the early New Deal, to pass his crime bill, with enthusiastic FBI assistance he was successful. Then, beginning in

1934, Hoover responded to White House requests for information about the activities of fascist groups in America. By 1936, pleased with Hoover's reports, Roosevelt stepped up FBI efforts when he verbally authorized the Bureau to investigate domestic fascist and communist movements. In 1939 Hoover sought and won an executive order making the FBI the primary domestic investigative agency. With war raging in 1940, Roosevelt increased FBI investigative authority by authorizing the use of illegal wiretaps in national defense cases. Hoover exploited this executive directive and created for his FBI autonomy in using this investigative tool. Meantime, Hoover developed or revised special filing procedures that ensured the confidentiality of sensitive FBI operations and information. Yet it is an important factor that this all occurred during a period of international crisis that resulted in a charged political debate that permitted Hoover to cater to the President's domestic political concerns.

An examination of the increasing number of FBI agents and the agency's annual appropriations from 1934 further alludes to Hoover's success in developing his FBI during this period. In 1934 the FBI employed 391 agents and a support staff of 451 and was appropriated \$2,589,500. By 1936, the year Roosevelt increased FBI investigative authority, the agency had nearly doubled its agents to 609 with a support staff of 971. Its 1936 appropriation was \$5,000,000. When the anti-interventionist/interventionist debate dominated American national politics by 1941, the FBI employed 1,596 agents and 2,677 support staff with a budget of \$14,743,300. To round off the increase, by the final year of the war (1945) the FBI had 4,370 agents, 7,422 support staff, and an appropriation of \$44,197,146.²

The FBI's relationship with British intelligence also illustrates the origins of the Bureau's role in the later national security state. A hallmark of the Second World War and Cold War (and beyond), the close intelligence relationship between the United States and Great Britain had its origins during the Great Debate. The FBI's "special relationship" with British intelligence began in 1940 and increasingly became more intimate. And while we may not be able to definitively ascertain the scope and nature of the FBI's relationship with the British Security Coordination, both sought similar goals in regards President Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy critics. Together with other FBI tactics alluded to previously, the Bureau's close liaison with a foreign intelligence agency suggests that its origins within the national security state began during the pre-Second World War period..

Anti-interventionists suspected that the FBI was monitoring their political activities, and while the Bureau's efforts ultimately failed to discredit them, it nevertheless had a certain chilling effect. Lindbergh believed that the FBI had wiretapped his telephone and, indeed, FBI agents collected information about the aviator indirectly from an illegal wiretap and included it in a report to the White House and to the federal prosecutor who was to question Lindbergh in a grand jury investigation. Other anti-interventionists suspected or knew they were under investigation by the FBI, and they expressed their concern. The America First Committee went so far as to obtain confirmation from Hoover that the FBI had in no manner collected intelligence on them through a wiretap. Yet FBI agents had, indeed, gathered "valuable" political intelligence about the group via the Brigham wiretap. Even in the Ingalls investigation it appears that the FBI had used an illegal

wiretap that caused some concern among FBI officials about certain evidence thereby being inadmissible in court.

Roosevelt and senior administration officials found Hoover's reports valuable. After receiving the first of Hoover's political intelligence reports in 1940 Roosevelt thanked the FBI director in a personal letter. And by late 1941 when the Great Debate settled into a temporary stalemate, Roosevelt directed the attorney general to have the FBI investigate the money sources behind the America First Committee in the hopes that a grand jury probe would end the impasse. Senior administration officials also pressed for an FBI investigation of anti-interventionists in order to hold them responsible for the leak of the Victory Program. But most unsubtle was Interior Secretary Ickes's use of FBI information—which had been acquired, unknown to Ickes, partly through a wiretap—in his critical book manuscript on Lindbergh. Clearly, senior administration officials found Hoover's reports tantalizing and, in some instances, used this information.

This study, therefore, compliments the work of historians of the FBI, anti-interventionists, and the national security state. The FBI's extensive political surveillance during the Great Debate can now be understood as part of the better-known history of the FBI's political surveillance during both the Red Scare and Cold War periods. This study also compliments the work of historians of anti-interventionism who have neglected the topic due to a lack of documentation or historical focus. While we might not be able to definitively understand how the administration used the information provided by the FBI, the administration's interest in it is apparent. This study further broadens our understanding of the

national security state which has been analyzed in numerous ways. In terms of the FBI, at least, during the period of the Great Debate was when, for the first time, the agency extensively monitored the activity of administration critics and sought to undermine them. The FBI's methods here are strikingly similar to those employed, though on a much greater scale, during the Cold War. This suggests that the FBI's contribution to the national security state may be dated earlier than the Cold War and involved groups beyond leftists and communists.

In sum, the FBI's surveillance of Roosevelt's anti-interventionist foreign policy critics denotes the origins of the Cold-War FBI's national security apparatus. For the first time the Bureau extensively monitored administration opposition, basing their efforts on a "domestic security" rationale, and thereby became an intelligence arm for the White House. FBI agents used a variety of intrusive and illegal investigative tactics and regarded legitimate foreign policy dissenters as "subversives" or "un-American." FBI officials sought to develop the intelligence gathered from these investigations to recommend the indictment of Roosevelt's critics under the Smith Act, Foreign Agents Registration Act, Espionage Act, or conspiracy statutes, a tactic they would employ against domestic Communists during the Cold War. These actions violated the civil liberties of law-abiding political opponents and contributed a chilling effect in important public debate over national policy. From these origins FBI Director Hoover was able to create in the FBI a more intrusive, powerful, and autonomous internal security agency during the Cold War. But while this evolution had its basis during the Great Debate, it was not a predetermined fact that the FBI would become the Cold War agency it did. Unique

circumstances (such as Truman's ascendancy to the presidency and Hoover's later misrepresentation of executive orders) during the Cold War era permitted Hoover to develop the FBI into a more intrusive and autonomous agency.³ Nevertheless, Hoover could not have accomplished this without the basis laid during the Great Debate.

NOTES

¹ Kenneth O'Reilly, "A New Deal for the FBI: The Roosevelt Administration, Crime Control, and National Security," *Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982), 639.

² FBI agent and appropriation figures are reprinted in Athan Theoharis, *et. al.*, *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999), 4-5.

³ See Athan Theoharis, "The FBI's Stretching of Presidential Directives, 1936-1953," *Political Science Quarterly* 91 (Winter 1976-77): 649-72.

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William Allen White papers

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America First Committee Papers
Albert C. Wedemeyer Papers

American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming:

Harry Elmer Barnes papers
John Franklin Carter papers

Federal Bureau of Investigation:

FBI files are available in various places. Some have been microfilmed and others are available at various research depositories. Some files can readily be viewed at the FBI's reading room in Washington, and the rest can be obtained via an FOIA request to the FBI.

America First Committee file
Charles Augustus Lindbergh file
Henry W. Grunewald file
FBI "Do Not File" file
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Victory Program file
Ethel F. Brigham file
Harry Elmer Barnes file (AHC)
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