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*Adlai E. Stevenson,
McCarthyism,
and the FBI*

KENNETH O'REILLY

On a speaking tour in February, 1954, sponsored by the Republican National Committee to commemorate Abraham Lincoln's birthday, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy assailed the Democratic administrations of Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S Truman for "twenty years of treason." Later in the year, on the eve of the congressional elections, Vice-President Richard M. Nixon repeated Senator McCarthy's charge in a softer, more effective tone. While conceding "the loyalty of Democrats," he nevertheless criticized the "misguided officials of the previous [Truman] Administration" who were either "blind or indifferent to the danger" of communist infiltration. The Dwight D. Eisenhower administration, in contrast, had "fired the Communists and fellow-travellers and security risks off the Federal payroll by the thousands." The Vice-President had earlier specifically accused Adlai E. Stevenson, the Democratic presidential

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Governor Stevenson

candidate, of "covering up" the Truman administration's shameful record of "clearing and hiring 6,000 security risks." Nixon charged: "Mr. Stevenson has been guilty, probably without being aware that he was doing so, of spreading pro-Communist propaganda as he has attacked with violent fury the economic system of the United States and has praised the Soviet economy."¹

Adlai Stevenson condemned such charges, commonplace during the dog days of the 1950s, as a "Republican formula for political success."² If partisan and more than a bit irresponsible, McCarthyite

¹ Cabell Phillips, "One-Man Task Force of the G.O.P.," *New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 24, 1954, p. 55, col. 3; Stuart Gerry Brown, *Conscience in Politics: Adlai E. Stevenson in the 1950's* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1961), pp. 72-73.

² Bert Cochran, *Adlai Stevenson: Patrician Among the Politicians* (New York: Funk, 1969), p. 257.

rhetoric was nonetheless persuasive enough to put many Democratic party standard-bearers on the defensive. Stevenson himself responded to suggestions that his party was somehow furthering an international Communist conspiracy by combining a highly principled and often eloquent opposition with a strong dose of political pragmatism. He was a consistent critic of the headline-grabbing methods employed by the most visible and controversial Red-hunting machines of those times: Senator McCarthy's own Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS), and their imitators in nearly a dozen state legislatures. Stevenson, urging a more professional approach to the issue of Communist infiltration of government during the New Deal and Fair Deal years, emerged as a champion of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). An uncompromising defender of the FBI's bureaucratic hegemony in the internal security field, Stevenson hoped that this apparently apolitical, fact-gathering investigating agency would deprive McCarthyites of their most volatile issue.

Needless to say, things do not always work out as planned. J. Edgar Hoover and other senior FBI officials had their own political objectives, and those included a covert effort to underwrite the McCarthyites' "soft on communism" critique of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Among other operations in support of their effort, Bureau executives nurtured an extensive dossier on Stevenson, which was kept in a safe in Hoover's office as part of the FBI Director's Official and Confidential File. Because the FBI maintained a carefully cultivated image of nonpartisanship and professionalism, Stevenson never discovered the extent of that political activism and thus continued throughout the McCarthy era to promote the FBI as a

responsible alternative to the incorrigible Red-hunters in Congress and state legislatures. As a result, Stevenson—himself one of the principal targets of the McCarthyites—contributed in a limited and ironic way to the anticommunist obsessions and blacklists of those times.

Stevenson was especially vulnerable to the assaults of the Nixons and McCarthys because of his past association with Alger Hiss. The two men had met in 1933, when both were New Dealers employed in the legal division of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. They renewed contact in 1945, when Hiss was appointed secretary general of the United Nations conference and Stevenson was attached to the United States delegation there. Besides launching the career of Richard Nixon, then an obscure freshman congressman and HUAC member, the Hiss case seemingly confirmed the critique offered by conservative opponents of the Truman administration to explain why the nation had experienced a string of diplomatic and strategic reversals in the postwar period. The United States emerged from World War II an economic and strategic giant, seemingly capable of dominating the world economy and in possession of a

³The most important scholarly book on the case is Allen Weinstein, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (New York: Knopf, 1978). It should be read in conjunction with Athan Theoharis, ed., *Beyond the Hiss Case: The FBI, Congress, and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982). See especially the essays by Victor Navasky, "Weinstein, Hiss, and the Transformation of Historical Ambiguity Into Cold War Verity," pp. 215–45; Theoharis, "Unanswered Questions: Chambers, Nixon, the FBI, and the Hiss Case," pp. 246–308; and Kenneth O'Reilly, "Liberal Values, the Cold War, and American Intellectuals: The Trauma of the Alger Hiss Case, 1950–1978," pp. 309–40.

⁴Brown, p. 47; Kenneth S. Davis, *The Politics of Honor: A Biography of Adlai E. Stevenson* (New York: Putnam's, 1967), pp. 240–41; Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York: World Pub., 1970), p. 182. For Stevenson on the Yalta myths, see speech,

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nuclear monopoly. Yet it was at this time, when the United States enjoyed unrivaled and never-to-be-seen-again power in relation to the rest of the world, that the Soviets acquired their empire in Eastern Europe and that an American ally, China, was “lost” (in McCarthyite parlance) to communism. When explaining those perplexing developments, conservatives in the Congress and the national media charged that Communist agents in the government and other strategic levels of American society had undermined the nation’s omnipotence. Subversives who had infiltrated the State Department and “sold out” Eastern Europe and China, in short, had betrayed the United States. The Hiss case gave the argument a boost because Alger Hiss was a member of the State Department delegation to the principal summit conference held in February, 1945, at Yalta in the Crimea.³

To Stevenson, the contention “that Truman and [Secretary of State Dean] Acheson and a few sinister men in the State Department caused the Chinese revolution” and “gave Eastern Europe to the Communists at Yalta” was simply a “myth.” The McCarthyite critique could not be so easily dismissed, however. A month after

Oct. 16, 1954, in Walter Johnson, ed., *The Papers of Adlai E. Stevenson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972–1979), IV, 410. Other prominent character witnesses for Hiss included Supreme Court Justices Felix Frankfurter and Stanley F. Reed, and John W. Davies, former congressman from Virginia, ambassador to Great Britain, and in 1924 Democratic candidate for President. In addition, John Foster Dulles, then chairman of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, originally named Hiss president of that organization. Dulles, of course, went on to become Secretary of State in the Eisenhower Cabinet. General Dwight Eisenhower himself became a trustee of the Carnegie Endowment at the time Hiss was reelected president. After Hiss’s indictment, Dulles offered his resignation and the board of trustees rejected it. Eisenhower was not present at the meeting (Davis, p. 241).



Stevenson addressing a September, 1949, labor rally in Springfield

the Hiss conviction, Senator McCarthy addressed a women’s club in Wheeling, West Virginia, waving in his hand what he said was a list of 205 (or whatever; he was not quite clear on the exact number) communists in the State Department. Thereafter, McCarthy relentlessly criticized Stevenson for the character deposition he had submitted in June, 1949, on Hiss’s behalf. At one point, in the midst of the 1952 presidential campaign, McCarthy referred to him as “Alger—I mean Adlai.” Meanwhile, vice-presidential candidate Nixon described Stevenson as “a graduate of Dean Acheson’s spineless school of diplomacy which cost the free world 600,000,000 former allies in the past seven years of Trumanism.”⁴

Stevenson condemned McCarthyism as a “hysterical form of putrid slander” that “flourishes because it satisfies a deep craving to reduce the vast menace of world

Communism to comprehensible and manageable proportions." In a commencement address delivered in June, 1950, at the University of Illinois, he offered a more thoughtful assessment of McCarthyism and its impact:

We are not behaving like a resolute breed of men. We are behaving more like nutty neurotics nervously looking for subversive enemies under the bed and behind the curtains. We exchange frenzied, irresponsible accusations of disloyalty. "Guilt by Association" has been added to our language. The slanderer is honored. The shadow of a nameless fear slopes across the land. There is talk of thought control among Jefferson's people. Fear, not freedom, seems to be our portion on the very morrow of our greatest victory, at the very pinnacle of our strength, prestige, and affluence.⁵

Stevenson's opposition to McCarthyism was sincere; his criticisms cannot be dismissed simply as a response to personal attacks on his integrity or partisan political attacks on his party. He was troubled by the mounting postwar Red Scare. Nearly three years before Senator McCarthy's Wheeling speech, in a debate with Michigan's Republican Governor Kim Sigler on whether the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) should be banned, Stevenson maintained that "we must prevail in the struggle here at home" but not by sacrificing "our most precious heritage . . . the right to think, to say what we believe without fear of intervention from the state." "Suppression," he added, "is a dangerous precedent. Let us not adopt Fascism to defeat Communism."⁶

Later, as the Democratic presidential candidate, Stevenson qualified his civil libertarian rhetoric while reiterating his absolute opposition to McCarthyism. The issue was no longer the real or imagined existence of a Red menace on the home front, but whether the Democratic party or the Republican party was best equipped to confront the threat. "Democratic leadership," he announced in an October, 1952,

"has built an elaborate internal security system to protect this nation against communist subversion—a system which has put the leaders of the Communist Party in this country where they belong—behind bars."⁷ Elements in the system included not only the Smith Act prosecutions of CPUSA functionaries for conspiring to teach or advocate the violent overthrow of the United States government, but the federal employee loyalty program, the compilation and public release of the Attorney General's list of subversive organizations, and a radical increase in funding for the FBI—the government's principal internal security bureaucracy.

Stevenson seemed particularly enamored with the FBI, apparently considering it a creature of liberalism in general and of the New Deal in particular. Under the last Republican President, Herbert Hoover, the Bureau of Investigation (the word Federal was added in 1935) was an obscure division of the Justice Department with an annual appropriation of some \$3 million. During the Roosevelt and Truman years, the budget ballooned to more than \$90 million. That funding, Stevenson said, enabled FBI "professionals" to pursue the communist plot against America "quietly and remorselessly." He concluded: "Close screening of government employees and the quiet professional work of the F.B.I. is the best way to turn over every stone in this country to see what lies beneath it. This is a job for professionals, and I think it can be done without slandering innocent people."⁸

⁵ Commencement addresses, June 18, 1950, and June 15, 1951, in Johnson, ed., III, 280–81, 411.

⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 393–94.

⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 135.

⁸ Speeches of Sept. 29 and Oct. 7, 1952, *ibid.*, IV, 126, 135, 138; Stevenson to W. H. Flanagan, Dec. 19, 1953, *ibid.*, p. 303; Don Whitehead, *The FBI Story* (New York: Pocket Books, 1958), p. 107.

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Stevenson's confidence in the FBI was in part the result of an earlier conflict, when serving as governor of Illinois, with one of the so-called "little HUACs"—the state's Seditious Activities Investigation Commission. Organized in August, 1947, and chaired by Republican Senator Paul Broyles of Mount Vernon, the commission consisted of ten members of the Illinois General Assembly (five each from the House and Senate) and five appointees of then Governor Dwight H. Green.

According to the enabling act, the commission was empowered

to investigate any activities of any person or persons, co-partnership, association, organization, group or society, or combination thereof which are suspected of being directed toward the overthrow of the Government of the United States or the State of Illinois. The commission is also empowered to investigate as to whether the Ku Klux Klan has organized, and to investigate any other association, group, organization, or society that foments or attempts to foment racial and religious hatreds. The commission or any member thereof is hereby empowered to subpoena witnesses and to require the production of books, textbooks, papers, records or documents of any nature whatsoever at any hearing before the commission or such member or agent thereof. . . .

All departments, boards, commissions, agencies and officers of the state government or of any political subdivision thereof, shall furnish the commission or any member or agent thereof, such necessary assistance as may be required by the commission, such member or agent, in the performance of such duties so far as may be compatible with their other duties.

⁹Other commission members were Senators John T. Thomas of Belleville, and Norman C. Barry, William G. Knox, and Roland V. Libonati, all of Chicago; Representatives Clyde L. Choate of Jonesboro, Rollie C. Carpenter of Ancona, Ed Fellis of Hillsboro, and Charles J. Jenkins and Pierce L. Shannon of Chicago; and gubernatorial appointees Norval D. Hodges of Urbana, Omar J. McMackin of Salem, and Kermit E. Johnson, Vincent L. Knaus, and William P. Kluesken, all of Chicago. *Laws of Illinois*, 65 G.A. (1947), pp. 275–76; State of Illinois, Seditious Activities Investigation Commission, "Investigation of the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College," 66 G.A. (1949).



State Senator Paul Broyles

Free access shall also be given to any books, records or documents in their custody relating to matters within the scope of such investigation.⁹

After nearly two years of secret investigations, the Broyles Commission called for public hearings on the extent of communist infiltration of the faculties and student bodies at two Chicago schools, the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College. Legislative interest in the two schools arose only in March of 1949, when some 150 University of Chicago students descended on Springfield to protest the Broyles Commission's original and somewhat general agenda. After Stevenson met with a delegation of students, the entire group moved to the Senate chamber and demanded to be heard by the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was then holding

hearings on Broyles's recommendations. The students hissed and booed committee witnesses and then staged a demonstration in downtown Springfield—prompting legislators to criticize the Governor roundly for meeting the delegation. Rock Island Republican Clinton Searle even raised the specter of terrorism. "Members would make no mistake in seeing to it that this house has an ample guard," he said. "Some day a 'pineapple' will be tossed from the gallery, wiping out most of us." "I'm sorry I graduated from the University of Chicago," Searle added. "I wouldn't send my pet dog there now."¹⁰

The legislature passed two deficiency appropriation bills to support the proposed probe of the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College in April and July of 1949, and Stevenson allowed the bills to become law without his signature. No matter how much he doubted "the legality . . . [and] necessity for this investigation," he was "reluctant to interfere with the Legislature's power of investigation." Beyond that, "the serious charges" leveled against the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College called for a response. Both schools "should now be given an opportunity to be heard," he said, when forwarding the appropriation bill to the Illinois Secretary of State for filing. "Suppression and intimidation are not among the weapons we ought to use in the current warfare of ideas, lest we abandon the very things we seek to preserve. Academic freedom, freedom to think and freedom to speak, are the best antidote to Communism and tyranny."¹¹

Not surprisingly, the Broyles Commission rejected Stevenson's advice. Senator Broyles used part of the appropriation to hire two dedicated anticommunists who interrogated witnesses at public hearings. One of those investigators, Benjamin Gitlow, was a former Communist party official. The other, J. B. Matthews, had a

list of credentials that included service from 1938 to 1945 as chief investigator for Congressman Martin Dies's Special House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities. Matthews had demonstrated a penchant for sensationalism during his years with the Dies Committee, and he remained in a sensationalist mode when joining the Broyles Commission staff. For example, he advised University of Chicago Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins that his faculty and staff were "affiliated with 135 Communist Front organizations in 464 separate affiliations."¹² With such charges being hurled about, and with the American Legion and the *Chicago Tribune* providing unqualified support for the Broyles Commission, the hearings attracted widespread and potentially embarrassing publicity for Governor Stevenson and administrators at the two schools under siege.

No matter how sensational, Matthews's and Gitlow's charges were soft. Having failed to document much bona fide communist infiltration, the Broyles Commission expired in the summer of 1949 with little to show for its labors. None of its recommendations became law, although in May the leadership did prevent a vote on Chicago Democrat Charles M. Skyles's resolution to "exonerate" the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College.¹³ The Illinois Senate flatly rejected two bills, one to

¹⁰*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 2 (p. 16, col. 2), March 3 (p. 1, cols. 8 ff.), 1949; *Laws of Illinois*, 66 G.A. (1949), p. 268.

¹¹Under the 1870 Illinois Constitution, if the governor failed to sign a bill within ten days of submission, it would automatically become law. The University of Chicago had been investigated once before by state legislators, in 1935, after drugstore magnate Charles Walgreen charged that his niece had been indoctrinated by Marxist faculty members; see E. Huston Harsha, "Illinois: The Broyles Commission," in *The States and Subversion*, ed. Walter Gellhorn (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 54; Johnson, ed., III, 69–70; *Laws of Illinois*, 67 G.A. (1949), pp. 267–68.

extend the commission mandate for two more years and the other to require registration of organizations using an oath as a condition of membership. An additional recommendation intended to revoke the tax exemptions of the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College was ignored, as was a final "Analysis of Testimony Given before the Commission" offered by G. William Horsley, a Springfield Republican, to condemn the two schools. Three other countersubversive bills passed in the Senate but died in the House when it adjourned on June 30.¹⁴

Those events, nonetheless, marked the beginning, not the end, of the communist infiltration issue for Governor Stevenson and other state officials in Illinois. At its next session, the legislature attempted to reestablish the Seditious Activities Investigation Commission and to enact Senator Broyles's sweeping anticommunist legislation. The proposed legislation included provisions requiring a loyalty oath for teachers and all other public employees and officials, making it a crime to advocate the overthrow of the federal government, creating a special antsubversive assistant state's attorney, and providing for the characterization of radical organizations as subversive and declaring such organizations illegal if so classified. Senate Bill 102 passed both chambers in 1951.¹⁵

Governor Stevenson knew how to respond to the demand for tough new antsubversive law. He vetoed the bill, and on June 27 three Republicans joined sixteen Democratic senators to uphold the veto. The Governor had no real quarrel

with Broyles and other sponsors of the legislation. What differences existed, he said, had to do with "the choice of methods," and in his veto message he made clear his belief that the Communist party was "a danger to our Republic, as real as it is sinister." Ill-considered legislation, he said, and an amateurish state investigating commission, however, would be more likely to intimidate "honest citizens" than to detect subversives. And for this the state of Illinois would pay a heavy price:

We cannot afford to make public employees vulnerable to malicious charges of disloyalty. So far as the employers are concerned—heads of departments and of schools and so on—the only safe policy would be timid employment practices which could only result in a lowering of the level of ability, independence and courage in our public agencies, schools and colleges. . . . We must not burn down the house to kill the rats.

The legislation was unnecessary for another reason as well, he added: "The Federal Bureau of Investigation has identified and has under observation virtually every member of the Communist Party and every serious sympathizer, and is prepared"—in the event of a national emergency—"to take such persons into custody on short notice."¹⁶

The veto of the Broyles bill has been widely praised (and perhaps rightly so) as an example of uncommon political courage during the depths of the domestic Cold War. Yet it was a relatively easy decision to make, according to one of the Governor's aides. Carl McGowan remembered a meeting with Broyles during the veto period—a meeting the Senator had requested in an attempt to persuade the administration not to block the proposed legislation: "It didn't faze Stevenson. We never sat around and debated the veto. After Broyles left, we said that's that, and vetoed it." McGowan continued, "The Broyles bill simply violated his [Stevenson's] instincts. . . . [H]e thought it was a

¹²Harsha, p. 102.

¹³*House Journal*, 66 G.A. (1949), p. 1011.

¹⁴Harsha, pp. 54–139; *House Journal*, 66 G.A. (1949), p. 2404.

¹⁵*Senate Journal*, 67 G.A. (1951), pp. 109, 1946–50.

¹⁶Johnson, ed., III, 413–14, 416–18.



On a visit to East St. Louis on October 10, 1952, Governor Stevenson greeted Henry Fuller, who was born in slavery. Left to right are Fuller, State's Attorney Richard T. Carter, Stevenson, Lt. Gov. Sherwood Dixon, Democratic State Central Committeeman Alvin G. Fields, and Ben F. Day of the East St. Louis Democratic Committee.

lot of bullshit—the state has a lot of important things to do and why bother with this.”¹⁷

Actually, the decision for the veto was a bit more complex. “The Governor wanted to be sure that his bias was not getting in the way of the public interest,” McGowan conceded. “So he took time out of his busy schedule and went to Washington to talk the matter over with the FBI.” Afterwards, he “came home and wrote a veto message.”¹⁸

Neither Stevenson nor McGowan had much to say about the subject of that conversation in Washington. The FBI, however, has kept a detailed and credible record. In February, 1951, Stevenson met with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and one of his principal aides, Louis B. Nichols, in the company of a delegation appointed by the executive committee of the National Governors' Conference. The

governors had requested the meeting with Hoover in the hope “of developing greater coordination in the field of internal security between the state and Federal government.” According to an FBI agent who recorded the substance of the conference in a memorandum, their purpose “was to obtain information about persons teaching

¹⁷John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson of Illinois* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 469, 471.

¹⁸Johnson, ed., III, 412–13.

¹⁹The regular meeting of the full Governors' Conference was held later that year in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The special delegation included Carvel, Frank Lausche of Ohio, Gordon Browning of Tennessee, Frederick G. Paine of Maine, and Sherman Adams of New Hampshire. Governor Walter J. Kohler of Wisconsin and Frank Bane, executive secretary for the Council of State Governors, also attended the meeting with Hoover. Memo, Louis B. Nichols to Clyde Tolson, Feb. 13, 1951, no. 4, FBI Responsibilities Program File (62-93875); correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, in Adlai E. Stevenson Folder,

in state institutions as well as persons working in key areas for the state who would be considered dangerous to the security of the U.S." One of the governors, Elbert N. Carvel of Delaware, went so far as to interrupt a Hoover monologue on FBI internal security policies to point out the concern "with . . . the matter of Communism in our colleges and universities." "The Governors frequently will appoint college professors to positions," Carvel said, "but did not know whom they are appointing and that it is necessary to secure information."¹⁹

FBI officials could render such assistance rather easily because they maintained a "Security Index"—a service Stevenson alluded to when vetoing the Broyles bill. The Security Index was a continuously monitored and updated card file of persons whose "presence at liberty in this country in time of war or national emergency would be dangerous to the public peace and safety of the United States Government." In effect, it ranked "subversives" according to "their degree of dangerousness." On the day that the governors met with Hoover and Nichols, the Index contained the names of 14,283 American citizens and was growing at the rate of seventy-five names per week.²⁰

Stevenson had accompanied the Governors' Conference delegation to the FBI

director's office principally because he was troubled by the proposed reestablishment of the Broyles Commission. According to FBI documents, Stevenson's first order of business was to ask Hoover to meet with two members of the American Legion, including Illinois State Commander Lawrence J. Fenlon. The Governor wanted the FBI director "to talk to them in a 'sobering' way as they were somewhat overly anxious in regard to the pending [Broyles bill]." Hoover understood this concern, and he told Stevenson to beware of amateur Red-hunters, citing several examples of bumbling countersubversives who had interfered with the Bureau's sophisticated internal security operations. Because the Legion was lobbying extensively for the bill back in Illinois and at least two Legionnaires were among former Governor Green's original appointments to the Broyles Commission, the FBI director approved the conference. But he was forced to cancel when a more pressing matter arose.²¹

Moving beyond this concern with American Legion lobbying and remembering the old Broyles Commission interest in the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College, Stevenson mentioned "state legislators" who "were beginning to move toward investigation of state educational institutions." "This would create a certain amount of witch-hunting," he felt, and to guard against this possibility FBI assistance was needed. Hoover summed up Stevenson's argument: "If Governors could be furnished, on a strictly confidential basis, information from the FBI, they could protect themselves from ill-considered inquiries by well-meaning legislatures."²²

The arguments of Stevenson and the other state governors in attendance at the February, 1951, meeting proved persuasive. After consulting the White House and Attorney General J. Howard McGrath in a general and quite misleading way,

J. Edgar Hoover Official and Confidential FBI File; memo, FBI Executives' Conference to FBI Director, Oct. 14, 1953, unserialized copy in FBI House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) File (61-7582). All FBI files are in the J. Edgar Hoover Building, Washington, D.C.

²⁰The FBI Security Index File has been released under the Freedom of Information Act and is available for public inspection in the Reading Room, J. Edgar Hoover Building.

²¹Correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, in Stevenson Folder, Hoover Official and Confidential File.

²²Ibid.; memo, Nichols to Tolson, Feb. 12, 1951, no. 4, FBI Responsibilities Program File.

Hoover approved an ambitious dissemination program, known within the Bureau as the Responsibilities Program. The program itself was not restricted to the perceived problem of communist infiltration of the college teaching profession. Nor were recipients of FBI briefings (leaks) limited to state governors. Instead, Hoover directed FBI field offices to compile and disseminate, "on a strictly confidential basis," derogatory personal or political information concerning all "Communist or subversive elements" employed in a "public" or "semi-public" capacity. Eventually, this meant a blacklist of some public school teachers as well as college teachers. Recipients of FBI leaks included "a large number of state and local officials" who were themselves investigated to determine their "reliability and discretion." These recipients, moreover, were often selected unilaterally by senior Bureau officials, with the result that "the Governor of a state" would not in every case receive "information regarding subjects who are on the Security Index." Whenever "appropriate," a "responsible local official" would be alerted instead. In every case, the FBI was not to be identified as the source of the information under any circumstances.²³

If Stevenson intended to enlist the FBI in his campaign against members of the Illinois General Assembly who intended to reconstitute the Broyles Commission, his success was mixed. While the Broyles Commission was never again activated, the FBI dissemination program that Stevenson sought proved to be more of an asset to the McCarthyites than to vulnerable liberal governors. Hoover was not nearly as apprehensive about the meandering of state and federal investigating committees as he seemed to be when meeting with Stevenson and the other governors—or, for that matter, when explaining the proposed Responsibilities Program to the White House and the Attorney General. Indeed,

for reasons of politics and ideology the Bureau director fully supported the Broyles Commission inquiries of 1949 and quite possibly provided indirect assistance to the commission. (The FBI followed Senator Broyles's anticommunist activities closely, and on one known occasion many years later, in 1962, sent him an anonymous communication regarding the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights in an effort to inspire an investigation of that group.)²⁴ In addition, the FBI provided direct assistance, on a more or less regular basis, to the major investigating committees of Congress—including HUAC, SISS, and the McCarthy Committee. FBI Assistant Director Nichols, for example, processed name checks for Senator McCarthy and two of his closest aides, Roy Cohn and former Bureau agent Don Surine.²⁵

The purpose of covert FBI assistance to congressional Red-hunters was political. FBI officials had been working since 1946 to develop "an informed public opinion" on the menace of internal subversion by disseminating "educational materials"

²³Hoover to all Special Agents in Charge (SACs), Feb. 17, 1951, SAC Letter no. 19, copy in FBI Responsibilities Program File; memo, Nichols to Sidney W. Souers, Feb. 5, 1951, no. 91, *ibid.*; memo, FBI Executives' Conference to FBI Director, Oct. 14, 1953, unserialized copy in FBI HUAC File.

²⁴Memo, SAC Chicago to FBI Director, Aug. 3, 1962, serial number illegible, FBI Richard Criley File (100-32864); memo, FBI Director to SAC Chicago, Aug. 20, 1962, no. 1228, *ibid.* Criley was the director of the Chicago Committee to Defend the Bill of Rights.

²⁵This service is referred to in memo, FBI Executives' Conference to Tolson, June 2, 1953, unserialized copy in FBI HUAC File.

²⁶United States Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence activities, *Final Report: Book II, Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, 94 Cong., 2 Sess. (1976), p. 66; and *Final Report: Book III, Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, 94 Cong., 2 Sess. (1976), p. 430.

through “available channels”—that is, by leaking derogatory information on dissidents to the investigating committees and other anticommunist publicists.²⁶ Even Smith Act prosecutions had an explicitly “educational purpose.” They were not intended solely to put Communist party leaders (as Stevenson would later put it) “where they belong—behind bars.” For the FBI, the principal purpose of these prosecutions was to “convince the American people that the Communist Party, USA, is not an orthodox political party . . . but an integral part of an international conspiracy.” Bureau officials considered the Smith Act not in a narrow legalistic sense, but rather as the cornerstone of “a campaign of education directed to the proposition that Communism is dangerous.”²⁷

If the Responsibilities Program did not mark a fundamental change in FBI operations, it did mark a shift from an earlier *ad hoc* effort to an institutionalized and refined dissemination (read blacklisting) program.²⁸ More important, the FBI worked with or through the principal congressional investigating committees in an

effort to police the various other blacklists of the McCarthy era—an effort that was perhaps the last thing Governor Stevenson envisioned when he originally proposed “a strictly confidential” FBI program to “protect” state governors “from ill-considered inquiries by well-meaning legislatures.”

The FBI contributed to the success of the blacklists by forwarding documents to congressional investigating committees that detailed the alleged communist and other left-wing affiliations of dissidents. In accordance with Hoover’s instructions, all of those documents were in the form of “blind” memoranda typed “on plain white bond, unwatermarked paper,” without identifying either sender or recipient. “The Bureau’s identity must not be revealed as the source,” the director said.²⁹ At the same time, FBI field offices reviewed their files on anyone named as a communist or a communist dupe before HUAC, SISS, and the McCarthy Committee for possible inclusion on the Security Index. With all three committees contemplating hearings in the Boston area in February, 1953, that policy led on one single occasion to checks on every person listed in the faculty and staff directories of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In “appropriate” cases, FBI field offices submitted “recommendations for . . . action under the ‘Responsibilities Program.’”³⁰

Any person who received all or part of his or her income from a government source of any type, regardless of the nature of the person’s work, was a potential subject for a Responsibilities Program leak. The explicit purpose of these leaks was to impose economic sanction on dissidents, and the preferred form of sanction was unemployment.

Had Adlai Stevenson been aware of such a pervasive program and the FBI’s rather loose standards for inclusion of “dissidents” on the Security Index (which listed

²⁷Senate Select Committee, *Final Report: Book III*, pp. 438–39; memo, William C. Sullivan to Alan H. Belmont, Oct. 9, 1956, no. 47 (and the accompanying report, “Current Weaknesses of the Communist Party, USA,” p. 88), in FBI COINTELPRO—CPUSA File (100–3–104); Frank J. Donner, *The Age of Surveillance* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 184–95.

²⁸*Ad hoc* leaking continued nonetheless, even after the Responsibilities Program was formally abolished. In May and June of 1959, for instance, FBI Assistant Director Cartha DeLoach forwarded brief dossiers to HUAC on eighty-one public school teachers in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas. The FBI hoped that these dossiers would “result in their removal from the public school system in California”; see memos, James F. Bland to Belmont, May 6, 1959, no. 4144, and June 2, 1959, no. 4172, FBI HUAC File.

²⁹FBI policy on blind memoranda is outlined in memo, re Proposed Change in Manual for Field Stenographer, Oct. 12, 1955, no. 7393, FBI File 66–1934.

³⁰Memo, SAC Boston to FBI Director, Feb. 13, 1953, unserialized copy in FBI HUAC File.

Illinois' Democratic Senator Paul Douglas), he might have brushed past Senator McCarthy and Vice-President Nixon when attacking McCarthyism and concentrated on J. Edgar Hoover.³¹ But the Democratic party's strategy to counter McCarthyism virtually guaranteed that Stevenson and his fellow liberals would not discover the extent of the FBI's political activism.

The Democrats relied on expansive claims of "executive privilege" to prevent irresponsible Red-hunting congressmen from carousing through FBI loyalty files—on the moral ground that the reputations of innocent persons had to be protected, the constitutional ground that the powers of government must remain separate, and the national security ground that the nation had to protect its secrets from the Soviet enemy. In pursuing that strategy, the Truman administration lost both ways. By withholding FBI records, and in particular the loyalty files of federal employees, it made itself vulnerable to the McCarthyite charge of a cover-up. And by denying FBI files to Congress, the administration declined to use the data for political gain, a device that FBI officials found so inviting. Shielded from external review, Hoover and his principal aides were free to pursue their own political objectives, and those objectives included providing selective support for McCarthyites in the Congress and the national media.

When Dwight Eisenhower moved into the Oval Office, Hoover found unaccustomed support for those avowed objectives and thus decided to brief the new Attorney General, Herbert Brownell, on the Responsibilities Program. The Director had made that decision even before the inauguration, when FBI Assistant Director Nichols learned from Ogden Reid of the *New York Herald Tribune* of Eisenhower's preferred strategy for purging the academy. "He, the General, was inclined to think," reported Nichols, "that the way to

approach the matter was to supply trusted members of the Board of Trustees of a college or university with the facts and he had no doubt in his mind as to what they had to do."³²

At the time, Brownell raised no objections to the Responsibilities Program. But he grew increasingly troubled by FBI operations targeted against academe. In November, 1954, he called a staff conference of Justice Department attorneys to discuss his reservations, and later advised the FBI Director "that it was the thinking of those present that furnishing information regarding persons working in key areas should be continued, but that information about persons teaching in institutions should be discontinued." FBI records indicate that Hoover persuaded Brownell to reverse that decision for the time being, by citing the very arguments Adlai Stevenson had raised when calling for a covert FBI dissemination program on faculty at state educational institutions. Indeed, the Responsibilities Program continued to function for another four months, until it was terminated in its entirety on March 7, 1955.³³

It is not known why Brownell was troubled by Responsibilities Program leaks "about persons teaching in institutions." Perhaps he concluded that those operations, if publicly compromised, would raise the specter of Eisenhower administration interference with academic freedom. With Stevenson on record not only as a proponent but an instigator of such a dissemination program, however, the administra-

³¹Donner, p. 164n.

³²Memo, Nichols to FBI Director, Dec. 31, 1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower Folder, Louis B. Nichols Official and Confidential FBI File.

³³Correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, in Stevenson Folder, Hoover Official and Confidential File; memo, Hoover to Tolson, Leland V. Boardman, Belmont, and Nichols, Nov. 9, 1954, unserialized copy in FBI Responsibilities Program File; Belmont to Boardman, March 31, 1955, no. 2663, *ibid.*



Confidential files of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover indicate that Illinois State Police were blackballed from the FBI National Academy because of differences between the Governor and the Director. In Christmas greetings of the previous year, Hoover had told Illinois police: "Law enforcement, the body which must take action first in time of emergency accident or disaster, is a group well qualified to dispel the fog of fear which has settled over so much of the earth. . . . Loyalty to the ideals of our founding fathers and consistent devotion to duty are sound bulwarks against it." Above, the signing ceremony for the bill that removed the State Police from patronage.

tion's vulnerability was greatly reduced. Brownell may have concluded, however briefly, that any adverse publicity could be deflected onto Stevenson and the Democratic party.

Despite his unwitting service to the FBI, Stevenson was not one of the Bureau's favorites—a fact that led to the compilation of an extensive dossier on the former Governor and Democratic party presidential candidate. The reasons for the surveillance ranged from the picayune to the substantive, from bureaucratic paranoia to the political and ideological chasm that separated Stevenson's liberal anticommunism from Hoover's less-discriminating variety.

On the bureaucratic track, the FBI

director was troubled by "Governor Stevenson's attitude toward the FBI," particularly a remark attributed to Stevenson in a January, 1949, newspaper article. Stevenson was planning to reorganize the Illinois State Police, and he reportedly said, when questioned about rumors regarding the possible appointment of an FBI man to an administrative post, that "FBI agents are not renowned administrators." Hoover responded by ordering his men to "keep this in mind" and to render no assistance to the State Police reorganization effort "as long as Stevenson is Governor." Then, in December, 1950, an FBI Executives' Conference recommended that the Bureau accept no applicants from the Illinois State Police to the FBI National Academy, a

prestigious training facility for state and local police. When Hoover approved the suggestion, Illinois lawmen were effectively blackballed from the Academy. (Stevenson did in fact hire former FBI agents for his personal staff. One of them, Ross V. Randolph, served as his administrative assistant until June, 1952, when he was appointed warden of the Illinois State Penitentiary. Michael H. Farrin resigned from the FBI on June 20 to become Stevenson's new administrative assistant.)³⁴

On the political track, FBI agents chronicled Stevenson's activities and associations in a painstaking effort to document his naiveté on internal security matters. One section of his FBI file, captioned "Attitude of Governor Stevenson Toward State Legislation Affecting the Communist Party," concentrated on the Broyles bill veto. (The same documents reveal that Senator Broyles conferred with the Springfield FBI office regarding the proposed legislation.)³⁵ Other sections—identified with such titles as "Association With or Support from Alleged Front Groups"—itemized the aid and comfort Stevenson allegedly provided to the Communist party and its sympathizers. In 1940, for instance, when he accepted an award from the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee on behalf of the Chicago Bar Association, the FBI condemned the Committee on the ground that its "program and policies closely paralleled those of the Communist Party with respect to the issues of race discrimination, elections laws, and poll taxes." A year later, the FBI found Stevenson's name on a list in the Chicago offices of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade—a list obtained by "a highly confidential source" (that is, a burglar). Even the February, 1948, statement of Americans for Democratic Action executive Leon Henderson in support of Stevenson's candidacy for Governor of Illinois was included under the "Alleged Front Group" heading.³⁶

To support the McCarthyite critique of postwar diplomatic failure in Eastern Europe and China, the FBI concentrated on Stevenson's relationship with Alger Hiss and support for the left-wing Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR). During the 1940s several State Department employees assigned to the China desk belonged to the IPR, and Senator McCarthy described one of those men, Owen Lattimore, as "one of the principal architects of our Far Eastern policy." To the McCarthyites, the logic was obvious: Communists had infiltrated the IPR and the IPR had infiltrated the State Department, subtly influencing American policy in the Far East and successfully paving the way for Mao Tse-Tung's victory in China. The best the FBI could do to implicate Stevenson, however, was note his name on yet another list (with a 1938 date) of the IPR's American Council membership. And in 1943 Stevenson apparently made a small financial contribution to the group. With regard to Alger Hiss, the FBI simply rehashed all the well-known accusations and innuendos. Not even the wiretap ("an extremely delicate confidential source") on Hiss's home telephone that recorded at least one of his conversations with Stevenson revealed anything of great import.³⁷

There is no hard evidence to indicate

³⁴Memos, Milton A. Jones to Nichols, July 24, 1952, nos. 19 and 20, in Stevenson Folder, Hoover Official and Confidential File; correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, *ibid.*

³⁵Memos, Jones to Nichols, April 3, 1952, nos. 30 and 31, and July 24, 1952, nos. 19 and 29, *ibid.*

³⁶Memos, Jones to Nichols, July 24, 1952, nos. 19 and 20; correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, both *ibid.*

³⁷Memo, re Adlai Stevenson-State Department Connection, Nov. 2, 1955, no. 7; memos, Jones to Nichols, July 24, 1952, nos. 19 and 20, and Nov. 1, 1955, no. 9; correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, all *ibid.*

that the FBI widely disseminated the information gathered on Stevenson. On the contrary, in October, 1952, when Senator McCarthy asked for "public source information" regarding communist connections, he "was advised that the Bureau had nothing on Stevenson." McCarthy responded with sarcasm, promising "to send the Bureau a file on Stevenson so that it would have something on him."³⁸ It is possible, nonetheless, that the FBI's apparent refusal to help McCarthy may have been an attempt to create a paper record. The Bureau frequently delivered letters from Hoover to conservative congressmen formally denying access while at the same time making the requested file available by responding to specific questions about its contents. Whether assisted by the FBI or not, Senator McCarthy armed himself with "documents" and "exhibits" gathered by former agent Don Surine and delivered a nationally televised speech two weeks later in Chicago. He concentrated on Stevenson's "history in so far as it deals with his

aid to the Communist cause and the extent to which he is part and parcel of the Acheson-Hiss-Lattimore group."³⁹

If FBI officials did not aid the junior senator from Wisconsin in the preparation of the speech, there is little doubt that they intended to use the information they had gathered. Their purpose is suggested by the timing of decisions to prepare detailed memoranda on Stevenson in 1952 and again in 1956 in the midst of his campaigns for the Democratic party presidential nomination. Kept in a safe in the FBI Director's office as part of the unserialized Official and Confidential File (and not sent on to the serialized central records system), those memoranda were compiled by FBI Assistant Director Nichols, head of the euphemistically named Crime Records Division and Hoover's liaison with anti-communist publicists. It was Nichols who serviced the needs of such "cooperative and reliable" newspaper columnists as Fulton Lewis, Jr., and George Sokolsky and such Republican party leaders as former President Herbert Hoover and New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey. On one occasion in late April, 1948, Nichols personally delivered position papers—prepared by the Bureau but later issued as Republican campaign literature—to Dewey at the Governor's Mansion in Albany. These documents condemned the Truman administration's internal security policies and were intended to help Dewey unseat the incumbent Democratic President.⁴⁰ Moreover, it was Nichols's successor as FBI Assistant Director for Crime Records, Cartha D. DeLoach, who in May, 1960, once again reviewed (for reasons that remain unclear) the Official and Confidential File on Stevenson.⁴¹

FBI surveillance of Stevenson and likely dissemination of the fruits of that surveillance to conservatives in the Congress and the media confirm the political activism of J. Edgar Hoover and other FBI officials

³⁸ Correlation summary memo, March 22, 1956, no. 2, *ibid.*

³⁹ Brown, pp. 37–38; Thomas C. Reeves, *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982), p. 444. For Hoover's interest in creating a phoney paper record, see O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), pp. 127–28. See also Athan G. Theoharis and John Stuart Cox, *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 284–86.

⁴⁰ Memos, Hoover to Tolson and Nichols, April 29, 1948, nos. 1 and 2, Thomas E. Dewey Folder, Hoover Official and Confidential File; William C. Sullivan with Bill Brown, *The Bureau: My Thirty Years in Hoover's FBI* (New York: Norton, 1979), pp. 41, 44.

⁴¹ FBI agents continued to chronicle Stevenson's activities well beyond the McCarthy era, as DeLoach's interest attests. In 1964 another FBI executive, William C. Sullivan, passed on a rumor to the director that President Lyndon B. Johnson would appoint Stevenson, then Ambassador to the United Nations, Secretary of State. "If this is the case," Sullivan advised, "I think you will agree it would be rather unfortunate" (Sullivan to Hoover, March 26, 1964, no. 33, Lyndon B. Johnson Folder, Hoover Official and Confidential File).

during the McCarthy era. And Stevenson's ignorance of that surveillance suggests the elitism of American politics during the 1950s, a time when even the Democratic party candidate for President was dismissed as an outsider and depicted as a potentially subversive threat. Obviously, Stevenson was no subversive. But he was an outsider who did not understand the dynamics of McCarthyism, a victim of those highly visible and often crude McCarthyites (whom Dean Acheson called "the primitives") in the Congress, and a victim as well of the more sophisticated anticommunists in the FBI.

It is not simply ironic that Stevenson responded to McCarthyism by placing his confidence in the integrity and professionalism of FBI officials; he called for a different type of Red-hunt—publicly in his campaign speeches and secretly in his February, 1951, meeting with J. Edgar Hoover. Perhaps Stevenson's articulate criticisms of the junior senator from Wisconsin—and in particular his much-heralded March, 1954, response to McCarthy's "Twenty Years of Treason" speech—were "part of the sequence of events that destroyed McCarthy." "If Adlai Stevenson did nothing else," said Joseph L. Rauh, Jr., onetime head of Americans for Democratic Action, "he voiced the sentiments of the anti-McCarthy people in that period."⁴² At the same time, Stevenson supported an FBI surveillance and dis-

semination program on the nation's campuses that quickly escalated into an ambitious Responsibilities Program and contributed in no small way to the cultural pollution of the domestic Cold War. He thought of the university "as the archive of the Western mind, as the keeper of Western culture," a national treasure with "an obligation to transmit from one generation to the next the heritage of freedom."⁴³ Yet he helped bring the blacklists to the university. They would have come anyway, but the fact remains that Stevenson played a part.

FBI surveillance was an integral part of McCarthyism, not an alternative to congressional Red-hunting. It is a reflection of the political influence and effective bureaucratic maneuverings of FBI Director Hoover and colleagues that even such an accomplished, sophisticated, and decent politician as Adlai Stevenson reacted to the domestic communist issue by turning to the FBI—an agency that defined "subversive" or "un-American" broadly enough to include the Governor himself.

⁴²Cochran, p. 258; Rauh, Oral History, July 30, 1969, p. 30, Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Tex.

⁴³Speech, March 22, 1954, Princeton University, in Johnson, ed., IV, 344.