

# I. F. Stone's Weekly

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## Was J. Edgar As "Blind" As Harry?

*There is a strange, untouched, perhaps untouchable aspect of the Harry Dexter White affair. To go back and re-study the hearings and reports since Elizabeth Bentley began telling her story publicly on July 30, 1948, is to wonder why it was never inquired into. For if it can be said that Harry Truman "knowingly" promoted a Soviet spy, it can also be said that J. Edgar Hoover allowed a known and registered Russian agent to operate unscathed. The biggest mystery of all is why the FBI chief should have been surprised when Elizabeth Bentley first talked in November, 1945. Because the central character in her story, the master spy whom she claimed to have served as courier and lived with as man and wife, Jacob Golos, had been publicly accused of military espionage for the Soviet government by the Attorney General almost six years earlier and forced to register as a Soviet agent.*

One of Frank Murphy's last acts as Attorney General, just before his elevation to the U.S. Supreme Court, was to file charges on January 2, 1940 against eight persons and three business houses for military espionage on behalf of the Soviet government and for failure to register as foreign agents. One of the men was Golos and one of the business firms was World Tourists, Inc., of which he was the sole stockholder.

Two months later, in March, a special grand jury in Washington indicted "Jacob Raisin, also known as J. N. Golos" and World Tourists, Inc., for failure to register as foreign agents. The charge of military espionage and the case against the others had been dropped. The next day Golos pleaded guilty. He was sentenced to four months in jail but put on probation and fined \$500. A similar fine was imposed on World Tourists, Inc., but that fine was suspended.

*Just why the more serious charge was dropped and why Golos got off so easily on the lesser charge was never explained. The greater mystery is how Golos, after being publicly accused of military espionage and forced to register as a foreign agent, was able to go on operating as a master spy. For according to Miss Bentley, she began in 1941 to travel between New York and Washington as his courier and go-between, to build up a whole circle of informants in the government and to bring large quantities of secretly filmed documentary material out of the capital in her knitting bag every two weeks or so. This went on, according to Miss Bentley, from 1941 to 1945. Yet her story, when told to the FBI, apparently came as a complete surprise. Either the FBI was extraordinarily inefficient or there is much more to this affair than has yet been told.*

It is curious that in her book, "Out of Bondage", Miss Bentley does not mention the charge of military espionage made against Golos in January, 1940. Here she was engaged in a very dangerous and intimate relationship with a Russian agent. The Attorney General of the United States suddenly

accuses him of engaging in military espionage. The charge would endanger her, too, for she speaks of being shadowed in this period by the FBI. Yet this vital fact—when she seemed on the verge of being caught—is omitted. As told vaguely in the book, the government had become more hostile to the Communists after the Nazi-Soviet pact. The records of World Tourists were seized, revealing that Earl Browder had used a false passport.

*But her account does not mention two dramatic episodes which focused publicly attention sharply on World Tourists, Inc. The first was Earl Browder's admission to the Dies committee in September, 1939, that he had used false passports in travelling abroad; it was as a result that in October the records of World Tourists, Inc., were seized. (From Miss Bentley's account one would believe that this happened in reverse; that the government only learned of Browder's false passports after it seized the records.) The other episode was the FBI "midnight raid" in Detroit and Milwaukee, in which 11 persons were arrested on charges of recruiting soldiers for the Spanish Republican Army. That occurred early in February, 1940, and the Federal District Attorney in Detroit said recruits were given their tickets to Spain by World Tourists, Inc., in New York. Had these events, and the charge of military espionage, been related in the book (or indeed in any one of Miss Bentley's appearances before Congressional investigating committees) they would sharply have raised the question of how, after that, Golos could still have operated a spy ring successfully under the very nose of the FBI.*

It is possible that this is how it happened but it is not likely. World Tourist, Inc. with its link to *Intourist* was a pretty obvious place for surveillance long before 1939. Hoover in the radio speech of 1942 quoted in last week's issue said the FBI's method was to "first find out who the spies are . . . and then carefully keeping them under scrutiny, ascertain . . . the identity of their associates . . . finally taking over the supervision of the spy ring until the time comes to take them into custody." Miss Bentley says (p.295) that after telling her story in 1945 an FBI agent asked her, "Would you be willing to keep on going as you are now? . . . With you in there, we can keep tabs on what is going on. Then, too, it's vital to keep in contact with the Russian secret police and also with the people you know in the American Communist Party." This embodies a basic technique of counter-espionage, to try and turn a spy into a counter-spy. One wonders why if she is telling the truth this was not done with Miss Bentley in 1940-41 when (as she says) she was under surveillance for a time. Or was it? The puzzle is increased by a re-study of the Remington case, and of her admissions under cross-examination. These are discussed on the next page.

## Eye-Opener: Bentley's One Conviction in That "Spy" Ring

In his appearance before the Jenner committee, J. Edgar Hoover praised Elizabeth Bentley, saying "She has been subjected to the most searching of cross-examinations; her testimony has been evaluated by juries and reviewed by the courts and has been found to be accurate." The unwary reader would never guess that she was subjected to cross-examination in only one case growing out of her sensational spy ring story to the FBI in November, 1945. This was the case of William W. Remington.

Remington was one of the 30-odd government employees named by Miss Bentley to the FBI in November, 1945. He himself was not questioned until a year and a half later. Presumably the charges were kept secret during the interval while the suspects were under surveillance. On April 15, 1947, three FBI agents questioned Remington for three and a half hours. Remington denied he had ever been a member of the Communist party and denied that he had ever given Bentley secret information. In June, 1947, after Miss Bentley told her story to a special grand jury, Remington testified voluntarily and at length. Neither he nor anyone else named by Miss Bentley were indicted.

That grand jury sat a long time. In the spring of 1948, before the outcome was known, Miss Bentley called on Frederick Woltman of the New York *World-Telegram*. Miss Bentley, as was later testified, wanted to find out when the grand jury was going to return indictments. Woltman arranged for her to tell her story to a fellow staff member, Nelson Frank. Miss Bentley entered into a contract with Frank making him her literary assistant and promising him a share in the proceeds of any writings based upon her disclosures. Frank wrote a sensational series about her for the *World-Telegram* in July, 1948. On July 30 she was summoned to Washington to tell her story before a Senate committee and a few days later before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. These made her famous and launched her on a career as an ex-Communist writer and lecturer.

### Bentley in Danger

This career—and Miss Bentley's usefulness to those who wished to picture the New Deal as a nest of spies—was soon endangered by the Remington case. By the time Miss Bentley testified publicly in July, 1948, Remington was (with one possible exception) the last of those she named still on the Federal payroll (White and V. Frank Coe were employed by the international monetary fund). Remington was at once suspended by the Department of Commerce pending loyalty proceedings.

Thanks to her public appearance, Miss Bentley was no longer one of those confidential informants whose identity (as the formula goes) could not be disclosed lest it endanger FBI sources of information. Remington asked to confront his accuser. The Loyalty Board lacked power of subpoena but invited her to appear. She twice accepted and twice failed to appear. When a third attempt also proved fruitless, the Board cleared Remington. The decision was a blow not only to Miss Bentley but to the FBI since it had marshalled "derogatory information" from many other sources to prove that Remington was a Communist.

The verdict was given additional weight because a former national commander of the American Legion was on the Loyalty Board which cleared Remington. A new blow was the payment of \$9,000 to Remington in settlement of a libel suit he brought against a TV show on which Miss Bentley had repeated her charges. A star witness was waning. Something had to be done. In April, 1950, the House Un-American Activities Committee reopened the Remington case. They summoned not only Miss Bentley but several of the FBI's hitherto confidential informants whose accusations had been before the Loyalty Board. These new witnesses claimed that

Remington had been a Communist in Knoxville, Tenn., in 1936-37. Again Remington denied the charges under oath before the committee and before a new grand jury. Again there was no indictment.

### A Stacked Grand Jury

It was not until a third grand jury took up the matter in May, 1950, that an indictment of Remington was finally obtained, not an indictment for espionage but for perjury in denying that he had ever been a Communist. This grand jury, as was revealed during the ensuing trial, was stacked in Miss Bentley's favor. Under cross-examination, she admitted that the special prosecutor in charge, Thomas E. Donegan, had been her personal attorney in a suit for back pay. One of the first witnesses called was Joseph E. Egan, her counsel in the libel suit brought by Remington. And during the trial two women who had been employed by Miss Bentley's publisher turned up to testify that John Brunini, the foreman of the grand jury, was collaborating on Miss Bentley's book at the very time the grand jury was drawing up the Remington indictment. This information was known to the prosecution (and discussed with Attorney General McGrath) but hidden from the defense.

The conviction of Remington in that case was reversed on appeal, but the indictment was not dismissed. Rather than let this tainted indictment become an issue in a new trial, the government obtained a new indictment for perjury. Remington was convicted again, but as in the Lattimore case there had been a steady deflation in charges. This time he was convicted for denying at the first trial that he had given Miss Bentley information to which she was not entitled (a far cry from the original espionage charge) and for denying that he knew there was a Young Communist League on the campus when he was a student at Dartmouth (an equally far cry from the charge that he was himself a Communist).

### What Bentley Told Her Contacts

What makes the Remington case so relevant for study today is that under cross-examination Miss Bentley admitted that most of the persons from whom she obtained information in Washington did not know that she was a Russian agent. Remington himself swore (as did another witness named by her) that she represented herself as a research worker. Miss Bentley said the Silvermasters and Ullman knew what she was doing and that "from what they said, Mr. White knew where it [the information] was going but preferred not to mention the fact." Of the others, she said, some may have guessed but most thought they were merely aiding the Communists in this country. "That was especially true of the individuals I contacted," she admitted at one point, "because they were told by Mr. Golos that this information was for the personal use of Earl Browder in preparing books and in preparing policies of the Communist party."

"The general policy," Miss Bentley testified at another point, "was to try and keep, at least for that period, to keep American Communists from knowing things were going to Russia because if anybody turned sour, as they called it, or turned traitor, then they could tell a great deal more than they could otherwise."

Of the Perlo group, Miss Bentley said "no one was actually told that it [the information] was going to Russia." And of Remington she admitted that maybe he had grown "less willing to see her" because he began to suspect from the nature of her questions that she might be a Russian spy.

Thus, according to her own story as it finally came out, Miss Bentley was taking advantage of Communist or Soviet sympathies to draw Federal officials into a dangerous relationship whose real nature was deliberately hidden from them. This begins to appear in retrospect as an exercise in entrapment, and the full truth about that has yet to be told.

## I. F. Stone's Weekly

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### What Country Does Ike Think He's President Of—Denmark?

President Eisenhower to the B'nai B'rith:

"In this country, if someone dislikes you or accuses you, he must come up in front. He cannot hide behind the shadows, he cannot assassinate you or your character from behind without suffering the penalties an outraged citizenry will inflict."

### Portrait of a Fighting Newspaper About to Take a Stand But Then Quietly Lying Down Again for Comfort

"Even though it seems necessary to permit the use of wiretap evidence in national security cases, Congress ought to remember that such undercover snooping is, as Justice Holmes called it, 'dirty business.' Resort to this method can be condoned only if the strictest precautions are taken to avoid abuses and encroachment upon individual rights . . . by requiring the Attorney General to authorize each request for permission before a court order is sought."—*Washington Post*.

The Attorney General being that renowned defender of fair play, due process and private reputation, Herbert Brownell, Jr.

### Query

We would like to know whether the Catholic Bishops of the United States, assembled here in Washington, had any evidence to support the language of their joint statement on "Peter's Chains."

"Peasants are slaughtered," they said, "and flung upon the pyre of their burning churches. Innocent children are torn from the arms of their Christian mothers and handed over to atheist debauchers."

We would also like to have some fuller exegesis for their attack on "the Voltaires of the West." It would seem from

their language that the Bishops have not forgiven the great champion of toleration and enlightenment.

It has become one of the clichés of American political rhetoric to equate intellectual freedom and belief in God. But the attack on "the Voltaires of the West" reflects hostility to intellectual liberty, to toleration of differing opinions, and to the spirit of free inquiry.

There was a loyalty case here some years ago in which a Federal employe was accused of having Rousseau in his library. Is Voltaire to become "subversive," too?

### Unerring Instinct for Not Being Where the Battle Is Hottest

"Seen from Belgrade and Trieste, which I visited last week, it was clear to me that the boundary line between Italy and Yugoslavia is not the crucial problem."—Walter Lippman, November 24, 1953.

And on careful consideration, we agree with him.

### The Elephant Is Not Alone In Having Two Heads

Adlai Stevenson before the Georgia legislature: "Root out, I say, the agents of this Satanic world-wide conspiracy. . . . But for the love of heaven let us do it with dignity, objectivity and justice."

Are sober methods encouraged when one uses the very metaphors of witch-hunting? A "Satanic world-wide conspiracy" is a bogeyman, something too occult and elusive for normal methods of prosecution; too sinister, dangerous and frightening.

To use the language of medieval superstition is to recreate its atmosphere and foster the revival of its methods. This is not the way back to national sanity.

### Hats Off

To Ed Murrow, whose great Alcoa TV show on the Radulovich case deserves a major share of the credit for Air Force Secretary Talbot's decision last week reinstating Lt. Milo J. Radulovich as a reserve officer in the Air Force.

### Recommended

For the best background account of what lies behind the anti-Israel maneuvers at the UN: Lillie Schultz's "British Plot Return to Israel" in the November 21 issue of *The Nation*.

### Note

The *Weekly* had to go to press early last week because of the Thanksgiving holiday. The Circuit Court decision in the Remington case came too late for this issue and will be discussed in our next.

### DON'T BE ALARMED

If you've already renewed and get a letter asking for a renewal—that letter was sent to all subscribers. It would have been too time-consuming and costly to weed out the renewals first. And don't be worried if you get a duplicate some time in the next few weeks. Your name may also have been on one of the lists we are using in the current 50,000 promotion-and-renewal mailing. To those who have already renewed—many thanks for a promptness which enables us to see and plan ahead for the new year. To those who have not yet renewed please do so TODAY if you can, and add a gift sub for a friend who'd like something different out of Washington than the AP pap in his local paper. For the kind words which accompanied many renewals, we are grateful and beg your forgiveness if these have not yet been acknowledged.

With many thanks,

*I. F. Stone*

### JENNINGS PERRY'S PAGE

## "Old New Dealers" Meet Under the Magnolias

Not long ago the TV people were looking hard to find one prominent Southern liberal willing to take on Georgia Gov. Herman Talmadge in debate on segregation in the schools, and finally found one. Aubrey Williams had the gizzard to come up from Montgomery, Ala., and say the Supreme Court *ought* to rule there is no such thing under the Constitution as "separate but equal."

Last week, I went down to the one-time capital of the Confederacy to see how else this lean, soft-spoken Alabaman who headed Roosevelt's National Youth Administration is using himself. Clifford and Virginia Durr joined us at dinner.

It was good to be able to come up with them all again, to "catch up" a little on their lives since Washington—where, in those days of reinvigorated democracy, Williams under Harry Hopkins labored to set up the Civil Works program, Durr served as a New Deal member of the Federal Communications Commission and Virginia, from their rambling big frame house in Alexandria, fervently urged and aided the movement to make voting free, in fact, for all in the land.

And now, back home from that stirring scene and time, in their native Deep South? Williams is publisher of Southern Farm and Home, a long-established monthly with wide circulation in the rural areas of the lower states. He himself is a farmer and cattle-raiser, with two sons grown up to share with him in these enterprises. Cliff Durr, who used to lecture on law at Princeton, has his own office now at Montgomery. Virginia is his secretary.

None of these people has changed in spirit or convictions, though their environment at Montgomery, beside the slow-moving waters of the Alabama River, is a far cry from the strenuous life of which they were a part beside the sluggish Potomac. The walls of Williams' office at his modern printing plant, as indeed the walls of his quiet suburban home, are friendly with inscribed photographs from "those days"— of FDR, of Eleanor Roosevelt, of Hopkins, La Follette, Olson. These presences comfort and stay him, he says, when the

Brownells, the McCarthys—and Talmadges "posture as patriots."

As always scholarly and gentle, Cliff Durr cons the liberty-loving philosophers from Milton and Mill to Commager and Conant and traces the lamentable parallel between the persecutions of the early Christians and "atavistic" legal efforts to suppress intellectual freedom in our times.

Stricken by a painful spinal condition after leaving the government service, Durr has recovered completely. His family has been seated at Montgomery for generations, and though undoubtedly his association with the defense in loyalty hearings in the East is held against him by the predominantly conservative elements of his home town, his exemplary virtues of mind and manner cannot but claim for him increasing respect in his profession and community.

As for the irrepressible Virginia, Virginia remains irrepressible, indignant at all social injustice and incapable of complacency. The fight for free suffrage of which she was, in Washington, "la Pasionaria" holds her unabated interest in the far South. Alabama has made some amendment of its restrictive voting laws, but the poll tax still goes before the ballot. "You just don't rest with that," Virginia Durr protests. "It's un-American!"

I went out with Aubrey Williams to his farm—Peace Farm—, a 2,500-acre sweep of wooded hills and bottom pastures in a bend of the Alabama River. The place is remote. Green oat-fields spread along the ridges. A herd of 200 mixed-breed cattle runs in the low meadows, watered by springs that "won't quit." Beside the river and beside the creeks flowing unhurriedly to it, tall live oaks drip pendants of gray moss.

The one-time Youth Administrator's eyes light up at all this. "The neighbors were skittish at first," he says. "We wouldn't cheat the hands, and showed them our books. Now some of them are coming around. Some of them are beginning to give their own tenants a fair shake. We keep calling it 'the New Deal, Alabama speed.'"

*Don't Rue It, Do It.*

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