

# Americans vs. Fifth Columnists: a Symposium

Last month, in a widely quoted and publicized article by Werner Guitmann, *Survey Graphic* presented the most thorough and dispassionate picture that has yet been published on what has come to be called the Nazi Fifth Column. The article's implications, as well as its facts, were of such a challenging nature that the editors of *Survey Graphic* invited a number of Amer-

## Our Government Is Prepared Against the Fifth Column by ROBERT H. JACKSON, Attorney General of the United States

THIS NATION IS WELL EQUIPPED TO COMBAT SABOTAGE, ESPIONAGE, Fifth Column activities, and other matters related to law enforcement. Long before this country became alive to the dangers of the Fifth Column, the President, forewarned by his experience in the World War, saw emergence of national defense as the nation's first problem. As long ago as September 6, 1939, he directed that all federal agencies dealing with civil defense during peace time be coordinated under the Department of Justice. By Executive Order he directed the expansion of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and placed investigative activities wholly under the direction of Mr. Hoover, whose preeminence in this field has given the country confidence that the task will be thoroughly done.

There are other federal agencies such as the Military Intelligence and Naval Intelligence, which, in addition to their particular duties, are actively cooperating with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in covering the field properly assigned to the federal government. Under our scheme of government there remain, of course, certain divisions of authority between state governments and strictly local municipal governments.

The detection of spies is no job for merely well-intentioned citizens, however patriotic. The foreign agent and the skilled spy are trained to their jobs and can be dealt with only by one who is trained to his job. Amateur efforts or mob efforts almost invariably seize upon people who are merely queer or who hold opinions of an unpopular tinge, or who talk too much or otherwise give offense.

The law enforcement of the United States and that of the several states, and that of each of the municipalities, should be kept under the control of officials who are responsible for their conduct and subject to the discipline and training of legally recognized law enforcement bodies. Expand them if we must to whatever extent necessary, but under no circumstances let us tolerate the taking of law enforcement into private hands.

For the first time the United States must meet the competition of a totalitarian economy and must resist a well developed strategy of penetration and infiltration both by ideas and by foreign agents. The course of the war in Europe has also raised many new and unpleasant problems for each of us. Among these problems is that of the so-called Fifth Column, whose immediate object is to sabotage American morale, to slow up production, to stir up strife, to cultivate hates and divisions, to destroy confidence in the government, and generally weaken us, whether as a military power, a business competitor, or as the source and example of democratic self-government which they fear and hate.

Altogether too many people think of the Fifth Column as groups of disloyal citizens or of disloyal workmen who are prepared to sabotage industrial plants. To be sure, we face that danger. But a greater menace for us is the effort being made here now to try to "soften" this country as France was "softened." This effort takes the form of the promise of "softened" business orders and of profits if the war can be called off and

americans who are prominently identified with cultural, legal, welfare, and educational work to answer the question: "What can we do, democratically, to identify and counteract the Fifth Column in the United States?" The replies, including a statement from the Attorney General of the United States, have resulted in a symposium of profound and timely importance.—*The Editors*

business relations resumed as usual with the victor. In holding out the allure of business this effort seeks to create a Fifth Column among men of influence and respectability.

It is not illegal to dangle this bait before American business men even in our own press and in our markets. But it is well that our people recognize it when they see it, and that we cease the belief that efforts in this country are confined to the crudities of the Black Tom days.

Yet it is important that American people do not permit an attitude of suspicion of their neighbors, and charge with disloyalty every person with whom they have individual disagreements. Not every person who sticks his neck out in curiosity is a spy. Not every person who believes that there is need for improvement in our government or a need for change in its laws is an undercover agent of foreign governments. And not every bad job done in an industrial plant is the result of sabotage; we have put on new workers and increased their speeds and a good deal of bad work is certain to result. The greatest reliance of the law-enforcing authorities is upon sound and calm and dispassionate attitudes on the part of the American people and its press. We must not yield to any tendency to become frightened and to make enemies among ourselves.

On the other hand, dissenting groups or nonconforming individuals will help to maintain the law that gives them such freedom if they will use a common sense recognition that events have unsettled public opinion and that it is a period of uncommon excitement and sensitivity. Persons who go about flaunting their right to be provocative or disagreeable or intemperate in speech are among the chief enemies of the liberty we are trying to preserve.

Let us avoid some of the mistakes which give aid and assistance to any Fifth Column:

*First:* We must permit no tampering with our civil rights, for the first break in that bulwark will provide the opening wedge for those who seek the breakdown of our democratic system.

*Second:* We must prevent lawlessness and mob violence, for by destroying law and order we create the confusion in which the Fifth Column thrives.

*Third:* We must not alienate the alien who wants to be loyal, for by so doing we drive him into the camp of the Fifth Column.

*Fourth:* We must have a social and economic policy in the nation which will not leave millions of people hopelessly outside of its benefits and comforts. A reactionary national policy would be the greatest aid and comfort a Fifth Column could hope for.