

Bruce Franklin and the FBI

It Has Happened Here!

By HERB BOROCK

Nearly five years after Stanford's Board of Trustees fired English Professor H. Bruce Franklin, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has released documents that reveal it anonymously mailed copies of news clippings and circulars about Franklin to trustees to encourage them "to take some positive action against such a person as Franklin... and insist that Franklin be removed from his position at Stanford."

The FBI mailing occurred in June 1969, a year and a half before Stanford President Richard Lyman initiated the year long disciplinary proceedings against Franklin. The mailing included copies of documents bearing the return address of the Young Americans for Freedom chapter at Stanford.

Other memos show that the FBI used the San Francisco Examiner reporter Ed Montgomery to create the articles the FBI later mailed the trustees and investigated witnesses who appeared on Franklin's behalf during his disciplinary hearing before Stanford's Faculty Advisory Board.

EARLY HISTORY

The FBI began surveillance of Franklin in 1966 following his outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War, his membership in the Stanford Committee for Peace, and his participation in lawful activities against a napalm plant in Redwood City.

In March of 1967, the San Francisco FBI office recommended that Franklin be included in the bureau's Reserve Index -- a index used to monitor persons who might bear watching in the event of a national emergency.

Later, in May of 1968, Franklin's name was moved to the Security Index, a second file. Once in this index, Franklin was tagged for apprehension and detention under the provisions of the Emergency Detention Act, as a person dangerous to the internal security during a national crisis.

The FBI initially included Franklin in their Reserve Index and Security Index despite the fact that he had never been arrested or charged with any crime. It's quarterly report on Franklin noted that he had been acquitted the previous month of charges stemming from a demonstration the previous November, but recommended keeping Franklin in the Security Index because "he is reportedly one of the founders of the RU (Revolutionary Union), a Marxist-Leninist organization, that adheres to the policies of Mao Tse-tung."

FBI WANTED FRANKLIN FIRED

On May 14, 1969, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote his San Francisco office that "Franklin, in his position of Associate Professor of English at Stanford University, represents one of the most militant radical extremists on American campuses, and his background has been well documented publicly."

One of the public documents Hoover referred to was a March 23, 1969 article by Ed Montgomery in the San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle that claimed to describe Franklin's revolutionary objectives. Hoover could not have been surprised when he read that article, since he had requested that such an article be written.

In February 1969, Hoover suggested that

a "cooperative news media source" interview Franklin about his relationship with "his close associate" who lived in China and a "young friend" who had served in the Red Guard. Montgomery subsequently interviewed Franklin, and his March 23 article identified the "close associate" as William Howard Hinton, and the "young friend" as Christopher Milton.

Hoover later proposed that a pamphlet about Franklin be prepared and "be anonymously posted to all members of the Board of Trustees of Stanford, to selected alumnus, and other appropriate individuals including the Governor, senators and congressmen of California."

The San Francisco office replied on May 20 that "a circular made from duplicating MONTGOMERY'S article... is being distributed in the Palo Alto and Stanford area." The circular advised that additional copies could be obtained from P. O. Box 3697, Stanford, California, which the FBI noted "is a box on the Stanford University Campus utilized by the Young Americans for Freedom."

The local FBI requested authority to distribute copies of both the March 23 article and another Montgomery article that appeared coincidentally on May 19, four days after Hoover's request for a pamphlet or brochure on Franklin. The two articles would be mailed to "selected individuals having apparent influence over the Stanford Staff and Faculty, urging them to use this influence to rid Stanford of this menace to the democratic future of their children."

Apparently Hoover approved the mailing. On October 31, 1969, the San Francisco office reported that since June 1969 both Montgomery articles had been sent to the Trustees, selected alumni, and local political figures. Again the FBI noted that the mailing "appears to have its origin with... the Young Americans for Freedom."

It is not clear from the FBI memos whether the Stanford YAF chapter knowingly cooperated with the FBI in this endeavor. Key portions of the memos have been deleted, and the FBI never assigns responsibility for the original distribution of Montgomery's March 23 article. However, the circular says that more copies of the reprinted article can be obtained from the YAF, and the FBI's May 20 memo requested "authority to prepare additional Xerox copies of the enclosed 3/29/69 circular and attach it to Xerox copies of the ED MONTGOMERY article dated 5/19/69." Why the word additional if the FBI had not participated in preparation of the original circular?



ADVISORY BOARD HEARING

The FBI was aware that their anonymous mailing had "little effect" with the Trustees as FRANKLIN continues as Assistant (sic) Professor in the English Department and is still active in RU activities. "Throughout 1970 they devised a number of so called "counter-intelligence" operations with the objective of "neutralizing" Franklin and the RU. By the end of that year, the FBI had not been successful.

However, early in 1971, Stanford President Richard Lyman filed charges before the Faculty Advisory Board to fire Franklin for his alleged role in demonstrations against Henry Cabot Lodge and the U.S. invasion of Laos. No one knows whether the Advisory Board members received the FBI mailings or were influenced by anyone who did. But the FBI mailed Montgomery's articles to the trustees who made the decision to fire Franklin. And the FBI was busy throughout the Advisory Board hearings.

On November 17, 1971, Hoover told the San Francisco FBI office that four persons -- including GRAPEVINE staffer Lenny Siegel -- had appeared as witnesses for Franklin. Hoover requested the local FBI to determine whether those witnesses were members of Franklin's "Venceremos Organization (VO) or other subversive organizations." He also asked the local office to "Identify other individuals who have appeared as witnesses on behalf of Franklin, at the current hearing, to determine if they are affiliated with the VO or engaged in subversive activities."

FRANKLIN'S ACLU SUIT

For the past four years, the American Civil Liberties Union has been representing Franklin in an attempt to have him reinstated at Stanford with back pay. The ACLU may be able to use the FBI memos to question the trustees about how they arrived at their decision to fire Franklin. Stanford is preparing to answer such questions. Bob Beyers, Director of Stanford's News and Publications Department, has written for a copy of the FBI documents Franklin released to the press.

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