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## **Internationalism of the Leftist Press and Reactions from the FBI and CIA from the 1960s-1970s**

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# INTERNATIONALISM OF THE LEFTIST PRESS AND REACTIONS FROM THE FBI AND CIA FROM THE 1960s-1970s

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**Abstract:** Amid the wave of American counterculture movements in the 1960s and 1970s, several members of the New Left established internationalist connections abroad. They questioned American involvement in countries undergoing decolonization and political revolution, showing solidarity with activists in those nations.

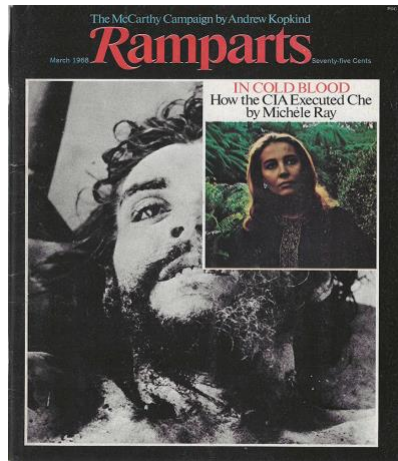
The voices of these activists were undoubtedly amplified by the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), which disseminated these stories of international solidarity. This paper examines the stories of left-leaning activists who often served as staff writers on these publications and wrote on their ideologies and experiences. While the UPS included a range of newspapers, this paper will focus on *Ramparts* and *Liberator Magazine*, specifically with their coverage on Cuba, Ghana, and the Congo, to show the international solidarity expressed on the pages that ultimately led to police surveillance.

The FBI and CIA used strategies like “lit.-cop federalism” to monitor leftist journalists, collecting files on their publications and words to frame a story of treason and espionage. These organizations also purposely mistranslated the works of a lot of international activists, to turn domestic New Left activists against their internationalist comrades.

The leftist press was crucial in providing a voice for the New Left, and in combating the intentionally false, anti-communist narrative policing agencies were spreading. I argue that it was when these news sources began to take a specifically *internationalist* lens that the FBI and CIA increased their surveillance of these papers, as they understood the threat they posed to domestic opinion during the Cold War.

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*“We want our people to be aware of the direct chain, which reaches from Cuba into our cities, our campuses, our conventions, our lives – and which threatens the life of this Republic.”<sup>3</sup>*  
*- Senator James Oliver Eastland, Chairman of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Internal Security Act*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Garland Allen, a renowned historian of science, spent much of the 1960s and 1970s politically involved like many of his college-aged peers.<sup>4</sup> While a graduate student at Harvard, Allen actively participated in several anti-Vietnam protests, and organized a two-week long strike where students occupied Harvard’s administration buildings and University Hall. Allen additionally participated in MLK’s march from Selma to Montgomery, considering himself to be a staunch activist for civil rights.

When Allen began teaching at Washington University in St. Louis, he decided to take a semester off to join the Venceremos Brigade to Cuba, an underground organization that sent Americans to work alongside Cuban farmers, students, and government officials to show

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<sup>2</sup> Michele Ray, “*Ramparts* 1968-03: Vol 6 ISS 8 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming.” Internet Archive. *Ramparts* Magazine Inc, March 1, 1968. [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_ramparts\\_1968-03\\_6\\_8/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/sim_ramparts_1968-03_6_8/mode/2up).

<sup>3</sup> Teishan A. Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists? The Venceremos Brigades to Cuba, State Surveillance, and the FBI as Biographer and Archivist.” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 9, no. 1 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.5070/t891034678>.

<sup>4</sup> Everett Mendelsohn, “Garland Allen: An Appreciation.” *Journal of the History of Biology* 49, no. 4 (2016): 583–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-016-9459-2>.

American solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Allen singularly credits this experience to his radicalization and the complete development of his political consciousness. During this time, he worked on a sugar cane farm in community with Cubans, who shared their revolutionary zeal with Allen. He read selected works of Marx, and was invited to join the Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action, a radical organization.<sup>6</sup> Upon returning to the United States, Allen's scientific work began taking a radical social and political perspective.

In no way was Allen's radicalization an isolated incident. Several other members of what would be termed the "New Left" established internationalist connections abroad. They questioned American involvement in countries like Ghana, the Congo, and Cuba, and showed solidarity with activists in those nations.

The voices of these individuals were undoubtedly amplified by the underground press, which burst onto the media scene in the 1960s and 1970s. Their coverage included first-hand reports—from left-leaning activists of the time who were often staff writers on these papers—as well as republications of local news in other countries. For example, Eldridge Cleaver, an activist and staff writer for *Ramparts Magazine*, published several stories on his own internationalist activism, but also republished anti-imperialist stories circulated in local African news sources, in order to broaden the message to an American audience.<sup>7</sup>

In reaction to this activism, U.S. policy doubled-down on its already existing fears of Cold War communism, as agencies like the FBI and CIA sought to prevent U.S citizens from traveling to areas in the Third World where leftist movements were happening. The internationalism and eventual radicalism of activists like Allen strengthened the fears of subversion and treason which were deep-rooted in the U.S. at this time. This phenomenon manifested itself through the media, as the government hoped to control the narrative that was being shared with the larger population.

I argue that it was when the underground press began to take an *internationalist* lens to amplify the stories of the Third World Left between the 1960s and 1970s that American agencies like the FBI and CIA became especially threatened by their anti-American narrative, and instituted several strategies to discredit, block, and prosecute their work.

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<sup>5</sup> Mendelsohn, "Garland Allen," 583.

<sup>6</sup> Mendelsohn, "Garland Allen," 583.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect Liberator Magazine and Black Activism in the 1960s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

## A) Terminology

It is first important to frame what Third-Worldism, leftism, internationalism, and communism meant during this time. In her book “Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era,” author Judy Wu defines and contextualizes these terms.<sup>8</sup> The United States government exuded a perspective of democratic exceptionalism during the Cold War, tasking itself with saving countries around the world from communism. Specifically with Vietnam, mainstream media presented an East-West divide between the totalitarianism of the East and freedom of the West. Wu writes “Perceiving Vietnamese opponents of the United States as part of an international communist conspiracy further intensified the divide that most Americans drew between deserving insiders and inhumane outsiders.”<sup>9</sup>

In response to these perceptions, the idea of internationalism arose. Wu explains the term in the context of the Vietnam War, explaining that internationalists viewed themselves as “members of communities that transcended national boundaries.”<sup>10</sup> Suspicious of the mainstream narratives of leftist/communist countries, internationalist activists visited those countries themselves. Oftentimes, after traveling to and interacting with grassroots activists in those nations, these Americans expanded their political views outside the walls of strict American interests. Internationalist activists often rejected what they viewed as the “militaristic, materialistic, and racist values of mainstream society” and instead identified with “people and societies resisting colonialism and neocolonialism.”<sup>11</sup>

The nations these individuals established solidarity with were referred to as the Third World, due to their specific relationship with radicalism at the time. The activists were moving away from the communism of the Soviet Union, which they believed was totalitarian. Rather, Third World leftism centered itself around solidarity with countries in Latin America and Africa, where nations were undergoing their own decolonization movements. The relationship between

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<sup>8</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 5.

these Third World socialist movements and American activists was the key to international solidarity.

### B) The Bureau's Strategy - Literary Analysis

John Edgar Hoover, former Director of the FBI, is the man credited with transforming the organization into what it is today. Between 1924 and 1972, Hoover brought the FBI to national prominence through relentless persecution of what he believed to be domestic and foreign threats. During the 60s and 70s, this meant a lot of Hoover's efforts were focused on dispersing the civil rights movement. William J. Maxwell, author of the book "F.B.Eyes," coined the term "lit.-cop federalism" to describe Hoover's strategy in policing these activists.<sup>12</sup>

The first step of "lit.-cop federalism" was the creation of literary archives on the works of activists in radical organizations, including their speeches, articles, and letters.<sup>13</sup> Hoover recognized that the dissemination of radical literature and journalism further advanced the motives of the Left, and believed this was a major threat to the stability of the country. Maxwell quotes Hoover saying that the radicals' sole purposes were to "commit acts of terrorism and to advocate, by word of mouth and by the circulation of literature, the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force and violence."<sup>14</sup> Hoover's collection of this literature was so expansive, he had gathered "a cluster of text-centered desires and activities ranging from the archival to the editorial" that was enough to make his own "intragovernmental newspaper."<sup>15</sup>

Literary archives were especially useful to the Bureau when radical activists were publishing internationalist pieces. During this time, the FBI believed that the global influence on American activism was "conceptualized in ideological terms."<sup>16</sup> In order to understand the ways in which activists were aligning with international allies, the Bureau often used these archives to prove an activist's subversion or treason.

For example, as Black activists widened their scope to promote international solidarity with Africa, so too did the FBI, although for a different reason. Maxwell writes that "the open

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<sup>12</sup> William J. F.B. Maxwell, *Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?," 126.

comfort of the Harlem Renaissance with the simultaneously national and transnational implications of New Negro modernity dictated a comparable range in Hoover's ghostreaders."<sup>17</sup> As Black writers and activists began looking abroad, the FBI grew wary of the growth of Black international consciousness. The Bureau wanted the movement to be contained domestically as it made it easier for them to control it.<sup>18</sup>

"Lit.-cop federalism" intended to weaponize literary archives collected on activists in two ways - by smearing their images in the "U.S. print public sphere," and when possible, prosecuting them.<sup>19</sup> Hoover was attracted to print news as a PR tool, and sent several government sanctioned messages into the media to counter the publications of anti-government stories/news. Hoover's goal was to involve the government directly in the public sphere, and to challenge the desire to keep "police power at a critical distance."<sup>20</sup>

Hoover also smeared the image of these activists in the print media through "diasporic translations" of literature being transferred between American and international activists.<sup>21</sup> The Bureau hired U.S. diplomats to translate several foreign publications to English, like Claude McKay's contributions to Bolshevik papers and James Baldwin's contributions to Turkish newspapers. Yet, the Bureau intentionally released false and incomplete translations in order to divide Black activists in the U.S. from their international allies. Maxwell writes "aggravating the ambiguities of communication within the Black diaspora and its chosen political allies, Hoover's ghostreaders added the strain of hostile retranslations circulated across state channels to worsen 'the haunting gap of discrepancy' involved in any articulation of international blackness."<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the mistranslations, Hoover looked for ways to prosecute individuals on the basis of their work. It was during this time the FBI expanded its Radical Division, which was at the forefront of collecting domestic intelligence on the works of prominent activists of the time like Martin Luther King and Malcom X.<sup>23</sup> The Radical Division began by subverting internationalist or Marxist efforts of solidarity during the Russian Revolution, but honed its scope to Third World internationalism during the movements of the 60s and 70s.

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<sup>17</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195.

<sup>18</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195.

<sup>19</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195, 196.

<sup>22</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 197.

<sup>23</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 47.

Hoover was known to search the information collected by the Radical Division for “deportation-worthy” sentiments in the writings of these left-leaning activists and writers (anything that he could paint as being treasonous), as grounds to send them out of the country.<sup>24</sup> For example, Claudia Jones, a Trinidad-born Black radical journalist, was deported from the U.S. in 1955 due to her leadership in the Communist Party U.S.A. Much of the prosecution against her was based on literary evidence collected by the Bureau.

The FBI also took on the international surveillance roles of the CIA to block passports of Americans who were traveling to leftist countries, due to perceived fears of subversion. A particularly famous case is that of W.E.B. Du Bois, whose travel requests were closely tracked by the FBI. One specific instance was when Du Bois requested a passport to travel to Ghana to see the installment of Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister. His passport was taken from him and voided, and was not reinstated during this time, due to his membership in the Communist Party U.S.A., and his naturalization as a Ghanaian citizen.<sup>25</sup>

The FBI took an international lens due to the internationalism of activists that were publishing their stories in the leftist media in the 60s and 70s. It is out of the Bureau’s mistranslation of radical papers and collection of literary evidence against activists that lit a fire within the leftist press. They strove to present what they believed to be a crucial yet silenced viewpoint in the media at this time.

### C) Cultural Overview - Underground Press

As Wu explains, there was a common feeling among leftist activists to question the message being presented in mainstream media on the state of affairs in the Third World Left. As they engaged in internationalist activism to answer those questions of what is happening abroad, they contributed to the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) to share what they were seeing.

While this paper will hone in on *Ramparts Magazine* and *Liberator Magazine* to argue the thesis, it would be a loss not to mention the larger work of the Underground Press Syndicate that created the conditions for *Ramparts* and *Liberator* to succeed.

Artists and writers in the counterculture movement of the 1960s largely helped define the anti-establishment atmosphere of the time through publishing in papers like the *San Francisco*

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<sup>24</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 202.



*Oracle*.<sup>26</sup> A hub of the hippie movement, the *Oracle* transformed the cultural atmosphere of Haight-Ashbury into a circulated publication. Art, graphics, prose and poetry that symbolized the burgeoning cultural revolution of the time were all included. While the *Oracle* was largely apolitical at the time, it still played a foundational role in creating a hub of alternative news media.

In order to inspire other news sources with the artistic impulse of the Haight, the *Oracle* organized the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) in several cities around the U.S., inviting publications like the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *East Village Other*, and the *Berkeley Barb*. Editors at the *Oracle* helped create standards among this coalition of papers in 1967 to increase readership.<sup>27</sup> Forming a chain of publishing houses across the country, these papers shared research with one another and sent out robust newsletters on the nature of the counterculture movement to readers in their areas. While the *Oracle* was solely responsible for cultural and arts news inspired by the Haight, the papers they recruited to join the UPS reported heavily on the leftist perspective of the antiwar movement, connecting the arts of the counterculture with the work of activists who were a part of it.<sup>28</sup> This infrastructure that artists in the UPS created was significant in allowing the leftist press to have a shot at spreading their message to a comparable readership as conservative and mainstream media. Given this context, we can explore two specific leftist publications to see how they faced off against Hoover's intragovernmental newspaper.

## Chapter 2: *Ramparts Magazine*

### A) Introduction to *Ramparts*

*Ramparts Magazine* was one of America's foremost leftist publications in the 1960s and 1970s, serving as a "mainstream" leftist voice for student activists across the country.<sup>29</sup> Originally a Catholic literary quarterly founded by Edward Keating in Menlo Park, California, the paper

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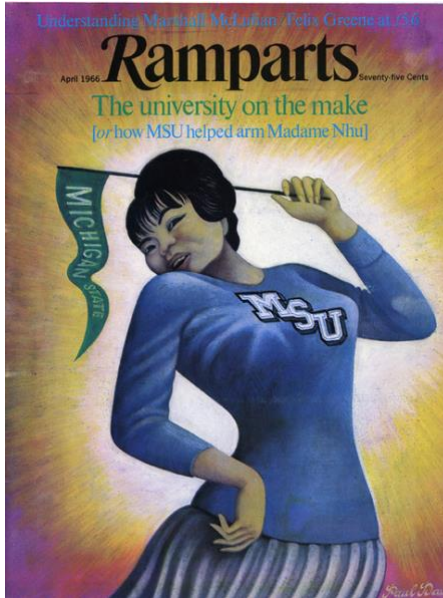
<sup>26</sup> Oleg Vyacheslavovich Brodov, Almaz Vasilovich Zakirov, Luiza Kajumovna Karimova, and Anna Andreevna Kirpichnikova, "Counterculture of 1960s and Underground Press in the USA." *Propósitos y Representaciones* 9, no. SPE2 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2021.v9nspe2.999>.

<sup>27</sup> Bodrov, "Counterculture," 5.

<sup>28</sup> Bodrov, "Counterculture," 4, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Richardson, "The Perilous Fight: The Rise of Ramparts Magazine, 1965–1966," *California History* 86, no. 3 (2009): 22–69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40495218>.

became political when Warren Hinckle and Robert Scheer were hired as editors and moved *Ramparts* to San Francisco.<sup>30</sup> In 1963, Hinckle turned the gaze of the paper to Vietnam, as anti-war protests began in full force. *Ramparts* covered Kennedy's assassination and Lyndon B.



Johnson's Vietnam policy, calling U.S. intervention in Vietnam a mistake. Scheer wrote a commentary on the famous book *Deliver Us from Evil* by Tom Dooley, saying that the reductive description of the war in Vietnam as one between the "godless communists and freedom-loving Vietnamese" painted an inaccurate and incomplete picture.<sup>31</sup> In 1966, Scheer began working on one of *Ramparts*' first investigative pieces with whistle-blower Stanley Sheinbaum, the coordinator of Michigan State University's Vietnam Project in 1957.<sup>32</sup> While going through government documents at the UC Berkeley library, Scheer discovered that the "CIA had used the Vietnam Project to interrogate and torture Vietnamese nationals."<sup>33</sup>

Scheer told Sheinbaum his discoveries, and Sheinbaum confirmed the information in the UC Berkeley files. The two broke the story together, with Sheinbaum helping write the piece.<sup>34</sup>

*Ramparts*' coverage went well beyond the scope of just the Vietnam War, as activists employed by the paper brought other internationalist perspectives to their coverage. Eldridge Cleaver, leader of the Black Panther Party, was a prominent staff writer for *Ramparts*, as the magazine published his diaries in a special edition. The Black Panthers were well known for their solidarity with activists in Cuba and Africa, and Eldridge often brought stories of the activism of the Black Panthers in Cuba and Africa to *Ramparts*.

In the same vein, *Ramparts* covered the Cuban Revolution using stories from activists who established internationalist connections in Cuba, publishing a retranslation of the diaries of Che Guevara with an introduction written especially for *Ramparts* by Fidel Castro.<sup>35</sup> It was this specific retranslation that was one of *Ramparts*' most prolific stances against mistranslations of

<sup>30</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 22, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 24.

<sup>32</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 27.

<sup>33</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 27.

<sup>34</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 30.

<sup>35</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 22.

radical works released by Hoover. In order for *Ramparts* to establish firm solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, their writers often engaged in direct activism in the region.

### B) Cuban Revolution and the Venceremos Brigade

Historian Teishan Latner writes that the New Left's leading activists at this time were "increasingly invested in examining and learning from revolutions, anticolonial struggles, and leftwing political movements in the Third World."<sup>36</sup> Black radical activists were the first to look towards Cuba due to Castro's anti-racist proclamations. Stokely Carmichael, a leader within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was invited to Cuba personally by Fidel Castro, and spoke to the Cuban audience saying that the civil rights movement in the U.S. looks to Cuba as a shining example. As anti-Vietnam War protests continued to boil well into the 60s, white, Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian activists alike began looking to Cuba with even more fervor. One student activist said "We, who participated in the civil rights movement, the battles for self-determination ... began to look outside the borders of the United States toward those who were already building societies of justice, equality, and human dignity: we were ready to learn from their examples."<sup>37</sup>

Such internationalist solidarity with Cuba resulted in the creation of the Venceremos Brigade. An organization that started among activists within the SDS, the organization sent out students to work alongside "Cuban students, farm laborers, urban volunteers, and government officials, including Fidel Castro himself, as well as volunteer brigades across the Third World."<sup>38</sup> The work of the Brigade radicalized several of the members who went. Student activists were in community with Cuban leftists, and began re-examining the work of Marx in its direct social application. These activists were stepping away from the communism of the Soviet Union which they believed had become equated with totalitarianism, and focused their efforts on Marxist/Leninist applications within the Third World. As Latner writes, "the group became the most visible and broadest expression of U.S. leftwing interest in the Cuban revolution."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 123.

<sup>37</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 124.

<sup>38</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 120.

<sup>39</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 124.

### C) *Ramparts* on Cuba

*Ramparts* wanted to tell the stories of Venceremos to show solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, and counter the anti-Cuban sentiment in mainstream American media. An especially famous example of this is *Ramparts*' special published edition of the Diary of Che Guevara, which was released on July 3, 1968. *Ramparts* was the first to translate Che's works to English, and upon publication, they included an introduction by Fidel Castro, written specifically for *Ramparts*, showing thanks for Americans that supported the Cuban Revolution.

Castro speaks about his hatred of American Imperialism in his introduction, something which was only available to Americans through publications like *Ramparts*, as the U.S. government did not want such anti-establishment rhetoric being made widely available. For example, Castro writes, "Yankee imperialism has never needed pretexts to perpetrate its villainy in any part of the world, and its efforts to smash the Cuban Revolution began with the first revolutionary law made in our county."<sup>40</sup> He goes further to explicitly state that due to the "internationalist character of contemporary social revolutions," denying support to Cuba does not show abstinence from the issue, but rather implicit support for the "Yankee Imperialists."<sup>41</sup> By publishing such language by Castro, *Ramparts* made no hesitations about broadcasting a call for solidarity with Cuba.

Later in Castro's introduction, he acknowledged that the revolutions in Latin America were being watched by certain people in North America who were tired of the United States' imperialist policy, and that these people could become crucial allies for Latin America. He writes "Only the revolutionary transformation of Latin America could permit the people of the United States to settle accounts with imperialism itself ... the rising struggle of the North American people against imperialist policy could become a decisive ally of the revolutionary struggle in Latin America."<sup>42</sup> Castro goes one step further to state that if these people in the United States did not act on their solidarity with Latin American revolutionary movements and support those within Latin America, then the dark reign of imperialism could further enslave individuals within

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<sup>40</sup> Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, *The Diary of Che Guevara : Bolivia, November 7, 1966-October 7, 1967*. 191 p. ill., facsim. ; 19 cm. Vol. 191 p. ill., facsim. ; 19 cm, (New York City, New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 10, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 19.

these countries. Castro established solidarity with other parts of the world here too, writing “This dark perspective equally affects the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa.”<sup>43</sup> Without *Ramparts* or the underground press, there would have been no platform for the New Left to openly express Cuban solidarity in the way Castro’s introduction did.

#### D) Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC)

Staunch anti-communists utilized the media in their own way to turn popular opinion against the leftist’s solidarity with Cuba. A prime example of this is the Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC), which operated from 1961 to 1975. Composed of both anti-Castro Cuban exiles and U.S. conservatives, TACC worked with several media organizations and prominent U.S. agencies like the FBI and CIA to spread anti-Cuban state propaganda. Richard M. Mwakasege-Minaya, professor of historical media at the University of Michigan, has studied the TACC extensively.<sup>44</sup>

Minaya writes that the TACC used three distinct strategies to disseminate information: appeals to news stations, appeals to Washington officials in the FBI, and appeals to allies in other U.S. organizations.<sup>45</sup> At this time, anti-communism was the “ideological linchpin between Cold War-era U.S. conservatives and exiles of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.”<sup>46</sup> As several mainstream media outlets heavily reported on the “threat to communism,” TACC sent anti-Castro information pamphlets and essays directly to media outlets that they felt aligned with their agendas.<sup>47</sup> They additionally claimed to have sent over 4,000 copies of their pamphlets directly to J. Edgar Hoover and James O. Eastland, the Chairman of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act, urging them to disseminate TACC’s anti-Cuba material.<sup>48</sup> The organization positioned itself within four miles of major Miami news outlets, and distributed over one million copies of books, flyers, and brochures containing their anti-communist messages. They were especially successful with hyper conservative news outlets,

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<sup>43</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Richard M. Mwakasege-Minaya, “Cold War Bedfellows: Cuban Exiles, US Conservatives, and Media Activism in the 1960s and 1970s.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 41 no. 1 (2020): 114–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2020.1815364>.

<sup>45</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 117.

<sup>46</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>47</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 124.

<sup>48</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 124.

who utilized TACC pamphlets as factual evidence in their reporting. While at first most self-proclaimed “respectable” conservatives like William F. Buckley separated themselves from such hyper conservative reporting, the TACC found a way to make itself marketable to the average American.<sup>49</sup>

What allowed the TACC to do this was its framing of its movement under the “exile model” - the idea that the entire Cuban population was a homogenous monolith that shared in the anti-Castro values of the TACC.<sup>50</sup> Minaya writes “Essential to any activist organization is the perception that they represent the group that they are advocating for, despite actual support and ingroup political diversity.”<sup>51</sup> By presenting the anti-communist, pro-West stance as one that most Cubans shared, the TACC made itself more palatable to the American public.

The TACC also framed the communist movement’s internationalist nature as an especially dangerous facet of the movement, bouncing off ideas like the domino theory of the time. TACC exile leader Luis Manara went on several shows like Life Line where he explained the dangers of the communists using TACC, writing that the revolution was evidence of the communist’s “imperial intentions.”<sup>52</sup>

#### E) FBI on *Ramparts*

Venceremos “crystallized fears within U.S. officialdom that Cuba was training Americans in the dark arts of guerrilla warfare.”<sup>53</sup> And to a degree, their intuition was correct. Most premier U.S. radicals in organizations like the Black Panther Party and the Weathermen Organization had in fact coalesced with Cuban revolutionaries, if not as a part of the Brigade, privately. It was these internationalist relationships U.S. leftists were making that caused the FBI to kick their tracking and reporting into a higher gear than they had before.

The FBI hoped to “expose” the Brigade and other solidarity movements with countries like Cuba by collecting samples of an activist’s writings and speeches as proof of the subversion caused by their internationalism. They hoped to show the public that members of the Brigade

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<sup>49</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 115.

<sup>50</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>51</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>52</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 122.

<sup>53</sup> Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists?,” 125.

were “adherents of a particular subversive ideology,” and therefore dangerous and unreliable.<sup>54</sup> FBI files of this time contain bodies of literary evidence, partially gathered from intercepted mail or informants, but mainly from the published accounts of these activists' experiences in papers like *Ramparts*.

It becomes clear that the FBI's interest in *Ramparts* increased as their work became more internationalist. In *Ramparts*' early days, the FBI was alerted to their presence, but did not view the publication as much of a threat. We can look at FBI file FD-36 (Rev. S-22-64), where an agent writes that *Ramparts* is a Lay Catholic Magazine that does not have a strong following, but that some citizens believe the work could eventually become subversive. It was at this point in the files that the FBI began tracking *Ramparts* and was receiving copies of articles by Scheer and Cleaver, and collecting bodies of files on things like Sheibaum's whistle-blower piece on the corruption of the Vietnam Project.

Yet, as *Ramparts* became more internationalist in nature, the FBI's tracking of it took a steep incline. We can look at one specific FBI file where a special agent covertly interviewed *Ramparts* writer John Gerassi at the Laos conference in Havana, Cuba. Gerassi speaks openly about the benefits of the revolution happening in Cuba, glad to see such a widespread cultural protest, and praising Castro for being so willing and open about speaking with him for a U.S. magazine. “In what other country would a thing like this happen,” Gerassi is quoted to have allegedly said.<sup>55</sup> It was at this point in the file that *Ramparts* began to be viewed as a body of literature that posed a genuine threat to democracy, and would turn people against democratic institutions.

Scheer writes in the editor's note before Castro's introduction, “We find it fitting that Che's Diary was made public by his Cuban compañeros rather than by those against whom he fought, and we feel privileged to have been involved in its first publication.”<sup>56</sup> As explained in

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<sup>54</sup> Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists?”, 126.

<sup>55</sup> FBI. *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Files on Ramparts Magazine, 1964-1975*, 2011.

[https://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/FBI-RampartsMagazine\\_1964-1975.pdf](https://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/FBI-RampartsMagazine_1964-1975.pdf) Description of document: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) files on Ramparts Magazine, 1964-1975; Released date: 31-October-2011; Posted date: 14-November-2011; Date/date range of document: 22-October-1964 – 16-May-1975; Source of document: Federal Bureau of Investigation; Attn: FOI/PA Request; Record/Information Dissemination Section; 170 Marcel Drive Winchester, VA 22602-4843; Fax: (540) 868-4995/4996/4997; E-mail:foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov; Note: FBI Files included: 100-HQ-445393 - Sections 1-5; 100-HQ-445393-EBF - Section 104; 44-HQ-25706 SERIAL 1351 - Section 42; 44-HQ-25706 SERIAL 1407 - Section 44; 52-HQ-94527 SERIAL 2065 - Section 30; Some records are undated.

<sup>56</sup> Castro, *The Diary*; Scheer, 1.

the introduction, one of the stages of the FBI's "lit.-cop federalism" policy was intentionally mistranslating radical pieces like Che's Diary to pit domestic activists against internationalists. As *Ramparts* became more internationalist and became aware that the FBI would perceive them as a bigger threat, they were intentional about getting ahead of a potential mistranslation by publishing their own first-hand, vetted, accurate translation of Che's diary. Castro was aware of the CIA tracking Che's diary and other inciting literature, and openly acknowledges it in his introduction. Castro writes that certain news organizations that were working for the CIA "had access to the document [Che's diary] in Bolivia and have made photostatic copies of it – but with the promise to abstain from publishing it for the moment."<sup>57</sup>

The internationalist rhetoric did not start or stop with Cuba - in fact *Ramparts* wrote most extensively about its anti-Vietnam War perspectives, publishing articles written by correspondents they sent to North Vietnam to get an alternative on the ground perspective of what was happening in the war. FBI files about these endeavors are similarly based on literature written by these journalists, and demonstrate the lengths the U.S. government was willing to go to understand what these leftist publications were writing about.

In Hoover's second stage of "lit-cop federalism," sometimes the Bureau would attempt to use these bodies of literary archives as grounds to prosecute writers on other terms.<sup>58</sup> For example, Richardson writes that the FBI and CIA both could use mailing addresses on these bodies of literature to see if *Ramparts* was receiving foreign investors, and through the National Security Act of 1947, conduct internal surveillance of the magazine on those grounds. It was through that specific practice that the Bureau was able to find two Communist Party members on the staff.

The efforts of the FBI in tracking the underground press were neither limited to *Ramparts* or Cuba, but the ways in which they grappled with the evolution of a leftist magazine as it became more internationalist shows a poignant example of the threat that the Third World Left was to the U.S. government. We find another example of this in the work of *Liberator Magazine* and the decolonization of Africa.

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<sup>57</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 9, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.



### Chapter 3: *Liberator Magazine*

#### A) African Decolonization

Between 1960 to 1961, 28 African nations became free from colonial rule and were left with radical governmental shifts.<sup>59</sup> Due to Cold War alignments of the time, these nations “required support from international allies to sustain their autonomy and to guarantee that basic goods and services could be distributed to their citizenry.”<sup>60</sup> The question then became whether they would receive this aid from the United States or the Soviet Union. In order to protect their own anti-Soviet interests, the United States relied on organizations like the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) and the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) to defend U.S. interests in the region.

In the wake of African independence movements, there was a “shift in African American consciousness,” as Black Americans revisited their relationship with Africa.<sup>61</sup> Two main opinions emerged. Organizations like ACOA and AMSAC held a firm, liberal, anticommunist interest in African independence. While they represented anti-nationalist sentiments in domestic civil rights movements, they represented pro-nationalist sentiments in regard to Africa. These groups felt that U.S. backed involvement in the area was necessary. AMSAC was held in “esteem... in elite intellectual and government circles”, where it served as the pinnacle of conversations on African liberation and Pan-Africanism.<sup>62</sup> The group published essays like “Africa Seen by American Negro Scholars (1958)” by leading Black scholars like St. Clair Drake and John Henrik Clarke.<sup>63</sup>

On the other side, the Liberation Committee for Africa (LCA) would become strong opposers to liberal anti-communist groups like ACOA and AMSAC. While they were also grappling with the new consciousness Black Americans were experiencing due to the liberation of Africa, LCA was firmly against U.S. involvement in the region. They focused on creating a Pan-African identity – the idea that all people of African descent have a shared heritage and should be unified. They released a formal Statement of Aims to that effect early on:

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<sup>59</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

To work for and support the immediate liberation of all colonial peoples  
To provide a public forum for African freedom fighters  
To provide concrete aid to African freedom fighters  
To re-establish awareness of the common cultural heritage of Afro-americans  
with their African brothers.<sup>64</sup>

It was soon revealed that AMSAC was financed in part by the CIA Committee on Race and Class in World Affairs. AMSAC supported the American-Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Inc. that “hoped to provide intercourse between American and Nigerian businessmen,” yet had no Nigerians on its board of directors.<sup>65</sup> The LCA held a much stricter anti-imperialist position than the AMSAC, as outlined in their Statement of Aims, so they spoke out fervently against such actions taken by the AMSAC. LCA wanted African Liberation to entail an anti-west, Pan-African cultural revolution, which involvement from the CIA was fighting against using the AMSAC.

Dan Watts, leader of the LCA, experienced a long-standing frustration with liberal Black activist groups. Watts attended the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA), where leader of the struggle in Mozambique Eduardo Mondlane spoke up on behalf of Watts and LCA, saying they were the “only group who have managed to combine any active interest in the American Negro struggle for equality with an intense interest in African freedom.”<sup>66</sup> Watts agreed with Mondlane’s comments, saying that mainstream liberal Black groups were more concerned in maintaining western political and economic ties with the continent, rather than helping any grass roots anti-imperialist initiatives like they should be. Watts said he was done waiting around for liberal groups to provide any support, and that he would be taking matters into his own hands through the LCA.

## B) Congo Crisis

One of the major events that pushed the LCA to the forefront of the African independence and Black nationalism movement was the Congo Crisis and the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in 1961. The leftist leader Lumumba earned the support of the LCA, who published a telegram on January 21, 1961 that they sent to his wife that

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<sup>64</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 42.

<sup>66</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 55.

said they viewed Lumumba as a “symbol of liberation for all Africans at home and abroad.”<sup>67</sup> However, 4 days prior to this press release, Lumumba was killed. This news was not released until February 13, 1961, a full 22 days after. Upon hearing this news, the LCA released another press release by Watts condemning the UN and the U.S. for being responsible for Lumumba’s capture and murder.

At this time, several Black activist groups of the New Left took to the streets to protest the death of Lumumba. They spoke about how the U.S. government was complicit in Lumumba’s death due to his “pro-Soviet” tendencies, calling out the United States for their unjust actions. Watts spoke at the protests, making sure journalists heard him. It was at this moment that he officially announced the formation of the Liberation Committee for Africa, formalizing its role as an organization focused on exposing U.S. based corruption in Africa.<sup>68</sup>

While the LCA made its own press releases, its voice was undoubtedly unified in its formal publication - *Liberator Magazine*. Watts was the editor-in-chief of *Liberator*, alongside editors John Henrik Clarke and Beveridge. Watts utilized close ties with “African diplomats, students, artists, and workers” in order to create leverage for African American communities who were fighting for their own rights on the home front.<sup>69</sup> Yet, as the actions of AMSAC began to more directly threaten the goals of the LCA, *Liberator Magazine* played a critical role in exposing CIA and government ties to supposedly anti-colonial organizations like the AMSAC. *Liberator* published significant literature about the necessity for Pan-African connections. Similar to *Ramparts*, *Liberator* not only questioned American policies, but reprinted Nigerian and other African papers that were asking the same questions about the role of the U.S. in their regions, allowing a wider network of people to see the issues being presented in Africa. This helped expand the Pan-African notion too. *Liberator Magazine* made its paper internationalist in the same way *Ramparts* did, except with the framework of Pan-Africanism at the forefront of its efforts, in order to provide a leftist perspective on African decolonization, working with the LCA to fight against the continued influence of the West in the region.

### C) FBI’s Coverage of Watts and *Liberator Magazine*

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<sup>67</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 20.

Similar to *Ramparts*, the FBI began paying special attention to *Liberator* as they began to openly express solidarity with Africa. FBI informants were tracking the LCA the second that they began protests against Lumumba's murder. An "anonymous source" tipped the FBI to a memorial being held for Lumumba on February 23, 1961. One sponsor of this meeting was Watts.

As Watts has made his name known to the FBI, they began sending agents to the events he would be present at. One such agent had lunch with Watts at the Delegates Dining Room in New York, for the UN. This agent covertly engaged in a conversation with Watts, who allegedly proclaimed opinions that the FBI deemed to be threatening to the U.S. government. The file NY 105-42387 reads "He [Watts] stated to the informant that he is of the firm opinion that violence is necessary to attract attention to the cause of the LCA."<sup>70</sup>

As the FBI began understanding the degree of *Liberator's* solidarity with African decolonization, the Bureau collected more evidence for their literary archives in order to pit liberal Old Left Black activists against these Third World leftists. They used some of the same tactics in Ghana to monitor these leftists.

#### D) FBI and Ghana Independence

*Liberator Magazine's* reporting was just as impacted by Ghanaian independence movements as it was with what was happening in the Congo. The Conventions People Party led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was the largest political group in Ghana a few years before the country gained its independence, controlling 79 out of the 104 seats in its government.<sup>71</sup> Nkrumah's vision was for a Ghana completely independent of imperialist rule. The LCA was fascinated by Nkrumah's government, and believed it served as a representation of the potential for independence in the continent as a whole. *Liberator Magazine* sent Selma Sparks, an advisory board member and labor rights activist, to attend Nkrumah's "world without the bomb"

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<sup>70</sup> FBI. JFK Assassination System Identification Form , n.d. <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/docid-32339197.pdf> FBI, 124-90146-10029, HQ, Agency File Number 105-93072-18, originator, FBI, NY, HQ, Richard Thomas Gibson, Paper, Textual Document, Unclassified, 4, Redact, 10/16/1998, indefinite, RPT, Released under the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (44 USC 2107 Note). Case# NW 54464 Date: 10-10-2017.

<sup>71</sup> S. A. de Smith. "The Independence of Ghana." *The Modern Law Review* , Jul., 1957, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jul., 1957), pp. 347-363, n.d. <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/1092185>.

conference.<sup>72</sup> Selma reported back to *Liberator* with optimism for the new government Nkrumah was trying to install. This hope for an anti-imperialist Africa was shared by many African-American expatriates, who Tinson writes moved to Ghana under “Nkrumah’s idealistic diaspora-wide invitation to assist in the development of the young nation.”<sup>73</sup>

The context of the Cold War and atomic weapon development would continue capturing the interest of reporters in Africa, and *Liberator* hoped to amplify those voices. For example, UN secretary general U. Thant spoke about how there was a racist element to the U.S. dropping the atomic bomb over Japan but not willing to drop the bomb over Germany to end WW2.<sup>74</sup>

Nkrumah held conferences on the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. There was a real palpable fear in Ghana that the U.S. was going to use this newfound power to continue to oppress nations in Africa. T.D. Baffoe wrote about this phenomenon in the *Ghanaian Times*, and expressed how the U.S. was largely viewed as an oppressive police state by the rest of the world. *Liberator* republished this article in a 1964 edition of their newspaper.

## U.S. Image in Ghana

The following article appeared in *The Ghanaian Times* (5/30/64) under the by-line of its Editor-in-Chief, T.D. Baffoe, who recently toured the U.S. as a member of a Ghana delegation.

officers whisked off the man, Odis Hyde, to his place of work in a police car and were to stay with him wherever he went, from the toilet to the lunch room, while a third rather well-mannered giant of a security agent was put on the



terical drama.

The Afro-Americans' struggle strengthened by the successes of the African Liberation movement and the social and ideological revolution raging in our continent, is now beyond the point of appeasement

T.D. Baffoe was a Ghanaian journalist who toured the U.S. as a part of a delegation. While he was in Chicago, President Lyndon Johnson was set to visit the area. In anticipation of his arrival, Johnson’s secret police worked with the FBI to send notices to Baffoe and other suspected communists to “refrain from either opening the window” in their hotel rooms, or making any gestures that would “cause alarm to any of the security personnel.” A poor Black

<sup>72</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 51.

<sup>73</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 51.

<sup>74</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 62.

couple that had expressed anti-capitalist sentiments were guarded by two members of Johnson's secret police as well, during his visit to Chicago. Baffoe later learned that several hotels in the area were similarly visited by the secret police, and suspected subversives were tightly surveillanced.

Baffoe writes that while he understands the measures the U.S is taking to protect internal security (especially so soon after Kennedy's assassination), he is unable to accept the hypocrisy of these same people having an opinion about the importance of maintaining a free democracy in Africa. Baffoe writes, "But when their journalists, who have not carefully studied events in Africa and seem not to know the history of America's own struggle for independence... dare to moralize to Ghana, and to Africa, about the liberty of the individual in a democratic society, then it is the duty of the press and Governments in Africa to tell off the holier-than-thou hostile U.S. press."

It is this solidarity between American leftists and activists in Africa that prompted the FBI to carefully monitor journalists in *Liberator Magazine*. The Bureau hoped to curtail efforts of Pan-Africanism and decolonization by pitting internationalist writers against domestic civil rights activists, capitalizing on tensions between groups like AMSAC and LCA. Similar to how the FBI monitored *Ramparts*, their monitoring of *Liberator* showed the threat that the Third World Left posed to the U.S. government, as they felt they were going to lose their control of domestic and global affairs.

#### **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

Solidarity with the Third World Left through internationalist efforts was undoubtedly one of the most defining hallmarks of leftist activism during the 60s and 70s. Individuals traveled abroad to witness movements happening in countries like Cuba, Ghana, and the Congo, and worked with grassroots organizations like Venceremos to help in the fight against American imperialism. Yet, the impact of these efforts would not have been nearly as large without these stories being amplified by leftist press outlets like *Liberator* and *Ramparts*.

As evidenced by Hoover's "lit.-cop federalism" practices, the U.S. government recognized the power that these leftist news outlets had in mobilizing the counterculture against U.S. policies. It is for this exact reason that they worked so hard to discredit and dismantle

organizations that were spreading an anti-imperialist message at a time when Cold War fears of communism were so high.

The work of the underground press at a time when the country was so afraid of the Third World Left was invaluable in preserving freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. The extent of FBI's tracking of their work goes to show how effective these papers were at challenging mainstream narratives, even if for a short period of time. They provided a voice for the silenced stories of decolonization and internationalist movements that the FBI did not want circulated.

When we look at the evolution of news today, specifically post-2016, we can see how the government is able to discredit news that attempts to hold people in power accountable. While there is a large body of polarized, inaccurate information being circulated, the government sweeps genuine investigative journalism into that category to draw attention away from their own corruption. In the same way Hoover was eventually successful in silencing the Underground Press, the last 5 years have shown us how effective the government can be at discrediting unsavory news. This illustrates how important it is to have access to reliable news that paints a holistic picture of the truth, outside of the narrative that politicians want us to believe. With the oversaturation of content and media, it is unclear where we will receive our information going forward. However, there is a strong and timely lesson to be learned from the Underground Press Syndicate of the 1960s and 1970s. They demonstrated the profound effect that ground-breaking investigative journalism can have, in spite of a federal police force that hoped to silence it at every turn.

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