
Register of the Herbert Romerstein collection

Finding aid prepared by Dale Reed

Hoover Institution Archives

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Title: Herbert Romerstein collection

Date (inclusive): 1864-2011

Collection Number: 2012C51

Contributing Institution: Hoover Institution Archives

Language of Material: English

Physical Description: 1235 manuscript boxes, 36 oversize boxes, 17 cardfile boxes(573.2 linear feet)

Abstract: Pamphlets, leaflets, serial issues, studies, reports, and synopses of intelligence documents relating to the Communist International, communism and communist front organizations in the United States, Soviet espionage and covert operations, and propaganda and psychological warfare, especially during World War II.

Physical Location: Hoover Institution Archives

Creator: Romerstein, Herbert, collector.

Access

The collection is open for research.

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Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Herbert Romerstein collection, [Box number], Hoover Institution Archives.

Acquisition Information

Acquired by the Hoover Institution Archives in 2012, with subsequent increments through 2015.

Accruals

Materials may have been added to the collection since this finding aid was prepared. To determine if this has occurred, find the collection in Stanford University's online catalog at <http://searchworks.stanford.edu/>. Materials have been added to the collection if the number of boxes listed in the online catalog is larger than the number of boxes listed in this finding aid.

Historical Note

The Herbert Romerstein collection consists of material collected by Herbert Romerstein (1931-2013) over a period of many decades, during which he served successively as a staff member of United States Congressional committees (House Committee on Un-American Activities, House Committee on Internal Security, and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence) and of the United States Information Agency. He made use of the collection as research material for several publications of which he was author or co-author, including *The KGB against the Main Enemy: How the Soviet Intelligence Service Operates against the United States* (Lexington, 1989), *Heroic Victims: Stalin's Foreign Legion in the Spanish Civil War* (Washington, D.C., 1994), *The Venona Secrets: Exposing Soviet Espionage and America's Traitors* (Washington, D.C., 2000), and *Stalin's Secret Agents: The Subversion of Roosevelt's Government* (New York, 2012).

Scope and Content of Collection

The principal focus of the collection is on international communism and on communism in the United States. Besides material issued by or relating to the Communist International, the Young Communist International, the Communist Information Bureau, the Communist Party, U.S.A., the Young Communist League and Communist parties of countries other than the United States, there is also a great deal of material issued by communist front organizations, ostensibly independent from Communist parties but closely associated with them and concentrated on specific fields or issues, including peace, labor, religion, race, ethnicity, journalism, law, education, women, youth, and solidarity with Communist-bloc countries or movements abroad.

Among those organizations covered are the World Peace Council, American League against War and Fascism, Red International of Labor Unions, World Federation of Trade Unions, International Labor Defense, International Red Aid, Workers International Relief, Christian Peace Conference, National Negro Congress, International Workers Order, International Order of Journalists, International Association of Democratic Lawyers, Women's International Democratic Federation, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, World Federation of Democratic Youth, International Union of Students, World Youth and Student Festival, American Youth Congress, Friends of the Soviet Union, National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, and Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization.

While correspondence and internal and public issuances of these organizations form the largest volume of material, the collection also includes reports and other writings of a critical nature about them. The extent of documentation of this network of organizations is unusually comprehensive. There is also much information on Communist activity within a wider range of organizations covering the same gamut of areas as communist front organizations, as well as mainstream political parties, the United Nations, the Socialist International, and the United States government from the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt to that of Barack Obama.

A second focus is on Soviet espionage in the United States. The collection includes a set of the Venona Project intercepts of Soviet diplomatic communications made by the United States government during the 1930s and 1940s and publicly released in the 1990s. It also includes an English translation of the complete set of notes made by Alexander Vassiliev on the contents of Soviet intelligence service files that he examined in the 1990s. Access to these files was subsequently closed by the Russian government, but Vassiliev's notes served as a basis for the books *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America: The Stalin Era* (New York, 1999) and *Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America* (New Haven, 2009), both of which Vassiliev co-authored.

A third focus of the collection is on psychological warfare, including disinformation and forgery. There is a large body of English-language propaganda pamphlets and booklets issued by the Soviet government. In addition to documentation of propagandistic activity by Communist International and other Communist organizations, there is a large body of propaganda leaflets and flyers, issued by the American, Soviet, British, German and Japanese governments during World War II, and lesser quantities from World War I, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War, illustrating the employment of this aspect of modern warfare by belligerents on all sides. A lesser theme concerns documentation of far-right organizations and particularly of antisemitic activity. The collection includes a large collection of antisemitic publications, including many editions of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in various languages. Some other notable subsidiary themes include: a collection of song books of revolutionary and also of Nazi organizations; a collection of Communist publications designed for children and issued by the Young Pioneers of America; a considerable volume of material on Communist Party activity in the International Brigades and various relief organizations during the Spanish Civil War; documentation of splinter groups from the Communist International and Communist Party, U.S.A.; proposals for regulation or reform of United States national intelligence agencies in the post-Watergate era; and international terrorism in the 9/11 era.

Communist International records in Russian archives provide a major source of material in the collection. There is a large volume of photocopies of documents from these records. A large proportion of these documents concerns the Communist International's relations with the Communist Party, U.S.A., but many documents deal more generally with Communist International activities. There is a considerable bloc relating to Willi Münzenberg and his international front organization work. English translations of some documents are included.

Photocopies of documents from archives of the East German Ministerium für Staatssicherheit provide sources for the history of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands and of Soviet espionage in Germany, as do photocopies from German police records of the Nazi era. There are also photocopies from British government security archives, and many photocopies of documents captured by the United States government from guerrillas in Nicaragua and El Salvador and from the New Jewel Movement in Grenada.

The sources of some of the other material in the collection are readily apparent, but are obscure in other cases. Many items, notably pamphlets and serial issues, were publicly available. These include reports of the United States Subversive Activities Control Board and other federal agencies and of anti-communist commissions established by a number of individual state governments. Some material was generated by, or passed through the hands of, the Congressional committees on whose staffs Romerstein served. Original letters to individuals, notably Albert E. Kahn and Jessica Smith, whose papers may have been confiscated, are likely in this category.

Copies of raw governmental working documents, especially Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency reports and Department of State dispatches, were acquired, often in redacted form, in response to Freedom of Information Act requests. A substantial body of material from the 1920s and 1930s was collected and/or generated by the American Vigilant Intelligence Federation, a private anti-communist organization with headquarters in Chicago. Other material was acquired from the American Security Council and other private anti-communist groups. The collection includes some papers of the anti-communist investigator J. B. Matthews, acquired from his widow. Biographical data on Communist International agents gathered by David Hornstein is also included.

Material emanating from governmental and private anti-communist sources in the United States have, in addition to their primary informational value, a secondary value in documenting the scope of surveillance of Communist Party and other radical activities. In addition to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies of the national government, the collection includes investigative files from the New York State Police and other state and local police agencies. There are many raw informant reports, including some from Morris Childs, who met with high-ranking foreign Communist leaders

while acting as a Federal Bureau of Investigation informant within the Communist Party, U.S.A., and from Jack Thompson, who infiltrated the Socialist Workers Party at the behest of the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Properly speaking the collection does not include Herbert Romerstein's own personal papers. There are, however, a few short written pieces by him, mainly printed copies, and one notable curiosity item. This is Romerstein's appeal of his expulsion from the Communist Party in 1949.

The great bulk of the collection is in the **Subject File**, which is arranged alphabetically by issuing organization or by topic. In general material relating to international or American organizations or applicable to international or American topics is entered directly, while material relating to organizations or topics in countries other than the United States is entered under name of country. Oversize serial issues and other oversize items are located in the **Oversize File**. There are also photographs in the **Audiovisual File**, a **Microform File**, and a small **Card File**.

Because the collection was received and processed in discrete installments over a period of a few years, related materials are often physically separated but are brought together intellectually through the register. While the register lists representative and especially notable items, there has been no attempt at comprehensive itemization.

Subjects and Indexing Terms

Communist International.

Communism--United States.

Subversive activities--United States.

Espionage, Russian--United States.

Secret service--Soviet Union.

World War, 1939-1945--Psychological aspects.

Psychological warfare.

Propaganda.

Boxes 1-1286

Contents List

[Downloadable PDF file of the Contents List of the Herbert Romerstein collection](#)