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The Purge

CHANDLER DAVIS

1. GROWING UP SUBVERSIVE

As a child I thought it was up to my generation to establish world socialism. My mentors reassured me that to follow my inclination and become a scientist would not be letting the cause down, because scientists would be needed after the revolution. Things like the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 — and even more the bombing of civilian populations in Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki by armies nominally on the side of progress — obliged me to see that issues of good and evil are complicated; but however hard it became to know what needed to be done politically, I never stopped wishing to do it.

Between 1947 and 1960 it was even harder than usual for left-wingers in the United States to get by. If you were active on the left, or were thought to be, there were more ways than now that you could be arrested or threatened with arrest, or have civil rights such as the right to travel abroad withdrawn. But for would-be mathematicians, the punishment for leftism was meted out not only by government but also by university administrations. You could lose your job, or be passed over for a job; even at the student stage, you could lose a fellowship or in rarer cases be expelled from school.

For me and many of my contemporaries, these were lessons we imbibed, not exactly with our mothers' milk, but with, say, the Plancherel Theorem.

We all got pretty accustomed to the danger. We watched press accounts of firings all over — with a view of protesting where feasible, but also to acquaint ourselves with the morphology and methodology of the purge so as not to be caught off guard when it struck next.

We used the networks we had with political allies, but we also made new contacts quickly with targets of successive attacks. In the late 40s, civil libertarians reached deep into their pockets to finance lectures on many campuses by targeted professors at the University of Washington and UC Berkeley. Why, at Harvard in 1948 I even helped organize a meeting which publicly deplored the detention incommunicado, without charges, of a mathematician way up in Canada. And then (not altogether unexpectedly) some of those organizing the visits and protests became the targets in the next round.

Knowing we might soon face the same form of harassment a friend — or a stranger — had faced at another campus, we would read the transcripts: Now, would that response work here? How might I do that better?

The cases that didn't make the press made the grapevine. "You're looking for a job? I thought you were at Harvard." "They told me I could resign quietly or be fired." "Gee, that's too bad. Is it okay to tell people?" "Well, I said I'd try the quiet route. It hasn't worked so far..."

Or merely "One of the guys in the department at X University told me my thesis director is saying in his letters for me that I'm 'much concerned about social issues.' No wonder I haven't found anything."

Those of us who landed in tenure-track jobs (I made it at Michigan in 1950) didn't feel secure. We saw the jobs of our teachers and older friends and relatives threatened, or snatched away. (In my case, my economist father and two of my grad school teachers, Wendell Furry and Dirk J. Struik, were three of those who preceded me as targets.)

There was a tendency to lie low politically, as you can imagine. Some of us kept stubbornly casting about for some way of keeping resistance alive. Not just defense against the Red-hunt. Organization against the Korean War, against legal lynchings of Willie McGee and other black defendants in the South, against the arms race... In 1951 our memory was very fresh of a time when civilian (international!) control of atomic energy was an objective we felt we had a chance of winning. If you had told me the arms race then beginning could continue even half as long as it has, even to one-tenth the level of firepower it did, without world war, I would have scoffed. It seemed like the last minute for disarmament already in 1951. One of the things I resented about the Red-hunt was the large share of our organizing energies it diverted away from the issues of war and racism. Not to mention socialism. When was progress to find a place on the agenda alongside avoidance of disaster?

Both the quiet leftists and the agitators like me knew that the "investigators" might presently knock on our door. Though of course all varieties of radical were in danger, those who were or had recently been Communist Party members were especially vulnerable. The FBI had reports from many spies in the Party and allied open organizations, and made fairly ample portions of

this information (true and otherwise) available to employers and to Congressional Red-hunters. The Congressional committees pressured ex-leftists into public recantations, and the repentant witness was obliged to accompany the *mea culpa* with naming names of fellow culprits. Thus they generated their own information (again, both true and otherwise) about what we were up to.

We couldn't know what the FBI had in their files. One thing I did do — and you can still do the same today, if you can bear it — is read the testimony before the House Committee on Un-American Activities by mathematicians W. Ted Martin and Norman Levinson. Beside the “friendly witnesses” like those two who supplied names to the inquisition publicly, there were unknown others who did so in closed session. We could see from repeated cases that there was a great deal of evidence the authorities might have which would be held against us, and that they might use it either by denouncing us to our employers or by a public attack.

We didn't know how far the Red-hunt would go, remember. The example of Hitler was then recent; and we knew that after passage of the McCarran-Walter Act in 1952 with both right-wing and “liberal” support, the US government was keeping concentration camps on hold to incarcerate subversives in case of (Administration-perceived) emergency. We had no way of telling whether it would come to that.

It took us a while to understand that they didn't need to rely on extirpating all of us. They might be happy to try, but they didn't need to. Firing a lot of us and jailing a few would be enough to pretty well silence the left as a coherent force. We knew they were likely to keep after us, but it was impossible to guess *which* of us.

You may like a rough body-count. I'll recall in Section 2 a good many cases involving mathematician targets in the period 1947–1960. This will not be a complete listing, I'm afraid. Even if I attempted that, I would be unable to find all the instances of damaging political denunciations made secretly, unknown to the public and sometimes even to the victim. In Section 3 I'll give more detail about my own experience: it may not be more important than others', but I can tell you for sure how it felt. Section 4 seeks silver linings. Section 5 concerns open problems.

2. THE CASUALTIES¹

The Feinberg Act, hastily passed and hastily implemented in New York state in 1949, produced a large purge of the New York City schools. A

¹Thanks to many who have shared memories and references, and especially to Ellen W. Schrecker and Lee Lorch. In many cases, even though I had personal accounts of an episode, I looked up documentation. I wish I had been able to do this in every case. By far the best general picture of the academic Red-hunt is Ellen Schrecker's *No Ivory Tower* (Oxford University Press, 1986).

mathematician, Irving Adler, was one of the high-school teachers fired, and one of the plaintiffs in a court challenge to the Act, who lost their last appeal in 1952. Finding himself excluded from teaching, Adler returned to school, got his doctorate, and became a best-selling mathematical expositor and a researcher on the mathematics of phyllotaxis. Eventually the Supreme Court, reversing itself, invalidated the Feinberg Law, and Adler and others were reinstated in the school system and put on retirement pension.

Lee Lorch in 1949–1950 had recently come from New York to join the Penn State faculty. He and his wife retained their lease on their apartment in Stuyvesant Town, a “desirable” Manhattan development then kept all-white by Metropolitan Life which owned it, but they invited black friends to live in it. The Penn State trustees passed the word to Lee that he could give up his apartment or lose his job. He refused, and was let go.

One of Lee Lorch’s Penn State colleagues, Julian Blau, was quietly fired, apparently for defending him too vigorously. These quiet firings involved a form of blackmail which was sometimes made explicit: You have the right to appeal the dismissal if you choose, but think how it will look on your record if we state our reasons for not wanting you. And indeed anyone would fear it — whether the administration honestly said they didn’t want political trouble-makers around, or cooked up “professional” grounds for the firing.

All eyes were on the University of California in 1949–1950. Like some other leading institutions, UC had a stated policy of refusing to hire Communists; this had been put on record when then-member Kenneth O. May was fired as a mathematics TA back in 1940. The Regents’ proposal in 1949 was to demand that a non-Communist oath be made a condition of employment. Vigorous faculty protest, especially from the Berkeley campus, combined several disparate arguments: that the language of the Regents’ oath was too broad, that the oath precondition was not required for other State employment [a lack the authorities later rectified], or simply that loyalty oaths were repugnant in a democracy. Most of those who rejected the oath requirement could themselves honestly have signed even its broad wording; one does not know how many were solicitous of some colleague who couldn’t. The tangled story of the oath controversy is rich in incidents and concepts. Mathematicians who left their jobs rather than sign included Hans Lewy, Paul Garabedian, Charles M. Stein, J. L. Kelley, and Pauline Sperry. (Sperry was an older professor not far from retirement, so her refusal to sign ended her teaching career.) Mathematicians who were to have come to UC but withdrew their acceptances rather than sign included Henry Helson and me. Later Shizuo Kakutani cancelled a move to Berkeley in protest of the case.²

The state of Oklahoma required a still more sweeping oath of all employees, by a 1951 law. Thirty-nine faculty members at Oklahoma A & M in Stillwater either refused to sign or modified the wording, including two mathematicians, a graduate student and the Chairman, Ainslee W. Diamond. All were suspended. An appeal resulted in the law being struck down, but by that time Diamond had relocated. Alfred Tarski pulled out of a scheduled series of lectures in Stillwater in 1951 because of the oath.

Dirk J. Struik was “investigated” by state agencies, leading to his indictment in 1951 for (among other such counts) conspiracy to overthrow the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MIT suspended him with pay for the duration of his court case, and when it was finally thrown out in 1955 (because the Supreme Court ruled another state’s similar anti-subversion statute was unconstitutional) Struik returned to regular duties. Not all major universities let pass such opportunities to punish people for charges the courts had thrown out.

Rebekka Struik, eldest child of Dirk, was let go from her job at the University of Illinois in 1950 while a graduate student there; and a fellowship she had accepted at Northwestern for the following year was withdrawn. To protest would have meant being asked to “clear herself”; she took her parents’ advice and let the matter go.

Kenneth O. May, unrepentant ex-Communist, was called to testify before a grand jury and before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1950. He was willing to talk about himself. But such a response left one exposed: one was deemed to have waived the protection of the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination, hence had no way to refuse to answer the continuation of the questioning. May is one of the very few witnesses who, in this situation, got away without being forced either to implicate their political friends or to defy the interrogators (another is Philip Morrison). The administration at Carleton College decided not to take any action against him, but it was touch-and-go.

When investigators from the Board of Higher Education of New York City were gathering testimony about Communists at Hunter College, Louis Weisner, a senior mathematician, voluntarily came forward, testifying that he had been in the Communist Party, and that it was by no means so sinister a conspiracy as alleged. He was less fortunate than May. The investigators immediately demanded names of his fellow-members of the Party. He refused to denounce anyone, and was fired.

²An account by a participant is George Stewart’s *The Year of the Oath* (Doubleday: New York, 1950). See Kelley’s article in this volume, and Florence D. Fasanelli’s article in L. Grinstein & P. Campbell, *Women in Mathematics: A Biobibliographical Sourcebook* (Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 217–219.

David S. Nathan of City College (now CUNY) had been inconclusively attacked as a Communist in 1940. With no new evidence, the charge was revived after the War. He died of cancer with the proceedings against him still unresolved.

Robert W. Rempfer was let go at Antioch at 1953 after resisting the President's demands that he cease left-wing political activity if he wanted to be regarded as of "value to the College." Yet another of those blackmail cases. He left quietly.

Felix Browder was not active on the left, but the sins of the father were visited on him. When he got his Ph.D. he found himself rich in glowing letters of recommendation, and the object of many feelers, but quite without tenure-stream offers; for years no institution dared hire the son of the recent national head of the Communist Party USA. At last in 1956 Brandeis University mustered its courage to take him, and thereafter he had no job difficulties. His mathematician younger brothers were never on the blacklist, though Bill's first job, at Rochester in 1957, was approved only over top-level opposition.

The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) repeatedly made jaunts around the country, calling witnesses friendly and unfriendly, enjoying mixed success in attracting favorable press coverage but near-total success in destroying the jobs of unfriendly witnesses (and those tagged by friendly witnesses). Starting in early 1952, HUAC announced the intention to hold hearings in Michigan. These hearings occurred in 1954. Three mathematicians were among those subpoenaed. Gerald Harrison of Wayne refused to answer political questions, citing the Fifth Amendment; a university hearing then told him he should purge himself before the Committee, and when he did not he was fired promptly. He told me at the time that he saw no future as a mathematician unless he went into industrial work, and that is what he did. For the University of Michigan case, see below.

One of the emulators of HUAC's road-show was the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee. The administration of the University of Chicago assured their faculty members subpoenaed by this committee in 1953 that they would not be fired for refusing to testify about others, providing they made full disclosure concerning themselves. The administration kept their word, too. It just somehow happened that every such unfriendly witness who was non-tenured found the job was not renewed. Among those quietly let go were mathematicians Hyman Landau, George W. Schmidt, and Alfonso Shimbel.

A moment of relief came in 1954 with the Supreme Court's ruling school segregation unconstitutional. The outstanding example, to us at the time, of an indication that the skid toward fascism was at least not monotonic! And it enters the present tale.

An accidental benefit of Lee Lorch's firing at Penn State was his subsequent hiring at Fisk, where by all accounts he supplied a spark uniquely valuable

to a whole academic generation of black undergraduates. But in 1954, after his daughter was enrolled in an otherwise all-black elementary school, HUAC called him to the stand, he refused to answer political questions, and his job was put on the line. His enemies on the (largely white) Board eventually put enough pressure on the waverers to get him dismissed in 1955.

Fisk's loss was in turn the gain of Philander Smith, a much more obscure black college in Little Rock, which hired Lee Lorch though he was under indictment for contempt of Congress (a case that was later thrown out). The Arkansas schools were being integrated in compliance with the Supreme Court's 1954 ruling; the segregationist governor led the defiance of these court orders, at Little Rock Central High School. Lee Lorch and his wife Grace worked with the local NAACP in its support of integration of the high school. At the height of the confrontation Grace fortuitously was able to rescue a black teenager from an ugly mob. The incident made national headlines, and Grace was almost immediately subpoenaed by the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee. She refused to answer political questions. Under heavy outside pressure, the college terminated Lee's job.

You get the picture.

As I said already, it would be too hard to list all cases. My object has been to give the overall shape of things, and thus mitigate the distortion entailed by giving only one case in any depth: my own.

3. BEING A CASE

As a warm-up, there was the Atomic Energy Commission Fellowship. I had been awarded one in 1949 to support me for my last year of graduate school. Then lo, a flamboyant senator from Iowa issued thunderbolts against a Communist grad student in North Carolina who was currently holding an AEC Fellowship. There were hearings in Washington, recriminations, withdrawal of his fellowship, and sudden imposition of a non-Communist oath as a condition for holding the fellowship in the future. I was then a member of the Party; I discussed with my branch whether it would be best to drop out at least temporarily so I could honestly sign the oath, but the group decision was that I should stay in the Party and scrounge around for other funds, and I did.

(The alternative of falsely signing the oath was not raised. I recognize, and I hope my reader does, that it is sometimes necessary and ethical to lie to a repressive régime; but for me false denial of membership was never under consideration.)

Then just for further emphasis, there was the California oath. My thesis director had kindly (and without consulting me) lined up a job for me at UCLA. Starting in February 1950, therefore, I watched especially closely the

turbulent fight over the Regents' oath. In this situation even if I had left the Party I would not have been willing to sign the oath, because it would have been a breach of solidarity with the courageous resistance to it. Most reluctantly coming to the conclusion that the fight was being lost, I resigned the UCLA job in early May and began looking around for something else. Belatedly? You bet. I luckily got two good offers, and accepted Michigan.

A little reminder of my helplessness came in 1952. A minion of the State Department came to our apartment and asked for my passport and my wife's. Maybe I shouldn't have given them to him?

So clearly there was a touch of "here we go again" in autumn 1953 when two unprofessorial types showed up in 374 West Engineering Building and said they were from the House Committee on Un-American Activities. "Congratulations," I gibed. They said they wanted to talk with me, but this was altogether perfunctory, quite unlike the protracted interviews I know they had with others. In short order they had served me with a subpoena and departed.

I set about exploring my possible responses. First talking it over with family and friends. Then putting out inquiries to others who I thought might have got subpoenas too. And contacts with the Department and the President of the University, who like me were going to have some hard decisions. All this was done in haste, and then redone several times as the Committee repeatedly postponed their hearings.

Through movement networks I learned of a number of prospective witnesses I didn't know, including the Wayne State mathematician Gerry Harrison. Several U of M friends turned out to be on the list too, in particular the mathematician Nate Coburn. There were altogether (I was told later) fifteen subpoenas issued to University of Michigan faculty. The Administration asked the Committee please to call only a manageable number of these to the stand in public hearings, and talked them down to four. Two of these four were Nate and myself, stalwarts of the Council of the Arts, Sciences, and Professions (ASP: the bitter-enders who kept the left visible on campus); the other two were men I'd never heard of, former active Communists now occupied 100% with research. When I finally met them the following spring, I can't recall through whom, I liked them a lot.

Nate Coburn was ill. Just the year before, when he and I were distributing ASP leaflets, he had complained of mysterious weakness in his legs; soon after, it was diagnosed as an attack (probably not his first) of multiple sclerosis. His medical advice was to "lead a bland existence, avoid all stress." Through all the months of postponements, in spite of all the evidence they were given of his medical condition, the Committee cruelly left his subpoena in force, cancelling it only immediately before the hearing. Short of a public attack on Nate, then, they subjected him to as much suffering as possible. I hope

my wife and I were a help to the Coburns during this tension. They surely were to us.

The President of the University, Harlan Hatcher, was all prepared for the situation. He had participated the previous spring in passing the policy statement of the Association of American Universities, to the effect that “present membership in the Communist Party extinguishes the right to a university position” and that the professor “owes his colleagues in the university complete candor.” He had worked out with the Academic Senate a procedure for handling any refusals to testify. When it came to the fact in May 1954, he improvised rather different procedures, it wasn’t clear why.³ There was an agreed-upon Senate Advisory Committee to consider any administration proposal to dismiss; but the President interpolated an extra stage before his decision to dismiss: an Ad Hoc Committee, also chosen by the Senate.

On my side, I told the President already in November what to expect. I would refuse to answer all political questions from HUAC, on the First Amendment grounds that the inquisition into political activity was interference by the Congress with the deliberations of the nation’s highest governing body, the electorate. I would refuse to answer any university interrogation which appeared as a mere extension of the HUAC heresy-hunting. Though I had been more vocal about my political views than most of my colleagues, I refused to discuss them for the sake of an official judgement whether they were acceptable. It was predictable that my refusal to answer HUAC, without invocation of the Fifth Amendment, would lead to my indictment for contempt of Congress; indeed, indictment was required in order that I have standing to challenge HUAC’s legality in the courts.

A strange plan? Well, it seemed like the thing to do at the time. If it sounds quixotic to you, I won’t debate the point. The motivation was my resolution to face the Red-hunt as squarely as possible. If I had still been in the CP, I would likely have been urged, perhaps even ordered, to “take the Fifth.” I had dropped out of the Party the previous June, with no rancorous repudiations; for several years prior to that, most of my significant political activity such as ASP was unaffected by the circumstance of some members of our little band being in the Party and most not. Throughout my case, I went out of my way not to dissociate myself from those who took the Fifth.

My courteous private interview with President Hatcher did not altogether achieve mutual understanding. He evinced as little comprehension of what I was about as would the Congressional committee.

That was little enough. When he had me on the stand, Rep. Kit Clardy (R, Mich), incredulous that I denied his power to quiz me about my associ-

³This and some other details are critically discussed in the report of the AAUP’s investigating committee: *AAUP Bulletin*, 44 (1958), 53–101. For example, sections II.2 and IV.2.

ations, asked whether I was acquainted with President Hatcher. I refused to answer, of course.

Gratifying though it was to me and my supporters to read a cogent statement of my position into the HUAC hearing records, it had no bearing on my court challenge. I was indicted for contempt of Congress for refusing to answer, and the point was to get the Supreme Court to accept the argument in my defense that the hearing was illegal and so nothing I did at it (cogent or not) could be the basis for a finding of guilt. This challenge was known to be a long shot, and sure enough, I lost and served a 6-month sentence in 1960.

Immediately upon our testimony, 10 May 1954, the three unfriendly witnesses were suspended with pay. The Executive Committee of my Department met at once and unanimously called for me to be reinstated without prejudice. Most of the other members of the Department submitted a letter saying the same. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts called me in for a brief chat, after which they unanimously made the same recommendation.

Ah, but then we came to the hearings that really counted. The two Senate committees, though each included at least one "liberal" among its five members, clearly felt mandated to smoke out Reds. My companions in the dock, professors of pharmacology and zoology, both of whom had "taken the Fifth" before HUAC, discussed their politics freely before the Ad Hoc Committee, which then divided as to whether their heresies were sufficiently grave to "extinguish the right to a university position." As for me, since I had announced I would not describe my own left-wing views and activities in that context, the Ad Hoc Committee sought other ways of finding how left I was.

(1) They called some of my colleagues in a secret session and asked them! Of this session (which I did not know about at the time) more below. It seems to have provided the Committee with nothing they could use against me. (2) David Dennison, the only member of the Ad Hoc Committee I knew personally, took me aside before the formal session and urged me in a collegial tone to follow J. Robert Oppenheimer's example of openness. He presumed rightly that I admired Oppenheimer's physics, but how could he have hoped that I would take as a model of morality Oppenheimer's turning in to the thought police his brother and dozens of his friends? And (3) the Ad Hoc Committee asked one of HUAC's "investigators" what it had on me. He gave them six items, with which I was solemnly confronted at my hearing.

This was a deflating moment for me. I had been active on the left since before starting college, and it seemed to me that some of my efforts had

been worth noting. Yet that most conspicuous exposé of leftist subversion, HUAC, had apparently never heard of my exploits. The list they submitted in response to the University's request for the dirt on me was half wrong, and mostly vague: manifestly, just guesswork.

[Earlier, at the HUAC hearing itself, I had experienced the same chagrin. To judge by their questions, all the Committee knew about me was that I had had my passport taken away by the State Department, and that I had had something to do with a pamphlet distributed on campus by ASP and a student organization in 1952 — against *them*, HUAC. Like browbeating prosecuting attorneys, they kept after me to “admit” I had written “Operation Mind”. Now “Operation Mind” was a fine tract, and I had been at a couple of sessions when it was undergoing revision, but it wasn't mine. I guess I can reveal its authors now, they both have tenure: my wife, and Elizabeth M. Douvan. An undergraduate and I contributed our typing skills to produce nice neat copy, which I took down to Edwards Letterprint for photo-offsetting. Apparently the Red-hunt, at least its HUAC arm, had overlooked me until 1952. If they hadn't started asking about who had got “Operation Mind” duplicated, they might have chanced to overlook me even longer.]

To find the Ad Hoc Committee conducting this shabby inquisition was not surprising to one who had been following parallel cases at other campuses, but it was disappointing. At that stage, as a 27-year-old instructor, I wasn't up to telling my august colleagues they should be ashamed of themselves, though intellectually I saw that that was called for. Next best: I was respectful, patient but firm. They were unabashed and unappeased. They split on what should be done with the ex-Reds who answered their questions, but concerning me they were unanimous. They found me guilty of “deviousness, artfulness and indirection hardly to be expected of a University colleague.” The President moved with alacrity to recommend my dismissal.

That put me in a hearing before the Senate Advisory Committee: another quintet of distinguished colleagues, this time chaired by a “liberal”; another shabby inquisition; another recommendation to fire me. The Board of Regents moved with alacrity to comply.

Then followed eight years in limbo: a precarious job in industry, part-time teaching when I could find it, fellowships, editing *Mathematical Reviews* (fun, that), prison. A broadening time. The experience of marginality is good for the soul and better for the intellect. And throughout, the joy of watching my children grow; always mathematics; always political struggle. My political activity in 1954–1960 was mostly surrounding my court case. I fumed, even more than before, that defense of civil liberties was pre-empting all my energies though it was only one of the burning issues. After my release from prison, it was relaxing to go on an anti-Bomb march with my wife again.

4. WHETHER TO DESPAIR

To Ed Moïse, the memory of those days “is a burden: my respect for the human race has never recovered from the beating that it took then.” I remember a lot of things with pleasure.

Let’s remember Moïse, my wife, and a philosopher friend going over my planned testimony with me before my HUAC appearance.

Let’s remember Moïse, Gail Young, Wilfred Kaplan, and Bill LeVeque sitting around the kitchen table with me trying out tactical ideas for the university Ad Hoc Committee interrogation.

When the Ad Hoc Committee convoked some of the mathematicians to ask them how Red was Davis after all, Sumner Myers said he refused to take part in such a proceeding; and he walked out. Well said, Sumner.

At the last stage of my expulsion, the Senate Advisory Committee gave one last opportunity to speak — not only to me, but to the Executive Committee of my Department too. Bill LeVeque took this opportunity to say that in my place he would do exactly what I had done; Wilfred Kaplan said that went for him too. What could the Committee have made of that? Did they think Bill and Wilfred were saying that if they had as shameful a past as mine they would refuse to discuss it? I took Bill and Wilfred to mean rather that the “lack of candor” for which I was about to be fired was the proper response for anybody. That line of thought was one the Senate Advisory Committee had to avoid, for they could hardly recommend firing Myers, Kaplan, and LeVeque for lack of candor.

During the academic year 1954–1955, I hung around Ann Arbor, jobless and under indictment, trying to make new plans. Raoul Bott and other friends collected a pretty substantial amount of money to help tide me over (the Regents had even denied me severance pay). I said, look, I got into this myself, you don’t have to pay my grocery bills; on the other hand, my court challenge to Congressional Red-hunters is a worthy civil liberties cause, and you can help out with my legal expenses if you want. A few days later an amused peacenik at a neighboring institution sent me a check for \$100 accompanied by a note saying, “You are absolutely not to use this for groceries.”

In 1959, the last stage of my court appeal, Bill Pierce and other mathematicians raised quite a respectable share of my legal expenses.

Same with others. David Blackwell chaired a committee of well-known mathematicians soliciting defense funds for the court appeal of Lee Lorch.⁴

⁴See *Notices of the AMS*, no. 20 (Nov. 1956), 17.

Such a campaign does two things. It brings people together to resist the oppression, and it is a way that the unfired can overtly refuse to reject the people who have been branded to be pariahs.

In the same way, when I got out of prison in 1960, though I was looking forward just to a quiet return to my wife and children, it was nice that mathematicians and others put on a triumphal welcome-home party.

We had better face the bad with the good. Proposals to protest Lorch's firing were vocally opposed by some on the grounds that he was primarily a political agitator and only secondarily a mathematician. Yet the evidence was already in then that he did much more than hobbyist research! It says a lot about the atmosphere then prevailing that such a specious argument could be advanced and be taken seriously. Plainly, some mathematicians were clutching at excuses for not doing the right thing when the right thing might be inconvenient; everyone falls into such rationalizations sometimes. I want to emphasize that such responses were not general.

More general was another kind of failure. I give two instances. (1) Of the twenty-odd Penn State mathematicians who had signed a statement on Lee Lorch's behalf when he was under attack, many rushed to remove their signatures as soon as it appeared his job was lost. (2) After I had been fired from Michigan, the college Executive Committee, which had unanimously called for my reinstatement in May, averred that it "was impressed by the reasoning and accepted the conclusions" of the Senate committees — microscopically short of a retraction.

I call this undignified haste in accepting *faits accomplis* the Grenada Effect. You remember that a few days before President Reagan ordered the invasion of Grenada hardly anyone could be found who favored such a move, but once it had been done it was widely popular. So easily, without resorting to reason or even to coercion, can the powerful change opinions, just by having the power.

5. SOME OPEN PROBLEMS

I. *Wouldn't you have been able to keep your job if you had cooperated with the university committees?*

I regard this as a rather easy question, but not entirely settled. It has to be properly formulated: after all, I was going for rather slender hopes in everything in those days, the question really is whether the chances of keeping my job would have risen just a bit. Maybe.

I remember a tactical meeting with a few (non-Party) friends in May 1954 on just this point. Should I hastily rejoin the Party so as to be able to give the university committees a yes answer to the \$64 question? That seemed rather involuted. Should I then say no, I was not a Party member? That would have

been technically accurate, but the word stuck in my throat. There would have been no way to insist sufficiently on my radicalism, I would inevitably have seemed to be pleading not guilty of an *offense* of which friends still in the Party were guilty. I would have been accepting the inquisition's terms. I feel good still about having refused to play their game. I even dare to hope that some political point was communicated — not to the committees, but to somebody.⁵

So I scrupulously said nothing on the record which a Party member couldn't have said. My misgivings about "Soviet legality" could be expressed privately — and were, even before my case. It wasn't till fourteen years later (and then reluctantly) that I took a public political position which differentiated me from the Party. By then people's memory of my case was dim, and protesting the Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia took priority.

II. *Your difficulties in the 1950s don't affect you now, do they?* In other words, the blacklist of the fired mathematicians expired at some point, didn't it?

If it did, nobody told us. Objectively, as measured by tenure-track job offers, all the mathematicians who were fired after publicly refusing to testify before Red-hunters have been on the blacklist in the USA ever since. From Bellingham to Bee Caves to Bangor, from that day to this, every single university search for a mathematician has concluded that the institution needed something other than Weisner, Harrison, Lorch, or Davis. This even includes some small traditionally black institutions which were thereby left with *nobody* teaching mathematics. Excuse me, the blacklist was not total, there was one admirable exception: Philander Smith courageously hiring Lee Lorch in 1955; but as recorded above, that didn't stick.

Colleagues wrote us letters of recommendation (I told one sponsor he must have written a record number of fruitless letters for me). Sometimes we were able to land temporary jobs or fellowships;⁶ the nearest to the real thing was my position at *Mathematical Reviews*. Several people — let me mention especially Howard Levi, Al Putnam, Bob James, and non-mathematician Percy Julian — fought hard to get one or another of us regular jobs at their universities.

⁵A couple of years earlier, before either my father or I had been called by the Committees, I made much the same point in a science-fiction story, "Last Year's Grave Undug" (in *Great Science-Fiction by Scientists*, ed. G. Conklin (Collier: New York, 1962, and other printings)). Many readers of the story must have asked themselves which of the young men the author identified with, the Communist or the non-Communist, or neither. The answer is, both.

⁶More than once, leaks from committees of federal granting agencies let me and some other "political enemies" know that federal support would be impossible for political reasons. Yet in 1957, during my notoriety, NSF dared to give me a Post-Doctoral Fellowship for a year. Lee Lorch's NSF Grant was interrupted the year he was under fire at Fisk — but by the university rather than by NSF.

Some comments from friends who didn't: "We're hiring the best new Ph.D.'s we can get." "Why don't you prove the Riemann Hypothesis?" I get the message. Another friend made it clear to me that he couldn't hire somebody like Lorch who might undertake controversial political actions. What was I supposed to do, promise Lee would be docile as a lamb?

Those who lost jobs or were denied them without attendant furor did sometimes (unlike us four) get back in. They were always under a handicap, though, and what I say about the blacklist applies to some degree also to them — as also to political firees of the 1960s. It applies totally to Irving Adler; though he never put himself on the university job market, he would have been perfectly hireable by 1960 but for his case.

The AMS set up a committee, with Moise as chair, to consider what could be done for us. It wasn't able to do anything.

I consider Question II still open. It is not my project, however. It should be for some of the thousands of you who were on the search committees and the administrations that passed us by to consider by what mechanisms this astonishing unanimity was achieved.

III. *But you're happy in Canada, aren't you?*

Since I emigrated in 1962, I find that indeed I am much more content to be at Toronto than most people are to be where they are. I think it's pretty much the same for the other emigrés. So I easily answer this question, Yes, fine, thank you.

Why do you ask?

With a proper understanding of Question III, perhaps its surface content and my easy answer turn out to be irrelevant. I think the point is not whether you should feel sorry for us; the point is whether you can tolerate the system which excluded us. You spend your life in a structure of universities, the AMS, and other interlocking institutions, it is your most significant environment as mathematicians. You rightly devote a great deal of attention to its construction and care. Are you satisfied with it?

In a much earlier article,⁷ which I wish I could tack onto this one as an appendix, I argued at length that the universities, in order to maintain the level of intellectual challenge they require for health, ought to display to potential dissenters a moderate welcome to dissent; and that a minimum in this direction would be ostentatiously restoring the radicals who had been expelled.

All right, maybe I was wrong in that essay. Maybe if you *had* made a point of ending the blacklist against us, it wouldn't have made the following generations any livelier. They're pretty lively here and there as it is, I admit.

⁷"From an Exile," in *The New Professors*, ed. R. O. Bowen (Holt, Rinehart, Winston: New York, 1960), 182–201.

Still I wish I were surer that the profession is ready to respond honorably to a new purge. None is imminent, but rumblings recur, and Latin America of the 1970s and 80s reminds us that it could be much worse than HUAC. To be ready for the next time if any, we should at least not be complacent about the last.