

Defending the Defender:

Gerald Winrod and the Great Sedition Trial

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The Rev. Dr. Gerald B. Winrod, an evangelist based in Wichita, Kansas, viewed himself and his followers as defenders. He came to call his media and ministry organization the Defenders of the Faith and its flagship magazine, *The Defender*. From Winrod's view, the Defenders provided a moral bulwark against Darwinists, saloon keepers, women who wore revealing clothes, Catholics—sometimes, Jews, and especially Communists. At times, Winrod used very thin evidence to apply these labels to those he viewed as threats to American morality. For example, Winrod widely promoted his assertion that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was both a Jew and a Communist.¹

As Richard Polenberg explained in *War and Society*, the Roosevelt White House was sensitive to the civil rights abuses that occurred during World War I and endeavored not to repeat them during World War II. Even so, wartime pressures and poor judgment led to such spectacular abridgments of rights as the forced internment of Japanese residents, Japanese Americans, and Aleutian natives during the war.² Though not on the same level, the Roosevelt administration's Department of Justice also erred in initiating the farce that became known as the Great Sedition Trial, in which thirty radicals of various degrees of influence, notoriety, and sanity were tried collectively. Acknowledging that the trial was an infringement on their rights does not mean that the defendants were a sympathetic lot. In particular, Winrod was an outspoken anti-Semite given to promoting the long-discredited *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in blaming Jews for many of the world's ills. The affair ended in a mistrial when the judge died unexpectedly—perhaps sparing the Department of Justice further embarrassment.

Contemporaneous commentators and today's historians, right- and left-leaning, agree that the Great Sedition Trial was a poor idea that devolved into a courtroom circus. Such a neat conclusion, however, bears reexamination. Perhaps there were defensible strategic or political purposes for conducting the trial and including Winrod in it. There may have been members of the Roosevelt

1. Barbara Jean Beale, "Gerald B. Winrod: Defender of Christianity and Democracy in the United States" (master's thesis, Wichita State University, 1989), 2, 18; Leo P. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right From the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1983), 116. Ribuffo notes that with the rise of Father Charles Coughlin in the 1930s, Winrod scaled back his anti-Catholic rhetoric.

2. Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1972), 38, 72, 100, 240.

administration driven to act by their own moral outrage against anti-Semites. Possibly Roosevelt himself wished retribution against some of his harsh critics. It is plausible that any number of individuals or companies might derive satisfaction in seeing isolationists squirm in a courtroom; Winrod certainly earned the scorn of many over the years.

Ultimately, however, the historical evidence still leads to the conclusion that there was no justification for the Great Sedition Trial and that Winrod, however deplorable his views, neither attempted nor accomplished the anti-American activities of which he was accused. The trial could never have succeeded because the defendants were not especially influential, because their claims were indistinguishable from other prominent isolationists and critics, and because the prosecutor set himself an impossible task in trying to argue for conviction under the vague Smith Act. Formally known as the Alien Registration Act of 1940, the Smith Act made it a crime to advocate for the overthrow of the government, which meant the prosecutor needed to both prove seditious statements were made and that they rose to the threshold of pushing for the overthrow of government. Despite an extensive investigation into his activities and writings, there was no evidence of sedition in the FBI files on Winrod, and his anti-Semitism reflected common views of his followers, not to mention other Kansans. In some ways, putting Winrod on trial bolstered his perpetual claims of persecution, fueling another decade of his hate-filled radical right-wing preaching and influencing a movement that continues to the present.

Winrod, born in 1900, and his Defenders began as a Kansas manifestation of the fundamentalist Christian movement of the 1920s and 1930s.³ Winrod's call to ministry was uniquely Kansan. According to family legend, Winrod's barkeep father was on duty at Wichita's Old Four Ten saloon when Carry Nation smashed the place up on one of her temperance raids in Wichita. That event started a change of heart for the family, which was completed a few years later when Winrod's dying mother experienced a miraculous healing. His overcome father entered the ministry. Winrod delivered his first sermon in his teens, and he joined the Chautauqua circuit at age twenty-one. He only briefly had his own church, instead traveling for months at a time speaking as a guest in other pulpits or broadcasting in a vehicle outfitted with speakers. For the most part, Winrod built his career on appearances in small towns and through radio addresses. He maintained a lifelong connection to Midwestern agricultural communities even when traveling nationally and internationally. He took one step into the political arena himself and attempted to parlay the credibility he had gained through his ministry and manner into the Republican nomination for United States Senate in 1938. He did not win. Throughout his career, Winrod provided a

3. The most helpful general summary of Winrod's life and career is Leo P. Ribuffo, "Gerald B. Winrod: Prophet in Politics," in *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right From the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1983), 80-127.

steady public commentary on current affairs, certain he was seeing world events that had been predicted in the New Testament.⁴

Winrod was one of thirty people named as defendants in *United States vs. Joseph E. McWilliams, et al.*, what became known in the press as the Great Sedition Trial. The defendants, their organizations, and their publications were mostly of the far-right perspective, opposing United States entry into World War II, blaming Jews and Communists for world crises, and promoting an “America First” message. Previous indictments of multiple defendants, both called *United States vs. Winrod*, had been returned on July 21, 1942, and January 4, 1943. Neither resulted in a trial. (Winrod viewed the fact that his name was not part of the final case title as a sign that the Department of Justice feared his ability to muster his Defenders.) O. John Rogge took over as federal prosecutor in the matter, seeking a third indictment, which was returned on January 4, 1944. Rogge charged Winrod and the others under the Alien Registration Act of 1940. The relevant terms of the Smith Act prohibited “advocacy of insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces of the United States” and “advocacy of the overthrow or destruction of any government in the United States by force or violence.”

The Great Sedition Trial began April 17, 1944, in Washington, D.C. Preliminary matters and jury selection took more than a month.⁵ A *New York Times* article about the selection process showed that the defendants were not going to follow protocol. One, James Smythe, pointed at the judge and shouted. Another, Lois de Lafayette Washburn, “arose and bowed and then bowed some more.”⁶ A few days later, Smythe again interrupted, “shouting for his attorney on a matter ‘so vital it will rock the nation.’”⁷ In a related hearing, two attorneys tried to subpoena Henry Ford. On May 31, the *Times* described “a day-long barrage of arguments and objections

4. Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raub, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), 162; Leo P. Ribuffo, “Gerald B. Winrod: From Fundamentalist Preacher to ‘Jayhawk Hitler,’” in *John Brown to Bob Dole: Movers and Shakers in Kansas History*, edited by Virgil W. Dean (Lawrence, Kan.: University of Kansas, 2006), 230, 239.

5. Beale, 89-90; Maximillian St.-George and Lawrence Dennis, *A Trial on Trial: The Great Sedition Trial of 1944*, (National Civil Rights Committee, 1946), 84, 106, 501-503; Lutheran Research Society, *The Sedition Case* (Lowell, Arizona: Lutheran Research Society, 1953), 15; “An Idea is Illegal: Smith Act Passed,” *Today in Civil Liberties History*, accessed March 18, 2017, todayinclh.com/?event=an-idea-is-illegal-smith-act-passed; “Mistrial in Right-Wing Sedition Trial,” *Today in Civil Liberties History*, accessed March 18, 2017, todayinclh.com/?event=mistrial-in-great-sedition-trial.

6. Nancy MacLennan, “Selecting a Jury in Sedition Trial,” *New York Times*, April 21, 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed March 21, 2018.

7. Judge Again Bars Sedition Case Stay,” *New York Times*, April 26, 2944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed March 21, 2018.

from attorneys.”⁸ Another newspaper columnist quipped after the first six weeks that the trial would last “a minimum of eight years, give or take a fortnight. I base this on a number of factors, one of which is that it took twenty-seven and a half minutes, by actual clocking, for one of the defense lawyers to interpose a single question.” On June 26, “apparently seeking to speed up procedure in the dragging trial,” the judge quieted several defense attorneys for being repetitious or speaking out of turn. A day later, the judge fined an attorney \$200 for engaging in cross-examination in a way that deliberately slowed progress. “It was the second fine for Mr. [Henry] Klein for contempt of court and the sixth imposed on defense counsel or their clients since the trial began eleven weeks ago.”⁹

The trial went on for more than seven months before Judge Edward C. Eichner died. A mistrial was declared, and the trial ended November 30, 1944; charges were formally dismissed a week later. Some post-trial posturing continued, including Rogge’s request for additional time to research connections between the defendants’ activities and German operations. As Winrod put it, “the chief prosecutor is now in Germany, trying, so he says, to find something on which to base a case.”¹⁰ No further indictments were returned. On June 30, 1947, E. Hilton Jackson, one of Winrod’s attorneys, sent him notice that the Court of Appeals had upheld the case dismissal: “The opinion of the court, together with the stupid dissent of Justice Edgerton, is enclosed.”¹¹

Given the effort expended by the Department of Justice on the Great Sedition Trial, it is worth considering whether there was a strategic argument for conducting the trial. Roosevelt himself was predisposed to take the idea of secret plots with military objectives seriously, in part because of his service during World War I as assistant secretary of the Navy. He remembered well the sabotage of an ammunition depot in New York Harbor in 1916, when “thousands of heavy plate-glass windows fell out of skyscrapers and office buildings in Manhattan and Brooklyn.” The next year a shell assembly plant in New Jersey suffered an explosion. An investigation showed the German secret service planned these assaults; it is reasonable that Roosevelt would have expected similar efforts in the 1940s.¹²

In fact, Germany was sponsoring efforts at sabotage and spying. The Federal

8. Nancy MacLennan, “Sedition Lawyers Charge Trial ‘Plot,’” *New York Times*, May 5, 1944, “Government Defends Sedition Trial Venue,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1944, and Frederick Barkley, “Hitlerite Letters Stir Fight at Trial,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed March 21, 2018.

9. George Dixon, Washington Scene, *Times-Herald*, June 4, 1944, in Gerald B. Winrod Papers, Wichita State University Special Collections.

10. Letter, May 6, 1946, in Gerald B. Winrod Papers, Wichita State University Special Collections.

11. Jackson to Winrod, June 30, 1947, John W. Jackson Papers, Wichita State University Special Collections.

12. Michael Dobbs, *Saboteurs: The Nazi Raid on America* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 88-89.

Bureau of Investigation intervened against Nazi espionage rings in 1938 and 1941. A German who lived in the United States for eleven years and claimed to be an early proponent of Adolf Hitler tried to sail back home on a small yacht in 1939; he was picked up by the United States Coast Guard. In 1940, he made a more conventional trip home to Germany and became a leader in a Nazi-sponsored sabotage effort. Hitler was demanding that his chief of military intelligence, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, do something to slow the American industrial advantage. At the same time, Lt. Walter Kappe of the German Abwehr was hatching a plan to engage members of the German-American Bund, a Nazi Party offshoot in the United States. The Abwehr was an intelligence-gathering agency that collected field reports from agents and other sources. Kappe had previously served as the Bund's propaganda chief, and he believed that Bundists could assist clandestine Nazi efforts. As a result, the Nazis recruited and trained two teams of saboteurs who had previously lived in the United States and sent them by submarine in 1942.

Viewed from the perspective of a country that had recently been attacked on its own soil, the sabotage effort was sinister and unsettling. The German teams had explosives, fuses, detonators, and timers, including delay timers disguised as fountain pens. The teams also had names of sympathetic Americans whom they expected to support their work when greeted with the code word "Pastorius." When the erstwhile saboteurs were arrested, Roosevelt was specifically alerted to the case. He saw it as an opportunity to make an example of some subversives—and embarrass the Nazis. "Surely they are just as guilty as it is possible to be and it seems to be the death penalty is almost obligatory," he wrote to the attorney general. On another occasion Roosevelt asked his assistant, "Should they be shot or hanged?"¹³

With the onset of war came a broad acceptance of secrecy and a generalized concern for unpatriotic or subversive behavior. The government kept the details of the Pastorius tribunal under close wraps, feeding reporters unimportant details about the defendants. Opinion polls showed that most Americans found this appropriate. The FBI routinely received letters from concerned citizens, as the files on Winrod demonstrate. Overseas military personnel routinely had their personal correspondence censored. Annoyed that he could not disclose his location in Northern Ireland, despite its lack of strategic importance, one soldier wrote to his wife: "We must not write with lines apart / Of where we are, from where depart / The track along which we have been / The town or port which we are in."¹⁴

In this atmosphere, the Department of Justice may have sincerely perceived a security threat from Winrod and his co-defendants. Director J. Edgar Hoover alerted the chief of the Special Defense Unit in 1941 that Winrod should "be

13. *Ibid.*, 143, 204-205, 223.

14. *Ibid.*, 217-218; Russell A. Gugeler, *Major General Orlando Ward: Life of a Leader* (Oakland, Oregon: Red Anvil Press, 2009), 175.

considered for custodial detention in the event of a national emergency.”¹⁵ Rogge claimed that George Deatherage of the American Nationalist Confederation wanted all the American Nazi groups to band together as early as 1937. Based on FBI investigations and reviews of documents, Rogge said Winrod’s “closest connections” included defendants Deatherage, Robert Edward Edmondson, James True, Elizabeth Dilling, and Eugene Nelson Sanctuary. Not on Rogge’s list was Elmer J. Garner, another Wichitan, who died in the third week of the trial. Certainly some of the defendants corresponded, and a few of them met in person. Their most common way of interacting was quoting or reprinting articles from one another in assorted newsletters and publications published by their various organizations. For example, Winrod published articles by True, Sanctuary, and Dilling. Winrod and Garner crossed paths from time to time, as when Garner’s publication *Publicity* endorsed Winrod’s bid for Senate in 1938, and when a *Publicity* columnist in 1940 praised Winrod as a great American.¹⁶ Trial testimony claimed that the German-American Bund’s national headquarters received and distributed articles by at least nine of the defendants, including Winrod.¹⁷ Regular connections among thirty outspoken critics of the government could have looked like military conspiracy to the Department of Justice.

In addition to possible conspiracy, it is conceivable that the Roosevelt administration saw a security and public relations threat in the potential the defendants had for spreading Nazi propaganda. The indictment claimed that in order to destroy democracy throughout the world, “the said Nazi party and its leaders carried on a systematic campaign of propaganda.” The propaganda was real; what was in question was whether the defendants were deliberately creating or distributing it. From the publication of *Mein Kampf* forward, Hitler was clear about his purposes and methods for propaganda. “Every possible organization, agency, individual, and device was to be used for propaganda purposes” in order “to enable the Nazis to conquer the earth.” Postwar investigation showed that there was a Nazi International effort modeled on the Communist International organization. The Soviet Comintern, as it was known, engaged in generating propaganda directed to specific groups of people identifying how Communism was an answer to their troubles. It also created and supported front organizations throughout the 1920s and 1930s. “The Comintern built an astonishing media empire to promote the cause of Communism around the globe.

15. Hoover to Smith, March 27, 1941, in Kenneth Bradley Collection, Wichita State University Special Collections.

16. St.-George and Dennis, *A Trial on Trial*, 201-208; O. John Rogge, *The Official German Report: Nazi Penetration, 1924-1942, Pan-Arabism, 1939-Today* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961), 215; Virgil W. Dean, “Another Wichita Seditonist?: Elmer J. Garner and the Radical Right’s Opposition to World War II,” *Kansas History* 17, (Spring 1994): 58-60.

17. “Says Bund’s Words Were Defendants’,” *New York Times*, July 19, 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed March 21, 2018.

... [It] ran dozens, possibly hundreds, of newspapers, publishing houses, film production companies, and charities. Officially, most of these organizations claimed to be involved in ‘workers’ aid,’ but in reality they were all sponsored by the Comintern.” It was a global effort, and it included the United States among its targets.¹⁸

The Foreign Affairs Office of the Nazi Party, the Propaganda Ministry, and the German Foreign Office all contributed to this Comintern-inspired effort. In 1932, the Foreign Section of the Nazi party sent one of its own, Heinz Spanknoebl, to Detroit as head of an American branch. Propaganda Minister Paul Joseph Goebbels called him home the next year, not because he wished to stop influencing Americans, but because Spanknoebl had exceeded his authority. Employing another approach, Goebbels authorized \$50,000 to support *Deutsche Zeitung* (German News) to be published in the United States. Another Nazi propaganda strategy was mailing literature to Americans; defendant George Sylvester Viereck provided names and addresses for the effort.¹⁹ Winrod received *World Service*, a regular periodical that was part of the Nazi propaganda effort; in 1937, he praised it as “a reliable source of European information,” and from 1936 to 1940 *World Service* referenced Winrod or his publications at least six times. In 1939, the Wichita postmaster told an FBI agent Winrod had received an item “in the nature of German propaganda and [it] contains Hitler’s photograph.”²⁰ The indictment against the Great Sedition Trial defendants listed more than forty publications they had allegedly published or distributed, from *Mein Kampf* and the dangerous-sounding “American Vigilante” Bulletins to Winrod’s *The Defender* and the amusingly named information card “West Africa is Not Iceland—It’s Anything But a Nice Land!”²¹

Perhaps there were figures in the Roosevelt administration who suspected and feared a Nazi uprising from Winrod or the other men and women named in *United States vs. McWilliams*. In an evidence hearing on June 19, 1944, Rogge made a startling claim:

One of the three defendants repeatedly stated that, when the showdown came, a large segment of the Army would revolt. The evidence will show that they had two plans: one was that after the Communists took over

18. Graham, Lindsay, “The Cold War—An Ideological War,” January 3, 2018, in *American History Tellers*, produced by Hernan Lopez, podcast, MP3 audio, 41:35, <https://art19.com/shows/american-history-tellers/episodes/acb87cac-119c-4827-a98b-c9cd90dd84b0>.

19. St.-George and Dennis, 114-119; Rogge, 16-17, 62-63, 99-101; Dobbs, 56; Investigation summary, undated, in Kenneth Bradley Collection, Wichita State University Special Collections.

20. Dwight Brantley memos, December 22, 1939, and June 15, 1940, in Kenneth Bradley Collection, Wichita State University Special Collections.

21. St.-George and Dennis, 114-119.

the Government the defendants would put out the Communists and seize the government, while the other plan was to seize the Government before the Communists got in. The evidence will show . . . that one of the defendants discussed ‘the coming revolution’ with a colonel in our armed forces, telling the colonel that the revolution would start in New York.²²

According to the indictment, some or all of the defendants disseminated messages that claimed the United States should adopt a national socialist or fascist government and that actions and laws of public officials and Congress are traitorous and unconstitutional. In his opening statement, Rogge said the defendants were trying to “weaken our entire social structure” in hopes it would collapse, creating the opportunity to build a new government based on Hitler’s philosophy. Rogge also asserted that the defendants were readying “an underground army of Storm Troopers . . . who could take over the Government by a march on Washington,” and he suggested that Hitler had hand-picked these thirty men and women to found a new American government after a German victory.²³

Based on speeches Winrod delivered starting in 1935, the FBI recognized him as anti-Semitic and pro-German: “Winrod defends Hitler and his Nazi government in the governing of the German race.”²⁴ Nazi sympathizers were, in turn, pro-Winrod. The American Nationalist Convention endorsed his Senate campaign in its *News Bulletin*. Trial testimony against Winrod suggested that he had a larger plan that might have been interpreted as sedition. A statement at the trial from an optical technician in Los Angeles said that one of the defendants, Hans Diebel, had indicated that the Bund was “looking for ‘a strong man to take over the government. . . . I remember him naming Gerald Winrod as a possible choice.”²⁵

A former employee reported Winrod’s intention to use his senatorial campaign as a springboard to the presidency. Another former employee was set to take the stand when the judge died; it is not clear what he planned to say, but Winrod expected him to try showing that he and other defendants “were not Christians at all—but rank hypocrites, Nazi agents.” The most troubling claims against Winrod

22. “Army Plot Hinted in Sedition Trial,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed March 21, 2018.

23. St.-George and Dennis, 119-121, 249; *The Sedition Case*, 43. Dwight Brantley memo, June 1, 1940, in Kenneth Bradley Collection, Wichita State University Special Collections; “Winrod Has Them Worried in Kansas,” *The News Bulletin* 1 no 27, (July 23, 1938), in Jackson Papers, Wichita State University Special Collections; Winrod to Grube, July 13, 1945, Jackson Papers; P. E. Foxworth memo, June 21, 1940, and Ladd to Welch, June 4, 1942, in Bradley Collection; Beale, 85-87.

24. Dwight Brantley memo, August 12, 1242, in Kenneth Bradley Collection, Wichita State University Special Collections.

25. “Government Defends Sedition Trial Venue,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1944.

came from his wife, Frances, as she sought police help when leaving him, leading to their divorce. A statement from Frances Winrod in the FBI files was completely redacted, but a series of newspaper articles detailed some of her concerns. She did not wish to live in a household in which children were taught the superiority of Hitler and the inferiority of France and England. “A favorite joke was to tell them that England was like ‘cream.’ And then he would add ‘whipped cream.’” Her husband kept a loaded gun nearby at night and told her he had a hideout in Wyoming where she would be protected as the government was toppled. She said he would be a political leader after an expected revolution, which he believed was imminent, and she could be the First Lady. Finally, she said Winrod and his parents were unduly influenced by an unnamed cult leader. In public Winrod often made inflammatory statements, but he was described as dignified and chose his words carefully. It is hard to know how much the media sensationalized Frances Winrod’s claims, but they suggest that Winrod was less careful with his words at home and possibly viewed himself as a ruler appointed by God. The government could have viewed this as a threat.

In addition to any security reasons that may have been at play in the decision to proceed with the Great Sedition Trial, it is also relevant to consider possible political motives. For one, the Roosevelt administration may have seen the trial as an expedient way to quiet isolationists. The political power of isolationists had been demonstrated by the inability of either political party to secure Congressional approval for membership in the World Court beginning in 1924. In 1935, Roosevelt requested the Senate finally allow the United States to join. Just as the vote counting seemed to be in the administration’s favor, a campaign led by Fr. Charles Coughlin, an anti-Semitic priest heard on radios across the nation, and William Randolph Hearst, publisher of the county’s largest newspaper chain, swayed enough votes to change the outcome. The most famous isolationist in the years before World War II was aviation hero Charles Lindbergh, seen by the German Foreign Ministry as a close contact. Ironically, the Nazis attempted to keep their high regard for Lindbergh close to the vest; he did such a good job of representing their positions that they dared not hinder him by creating too public an association with him. By September 1941, Lindbergh was intimating that Roosevelt was colluding with the British and the Jews as he pushed the country closer to the war. It might have been too politically risky to go after a figure as popular as Lindbergh, but a less-connected group of outspoken isolationists could be stopped; the Roosevelt administration may even have viewed the trial as a warning to Lindbergh and some of the other influential isolationists.²⁶

Winrod was a good option for setting an example, if that was the intention. He was sometimes on the national stage, and he had a loyal following, but he was controversial enough and far enough on the fringe to elicit little mainstream sympathy.

26. Arnold A. Offner, *American Appeasement: United States Foreign Policy and Germany, 1933-1938* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap, 1969), 108-110; Rogge, 276-281.

To some degree, Winrod's stance against entering the war reflected a view that war itself was horrific and sinful; borrowing a page from the Mennonites (with whom he had a strong bond), he "emphasized that this destructiveness was rooted in human depravity." He also made the case that supporting Hitler was the same as opposing Communism. As P.H. Richert, a board member of Mennonite-affiliate Bethel College put it, "What Winrod emphasizes is that Hitler saved Germany from bolshevism, and he gives him credit for it, as we no doubt all do." More often, though, Winrod questioned whether "bloodshed was warranted because New Dealers wished to save German Jewry from Nazism," as Leo Ribuffo explains. Winrod's isolationist writing and speaking was extensive, including seven radio broadcasts in April 1939 from a Mexican-based radio station that Winrod often employed. The text of one such speech, "Keep America Out of War," was entered into the *Congressional Record* by Senator Robert Reynolds on June 30, 1939. Winrod's more direct action included printing and distributing thousands of copies of anti-war materials such as "Christians and Patriots Keep America Out of War" decals, petitions to Washington, and copies of a speech by ultra-isolationist Congressman Jacob Thorkelson. The last item Winrod was able to send using Thorkelson's franking privilege, which meant that modest fundraising resulted in mass distribution.²⁷

Beyond his opposition to United States entry into the war, it is conceivable that the Roosevelt administration and/or the Department of Justice viewed Winrod's activism as an opening for Nazi politics that needed to be closed with legal action. There was widespread belief, sometimes based on compelling testimony, that Winrod was a Nazi sympathizer or even an active Nazi agent. Much of the belief was based around a trip Winrod made to Europe, including Germany, in 1934 and 1935.²⁸ The Germany trip became the focus of so much media and courtroom attention that minute details of it were debated. One detail was the charge that Germany had secretly funded the trip and/or paid him during the trip to engage in Nazi propaganda back home. "While he was in Germany, he was in touch with *World Service* and its head, Ulrich Fleischhauer. He and Fleischhauer tried to help out five defendants in a case in Berne, Switzerland, who were being prosecuted for disseminating copies of the forged Protocols." Winrod's contact with a rare book dealer and suspected German agent named Dr. Otto Volbear could have been an opportunity to exchange money and orders. Winrod's accusers emphasized his precarious financial position at the time of the trip as represented by his delay in making installment payments on items in

27. Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right*, 126; James C. Juhnke, "Gerald B. Winrod and the Kansas Mennonites," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 43 no. 4 (October 1969): 293-297; Seth Bate, "Acts of Courage," *The Journal* 5 no 4 (Winter 2014): 42; *The Defender* (September 1939) and Investigation summary, March 14, 1941, in Kenneth Bradley Collection.

28. Some sources say the trip was in 1933. This appears to be an error that has been repeated. Both Winrod and the FBI say it took place from December 1934 through January 1935.

Wichita stores; the items were paid off in full when he returned. Following his trip, Winrod gave long accounts of Fleischhauer's arguments against "International Jewry." An anti-Winrod pamphleteer pointedly asked "Does Dr. Winrod have privileged and unique access to facts about Germany so that he can correct the alleged libels against Hitler which the great press agencies of the world have been sending out as to religious conditions within Germany?"

A statement collected by the FBI claimed that Winrod regularly traveled to Germany and was "in the employ of the German Government or at least his organization is subsidized with German Government Funds." In an article published in April 1935, Winrod compared the Hitler of 1920, "then a struggling young Austrian," to Martin Luther.²⁹ Later that year, Winrod quoted Goebbels and anti-Semitic propagandist Julius Streicher, making the case that Germany was the only nation opposing "Jewish Masonic Occultism, Jewish Communism, and the international Jewish Money Power." In 1939, Winrod hosted German Methodist Bishop F. H. Otto Melle, known for his conciliatory stance toward National Socialism; Winrod went on to publish three of Melle's translated sermons. Some claimed that Winrod was operating his own organization based on Nazi philosophy. Rogge said followers called Winrod the "American Streicher," apparently referring to a German newspaper that used the term. The FBI interviewed someone who confirmed Winrod's statements on "the superiority of the Teutonic races" and apparently came forward "in the light of information she had received that he might be a Nazi agent." An FBI review of Winrod's publications concluded that despite Winrod's professed opposition to Nazism, he believed "that all the ills of the country may be attributed to what is termed 'International Jewry.' . . . The above philosophy of Winrod, which is analogous to the philosophy of Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, clearly accounts for Winrod being dubbed 'the Jayhawk Hitler.'"³⁰

It is possible that Winrod and the other Great Sedition Trial defendants were seen as a security threat or that it was politically expedient to bring the case against them. It is also possible that those behind the trial were motivated by their own morality; anti-Semitism is vile at any time, much less so at such a sensitive time. Of course, Winrod claimed throughout his career that he was not the Jews' enemy, and he had the chutzpah to claim empathy for them. Yet whether he learned it from Germans or created it himself, Winrod's brand of anti-Semitism underscored typical

29. Fellow defendant Edward James Smythe went farther than Winrod, calling Hitler "the second Jesus Christ of the modern world." See Rogge, 216-217.

30. Lutheran Research Society, *The Sedition Case*, 116; Rembert Gilman Smith, "Winrod of Wichita: A Number One Enemy of the Jews, Arch Apologist for Hitler" in Bradley Collection; Rogge, 190, 213-215; Beale, 80; Investigation summary, March 14, 1941, and investigation summary, undated, in Bradley Collection; Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right*, 118; FBI internal security report, March 15, 1941, and Brantley report, May 13, 1941, in Bradley Collection.

Nazi claims. He said the Nazi approach against radical Jews protected other Jews, that Nazis were simply trying to save their country from Jewish radicalism, and that Jewish economic motivations were really to blame for the war. The FBI found these themes repeatedly in examining Winrod's activities: "Speeches of subject delivered following his return to the United States from Europe in 1935 obtained and transmitted to the Bureau and are of an anti-Semitic, pro-German nature." In some cases, Winrod's statements were merely obnoxious, such as his claim that Jewish control had been imposed over the Disabled American Veterans. Other Winrod claims were more in line with the Great Sedition Trial charges, as some may have viewed them as interfering with the loyalty and morale of the United States military. One claim was that the same Jewish conspiracy that had dragged the United States into the first world war was again pushing for intervention. This is similar to the perspective of one of the Pastorius saboteurs that America had been deceived into entering the war by a minority of Jews. It also mirrors the message Gerhard Ruehle, head of the Radio Political Department in the German Foreign Ministry was broadcasting: "The American entry into the war serves only Jewish interests. . . . The act of bringing the United States into armed conflict was the work of the Jewish surroundings of Roosevelt. . . . The war was only a Jewish war in which American soldiers had to bleed."³¹ Winrod went so far as to blame the instigation of the Nazi movement on "Jewish domination of Continental Europe, the British Isles, the Balkans, and Russia." In the same publication he stated,

There would be no war in Europe today but for the economic dictatorship built up by a few Jewish families, over a period of years. Now that the power of these hidden rulers has been challenged, they prefer to throw civilization into a pool of blood, rather than release their grip upon the arteries of international finance.³²

To many people, such a statement is highly offensive, and it may have been enough to spark retributive legal action against Winrod and others.

While moral considerations might have led to the initiation of the Great Sedition Trial, a less noble reason must also be evaluated. Perhaps Roosevelt himself had it in for Winrod after receiving years' worth of personal criticism. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., perhaps the president's most sympathetic biographer, described him variously as petty, selfish, puckish, and malicious, with a capacity "for calculation, sometimes even for cruelty, in human relations. . . . Nearly everybody was

31. Rogge, 67, 434; Ribuffo, *The Old Christian Right*, 117; "Items of Interest to Defenders," *The Defender*, September 1939, and Brantley memo, August 12, 1942, in Bradley Collection; Ribuffo, "Gerald B. Winrod," *John Brown to Bob Dole*, 237; Dobbs, 27.

32. *The Defender*, February, 1941, quoted in Brantley memo, May 13, 1941, in Bradley Collection.

expendable.”³³ Part of the indictment against the alleged seditionists referred to statements claiming

President Roosevelt is reprehensible, a warmonger, liar, unscrupulous, and a pawn of the Jews, Communists, and Plutocrats. . . . President Roosevelt is a Jew and is working with International Jewry against the interests of the people of the United States. . . . President Roosevelt and Congress, through a surreptitious and illegal war program against the Axis Powers sold out the United States and forced the Axis Power to wage war upon us.³⁴

Winrod made his fair share of such claims; Roosevelt and his Brain Trust were among the Wichita evangelist’s favorite targets. Winrod had an unusual ability to weave commentary on current events with his approach to Biblical prophecy. “Winrod combined standard conservative complaints about FDR with an argument that the New Deal represented the latest phase in a conspiracy at least as old as human history.”³⁵ Roosevelt’s campaign promise to end Prohibition would have been enough to turn Winrod against him. The membership of his Brain Trust inspired more ranting; Barnard Baruch to Winrod was “the most powerful Jew in the world,” and the legislation prepared by Roosevelt’s men was intended to undermine democracy and destroy the practice of Christianity. “Furthermore,” as Barbara Jean Beale writes, “the radical measures of the president and the Brain Trust were nothing more than an attempt to create a revolution to establish Communism in the United States, the evangelist proclaimed.”³⁶ Winrod also claimed that Roosevelt bought the 1936 election. As the Roosevelt-backed Lend-Lease program was in full effect, Winrod shared “startling facts, exclusively for the prayer circle” that he had “come into possession of unmistakable proof that a well organized, powerfully financed program is under way, TO MAKE THE UNITED STATES A PART OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE” complete with a new flag.³⁷ Even after the war and the indictments, Winrod wrote about the Roosevelt presidency as a “dictatorship” and claimed the administration’s “official policy . . . is to put an end to criticism of the Roosevelt Administration by whatever means may be necessary. Be ruthless as the enemy—get him on his income tax or the Mann Act. HANG HIM, SHOOT HIM, OR LOCK HIM UP IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP.”³⁸ The most widely reprinted Winrod

33. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Crisis of the Old Order, 1919-1933* (Boston, Mariner Books, 1957), 405-410.

34. Rogge, 118-121.

35. Ribuffo, “Gerald B. Winrod,” *John Brown to Bob Dole*, 232-233.

36. Beale, 24, 29, 34-36, 60, 69, 95.

37. Prayer Circle letter, July 2, 1941, in Bradley Collection.

38. Prayer Circle letter, January 19, 1944, in Winrod Papers.

claim came from an article in 1934 and a subsequent genealogical chart published in 1936 tracing Roosevelt's ancestry to Dutch Jews. Winrod used this information to bolster his claim that Jewish economic interests were influencing "Rosenvelt," and it became an evergreen item in anti-Semitic and Nazi publications for the next decade. Of course, from Winrod's perspective, a Jew was by definition also a Communist. Winrod also had plenty to say about Eleanor Roosevelt, who smoked, gave advice about alcohol to young women, entertained the idea of mandatory conscription for young men and women, and spoke at "Negro gatherings."³⁹ Franklin Roosevelt even became a contentious topic during the sedition trial. A radio address in which the president referred to "Silver Shirts and others on the lunatic fringe" caused attorneys to ask for a mistrial on the grounds that the statement prejudiced the jury. Winrod's attorney, E. Hilton Jackson, spoke up on the matter with his usual loquacity: "There has never been a castigation of a defendant in a criminal case that can compare with this excoriation."⁴⁰

While none had the power of Roosevelt, any number of patriots, liberals, Jews, or media professionals could have wanted Winrod and the other defendants to be punished or silenced. They could have pulled strings in Washington or appealed to Roosevelt. As one analysis suggests, "The case was authorized by Attorney General Francis Biddle because of intense pressure from President Roosevelt, who was in turn responding to pressure from some liberals and leftists who demanded action against 'fascists' in America."⁴¹

In particular, Winrod was obsessed with Walter Winchell, a nationally syndicated columnist and radio personality (or as Winrod described him, "the collector and distributor of alley, back-door, and bed-chamber gossip"⁴²) and the Levand family, publishers of the *Wichita Beacon*. Winrod often referred to the trial as the "Winchell persecution trial," and in innumerable articles he recounted how Winchell was a catalyst for the trial, how Winchell specifically targeted Winrod, and how through the prayers of Winrod's supporters, Winchell's plans were thwarted. It must be said that Winchell made the trial a regular theme of his commentary, and according to a defendant and an attorney involved, after the mistrial Winchell began "appealing to his listeners to deluge Washington with demands for a new trial."⁴³ The feud between Winrod and the Levands began long before the sedition case and continued after it was over. While the *Beacon* coverage of Winrod more or less kept to the facts—though presented with an understandable bias against Winrod—his commentary on the Levands freely mixed fact and ravings. In one example that

39. Beale, 36, 46-48.

40. "Assails President at Sedition Trial," *New York Times*, October 9, 1944, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, accessed March 21, 2018.

41. "Mistrial in Right-Wing Sedition Trial," Today in Civil Liberties History.

42. *The Sedition Case*, 29.

43. St.-George and Dennis, 52.

captured the attention of the FBI, Winrod stated “The *Wichita Daily Beacon* is owned and edited by Jews” and took issue with a *Beacon* editorial stating that the capture of Hitler ought to be worth a very substantial monetary reward. Winrod called the opinion “a fair example of the Jewish attitude, which is responsible for creating nothing short of a war psychosis against Germany in some circles.”⁴⁴

Beyond these named Winrod opponents, possibly there was some truth to a common assertion among the defendants that secret, powerful Jews were behind the whole trial. One defendant said that even among leftists and Jews, the desire for the trial lived within an “intolerant minority of leadership.”⁴⁵ Winrod called these unnamed interests “hidden masters in the background who pulled the puppet strings.”⁴⁶ He also asserted that the indictment against him “is obviously the product of Jewish motivation” and “purely a matter of POLITICAL PERSECUTION.”⁴⁷ As the old joke goes, just because you are paranoid does not mean they are not out to get you; it is within the realm of possibility that Winrod was the victim of a conspiracy.

The Roosevelt administration, its Department of Justice, or its liberal allies may have viewed Winrod and the other alleged seditionists as a strategic or security threat, as a political movement that needed to be quelled, or as simply personally offensive enough to merit a legal response. Any or all of these reasons could explain why the original indictment was pursued. None of these reasons, however, merits the actual charges brought against the defendants or the line of argument pursued by Rogge. They may have been a collection of Roosevelt-hating, isolationist, anti-Semitic, Nazi sympathizing, right wingers, as Winrod certainly was. But they were not conspiring together, and their inflammatory messages were not interfering with or assaulting the loyalty of the military forces, much less causing insubordination or refusal of duty. The defendants were of no particular level of influence. Their isolationist and anti-Semitic views, if not mainstream, certainly were shared by many Americans, including key public figures. As other Americans did, many of the defendants moderated their isolationist stances after Pearl Harbor. The Smith Act itself was vague, and the prosecutor had an equally vague approach to the trial. The FBI evidence against Winrod was unconvincing, and Winrod had effective representation. The trial became a circus, which may have been the most appropriate result as it should have never happened in the first place.

Though all had achieved some level of notoriety, no one in the list of Great Sedition Trial defendants was a national figure of importance. “One of the most significant features of the Trial was the utter insignificance of the defendants in relation to the great importance which the government sought to give to the Trial by

44. *The Defender* (May 1940), in Brantley memo, May 13, 1941, Bradley Collection.

45. St.-George and Dennis, 52.

46. *The Sedition Case*, 47.

47. Prayer Circle letter, January 19, 1944, in Winrod Papers.

all sorts of publicity-seeking devices, one of which was the staging of the Trial in the nation's capital," where only one of the defendants lived.⁴⁸ An account of the trial sponsored by Winrod emphasized a few notable defendants, including himself, William Griffin of the *New York Enquirer* and "a cultured Christian lady," Elizabeth Dilling.⁴⁹ (That "cultured Christian lady" would be photographed at the trial giving the Nazi salute.) Other defendants, the account acknowledges, were at best known in their own regions. An FBI report concerning Winrod and possible espionage may be about him or any of the other defendants: "It is not believed that [redacted] exerts any great influence on the minds of any number of people." A similar report about Winrod concluded he did not "have any workable organization" beyond his two employees and that an interview subject did not believe anyone else working for Defenders of the Faith "has any particular importance . . . and she doubts that he has any backing except the political backing which he has developed."⁵⁰ The FBI never found anything about Winrod's supposed meetings in Germany beyond the reports of an informant apparently from the B'Nai B'rith Anti Defamation League. Winrod did not have enough sway to be worth the extraordinary efforts of the Department of Justice, and it does not seem that any other defendant did either.⁵¹

Furthermore, the stances Winrod and other defendants took in opposing the war, blaming the Jews, and castigating Roosevelt were unexceptional. Many other public figures, mavericks, and writers took similar positions. In today's language, there was not much difference between the the alt-right Winrod and more conventional hardline conservatives. "[O]pponents of President Roosevelt's pre-Pearl Harbor foreign policy and steps in foreign affairs, such as Colonel Lindbergh, Senator Taft, Senator Nye or Senator Wheeler, and Colonel McCormick, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*, would be equally guilty" of violating the Smith Act. Rogge's book includes a photograph of Lindbergh and Wheeler at an America First Committee rally. McCormick's *Tribune* was typical of isolationist publications; it "had excoriated Roosevelt for attempting to involve the United States in yet another European conflict. But now that the nation was actually at war, its editorial policy had undergone a 180-degree turn." Political anti-Semitism, "the attempt to establish the corporate Jew as a generalized menace, the implication being that some official public remedy is called for," was seen in organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan and national figures including Henry Ford and Coughlin. For most people in this era, the height of the Klan influence in the 1920s was a recent memory. Thousands of Kansans had been members. Winrod and the other Great Sedition Trial defendants did not proclaim anything about the impending war, the president, or the Jews that others were not

48. St.-George and Dennis, 16.

49. *The Sedition Case*, 17.

50. Andersen memo, December 28, 1939, and Brantley memo, April 10, 1940, in Bradley Collection.

51. Ribuffo, "Gerald B. Winrod," *John Brown to Bob Dole*, 235.

also saying.⁵²

The Smith Act was vague. It required the prosecutor to show the defendants were part of a nationwide—perhaps international—conspiracy to influence the loyalty, morale, and discipline of United States military forces and/or advocated the overthrow of the government. Rogge himself questioned whether the Smith Act impeded freedom of speech; in light of his misgivings, he only sought to try defendants whom he believed “had some form of Nazi connections.” Even so, Rogge thought at the time that any conviction would be overturned by the Supreme Court, and later in his career wrote “even a conspiracy to cause a violation of the law, if the means to be employed consist of advocacy, should go unpunished.”⁵³

Rogge attempted to establish the existence of coordinated effort, then to tie individual defendants to it,

. . . showing that there was a world-wide Nazi movement which became a conspiracy after June 28, 1940, and these defendants became part of it is an essential element or really a vital part of showing specific intent . . . There will be further evidence to show that it was in integral part of the Nazi revolution to appeal to members of the armed forces to be disloyal to the existing democratic republican form of government; it was an integral part.⁵⁴

Defendants and their attorneys argued that they were a collection of “extreme individualists,” and that their purposes for criticizing the government were not the same. Rogge could not tie the supposed conspirators to one another, and he largely failed to tie them to the Nazis. In a small but telling example, Rogge argued that Winrod met Ulrich Fleischhauer in Germany and that Fleischhauer was paid for his service; all of this was farfetched but possible. But Rogge never claimed Winrod was paid. He may have had an ill-advised friendship before the war, but Winrod was not a Nazi agent.⁵⁵

Winrod had the benefit of good representation that aggressively represented him. His attorneys’ motion for a bill of particulars in a legal proceeding based on a vague allegation was appropriate and delivered with style, at one point asking “exactly what is meant and intended (to be charged) by this conglomerate, redundant, ambiguous, confusing and prolix verbiage” and elsewhere asking how any of Winrod’s printed matter “would be distributed to any member of the Military or Naval forces of the United States, by this defendant.”⁵⁶ Winrod praised his legal team, especially

52. St.-George and Dennis, 30; Photograph insert, Rogge; Dobbs, 158; Lipset and Raub, 492; Bate, 44.

53. Rogge, 174, 407, 447.

54. Trial transcript, July 13, 1944, in Jackson Papers.

55. St.-George and Dennis, 105; Rogge, 213.

56. Motion for a Bill of Particulars, case no 71,203, in Jackson Papers.

Robert Foulston of Wichita, whose “firm has done wonders for the Cause of Christ here locally, where persecutors tried to pull the Defender Movement up by the roots.” Winrod was also proud of his Washington attorneys, E. Hilton and John Jackson, especially when they successfully complained to the judge about Rogge talking outside the courtroom to a reporter, earning the prosecutor a reprimand from the bench.⁵⁷

Even if he had, like some other Great Sedition Trial defendants, tried the tactic of representing himself, there was very little case against Winrod. He engaged in many activities that were obnoxious, shocking, or, depending on one’s views, unpatriotic. But he did little if anything that could be construed as criminal or seditious, especially after Pearl Harbor. Winrod of course disputed the testimony from his former employee about Winrod’s future plans, but even if it were true, it did not link Winrod to any Nazi network or effort to influence the United States military. Myrtle Flowers, Winrod’s business manager and personal assistant, lashed out at the employee after all charges were dropped: “The world now knows what you have always known in your heart, namely that there was not one word of truth in the things you said. You are a professing Christian and as such surely your conscience is causing you anguish.” The other employee who did not take the stand said in later years that he would have “blown up” the case against Winrod: “It is true that pressure was put on me. But I was not going to yield.”⁵⁸ Nearly all the FBI files on Winrod include statements such as “The instant file is not being kept open,” “No further investigation will be taken by this office unless advised to the contrary by the Bureau,” or “[Winrod] has never made specific statements indicating he was pro-Nazi or un-American.”⁵⁹

The Great Sedition Trial failed to muzzle Winrod. If anything, it fueled his perpetual stories about the persecution he faced for defending the American people against immorality. He wrote his supporters in 1940, “I know something about this conspiracy, having suffered at its hands—my steps being constantly dogged for more than five years. When I am ready to tell the whole story, of what I have suffered, even the Prayer Circle will gasp.” One new angle Winrod used for gaining sympathy as a result of the trial was comparing himself to Dr. Martin Niemoeller, the German who was targeted by and opposed Nazis. As an advertorial said, “Dr. Niemoeller cried: ‘GOD IS MY FUHRER!’ Dr. Winrod’s favorite phrase is: ‘WE PREACH CHRIST!’” Another story Winrod picked up at the trial and exploited afterward was his claim that he had been carrying a pocket-sized Bible in a zippered case at the trial. “On the second day, an officer ordered me to put it away . . . and keep it out of sight.” Separated from his Bible, the evangelist focused on a small, gold cross he used as a

57. Prayer Circle letter, May 6, 1946, Excerpt from court record, September 26, 1944, “Judge Reprimands Rogge For Talking Out of Court,” *PM*, September 21, 1944, in Winrod Papers.

58. *The Sedition Case*, 120; Flowers to Roccaforte, November 30, 1945, and Gilbert to Phillips, in Jackson Papers.

59. FBI reports December 22, 1939, December 28, 1939, and March 15, 1941, Bradley Collection.

watch fob. “I found myself instinctively fingering with this Cross.” That story leads into a dramatic, much-repeated one about the death of Eicher. Depending on the account, Winrod either obliquely or explicitly says he prophesied the judge’s demise and hints that the power of prayer accomplished the deed. As he said in a radio address on March 19, 1945, “Christians all over the Nation were praying. The Judge was found dead in bed that night.”⁶⁰

Questions raised by the Great Sedition Trial are all too relevant. With the United States operating in a constant state of war, what constraints on speech are legal and appropriate? How mainstream are the kinds of racist, anti-Semitic, ultranationalist views that Winrod and some of his fellow defendants held? What are effective strategies for responding to, or even stopping, such sentiments in a world of online communication? And would such responses only cause hatemongers to further entrench, fed by their own stories of how misunderstood and persecuted they are?

One lesson from the Great Sedition Trial seems clear. It is fair and necessary to punish seditious acts—but not advocacy. Ideas should never be illegal in the United States, even if they are shared with others conspiratorially, even if they come from the deplorable alt-right. As the trial’s prosecutor stated in his own reflections on the case, “Legislatively, the proscription of such a conspiracy is both unwise and ineffective; and constitutionally, at least so far as the Congress is concerned, it violates the First Amendment.”⁶¹

Essay on Sources

A rich array of primary sources is available to a researcher with an interest in Gerald B. Winrod in the Wichita State University Library Special Collections and University Archives. The Gerald B. Winrod Papers include years’ worth of publications by Winrod’s organization and letters he sent to his supporters. The papers also feature some personal correspondence and some letters only sent to his Kansas mailing list, particularly items asserting that he was the victim of ongoing harassment by the publishers of the *Wichita Beacon*. Especially useful in this paper were large scrapbooks of news clippings and letters related to the Great Sedition Trial, some including handwritten notes from Winrod or instructions to his longtime assistant, M. E. Flowers.

Linked to the Winrod papers are the John W. Jackson Papers, which come from one of the attorneys who represented Winrod. The Jackson Papers include some items of evidence from the trial as well as trial transcript excerpts, copies of legal documents such as a motion for a bill of particulars, and a copy of the argument

60. Prayer Circle letters, December 30, 1940, and December 13, 1944, “America’s Niemoeller,” February 1944, Radio address, March 19, 1945, in Winrod Papers.

61. Rogge, 447.

Jackson made opposing a continuation of the trial after the judge's death. Posttrial correspondence demonstrates that Jackson had a cordial relationship with other defendants and their counsel. There is nothing to suggest whether or not Jackson shared Winrod's world view or politics, but his opposition to the proceedings was personal as well as professional; in one letter, he called them a "travesty on justice."

Also augmenting the Winrod Papers is the Kenneth Bradley Collection, a fascinating set of Federal Bureau of Investigation reports, memos, and letters demonstrating that Winrod was repeatedly investigated in the 1930s and 1940s. Most reports come with summaries or copies of articles or speeches attributed to Winrod. Any researcher interested in the relationship between FBI and subversives in this era would be particularly interested in a series of reports from Special Agent Dwight Brantley in the Kansas City office. The Bradley papers were crucial to this paper as they reveal how small a threat the FBI perceived Winrod to be.

Two contemporaneous books report on the trial from the perspective of the defendants. *A Trial on Trial: The Great Sedition Trial of 1944* was published in 1964. Its first author is Lawrence Dennis, a defendant who was also apparently a capable attorney and represented himself at the trial. It was co-written by Maximilian St.-George, the attorney who represented Joseph E. McWilliams. The book is obviously biased, self-published by an organization calling itself The National Civil Rights Committee. Even so, it offers a thoughtful—if often repetitive and pedantic—analysis of the trial, including a six-chapter point by point examination of the prosecutor's opening statement. St.-George and Dennis effectively argue that the attempt to prove a conspiracy could never have worked.

Even more biased is *The Sedition Case*; though not signed, it bears all the hallmarks of Winrod's style and themes. He at least sponsored it and probably wrote it. It was published in 1953 by the "Lutheran Research Society," which also published a book about the Koch cancer treatment, a quack cure promoted by Winrod in the later days of his career. In contrast to the Bradley Collection, *The Sedition Case* plays up Winrod's supposed importance as the "arch enemy" of Walter Winchell and others.

Biased toward the government's case is *The Official German Report: Nazi Penetration, 1924-1942, Pan-Arabism, 1939-Today* (Thomas Yoseloff, 1961) by O. John Rogge, the prosecutor of The Great Sedition Trial. The book includes the full text of Rogge's report on Nazi propaganda efforts to influence Americans from September 1946. Rogge writes convincingly that the Germans were trying to spread their message and equally convincingly that the defendants engaged in anti-Semitic and isolationist speech; he fails to tie the two truths together.

An interested researcher will find much more detail on the daily ups and downs of the trial itself and the media's eventual fatigue in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *PM*, the *Wichita Eagle*, and the *Wichita Beacon*, as well as Walter Winchell columns from the time. The National Archives holds records on

both the trial and an appeal which were not explored for this project.

When the Great Sedition Trial is remembered today, it is often by the arch-conservative and “alt-right” press, held up to support claims that the United States government has persecuted such views for decades. Alternately, it is remembered by those who understandably perceive Winrod and his philosophical—and, actually, biological—offspring as a threat. An example of a clearly leftist but helpful history is *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, 2nd ed., by Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab (University of Chicago, 1970). Lipset and Raab mix specific examples with context; their definition of political anti-Semitism helped to sharpen this paper.

Less ideological but still critical of Winrod is a master’s thesis from 1994 by Barbara Jean Beale, “Gerald Burton Winrod: Defender of Christianity and Democracy in the United States.” Beale effectively captures Winrod’s moral activism, which was apparently sincere, but she errs in calling Winrod’s participation in the Great Sedition Trial his “downfall,” neglecting the influence he rebuilt in the Red Scare years after the war. The author’s own “Acts of Courage” is a popular history account of Winrod’s senate campaign viewed through the lens of his detractors. It can be found in the Kansas Leadership Center’s Journal 3 no. 4 (Winter 2014), 38-47. *Kansas History* has published three relevant articles: “Strident Voices in Kansas Between the Wars” by Clifford R. Hope Jr., 2 no. 1 (Spring 1979), 54-64; “Another Wichita Seditiousist?: Elmer J. Garner and the Radical Right’s Opposition to World War II” by Virgil W. Dean, 17 no. 1 (Spring 1994), 50-64; and “Religion in Kansas” by Gary Entz 28 no. 2 (Summer 2005), 120-145. Leo P. Ribuffo in both *The Old Christian Right: The Protestant Far Right From the Great Depression to the Cold War* (Temple University, 1983) and his chapter about Winrod in *John Brown to Bob Dole: Movers and Shakers in Kansas History* (University Press of Kansas, 2006) provides a centrist view of Winrod and his place in religion and politics. A more recent, beautifully written, exploration is by Kansas native and Princeton sociologist Robert Wuthnow: *Red State Religion: Faith and Politics in America’s Heartland* (Princeton University, 2011).

The Smith Act would again become a matter of public discussion in 1948, when the Harry Truman administration charged the leaders of the American Communist Party with violating the act. For more on this, see Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton University, 1998).

Saboteurs: The Nazi Raid on America (Knopf, 2004) is a thoroughly researched and wildly entertaining account of the Pastorius teams. For more on Nazi propaganda and its efficacy in various settings, see Nathaniel Weyl, *The Battle Against Disloyalty* (Crowell, 1951); Arnold A. Offner, *American Appeasement: United States Foreign Policy and Germany, 1933-1938* (Belknap Press, 1969); and Werner Rings, *Life With the Enemy: Collaboration and Resistance in Hitler’s Europe, 1939-1945* (Doubleday, 1982). Innumerable books explore Roosevelt’s leadership and demeanor before and during the war. Two that were helpful for this paper were Richard Polenberg, *War and Society:*

The United States, 1941-1945 (J.B. Lippincott, 1972), and Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s Age of Roosevelt series, especially volume one, *The Crisis of the Old Order* (Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

A useful introduction to Fr. Charles Coughlin, including telling audio clips, comes in podcast form. The episode "Father Coughlin" from The Omnibus, hosted by Ken Jennings and John Roderick, provides insight into Coughlin's reach and influence as well as his increasingly virulent anti-Semitism. It is found at omnibusproject.com (Entry 284.MT2309).

Major General Orlando Ward: Life of a Leader is a military biography by Russell A. Gugeler full of quips and quotes about one soldier's experience. Historians would do well to follow the instructions Ward gave his staff in October 1942 as they were writing for both the British and American armies: "Abbreviations have made our common language a babble of tongues. . . . God deliver us from having any allies in the next war we have." In addition, Gugeler was my grandfather, so I was damned sure going to cite him.

Online sources include entries from the online civics project "Today in Civil Liberties History."