

political activities. As a result, investigating organized crime was not a Hoover priority. And his belated decision to use illegal investigative techniques during criminal investigations actually undermined the FBI's ability to help prosecute (rather than just collect information on) organized-crime leaders.

Hoover's leadership of the FBI can best be understood not in terms of Summers's morality play of compromised homosexuality but as a by-product of the politics and priorities of Cold War America. It is a story of a resourceful bureaucrat who successfully circumvented the limitations of the American constitutional system of checks and balances. In so doing, Hoover compromised the FBI's and the Justice Department's abilities to convict organized-crime leaders. This story of institutional politics remains to be told.

ONE

A Compromised
Homosexual?
A Case
in Search of
Evidence

WAS Hoover a homosexual? Did his sexuality influence his leadership of the FBI and shape the Bureau's investigative priorities? For the Hoover biographer, these are important questions, and not the product of a perverted mind. But the private nature of homosexual conduct makes their resolution extremely difficult, particularly in Hoover's case. Given the moralistic and security-based homophobia of the cold war era, homosexuals were wise to avoid public discovery of their sexual orientation. It was then unquestionably believed that a homosexual would be vulnerable to blackmail and to the betrayal of national secrets. Given the sensitivity of Hoover's position as FBI director, had he been discovered to be homosexual he would have been dismissed or hounded out of government.

Hoover was well aware of this reality from his own experience as FBI director. Twice during President Eisenhower's tenure, for example, he had identified homosexuals on the White House staff, who were then fired. In 1951 he had unilaterally instituted a Sex Deviates program to purge alleged homosexuals from any position in the federal government, from the lowliest clerk to the more powerful

position of White House aide. FBI agents were to report even rumored homosexuality—of *anyone*—and to monitor homosexual publications (such as *One*) and homosexual organizations (such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis). Individuals identified as suspected homosexuals were listed in a Sex Deviates index card file. This information was quietly used to dismiss homosexuals from positions outside the federal government as well, including college professors and police officers.

At the same time Hoover recognized the difficulties of confirming intimations of homosexuality and the counter-productivity of a politics of homosexual rumormongering. His awareness may be seen in three of his actions as FBI director, examples which also indirectly highlight the difficulties confronting any biographer who seeks to understand Hoover's sexuality.

On February 27, 1953, President Dwight Eisenhower nominated Charles Bohlen as United States ambassador to the Soviet Union. Inheriting a vacancy in that position, the recently inaugurated president sought to fill this important post quickly in light of the tensions in U.S.-Soviet relations which had been exacerbated by his anti-Communist rhetoric during the presidential campaign. But his proposed nominee caused political problems for the president among the already suspicious McCarthyite wing of the Republican party. Eisenhower had defeated the preferred choice of conservative Republicans, Robert Taft, in gaining the presidential nomination, and did not automatically command the conservatives' loyalty. The McCarthyites' power in

Congress and in state party organizations could complicate Eisenhower's ability to promote his own foreign policy objectives—the dominant issue in national politics, and an issue that separated the president and his moderate Republican supporters from the McCarthyites.

From 1948, and more effectively during the 1952 presidential and congressional campaigns, conservative Republicans had successfully accused the Truman administration of "softness toward communism" and had called for a housecleaning to purge security risks from high government positions, notably the State Department. In these criticisms they had focused on the symbolism of the Yalta Conference of February 1945. At Yalta, the McCarthyites claimed, President Roosevelt and members of the U.S. delegation had sold out Eastern Europe and China, making possible Soviet expansion and laying the basis for the cold war. The Yalta agreements were not simply errors of judgment. Rather, the McCarthyites charged, American security interests and democratic principles had been betrayed by government officials who were either indifferent to or attracted by communism. The McCarthyites welcomed Eisenhower's election for its promise of a militantly anti-Communist foreign policy, with all the "Yalta men" purged from the State Department.

Bohlen's nomination challenged this politics and these expectations. As a career diplomat Bohlen had attended the Yalta Conference as an interpreter for the president and the U.S. delegation. He had publicly defended the Yalta agreements as realistic and in the national interest. For the

McCarthyites, then, Bohlen's nomination raised questions about the future course of Eisenhower's Soviet policy while threatening to undermine a powerful political tool used to discredit liberal Democrats. Because ambassadorial appointments require Senate confirmation, the McCarthyites could either try to defeat this appointment or to use the confirmation process to raise doubts about the president's leadership.

Bohlen's loyalty proved difficult to impugn. His continued defense of Yalta and of other postwar foreign policy positions toward the Soviet Union raised questions about his political judgment but little worse. And the administration argued that Bohlen had been a career diplomat whose role at Yalta had been merely that of an interpreter, and whose appointment to Moscow would be that of a subordinate who represented the administration's foreign policy. The McCarthyites thus looked elsewhere for ammunition to submarine this nomination. One such opportunity involved rumors of Bohlen's homosexuality.

Enjoying direct access to the FBI director, Senator Joseph McCarthy telephoned Hoover on March 18, 1953, to seek his counsel and assistance. Hoover was more than willing to help the senator, in part because he shared the conviction that despite Eisenhower's election "there was practically no change [in State Department loyalty procedures] and everything was running about the same as it was a year ago." The conversation focused on the homosexual question. Responding to McCarthy's inquiry as to "how bad" Bohlen was, Hoover remarked that "this, of course, was very hard

to evaluate" because the administration had not requested an FBI investigation "until after Bohlen was named for the appointment." McCarthy pressed Hoover as to whether the FBI director thought Bohlen was a homosexual. Hoover "did not know; that that was a very hard thing to prove and the only way you could prove it was either by admission or by arrest and forfeiture of collateral." This had not occurred "as far as we know" in Bohlen's case, "but it is a fact, and I believe very well known, that he is associating with individuals of that type." Continuing on, Hoover reiterated that "it was very difficult to prove a charge of homosexuality; that he [Bohlen] did associate with such individuals and certainly normally a person did not associate with individuals of that type." Repeating that the FBI "had no evidence to show any overt act" excepting Bohlen's "very bad" judgment in associating with homosexuals, Hoover suggested that the senator could not publicly cite such associations as evidence during the ensuing Senate debate over the Bohlen nomination. McCarthy agreed that "it was so easy to accuse a person of such acts but difficult to prove." Hoover added that such charges were often "used by persons who wanted to smear someone."

McCarthy was clearly disappointed to learn that Hoover could not confirm Bohlen's homosexuality, but he asked if the FBI director could provide him with any information—"public source information such as the Daily Worker"—that he could use during his planned Senate speech denouncing the Bohlen nomination. Hoover lamented that he could not. Even though the FBI had "investigated Bohlen from

the security and morals angle," Hoover advised McCarthy, that investigation had been based on interviews with Bohlen's current or past associates in the State Department, and the FBI had not analyzed Bohlen's "political speeches, and so forth, as that was supposedly handled by the State Department."

Much as he might have liked to help McCarthy undercut the president's nominee, Hoover could not provide the needed assistance, and not simply because the FBI had uncovered no evidence to impugn Bohlen's loyalty and character. More important, the FBI's only information had been obtained from interviews with Bohlen's State Department associates and acquaintances, so Hoover could not relay this information to McCarthy without disclosing that McCarthy's source was the FBI. Furthermore, Hoover's suggestion of Bohlen's homosexuality was itself based on unsupported allegations and wild speculation. The FBI's most damning information about Bohlen came from a State Department associate who, during her FBI interview, suggested that Bohlen's "manner of speech indicated effeminacy and she is of definite belief he has strong homosexual tendencies." Although this woman admitted that she had had no social contact with the nominee, she pointed out that Bohlen "walks, acts and talks like a homosexual." She based her assessment on "considerable reading in abnormal psychology in the course of her life, and she has met many homosexuals and claims she is able, with some degree of certainty, to discern homosexual tendencies in individuals." A second FBI source, a State Department security officer,

reported that the State Department's index cards on "suspected homosexuals" included one "that Bohlen was associating with sexual perverts." The FBI's third source cited as damning evidence the fact that "an admitted homosexual gave Bohlen as a reference in a Government application."

Interestingly, Hoover did not advise McCarthy that he had already recommended against Bohlen's appointment. On March 17, the day before Hoover's conversation with McCarthy, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA Director Allen Dulles met with the FBI director to discuss the Bohlen nomination. Advised that the president had requested his personal evaluation, Hoover agreed to abandon his normal practice of not offering any evaluation of the reports compiled by FBI agents during security investigations. "He would not be inclined" to give Bohlen a "complete" security clearance, Hoover responded. He observed that while there "was no direct evidence" of Bohlen's homosexuality, "it was a fact that several of his closest friends and intimate associates were known homosexuals."

In this case Hoover was willing to torpedo Bohlen's nomination on the basis of mere suspicion and speculation, and in the absence of hard evidence. Furthermore, the FBI director, both in his overt contact with the president's representatives and in his covert contact with Senator McCarthy, did so knowing that Eisenhower was committed to the nomination and that the McCarthyites aimed to undermine the president's direction of U.S. foreign policy.

A second, equally revealing example of Hoover's under-

standing of the politics of homophobia involved his assistance to another Republican president, Richard Nixon. In this case the FBI director recommended a strategy to prevent the president's adversaries from forcing the dismissal of three high-level White House aides accused of being homosexuals.

The catalyst to this episode was a June 11, 1969, meeting between Jack Anderson, Drew Pearson's collaborator on a syndicated column, and FBI Assistant Director Cartha DeLoach. As head of the FBI's Crime Records Division, DeLoach served as Hoover's liaison to the media and Congress. At this meeting, Anderson advised DeLoach that Pearson had "picked up some very damaging information" that three high-level Nixon aides—H. R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, and Dwight Chapin—were homosexuals. Pearson's source, Anderson said, was another White House aide who had provided the columnists with information in the past and was "absolutely reliable." If Pearson were to publish this information in his column it would "be quite a bombshell," Anderson added, but he had advised against publication "until he had further evidence." When DeLoach responded that Anderson's briefing would require the FBI to report this allegation to the White House, Anderson raised no objection but "wanted his name to be kept out of it."

Briefing Hoover on this meeting, DeLoach described Anderson's purpose as "dump[ing]" this information on the FBI "so that he [Pearson] will be in a position to indicate publicly or otherwise, that the FBI had received such information." DeLoach told Hoover that the FBI's investi-

gation of Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Chapin (pursuant to an earlier presidential security clearance request) had uncovered nothing to indicate the "authenticity" of Pearson's charge. DeLoach then pointed out that Anderson and Pearson had been "very close to [the 1968 Democratic presidential nominee Hubert] Humphrey and he and Pearson have quite naturally been chagrined over the results of the Republican victory."

Hoover immediately briefed President Nixon, Attorney General John Mitchell, and H. R. Haldeman, the president's senior aide. The FBI director then explained how the FBI could help the White House undercut Pearson's and Anderson's hostile intent. He proposed that specially selected FBI officials take "sworn statements" from the three named White House aides denying these allegations; he would then retain these statements in his own office safe. This procedure would preclude any possibility that Pearson could discover and report that the FBI was investigating this allegation, thus denying him the opportunity to make such a claim. Should Pearson claim that the administration had prevented the FBI from investigating the matter, Hoover could produce the signed statements to refute both the charge of a cover-up and the homosexual allegation. In outlining this plan to Haldeman, Hoover began by expressing his own "outrage and disgust" over Anderson's and Pearson's intentions. He advised that it was nonetheless necessary to foreclose the columnists' practice whereby through the circulation of "innuendo they were able to establish [rumor] as fact."

The third case involved Hoover's quiet assistance to President Franklin Roosevelt on the matter of Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles. Returning on the presidential train to Washington, D.C., on September 18, 1940, from the funeral of House Speaker John Bankhead of Alabama, and then on a second train trip later that month from Washington to Cleveland, an inebriated Welles had propositioned a number of porters in his Pullman car. The Secret Service learned in January 1941 that railroad company officials were considering legal action, and brought this to the attention of the president. Roosevelt immediately asked Hoover to conduct a discreet FBI investigation.

Hoover personally briefed the president on the FBI's findings, confirming that the incidents had occurred and, further, that former Ambassador William Bullitt and Senator Burton Wheeler were circulating gossip about Welles. Roosevelt said he suspected that Welles's drinking had precipitated the two incidents, and sought Hoover's counsel. After pointing out that "a great many persons knew of these incidents," Hoover observed that Welles had in fact made these advances—"which was more of a mental condition than anything else and there could not be any assurance it would not be repeated in the future." The FBI director recommended that if the president intended to retain Welles, "certainly someone should be assigned to travel with Mr. Welles to see either that he did not indulge in the use of liquor or that, if he did, that he then did not endeavor to make propositions for such immoral relations." Roosevelt thought this an excellent suggestion.

While the Sumner Welles matter was successfully contained in 1941, it resurfaced as a more troublesome issue in 1942-1943. Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who resented Welles's access to the president, became particularly concerned about rumors of Welles's behavior that were circulating on Capitol Hill. Influential Senate Republicans, notably Ralph Brewster, were demanding information and appropriate action. Roosevelt reluctantly accepted Welles's resignation.

THE Roosevelt, Nixon, and Eisenhower examples illustrate Hoover's interest in homosexual allegations involving high-level public officials, but there was still more. The FBI director's interest virtually exploded whenever such rumors circulated about his own homosexuality. In these instances he would not tolerate a public airing of such allegations but fully employed the resources of the FBI to intimidate his accusers into silence. Identifying the FBI with himself and employing the agency as his personal instrument, Hoover unhesitatingly demanded that FBI agents closely monitor these rumors, alert him to them, and then act forcefully to defend his reputation. The extent and intensity of these efforts made this a high FBI priority.

For example, a 1943 FBI investigation sought to determine whether Washington-based businessman John Monroe had used his "connections in government circles" to secure dismissal of a suit by the wartime Office of Price Admin-

istration (OPA) against a Brooklyn baking company. In the course of the inquiry, an FBI agent learned that Monroe had allegedly bragged that he had "no fear of the F.B.I. inasmuch as he 'was the only one who had positive proof that J. Edgar Hoover is a fairy.'" Although this agent reported the allegation to his superior on December 17, 1943, his report was not relayed to Hoover until January 18, 1944. Hoover protested to the head (SAC—special agent in charge) of the FBI's New York field office this "gross" mishandling and demanded to know "why this matter was not reported from Dec 17 to Jan 18." The FBI director did not await the SAC's response. He simultaneously ordered his senior aides to take "vigorous action" to address this failure "to promptly or properly report" the homosexual allegation. Hoover also demanded that Monroe be made to "put up or shut up" concerning his statement.

FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols was dispatched to confront Monroe and "dress down" and threaten him with "crim[inal] slander unless can prove." During the meeting with Nichols, Monroe denied having made the aspersion, claiming to have been himself the victim of character assassination.* He signed a statement to that effect. Hoover did not believe this denial, and Monroe remained a subject of FBI investigative interest. Although he escaped indictment in the 1943 case, Monroe was indicted in 1945 and convicted in 1946 for violating OPA price ceilings.

*Monroe was at the time involved in a libel suit with syndicated columnist Drew Pearson, and advised Nichols of his suspicion that Pearson had passed this rumor to the FBI.

Letters of reprimand were placed in the personnel files of the New York FBI officials who had supervisory responsibility over this 1943 investigation and who had failed to report and act immediately upon this homosexual allegation. These officials were further admonished that "No repetition will be tolerated." Finally, E. E. Conroy, the New York SAC, convened two meetings of all the supervisors in the New York office at which he conveyed his "very forceful" displeasure over their failure to have "immediately called" such "scandalous and scurrilous remarks" about Hoover to his immediate attention.

New York agents, and those assigned to other field offices, learned an important lesson: their careers and future advancement in the FBI would be determined by how closely they monitored and immediately reported any derogatory comments about Hoover's character—no matter how innocuous or incredible. In due course, ever-alert agents reported to the FBI director a variety of gossipy allegations, whether by a woman at a meeting of her bridge club in Cleveland, a beauty parlor operator to a customer in Washington, D.C., or a Detroit businessman to his host during a visit to New York City. Each offender was thereupon visited by a high-level FBI official and subjected to intimidating interviews.

The woman who had remarked at the Cleveland bridge party that she had heard that Hoover was homosexual was so chastised by the Cleveland SAC that she agreed at the next meeting of her bridge club "to point out to each of those present that her statement was not founded on fact

and that she was deeply sorry that she had made it and it should not have been made at all." The Washington, D.C., beauty parlor operator was interviewed twice by two senior FBI officials (an FBI assistant director and an FBI supervisor) at her place of business. She denied having made scurrilous remarks about Hoover, including a suggestion that he was "queer," and was "advised in no uncertain terms that such statements . . . would not be countenanced." Reporting back to Hoover, FBI Assistant Director F. C. Holloman contended that this woman "fully realizes the seriousness of her accusations, and it is not believed that she will ever be guilty of such statements."

In a report on his interview with the Detroit businessman, the Detroit SAC described him as "scared to death" that the FBI was "going to investigate him." The interviewing agent had warned the businessman that if he ever again called Hoover a homosexual he "might take care of him right there on the spot." The Detroit SAC confidently predicted that this man "will not repeat such a statement in the future." The mind-set of FBI personnel was best expressed by Louisville SAC M. W. McFarlin: Hoover could be assured that "so long as there is a Federal Bureau of Investigation that those associated with you will exert every means in their power to protect you from malicious lying attacks and throw the lies down the throats of those who utter them."

If Hoover had his agents move quickly to intimidate those who questioned his sexuality during essentially private conversations, he upped the ante whenever such allegations

might be widely disseminated. Having heard that *Los Angeles Times* reporter Jack Nelson planned to write a critical article on himself and the FBI, including reports that the director was homosexual, Hoover arranged a meeting with Nelson's bosses at which he sought to have Nelson fired. Hoover cited instances of Nelson's excessive drinking (the FBI's only derogatory information on this reporter) and claimed to have learned that Nelson had been given the "assignment of 'getting' me, and . . . was assigned to the Washington bureau of the *Los Angeles Times* for this specific purpose." Hoover's threats proved unavailing; instead Nelson's standing with his superiors improved. For this sin the *Times* was placed on Hoover's "not to contact" list and was denied help on pending stories.

Hoover was more successful in a second case. *New York Times* reporter Anthony Leviero, Hoover learned, had been commissioned by *American Mercury* publisher Lawrence Spivak to write "a highly critical 'smear' article in the nature of a profile" which would charge Hoover "with perversion," contend that Hoover claimed "personal credit" for the accomplishments of local police, other government departments, and the FBI, and that "while constantly disclaiming that there is any political consideration in your [Hoover's] policies, you are, nevertheless, a most successful politician."

To contain this threat, Hoover mounted an attack on several fronts. FBI Associate Director Clyde Tolson belligerently accosted Spivak in a restaurant to inquire how his "smear article" was coming along while FBI Assistant

Director Louis Nichols quietly interceded with *Reader's Digest* general editor Paul Palmer, a former partner of Spivak's on the *American Mercury*, to kill the critical article. Nichols also met with both Leviero and Spivak. In his meeting with Nichols, Leviero denied any intention to write a "smear" piece. Spivak, a political conservative and a journalist of considerable stature, said he had originally sought a meeting with Hoover to dispel any doubts about the nature of the article. Affirming his interest in publishing an "objective piece and nothing else," Spivak assured Nichols that he intended to "check each fact and triple check it and if there was anything that was the least bit derogatory he would check it with Mr. Hoover personally." At the end of this meeting, Nichols promised to brief Hoover on Spivak's assurances, and singled out the "element of perversion" as having most "infuriated" Hoover, Tolson, and himself. When Nichols reported back to Spivak that the FBI director had accepted his apology and considered the "incident closed," Spivak, in a revealing comment, characterized this as "a wonderful demonstration of a free country, that had this occurred in any other country he would have been shot by now." Not surprisingly, perhaps, Leviero decided against writing the profile.

Clearly, one did not lightly remark about Hoover's sexuality. The intensity of his interest and his commitment to stifle such rumors demonstrated, at a minimum, Hoover's awareness of their damage not only to his personal reputation but to his tenure as FBI director. Hoover's concern to retain his office obliged him to conduct his personal life in

a way that precluded the possibility of anyone discovering whether he was a practicing homosexual. As a cautious, highly disciplined bureaucrat who had devised special records procedures to conceal his authorization of "clearly illegal" activities or his receipt of highly confidential reports, Hoover would never have put himself in a position where anyone, other than a homosexual lover, could uncover such a dangerous secret.

This reality renders incredible Anthony Summers's most electrifying source—Susan Rosenstiel, who claimed to have seen Hoover, in 1958 and then again in 1959, dressed in drag and engaged in homosexual orgies hosted by former McCarthy aide Roy Cohn at the Plaza Hotel in New York. The former Mrs. Rosenstiel would have us believe that Hoover allowed himself, not once but twice within a year, to be observed while participating in homosexual activities. It is impossible to confirm or refute such activity during the 1950s in a private suite in the Plaza Hotel—had such parties taken place, only those present could contradict Susan Rosenstiel, and all those she names are deceased. The private nature of such activity ensured that its existence could have become known only if someone in attendance decided to come forward.

Could Hoover have been surprised in the act, as Mrs. Rosenstiel claims? In attending these orgies and dressing in drag, had he anticipated that no one, except those who were homosexuals like himself and who shared his interest in not being caught, would see him in such a compromising position? Why, moreover, would Susan Rosenstiel have

attended a homosexual orgy? Her explanation renders an incredible account even more incredible.

Susan Rosenstiel was at the time of the alleged parties the fourth wife of Lewis Rosenstiel, the multimillionaire owner of Schenley Industries. Rosenstiel had made his fortune in the liquor industry in the years after Prohibition, allegedly through his contacts with organized crime. Ultra-conservative in politics and sensitive to his own public relations problems, Rosenstiel in 1957 lured Louis Nichols into early retirement* to become a Schenley vice president at a reported annual salary of \$100,000. Nichols, seeking to refurbish Rosenstiel's image, convinced the multimillionaire in 1965 to make an initial gift of \$1 million to endow the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The stated mission of this foundation was "to safeguard the heritage of freedom of the United States of America and to perpetuate the ideas to which the Honorable J. Edgar Hoover has dedicated his life...[and] to combat Communism." The foundation sought to inculcate American youth with the importance of "Americanism" by funding educational programs, scholarships, and endowed chairs as well as magazines, books, and pamphlets.

While he was never a close friend of Hoover, Rosenstiel's hiring of Nichols earned him ready access to the vain FBI director, who throughout his tenure had regularly sought to curry favor with prominent businessmen. According to Susan Rosenstiel, however, her second husband and Roy

*At the time Nichols was the number three man in the FBI hierarchy behind Hoover and Tolson, and Hoover's public relations genius.

Cohn in 1958 invited her to attend a party in Cohn's hotel suite at the Plaza on the condition of secrecy, with Cohn adding, "You're in for a big surprise." She explains that Lewis Rosenstiel extended this invitation because her first husband, to whom she had been married for nine years, had been "predominantly" homosexual. So Lewis Rosenstiel had concluded that she "was a 'regular' and knew what life was, that my first husband had been gay and I must have understood because I'd stayed with him for nine years." At the 1958 party, and on a second occasion in 1959 (for which she stated that she was paid off with an expensive pair of earrings), she witnessed Hoover engage in homosexual activities, dressed in drag.

The story is unbelievable and reflects more about Susan Rosenstiel's attitudes toward men in general.* Claiming that both her first and second husbands were homosexual (her second husband bisexual), and that her discovery of her first husband's homosexuality led to their divorce after nine years of marriage, she would have us believe that she twice attended homosexual orgies—the first time on a dare and the second because of a bribe of expensive earrings. Her malicious portrait of Lewis Rosenstiel (she further claims that at the first party he "wanted me to get involved [with two boys] but I wouldn't do it") leaves unexplained why he

*In addition to linking Hoover with Cohn, another rumored homosexual, Susan Rosenstiel claims that Cohn flaunted his homosexuality to her and told her about her husband's other homosexual friends, notably Cardinal Spellman (another rumored homosexual). She thereby links together a veritable Who's Who of rumored homosexuals (Hoover, Cohn, Spellman), with her first and second husbands thrown in for free.

would want her present at two homosexual parties which could only adversely affect their relationship. Nor can she explain why she had not sought a divorce from Rosenstiel after the "surprise" of the first party, given her further claim to having earlier caught him "in bed" with Roy Cohn, and why she had not raised the matter of homosexuality in her own later pleas for divorce.

But Susan Rosenstiel's story gets better. In addition to seeing Hoover wearing a dress, hose, heels, and a wig, she claims to have watched him engage in homosexual activities at the first party with two eighteen- to nineteen-year-old blond males, and at the second party with two boys dressed in leather. On this second occasion, she reports, "Hoover had a Bible. He wanted one of the boys to read from the Bible. And he read, I forget which passage, and the other boy played with him [Hoover], wearing the rubber gloves. And then Hoover grabbed the Bible, threw it down and told the second boy to join in the sex."

Nothing is missing: a homosexual Hoover in drag, engaging in sex with blond boys dressed in leather and—continuing this stereotypically homophobic account—with a Bible being held, read from, and then discarded. No fundamentalist minister could better capture the immorality of homosexuals!

Susan Rosenstiel, moreover, was not a disinterested party. Although the target of her allegations was J. Edgar Hoover, she managed as well to defame her second husband with whom she had been involved in a bitterly contested divorce which lasted ten years in the courts. Her hatred of Lewis

Rosenstiel had led her in 1970 to offer damaging testimony about his alleged connections with organized-crime leaders before a New York state legislative committee on crime. This testimony remains sealed and cannot be evaluated for its credibility.

Susan Rosenstiel was not Summers's sole incredible source. He provided further corroboration of Hoover's homosexuality by reporting that Hoover's concerns about it had led him to seek the counsel of a Washington, D.C., psychiatrist, Dr. Marshall deG. Ruffin.* On its face, this account is more believable. If Hoover was homosexual, he could have been so troubled by his sexual orientation, his own hypocrisy in publicly denouncing "perverted" sex, and his own aggressive efforts to purge homosexuals from government that he sought psychiatric counsel. The contradiction between his private life and public activities would have been wrenching, and he might have felt anxious that his continued indulgence might result in his being caught, with resulting public humiliation. Visiting a psychiatrist offered the prospect of medical assistance and an assurance of secrecy; psychiatrists are professionally bound to honor the confidentiality of a doctor-patient relationship.

*Summers's source, apparently, was either syndicated columnist Jack Anderson or a February 1971 Anderson column in which he claimed that Hoover had "consulted" a psychiatrist, naming Dr. Ruffin. Incensed by this published defamation, Hoover that same month inquired of Deputy Attorney General Richard Kleindienst whether he should sue Anderson. Kleindienst's sarcastic response reflected his low estimate of the reliability of Anderson's column—that "if Anderson had spelled my [Hoover's] name right, to leave it alone."

In light of Hoover's powerful position and the recent disclosures of his abuses of power (including monitoring the sexual activities of prominent political leaders), a psychiatrist with political principles might well have concluded that it was more ethical to expose Hoover to reporters or authors. Presumably Ruffin could have documented his professional relationship with Hoover through appointment records, and through case notes have recorded Hoover's admissions.

Summers's source, however, was not Dr. Ruffin, who died in 1984, but his widow. Recounting her husband's counseling sessions with Hoover, she added that he had "burned" his notes shortly before his death. As in the case of Susan Rosenstiel, we are left with an uncorroborated account, in this case of a widow who, during a 1990 interview, precisely dates her husband's counseling sessions with Hoover as occurring "in late 1946" and then "again later in 1971."

There is further reason to question this account. When I began researching my own biography of Hoover during the 1980s, I became the recipient of numerous volunteered examples of Hoover's homosexuality (although none as melodramatic as that of Susan Rosenstiel). Each of the allegations turned out to be baseless, either because records that would have confirmed the allegations had been destroyed or because what was being offered was an eyewitness account. A principal source of these rumors was the gay community—which had its own interest in "outing" Hoover, whether to expose his hypocritical homophobia or to show that homosexuals could hold sensitive government positions

without compromising national security. Among the proffered examples was the psychiatrist story—which Summers attributed to Dr. Ruffin. I was not told the name of the psychiatrist, or that he was already deceased. If I was interested in pursuing this matter, I was told, contact would be made with the psychiatrist's son to see whether he would be willing to disclose his and his father's identity. I demurred, having decided first to determine the credibility of Hoover's psychiatric counseling by contacting the person identified as having referred Hoover to the psychiatrist. Summers reports that Hoover's personal physician, Dr. William Clark, had referred him to Dr. Ruffin, but I had been told that former Senator J. William Fulbright had provided this referral.

It struck me as incredible that Hoover would approach Fulbright (a brilliant lawyer and astute when it came to foreign affairs, but with no special expertise in the area of psychiatric referral) and disclose his interest in seeing a psychiatrist. Such an interest might not betray his homosexuality, but it certainly would have alerted a prominent senator, who was not friendly to Hoover, to the FBI director's need for psychiatric counseling. True, Hoover could have avoided this political problem and obtained better counsel from Dr. Clark, his personal physician, but even that request carried the risk of disclosing Hoover's troubled mental state. Absolute confidentiality was possible: Hoover might have instead relied upon the FBI's resources to obtain the names of reputable psychiatrists in the Washington, D.C., area, ostensibly to seek consultation on the workings of the

criminal mind. In any event, I did contact Fulbright, who (perhaps more gently than my request deserved) denied that he had made such a referral.

Summers's third sources—and from these he segues into Hoover's blackmailing by organized-crime leaders—claim to have seen a photograph of Hoover and Tolson engaging in a homosexual act. None of those who told Summers they had seen this photograph produced a copy; they simply testified to having seen it. According to Summers, John Weitz, a former official in the wartime Office of Strategic Services (OSS), had been shown the photograph in the early 1950s at a dinner party hosted by the former head of the CIA's counterintelligence division, James Angleton. Summers also recounts a second viewing by a self-proclaimed intelligence operative, Gordon Novel. According to Novel, in 1967, with the support of the Johnson White House and the CIA, he was pursuing a lawsuit against New Orleans prosecutor Jim Garrison. Hoover opposed his investigation, Novel said, and he was advised that he would incur Hoover's wrath if he continued it. Novel sought a meeting with James Angleton, who urged him to continue and then took from his desk the compromising photograph of Hoover and Tolson and told him "to go see Hoover and tell him I'd seen the sex photographs." According to Novel, this photograph, a copy of which found its way into the hands of organized-crime leaders, had been taken by the OSS in 1946 at a time when that agency "was fighting [the FBI] over foreign intelligence which Hoover wanted but never got." Novel recounted that he then met Hoover at the Mayflower Hotel

in Washington. Upon being advised that Novel had been sent by Angleton and had "seen the sex photographs," an infuriated Hoover eventually relented and Novel proceeded, no longer impeded by the FBI director.

The implication of this tale is that Hoover became a victim of a struggle between the FBI and the OSS for control of foreign intelligence. But the story is both unbelievable and fictitious. OSS agents could not have taken this compromising photograph in 1946, for the agency was dissolved by President Truman in September 1945, its personnel either retired or assigned to other agencies. In 1946 Truman created a Central Intelligence Group (the immediate predecessor to the CIA), but its personnel were on temporary assignment from the established intelligence agencies—State, FBI, MID (Military Intelligence Division), and ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence). Nor was the FBI the OSS's principal bureaucratic rival. Before World War II only State, ONI, and MID conducted foreign intelligence, and their officials were more intensely concerned than the FBI about the creation of a rival agency having direct access to the president. OSS director William Donovan and Hoover were indeed rivals (and Hoover's FBI closely monitored Donovan's personal and official activities), but Donovan would not have risked the discovery of his agents' participation in a break-in to install photographic equipment in Hoover's residence. Had he done so, Donovan would have used this compromising photograph to force Hoover's dismissal—less for bureaucratic than for security reasons,

given the prevailing notion that a homosexual could be blackmailed into betraying security information.

It is inconceivable that someone of Novel's background could have obtained an interview with Angleton. And in light of Angleton's recognized obsession with security, it is unimaginable that the CIA chief would have shared such a compromising photograph with Novel. Had he possessed such a photograph, Angleton would have already shown it to the CIA director, the attorney general, and the president—again, for security reasons. This delightful story also leaves unexplained why Angleton did not use the photograph to advance the CIA's interests. Such a photograph would have come in handy in 1970, at a time when Hoover had severed the FBI's liaison relationship with the CIA and had cut back the FBI's various intelligence services to the CIA (foreign embassy break-ins and electronic surveillance).

What really happened was this. In June 1944 an OSS official named Towell contacted the head of the FBI's wartime security division to obtain permission for an OSS agent to "select copies of obscene material" from FBI files. The material was to be used to counteract a Japanese program of "sending obscene photographs of American girls through India and other countries in an effort to create the impression of lax morals on the part of Americans." The OSS planned to disseminate "similar material with reference to Japanese girls through this same area." When he was advised that the FBI had "a collection of 25 to 30 photographs of this nature" in its Obscene File, Hoover allowed

an OSS agent to "obtain copies of a representative group of these photographs for this project."

OSS and then CIA officials were thereafter aware of this FBI capability. In May 1951 Joseph Bryan III,* then employed in the CIA's psychological warfare division, received CIA and FBI authorization to review the FBI's Obscene File. It remains unclear why CIA officials sought such assistance in 1951, and what uses were then made of the contents of the FBI's Obscene File. In any event, on the eve of the 1952 presidential election, Bryan hosted a dinner party in his home. After remarking to his guests about Hoover's perverse interest in pornography, Bryan reportedly then stated that the FBI director "had a crush on a friend of theirs and had made advances to him several times; when it was found out that no progress could be made, [Hoover] had 'turned him in.'" Bryan claimed to be able to identify this person and "would be glad to testify to it and he could name this person and prove it," adding that Hoover was "afraid of me for this reason."

Inevitably, Hoover was informed of Bryan's alleged statements. Incensed by Bryan's disclosure of the contents of the Obscene File, Hoover demanded a briefing. The FBI director was reminded that he had earlier authorized Bryan and a second CIA officer to review the Obscene File, but on the condition that "someone from the Security Division should

*A member of a prominent Virginia family—his father was the publisher of the *Richmond News Leader*—Bryan had joined the CIA in 1947. He left the agency in 1952 to become special assistant to the secretary of the air force.

accompany them." Hoover then ordered that henceforth this file "should not be exhibited to anyone outside [the FBI] unless specifically authorized by Tolson or myself."

Hoover also demanded that FBI officials contact the source of the report on this dinner party, learn the names of all those in attendance, and seek confirmation of what had been said. Hoover insisted that Bryan "be made to put up or shut up. I want no effort to be spared to call his bluff and promptly." To ensure that all identified parties were fully responsive, Hoover directed his aides to impress upon the CIA liaison that the FBI director expected full cooperation. If the CIA and the other identified parties failed to cooperate, Hoover intended to "arrange for a congressional committee to subpoena [Bryan] or will file suit for slander or initiate Criminal Slander proceedings in D.C. Court."

The resulting FBI interviews proved unavailing. Although the FBI's source repeated his account of this dinner party, he demurred about going public, expressing concern about Bryan's influence and slippery character. Others identified as having attended the party denied having heard Bryan make the alleged statement. Unable to resolve conflicting versions, Hoover and his close aides decided not to press for a congressional investigation or even to interview Bryan.

The Bryan matter did not die, however. In 1955 Hoover learned from the FBI's "friendly sources on the Hill" that Bryan had repeated the allegation about Hoover's homosexuality to another individual who in turn had reported it during a meeting in the office of the vice chairman of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, William Jenner.

Having concluded that the FBI now had "enough evidence in this matter to tackle Joseph Bryan and make him put up or shut up," FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols requested Hoover's approval for himself and FBI supervisor Cartha DeLoach to interview Bryan. Nichols assured Hoover that "no holds will be barred," that he personally wanted the pleasure of making Bryan "put up or shut up." The FBI assistant director also emphasized that the FBI "should really try to make an issue" in view of Bryan's former CIA employment—he knew "better than to be permitted to get by with such."

Hoover approved this request, and Nichols and DeLoach interviewed Bryan at his home. Told that the FBI had learned of his alleged remarks about Hoover's homosexuality at the 1952 dinner party, Bryan claimed that his comments had been misreported. During a discussion with one of his guests about "rumors and gossip in Washington," he said, he had innocently remarked that he "wouldn't be surprised to hear that Admiral [William] Halsey* was beating his wife or that J. Edgar Hoover was a homosexual." Nichols countered that the FBI had learned that Bryan had repeated the statement to another person that month—and the FBI had a signed statement from this individual. A distraught Bryan repeated his denial and wrote Hoover: "I can only give you my word that never did I utter any such statement.

*Bryan had published a biography of Halsey in 1947. Coincidentally, that same year he had sought and obtained an interview with Hoover for a planned profile of the FBI director for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Bryan never published this profile, having in the interim joined the CIA.

I do not slander anyone. Specifically, I do not tell lies. I hope most sincerely that you will believe this."

Hoover and Nichols did not believe Bryan's denial.* Nichols had pointedly warned Bryan that the FBI did not intend to "permit such statements to go unchallenged," and that should such allegations ever be repeated, "anyone who said it would have to put up or shut up and we would take care of anyone who made such a statement." Nor was this an idle threat. Nichols thereupon briefed Senate Internal Security Subcommittee counsel Jay Sourwine about the FBI's "experience with Bryan and his denial," on the understanding that Sourwine would brief Senator Jenner. The FBI's liaison to the CIA, Sam Papich, also briefed his CIA contact about this 1955 incident and the FBI's possession of the signed statement from Bryan's accuser. If the intent was to smear Bryan to his former CIA employers, a further purpose was to raise questions about the professionalism and discretion of CIA personnel.

In any event, John Weitz's version bears little relationship to the quite different and more complex reality. CIA and OSS officials had never been in the business of monitoring Hoover's personal conduct. Instead they had sought to promote closer cooperation with the vain and difficult FBI director. Given their interest in preserving the confidentiality of classified records and in ensuring an effective internal security program, these officials would never have allowed

*Bryan repeated it in 1981 when I interviewed him. It was some thirty years later, and Hoover was dead, but Bryan was still defensive and quite nervous.

organized-crime leaders to obtain information that might compromise the FBI's law enforcement efforts.

What other evidence, then, did Summers offer about the Mafia's blackmailing of Hoover? Summers recounted the claims of a number of organized-crime figures (Seymour Pollack, Jimmy Fratianno, Irving Resnick) that they learned of Hoover's homosexuality and cited instances wherein this information had been used to pressure the FBI director not to prosecute crime leaders. The criminal backgrounds of these men raises serious questions about the veracity of their accusations—and they bore no love for Hoover or interest in upholding his reputation. Ironically, in offering an 'insider's account of a conspiracy to protect criminals, Summers relies on the very technique that Hoover himself successfully employed during the cold war years to further the anti-Communist "cause" (FBI Assistant Director Louis Nichols's revealing phrasing).

When they promoted the second Red Scare as part of a formal "educational campaign" initiated in February 1946, FBI officials relied directly and indirectly on the testimony of ex-Communists. During Smith Act trials or as friendly witnesses before congressional committees such as the House Committee on Un-American Activities or the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, these former Communists publicly described the true purposes of the Communist conspiracy. FBI officials, with Hoover's approval, had provided the congressional committees with the names of many of these ex-Communists, having recognized the value of con-

gressional hearings in providing a public forum to expose the sinister nature of the Communist conspiracy.

Many of these ex-Communists—notably Louis Budenz—embellished their testimony, offering new names of party members as the occasion warranted, or tortured exegeses as to which Communist statements were to be believed as literal truth and which were “Aesopian” language intended to mislead. Hoover’s rationale for believing them was that as former participants in the Communist conspiracy they were in a privileged position to know and reveal the truth. The secretive nature of the Communist conspiracy dictated that the truth could be learned only when former conspirators decided to inform—and in such cases one could not expect other documentary corroboration. Hoover’s commitment to promoting the truthfulness of ex-Communist informers also underlay his aggressive response in the case of Harvey Matusow, an informer who in 1955 recanted his earlier testimony and claimed that he had been pressured by FBI and Justice Department officials to give perjurious testimony. Hoover denounced the repentant Matusow as unreliable and charged that his recantation was itself part of the Communist conspiracy to discredit principled informers. In 1960 Hoover also rallied to the defense of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, then under attack because of its reliance on the unconfirmed allegations of ex-Communists who publicly exposed Communists and Communist sympathizers during highly publicized hearings. Decrying the efforts of those who sought to abolish the committee, Hoover praised the committee’s method of ex-

posure, for the nation’s security could be preserved only through publicizing the testimony of ex-Communists.

Summers turned the table on Hoover. Whether in the cases of Susan Rosenstiel or Seymour Pollack, he presented uncorroborated allegations of claimed coconspirators as undeniable truth—for only those attending private sex orgies or privy to the secret discussions of organized-crime leaders could have provided evidence of Hoover’s homosexuality and blackmailing by the Mob. It might be satisfying to conclude that Hoover richly deserves Anthony Summers as his biographer. But Summers’s sources, if undeniably imaginative, provide no credible documentation for what amounts to no more than gossipy character assassination.

Whether or not Hoover was homosexual—and I doubt that he was—the wily and cautious FBI director would never have put himself in a position that publicly compromised his sexuality. His personal obsession was to retain the FBI directorship. His abilities were those not of a sophisticated criminologist but of a politically astute bureaucrat with a brilliant strategic mind who traded in information and operated in secret. Willing to abuse his office to advance his own political and moralistic agenda, Hoover’s strategic vision led him to devise procedures to ensure that his most serious abuses could not be uncovered. If he was a practicing homosexual, he would also have taken whatever safeguards were needed to ensure that such a dark secret would go with him to his grave.