

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

mission should have been the Hoover commission—a fitting capstone to a distinguished career. Hoover himself suggested as much to President Johnson. Hoover has already replied to one Warren commission criticism—that the FBI was “unduly restrictive” with its information on Lee Harvey Oswald. He has begun inundating the Secret Service with the names of potential assassins—kooks, beatniks, and other suspicious characters—at the rate of 8,000 a year. In his own commission testimony, Hoover said this would create an excessive burden for the Secret Service. The Secret Service obviously agrees: last week it announced it would hire 75 new agents and put in new equipment as part of a \$3 million program to beef up protection for the President.

For his next target, Hoover picked Dr. King, winner of the Nobel Prize, and the most charismatic apostle of Negro rights. The outburst against King struck many as particularly odd; yet Hoover clung firmly to his original charge that King is “the most notorious liar in the country.” King had lied, according to Hoover, in suggesting that the FBI in the South was staffed mainly by Southerners and that it was futile for Negroes to seek their help with civil-rights grievances. That was the only instance of “lying” he cited, but he later told a friend: “I haven’t even begun to say all I could about that subject.”

‘Moral Degenerates’: Democratic Sen. Thomas J. Dodd of Connecticut, himself a former FBI agent, observed that his old boss never makes a charge he cannot document—and that in the literal sense of the word. “I’m very certain,” said Dodd, “that Hoover knows what he’s talking about.” Hoover himself seemed unperturbed by the latest flurry. His only departure from his schedule for the week consisted of a last-minute



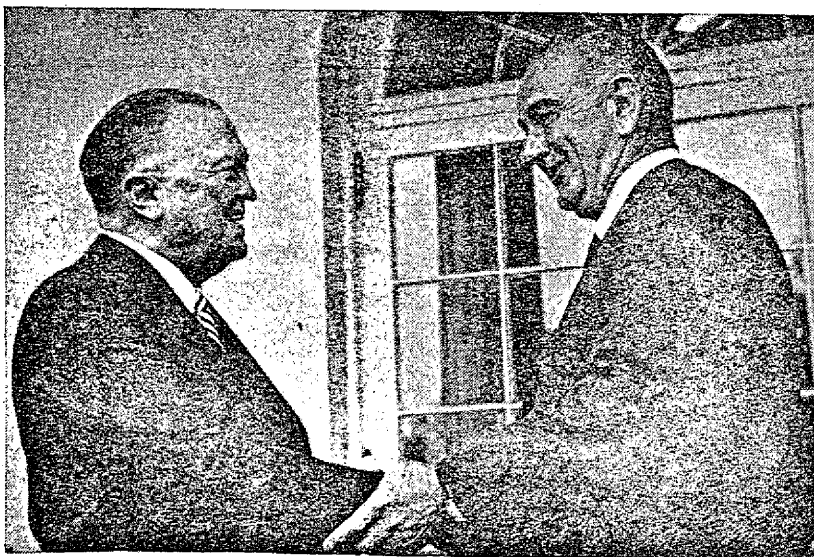
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‘I’d like to be a G-Man . . .’

change he made in the text of a speech he delivered in receiving an award from Loyola University in Chicago. There, in reference to the civil-rights movement, he spoke of “zealots or pressure groups,” and added the words “spearheaded at times by Communists and moral degenerates.”

Ironically, Hoover has even managed recently to offend some of his most conservative well-wishers. He was embarrassed during the campaign when news of the FBI’s investigation of Presidential aide Walter Jenkins at White House orders was followed by word that the FBI chief had sent flowers to Jenkins’ hospital room. Actually, the flowers were sent hours before Hoover knew of the White House request or the reason for Jenkins’ breakdown; they were merely a typically thoughtful gesture to a high official with whom he had worked—and whose brother William Jenkins, in Dallas, has been an FBI agent for 25 years.

Whatever the merits of the contro-



With President Johnson: The old icon remains, but the search is on

versy he stirred, the indomitable FBI boss was now faced with the greatest outburst of criticism in all his years of public service. In the wake of brickbats from the Republican New York Herald Tribune and The New York Times (which had called for his retirement) came a wave of criticism, in cartoons or editorials, from such respectably conservative journals as The Los Angeles Times and The Washington Star. Songwriter Harold Rome’s derisive old lyric that goes “I’d like to be a G-Man and go bang bang!”—which amused a liberal coterie in the labor-union musical “Pins and Needles” in the ‘30s—suddenly blossomed on NBC-TV’s “That Was the Week That Was.” Civil-rights leaders, who had hoped at first to soft-pedal their objections lest they make it harder for the President to act, loudly demanded Hoover’s resignation. And the White House was understood to feel that Hoover had some cause for his anger—but regretful that it had goaded him out of his customary discretion.

Like Father: Most remarkably perhaps, there were doubts within the sanctum of the shrine where J. Edgar Hoover is still worshiped as nowhere else—the FBI itself. Last week, one of the FBI’s highest ranking officers, a man who has worked for and revered J. Edgar Hoover for twenty years, said sadly that he feels it is time for his chief to step down. “I think of him,” said the official, “as I did of my own father. He has through the years made a tremendous contribution. Now, when he is no longer able to do so, maybe he just ought to retire.” In so speaking, this FBI officer knew he was committing the ultimate heresy—any evidence of personal disloyalty to Hoover is traditionally rewarded with instant dismissal and no appeal, for the FBI is not under the Civil Service—but he offered this appraisal of the agency and its chief:

“You’ve got to give the boss credit,” he said. “In his day, he pushed law enforcement far ahead of his time. He came up with brilliant ideas—a central repository for fingerprints, the use of scientific techniques of detection, a National Academy to train policemen and, incidentally, foster the spirit of cooperation with local authorities. Then the war comes along, and he takes an organization that’s been 99 per cent involved in criminal investigations, and transforms it into an intelligence operation. These were tremendous things. They were unequaled any place.

“But what’s been done since then? Where are the duplications of the ‘30s and ‘40s? They’re difficult to find. Nobody has come up with a breakthrough into a new field.”

The cause? Not so much that Hoover is aging as that he is set in his ways—and so is the larger, less flexible organization