

# The Office Politics of J. Edgar Hoover

by Ovid Demaris

*How to win loyalty, how to stay powerful, how to keep everybody guessing*

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the September Esquire, Ovid Demaris talked with Hoover's relatives, close friends, and colleagues about the Director's private life, including his relationship with longtime aide and companion, Clyde Tolson. This month, the concluding installment of Demaris' oral history deals with little-known aspects of Hoover's professional life.

When General Harry Vaughan walked into the Mayflower hotel's Rib Room in June, 1972, I found myself shaking the hand of a spry little man with an anxious smile. He had come to talk to me about J. Edgar Hoover, whom he had worked with during the time he was Truman's top military aide.

Vaughan: "About a week after Harry Truman became President, Matt Connelly [the President's appointments secretary] called me and said, 'The boss wants to see you in his office, right now.' So I went in and there was J. Edgar Hoover. The boss said, 'Sit down,' and I sat down and they finished what they were talking about. Then the President said, 'Harry, I called you over here because I want to start off on the right foot with Mr. Hoover and I want things to work smoothly between this office and his. Anything that I have to give to Mr. Hoover, that I want for his eyes, that I want to get his attention, I'll give it to you and you'll go over and put it in his hand.' And he said, 'Mr. Hoover, when you have anything that you think I should know about, you give it to Harry and tell him that you want me to see it and he'll hand it to me within an hour. That's the way we're going to operate.' We did exactly that for eight years.

"At the time of our first meeting, Hoover gave me very specific instructions on how to get to his office. He said, 'There's going to be a lot of talk, you coming to my office, my coming to your office. When you come over here, I advise you to come in on Pennsylvania, get on the elevator, go to the seventh floor, walk around to the other bank of elevators, go down to the third floor, walk around to this bank of elevators, come up to the fifth floor, and come into my office. You and I have legitimate things to talk about. It's the President's business, it's my business, it's your business, it's nobody else's business. Now a lot of the press are outside your office and they'd notice if I came over there.'"

*In other words, he never came to your office.*

Vaughan: "That's right. If I had said, 'Now, the President has directed me to tell you so-and-so, how about coming over to my office,' I think maybe he'd have done it. It might have hurt the hell out of him but—"

*Would it have ruined the relationship?*

Vaughan: "I don't think it would have helped it a hell of a lot, and I didn't give much of a damn about it. We had a good arrangement. The minute I got to Hoover's office, that little Negro fellow [Sam Noisette] would say, 'Come on in, General, you can go right in.' Oh, on occasion I might have waited two or three minutes, but usually I went right in. Our meetings were strictly business, no social talk, just two members of a staff that were anxious to cooperate, and I found Hoover that way all the time."

*Why did Truman bypass the Attorney General in his dealings with Hoover?*

Vaughan: "Theoretically, the At-

torney General is over the F.B.I., but in practice the F.B.I. is an independent agency. The reason was that Hoover was such a dynamic personality. By 1945, Hoover had already established his position in terms of power and importance. I don't think there was any doubt about it."

*Was it because of the files?*

Vaughan: "The files, of course, were important. They were a tool."

*Were they intimidating?*

Vaughan: "To certain people. I'm sure there was a hell of a lot in there about me, but it didn't concern me a damn bit. I'm sure they made some of the bastards on the Hill walk more carefully. They never bothered Truman. When he had occasion to disagree with Hoover, and strongly, he didn't hesitate to do it."

*Could you describe an incident?*

Vaughan: "Sure. Hoover was so successful with the F.B.I. nationally that he wanted to take over foreign duties. He wanted to expand the F.B.I. to foreign activities. Truman created the Central Intelligence Agency to great protest from Hoover, who wanted to take it over as an auxiliary of his organization. Truman said no. I heard him say that one man shouldn't operate both. 'He gets too big for his britches. Hoover's got plenty to do, he's done a great job, he'll continue to do a great job in the United States as the F.B.I., but the C.I.A. is a separate organization and should be under different auspices.' Hoover was very provoked by that, and he tried to argue with the President, giving his pitch about his organization, that it was operating smoothly, that it could be expanded more easily than starting a new organization. Truman never refused to listen to an argument, but once he made up his mind, that



from beneath one of the sterile towels that border the operating field. For a moment one does not really see it, or else denies the sight, so impossible it is, marching precisely, heading briskly toward the open wound.

Drawn from its linen lair, where it snuggled in the steam of the great sterilizer, and survived, it comes. Closer and closer, it hurries toward the incision. Ant, art thou in the grip of some fatal *ivresse*? Wouldst thou hurtle over these scarlet cliffs into the very boil of the guts? Art mad for the reek we handle? Or in some secret act of fornication engaged?

The alarm is sounded. An ant! An ant! And we are unnerved. Our fear of defilement is near to frenzy. It is not the mere physical contamination that we loathe. It is the evil of the interloper, that he scurries across our holy place, and filthies our altar. He is disease—that for whose destruction we have gathered. Powerless to destroy the sickness before us, we turn to its incarnation with a vengeance, and pluck it from the lip of the incision in the nick of time. Who would have thought an ant could move so fast?

Between thumb and forefinger, the intruder is crushed. It dies as quietly as it lived. Ah, but now there is death in the room. It is a perversion of our purpose. Albert Schweitzer would have spared it, scooped it tenderly into his hand, and lowered it to the ground.

The corpselet is flicked into the specimen basin. The gloves are changed. New towels and sheets are placed where it walked. We are pleased to have done something, if only a small killing. The operation resumes, and we draw upon ourselves once more the sleeves of office and rank. Is our reverence for life in question?

In the room the instruments lie on trays and tables. They are arranged precisely by the scrub nurse, in an order that never changes, so that you can reach blindly for a forceps or hemostat without looking away from the operating field. The instruments lie *thus*! Even at the beginning, when all is clean and tidy and no blood has been spilled, it is the scalpel that dominates. It has a figure the others do not have, the retractors and the scissors. The scalpel is all grace and line, a fierceness. It grins. It is like a cat. To be respected, deferred to, but which returns no amiability. To hold it above a belly is to know the knife's force—as though were you to give it slightest rein, it would pursue an intent of its own, driving into the flesh, a wild energy.

In a story by Borges, a deadly knife fight between two rivals is depicted. It is not, however, the men who are fighting. It is the knives themselves that are settling their own old score. The men who hold the knives are mere adjuncts to the weapons. The unguarded knife is like the unbridled war-horse that not only carries its helpless rider to his death, but tramples all beneath its hooves. The hand of the surgeon must tame this savage thing. He is a rider reining to capture a pace.

So close is the joining of knife and surgeon that they are like the Centaur—the knife, below, all equine energy, the surgeon, above, with his delicate art. One holds the knife back as much as advances it to purpose. One is master of the scissors. One is partner, sometimes rival, to the knife. In a moment it is like the long red fingernail of the Dragon Lady. Thus does the surgeon curb in order to create, restraining the scalpel, governing it shrewdly, setting the action of the operation into a pattern, giving it form and purpose.

It is the nature of creatures to live within a tight cuirass that is both their constriction and their pro-



tection. The carapace of the turtle is his fortress and retreat, yet keeps him writhing on his back in the sand. So is the surgeon rendered impotent by his own empathy and compassion. The surgeon cannot weep. When he cuts the flesh, his own must not bleed. Here it is all work. Like an asthmatic hungering for air,

longing to take just one deep breath, the surgeon struggles not to feel. It is suffocating to press the feeling out. It would be easier to weep or mourn. For you know that the lovely precise world of proportion contains, just beneath, *there*, all disaster, all disorder. In a surgical operation, a risk may flash into reality: the patient dies . . . of complication. The patient knows this too, in a more direct and personal way, and he is afraid.

And what of that *other*, the patient, who is brought to the operating room on a stretcher, having been washed and purged and dressed in a white gown? Fluid drips from a bottle into his arm, diluting him, leaching his body of its personal brine. As he waits in the corridor, he hears from behind the closed door the angry clang of steel upon steel, as though a battle were being waged. There is the odor of antiseptic and ether, and masked women hurry up and down the halls, in and out of rooms. There is the watery sound of strange machinery, the tinny beeping that is the transmitted heartbeat of yet another *human being*. And all the while the dreadful knowledge that soon you will be taken, laid beneath great lamps that will reveal the secret linings of your body. In the very act of lying down, you have made a declaration of surrender. One lies down gladly for sleep or for love. But to give over one's body and will for surgery, to *lie down* for it, is a yielding of more than we can bear.

Soon a man will stand over you, gowned and hooded. In time the man will take up a knife, and crack open your flesh like a ripe melon. Fingers will rummage among your viscera. Parts of you will be cut out. Blood will run free. Your blood. All the night before you have turned with the presentiment of death upon you. You have attended your funeral, wept with your mourners. You think, "I should never have had surgery in the springtime." It is too cruel. Or on a Thursday. It is an unlucky day.

Now it is time. You are wheeled in and moved to the table. An injection is given. "Let yourself go," I say. "It's a pleasant sensation," I say. "Give in," I say.

Let go? Give in? When you know that you are being tricked into the hereafter, that you will end when consciousness ends? As the monstrous silence of anesthesia falls discourteously across your brain, you watch your soul drift off.

Later, in the recovery room, you awaken and gaze through the thickness of drugs at the world returning, and you guess, at first dimly, then surely, that you have not died. In pain and nausea you will know the exultation of death averted, of life restored.

What is it, then, this thing, the knife, whose shape is virtually the same as it was three thousand years ago, but now with its head grown detachable? Before steel, it was bronze. Before bronze, stone—then back into unremembered time. Did (Continued on page 210)



was it. He said no, and when Hoover persisted, he said, 'You're getting out-of-bounds.' I think Hoover was smart enough to agree to it. He didn't like it because he had great ideas about his international importance. He was an egotistic little guy, there's no doubt about that. He thought nobody could be as right as Hoover on any particular subject, which was a difficult thing to combat."

*What kind of a man was Tom Clark?*

Vaughan: "I'll tell you why he left the Supreme Court. That might indicate to you the kind of man he is. He made a deal with President Johnson. Johnson wanted a vacancy on the Supreme Court so he could appoint a Negro, which would give him some prestige in the Fourth Ward or something. So Tom Clark created a vacancy by resigning from the Court so they could appoint Thurgood Marshall. And the deal was that Johnson would appoint his son Ramsey Attorney General."

*What kind of Attorney General was Tom Clark?*

Vaughan: "I think he was a very good one."

*Didn't Hoover ride roughshod over him?*

Vaughan: "I don't know if you could say that he rode roughshod, but Tom Clark didn't tell Hoover what to do. He didn't mess with him at all. He let Hoover run his own show. At least, that's my opinion. Actually, I don't think Harry Truman would have appointed Tom Attorney General if he hadn't had his arm twisted by Sam Rayburn and Tom Connally from Texas. You know these Texans, oh how they stick together."

*Did Hoover provide Truman with reports on the personal habits of members of the Administration?*

Vaughan: "When we went in, the F.B.I. had about a dozen phone taps on various people in Washington, and they used to give me a report on the phone conversations. For example, they had one on Tommy Corcoran, you know, Tommy the Cork, who was a lawyer here who was on Roosevelt's kitchen cabinet. He's an influence peddler, and for some reason Roosevelt was a little suspicious of him and had the F.B.I. put a tap on him. When these reports started coming in, I said, 'What the hell is this?' and they said, 'This is a wiretap on so-and-so,' and I said, 'Who ordered it?' and they said, 'Oh, that's been going on for six months, three months,' or what have you. I told

the President, 'I'm getting these reports. I read them over and it's the most dull, deadly stuff—Mrs. Corcoran calls up the grocer and orders this, she calls her hairdresser.' 'Well, I don't give a goddamn whether Mrs. Corcoran gets her hair fixed or don't get her hair fixed,' Harry told me. 'What the hell is that crap?' I said, 'That's a wiretap.' He said, 'Cut them all off. Tell the F.B.I. we haven't got any time for that kind of shit.'"

*Do you think Hoover and Tolson were homosexuals?*

Vaughan: "Oh, no!"

*What makes you so positive?*

Vaughan: "Well, because he was a red-blooded, virile individual. I

House the whole time I was Attorney General."

*Hoover went through you in those days?*

Tom Clark: "He wouldn't go through me but he had a man over there. I'm not sure but I think he had one there in Roosevelt's time. The idea was that if any problems came up on matters that Hoover was handling that involved the White House, or what he thought of some national program, or that had national aspects, he'd send copies of memoranda to the President. Then the President usually sent it on over to me. Of course, I already had a copy but I got so many copies that I couldn't read them all—it

**Rule One: Never go to their offices, make them come to yours. Stay on your own turf—this puts you in control of the situation.**



can imagine that I might be in a job like that, having an old college classmate of mine associated with me, and we'd be living together. In fact, one time I heard a member of the press say that the reason that Harry Truman and his staff spent two weeks down at Key West without their wives was because 'most of those bastards are homosexuals.'"

**I** visited Tom C. Clark in his Supreme Court office in Washington. The fact that Hoover had called his son Ramsey a "jellyfish" and the worst Attorney General in his experience had no visible effect on Clark's reflections on the Director.

Tom Clark: "I don't believe I ever saw Mr. Hoover at the White

would have taken twenty-four hours a day. I had my assistant read all mine and he'd give me what he thought I should see, what was important enough for me to see."

*Was your relationship with Hoover friendly?*

Tom Clark: "We had dinner together many times. Most of the time when I went with him it would be to Harvey's. He was out to our house two or three times. Hoover was not one to go out much socially but we'd meet at rare intervals at somebody's place in the evening. But nearly all the contacts I had with Mr. Hoover were either in my office or his. When I was an assistant it would be mostly in his. After I became Attorney General [in 1945], they were practically all in my office."



*Did Hoover ever supply you with dossiers on Cabinet members?*

Tom Clark: "If you mean by dossier a report on one person, no, he never did. Many times in reports he might have a paragraph or two. He didn't like Mr. Morgenthau, for example, and he might take a dig at him, or he might indicate there were queers in the State Department, but as far as having a dossier that was devoted to one person, I never saw one of those in my life, on any person."

*I understand President Johnson received some.*

Tom Clark: "I rather think, knowing Hoover as I do, that he wouldn't do that unless someone indicated that it might be helpful."

*Did you have to approve all wiretaps and bugs used in internal-security cases in those days?*

Tom Clark: "That started during the time of Attorney General Cummings. He made arrangements with the telephone company to put in a tap on a phone. That was just before we went into the war, about 1937 or '38, along in there. But there was a Supreme Court case outlawing evidence obtained by a wiretap so we would not use any evidence we got on a wiretap in a prosecution. Then when Mr. Murphy succeeded Cummings, I suppose that they continued that arrangement and then during the war I know that Mr. Roosevelt arranged to continue the operation with Mr. Biddle. When I came in, Mr. Hoover asked me to write a letter which he had drafted to the White House

asking them to continue the arrangement, which I did. The arrangement was that he would make taps that didn't have to be used as evidence—say it was internal security and things of that kind. It was largely up to Mr. Hoover as to whether he thought there was a necessity for it. But I used to get queried by so many Congressmen when I'd come up on the Hill and appear before a committee and they'd ask whether so-and-so's phone was tapped that I turned all of mine over to Mr. Ford who was my assistant. And I told him I didn't want to know who was tapped and who wasn't tapped. I was Attorney General for about four years and after Mr. Ford took over, I didn't know anything about the taps. When I first came in I asked for a list of the taps because I wanted to see what was going on. I don't think there were any more than there are now.

"After the war Mr. Hoover started what you might call his Communist program. As you know, Mr. Roosevelt was one who worked with the Russians in the war and he had a pretty close arrangement with them. And Mr. Hoover had an idea that the Communists were pretty strong. I rather thought that he overexaggerated it, which I used to tell him all the time, but he developed a subversion section. This was at about the time the Iron Curtain got started, I'd say along about 1946. He spent considerable money on subversive activities. I don't know just what percent he spent,

but I'd say compared to other specific programs it was large. Then he accentuated it from time to time and it grew into its height soon after I came here to the Court [in 1949]. During all that time, I got hundreds of memoranda which I had my assistant screen. You see, Hoover was one that always wanted to put everybody on notice, so he'd send you a memorandum and they'd all be on your regular F.B.I. onion-skin form."

*Was he sincere in his belief that communism was a threat to the freedom of this country, or was he a man who engaged in hyperbole to feather his own nest?*

Tom Clark: "He was sold on it. Mr. Hoover never spoke in hyperbole. He was a very sincere man. If he decided that something was bad, he went after it. I used to laugh with him about it. As a matter of fact, this club in New York—Saints and Sinners—had a program one time that I was on. They had a skit and an actor played Mr. Hoover's part. He and I were in my office and looking around, under my desk and stuff like that, to see if there were any Communists hiding. It was sort of a reflection of an attitude many people had towards Mr. Hoover's activities in the Communist field, and it was highly exaggerated. He admitted himself that only about one percent of these people were really bad, but in public I think he said ten percent. You have to remember that it was a small group that overthrew the Russian government. That was his attitude. But most of the cases we had I thought were somewhat squeezed oranges. I didn't think there was much to them. And while some of these people often talked in terms of overthrow, they didn't have the means or the capacity at all to bring it about. I prosecuted the [Eugene] Dennis case [the top eleven members of the domestic Communist Party] and we won it, and we had some secondary cases, but I didn't think they were really such strong cases. Then it gradually petered out after McCarthy's time."

*Was he tenacious in seeking prosecution in certain cases—for example the Judith Coplon case?*

Tom Clark: "Well, no. He'd send you the memos. Of course, many times those matters would be returned to U.S. attorneys. We have ninety-four of them. If it was a national case like Dennis, he'd probably take it up with the Attorney General, but most of the time he'd take it up with the assistant who



**Rule Two: Maintain absolute confidence in your judgments and your opinions. Give in to nobody but your superior—and then only as a last resort.**





handled that particular business. They might take it up with the Attorney General, but ordinarily the Attorney General would never even hear about it unless they got into trouble."

*Since he was so quick to censure his own men, do you think he was ever censured by an Attorney General when the F.B.I. goofed as they did in the Coplon case?*

Tom Clark: "I doubt it. It happened to me in the Amerasia case when I was an assistant. The F.B.I. went over here and went into Harvard Hall without any warrants at all and cased this apartment. I didn't know a thing about it until after I filed the case and the people filed a motion to quash all this evidence on the grounds that they'd gotten it without any search warrant. So then the F.B.I. told me about it and we dismissed the case."

*Would you send a letter of censure or ignore it?*

Tom Clark: "I don't remember sending any letter of censure. I used to kid with him about it. I thought he was a little off base on this Communist thing. I don't know what other Attorneys General did. I rather think, though, that beginning perhaps in the Thirties Hoover had pretty clear sailing. He was told by Mr. Stone [Hoover's first boss in the Justice Department] in 1924 that he would have freewheeling and I think it would be fair to say he had freewheeling for the rest of his life.

"He was pretty powerful in 1937 when I came in. He occupied a high position with governmental people and I think he had all the Federal backing then that he had later. He had his vintage bulletproof car and stuff like that. He gave me his bulletproof car when I became Attorney General. As you know, we couldn't get cars during the war. I think he had that car ten years before he told me I could have it. It had big windows, steel around the inside lining, had a telephone, but the only trouble was that it was so damn heavy the motor was too light to carry it around and it would break down a lot. I used it for two or three years."

*Do you think he thought he needed that kind of protection?*

Tom Clark: "I never talked to him about it. I don't know how he felt about it. I don't think he did. Hoover went around a lot and in the time I've known him, he had a chauffeur. The only time I ever saw him using the car was coming to work and going home. Oh, once or twice we went out to Laurel to a

horse race. It was very seldom that I'd be able to go with him. He went to the races quite a bit. I rather think he had agents watching him the whole time. Everywhere I went, they always had two F.B.I. men."

*I've been told that Tolson knew more about the operation of the Bureau than Hoover did, that he was the brains behind Hoover's success.*

Tom Clark: "I doubt it. Hoover had a succession of top people. I don't know of anybody who was able to surround himself with such capable people as Edgar Hoover. Top-notch staff. In fact, all the time I was down there, which was about twelve years altogether, I never met an F.B.I. man who wasn't well above average. They were outstanding. I don't know how he did it—attracted people. I don't know whether he did it, or whether he had somebody else do it, but he had a knack for selecting the best ones."

*We know that Hoover was up-to-date on technology, but do you think he matured intellectually? Weren't his views of the radicals of the Twenties similar to his views of the Panthers and New Left of today?*

Tom Clark: "He thought that the Black Panthers was an organization that was inimicable to the peace and security of the United States. He would have no compunction about tapping their wires or doing anything else to catch them. He excused himself on the ground that he was in the end effecting a good result."

I put the same question to Ramsey Clark.

Ramsey Clark: "That's very hard to say. There were changes and the changes may indicate that he didn't grow. For instance, he opposed wiretapping for many years. If I had to guess—and this is one of those things you can never really know—I would guess that an ideology overcame a professional investigative judgment, and that's what caused him to turn to favor the use of wiretaps. Or if not to favor them in any strongly affirmative sense, at least to concede their value. That would probably indicate a lack of growth, a hardening of an ideology that was in a sense disabling from a professional investigator's standpoint. You don't really think of Mr. Hoover as a man of intellectual interests. I don't really think of him as a book reader or an historian. He was interested in anecdotes and personalities, but his intellectual interests, in my experience, were quite limited."

*I was referring particularly to his attitude toward radical movements. Do you think he ever appreciated the importance of social protest in a democracy, or did he always view it as a disease of some kind?*

Ramsey Clark: "My guess would be that however he may have disapproved of it, he understood the protest of the Teens and the Twenties because those were the years that his personal viewpoints were crystallizing, but he really could not understand, or even try to understand, the later incidents."

**C**oming back to Tom Clark, I asked him about Hoover's famous crack that his son, Ramsey, was a "jellyfish."

Tom Clark: "His expression of 'jellyfish' wasn't that Ramsey was wobbly at all but that he wouldn't prosecute in certain cases, that he'd take a strong position and would turn down a prosecution at the outset. Sometimes a fellow looks guilty but you just can't prove it by running around like a bull in a china closet and trying to prosecute. It's a whole lot better for a prosecutor to exercise discretion and say, 'Well, I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt. I'm not going to prosecute.' I'm satisfied that Hoover, like all prosecutors, picked out some cases that had some lure and some front-page stories on them, and I'm sure that not all of them were prosecutable.

"Hoover was critical of most Attorneys General. He didn't like Frank Murphy at all. He was the only Attorney General I ever knew who got Hoover to go places with him. He knew that Hoover was a bit of an attraction. Hoover told me one time that they were having a parade at some military installation out West, and through some mistake, someone turned on the sprinkler system, and Murphy had on a white suit and he just looked like he'd been in a bathtub by the time they could get it turned off. Hoover used to criticize Biddle all the time when I was the assistant, very bitterly. I don't think he ever held out on anybody. He told everybody what he thought. He didn't like Biddle's prosecutive policy. He thought he was too soft."

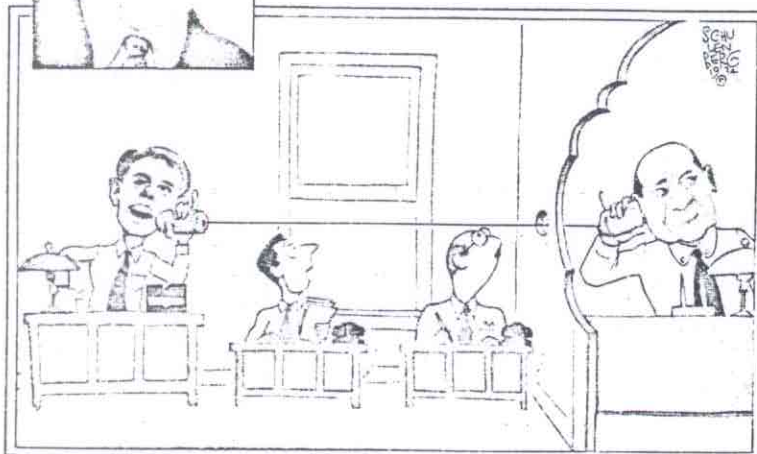
*If you were going to sum it up, what would you say were the sources of Hoover's power?*

Tom Clark: "I think his power sprang from the efficient, dedicated way in which he, twenty-four hours a day, carried out his responsibilities."





**Rule Three: Develop direct lines of communication to the Big Boss. Find ways of going over the heads of your immediate superiors—with little or no friction.**



ties. And I think you can get to the point in the minds of people who know you where you can do no wrong. When you have so many rights, people get to the point where if the name Hoover is connected with it, that's it. So I rather think that from the very inception of it, he had a pretty wise attitude. Mr. Stone and he built the agency by the selecting of top-notch people. Hoover built an esprit de corps, an idealism, a hardworking, dedicated person. Incorruptible. In that way he built up his strength, and then eventually you can get so much power that no one will go against you. That's about the way it is, I think. I don't think there was any deceit on his part. He would take each case as it came along and do the best possible job he could on it. He was very efficient and he was surrounded by dedicated people, and as a consequence the resulting product was usually high-class."

**A**s of this writing, Patricia Collins has worked for sixteen Attorneys General. The first time she was introduced to Robert Kennedy, she told him that he was nine years old when she first came to the Department. "He was bowled over," she recalled, "and forever after when he used to see me, he'd say, 'You know, this is Miss Collins. She came here when I was nine years old.' So we got to be great friends, and, oh,

he was such a great friend to me when my late husband was very, very ill."

*When do you think Hoover began dealing directly with the White House?*

Collins: "I think the end run around the Attorney General to the White House began in the Truman Administration. There was much closer liaison between Roosevelt and Cummings and Jackson and Biddle, so that things came to this Department, handwritten notes from the President to the Attorney General. How it developed later, I don't know. I think Tom Clark was perhaps intimidated by Hoover. I don't think he and Hoover were ever on a very even conversing basis."

*Have you heard the story that President Johnson agreed to make Ramsey Clark Attorney General if Tom resigned from the Supreme Court?*

Collins: "Yes, and you almost felt that there had to be some kind of deal. My own feeling is that Tom was happy to get off the Court. I think the sepulchral atmosphere over there got to him. When Tom was in the A.G.'s office, it was a very, very active place. He was making speeches all the time, the comings and goings, my God, people were sitting out there in droves waiting to see Tom Clark. I was in the office directly across the way then and I used to write speeches now and again and do various things that we had to do to keep it

running. Suddenly Tom Clark goes over to the Supreme Court, he gets in an office, he's got a couple of people in the outer office, and nobody ever sees him. They say that when the phone rang, he'd grab it and say, 'Hello.' He was dying to talk to somebody. Tom is a very gregarious person."

*Did you ever know Hoover socially?*

Collins: "During the Herb Brownell administration, we would have a big get-together once a year, a really elegant turnout, black tie. And a couple of times, I drew Mr. Hoover as a dinner partner, and he was everything that you would ask of a gentleman, always very gallant. One time I remember he drew Simon Sobeloff's wife, Irene, who was very chic and such great fun when she was younger. She was able to kid people in a kind of poker-faced way. She always used to take Edgar on, and we used to tease them considerably about how they were so stuck on each other. One night, she took her shoes off and started singing *Pistol Packin' Mama* for the entertainment of everybody and Hoover joined with her. It was really quite a show. Oh, yes, he was always great fun when he was at these parties. I'm sure you've heard people say he was a great practical joker. I knew that more by reputation and whenever I teased him about it, he would reply to the effect, 'Well, certainly, and why not if you get fun out of it?'"

**B**ack in 1951 the hottest section in the Department of Justice was Internal Security. "It was like Organized Crime today," William Hundley, who worked for the section and who is now a private attorney, recalled when I interviewed him in June, 1972. "Everybody went into Internal Security, and I actually got put into what they called Smith Act cases. You might remember that we used to run around prosecuting all these Communists. They had already tried the Dennis case up in New York, the big landmark Communist case that Hoover really wanted prosecuted. After they won it, they decided to branch out and indict the leaders of the Communist Party in virtually every city in the United States. We had cooperation from the F.B.I. that was unbelievable. They would assign an agent to every defendant and anything you wanted would be done. They made agents available, they made informants available, anything. They



really wanted to win these cases.

"Hoover was always very ideological about the domestic Communist Party, and he was really gung ho for that, he really put out. There was no question in his mind that Godless, atheistic, monolithic communism was a threat. And, of course, they won a lot of cases, and then the Court got into the act and threw them all out. What it all added up to is hard to say. I would honestly think that the pluses were outweighed by the minuses. I mean, most of the American domestic Communists that I prosecuted, for Christ's sake, the only thing they ever threw was a pamphlet. Anyway, Internal Security started to die off. In 1958, I went over to be chief of the Organized Crime Section—remember the Apalachin meeting? When that hit there was only a couple of guys in the O.C. Section clipping newspapers. There was absolutely nothing going on in the Justice Department. Apparently the Internal Revenue Service had done something back in the Kefauver days, and Immigration, and they all got hit on the head so nobody was doing anything. The Bureau certainly wasn't doing anything. It came as quite a shock to me. I had come out of Internal Security where you had agents coming out of your ears, and get over into Organized Crime and you couldn't find an agent."

*Why was Hoover opposed to organized-crime investigation?*

Hundley: "Well, we got into this at the Princeton seminar on the F.B.I. and nobody really came up with an answer. Everybody had different theories as to why the F.B.I. really had to be brought into organized crime kicking and screaming. Some of the ex-agents felt that Hoover didn't, first of all, want to get into it because his statistics would go down. You know, the cases would be harder to make. Some of them said he didn't want to put his agents into a position where they could be corrupted, have them dealing with gamblers and hoods. Others said that he got himself locked in because he got in a big pissing match with Harry Anslinger over at Narcotics, whom he didn't like, and Anslinger had the Mafia coming up out of the sewers the same way Hoover had the Communists coming up out of the sewers. So Hoover got himself locked in saying there was no Mafia. It was probably a combination of everything, but he just wasn't in it. There isn't any doubt, no matter what he said, he wasn't in it. He had no intelligence,

he didn't know what the hell was going on."

*Hoover's defense was that he didn't have the Federal laws to fight organized crime until 1961.*

Hundley: "In a certain sense, there is some truth to that. But they always had an intelligence function over there, that's what they relied on, that's what they rely on now with all this peace stuff. It's inexcusable for them to say they couldn't have been using that function to at least be aware of what the hell is going on. I mean, how can you have the top investigative agency in the world and have all these top hoods meeting up in Apalachin and they didn't even know about it. Then you get into the idea that Hoover was a good bureaucrat. When he found out that Bob Kennedy was coming in and that he was kind of hot on this, he knew he had to do something."

*As I recall, when Bob Kennedy was counsel for the McClellan Committee, he complained vigorously that the F.B.I. and the Justice Department were just shuffling papers back and forth and weren't doing anything about organized crime.*

Hundley: "Here's what happened. I was chief of the O.C. Section under Bill Rogers, and Courtney Evans was chief of the section over in the F.B.I., and he had a pretty good relationship with Bob. Whenever the F.B.I. would tell Bob they couldn't do anything for the committee, they always used to say that it was the decision of the Justice Department—that's why I became the big son of a bitch. The first thing Bob did when he came in as Attorney General was to fire me. He said, 'Look, I've been too critical of you. I don't have anything personal against you, but nothing's been done down here and I'm going to bring in my own guy and you'll have to go.' If I'd had a job to go to, I'd have gone, but I was rather surprised so I stayed on as a special assistant and had more fun than I ever did. I tried the Keogh and the Goldfine cases. Let me back up a bit here. In 1958, after Apalachin, Bill Rogers brought in Milton Wessel, a very bright guy, to head a special group to fight organized crime. Then all this infighting started and apparently Wessel really incurred the wrath of the Director, and he was shot down. Well, at the end of 1958, never officially, but through known agents and things like that, I found out that they'd started, on a very selective basis, to put bugs in. Apparently the Bureau drew some distinction between bugs and

wiretaps—only the Bureau could draw a distinction like this. For wiretaps, they always got the Attorney General's signature. Bugs they didn't. It's pretty weird. Sometimes the bugs were put in the phone, if they could get them in, so they could pick up both ends. Now if you ever asked them officially, they'd say no, but believe me, I knew. They were doing some of it out in Chicago, in New York—I think somewhere internally a decision was made that organized crime was heating up and they didn't have any informants so they'd better do something to catch up, and that's what they started to do. When they learned that Bob was going to be Attorney General, they really spread out. That's when they started doing this bugging on a massive scale.

"I saw them start to operate in Organized Crime like they'd operated in Internal Security. Little things—you'd meet an agent out in the field, and I'd say, 'Where the hell were you last night?' And he'd say, 'Christ, I almost got caught climbing out of a goddamn window.' Putting a bug in, see. But down here in Washington, if you asked them officially, they always said no. And it wasn't a case of where they bragged about it or went out of their way to tell anybody what they were doing. Now, when it came to wiretaps, I knew in the internal-security field that they went to the Attorney General and got his okay. Hoover didn't want to stick his neck out, so I just figured, well, look, Hoover's a smart guy, he's been around a long time, so I figured that when he started in 1958 that he got Bill Rogers to okay them in writing. But he never did. And then when Kennedy came in and he started enlarging, my guess was that he had gone to Bobby, that he had him sign every time he had a bug put in."

*Not only did you know that they were bugging, you were seeing evidence of it. Weren't you getting information that they couldn't have gotten any other way?*

Hundley: "Well, yes, but that's a little more complex too. They sent very little of the bug information over. Now and then they'd put something in a report and for what it's worth, they would always try to disguise it so you wouldn't know. I guess if you've knocked around as long as I have in Internal Security, well, I could spot it quicker than anybody else, and I'd get a couple of them to cop out to me. I used to say to them, 'Don't send that shit



over here. All you're going to do is screw up our cases.' I don't paint myself as a hero. I didn't say, 'Look, you guys better stop this.' I assumed all along that it was being okayed on a very high level. In any event, it really wasn't until the Las Vegas skimming investigation came up, and they were trying to impress the Attorney General with what a great job they were doing out there, and they sent a goddamn report over that you couldn't miss it. It was all over it. And then there was a big leak out there, and I swear to this day they sent the report over because they knew the casino owners had found the bug. Then the shit hit the fan and they uncovered all the F.B.I. bugs out there.

"This was after Jack Kennedy got shot, and Bobby Kennedy, although he stayed on as Attorney General was sort of non compos mentis until he left the Department. After he became a Senator, I got tipped off that Hoover was trying to leak out the fact that Bobby authorized all the bugs. He sent Deke DeLoach over to the *Evening Star*—Hoover was close to the *Star*—to plant the story, but the editor insisted on attributing the story to some official in the Bureau, which DeLoach wouldn't buy, so they back-doored it. They got Congressman Gross in Iowa to write a letter and that's how they got it out.

"I went over to the Senate to see Bobby when I got the tip, and I was trying to tell him—first of all, I thought he knew—'Let's handle this the best way we can. We'll take the position that it was sort of done in the nature of a security operation, we didn't use the evidence,' and all those things. And he said, 'Look'—and unless he was the greatest actor in history, he really got very upset. I liked Bobby Kennedy, but we weren't that close. What the hell, he fired me once. And he said, 'You knew about it? You knew and you didn't tell me?' And I leveled. I said, 'Bobby, I thought you knew. I thought Hoover had your John Henry on every one of these things.' And he said, 'No.' I came away convinced, and I'm convinced to this day, that he didn't know. Now other people don't agree with me, but I had this meeting and he convinced me. I was even saying, 'Look, Bobby, even if you didn't know, I think it would be better if you said you did know.' I'd rather go down in history as a guy who might have moved around a little bit than as an idiot. I didn't say that to him, of course. And he said, 'How can I? I didn't know.'

Now, when the thing blew, Hoover did everything he could to try to prove that Bobby did know. Christ, he came up with a memorandum that was written about twenty years ago—general authority. And then he got some affidavits from some agents about a meeting in Chicago and a meeting in New York where Hoover said they played these tapes for Bobby. I was at the Chicago meeting, and I don't want to knock the agents who submitted the affidavits, but it just didn't happen that way. We were having an Organized Crime meeting, and right in the middle of it Courtney Evans, who by then was the F.B.I. liaison to the A.G., brings in a recorder, puts it on a desk, and plays a tape. It was a tape of some Chicago hood complaining bitterly to a crooked police captain that since Kennedy had become Attorney General, they couldn't fix cops anymore. It was a lot of play-up, obviously trying to impress the Attorney General. My immediate reaction was these guys have flipped their lids. This is unbelievable that they would play one of these damn illegal tapes for the Attorney General."

*What did Kennedy say?*

Hundley: "He never said a word."

*He couldn't have been that naïve?*

Hundley: "Think about it. If you didn't know, it could have been a local tape, it could have been a guy who had a thing wired on him. It could be anything."

*Why do you think the relationship between Hoover and Bob Kennedy deteriorated to the point it did? It is my understanding that Kennedy consulted McClellan and Hoover before he accepted the Attorney Generalship, and they both advised him to take it.*

Hundley: "My guess is that Hoover liked Bobby at first. After all, Bobby worked on all this Communist stuff with McCarthy. I mean he had certain things going for him that Hoover would have liked. Hoover probably figured, well, he's a gung ho kid and his old man's an old buddy of mine and his brother's President—I can handle him. And I think it was more out of deference to Bobby's feelings about organized crime that Hoover started expanding his bugging program."

*There are stories about Kennedy putting in a direct line to Hoover's office, and about his going over there in his shirt sleeves and sitting on his desk. Once he supposedly caught the Director taking a nap. Have you heard these stories?*

Hundley: "Oh, sure. There was always a direct line but Bobby was the only one that ever used it. I was in Bobby's office once when he summoned Hoover. I couldn't get over it. I was working on the Goldfine case which involved a lot of politicians and this was one of those cases where the Director was dragging his feet. I was telling Bobby about it and Bobby said something like, 'I mentioned that to the Director, or I mentioned that to Edgar, yesterday, and he has some explanation.' And then Bobby said, 'Do you want me to get him over here so you can hear his explanation?' That was too much, so I said, 'Yes.' So he hit a goddamn buzzer and within sixty seconds, the old man came in with a red face, and he and Bobby jawed at each other for about ten minutes. And Hoover kept looking at me. And he went out, and it was amazing. I'll tell you one thing, he didn't give an inch."

*He had a good explanation then?*

Hundley: "I didn't think it was worth a shit, but I can't remember what it was. And Bobby pushed him a little but he didn't back off. I became very fond of Bobby, but Bobby never moved Hoover that much, and one thing you got to say about Hoover, he was tough. And he didn't back down. He always stood his ground. I am convinced that the thing that finally destroyed their relationship was that Bobby mentioned to too many people who complained to him about Hoover that, 'Look, just wait,' and we all got the message that they were going to retire him after Jack got reelected and Hoover hit seventy. And it got back to him."

"The fact is that with all the battling on organized crime that went on when Kennedy came in, Hoover didn't drag his feet half as much in this area as he did in other things, for example, civil rights, which gets you into that whole big flap with Martin Luther King."

**R**obert E. Wick, who once headed the Bureau's Crime Records Division, succeeding Lou Nichols and Deke DeLoach in that position, told me that the F.B.I. had "no such thing as a public-relations section or anything of that nature." As assistant director of the Crime Records Division, it was Wick's "responsibility to maintain the various F.B.I. publications and to answer questions from the press so that the information that the public has a right to know was given out to the public,



and we held no secrets back. I followed the policy of Nichols and DeLoach, of absolute forthrightness with the press. Mr. Hoover insisted on that and that's what we did. I'd tell Mr. Hoover the full facts and then we'd decide what we could say and what we couldn't say, what could be printed or broadcast and what couldn't be. My policy was, we're all going to the same place, so give the man the full benefit of the doubt."

*Was Hoover an effective speaker?*

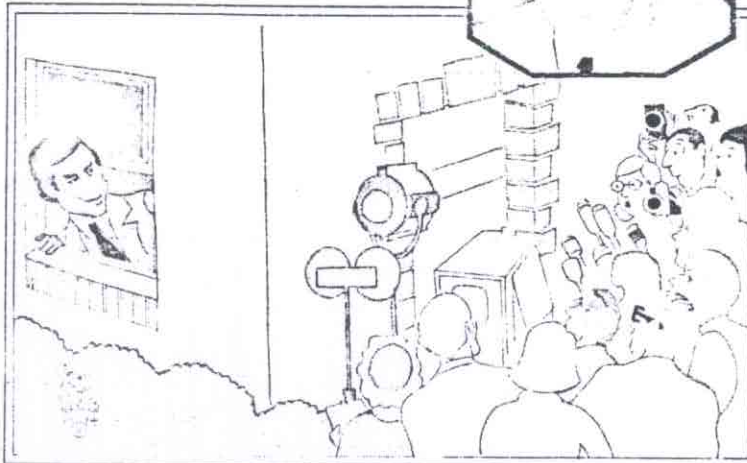
Wick: "Oh, yes, indeed, indeed. This is why I—many times I'd have newsmen say to me, 'I want an interview with Mr. Hoover.' Well, I'd try to get it and yet I realized this was sort of walking on eggs here because once you open the floodgates and let one news-media man have an interview with Mr. Hoover, then the other men can say, 'Well, look, I've got as much right as Joe over here so why can't I come in?' It would create considerable problems. Yet somebody would come out with a scurrilous article about Mr. Hoover that absolutely was not true, irrespective of what it was, and that would cause me to seethe quite a bit. We had to try to counter these things some way and I think the best way to counter it was with the truth, always. Well, the best way to get the truth is to let the man himself talk to the man. Then that brings the problem again, you see? You let one man in, you should let others in. Mr. Hoover could express himself very well."

*But he never held press conferences?*

Wick: "He did one time against our best judgment. I remember the time he let all those women come in—it was November 18, 1964, against my judgment, against DeLoach's, but he said no, he was going to see all those women. It just so happened that they weren't the big top reporters but he saw them and they asked him all sorts of questions. And from that meeting came the comment that Mr. Hoover made that Martin Luther King was 'the most notorious liar in the country.' And that was reported, and of course Mr. Hoover had reference to the fact that Martin Luther King had charged in a speech that all F.B.I. agents down South were Southerners and biased and so on, and this is just not the fact."

*Since his comment came shortly after the announcement that King had won the Nobel Peace Prize, don't you think the timing was unfortunate?*

**Rule Four: Avoid the press like the plague. Know full well that if you talk to one reporter, you'll have all reporters breathing down your neck.**



Wick: "Well, we—indeed it was—Mr. Hoover should not have said that. It was ill-advised."

*Do you think that his age had something to do with it?*

Wick: "Well, it could have. Let's see, he was seventy at that time. I think it may have—once he said it, he had to stick by it, and he did."

*My impression of Hoover is that of a man who says precisely what he wants to say when he wants to say it.*

Wick: "That's right. In that particular instance, I was there, I remember, sitting here and he was sitting there, and the girls, about fourteen of them, sitting around, and he was talking about Martin Luther King, and he said, 'And another thing, he's the most notorious liar in the country.' Then he talked about various other things, peculiarities he had, the way King was attacking the Bureau, and finally one girl said, 'May we quote you?' and he said, 'Yes, go ahead,' and Deke said, 'Well, Mr. Hoover, you just said so-and-so,' and he said, 'That's all right. You can use that as a quote.'"

*Didn't he also accuse King of being a degenerate?*

Wick: "Well, I don't think he publicly said that. I don't believe he did. I think he was probably quoted as saying that because that was some of the conversation with in that same conference. In fact, he said a great number of other

things in that conference that he asked them not to quote—sort of off the record."

*It was reported that when Hoover and King met in the Director's office some two weeks later, Hoover confronted him with tape recordings of his sexual activities, and suggested that he tone down his criticism of the F.B.I.*

Wick: "Deke DeLoach and I took Mr. Martin Luther King and two, three of his associates into Mr. Hoover's office, and that's the time—"

*Did you stay in?*

Wick: "I think Deke stayed in and I stayed out with one of the other aides with him. And we had many TV cameras and so on there. Although the agreement inside was to the effect that, well, Mr. Hoover told him, 'You can say anything you want to, it's up to you, but I don't want a press conference.' Well, Mr. King, of course, walked right out and took a piece of paper out of his pocket and announced that this was what they had discussed. It had been prepared ahead of time."

*Did Hoover confront King with tape recordings of his sexual activities?*

Wick: "That's not the fact."

*I would appreciate hearing your version.*

Wick: "I don't know. I wasn't there at the time, so I don't know what they discussed."

*Are you aware of a story by*



*Richard Harwood in The Washington Post to the effect that certain newsmen were offered transcripts of these tape recordings?*

Wick: "I don't know. They may have been. Dick Harwood, by the way, is a very honorable man and a good reporter, a topnotcher."

The editor of *The Washington Post*, Ben Bradlee, told me that he refused to see the tape transcripts because he thought they were "offensive."

*I wonder who would have a copy?*

Bradlee: "They showed them to plenty of people. They showed them to Gene Patterson when he was editor of *The Atlanta Constitution*. But I'm sure that they were not printable. I mean, I have the substance of them, they had to do with his sexual exploits and they were—DeLoach told me about them and—"

*How would he go about telling you that?*

Bradlee: "Well, by—hell, he brought it up. He said, 'We have,' or, 'There are,' I don't know. But he described the tapes, and the one that I particularly remember was King watching the televised funeral of Kennedy in some hotel room. I don't remember which, and he made some reference to the sexual habits of the President and Mrs. Kennedy."

*And DeLoach would be peddling this?*

Bradlee: "Peddling smeddling. They were trying to discredit King."

I asked Jack Anderson if he thought that Hoover had tried to intimidate King with the tape recordings.

Anderson: "He did have tape recordings on King but I would think that if King called Hoover's bluff, how could he put it out? I know Hoover operated in far more subtle ways, but he certainly was capable of blackmail—in fact, he did it all the time, but it was implied blackmail. He would let Senators know that he had picked up some information on them and he'd give it to them as an act of great charity, thereby doing them a favor but at the same time letting them know that he had the information."

*But how would you know that's true?*

Anderson: "People tell me things. They know I'm not going to use names. Yes, I've had people tell me that this has happened to them, and I have the impression that it's frequent. When I was friendly with Hoover, I personally was able to get

files, any files I requested. I got involved in a libel suit once when Hoover was courting me—and when you get in a libel suit, you fight with everything you've got—and I just called and said, 'Do you have a file on this guy?' They brought out the file, laid it out, and I went through the whole thing. It was extremely helpful, I might add."

*Did the F.B.I. ever offer you any of the evidence on King?*

Anderson: "It was never offered to me but I did get it from unauthorized sources. I published one quote from an F.B.I. document that had been sent over to the White House about an incident with a woman. I interviewed the woman in the case before I published it."

**J** Edgar Hoover hated *The Washington Post*, and yet in 1970 he gave it one of its major exclusive stories. The reporter involved, Ken W. Clawson, who covered the Department of Justice for *The Post*, later became Communications Director in the Nixon Administration. During an interview in June, 1972, Clawson described how he got his exclusive story.

Clawson: "On Monday morning [November 16, 1970], I had just left my home for *The Washington Post* when my wife received a telephone call from the F.B.I. I still don't know who called but the guy said to my wife, 'We'll send a car out to get Mr. Clawson immediately,' and my wife said, 'You can't because he's already left for the office.' I got into *The Post* about ten that morning and there were about eight messages to call the F.B.I. immediately. I called and Harold Leinbaugh of the F.B.I. said, 'The old man will see you if you can get here in ten minutes, and if you want, we'll send a car after you.' I refused the car and I got over there in ten minutes, by God, and I walked onto the fifth floor and Leinbaugh grabbed me by the arm and hustled me into Hoover's office, and on the way he said to me, 'You'll have about twenty-five minutes with the Director.' I said, 'Fine.'"

*Did you have any particular subject you wanted to discuss?*

Clawson: "Well, no, except that Sunday, the day before, Ramsey Clark's book [*Crime in America*] had come out, and I had read the news stories and the reviews on it, and so I was familiar with it. I said, 'The reviews of the Ramsey Clark book came out yesterday and they were very detrimental to you,' and I asked if there was anything

he wanted to tell me about it."

*Had Hoover read any of the reviews?*

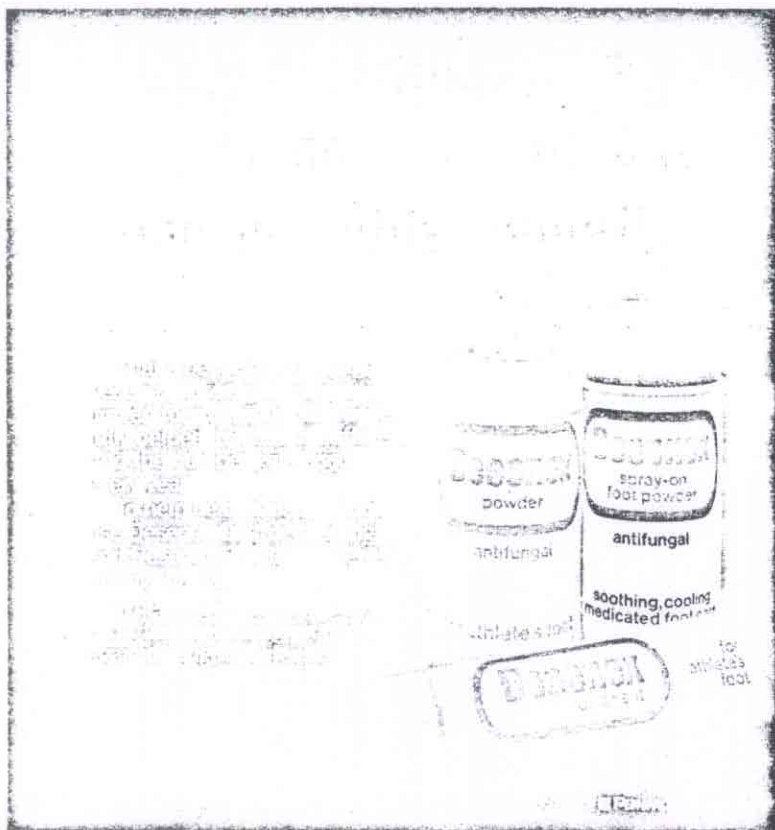
Clawson: "Hell, yes, he saw everything within a matter of minutes. He knew exactly what I was talking about. I had the lead of the story in the first ten minutes: 'J. Edgar Hoover yesterday called former Attorney General Ramsey Clark a "jellyfish" and the worst Attorney General he has encountered in forty-five years as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.' The story also revealed for the first time the reason Hoover wouldn't talk to Bobby Kennedy the last six months he was in office. He said Kennedy was exerting great pressure on him to hire Negro agents and he just wasn't about to lower the standards of the F.B.I. for any ethnic group."

In the story, Clawson quotes Hoover as saying, "If ever there was a worse Attorney General [than Kennedy] it was Ramsey Clark. You never knew which way he was going to flop on an issue." Until "Bobby Kennedy came along," he had never had any trouble with Attorneys General. In comparison, Attorney General John N. Mitchell was an "honest, sincere and very human man." Hoover added, "There has never been an Attorney General for whom I've had higher regard."

Clawson: "It's a long goddamn story, close to seventy column inches of type. I had asked him questions specifically on Clark and then on his own volition he spun out the Kennedy business right on the heels of the Clark business. And with that I knew that we were solid. Anything else from that point would be downhill. But here's the interesting thing about it—when you've interviewed a lot of people, you know within the first five minutes whether you're on the same wavelength, whether you're going to do business with that guy, and we did. It was apparent to both of us, I think, that we could talk with one another. The interview took off . . . and it lasted and lasted and lasted, and I think I got out of there about one o'clock in the afternoon."

"By the way, after this interview appeared, all those seventy publications that were waiting in line for years to interview him just descended on the F.B.I. with the worst language you've ever heard in your life, and especially those conservative publications that had always supported him. And we were overjoyed at having this exclusive story." (Continued on page 204)





## HOOVER'S OFFICE POLITICS

(Continued from page 150)

In an interview with Ramsey Clark, I asked him about the relationship between Hoover and Kennedy.

Ramsey Clark: "It's essentially an interpretation of the men—and of the men's personalities and their motives. A clear factor must be Bob's emerging prominence as a crime fighter. The point of one of Mr. Hoover's shortcomings, I believe, was his jealousy of anyone who emerged with any degree of prominence in the field of law enforcement except himself, and I think his almost consistent history is one of keeping everybody else down. It's really a fatal weakness in leadership because you need to do just the opposite, you need to bring them up. But Mr. Hoover's record, take with the chiefs of police, going back for many years, was to begin an attack of sorts on anyone who began to achieve national prominence. Well, Bob was coming on as a big crime fighter. People were talking about the Organized Crime Section and he was going around the country making speeches and holding meetings and energizing other investigative agencies, and they were beginning to get some glory. This was a holy mission of sorts with him. He was just deadly serious about it and deadly effective. The Organized Crime Section was going night and day. Subconsciously, or however, Mr. Hoover watched all that and it was getting into his bailiwick a little bit and he didn't like it. It stirred some jealousy.

"A major source of Mr. Hoover's power was knowledge, and, I think, in the early Sixties he knew very little about organized crime, and his agents could tell him very little, and that's when they started putting in all these bugs. Soon Mr. Hoover was beginning to tell Bob Kennedy things he didn't know. You can build a reputation by just knowing a lot, particularly if you're in investigative activity. That's why when I called the Russian Embassy for this group of church people to see if I could get them to go over to Leningrad and monitor the Soviet trials of the Jewish people there, I knew that would go straight to the President because I knew Hoover relished little things like that. To a busy guy at the White House, that seems like, 'Gee, those guys know everything, don't they? The F.B.I. is really on top of things.' It's as simple as this, they got a wiretap on the residency and a grown man is sitting there listening so that when a call comes in he knows that's something Mr. Hoover would be interested in because everybody's learned of his idiosyncrasies in that Bureau and it gets up there. And sure enough, the White House was leaking like a sieve and so Jack Anderson had it in less than two months, but he misinterpreted it at first; he thought it was a tap on me, but of course it was a tap on the Russian Embassy. The point is that they deal in information.

"In early 1964, or late 1963, Mr.

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Hoover started going to a considerable degree directly to the White House, bypassing Bob. I think that's a lawless thing, terribly dangerous and cannot provide equal justice or evenhanded law enforcement. The President is simply much too busy to get into those things, and the risks for political motivation or personality motivation are just enormous and terribly dangerous. The major conflict that was supposed to have arisen had to do with minority hiring. Bob wanted to get some black agents in there and Mr. Hoover took just a straight stand that he wouldn't compromise on personal standards.

"As far as the bugging controversy is concerned, I think the central truth is that if Bob had really known about it, Mr. Hoover wouldn't have been so secretive toward him and toward the Department of Justice. What you really find is a structuring of the thing in a way that protects the Bureau because that was the one thing he would always do was protect the Bureau first, and second, try to accumulate enough authority to go ahead and do what he wanted to do."

*Does it seem reasonable to you that Bob Kennedy was not aware of the F.B.I.'s bugging and wiretapping of organized crime? What about the meetings in Chicago and New York where the F.B.I. actually played tapes for him. Wouldn't you have said, "Where the hell did you get that?"*

Ramsey Clark: "Well, there's several things going. First, we've known and assumed that many police departments are wiretapping extensively. Second, we know that the F.B.I. has close needs, close relationships with them. You couldn't tell if it was consensual, where you had a guy wired and that wouldn't have required Attorney General approval at that time. Bob wasn't really keenly aware of civil liberties. He was keenly aware of organized crime and therefore he perhaps wasn't as sensitive as he should have been. But one thing you just don't do in the jungle of law enforcement, particularly when you're in a staff meeting and here are twenty-five guys, is say, 'Well, who was your informer?' or, 'Where did you get that information?' I don't know what the context of the tape was but I think you can be sure just from the nature of things that the Bureau wouldn't have said, 'A tap or a bug that we installed.'"

*Did Hoover ever fail to carry out an order?*

Ramsey Clark: "Not as far as I know, and some were quite unpleasant to him. Like any other institution, if they didn't really believe in or empathize with an order, why the execution might be very poor, as in the Orangeburg-massacre investigation. They might be very reluctant to do it. You would order them to do it and they would do it. That is, I would say that this looked like an important violation of Federal law. I did those things, with rare exceptions, in a personal communication rather than any formal thing. The formal ones—I suppose I turned down, I don't know how

many, maybe forty, fifty wiretap requests. I would do those in writing because they were submitted in writing."

*Who was your F.B.I. liaison?*

Ramsey Clark: "It was Deke DeLoach, but after Bob Kennedy's death I cut that off. I couldn't bear to do that anymore. We had a little episode there that I didn't like and I just lost confidence in DeLoach. We'd been searching for James Earl Ray, the assassin of Dr. King, and I had been in daily contact with them about it. I'd go over and see the evidence and hear what they had and they'd send me reports. This is unusual because as a rule the Attorney General doesn't know what's going on in an investigation. They were showing me everything. In fact, if anything, they would show me too much because they would be going down some blind roads and I'd worry for two days about whether a body they'd dug up on the beach in Puerto Vallarta was James Earl Ray or not. The fingers would be dehydrated and you couldn't get prints, so I'd be waiting around to hear about that sort of thing."

"The day of Bob Kennedy's funeral, I went up to St. Patrick's, and I had to get back down here early because we were having a ceremony in the courtyard of the Department of Justice that same afternoon for Bob. So I couldn't come down on that train. When I came out of the church, an agent said, 'Mr. Attorney General, Mr. DeLoach says that it's urgent that you call him immediately.' When I called him, he said that they had captured James Earl Ray in London and that he had tried to hold it up until after the funeral but he couldn't hold it up because Scotland Yard or somebody was saying, 'We can't do that,' and so they released the story apparently during the church service. I was a little puzzled by that. I had been told a day or two before that something might break and we'd heard about him trying to go to Rhodesia and we'd picked up something in Lisbon on him, and I was really concerned that he was going to get down to Rhodesia or someplace that we couldn't extradite him and there we'd be. But I got back to Washington and some of my people were really upset because they said there had been this long typed announcement of the arrest, that it had been laid on their desks either the night before or that morning—"

*It sounds like they wanted to release it at that precise time.*

Ramsey Clark: "I never have understood why. I mean, it's too bizarre for me to understand, but for some reason they decided they'd remind everybody the F.B.I. was still on the job about that time of day and they did. I think I could have taken that. I mean, it's an idiosyncrasy and kind of a petty one, but the thing I couldn't take was that I believed that I'd been lied to, and you can't function that way. I'd been told with some elaboration that they'd tried to hold up and couldn't do it when in fact it had been just the opposite, that they had held up just to

release it at that time. I called DeLoach in that afternoon and did what I don't do very often, that is, got upset, and told him I didn't want to use him as a liaison with the Bureau because I didn't have confidence in him anymore, and that was the end of that."

"Actually, I hadn't been using him very extensively anyway. Even men like DeLoach were very careful about their outside relationships with the Director. The night Dr. King was assassinated, I decided to fly down there. I don't think I decided until after midnight, and I decided I wanted DeLoach with me so that I would have the very latest information available when I got there because I knew the press and others would be all over me. Besides, by that time it was clear that there was a high potential for turbulence and rioting all over the country. So I told DeLoach that I wanted him to go with me and he said he couldn't unless the Director said it was all right. I said, 'I want you to go. You just tell the Director and you can get that straightened out.' In a little while he called back and said, 'Would you mind calling him?' So I called the Director about two o'clock in the morning, woke him up, and said I was going to fly down and I wanted to take DeLoach with me, and, of course, he said, 'Why, sure, go ahead.'"

*Do you think Hoover confronted King with evidence of the tape recordings, or do you think he was too smart to place himself in that position?*

Ramsey Clark: "Well, I think not only too smart, I just don't think he would do it."

*Except that he hated King to an irrational degree.*

Ramsey Clark: "He had some aberrations about people and things. He was very emotional about communism and sex and King and he could have gotten carried away. But it obviously wasn't anything that was very specific or detailed so it couldn't have been very much. Mr. Hoover was a religious man in his way and he equated communism with sin. He just thought communism was very evil."

*Do you think there was a conscious effort to play up his role against all radicals? For example, his comment about the Black Panthers?*

Ramsey Clark: "I think he had to have bad guys and he specialized not in creating them but in illuminating them, and the Panthers lent themselves to it. I think it was an absurd and outrageous exaggeration. There's nothing to support it, numberwise or conductwise, or any other ways. But Mr. Hoover was old-fashioned on race. There's just no use trying to ignore it; it's all through his character. I don't think he ever thought of himself as racist but there were heavy strains of racism in his character. When you take his age and having been raised in a Southern city, the District of Columbia, he just thought their place and role was different. Finally, after he came through all the metamorphosis of the 1960's, he was able to see revolutionary evil among them. Here's an illustration of



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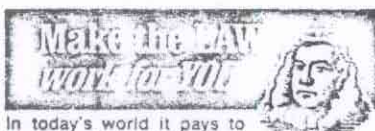


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the 'You'll be interested to know' type of memos I would get from Mr. Hoover: 'Communists are joining forces at every turn in treasonous coalition opposing our efforts in Vietnam, working with black-power advocates to lay foundations for outright guerrilla warfare in the streets of our cities.' Well, that's designed to scare you, I guess. I turned it down. They had just all kinds of people they wanted to tap or bug and I turned them down consistently, and I haven't the slightest doubt—oh, I shouldn't say the slightest doubt, but I have no real doubt that he obeyed all those orders with absolute fidelity. I don't think he put any of those taps on."

It has been reported that when President Johnson was asked why he kept Hoover on, his response was that "I'd rather have him inside the tent pissing out than outside pissing in." Do you know whether Johnson made that comment?

Ramsey Clark: "If he said that, he didn't really mean it. I think it's the kind of colorful thing he might say, but I think he kind of enjoyed having him around. He was always extremely cordial to Mr. Hoover, always anxious to have him involved. I wanted to kind of create a position upstairs for Mr. Hoover. I thought some kind of ombudsman role for a senior guy, some oversight of the C.I.A. and F.B.I. but the purpose was to see if we couldn't move him out of the F.B.I. before it got hurt too bad because I thought there was pretty significant erosion of the quality of its performance and its personnel going on. But to a fellow like Lyndon Johnson, they were so close personally. They had lived across the street for twenty-odd years and the beagle was named J. Edgar, and the Johnson daughters felt he was a rich uncle or something. Not that they'd see him that much, but in the old days he'd occasionally come over for breakfast on Sunday. And then Mr. Johnson was young enough to have grown up in the Dillinger days, and he liked that sort of thing."

"Yet I think President Johnson showed that he could do more with Mr. Hoover than anybody who'd ever tried. Getting Mr. Hoover to go down to Jackson, Mississippi, to open that F.B.I. office was quite a feat. I wouldn't have bet much on being able to talk him into doing it, but he did."

This brings up a real problem. People say, "Never again another J. Edgar Hoover," but what's the alternative?

Ramsey Clark: "First, he's an accident of history to a very considerable extent. The probability of there being another J. Edgar Hoover is just very remote. The alternative, however, is to have public accountability. The F.B.I. has not been publicly accountable and I think it needs an influx of manpower that will give it a much broader national experience, more different races and religions and viewpoints, an open performance. We've got to have a new sense of priorities there. Nobody, the public or the Attorney General, really has any sense of what the F.B.I.'s pri-

orities are, primarily because the F.B.I. doesn't really have priorities, and that's tragic. They need to begin a system of evaluation that would give them clearly focused priorities, and they need to focus and restrict their jurisdiction. Mr. Hoover was pretty good at that. If he'd been an empire builder, he could have built an empire. But he didn't really, not in comparison to what he could have."

What was it like dealing with him on a day-to-day basis?

Ramsey Clark: "It was difficult, frankly, in the last years. It was difficult to keep him on an issue and keep a focus on it until some agreement or decision could be made. He would tend to change the subject, to talk about other things, or to just kind of preempt the conversation. Usually I'd have three or four things I wanted to discuss with him and they would be tentative or preliminary to get his views and he would tend to talk about other things and frequently they'd be repetitious."

Was he being evasive?

Ramsey Clark: "No, I don't think so. It reminded me of some older relatives that I've had. As you get on in years, and particularly if you've had a rich experience, you tend to want to talk about things or relive things, and he would tell the same thing a number of times. In fact, it was hard for me to talk with him for thirty minutes without him bringing up Dr. King."

He had a thing about him, didn't he?

Ramsey Clark: "Yes, he did. It may have been this didn't happen with many people, but when he saw me, he would think of Dr. King. I don't think there were many occasions when he didn't start telling me something about him, and it would tend to be derogatory."

Was this before or after King's death?

Ramsey Clark: "Before and after. Mr. Hoover was a very direct man; at least, I always found him to be. He was quite candid in expressing his opinions if he expressed them at all."

Still you don't think he was being evasive when he changed the subject?

Ramsey Clark: "It may be that he did it in a way that escaped my detection, but to me it really seemed to be more a person who was more used to talking than listening, and more used to framing the subject than having someone else do it. I developed a practice of having him over to lunch every two or three weeks, just the two of us in my office. It would usually last an hour and a half, and I would find it would be right toward the end and I still hadn't gotten to the things I had wanted to discuss. So I'd have to just push it, say, 'Well, there are a few things I wanted to discuss with you.' Part of it too, I thought, was loneliness, really. I think he was a very lonely man and when he found someone to listen, he would just talk."

"He had some unusual ideas. He wouldn't have staff meetings in the F.B.I. He wouldn't have all his assistant directors meet and discuss things. It was run in what I would call an authoritarian manner. Now, we were hav-



ing staff meetings regularly and having everybody in—Prisons, Immigration, Legal Division, maybe a dozen outfits—but he never participated in those. He came four or five times, but he'd talk about the things he wanted to talk about. It would tend not to be spontaneous and it wouldn't move. The meetings were quite unproductive. That's when I finally went to just the two of us.

"You see, he had all those associates down at the F.B.I. and he really had a strong feeling that he shouldn't fraternize. One of the things I wanted to do—there were some things I wanted to do that I never did—was to have all the assistant directors to a lunch in my office. I did this at least once a week, selecting a different outfit each week, and I wanted to include the F.B.I. but it was obvious I wouldn't want to do it over his strenuous objections because you'd defeat the very purpose. I wanted to get to know them better and to open it up a little so I could get to hear what they were thinking, what they were saying and doing and give them some encouragement, but he just didn't think you should fraternize."

*Would Tolson accompany him when he came to your office?*

Ramsey Clark: "Only in the beginning. I always appreciated Clyde Tolson very much. But there were long periods there when Clyde couldn't come. I don't know the truth of the allegations and nobody would ever say, but Clyde had a stroke, I think, and it was pretty severe. He had a stroke in the night, and Mr. Hoover and his chauffeur—Clyde apparently called him—had to get him over to the hospital. They didn't want anybody to know it. I would ask him, 'How is Clyde?' but people in the Bureau wouldn't ask. I think Clyde had a series of strokes and I think he couldn't talk for a while. He was sick for months and months, I'd say in both 1967 and 1968, and of course I don't know anything about his condition after that time."

"I can remember the Director telling me at some length as if to justify—you see, he really needed Clyde because he didn't have any close relationship with anyone else—they were flying and the plane took a sudden drop and Mr. Hoover always wanted to think Clyde's condition had something to do with the change in pressure in the cabin. Mr. Hoover was a very lonely man. It was sad in a way. He had no close friends. His social contacts were just incredibly limited."

**J** Edgar Hoover grew increasingly cantankerous in his last years. The "jellyfish" story was only one in a long series of classic boners that were indiscriminately tossed to the media like raw meat to hungry wolves. Clyde Tolson, who always stayed a respectful half step behind the Boss in their famous walks together, survived him in death, but perhaps, if the truth were known, the Boss never survived that first stroke that disabled his lifelong alter ego. #

## ALL THE WORLD WANTS THE JEWS DEAD

*(Continued from page 107)* Culture of the Jews" at Chautauqua in the summertime, where there is also a workshop on tallith making.

How melancholy-sweet: the dear dead slain heroic Jews of long ago, that lost humanitarian people whose liberator Moses made it obligatory to free slaves, defend the widow and the orphan, carry on ordinary affairs in decency and equity, hate idolatry of stone or spirit; and who put all that down into a treasured Law in order to insure a life of Commandment and Deed.

Oh, the genius that was Israel!

Sometimes we try with all our might to imagine for ourselves what the world would be like if there were still a living Jewish people.

**I**n New York, on Yom Kippur, I knew well enough they meant me—not only the citizens of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The Nazis too had rejoiced in Yom Kippur as a "special" day for "special" treatment. The massacre at Babi Yar—the shooting of thousands of Jews on the lip of a ravine outside Kiev in the Ukraine, with the zealous complicity of the Ukrainians—Babi Yar had begun on the eve of Yom Kippur and continued all through the next day. The inner nature of the Yom Kippur War was immediately recognizable.

The word for it is pogrom.

But they would take from Jews even the death of Jews. In the Soviet Union, Babi Yar is not permitted acknowledgment as a Jewish martyrdom: the official view is that "Soviet citizens" perished there, justifying the prohibition against Jewish memorial ceremonies on that spot. In the Soviet Union, Jews are singled out in all the usual unpleasant ways, and become ordinary citizens only when they fall into mass graves.

The same with the holocaust. The Final Solution, some insist, was "a crime against all mankind," not "just" against Jews: as if to say that if this were declared a crime only against Jews, then it could not be considered a crime against mankind.

When the world wants Jews to start dying again, it begins to speak of "mankind."

But the Yom Kippur War was an exception. No one could say that Syria and Egypt did not mean Jews.

On Yom Kippur I was in the synagogue.

A word about "universalists." History yields categories, which some persons resist, insisting on their commonality with all flesh, as if flesh were the only human mark. Jews who refuse to be categorized form a very large category. From Leipzig, from Danzig, from Frankfurt, from Berlin and from Vienna, the charred bones of the uncategorized cried out from the gut of the ovens. "You cannot do this to me! I am a member of all humanity!"

Only Jews carry on this way. Universalism is the ultimate Jewish parochialism.

Universalism puts one in confederacy with those who will not admit that it

was Jews who were murdered at Babi Yar.

Abstractions cannot be murdered. If only it were possible to elude every violation, past, present, and future, by becoming a universalist abstraction!

Solzhenitsyn, by contrast, abhors the Soviet system not because he is a "human being" but precisely because he is a Russian.

**I**n the synagogue on Yom Kippur, I was pierced by the memory of a story. It was in my father's childhood, in a Russian townlet. There were two priests of that place, the "good" *galach* and the "bad" *galach*. It was, of course, Easter time, when these things often used to happen. The bad priest organized a mob with truncheons. The Jews ran to the synagogue and locked themselves in. The truncheons were turned into torches, and the mob marched around and around outside, about to set fire to the synagogue. My father, then a boy of four or five, always remembered the panic inside, families pressed together. But then the good priest came along and persuaded the murderers to go home.

My father lived, and here am I, free and safe in an American synagogue on October 6, 1973. Then why do I feel as if I am my father, about to be cut down by the mob outside?

There is no mob outside. Cairo and Damascus, which hold the torches, are on the far end of the globe. Yet they mean me. I know they mean me. Having chosen Yom Kippur, they mean me to know they mean me.

In the synagogue, amid those meditations of self-criticism and rededication that constitute the Yom Kippur worship, it seemed it was the end of Zionism, history thumbing its nose, the ideal of a Jewish homeland a mockery. Here were Jews, all crushed together in one little place, the mob beating the walls that held them. Was this what was meant by a sovereign state? A homeland? A refuge, a restoration, a return from exile? A nation like other nations? Or was it only another of those townlets, another trap in another place?

In the days that followed, a friend telephoned long-distance from Maryland; a poet. He wanted to read his new poem. The call came just before the ten o'clock news. It was the third or fourth day of the war; news in those hours was a feverishly awaited crust, an urgency, something to be downed. Nevertheless, I shut off the set and listened to the poem. It was lyrical; infused, as we say, with sensibility. Then and there I vomited up literature; I was turned against every posture grounded in aesthetics. Art is indifferent to slaughter.

On the fifth day of the war a magazine editor telephoned; business as usual. A good man, sensitive to certain elemental aches, he had grown up a member of a small fundamentalist sect in a Mormon community, and as a child felt dispossessed. "What





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ward do you live in?" they used to ask him; he lived in no ward; a ward is a Mormon parish. The experience made him into a kind of Jew. But he could not imagine—the fifth day of the war!—what it meant to belong to a people that was, even as he talked business, struggling not to die. He heard me out, and turned silent. I embarrassed him. All that Ethnic Anguish flooding out on him was something he, with whatever goodwill, could not take hold of.

It was as if someone in my family had died: a personal loss. "You must be feeling very bad"—a model letter of condolence from a self-exempted half-Jewish writer. Her letter came from a writers colony. She was at work.

Work! The whole ground of life—purpose, ambition, breakfast, getting the carpenter to come—all fallen into ash. Survival the single obsession. Work! If Israel burned, we here would turn into pillars of ash.

Who, then, was thinking about the death of Jews? Only Jews; the mass of Jews; that undistinguished tract of ordinariness whom Chaim Weizmann must have meant when he said, not without rancor, "Our Jewish masses are as the dust of the earth." The Jews of dust, of ordinariness; alone with each other. Day by day it became more and more plain *how* alone—the aloneness of those who feel themselves condemned; the aloneness of, after so much America, the stranger. And all the time free! Home! In safety! Oh, the huddling of those days. We went to synagogues, to rallies, in a manyness that was as the dust of the earth.

But the illustrious Jews—those who like to say "Hadassah ladies" with half a bored smile—stayed away from the synagogues and the rallies. You did not see them there. Not the critic who had written passionately on the holocaust; not the critic who reminded "sophisticated" Jews of their obligation toward survival; not the political thinker who only a week before had expressed in a famous financial journal his horror at the new war; not any of the dozens of freedom-fighter academics always found as signatories to humanitarian advertisements. Even now, the intellectuals, no matter to what degree they newly see themselves as implicated in the Jewish fate, shrink from those Jews who are, who must be, the pulse and sinew of the Jewish people.

Breadth versus narrowness, these Jewish intellectuals say. Palaces in preference to history's closet, the spacious periphery rather than the invisible point at the center. "One does not think with his blood," they say, as if scrutiny of any Jewish interest would put one's brain in danger of engorgement.

Elite fastidiousness, some of this; but the real meaning of all of it is this: *In order to be noticed, I must not notice myself.*

And Gentile intellectuals? The writers? Those who work assiduously for Amnesty International, for example, or the members of P.E.N., an organization dedicated to the humanist solidarity of writers, which canceled its internation-