



Drawing by Lorenz. © 1971
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"And if this be treason, J. Edgar, make the most of it."

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The FBI's

By Art Buchwald

WASHINGTON—"The people who attack the FBI and its leader, J. Edgar Hoover, are doing the country a terrible disservice."

Thus spoke Pro. Heinrich Applebaum, chairman of the criminology department at the Bonnie & Clyde Institute for Advanced Studies.

"How so?" I asked.

"There are 8,400 FBI agents in the country," Applebaum said, "including 57 blacks and no women. These agents are desperately needed in the war against crime."

"No one disputes that," I said. "But why would criticism of J. Edgar Hoover affect our country's battle against the forces of evil that would attack us from within?"

"Because," said Applebaum, "every time someone attacks J. Edgar Hoover, which is synonymous with attacking the FBI, two agents have to be assigned to the case to find out who

Never-Ending Battle Against Insults

Capitol Punishment

made the attack and what is behind it. So far this year there have been 4,166 attacks made against Mr. Hoover in the press and at universities and in Congress. This means 8,332 agents have had to be taken off their duties, which has left only six agents free to fight criminals."

"You mean the FBI has to devote most of its time these days to defending itself from attacks on the bureau?"

"That is correct," said Applebaum. "There was a time when the FBI was completely free of criticism. Then it was possible for Mr. Hoover to devote all his energies to capturing public enemies, Nazis, Communists and those who would destroy our way of life.

"But recently the attacks on the FBI director have made the bureau switch its game plan. Now hundreds of thousands of man hours must be spent finding out who is saying what about

J. Edgar Hoover. As the criticism escalates, more and more people have to be assigned to making out reports on the attacks, and the backlog of criminal cases is building up."

"Professor," I said, "do you believe the criticism of the FBI director is a plot by criminal elements in this country to detract from the work the FBI has been chartered by Congress to do?"

"There is no doubt about it," he said. "Anytime a professor, student or a former FBI agent says something complimentary about the FBI director, everything stops and hundreds of bureau employees are involved in the investigation.

"Now, these attacks are no accident. They are inspired by people in this country who are aware that the more agents and employees are assigned to tracking down critics of J. Edgar Hoover, the less law enforcement people will be available to go after them. The time will not be far off when all

the resources of the FBI will be used for only one purpose: to get people who are demanding Mr. Hoover's retirement."

"This is the most insidious plot I have ever heard of," I said. "Surely the FBI must be aware of what is going on."

"They are," Applebaum said, "but the first priority of any law enforcement agency is to protect its leader from attack, particularly from those who want to force him to resign."

"What is the solution?" I said.

"We must persuade the media that every time they print a story or an editorial attacking Mr. Hoover, they are taking two agents off a criminal case. If the media want law and order in this land, they have to knock off their criticism of the FBI director so the bureau can go back to its original business, which is making America's streets safe after dark."