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An Ex-Agent for the F. B. I. Criticizes Its Lead

By DAVID BURNHAM

A former agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation—once selected for one of the bureau's more prestigious positions—has criticized the way the F. B. I. selects its leaders, disciplines its men and makes its investigations.

His comments on the internal working of the F. B. I. are among the most critical assessments ever known to be made of the Bureau by an experienced agent. He said bureau reaction to the comments led to his

separation from the agency.

The criticism of the F. B. I. was contained in a private letter drafted by Jack Shaw, 37 years old, of Hillsdale, N. J., a seven-year veteran of the bureau. He was one of 16 agents selected from 67 applicants for the job of teaching at the National Police Academy.

The 16-page letter had been written in response to criticism of the F. B. I. made by one of his professors during a graduate school course at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a branch of City University.

Mr. Shaw was attending the school at the expense of the F. B. I. in preparation for his teaching assignment.

Mr. Shaw said parts of the letter were obtained by the bureau's New York office after he sent it to the bureau typing pool for preparation. Eventually, he said, the F. B. I. Director, J. Edgar Hoover, accused him in a telegram of "atrocious judgment" in writing the letter and ordered 15 other agents to resign from the John Jay College.

F. B. I. headquarters in Washington refused to comment on Mr. Shaw's analysis of bureau operations, his other comments or the resignation of the 15 agents from the college.

Mr. Shaw, whose wife is seriously ill, was ordered to report to the F. B. I. office in Butte, Mont., which he said was a purgatory for agents who had fallen from Mr. Hoover's grace. Rather than accept the transfer, Mr. Shaw submitted his resignation.

But Mr. Hoover immediately sent back a telegram saying that "your resignation is accepted with prejudice," Mr. Shaw said. He added, that this has made it impossible for him to obtain another job in law enforcement.

Mr. Shaw, in an interview, indicated he was planning legal action to force the F. B. I. to remove the "with prejudice" statement from his resignation.

In his letter to his professor, Dr. Abraham S. Blumberg, Mr. Shaw argued that he basically felt the F. B. I. was an "effective law enforcement agency" and that, despite a "cult of personality," Mr. Hoover was a man of integrity.

But he also discussed some of the things that he perceived as shortcoming during his seven years as an agent.

"It certainly is no military secret, though I am sure, not widely published either, that adulation of the director in some form or other provides the main catalyst in the process of 'administrative advancement,'" he wrote.

Mr. Shaw then said that, before being promoted, agents were given a brief interview with Mr. Hoover during which the director made his own

judgment about their merits and demerits.

"In today's 20th Century world of management techniques, and especially within an organization attaching great weight, publicly, to merit and ability, I believe that there may be a more sure and efficient way of recognizing latent leadership assets than during the impressions of a three-to-five-minute interview," Mr. Shaw wrote.

Terms Discipline 'Arbitrary'

Mr. Shaw said discipline in the bureau was "swift and harsh," adding: "Unfortunately, too, it is often quite arbitrary. Punishment is usually meted out in direct proportion to the amount of bad publicity generated by the particular mistake or incident."

He cited the Lee Harvey Oswald case in which, he said, the F. B. I. refused publicly to accept any criticism for not watching Oswald more closely before the assassination of President Kennedy but later "censured, suspended and transferred the special agent to whom the Oswald case had been assigned."

He said the bureau's system of control and discipline blunted personal initiative and aggressive action and tended to make the F. B. I. take an extremely conservative approach to its own responsibilities.

The bureau tends to seek new "successes" and to concentrate manpower on areas such as stolen car cases, petty thefts and bank robberies, he said, "because these types of crime have produced high statistical success in the past."

He said the bureau had ignored the criminal underworld's invasion of legitimate business and its efficient and expert operation. "The bureau," he continued, "was slow to cooperate with the organization of coordinated Federal Strike Forces, which are at least a novel approach to an old stalemated problem."

"At the same time, the internal power structure of the F. B. I. has been too rigidly set in its own ways to conceive or implement a novel program of action involving cooperation with outside agencies. Professional jealousy is not an un-

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common F. B. I. shortcoming," he said.

Mr. Shaw said another basic problem of the F. B. I. was that it was almost obsessively concerned with publicity.

"I believe it is possible for an organization to become so conscious of its public image—its unsullied reputation—that it is actually reduced in its effectiveness," he said. "I suggest that if avoidance of criticism becomes the chief consideration of an agency, there is little likelihood that its members will be distinguished for their imagination, initiative and aggressive action."

While arguing there was a need for effective public relations, Mr. Shaw said the F. B. I.'s program was aimed at past exploits rather than at current needs and current accomplishments.

"We are not simply rooted in tradition," he said. "We're stuck in it up to our eye-balls. And it all revolves around one key figure, viz., the life and exploits of J. Edgar Hoover."

Mr. Shaw is a former Marine Corps captain. In 1968 he fin-

ished second in a Russian-language class at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, Calif.