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# The FBI After Hoover



THE TYRANNY paralyzing the Federal Bureau of Investigation reached such depths in recent months that agents in the field, consumed with fear, refrained from sending official reports of their problems back to director J. Edgar Hoover in Washington.

The realization of that damaging paralysis inside the FBI is why so few moist eyes were found in the bureau's headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue after the stunning news that Hoover was dead at age 77.

Thus, the FBI now faces crisis—a time of both opportunity and danger. Opportunity from the sudden chance for thorough-going reform under a new director, better equipping it for its vital role; danger from the FBI's political vulnerability, now that Hoover is gone, to assaults from the left exploiting the late director's excesses as justification for emasculating the bureau.

In the shocked aftermath of Hoover's death, those officials who had reached the FBI's upper strata through unstinting sycophancy had

reason to mourn. But many others shared these bitter words of a veteran FBI agent: "It was fitting that the director died in his sleep. That was the way the bureau was run lately."

The use of such scornful words, violating the convention not to speak ill of the dead, is necessary to show how deeply the FBI's soundest critics feel about the bureau's present plight.

The hard fact is that in recent years Hoover seemed to subordinates interested only in protecting his fading image as a folk hero. To that end, agents were restricted in controversial information-gathering techniques. Within the last eight months, Hoover had transferred, demoted or forced into retirement all potential critics in the FBI's upper echelons.

IN THAT atmosphere, subordinates hesitated to incur the director's wrath with unpleasant details. Thus, problems were withheld from him, and the operation of the famed FBI took on a somnambulist aura.

A case in point is the hung jury in the Berrigan conspiracy trial, an event of deep despair for FBI agents who had gathered the evidence. But Hoover was elated, relieved that the Berrigan trial had not humiliated him by an acquittal and had not spotlighted his publicity-seeking revelations which forced the government to move prematurely.

The fear that haunts thoughtful FBI officials today is that the bureau may now pay dearly for the director's sins. Hoover explicitly instructed special agents-in-charge to slip him juicy bits of gossip about celebrities and notables which not only went into imperishable dossiers but gave the director a source of chit-chat with political big guns.

But extreme civil libertarians and their allies in Congress will now insist that no Americans be investigated by the FBI. This, in turn, is part of an inevitable attempt to emasculate the FBI by cutting off its national security and intelligence functions now unpro-

tected by Hoover's unique political power.

To prevent this, Hoover's successor must be a strong champion of the FBI who nevertheless is respected by Congressional liberals. To some Nixon administration officials, the man best fitting this description is William C. Sullivan, 59, forced out as the FBI's No. 1 man in a policy dispute with Hoover last October.

But acting Atty. Gen. Richard Kleindienst feels Hoover's successor must possess political finesse, and, in Kleindienst's view, Sullivan showed a lack of it in his public fight with Hoover.

On the other hand, Mr. Nixon may decide to keep L. Patrick Gray 3d, named yesterday as acting director. Gray is competent and colorless.

So, an act of God confronts President Nixon with a decision he long refused to face up to.

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