

Dear Athan,

2/11/84

Do not feel that you need reply when I send you something, unless you want to ask or say something.

Your letter of the eighth reminds me of two who should be excellent sources on the early Hoover. One is Mike Fooner, one of two clerks fired, as I recall, because they thought a union a good thing. If my recollection is correct, the other was named Weisberg ~~my~~ but was no relative. Back in the 30s Mike and his wife and my wife and I met for supper occasionally. After that I lost track of him. Then I saw (enclosed) that he is a criminologist, which should make it easy to locate him. The other is Al Bernstein, who worked under Max Lowenthal as a Senate investigator and was his research assistant on Max's book on the FBI. The Washington phone book has no listing I can identify as him. He used to live on River Road at about 47 or 48 and Carl, of Woodward and Bernstein, is his son. If he is still alive Carl ~~can~~ can be reached, I believe, at ABC-TV News, 1717 DeSales St., NW, Washington 20036.

If I didn't mention it earlier, the early Hoover built himself a power base in the so-called patriotic societies, which were merely ultra-reactionary groups. Some of his articles may be in the records I've deposited at Univ. Wisconsin, Stevens Point. Dave Wrona can tell you. One was called the Coalition of Patriotic Societies.

I don't know if it will ever be possible to really understand that man, he was that strange. You'll probably come as close as anyone else.

In time I'll be reviewing the separate files I've made of his annotations and a file I call "control," which is the name of the FBI's game. If I see anything in them when I do I'll send you copies.

I am reminded of something you may want to recall. Perhaps more than anything else Hoover was sensitive to criticism of the FBI. I've ~~never~~ never known of such over-reactions as his. Of all the possible and justified major criticisms of the FBI the Warren Commission could have made, it made an insignificant one. His reaction was to leak what could damage the Commission - without realizing that it also tended to damage the FBI's solution to that assassination. Hoover leaked that there had been two other rifles in the building from which supposedly all the shots came.

Likewise, for all the serious deficiencies of FBI personnel in that investigation, he fixed on the essentially irrelevant or for many the entirely unjustified and disciplined a number of SAs. Many for not having Oswald indexed as a ~~more~~ dangerous subversive when in fact Oswald did not meet the criteria. I have those records if you decide you need them. That is, those disclosed. Yet when Oswald left a threatening letter at the Dallas FBI before the assassination and on the SAC's orders the case agent, Hosty, destroyed it after the assassination (while the FBI was insisting he'd never indicated any tendency toward violence), Hoover and the FBI did not inform the Commission and Hosty was not disciplined for that serious offense. At the same time Hoover abruptly ended all relations, even training, with the Dallas police, from which he had forced a public apology for completely accurate information it had disclosed. Again I have the records in a separate file.

I'll alert my lawyer, Jim Cesar, and another lawyer who is involved in FOIA litigation, of your interest and I'll tell the lawyer how to get your book. Temple Univ. Press is at the old college. I was born within walking distance of it and beginning when I was about 8 years old was allowed to walk to a public library near it to get books.

Something else has just come to mind and I'm not sure of its accuracy, but I seem to recall that Senator Bert Wheeler had a feud with Hoover. Lowenthal and

worked on Wheeler's railroad investigating committee (as my wife also did). The only one of the Wheelers I knew well was a daughter, Frances, who married a friend, who remained friendly with the other Wheelers, through whom you might get some trace of any records. One of the sons went into radio broadcasting, perhaps also TV, in Arizona, taking this friend, Frans's husband, with him. Fran had died. This man is Allen Saylor who, when I last heard of him, was teaching school on in think Phoenix. Because of the "e" in the name he might be easy to find in the phone book. Luke Wilson, 9100 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda, Md. 20814 may have Allen's address and may also be able to help you in other ways. Luke also was an investigator on our committee, despite being born to wealth. His mother was a Lothrop of Woodward and Lothrop, the famous Washington store, and his father made Edz Dilling's Red Network because of his simple humanitarianism. Luke is a very good person who will help you if he can, I am sure.

Some of the still-living lawyers and reporters of that era should be good sources. I.F. Stone went to Washington before World War II and was on the Washington staff of PM, after being on the NY Post earlier. 4420 29th, NW, D.C. He may be able to refer you to others.

Yours is a very important project. I believe it is not possible to exaggerate Hoover's influence, rarely for good, a continuing influence.

If Corliss Lamont is still alive, he might be helpful. 315 W 106, New York 10025. He might know people, have or be able to direct you to old files. (He married the widow of another of our Senate investigators, Helen Lamb, who died some years ago.)

If you don't have and want Lowenthal's book, I have it. Also Norman Eelestad's and Sullivan's. I don't have Schott's, No Left Turns. Joseph L., 4004 El Campo, Fort Worth 76107.

Oh, yes, Quin Shea once told me that the former managing editor of Cissy Patterson's Washington Times-Herald, Frank ~~was~~ (I can't remember his last name) was doing a similar book. I've not heard of it. He may have gotten too old or ill and his research, particularly documents, may be available if you try. Hoover often leaked to that paper, probably through Nichols. As I recall, although very conservative, Quin indicated his book would not be favorable. (Frank must be well into his 80s.)

Best wishes,

Department of History

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February 8, 1984

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I have received both your letters of January 6, 1984 and February 3, 1984 and thank you for the enclosures and your many helpful comments. I trust that you understand the reasons for my dilatory response--to your January letter-- I have been snowed under with correspondence pertaining to the news stories on my receiving the Hoover and Nichols files and then the Parade article. The Xmas holidays and the beginning of a new semester further complicated my life and encumbered my time. In any event, my apologies.

I thought the piece on Hoover's reaction to Sartre a gem. Do remember to send on to me, any and all documents which provide insights into Hoover's directorship as well as to his outlook and politics. Having decided to write a biography, and thus shifting from an institutional approach, I find myself seriously deficient in my understanding of the man--at the same time given the length and importance of Hoover's governmental career the task of initiating a biography is a bit overwhelming. In short, I welcome any and all documents and research suggestions. I suspect that the more I research this project the more I shall be impressed by my inadequacies.

The Hoover O&C File on King is accessible to you at the FBI Reading Room. I fear that you will find nothing of particular new value--in part because so much is withheld. I have an appeal pending for the extensive deletions but have no firm sense when this will be acted upon and with what result.

Re your request for a copy of my book. It is not out of print, and your attorney can obtain a copy by ordering it directly (or having a local bookstore order it) from Temple University Press. I think that it is listed at \$30.00 (university press books are exorbitantly priced) and the order can be sent to Temple University Press, Broad and Oxford Streets, Philadelphia, Pa. 19122.

Again my thanks for your suggestions and consider this a standing request for any and all documents you have offering insights into Hoover as a person and the FBI director.

Sincerely,

  
Athan Theoharis