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Editor, The Washington Post
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If, as former FBI Assistant Director William Cleveland states (Post 12/29/83), all those apparently missing FBI files sought in Freedom of Information Act cases are "indexed in the main bureau files," then perjury is no longer a mere cottage industry in the post-Hoover FBI because agent after agent has sworn to a search of that very index and sworn that those countless records do not exist. My personal experience with these sworn FBI claims is in numerous FOIA lawsuits.

It apparently is beyond the comprehension of those like-minded selected by Hoover that no matter how right and proper they conceived the acts exposed by Professor Theoharis and others, with the FBI's own records as proof, those acts are illegal and subvert basic American belief and concepts of self-government - which distinguish us from dictatorships and authoritarianism. Moreover, a crime remains a crime even if committed by FBI agents and ordered by higher FBI authority.

Cleveland's is the official FBI line about exposures of it, that those who expose it are out to make a buck while those who publish what the FBI wants believed have noble and unselfish purposes. There is nothing wrong in a writer or a professor making a living, but the fact is that because the FBI extorts such enormous costs from those who sue under FOIA (one of the ways in which the FBI and other agencies have in effect rewritten FOIA), it is a practical impossibility for any such book to make a profit.

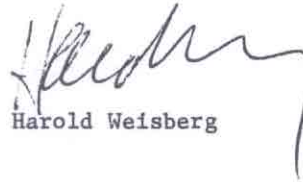
Cleveland misrepresents Hoover's presidential contacts by saying "you could count on your fingers the number of times he went to see the various presidents." Cleveland must know that these numerous contacts were indirect because the reports on them disclosed under FOIA reveal that they were usually routed to assistant directors. In Cleveland's day they were handled by Cartha DeLoach and, contrary to John Grady's representation in the same issue, did include blackmail. Records disclosed to me reflect how the FBI blackmailed even President Johnson and the CIA.

It is long past time for the country to recognize that, while the difference in degree is enormous, in fact these exposed official abuses are like those of the KGB and Gestapo in their purposes, which include silencing those the FBI does not like.

One of the great and little appreciated benefits of FOIA is that it can force disclosure of official wrongdoing and thus make correction possible. This is precisely what happened with the FBI's KGB-like and Gestapo-like

abuses misrepresented as its "counterintelligence program" or Cointelpro. FOIA brought these abuses to light, not any one of the countless government employees and thousands of FBI agents who were aware of them and participated in them.

Theoharis should be praised, not libelled, for his long and successful effort to make our system work and for the lucidity with which he makes formerly suppressed information available to the public. This is the intent of FOIA.



Harold Weisberg

Wash. Post
12/29/83

'The Hoover File'

I am writing about the editorial "The Hoover File" [Dec. 16]. After 36 years, I retired from the FBI in 1976. J. Edgar Hoover's last appointment of an assistant director before his death was the writer. I shouldn't tell The Post this because it has him down as being senile in 1971. As assistant director of the Special Investigative Division, my responsibilities included overall supervision of all organized crime investigations, all fugitive investigations and all special inquiry investigations of presidential appointees.

The Post says, "Mr. Hoover kept files that were not accessible even to top bureau assistants." Wrong. All of these files were indexed in the main bureau index. The only difference was that the index had a "stop" on it. To see the file, one had to first clear with the director's office to confirm that the

need to see the file was legitimate. After Mr. Hoover's death, the files were placed in the main files of the bureau. To do otherwise would have required an exemption from the Archivist of the United States.

My guess is that the purpose of the editorial was 1) to sell newspapers and 2) to help Athan Theoharis sell his new book. But the tone of it makes it sound like Mr. Hoover spent his time running back and forth to the White House, passing along "vicious bits of information." As a matter of actual fact, records would show that you could count on your fingers the number of times he went to see the various presidents, and usually it was when he was called to the White House for a specific purpose.

It is to Mr. Hoover's everlasting credit that more than 10 years after his

death The Post is still writing "There have been rumors in this town..." and it comes up empty with facts.

As for the allegation that "every bit of rumor, hearsay, trivia and potentially scandalous or embarrassing information about political figures was compiled and saved," The Post must certainly do the same thing because it keeps coming up with the same old rumors of "implied threats."

I do agree with The Post that William Webster is doing a good job—but check those files: he is on record as disagreeing that Mr. Hoover's name should be removed from the FBI Building. By putting this in the same paragraph, it almost sounds like The Post is implying that Judge Webster "wonders anew" with The Post how the current FBI Building is so named.

WILLIAM V. CLEVELAND

Arlington

I have a small business employing about 500 people. Frequently information of embarrassing and/or extremely personal nature comes to my attention concerning a client or employee. Whether this data is certain or rumor, it is placed in a file under my exclusive control. Why? Because it ensures that information will not be known to many employees with access to our general files. Is this, in the opinion of The Post, improper? One reading the editorial about Mr. Hoover would so conclude.

Is The Post's response that a businessman should throw away such information? Wouldn't that be an invitation for each employee to destroy files that for any reason he or she preferred destroyed?

The editorial fails to note that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is an information-gathering organization by its nature. Rumor, even vicious charges without substance, must be kept or, alternatively, each FBI employee could decide what is substantial and to be kept and what is muck and must be destroyed.

The editorial also implies that Mr. Hoover over the years used personal derogatory information in his "secret" files to blackmail. When? Who? How?

Why does The Post (and, in fairness, the media generally) work so hard to destroy America's good guys? Why does it continuously report about the alleged misbehavior of Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy? Will we in years ahead, be clamoring to remove their names from their memori-

JOHN J. GRADY

Spring

'Really Ridiculous'

The editorial "The Hoover File" (Dec. 16) was not only most scurrilous, but also really ridiculous. It seemed the whole piece was based on an "analysis" of certain pages released to an individual, whose credibility will not be mentioned. Then, with this flimsy basis, The Post reached a groundless conclusion that there was "evidence" of impropriety. Certainly The Post doesn't believe its readers are so ignorant that they cannot discount this type of rhetoric no matter how vitriolic.

The most significant statement The Post made was that J. Edgar Hoover ran the FBI for 48 years. The Post got that right. Based on that fact, the editorial's whole treatise fell flat on its face because it is well established that Hoover was successful in achieving an enormous variety of accomplishments in those 48 years. Perhaps The Post hasn't heard of the gangster era, sabotage, espionage, organized crime, white-collar crime or such things as the National Fingerprint Files, Crime Laboratory, National Academy for police training, etc., etc.

The public does not wonder how a building in this city can be named for the man. But the people surely have reason to wonder how journalists can be considered ethical in their profession when they vilify such an outstanding citizen and patriot as J. Edgar Hoover.

—James R. Adams

The writer was a supervisory agent of the FBI for 35 years.

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