

Ehrlichman Says Hoover Should Have Been Ousted

7/26/73 By DAVID E. ROSENBAUM
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WASHINGTON, July 25 — President Nixon should have dismissed J. Edgar Hoover as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation early in his Presidency, John D. Ehrlichman asserted today.

Mr. Ehrlichman, the President's former chief domestic affairs adviser, told the Senate Watergate committee that it was Mr. Hoover's refusal to investigate Dr. Daniel Ellsberg thoroughly that led White House agents to break into the office of Dr. Ellsberg's former psychiatrist.

Mr. Ehrlichman said of Mr. Hoover: "He was alert, he was sincere, he was patriotic. But he was certainly fixed in his views and it made operation very, very difficult."

Mr. Ehrlichman insisted that Mr. Hoover, who died in May, 1972, had declined to pursue the Ellsberg investigation actively because of the director's

friendship with Louis Marx, Dr. Ellsberg's father-in-law.

Dr. Ellsberg was alleged to have stolen the Pentagon papers, and given them to the press. The publication of portions of the material in June, 1971, by The New York Times, which has never disclosed where it obtained the documents, was said by Mr. Ehrlichman to have caused grave concern at the White House.

Around Labor Day of that year, the office of Dr. Lewis Fielding in Beverly Hills, Calif., was broken into, allegedly by a team led by E. Howard Hunt Jr. and G. Gordon Liddy, two

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men who were later convicted in the Watergate conspiracy.

Mr. Ehrlichman has acknowledged that Hunt and Liddy were working at the time for a special White House intelligence unit, known as the "Plumbers," because their assignment was to prevent leaks of information to the news media.

The plumbers unit was assigned to the Ellsberg investigation, according to Mr. Ehrlichman, after Mr. Hoover not only refused to have Mr. Marx interviewed by F.B.I. agents but also tried to demote a top bureau official who tried to arrange such an interview.

That official, Charles D. Brennan, was an assistant director of the bureau in charge of the Domestic Intelligence Division.

Mr. Brennan, then 49 years old, with 23 years of service at the F.B.I., was reassigned in September, 1971, to be the inspector in charge of the bureau's special investigations office. A year later, he was made the agent in charge of the field office in Alexandria, Va., where he now serves.

Mr. Brennan, reached by telephone today, refused to comment on Mr. Ehrlichman's assertions, saying that he would tell his version only to the Senate committee.

Senator Lowell P. Weicker Jr., Republican of Connecticut, tried to discredit Mr. Ehrlichman's contention that the F.B.I. was lax on the Ellsberg investigation by producing a letter from Mr. Hoover to Egil Kpogh Jr., Mr. Ehrlichman's assistant, who was in charge of the plumbers unit.

In the letter, dated Aug. 3, 1971, Mr. Hoover noted that, at the President's instructions,

he was forwarding to Mr. Krogh bureau files on 17 persons connected with the Ellsberg case, including the records of five F.B.I. interviews.

Mr. Ehrlichman said that Mr. Hoover's letter, implying a thorough F.B.I. investigation, was merely the "well-known bureaucratic device of papering the file."

Shortly thereafter the committee recessed for a series of votes on the Senate floor and then adjourned without giving Senator Weicker an opportunity to follow up his question.

Reportedly, when the hearings resume tomorrow, he plans to show Mr. Ehrlichman another letter, this one from Mr. Krogh to Mr. Ehrlichman, in which Mr. Krogh remarks that Mr. Hoover had promised a full investigation and noting that the bureau had interviewed Mr. Marx's wife.

Senator Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia, was interested in Mr. Ehrlichman's suggestion that Mr. Hoover could countermand an order from the White House and asked Mr. Ehrlichman:

"You are not saying that the President of the United States was helpless in trying to get the cooperation of the F.B.I., are you?"

Mr. Ehrlichman replied that John N. Mitchell, then the Attorney General, "did not think that at the time he could force the director to an acceleration of the bureau effort on this subject without a total rupture with the director."

"You don't mean to intimate in any way, shape, fashion or form, do you, Mr. Ehrlichman, that J. Edgar Hoover was in any way soft on communism or national security, do you?" Senator Talmadge asked.

Mr. Ehrlichman responded that he did not mean that but that "everyone who knew of the director knew of his loyalty to his close friends."