

FBI

Past Dirty Tricks

Political dirty tricks, as White House spokesmen never tire of explaining, are hardly a novelty, nor is the use of the FBI to help play those tricks. According to a memo by William Sullivan, former No. 3 man at the FBI, the White House has a point. He says both Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson used the agency as a weapon against political opponents.

The memo was solicited by John Dean when he was still White House Counsel. Subsequently, he turned it over to the Ervin committee, which has not yet got around to making any use of it. Though it is still confidential, its contents were divulged to TIME.

Sullivan had personal reasons for writing his memo. He had apparently been friendly with a number of Nixon officials, and this brought him into conflict with J. Edgar Hoover, who fired him two years ago. Sullivan offered to testify on behalf of the Nixon Administration and "draw a very clear contrast" between its relationship to the bureau and that of previous Administrations. His material, he assured Dean, would put the current Administration in "a very favorable light."

Sullivan compiled his memo from FBI records of presidential requests for political help, though no records apparently exist of what the bureau did in response. Omitting the Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations, Sullivan concentrates on the two Presidents who made the most extensive political use of the FBI: Roosevelt and Johnson. "Complete and willing cooperation was given to both," he says.

F.D.R. used to ask the agency to dig up dirt on his enemies, and he called off investigations of his friends, notably Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, who had been accused of homosexual behavior. "Mrs. Roosevelt would also make some unusual requests," Sullivan cryptically writes.

But Johnson, says Sullivan, went much further than the Roosevelts. In "devious and complex" ways, he would "ask the FBI for derogatory information

of one type or another on Senators in his own Democratic Party who were opposing him. This information he would give to the Republican Senator [Everett] Dirksen, who would use it with telling effect." During the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings in 1966, White House Aide W. Marvin Watson told the FBI that the President was worried that "his policies are losing ground." He wanted the agency to check out the possibility that Senator William Fulbright and other committee members might be receiving information from Communists or other subversives. Noted Sullivan: "There was no evidence of this." At another time, the President asked the FBI to see if it could uncover Republicans he suspected of fomenting a riot in New York to embarrass the White House. When none turned up, Johnson asked again: "Weren't there at least one or two Republicans involved?" Sullivan: "Again the answer had to be no."

Lowly Salesman. For both the 1964 and 1968 Democratic national conventions, L.B.J. ordered the FBI to set up a special squad to be used by him in various ways. "The cover would be that it was a security squad against militants," wrote Sullivan. "Nothing of this scope had ever been done before or since to my memory."

Even a lowly insurance salesman provoked Johnson into calling on the FBI. In 1964, Don Reynolds testified before the Senate Rules Committee that he had been forced to buy advertising time on the LBJ family television station in exchange for selling the President a life insurance policy. Johnson asked the FBI to look into the possibility that Reynolds had been given \$25,000 for "bribery purposes for the Republican Party." The FBI ran a check but found nothing.

When L.B.J.'s aide Walter Jenkins was arrested in a homosexual incident on the eve of the 1964 election, the President barged the FBI with requests. He

told the agency to make a report stating that Jenkins had never engaged in a previous homosexual act and had posed no security problem. He also asked the bureau to establish a link between Jenkins and Barry Goldwater. "He advised the FBI that Goldwater would find it difficult to deny he knew Jenkins well personally." On the chance that Jenkins might have been framed, Johnson asked the bureau to trace any possible connections between the man discovered with Jenkins and two members of the Republican National Committee. Finally, the President ordered the agency to try to persuade Jenkins' doctor to make a statement saying that his patient suffered from a brain disease; the doctor refused on the basis of his examination.

Before the 1968 election, L.B.J. became convinced that the Republicans were trying to sabotage the Paris peace talks. Their agent, he figured, was Mrs. Anna Chennault, widow of the general who commanded the famed Flying Tigers in China during World War II; she was supposedly urging the South Vietnamese to boycott the peace talks. Johnson ordered the FBI to put a "physical surveillance on Mrs. Chennault for the purpose of developing political information which could be used against Mr. Nixon." Believing that G.O.P. Vice-Presidential Candidate Spiro Agnew was in touch with Mrs. Chennault, Johnson ordered records of his phone calls to her checked. But Agnew turned out not to be implicated.

"Incidentally," reported Sullivan, "Johnson would call the director from time to time to ask: 'Did you have a telephone tap on me when I was in the Senate?' He was always told we did not, which was the truth. But he never seemed to believe it."

Despite obvious prejudices and omissions, there is no reason to dispute the memo's basic thesis: White House misuse of the FBI antedates the Nixon Administration.



FBI MAN SULLIVAN TESTIFYING IN 1970 ON CAMPUS UNREST
Cooperation was complete, including the unusual requests.