

# A Critical Portrait of the FBI's Hoover

By William W. Turner

**D**URING the Calvin Coolidge administration, an obscure bureaucrat was appointed director of an equally obscure agency. In the 45 years since, J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI have become so legendary and powerful that they are virtually immune from normal democratic checks and balances.

"Hoover is more powerful than the President," the late Sen. Estes Kefauver once told me, and for his part Hoover seems to regard the nation's chief executives as mere transients.

In 1951 I went on the FBI payroll as a special agent. I was a brash 23 — a war veteran, Jesuit college graduate, and would-be professional athlete. A decade later, having worked practically every phase of the Bureau's operation from criminal to counter-espionage to wiretapping, I was a bit-the wiser — and still brash. With FBI credentials No. 6627 in pocket, I fired off letters to members of Congress seeking an investigation of the Bureau. The void between the image and the reality, I contended, was immense.

### Sense of Outrage

To Emmanuel Geller, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, I described the cult of personality: "It is indeed frustrating to work under conditions where every action (or lack of action) is predicated upon the potentiality of embarrassment to the Bureau." To Mafia-fighter Kefauver, I complained of false priorities: "Most agents would prefer to lock horns with organized crime but are saddled with wasting minor violations from local authorities for the purposes of statistics-gathering."

No citizen bucks city hall



**J. EDGAR HOOVER** (left), is the subject of William W. Turner's "Hoover's FBI: The Men and the Myth" (Sherbourne Press; \$6.95). The Marin county author of this book was a former special agent of the FBI.

much less the FBI without being moved by a certain sense of outrage, for the outcome is predictable — in my case being forced to turn in the credentials. But I was outraged that the Bureau should be run as the personal property of a vain and dictatorial man whose perspective was dimmed by his total lack of experience in the field.

Even as I penned the letters alleging that the FBI was still living in the Dilinger days, Alan Shephard was making the first U.S. suborbital space flight. And now almost ten years later we have landed men on the moon yet the Bureau remains substantively unchanged.

Exposition is, of course, a prelude to change. But publishing a no-holds-barred account of Hoover's FBI isn't exactly like doing a children's book. In 1964 a major publishing house sat on a first manuscript for a full year, a marathon act of novel contemplation. Even articles not in accord with the myth encountered trouble. When I submitted a piece to Saga magazine several years

ago, a pair of polite gentlemen showed up in the editorial offices in what the editor interpreted as a bald attempt at intimidation. And when I sent another article to Playboy, the scene was repeated, this time with the desired effect. "The magazine isn't vulnerable," ruled editor A. C. Spectorsky, "but the (Playboy) clubs are."

### Scope and Dimension

The subject was not everywhere taboo, but some publishers thought that Fred Cook's "The FBI Nobody Knows" of six years ago settled the matter of critical appraisal. The book was a fine job of reportorial craftsmanship, but lacked the inside knowledge that lends special authenticity. At least, Sherbourne Press of Los Angeles thought so when it gave me the green light. Yet I have the feeling that during the entire production process the editors had one eye over their shoulder looking for drop-in feeds.

As the 1970s begin, the major question is not who should succeed Hoover — Ramsey Clark or Sen. Ed-

ward Brooke, to cite two, would do nicely. The overriding consideration is what is to be the shape and dimension of the agency itself. Here is an outfit that mirrors to an unprecedented degree the idiosyncrasies and hang-ups of its director. And from its humble beginnings Hoover has built it into an independent monolith with some 17,000 employees, an annual budget of close to a quarter billion dollars, and license to pry into virtually every nook and cranny of American life. My recommendations include creating a separate unit to handle civil rights inquiries — this would answer the poster "Who will watch the watchmen?" — and defusing the dossier bomb by weeding out and destroying what isn't relevant to the here and now.

As Arthur S. Miller of the National Law Center has remarked, "At some time, the FBI will be recognized as a national police force — in fact if not in theory." That Hoover can hold that "justice is incidental to law and order" indicates that day is not far off.

### A Long Exposure

William Turner has been fighting — he would say exposing — Hoover's FBI ever since 1961. Previous to that, he was an FBI agent for ten years. He undoubtedly has personal grudges for alleged unfair treatment, but that is only a minor factor in the massive body of accusation he has brought against the Bureau as it has developed from its original modest beginnings in 1924.

Nearly half his book is devoted to the Director himself — as "man," politician, publicist, critic-fighter, crime fighter, Red hunter, and "titular head of American law enforcement." The rest is nearly evenly divided between an account of his own service and grievances, and a survey of the present FBI lit-

**HOOVER'S FBI: The Men and The Myth** By William W. Turner. Sherbourne; 352 pp.; \$6.95.

Reviewed by  
Miriam Allen deFord

**CARTHIA D. DE LOACH**, No. 3 man in the FBI hierarchy, has resigned. The No. 2 man, Clyde A. Tolson, is 70 years old. Director Hoover himself must approve every bit of furniture for the new FBI building, which will not be ready for occupancy until 1975.

All of which adds up to the conclusion, quite in accord with the contentions of Mr. Turner's indictment, that J. Edgar Hoover (born on New Year's Day, 75 years ago) has no intention whatever of resigning.

# 'Hoover's FBI'

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self, with suggestions for cutting it back to size.

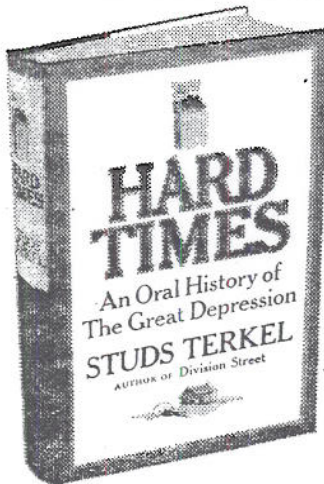
Ordinarily such a campaign, single-mindedly fixed on derogation of an individual, would arouse a backlash of defense and sympathy for the accused. Turner's book does not do so, any more than does any other prosecution backed by evidential fact. He is merely putting into definite words a realization already nebulous in all but the extreme right-wing mind. J. Edgar Hoover is the idol and the voice of what our young dissidents have taught us to call the Establishment.

To Turner and his disciples he is a megalomaniac and the organization he heads and embodies is dangerously near to becoming the Gestapo of a police state. Not that Hoover is consciously desirous of such an end: he and his followers are instead still living in a past that will not return, such a lack of understanding of the present menaces the future.

If this sounds exaggerated, and it does, there is plenty of backing for this view in Turner's book. And since the book appeared, the situation at Kent State University in Ohio, where students and faculty alike have protested against an FBI investigation of its tragedy which it claims to have been a "witch hunt," (with no reply from Hoover to the complaint) adds corroboratory evidence.

Turner's conclusion is that "the fabled far-hitting G-men" are really just bureaucrats whose main endeavor is to save face and placate "the southern segregationist-northern reactionary amalgam that has long formed Hoover's power base on Capitol Hill." Hence doctored statistics, "hypersensitivity to criticism," and consequent over-eagerness which too often result in a need to cover up incompetency. What he wants is for the FBI to stop playing policeman and go back to the purpose for which it was founded — investigation of crime, especially organized Big Crime.

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# Gutsy Fiction Objective Fiction

By Genevieve Stud

THE WAY Carol Evan tells it, her life is a mess. But she's no moaner. On a recent visit here she spoke about herself with the placid objectivity she says only \$20,000 of psychoanalysis can buy.

What gives her "tinges of doubt now is the same problem most first novelists have: How to write another book and prove to herself that the first one was not "an accident."

"Glad and Sorry Seasons" (Harper Magazine Press; \$5.95) "came easy," Miss Evan said burrowing into the deep leather-cushions at the St. Francis Hotel, as she drank a ginger ale. She is 40, frail looking at 5-ft. height, smiles easily with a waif-like sadness and thinks she has a "funny voice."

The novel, which she shyly admits is largely autobiographical, is the story of a 15-year love affair between a now "over-thirty" single woman and a married man. Happily, Miss Evan has developed this unpromising plot with gutsy humor, acute sensibility and a breezy style.

"A woman's novel" is what some key male reviewers are glibly labeling it. That gets an angry reaction from the author. She doesn't think there is such a thing even if she herself couldn't get through "Catch-22" — "a man's book."

Series of Letters

"Glad and Sorry Seasons" is written in the

movie called "The Moon Killers." I was about two of the white murderers — morbid as a child — nothing but mystery. I was anxious to see. There were about 100 testants, obese lac



CAROL EVAN

places like Anaheim the audience was gross, all the crowd the street, Nathan people.

"So who is the jokester who's the jokester?"

An Isolated House

Even though the book has been so many movies, Miss Evan stay around Los Angeles for the filming. How now are to find a little house somewhere Long Island, set up and try to write a novel.

She is not one of the writers "who have