

Durable F.B.I. Chief

John Edgar Hoover

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WASHINGTON, March 27— Standing at the President's right today as he made his dramatic television announcement of the arrest of the four Alabama suspects in the killing of Mrs. Viola Gregg Liuzzo was an authentic American folk hero. John Edgar Hoover, squat and broad shouldered, is the only chief in the Federal Bureau of Investigation had had in its more than 40-year history. The terror of spies, kidnapers, bank robbers and assorted bad men, he has been the incorruptible idol of generations of American youngsters and the symbol of the "honest cop" to millions of their elders.

He has become accustomed to the kind of praise that President Johnson heaped on him today. The spectacular feat of his nearly always anonymous special agents—the G-Men of countless magazine thrillers, movies and TV serials—in arresting the four suspects within hours of the crime, is the kind of performance he always demands and often gets.

But today's accolade probably had an extra filip of gratification for Mr. Hoover, who was 70 years old on New Year's Day. In the last 12 months a few cracks have appeared in the previously impenetrable armor of his public esteem. There have been reports that he was on the way out; that his prolonged and pervasive influence upon the F.B.I. had become a dead hand; that President Johnson had regretfully decided that he would have to be replaced.

Criticized Warren Report

Such reports received impetus last November when Mr. Hoover publicly criticized the Warren Commission Report on President Kennedy's assassination, for finding fault with the F.B.I.'s role in that tragedy. They were stimulated again when he told a group of women reporters that the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Negro civil rights leader, was "the most notorious liar in the country," for having said, according to Mr. Hoover, that F.B.I. agents in Georgia were not acting on Negroes' complaints because they were white Southerners.

These comments by Mr. Hoover came as a shock to many, since the F.B.I. chief has made a life-long virtue of circumspection and has always held reporters at arm's length, except when he



Associated Press Wirephotos

Accustomed to praise
 (Mr. Hoover listening to the President yesterday.)

denied in December that the President planned to ask for his resignation.

But the fact that the stories gained currency at all is something of a phenomenon in Washington, for few public figures have led such a charmed life in this respect as the F.B.I. director. For most of his 40 years in office, his words on crime, Communism, law enforcement and public morality have carried the weight of gospel on both sides of the aisle in Congress. And the bureau he heads has never been touched by the breath of scandal.

The F.B.I., which has been built in his own image, is generally acknowledged to be the finest police and investigative force in the world. It has greatly advanced the concept of law enforcement by introducing scientific methods and professional disciplines that have filtered down to precinct station houses in hundreds of cities across the country.

The F.B.I. has 6,300 special agents in 56 field offices, all of whom are qualified lawyers or accountants. A measure of the morale in this force is that it has one of the lowest turnovers of any Federal agency—less than 5 per cent a year. It is a toughly disciplined corps—fearless, resolute, orthodox in manner and thought, and with undeviating loyalty to Mr. Hoover.

John Edgar Hoover is a bachelor who does not smoke, who drinks sparingly and

now and then he would be photographed at a New York or Miami night club. But his modest social exertions have become even more infrequent as the years have added a touch of gray to his crinkly black hair and add inches to his girth.

John Edgar Hoover has spent all his adult life working for the Government. He was born in northeast Washington, attended a local high school and got his first job at 18 as a messenger in the Library of Congress. He took courses at night at George Washington University where he earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree.

Began in 1917

He went to work in the Department of Justice in 1917. After World War I he became a special assistant to Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and participated in the deportation proceedings against some of the alien "radicals" of that era.

In the Harding Administration, he was made an assistant director of the Bureau of Investigation. In 1924, after the Teapot Dome scandals had erupted, Attorney General Harland Fiske Stone asked Mr. Hoover to take over the bureau and rebuild it from top to bottom. He agreed on two conditions—that he would have a free hand and that there would be an end to politics in the agency. Mr. Stone agreed and the F.B.I. was on its way.

Throughout the succeeding 40 years, J. Edgar Hoover has run the F.B.I. with an iron hand. If some complain today that that hand has become a bit heavy and uncertain, it has built, nevertheless, an impressive monument to efficiency and integrity.