

## Judicial corruption: It didn't end with J. Edgar Hoover

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Calls for a cleanout of the U.S. judiciary system are growing by the day, from many different parts of the political spectrum. Last autumn, the *Washington Post* ran a six-part series cataloguing a horrifying pattern of prosecutorial abuses by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and its chief investigative arm, the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The *Post* was joined shortly after the Clinton inauguration by *Time* magazine, which ran a four-page story warning the new President that his greatest challenge would be reform of the Justice Department and FBI. Such ideologically diverse publications as *Forbes* and *Mother Jones* magazines have joined the drumbeat with recent cover stories; and Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.), chairman of the powerful House Judiciary Committee, has mooted the creation of a congressional select committee to probe corruption in the federal judicial system.

An ongoing probe of the Justice Department's handling of the Inslaw case, involving DOJ trickery, fraud, and deceit leading to the bankrupting of a small Washington computer firm, could lead to the appointment of an independent counsel to look into that scandal further.

And, most important, Congress and the Executive branch are being inundated with calls and letters from the United States and abroad, demanding a reversal of the judicial railroad of political economist Lyndon LaRouche, carried out on orders of the Bush White House over four years ago. LaRouche is now in his fifth year of a 15-year federal prison sentence, on totally invented conspiracy charges.

Over at the J. Edgar Hoover Building in Washington, D.C., FBI director William Sessions is facing an internal revolt, led by old-time Hooverites, who are reportedly furious about—among other things—his support for black and Hispanic agents battling against Bureau discrimination. On the eve of the presidential elections, Sessions earned the wrath of President Bush and Attorney General William Barr, for probing a DOJ coverup of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) banking scandal, to conceal U.S. and Italian government high-level collusion in the secret arming of Iraq. Barr counterattacked against Sessions by dredging



*J. Edgar Hoover and his homosexual lover Clyde Tolson (left), the deputy director of the FBI, live it up at Manhattan's Stork Club on New Year's Eve, 1936, with model Luisa Stuart. Later, she was shocked to see them holding hands in a limousine. Hoover and Tolson hobnobbed openly with the leading lights of organized crime.*

up a string of petty allegations about personal corruption by the FBI boss and his senior aides, based largely on leaks from Bureau "old boys" out to regain control over "The House That Hoover Built." President Clinton is now faced with the decision whether or not to fire Sessions, who is midway through a 10-year appointment.

In the midst of this swirl of corruption charges, new revelations about the FBI's legendary former director, John Edgar Hoover, have surfaced, providing a crucial framework for understanding how it was possible that the federal government's judicial and police functions could fall into such a state of malaise. Twenty-one years after Hoover's death, a small army of eyewitnesses has at long last come forward to recount horror stories about the FBI under Hoover. Thousands of pages of previously classified documents have been released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), corroborating much of the eyewitness reporting.

The *Boston Globe*, in an editorial published on Feb. 9 (the day that the Public Broadcasting Service televised an hour-long documentary about the Hoover era), appropriately warned its readers against thinking that the Hoover exposé was a matter of history: "The demystifying of Hoover should not be classified as an academic history lesson. It also offers a political moral. The better Americans understand how this crime fighter of legend was really a pawn of organized crime, the devoted civil servant a blackmailer of elected Presidents, the chief defender against subversion the ultimate subversive, the better they will know how to guard themselves

against the Hoovers of the future."

### **'Official and confidential'**

The source of many of the revelations is a just-published biography of J. Edgar Hoover by British investigative journalist Anthony Summers. Summers spent over four years gathering the material for *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993). The book is a damning indictment of Hoover and the entire FBI. It reveals that the federal agency responsible for combatting organized crime was led for 48 years by a man deeply tied to Meyer Lansky, the chairman of the board of the National Crime Syndicate. Hoover's marriage to the mob afforded him access to blackmail material on every top elected official in Washington, material he used frequently and ruthlessly. Yet Hoover himself was addicted to gambling and was a notorious homosexual. Photographs and other evidence of Hoover's sexual escapades were in the files of Meyer Lansky, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and its postwar successor, the CIA.

Although Summers does not provide any direct documentation, it is impossible to conceive that the Soviet intelligence services were not equally aware of Hoover's obscene sexual and gambling appetites. The implications of such Soviet access to the "Hoover File" should force a reassessment of some of the most significant events of the Cold War.

The picture that emerges from the Hoover story is a tragedy. Presidents, senators, and congressmen were ruled for

decades by fear and extortion. Some of the most profound decisions affecting the future of the United States were made, not on the basis of principles or the merits of argument, but were based upon secret police methods of coercion.

There is a strong implication in the Summers book that, when the traditional blackmail and extortion methods did not work, Hoover had no qualms about resorting to murder. Hoover's power struggle with the Kennedy brothers, John and Robert, was resolved only by assassins' bullets. An even stronger case is made by Summers that Hoover was in some way involved in the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. While it would be foolish, in light

of all the evidence now publicly available, to presume that Hoover was solely responsible for those three tragic murders, the vital role of the Hoover FBI in covering up the assassinations was so important, that it is hard to conceive that he was not at least a major player in setting up the executions in the first place.

Hoover's personal attitude toward the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King was demonstrated by the director's itinerary the days after John Kennedy and Martin Luther King were shot: He went to the race track, arm-in-arm with his sometime homosexual lover, FBI Deputy Director Clyde Tolson.

## Summers: Dismantle the FBI's blackmail files

*Author Anthony Summers released the following comments on his probe of J. Edgar Hoover on Feb. 16:*

Readers will be appalled, first, to discover for themselves that Hoover's abuses were every bit as bad as his critics claimed. And once they take that on board, I think it will dawn on them that, for decade after decade, this man succeeded in pulling the wool over the eyes of the American people. They will realize the leading role he played in using the threat of Communism within the United States—a threat which even he came to dismiss in private—to keep the nation in a state of panic. This was a pervasive fear, one which distorts American political life to this day. Readers will realize too that the man who held himself up as a God-fearing standard-bearer of morality, democracy and the American Way was in reality the very opposite—a hypocritical, corrupt man who institutionalized the suppression of essential freedoms. . . .

Hoover was able to pressure Presidents and make them aware of his power in such a way that even when they wanted to remove him, they couldn't. . . . Hoover created his own massive propaganda department at the Bureau, building himself up, through the '30s and '40s, as a national figure. As one President after another discovered, you can't just turn around and fire a national icon. More importantly, Hoover became an asset to those in power. Every President from Roosevelt to Nixon—Eisenhower came closest to being the honorable exception—used the FBI in ways that, if known at the time, would have seemed unacceptable to most citizens. By doing so, those leaders essentially delivered themselves into Hoover's hands. . . .

Newly released White House tapes show that the Nixon administration had been worrying—panicking even—

about what Hoover had in his files. Later, during the Watergate probes, investigators were told there had been plans to break into Hoover's home before he died—perhaps even to murder the man. The morning Hoover died, when the undertakers arrived, they found men swarming through his house, ransacking the place. Hours earlier, according to neighbors, two men were seen removing a heavy load wrapped in a quilt. Someone, evidently, thought the director had squirreled away some of his secrets at home. Meanwhile, despite orders to seal his office, many files were spirited away from FBI headquarters before Nixon's new acting director could get to them. Some were destroyed by Hoover's longtime assistant Helen Gandy. Others were reportedly kept by his aide and lover Clyde Tolson, and retrieved by the FBI when he in turn died.

### The lesson to be learned

A congressional inquiry failed to find out for sure what happened to the secret and sensitive files that were removed from headquarters. I suspect most were destroyed. But there's no doubt that the massive file systems still maintained at the FBI contain information that should never have been collected in a democratic society. Some of it would probably harm prominent people still alive, and certainly there is data that could smear the memory of revered politicians now dead. It is small consolation that much of the information the FBI gathered was baseless gossip. I would second the call Anthony Lewis made in the *New York Times* recently, that the Clinton administration should promptly force all agencies to disgorge their files on American citizens on request of the citizens involved. This should be the case anyway—had the Reagan and Bush administration not castrated the Freedom of Information Act. Finally, and most important, we must show that the lesson of Hoover's abuses has been learned. We should prohibit the investigation of Americans because of their beliefs or associations.

## The anal-sadistic personality

The strongest feature of Summers's biography of Hoover is the deep insight it provides into the director's personality, largely through the eyewitness accounts of people who were integral to Hoover's career and private life.

Born in 1895 and raised in Washington, D.C., Hoover was the youngest of four children of Anna and Dickerson Hoover. His mother was from a well-to-do Swiss Calvinist family. His father was a government printmaker who had a mental breakdown during World War I and spent much of the rest of his life in and out of mental institutions. He died of his mental illness in 1921, and Hoover never discussed his father, not even with his most intimate associates.

Hoover got his first job at the Department of Justice through family connections (his mother's cousin was a top DOJ attorney, soon to be appointed to a federal judgeship). Hoover's first substantive work involved the pursuit of aliens, particularly German aliens. It was the eve of the Red Scares and the Palmer Raids of the early 1920s. Hoover's zealous pursuit of aliens earned him a job with the FBI. His personal role in the 1919-20 Palmer Raids positioned him to win the directorship in May 1924.

Forty-eight years later, Hoover was still the FBI director, despite widespread belief throughout official Washington that he had become completely senile. Nearly deranged and prone to rambling diatribes about the "commie menace" and the sex lives of prominent Washingtonians, Hoover nevertheless remained in office. The key to his power was the private blackmail files he maintained on the nation's most powerful figures.

The night that Hoover died, his closest aides showed up at his home and at his office and carted off truckloads of those secret smut files. Their continued existence assured that the Hoover legacy would survive, even after the director himself was laid in the ground.

Through scores of interviews with longtime friends and enemies of the director, Summers established beyond a doubt that J. Edgar Hoover was a very particular brand of homosexual: the kind that in public maintained a fanatically puritanical code of morality and conducted brutal purges of suspected homosexuals in the government, while in private engaging in the most degrading and obscene acts.

One principal source of this information used by Summers was Susan Rosensteil, the wife of Lansky syndicate operative Louis Rosensteil. A Prohibition-era bootlegger, Rosensteil used his ill-gotten gains to found Schenley's Liquor Company. Despite his nominally legitimate business ventures, Rosensteil remained a front-man for the Lansky Syndicate, laundering black market money and handling the illegal bookmaking for some of America's power elite. According to his widow, Rosensteil was J. Edgar Hoover's bookie. He, along with former Joe McCarthy aide and mob lawyer Roy Cohn, was also Hoover's pimp.

In a televised interview with PBS's "Frontline" and in



FBI man "Fearless Fuzzdick" was the star of a 1970s cartoon series published in *New Solidarity* newspaper. The paper was shut down by the federal government in an "involuntary bankruptcy" action in 1987—later ruled illegal.

a sworn statement to Anthony Summers, Susan Rosensteil described two separate instances in which she was present at parties at the Plaza Hotel in New York City, where Hoover dressed in women's clothes and engaged in homosexual acts with young men.

The second incident described by Mrs. Rosensteil was particularly noteworthy: "A year later, according to Susan, Rosensteil asked her to accompany him to the Plaza again. She agreed, in return for an expensive pair of earrings from Harry Winston's, and the procedure was the same as on the previous occasion. Cohn ushered them into a suite to find Edgar, again attired in female finery. His clothing this time was even more outlandish. 'He had a red dress on,' Susan recalled, 'and a black feather boa around his neck. He was dressed like an old flapper, like you see on old tintypes.

" 'After about half an hour, some boys came, like before. This time they're dressed in leather. And Hoover had a Bible. He wanted one of the boys to read from the Bible. And he read, I forget which passage, and the other boy played with him, wearing rubber gloves. And then Hoover grabbed the Bible, threw it down and told the second boy to join in the sex.' "

The incident described by Susan Rosensteil took place in 1959, at the very height of Hoover's power. Just a few years earlier, Hoover had been initiated into the 33rd degree of the Southern Jurisdiction Scottish Rite Freemasonic Lodge. Hoover had been a Mason since the early 1920s, and many of his most trusted hands at the Bureau were also members of the secret society.

Louis Rosensteil was more than just a pimp and a bookie



*A rally in support of Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.), victim of the Justice Department's Operation Abscam, in March 1982. Williams was subject to an FBI "sting," framed up, and driven from office. Lyndon LaRouche called this the beginning of the end of representative self-government in America.*

for Hoover. So intimate were the two men, that Hoover deployed his chief FBI publicist, Lou Nichols, to work for Schenley's as vice president in charge of public relations. Rosensteil also set up the J. Edgar Hoover Foundation, and it was the foundation that financed the building of a memorial room to honor Hoover at the Scottish Rite Temple a few blocks from the White House.

### What Summers overlooks

On many occasions during Hoover's 48 years at the helm of the FBI, victims of his wrath drew the parallel between Hoover's FBI, Hitler's Gestapo, and Stalin's NKVD. His personality was certainly that of a Heinrich Himmler or a Lavrenti Beria.

Hoover was a known entity. His homosexuality was the worst kept secret in America. Every winter, he and Clyde Tolson vacationed at the southern California resort hotel of Texas oilmen Clint Murchison and Sid Richardson. They hobnobbed openly with well-known gangsters. The Lansky Syndicate covered all of Hoover's horse track bets. When he won, they paid him off, and when he lost, they "forgave" his debts. Hoover and Tolson attended the horse races at Del

Mar, sitting in a VIP box at the finish line. The owner of the box was the head of the Mattachine Society, one of the first homosexual organizations in America, founded by members of the Communist Party U.S.A. All of the regulars at Del Mar knew that anyone sitting in that box was a "fairy"—to use the terminology of the day. The Soviet intelligence services and the FBI coexisted inside the Communist Party and, according to some historians of the Cold War, used the CPUSA as a back channel for intelligence collusion.

In other words, even though Hoover's exploits were kept from the general public until long after his death in May 1972, his homosexuality, his protection of the mob, and his blackmailing of public officials were all well known among members of the establishment, East and West. To presume, as Summers does, that the key to the Hoover file was his blackmail by organized crime, is to miss the fundamental nature of the beast.

Hoover was installed in power at the point that the United States was falling under the domination of an Anglo-American oligarchical cabal, out to overturn everything positive that the United States had once stood for. The creation of the FBI, like the creation of the Federal Reserve System and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, all at the same time, signaled the consolidation of enormous power by this faction.

J. Edgar Hoover was groomed and elevated into the FBI director's job because of his obscene profile. He shaped an institution around that profile, and the institution carried forward that profile after Hoover's own demise.

### We told you so

In 1979, when the Carter administration Justice Department and FBI launched Operations Abscam and Brilab, Lyndon LaRouche warned that this was the beginning of the end of representative self-government in the United States. He called upon Congress and the labor movement to stand up and resist the blackmail and frameups by the federal police. They did not do so.

Earlier, in the mid-1970s, LaRouche and his associates had mocked the FBI and Hoover in a series of political cartoons recounting the tales of a mythical FBI man, "Fearless Fuzzdick." In several of the cartoon strips, FBI men were portrayed as transvestites.

Neither LaRouche nor any of his associates had been enlightened by Susan Rosensteil or any of the other witnesses to the Hoover drag shows. It was self-evident in the nature of the FBI's political operations that as individuals, the top FBI people were depraved.

The Summers book does an admirable job of documenting that depravity. What remains to be seen is whether the Congress, the White House, and the American people will draw the lessons of the secret life of J. Edgar Hoover, and launch a genuine effort to restore the Constitution and dismantle the police-state apparatus.