

Time To Strike Hoover's Name Off FBI Headquarters

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As sentiment grows to prosecute Vice President Dick Cheney and other designers of the Bush torture policies, it may seem a trifling matter to be concerned over whose name adorns the FBI headquarters building in Washington.

Yet the name J. Edgar Hoover represents a malignant streak of crime and corruption that is the very antithesis of impartial law enforcement, and if the Obama administration is going to clean house there's no better time than the present to dump Hoover's name where it belongs, on the garbage heap of history.

Six years ago, Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.), chairman of the House Government Reform Committee, led a futile charge to expunge Hoover's name on grounds Hoover "clearly abused his role as director of the FBI". Burton said, "Symbolism matters in the United States, and it is wrong to honor a man who frequently manipulated the law to achieve his personal goals."

He described Hoover as "a man who threw everything out the window, including the lives of innocent men, in order to get what he wanted." Hoover knowingly put innocent people behind bars, Burton said, referring to the 30 years Joseph Salvati spent in the slammer for a 1968 murder in Boston Hoover knew he didn't commit.

Among Hoover's foul deeds were manufacturing lies about people and leaking them to the press, the infiltration of legitimate organizations such as the ACLU, routine criminal breaking-and-entering(black bag) jobs without court warrants, attempts to get the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to commit suicide, bugging of the hotel rooms of King, Eleanor Roosevelt, and others to obtain prurient information, threatening to blackmail presidents, and aggressive attempts to derail the civil rights movement, all documented in Richard Hack's comprehensive "Puppetmaster: The Secret Life of J. Edgard Hoover"(New Millennium Press).

That Hoover was put in charge of the investigation into the murder of Rev. King is incredible as he must be regarded as one of the prime suspects for King's assassination. Hoover despised King to the point of madness. Along with a tape recording made from bugging his hotel room, Hoover sent King a letter that called King a "dissolute, abnormal moral imbecile" and warned, "King, like all frauds, your end is approaching." The letter repeated the phrase "you are done" over and over and urged King to commit suicide: "There is but one way out for you. You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation." Hoover even sent a copy of a hotel room tape recording to King's office, where it was read by his wife.

The day after King's murder, Hoover enjoyed himself at the race track, just as he did on the

days immediately following the assassinations of President Kennedy and his brother, Robert, the Democratic Senator from New York. His hatred for RFK, the former Attorney General and his one-time boss, was such that, according to Hack, Hoover timed a press release announcing the capture of James Earl Ray for the King murder to be issued during Kennedy's funeral!

"Hoover routinely used the U.S. mail to send forged letters and publicity releases aimed at embarrassing the (civil rights) militants and their agenda," particularly the Black Panthers, Hack writes. Because actress Jean Seberg, star of the 1957 film "Saint Joan," gave money to the Panthers, Hoover ordered his Los Angeles bureau to inform a Hollywood gossip columnist that she had been made pregnant by a Panther leader. The devastated actress miscarried and committed suicide in 1979. Hoover did his damndest to conflate the civil rights movement with Communism because several leaders had a former Communist on staff. No matter the other half million or so civil rights activists scorned the Kremlin.

As FBI director, Hoover long maintained there was no "national crime syndicate" in America. This at a time when, according to Hack, Hoover "had met socially" with mobsters Frank Costello, Meyer Lansky, Sam Giancana, and Santos Trafficante, "representing the heads of the New York, Las Vegas, Chicago, and Miami Mafia families."

Some claim Hoover covered for the Mob because it had compromising photos of him engaged in sex with underage boys. Others alleged the Mob gave Hoover inside information on fixed horse races. While these allegations may be disputed, it is a matter of record Hoover and his FBI deputy and companion Clyde Tolson accepted all manner of freebees that added up to big bucks. One of these was a bungalow reserved for them at the Del Charro hotel in La Jolla, Calif., near the Del Mar race track. "The Bureau chief and his assistant lacked for nothing—except a bill, since (oil baron Clint) Murchison happily picked up the tab for the pair's annual monthlong stay," Hack writes.

Hack also says Murchison and Texas wildcatter Sid Richardson "included both Hoover and Tolson in their oil exploration investments, promising to pay dividends if their wells produced, and protect the pair from losses if the wells did not."

Whether Hoover had too much unsavory information on them in his files, the presidents under whom he worked, and some of whom he blackmailed, declined to fire him despite his egregious conduct. Majority Leader Hale Boggs (D-La.) once declared on the floor of the House: "When the FBI taps the telephones of Members of this body and of Members of the Senate, when the FBI stations agents on college campuses to infiltrate college organizations, when the FBI adopts the tactics of the Soviet Union and Hitler's Gestapo, then it is time—it is way past time, Mr. Speaker—that the present Director no longer be the Director...I ask again that Mr. (John) Mitchell, the Attorney General of the United States, have enough courage to demand the resignation of Mr. Hoover."

One measure of the political courage of U.S. presidents is that Hoover died in office, vengeful dictator of a key Federal agency sworn to impartiality that he twisted to fit his own malign prejudices. The challenge remains for a new administration headed by an authority on the U.S. Constitution to remove the last vestiges of dishonor from the FBI headquarters building that is the name "J. Edgar Hoover."

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