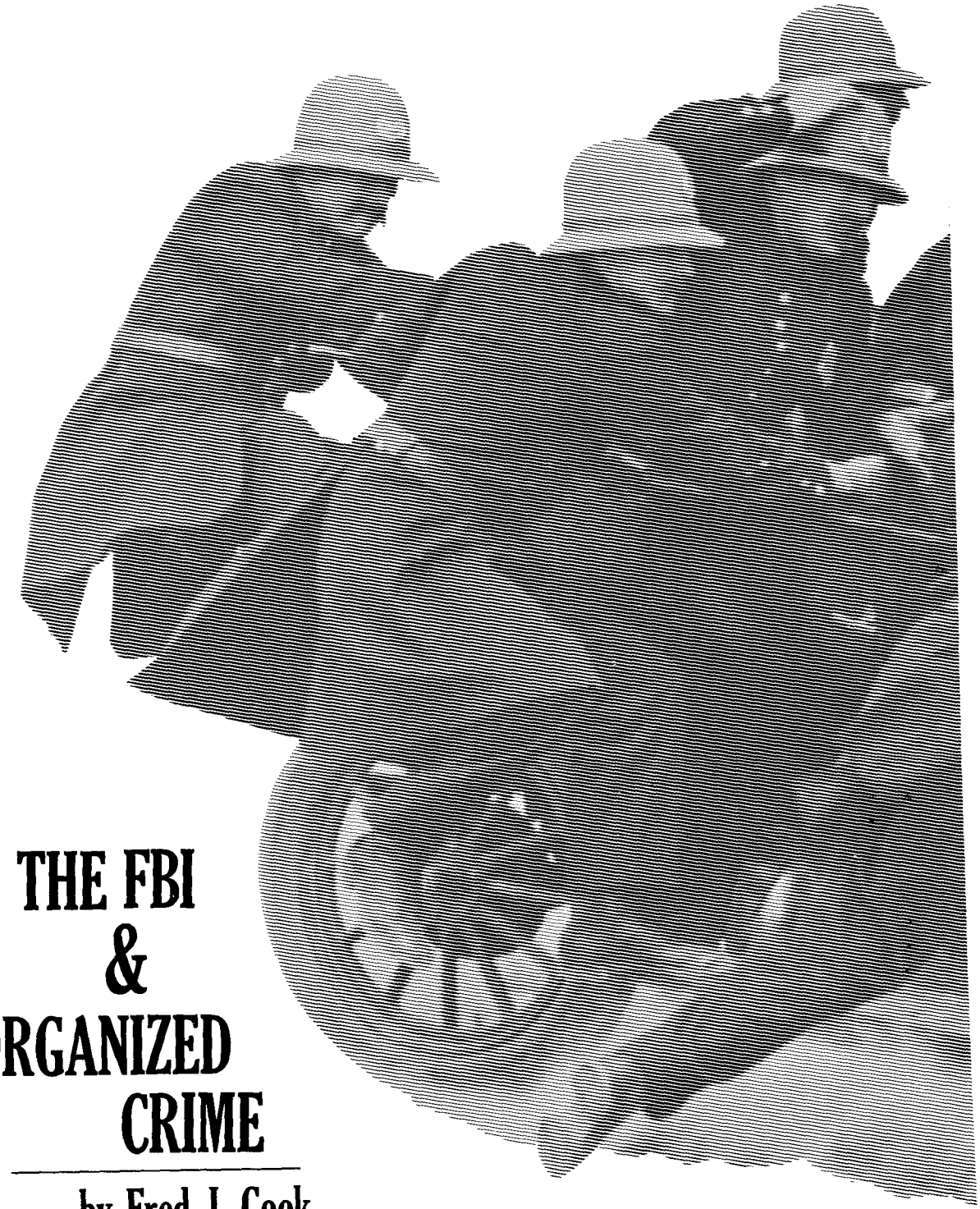


THE FBI & ORGANIZED CRIME

by Fred J. Cook

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE RESULTS would have been no different if the Keystone Kops had been helping on the case.

A team of Federal prosecutors and hard-bitten New York City detectives had carefully set their legal traps to snare a large underworld syndicate based in Harlem. The syndicate, an important cog in the national narcotics traffic, was engaged in other enterprises that would make it a prize catch, worth all the dreary hours of gathering evidence to justify arrests.

The painstaking police work was about to pay off – then a Federal Bureau of Investigation agent arrived on the scene.

Clean-cut and confident, the FBI man casually took his stance by a lamp post directly across from the syndicate headquarters. There he leaned industriously, as if his mission in life was to support that lamp post.

The syndicate's business immediately ground to a halt. No arrests were made.

"He was completely obvious, of course, to everyone in the neighborhood because FBI agents all *look* like FBI agents," the head of the frustrated Federal team moaned later. "This kind of thing used to happen all the time. We would get calls from police in the middle of an investigation that an FBI agent was in the neighborhood trying to survey premises we were watching – and making himself completely obvious to everybody.

"When it comes to scientific detection, the FBI is terrific. Take car thefts, bank robberies, crimes in which fingerprints or ballistics evidence or other scientific details are important – and the FBI is in its element. But not in surveillance. There they are a complete flop."

The incident of the FBI agent and the Harlem lamp post helps to illuminate what is perhaps the most glaring sin of omission in the long and colorful scroll of America's sacrosanct police agency and its infallible director, J. Edgar Hoover. Through long and assiduous propaganda, the vast majority of Americans have been taught to revere the FBI as the nemesis of evil in all its forms. Generally overlooked is one hard but inescapable fact:

The FBI's vaunted record has been built against second and third stringers – it has never successfully tackled the real overlords of crime.

What are the infamous names that decorate the FBI totem pole in its war against crime? Most date back to the 1930s. They are names like John Dillinger, "Pretty Boy" Floyd, "Machine Gun" Kelly, Alvin Karpis, "Baby Face" Nelson. All were desperadoes, certainly – but were any of them real underworld kingpins, commanding rackets worth millions of dollars, corrupting entire cities and states, running invisible governments that allotted territories and dealt in life and death? Here we draw the line between the trigger-happy wild men of gangdom and those with the real brains and the real power – men like Al Capone, Charles (Lucky) Luciano, Frank Costello, Joe Adonis, Albert (the Lord High Executioner) Anastasia, Meyer Lansky, Tony Accardo, Buggsy Siegel, Jack Dragma, Tony Bender, Vito Genovese. Look well at that random list. Except for one minor rap on the knuckles given to Capone, not a name in the lot appears on the FBI's well-publicized record.

Yet, peculiarly enough, the very years that saw these men acquire such awesome power were the same years that saw J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI grow from obscurity to holy household legends. The two developments danced hand in hand down the decades. It seemed to occur to no one, in the blind idolatry that has been lavished on the bureau and its all-powerful director, that these were most curiously incompatible partners for such a minuet.

On the one hand, there was the constant extension of gangland power, bankrolled by some $10 billion in annual gambling profits and extending into broad fields of business, into Wall Street, hotels, motels, vending machines, real estate, oil. On the other hand, there was the equally steady extension of the arm and authority of the FBI until it reached the point where today it has more than 6,000 agents and consumes more than half the annual budget of the entire Justice Department. It seems only fair to ask: Just what has the FBI been doing all these years in prosecuting the one crime war that really matters – the war against the true lords of the syndicate underworld?

The answer, well documented by the record of the decades, is that the FBI not only has done precious little itself, but it has actually thrown roadblocks in the paths of other agencies attempting to mount all-out war against syndicated crime.

The best illustration of this may be found in the events that followed the notorious Apalachin conference of Mafia dons in mid-November, 1957. The mere fact of that conference, held in the hilltop home of the late Joseph Barbara in the upper New York countryside, was itself a testament both to the reality of syndicate organization and the woeful inadequacy of Federal law enforcement. For, except for the alertness of a local state police sergeant, the Mafia leaders would have assembled at Apalachin, carved up the racket territories of the nation and then gone their separate ways – and no one on any level of law enforcement would have been the wiser.

Yet the size of the Apalachin gathering and the importance of the gang rulers who participated made it truly a national Congress of the Mafia. More than sixty racketeers were assembled. They came from the East, from the Midwest, from California, Florida, Texas, Cuba and Italy. Two were believed to be emissaries recently returned from conference with "Lucky" Luciano, the

---

FRED J. COOK, *author of eleven books, including* The FBI Nobody Knows, *is a three-time New York Newspaper Guild's Page 1 Award winner.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expatriated ruler of the Eastern Mafia who had become the brains of the international narcotics racket. Others had figures on the underworld's investment in Cuban gambling casinos set up by the Mafia with the approval —if not the active partnership—of the dictatorial Batista regime. Among those present were Joseph (Joe Bananas) Bonanno, whose racket empire stretched from Brooklyn to Arizona and whose "kidnaping" on the eve of a Federal grand jury appearance was to be one of the mysteries of 1964, and chunky Vito Genovese, the most dreaded name in the Eastern Mafia, a man whose alleged ability to pass death sentences even in prison was later to lead to the Joe Valachi "Cosa Nostra" revelations. More than $300,000 in "talking cash" jingled in the pockets of these underworld lords whose Cadillacs and Chrysler Imperials turned Joe Barbara's driveway and yard into a parking lot.

THE LAW would have to be blind indeed to remain ignorant of such a massive rallying of the clan. Yet Apalachin would never have hit the headlines (later and equally large gatherings did not), had it not been for the alertness of Sergeant Edgar Croswell, a New York state trooper who had seen Joseph Barbara beat murder raps with an ease that convinced him Barbara was a power in the blood brotherhood of the Mafia. Croswell had made Barbara his special project. He kept a hawk-like eye on the gang lord who lived such an apparently peaceful life in the hills of Apalachin, and it was this intense interest that led him to spot the well-heeled racket chiefs and to break up their deliberations.

The shock of Apalachin reverberated across the nation. For years there had been debate: Was there a Mafia or wasn't there? The Federal Bureau of Narcotics, whose experts had personally infiltrated narcotics rings and unravelled their inner mechanisms, argued passionately that the Mafia, originally a secret terroristic Sicilian society, had been transplanted to America and had become the force binding together huge criminal cartels that operated on a national and even international basis. J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI had scoffed at this conception as being the figment of some fiction writer's fevered imagination and had refused to believe the fact of interstate, syndicated crime. Now, at Apalachin, the reality had been exposed for all to see.

The *New York Herald-Tribune*, in shocked words, proclaimed editorially that Apalachin proved the reality of "the invisible government" of crime. It called for the nation to do something. The FBI, the *Herald-Tribune* felt, should be given the job, and it theorized that the only reason the FBI hadn't tackled it previously was that it must have lacked men and money. But this really should have been no obstacle. "Congress has never yet refused anything J. Edgar Hoover said he had to have," the *Herald-Tribune* noted accurately. "Let him demand the funds to take on this job. Let Congress provide them, plus stronger laws on national crime."

Hoover, hardly a reticent man, rarely needs such prodding. On his own, over the years, he has envisioned any number of menaces—the Communist menace, the juvenile delinquency menace, the treachery of hitchhikers and even (as in his recent Martin Luther King "notorious liar" interview) the danger of "soft" courts. He has intoned the dangers of walking in New York's Central Park, of listening to civil rights agitators. Yet the keen-eyed man who perceived all these threats just wasn't seeing the big-league crime menace. Even with the *Herald-Tribune's* encouragement, he uttered no outraged cries, mounted no righteous crusade. Instead of a bellow for action, only sickly silence mantled Hoover's command post in the Justice Department.

Nevertheless, something had to be done. Both the McClellan Senate Rackets Committee and President Eisenhower's Attorney General, William Rogers, decided that Apalachin was too huge a fact of life to be ignored. McClellan held hearings, and Rogers created in the Justice Department a new organization he called the Special Group on Organized Crime. He named to head it Milton R. Wessel, a young and energetic former assistant United States attorney.

Wessel quickly discovered a hard fact that remains true to this day—that there simply does not exist, on any level of Federal law enforcement, a central clearing house for information on organized crime. Whatever information the FBI amasses, the FBI preserves for the FBI. You can quickly check the fingerprints of a common thug in the FBI's massive fingerprint file, but there exists no similar source to correlate and put together the information on the activities of multi-millionaire gang lords. So it had been reasonable for a Joe Bananas to hop a plane in Tucson, for other emissaries to take

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wing from Cuba, from Florida, from California—all headed for Apalachin—without law enforcement on any level being aware of what was happening. A local police chief might know that one of his town's most notorious citizens had left on a little trip, but no one could know that similar characters all over the nation were traveling at the same time. Wessel quickly spotted this vast crater of ignorance that existed at the very heart of the Federal law enforcement system, and he began to advocate a permanent, central bureau into which all information on organized crime from every section of the nation could be funneled.

When he became dedicated to such a sensible idea, he immediately found himself in bitter conflict with J. Edgar Hoover.

Wessel, it should be said, had gone out of his way to avoid antagonizing the all-powerful FBI director. He realized that he was heading a new and untried group of investigators. He could not expect that older and established agencies—especially in the bureaucracy of Washington where each bureau is jealous of its rights and suspicious of competitors—would automatically welcome his novitiates and instantly unveil to them all secrets. "I always felt that we had to prove ourselves first," Wessel says, "and in the end, after we had, we did get a lot of cooperation from Hoover."

Some of Wessel's subordinates, eager to get on with the business of fighting the crime syndicates, took a less detached view of the FBI's role. One of them, Gerard L. Goettel, wrote that the special crime group had to fight not only mobsters, but bureaucrats in entrenched positions in Washington. "The FBI was the coolest agency of all," he declared. "J. Edgar Hoover, at a national meeting of United States attorneys, decried the need for 'special groups' to fight organized crime."

When the Special Group began to investigate Apalachin, it found everywhere it went that the FBI had been there first, Goettel added. But the FBI, not being able to prove the exact nature of the criminal conspiracy, had quietly filed away its reports. When the Special Group asked for them, "the G-men acted as if they had never heard of Apalachin. This aloofness was due in part to their mistrust of us. It also reflected an internal dilemma: the FBI has long taken the position officially that large criminal syndicates do not exist—or if they do, they are a state and local law-enforcement problem."

Equally outspoken was Richard V. Oglivie, who headed Wessel's Midwestern office and directed the first successful prosecution (later to be reversed on appeal) of Tony Accardo, the Chicago successor to Al Capone. Oglivie said bluntly:

"Hoover was very cool to the whole idea of the Attorney General's Special Group. He ordered the FBI files, containing the very information we needed on organized crime, to be closed to us . . . Criticizing Hoover is a dangerous thing for anyone to do. But honesty compels me to say that Hoover's ideas are sadly behind the times. . . . The FBI is still organized to fight a crime pattern of the '20s and '30s. It is not set up to do battle with the criminal syndicate—the organized conspiracy that drains $22 billion a year from the United States."

This archaic system, this lack of coordination and the gap in vital knowledge that results, have produced an atmosphere conducive to more Apalachins; indeed, since the much-publicized conclave in 1957, several more such high-level meetings have been held. In each instance, the mob delegates met, caucused, allotted territories, issued murder decrees. Then, having transacted all the vital business of "the invisible government," they disbanded before law enforcement agents at any level became aware they had even met.

One of the largest of these post-Apalachin gatherings, undisturbed by the presence of a Sergeant Croswell, was held in Worcester, Mass., on December 8, 1959. Attorney General Edward J. McCormack, of Massachusetts, subsequently testified about it before the New York State Commission of Investigation. He called it a "Little Apalachin," but actually, in numbers, it was a much larger gathering than the Apalachin conference of 1957. Some 150 delegates from the Northeastern states took over 15 rented rooms in a Worcester hotel and kept the switchboard alive throughout the night with telephone traffic to other conferees in New York. When the mobsters departed the following day, none of the hotel beds had been slept in, and the hotel bill of more than $600 was casually paid. When McCormack and state investigators picked up the cold trail, they learned enough about the deliberations in Worcester to believe that gangland boundaries had been realigned

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and that two murders – one in Hartford, Connecticut, and one in Youngstown, Ohio – stemmed directly from the decisions taken in those Worcester hotel rooms.

Such evidence of a still-flourishing "invisible government" prompted almost everyone, except J. Edgar Hoover, to conclude that a permanent organization was needed to combat syndicated crime. The McClellan Committee toyed with the idea of setting up a permanent Crime Commission, a body that would gather and correlate all information on racket leaders and would hold periodic hearings, keeping a spotlight focused on the underworld menace. The idea had a lot of support in Congress. One of its most influential backers was the late Senator Estes Kefauver, whose own historic investigation had documented the reality and threat of interstate underworld organizations. A former Federal agent who worked closely with Kefauver recalls helping the Senator prepare a joint resolution that would have provided for the centralization of all criminal records possessed by the Federal government – a proposal that promptly ran into a stone wall in the Justice Department and in Congressional committees, both areas where Hoover's word was paramount. As a result, the Kefauver bill was quietly strangled in committee.

Wessel took another tack. His Special Group quickly became the victim of bureaucratic infighting. Starting with barren files, it was allotted less than two brief years of life in which to gather information and atone for the delinquencies of decades. It spurred a number of prosecutions, deporting some mobsters, jailing others. But its two most notable successes – the conviction of some twenty of the Apalachin conspirators and of Tony Accardo for income tax evasion – were erased on appeal. Wessel, who intended to return to the practice of law, was concerned lest all that his unit had achieved should be undone, and he recommended the creation within the Justice Department of a small, special unit devoted to keeping track of developments in the world of syndicated crime. Support came from law enforcement officers across the nation.

The issue came to a head in early October, 1960, when the International Association of Police Chiefs held its annual convention in Washington, D.C. A special committee of the association, headed by Police Chief Edward J. Allen, of Santa Ana, California, in the past one of Hoover's favorites, sponsored a resolution calling for the establishment of a Federal nerve-center on organized crime. Many police chiefs were sympathetic and inclined to the view expressed by Captain James E. Hamilton, of the Los Angeles police department, that "the definite lack has been on a Federal level in furnishing local departments information as to the movements of national figures." But Hoover, who evidently saw such a new agency as a competitor and a threat to his exclusive rule in the field of law enforcement, threw his tremendous prestige into the fray.

APPEARING BEFORE the police chiefs, he claimed to see in the proposal the specter of a national police force – a "Gestapo" that might rob all of us of our liberties.

"The persons who endorse these grandiose schemes," he said, "have lost sight of some very basic facts. America's compact network of state and local law enforcement agencies traditionally has been the nation's first line of defense against crime. Nothing could be more dangerous to our democratic ideals than the establishment of an all-powerful police agency on the Federal scene. The truth of these words is clearly demonstrated in the experience of nations ruled by ruthless tyrants both here in the Western Hemisphere and abroad."

That did it. FBI propagandists, circulating at the convention, pressured the assembled police chiefs. The Committee on Organized Crime, which Chief Allen had headed, was deactivated and Allen, long a devout worshipper of Hoover, was almost read out of the lodge. The Allen-Wessel proposal for a Federal nerve-center on criminal information died.

John F. Kennedy, then President, and brother Bobby, Attorney General, listened to Hoover and gave in – although both had been on the McClellan Committee when the proposal got its first push.

Law enforcement was right back in the splintered state in which Wessel had found it more than three years earlier.

To all of this there was to be added one significant

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

postscript. Hoover, who has one of the most powerful egos ever to flourish in the Washington hothouse of egos, never forgets a critic. And so, in the spring of 1961, he seized the chance to square accounts with the members of Wessel's Special Group.

The occasion was his annual appearance before the friendly sounding-board of the House Appropriations Committee, whose members sometimes ask the revered Director of the FBI whether he is sure he has asked for *enough* funds to meet the demands of his bureau. This time, Rep. John J. Rooney, New York Democrat and one of Hoover's fervent admirers, asked a leading question: Would the chief of the FBI like to comment about the performance of Wessel's Special Group?

Hoover snapped at the chance to square accounts with Goettel, Oglivie and the always diplomatic Wessel. Criticism of the FBI for lack of cooperation, said Hoover, had been "unwarranted and unfair." He added: "My only conclusion is that some individuals look at . . . TV too frequently and absorb some of the fantastic panaceas as to how to solve *local crimes*." (Italics added.) The Wessel group, he said, had indicated by its activities that "their chief preoccupation is the quest for nest-feathering publicity." They had asked the FBI to assign special agents to the group "to be used on 'fishing expeditions' " but . . . "obviously, we have neither the manpower nor the time to waste on such speculative ventures."

It's basic that if you don't embark on fishing expeditions you don't catch fish. But this didn't matter. What registered with press and public was that Hoover had spanked those Wessel Boy Scouts – and spanked them good, like a firm father should.

Such performances seem calculated to deter the sincere critic, the dedicated fighter of crime. Faced with the prospect of such a withering counter fire, few law enforcement officers feel eager to challenge publicly Hoover's thesis that we live in the best of all possible worlds and that nothing can be done better than it is now being done. One of the few challengers has been Police Chief William Parker, of Los Angeles. On one occasion Parker traced Hoover's opposition to a national crime nerve-center back to 1952, when the police chiefs were considering approval of a resolution calling for a national crime commission.

"The FBI shows great interest when stolen property moves across a state line," Chief Parker said, "but little interest when some criminal or criminal mobs move from state to state. I strongly believe crime will destroy America if something isn't done."

Asked whether he thought the FBI could handle the crime-busting job, Chief Parker replied bluntly: "They could, but they have shown no indication that they will or that they want to."

Such, then, is the picture of the FBI's failure to solve, even to tackle, the crime problem that matters most. It is a performance that is the very reverse of the public image of Hoover and his FBI as infallible in combatting every aspect of crime.

How did Hoover and his men get their halos? What causes their foot-dragging?

In capsule, here are the major reasons for the intertwining of fact and fiction about the FBI:

An original misconception – Hoover early embraced the idea that the gangsters of the Prohibition Era, seeking a new racket after repeal, would turn to kidnaping. It was a totally erroneous conception, but this, of course, has never been acknowledged.

The conviction scorecard – One of Hoover's major propaganda ploys is the oft-trumpeted assertion that the FBI achieves something like 98 per cent of convictions. This is a cardinal prop in the infallibility legend. The pretense can be maintained only by a flood of convictions – and these are most easily obtained against two-bit criminals, not against multi-millionaire underworld lords with their slick lawyers.

FBI personnel – As a result of Hoover's selection policies, his personnel is not best suited to undercover work. Hoover's fetish for clean-scrubbed, 100 per cent American types with college degrees has produced a generally high-class bureau; but when it comes to infiltrating underworld rings, the hard-boiled local detective or narcotics agent, capable of looking as if he has just rolled out of a rumpled bed after a hard night with a bottle and a blonde, is often more effective.

The influence of mob money – Dirty dollars are heavy in politics, and very possibly Hoover, a consummate bureaucratic politician, recognizes their long reach and does not look for trouble. He leads a charmed life with Congresses of all political complexions. Could his life remain so charmed if his FBI showed a crusading zeal to smash the mobs whose contributions help to swell the political war chests?

Each of these propositions bears fuller examination.

It was clear to virtually everyone in law enforcement in the 1930s that repeal of Prohibition would not solve the racket problem. Bootlegging had made crime big-league. Underworld resources soared into the hundreds of millions of dollars. It was obvious that mob leaders, possessed of the kind of bankrolls even a Rockefeller might envy, weren't going suddenly to reform; they would still be crooks – and they would be looking for new rackets. Hoover, who had the ear of Franklin D. Roosevelt's first Attorney General, Homer Cummings, plumped strong for the idea that the mobsters would turn to kidnaping. He and Cummings bellowed loudly to the nation that they were going to get the rulers of the underworld. By this, they meant the mobster-kidnapers.

The mid-30s, as a result, were the glory period of the FBI – the epoch of shoot-downs with desperadoes in the best Wild West fashion. Hoover adopted the tactic of proclaiming the bad man highest on his list at the moment as Public Enemy No. 1, and hardly had a thug achieved this distinction before he tumbled face

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down under the avenging fire of FBI agents. It was all heady, headline stuff, and Hoover and the FBI have been striding across the nation in ten-league boots ever since. Only one unpublicized fact marred this panorama of flawless heroism: the Public Enemies No. 1 who bit the dust weren't the Number Ones at all.

ALL THE TIME Hoover and the FBI were chasing the likes of Dillinger and Karpis, the men who represented the much greater menace, delightfully out of the headlines, went about setting up the enduring "invisible government" of crime. This government dates almost certainly from May, 1929, when Frank Costello, flanked by Joe Adonis and facing Al Capone, called Mafia chieftains from all over the nation to conclave in an Atlantic City hotel. The decisions taken there led to the formation and active functioning of that awesome underworld power structure known as the Combination or the Syndicate, an amalgamation of the various Mafia "families" and other underworld baronies into one close-knit enterprise, with rackets allotted, territories defined. Its aim was nothing so crude and penny ante as kidnaping, but the commercial, never-ending rackets worth literally billions of dollars in annual revenues—gambling in all its forms, loan-sharking, narcotics.

Even at the time, there were some who perceived the flaw in the Hoover-Cummings conception of the true underworld menace. In September, 1935, Milton S. Mayer wrote perceptively in *Forum:*

"Kidnaping is largely an amateur sport. Unlike bootlegging, it is desperate and dangerous. It attracts two kinds of men: nuts and the kind of person who shoots up banks. It does not attract the kind of man who peddles illicit goods or murders fellow hoodlums for hire under the tolerant eye of both police and public. 'Good' criminals, the foundation blocks of the underworld, avoid it because it's a one-shot racket; kidnaping is easier to solve than any other major crime; the life of a 'kidnaping gang' has never been shown to be more than one kidnaping."

Time has proved the validity of this analysis. The famous kidnapers were not the big names of the underworld. Bruno Richard Hauptmann was an impoverished carpenter; Angelo John LaMarca, executed for the kidnap-murder of the Weinberger baby on Long Island in the late 1950s, was a penniless laborer driven to the border of insanity by the crushing pressure of debts. The record makes it clear that the really dread powers of gangdom—Luciano, Genovese, Costello, Adonis, Anastasia—never were so stupid as to mess with a cheap thug's crime like kidnaping.

The kind of crimes and criminals Hoover has made primary targets has much to do with the statistical numbers game in which he takes such delight. For decades now, Hoover has claimed that the FBI scores as high as 97 or 98 per cent of convictions in the cases it handles. This much-ballyhooed contention received some decidedly rough handling on the only occasion on which it was subjected to thorough critical analysis. That was back in 1937, when the Brookings Institution made a comparison of the effectiveness of the Federal police agencies for a Senate Committee headed by Harry F. Byrd, conservative Virginia Democrat. Brookings researchers found that the FBI's conviction record for 1935-36 was only 72.5 per cent and that the Bureau, in effectiveness, trailed the Narcotics Bureau, the Secret Service, the Alcohol Tax Unit, the Post Office Inspection Service and the Internal Revenue Bureau. The only agency it outranked was the Customs Bureau.

The type of crimes that weighted even these statistics showed clearly in the Brookings report. It found that, in fiscal 1936, the FBI reported 3,905 convictions—and that 1,570 of these, or 40.2 per cent, involved thieves who took stolen cars across state lines. The years have not changed the situation. Every year, when Hoover

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

goes before Congressional appropriations committees, he makes a great play about the number of cases handled, the high percentage of convictions, the amount of stolen property recovered and its value. These last figures always show that the FBI represents a great fiscal bargain; for, no matter how much it costs, it always "saves" millions more by its recoveries of hijacked goods and stolen cars.

In both of these fields, the Bureau is greatly assisted by local police and industrial detective agencies, outside helpers who are frequently responsible for FBI "successes." Apportioning credit is secondary, however, to the vital issue – the relative importance of the kind of criminals the FBI chases.

William W. Turner, a veteran FBI agent who received many commendations before he fell from grace and was dismissed after more than ten years' service, has estimated that "a large portion" of the FBI's convictions represent "misdemeanor offenses, not felonies." The stumblebums of crime are easy to convict. "These people usually can't afford attorneys when they're caught," Turner explains. "They usually figure, well, the FBI's got me, and they invariably plead guilty – with few exceptions." Another ex-FBI agent recently told *Newsweek:* "The Bureau likes sure things. It likes a statistic. Car cases are open and shut . . . J. Edgar doesn't want anything he feels the Bureau can falter on."

Most persons leveling such accusations at the FBI prefer to remain anonymous, but Warren Olney III is different. Olney was Assistant Attorney General from 1953-57 and headed the Criminal Division which prosecutes the cases investigated by Hoover's FBI. Olney, in a position to know the most intimate facts, bluntly terms Hoover's statistics "hogwash." The FBI's car theft data is a case in point, Olney feels. "In at least half, and possibly more of these cases," he says, "the thieves are arrested and the cars returned by local officials."

Olney adds that the FBI sometimes balks at taking on a case unless it feels certain of breaking it. He cites as a graphic illustration the 1956 kidnaping of Professor Jesus de Galindez. Dr. Galindez, who was teaching at Columbia University at the time, was a bitter foe of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, the long-time dictator of the Dominican Republic, and he had committed the cardinal offense of composing a philippic casting acid doubt on the purity of the Trujillo family tree. This, to Trujillo, was an unforgivable offense, and Trujillo agents, in a cloak-and-dagger plot that reads like the wildest fiction, kidnaped Dr. Galindez in New York, knocked him out with drugs, spirited him to an airport at Amityville, L. I., and there put him aboard a small plane flown by Gerald Lester Murphy, a young Oregonian. Murphy made Miami with the dawn, refueled and flew Dr. Galindez on into the Dominican Republic, where he was delivered to the tender mercies of Trujillo. (Murphy himself was later murdered by Trujillo agents.)

"WELL," OLNEY SAYS, "this was a case of a professor being snatched from the streets of New York by a foreign power, kidnaped, taken out of the country and murdered. If this isn't a case within the FBI's jurisdiction, then I don't know what is." But, Olney added, Hoover refused to take the case "purely to preserve his statistical record."

Hoover actually went farther than that. The enormous prestige of the FBI was thrown into diversionary actions, into the task of muddying the waters in an attempt to show that Dr. Galindez had *not* been kidnaped at all.

With a reporting partner, I dug deeply into the Galindez affair and detailed every step of the plot. And at every step we uncovered the tracks of FBI agents who had been there before us, questioning the same persons we were questioning. The facts were conclusive and undeniable; but the FBI turned cool, even hostile. I recall vividly the day that former Rep. Charles O. Porter, of Oregon, who was waging a one-man battle in Congress for an investigation, telephoned me from Washington. He told me that a man, whom I recognized as one of Hoover's long-time stooges in the fourth estate, was industriously purveying a yarn labeled as the FBI's "inside" story of the Galindez mystery. This was that Dr. Galindez had not been kidnaped at all; he had been in reality, according to this version, a James Bond type engaged in all kinds of devious machinations and his disappearance had been rigged to serve some unexplained Communist purpose. The story gained wide currency. It cooled off even a lot of editors who should have known better; and Congress, not a very crusading

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

body at the time, quietly buried and forgot the Porter demands for an investigation.

Such is the cost of the FBI's "statistics" fixation; such is the road-block this fixation erects in the path of investigative work that really matters.

The kind of work that does get performed and the kind of personnel who perform it complement the story. Other agencies, engaged in hard-nosed sleuthing, sometimes refer derisively to Hoover's agents as "the glamour gals" of the trade. The clean-scrubbed FBI agents, most of them trained as lawyers or accountants, are well able to work with, and through, local law enforcement agencies and private detective organizations. They possess in high degree all the skills required for tracking down commercial crimes or proving the scientific side of a criminal case. But they are out of their element when it comes to the difficult task of impersonating underworld types and engaging in surveillance. Added to this flaw is the fact that the massive FBI complex is so rigidly controlled by Hoover at the top that there remains little room for the kind of free-wheeling detective work so essential if underworld mobs are to be effectively infiltrated.

Few realize the degree to which the FBI is computerized. "IBM equipment is all over the place," one source familiar with its operation says. "Agents in the field are supposed to check in regularly, and the IBM machines keep track of every man almost every minute. This is all so that Hoover and the Washington Bureau can exercise rigid control; there is little room for flexibility, for the kind of undercover work that the Narcotics Bureau, for example, does so effectively."

In one way, says this source, this kind of ironclad control is almost essential to protect the rights of the average citizen. "There are only 270 narcotics agents," this man explains, "and if one of them gets out of line and starts breaking down doors and trampling on people's rights, it's not so serious – it can be quickly corrected. But there are 6,000 FBI agents, and I shudder to think what would happen if they ever got out of control. It would be a mess."

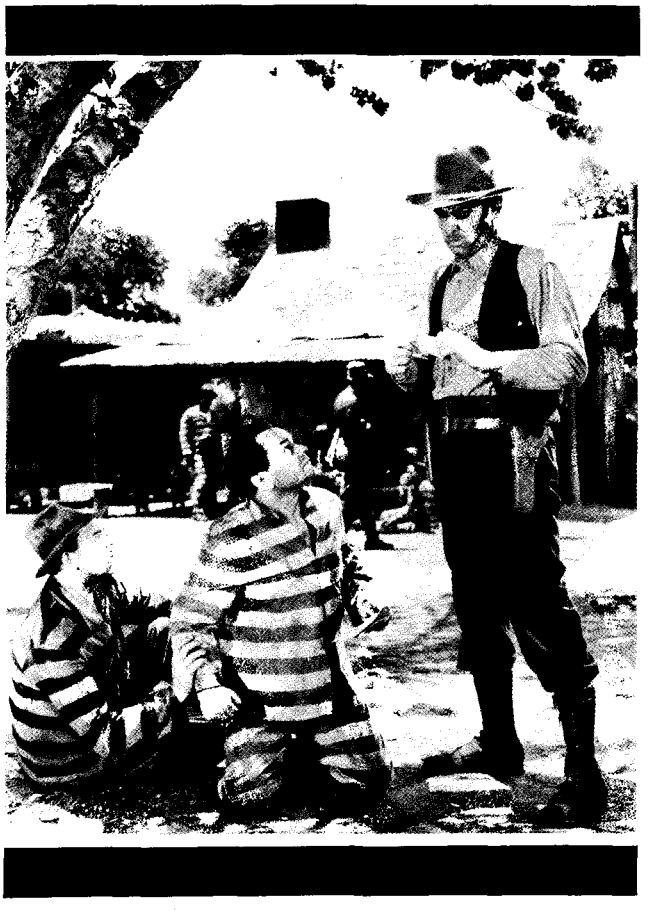
According to this view, it is virtually essential, if we are to have a Federal police force of this enormous size and power, that it be rigidly controlled, checked and made to stick within the letter of the law. Yet this tight rule, this stickling for ultra-fine points of law militate against the release of investigative energies aimed at cracking the gigantic criminal conspiracy of the underworld.

The contrast shows up best, perhaps, in the differing attitudes of the FBI and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics.

"You go in and ask the FBI for help in investigating a certain case," says a former Federal prosecutor who has worked with both agencies, "and the answer you get almost instantly goes something like this: 'What's your evidence? Show us where we have jurisdiction.' Unless you could almost prove the case for them and establish in advance that a Federal crime had been committed, they wouldn't move. The Narcotics Bureau, on the other hand, would listen to your story, feel certain that you probably had a case, and they'd go into it right away."

Since few cases are established in their full legal outlines prior to investigation, Hoover's insistence that the FBI must not go on "fishing expeditions" is a definite asset to criminals.

Is there more to this reluctance than meets the eye? This is the hardest question of all to answer. There can be no doubt that mob money exerts tremendous leverage in politics. Milton Wessel has estimated that a full half of gangdom's enormous gambling revenues – a staggering $4.5 to $5 billion a year – is used for police bribes and the purchase of political influence. This represents corruption on a colossal scale, and there is little question that these billions purchase potent influence up and down the political ladder. Some investigators, naturally anonymous, will tell you that, when they begin digging deeply into some smelly underworld situation, the phone will ring and the voice of some powerful political figure will come trumpeting over the line in outrage, demanding: "What are you doing to our *friends?*"



SUCH QUERIES rarely find their way into public record, but it is worthy of note that, in the recent Bobby Baker investigation, a few tracks showed up dimly.

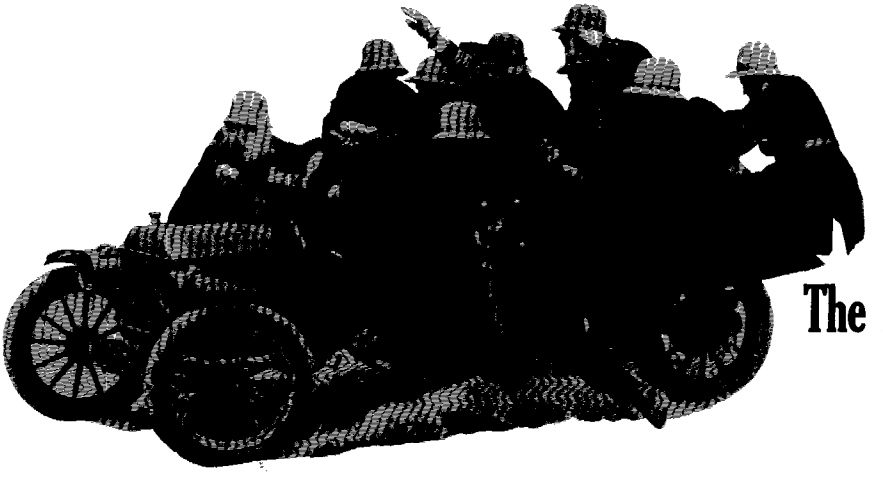
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bobby Baker was, of course, the Senate protegé of Lyndon B. Johnson and the powerfully placed secretary to the Senate's Democratic majority. In the course of the tepid investigation into his wheeling and dealing, it was discovered that he had acted on one occasion as the emissary of a couple of powerful Las Vegas figures attempting to secure Latin American hotel and gambling concessions. The Senate inquiry into this phase of the Baker case ran into a flock of obscuring Fifth Amendment pleas and never progressed beyond the disclosure of this intriguing tie.

Is it the existence of this kind of influence that deters Hoover? There is no proof, but there is a general belief that Hoover treads warily when confronted with the prospects of such far-reaching power plays. This is perhaps one of the underlying causes for his persistent refusal to recognize the existence of the Mafia, for his stubborn insistence that syndicated crime is a local and state, not a Federal, responsibility. If the Mafia were acknowledged, if the reality of interstate criminal organizations were acknowledged, it would be virtually imperative for Hoover and the FBI to lead the charge against the criminal ramparts. And this Hoover has never been eager to do. Even worse, his tremendous ego, his dedication to the proposition that the FBI represents the be-all and end-all of Federal law enforcement, makes it virtually impossible for any other organization to attempt the monumental task.

"I don't object so much to the fact that the FBI doesn't do it, but that Hoover won't let anyone else do it," says Milton Wessel. "It is this attitude that has created the tremendous vacuum – this attitude that, though they won't or can't move in most of these cases, this whole field must still be reserved for them."

Local and state law officers cannot control national crime rings; the Federal Bureau of Investigation won't even try. In the words of Jackie Gleason: How sweet it is for the mobs.



The End

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Little Brothers

JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN

In my early years when I was in France, I was greatly influenced by Charles de Foucauld who had the extraordinary vocation of going out among non-Christians to lead a life of perfect love, without ever attempting to make a convert, without any proselytizing whatsoever, without doing anything, in fact, except simply living the Gospel and loving perfectly.

Father Foucauld had hoped to pass on his ideas in the form of a new Order. But the life was so severe and so unattractive that during his entire lifetime he never succeeded in attracting a single disciple or follower. There had been other difficult vocations, such as the desert fathers, but none quite like that of Father Foucauld.

Charles de Foucauld was one of the world's extraordinary men. He was an army officer and a count. As an officer, he had taken up a totally bacchanalian existence to such an extent, that in the face of scandal he was forced to resign his commission. His career had taken him to Africa, and upon returning to France he met an unusual priest, an Abbé Huvelin. It was just one of those inexplicable things. Father Foucauld had never entertained the idea of becoming a priest. In fact, he had renounced the religion of his childhood in favor of complete sensuality. But through Abbé Huvelin he developed an interest in religion and finally became a Trappist monk. Upon entering the Order he was sent to one of the poorest Trappist monasteries, Our Lady of the Snows, and two years later, upon his request, he was transferred to a still poorer one in Northern Syria. After remaining a Trappist for seven years he found that his

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED