

To: File 4.16.1  
From: Phil Golrick  
CC: Jeremy Gunn  
Date: April 3, 1995

Re: Mark Felt, *The FBI Pyramid From the Inside* (1979)

I have read the above-referenced book. Aside from describing his own FBI career, Felt asserts that Hoover was able to resist attempts to turn the FBI to partisan political ends and to defend the FBI against misguided or biased attacks on its purposes and methods. Hoover's successors, Gray and Ruckelshaus, lacked the ability or the will to do either, which led to Watergate-era excesses, demoralization within the FBI, and condemnation and evisceration of the FBI's internal-security activities. From Felt's perspective, at least, this last development culminated in his indictment, with two other former FBI officials, for conspiring to deprive members of the Weathermen movement of their civil rights. These charges were pending against Felt when he wrote this book.

The book does not mention the investigation of the JFK assassination. However, I have identified the following items of potentially useful background information.

Felt's career: Felt retired from the FBI in June 1973 after 32 years in the FBI. (p. 11) In May 1972, Felt became Acting Associate Director under Acting Director Gray, and "was responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Bureau." (p. 12) During World War II, Felt worked at SOG as a Supervisor in the Espionage Section of the Domestic Intelligence Division. As a novice, he was first assigned to the General Desk with three other Supervisors. The General Desk handled "unimportant cases." (pp.

29-30) He was soon moved to the Major Case Desk within the Espionage Section. (p. 31)

Hoover abolished the Espionage Section immediately after V-E Day. Although "the FBI was busy learning to cope with the Russian agents and their American supporters," that work "was being handled by the Internal Security Section of the Domestic Intelligence Division." (p. 39) Felt was transferred to the Seattle office at the end of 1945, where he "spent two years working on general assignments." (p. 40) He then spent two years as a firearms instructor in D.C. (p. 41), after which he became a Supervisor in the Seattle office in charge of background investigations for Atomic Energy Commission personnel. (pp. 41-42)

In or around May 1951, he was transferred back to D.C. "as an Inspector's aide, the next step on the promotion ladder . . . there was no other way to go if I wanted to rise in the Bureau." (pp. 43, 45) After only two months in this assignment, Felt again "was transferred to New Orleans as the Assistant Special Agent in Charge." (p. 45)

"The FBI office in New Orleans was average in size -- fifty-one Agents and twenty-six clerical employees. It was the nerve center for all FBI activities in Louisiana, with suboffices in Baton Rouge, Shreveport, Monroe, Alexandria, and Lake Charles. The SAC, Morton P. Chiles, supervised most of the major cases and had overall responsibility for the office. As Assistant SAC, I handled everything else in the criminal field and supervised the Criminal Informant Program, which was very active in sinful New Orleans." (pp. 46-47)

Within 15 months, Felt was sent to the Los Angeles office, "second in

size only to the New York office" (apparently as ASAC). (p. 46) Shortly thereafter, he was made SAC of the Salt Lake City office.

"The Salt Lake City office . . . included Las Vegas and Reno . . . .

It has been charged that Hoover did not move against organized crime until forced to by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. I know differently because, in 1956, . . . I was under continual pressure from the Seat of Government to move against Mafia infiltration of the gambling casinos in Reno and Las Vegas. Without adequate laws such as the Congress enacted in the Sixties, we could do little more than gather information through the use of informants and electronic surveillance." (p. 47)

In February 1958, Felt was made SAC in charge of the Kansas City office. Kansas City was

"known within the Bureau as the Siberia of Field Offices. . . .

[F]or the most severe disciplinary cases, Hoover had a "dog house" Field Office -- in Kansas City, where for many years Dwight Brantley, the roughest and toughest SAC of them all, ran a reform school for fallen Agents, as well as an excellent investigative office. . . Instead of the collection of misfits I had expected, I found a group of Agents who had been tried and passed with flying colors." (pp. 49-50)

Felt describes intensive efforts against organized crime in Kansas City during this period, including the use of "planted microphones." (p. 50) Felt

writes that, in 1961, he gave RFK "a guided tour and personally escorted him into the 'plant' -- the room where microphones were being monitored," although RFK later "would deny all knowledge of this activity." (p. 51) Felt claims credit for recommending Clarence Kelley to be police chief in Kansas City. (p. 55)

In September 1962, Hoover made Felt the "Number One Man to the Assistant Director in Charge of the Training Division" at SOG. (p. 58) Hoover had recently split the "Training" and "Inspection" Divisions into separate functions. (p. 59) In this job, Felt was heavily involved in planning the new FBI Academy in Quantico. (p. 59) Felt became Assistant Director in charge of the Inspection Division in November 1964, and held this position for six years. In July 1971, Felt took a newly-created position: Deputy Associate Director, the third-highest position in the Bureau. (p. 133)

Security Index: Until 1972, the FBI helped implement the emergency detention provisions of the Internal Security Act.

"The Act provided for the detention during wartime of persons considered dangerous to the security of the United States. In response to this legislation, the FBI established a Security Index and over the years a list of more than 15,000 individuals was compiled. This was done under the close supervision of the Justice Department. Files were maintained on each person listed, and twice a year a check was made to verify employment and addresses of those considered the most dangerous in the event of war." (p. 346)

When the Internal Security Act was repealed in January, 1972, the Attorney General stated that such repeal did not make it unlawful for the FBI to keep an "administrative index" to make "readily retrievable and available the results of its investigations into subversive activities and related matters." Accordingly, "the FBI reconstituted the Security Index as an Administrative Index (ADEX) but with revised and much tighter standards." (p. 346)

Tolson and Hoover: "Tolson was not the innovator. He was the buffer between Hoover and everyone else in the Bureau. His job was to protect Hoover and to make sure that the Director's energies were expended efficiently." (p. 24)

Agent assignment and transfer: "It was FBI policy [at least when Felt was a new agent] to assign new Agents for three months to their first office, six months to the second, and three years to the third. Agents could then expect to remain in their fourth office of assignment from seven to ten years." (p. 25)

SOG/Field relations: "There was considerable competition among the different offices of the Seat of Government to extract the maximum amount of work from the field. The SACs had to juggle operations in such a way as to keep all eight [circa World War II] of those Headquarters divisions happy." (p. 28)

Infighting within the Bureau: Felt describes an episode during his stint in Kansas City in which someone sent Hoover an anonymous letter

alleging malingering and laxity in the Kansas City office. Hoover at once dispatched an Inspector from SOG to look into the matter. The Inspector told Felt what was going on only after ascertaining that the allegations were false. The focus of the Inspector's inquiry then became who had sent the anonymous letter. Felt states that such anonymous letters were a common means of waging personal vendettas within the Bureau. (pp. 55-58)

FBI/Kennedy Relations: Felt describes the Kennedys as attempting to an unprecedented degree to use the FBI for partisan political ends, and Hoover as resisting these attempts. (pp. 61-62) The conflict resulted in "ill-disguised friction between Hoover and Robert Kennedy, which affected all of us in the Bureau and struck at our morale." (p. 62) RFK also

"demanded that FBI Agents be detached from the Bureau and assigned to his 'Task Forces' to investigate the organized crime syndicates. Hoover argued strenuously that his Agents must remain under the direction of the Special Agents in Charge but he agreed to work closely with the Task Force attorneys . . . To counter the Kennedy onslaught, Hoover created a new division at Headquarters, the Special Investigative Division, and it was no coincidence that he selected Courtney A. Evans to head it. Evans had handled liaison with Kennedy when the latter was Chief Counsel to the Senate Labor Rackets Committee. Knowing that Evans had Kennedy's confidence, Hoover also made him responsible for liaison between the FBI and the Attorney General." (p. 63)

Post-assassination changes: Evans retired shortly after JFK's assassination. (p. 66) Hoover put James H. Gale, then Assistant Director in Charge of the Inspection Division, in Evans' old position as DOJ liaison (and possibly also as head of the Special Investigative Division), and made Felt Assistant Director in charge of the Inspection Division in November 1964. (p. 67)

New York field office: New York had always been the largest field office, and Felt describes a longstanding "subtle rivalry" between New York and SOG. New York apparently saw itself to some extent as an independent power base within the Bureau, and was sometimes perceived as slighting "leads" sent to New York by other field offices. (pp. 67, 73-74)

Liaison with other agencies: Felt denies reports that Hoover cut off FBI liaison with other intelligence agencies. He describes as the basis for these mistaken reports Hoover's decision in 1969 to dissolve the ten-agent Liaison Section within the Domestic Intelligence Division. Felt characterizes use of the Liaison Section as "more effective but more costly" than the method that replaced it, in which "individual supervisors deal[t] with their counterparts in other agencies directly -- by telephone, confirmed by correspondence. This in no way ended FBI liaison with other government agencies as has been charged." (pp. 78-80)

Reduction of wiretaps: In mid-1965, Hoover made Felt the point man for implementing Hoover's decision to substantially reduce the FBI's use of wiretaps. Almost to a man, this reduction was opposed by SOG officials, but the fiercest opposition came from Bill Sullivan, Assistant Director in

charge of the Domestic Intelligence Division. (pp. 105-112)

Executive Conference: Felt describes meetings, about once or twice a month, as required, of Tolson and all of the Assistant Directors, at which they discussed and voted on policy issues. The participant who made a particular proposal would prepare a memorandum summarizing the arguments for and against the idea and relating the result of the conference vote. Hoover then read the memorandum and himself made the final decision. Hoover usually did not attend these meetings, in order, Felt suggests, to foster a freer expression of views. (pp. 107-08)

Felt on Sullivan: Felt describes Sullivan as intelligent, well-educated and well-spoken, and as enjoying a close relationship with Hoover -- almost as a surrogate son to Hoover's indulgent father. He also describes Sullivan as having a "Napoleonic complex," a fiery temper, and as being a shameless flatterer to Hoover's face while being treacherous and back-stabbing in his effort to succeed Hoover as Director. (pp. 110-17)

Sullivan's files: In his discussion of the Martin Luther King "suicide letter," Felt mentions in passing that "in 1975, four years after his retirement from the FBI, a copy of the letter was found in Sullivan's private files which had been sealed at the time of his departure." (pp. 126-27)