

J Edgar Hoover

FBI Director J Edgar Hoover (JEH) and Kennedy patriarch Joseph Kennedy had been very good friends. JEH displayed in his office a letter from Joe saying that Hoover would make a good president of the US. Not surprisingly, Hoover had no fear of losing his job when Robert Kennedy (RFK) was appointed head of the Justice Department. JEH had held his position long enough to have controlled many US attorneys general, and he figured his new boss would be easier to control than any of his predecessors. JEH had been very busy over the years collecting dirty secrets about Washington's players, and he didn't hesitate to use that information to get his way. That's why he had been head of the FBI for so long.

Hoover soon came to strongly regret his early support for RFK's cabinet appointment. The Kennedy brothers didn't think much of *that old man*, but John instructed Bobby to get along with him. He didn't. RFK blunted JEH's authority, considering him a relic of an outdated style of law enforcement. JEH had built his reputation and that of the FBI by arresting high-profile criminals such as bank robbers. Bobby promptly began to reorganize the Justice Department to deal with modern crime and sophisticated criminals. At the center of that element was the mafia, which JEH didn't believe existed (or pretended not to believe it). Not surprisingly, mafia principles loved Hoover, because they were allowed to operate freely, and because the FBI had impeded, not helped, the Justice Department. RFK's crusade against organized crime didn't begin with his tenure as Attorney General. Bobby had played a key role in the McClellan Committee.

Meanwhile, JEH appeared to be oblivious to the mafia. Admitting the existence of the mob would have undermined his authority, damaged the reputation of the FBI, and given a boost to RFK. However, not only did JEH know about the mafia, he was good friends with some of its prominent members, including Joe Bonanno (aka Joe Bananas), Frank Costello, Carlos Marcello, and Johnny Rosseli. Costello: **The horse races! You'll never know how many races I had to fix for those lousy ten-dollar bets of Hoover's!** Marcello and Roselli would play key roles in the JFK murder.

When almost 100 mafia principles had a kaffeeklatsch at the home of Joseph Barbara (aka Joe the Barber) in November 1957, JEH had no clue. Among the figures attending the meeting in Apalachin, New York were Santo Trafficante (Tampa), Carlo

Gambino (New York), and Joseph Civello (Dallas). Although JEH didn't know anything about this unique confab of crooks, local police did. They crashed the party and arrested about half the men there.

As he felt control over his FBI slipping away, JEH referred to RFK as an *adolescent horse's ass*. Bobby called Hoover a *psycho*. Their mutual hatred intensified when Bobby noticed that there were very few blacks on the FBI payroll. Bobby sent out a memo requesting that a number of blacks be hired. JEH did not respond. In response to a second memo, Hoover replied that inquiring into the race of government employees was against federal regulations. He admitted that there were only two blacks working for the Bureau. (As it turned out, they were JEH's drivers.) He told Bobby that as long as he was Director, the FBI was not going to lower qualifications in order to hire more Negros. When RFK charged that JEH was not being cooperative, Hoover challenged him to get a new Director. Bobby was not prepared to go that far (yet), but he did have a buzzer installed in Hoover's office so Bobby could easily summon him. At times Bobby would push the button just for the fun of it, and he no doubt enjoyed seeing the rage on Hoover's face when he arrived.

JEH used blackmail to force the Kennedys to keep Hoover in office. But when Bobby forced JEH to communicate through the Attorney General, rather than directly with the president, JEH had been rendered impotent. The brothers were willing to tolerate Hoover for a little while longer, knowing that he would be forced to retire before JFK's second term. Meanwhile, JFK did call Hoover once in a while just to stroke JEH's massive ego.

Hoover was faced with a choice: cave in or fight back. He chose the latter. When JEH began to learn about mafia threats to JFK's safety, coming from reliable sources, he withheld the information from the Kennedys. Hoover did not actively participate in the conspiracy to kill JFK, but he passively played a key role. He didn't need to kill Kennedy. All he had to do was stand by and watch it happen. His friend LBJ was in pretty much the same situation. They allowed the murder plot to play out, then they stepped in to cover it up.