Unsung Partner Against Crime: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962

IF A CROSS-SECTION of American people were surveyed to determine the federal law enforcement personality with whom they most frequently identified, a large majority of them likely would name J. Edgar Hoover. This determination would not be without justification. Involved in law enforcement since 1917 and Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) from 1924 until his death in 1972, Hoover claimed the title of the nation's top crime-fighter. Although his fifty-year tenure as Director of the FBI has never been equalled, Hoover was not the only head of a federal law enforcement agency, nor was the FBI the only "domestic" agency operating on that level. The Internal Revenue Service maintains an intelligence division whose meticulous investigations have resulted in nabbing many "white-collar" criminals; the Secret Service often comes in contact with organized crime in its enforcement of counterfeiting laws; and U.S. Customs agents uncover literally tons of illicit drugs through their searches and seizures at border patrol points.

Another law enforcement agency that has not received the media attention comparable to that of the FBI, yet maintained a comparable record of arrests with less than half the staff and operating budget of the FBI, was the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN). Its first commissioner, Harry J. Anslinger, a native Pennsylvanian, might not have been as flamboyant or dynamic as Hoover, but Anslinger was certainly more than the one-dimensional "drug buster" his critics have alleged.[1] An examination of his career reveals an administrator of an agency of extraordinary versatility involved in apprehending international criminals, infiltrating drug-smuggling rings, and participating in various clandestine operations.

[1] Several authors can be categorized as critics of Anslinger's policies. The least sympathetic account is Larry Sloman's *Reefer Madness: Marijuana in America* (New York, 1979).

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In the federal realm of law enforcement only the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (now the Drug Enforcement Administration) can claim active and continued participation in all of the aforementioned criminal activities. Yet the Narcotics Bureau (as it became known) never has received the attention given to the FBI.[2] Nor has its administrator, Harry J. Anslinger, been accorded his rightful place as a skillful bureaucrat and law enforcement officer. Appointed at the Bureau's inception in 1930, Anslinger remained in that position until 1962—a leadership that spanned five presidential administrations. Through his office he almost single-handedly shaped federal drug policies and built a reputation for effectiveness, efficiency, and a no-nonsense approach to the enforcement of anti-drug laws.

Anslinger's upbringing in Pennsylvania provides a few clues to his personality. He was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, on May 20, 1892, the eighth of nine children of Robert and Christiana Anslinger, both immigrants who had emigrated to America in 1881 and settled in Altoona after brief stays in New York and Houtzdale, Pennsylvania.[3] Robert Anslinger was trained as a barber, but he gave up that trade in 1892 to find steadier employment with the Pennsylvania Railroad.[4]

[2] A survey of books held by Pattee Library at Pennsylvania State University, for example, lists six books under the subject of "J. Edgar Hoover": David J. Garrow, *The FBI and Martin Luther King, Jr.: From "Solo" to Memphis* (New York, 1981); Hank Messick, *John Edgar Hoover: An Inquiry into the Life and Times of John Edgar Hoover and His Relationship to the Continuing Partnership of Crime, Business, and Politics* (New York, 1972); Kenneth O'Reilly, *Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC, and the Red Menace* (Philadelphia, 1983); Richard Gid Powers, *G-Man: FBI in American Popular Culture* (Carbondale, 1983); Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York, 1987); and William C. Sullivan, *The Bureau: My Thirty Years in Hoover's FBI* (New York, 1979). An additional fourteen books are listed under the subject "FBI." No books are listed under the subjects "Harry J. Anslinger," nor are there any found under "Federal Bureau of Narcotics."

[3] His father, Robert J. Anslinger, was born in Bern, Switzerland, and his mother, formerly Rosa Christiana Fladt, was born in Baden, Germany. Vital statistical information about Harry Anslinger and his parents is in the Harry J. Anslinger Official Personnel File (United States Office of Personnel Management, Philadelphia) (hereafter, OPM File).

[4] The story of Robert Anslinger's decision to leave Switzerland, his movements in America, and Harry Anslinger's early years is taken from two sources: a retirement notice in the *Altoona Mirror*, Nov. 30, 1926; and my interview with a close acquaintance (who requested anonymity) of Anslinger in Hollidaysburg, Jan. 13, 1985.

According to the acquaintance, Harry was reasonably certain that his father had left Switzerland to avoid service in the Swiss army. Robert Anslinger came to America a poor man and remained a man of moderate means throughout his life.

The Altoona Harry Anslinger knew was a bustling, prospering town where the opportunity to work in the local industries was often more enticing to school-aged boys than earning high school diplomas. Harry was not unlike many young men at that time who wanted to quit school to make money, and at the end of the eighth grade he followed his father and went to work for the railroad. Although he did not attend classes in the traditional sense, neither did he drop out of school. Beginning in the ninth grade, at the age of fourteen, he completed his course requirements as a part-time student in the morning session. In the afternoons and evenings he worked for the railroad.

Anslinger kept up with his studies and, though he never received a high school diploma, he enrolled at the Altoona Business College in 1909 and also received tutoring at nights during the next two years. In 1912 he requested and was granted a furlough from the Pennsylvania Railroad so that he could enroll at the Pennsylvania State College. There he entered a two-year associate degree program consisting of engineering and business management courses. On weekends and during vacations he continued to work for the railroad as a utility employee.[5] While in State College, he indulged his hope of one day becoming a concert pianist and earned tuition money as a substitute piano player for silent movies in a downtown theatre.

Anslinger claimed that two incidents during his youth strongly influenced his career as a narcotics commissioner. The first was a traumatic experience he had when learning about the agony of addiction. In his book, *The Murderers: The Story of the Narcotics Gangs*, which he co-authored with Will Oursler, Anslinger vividly recounted how as a twelve-year-old he once visited a neighboring farm house and heard the shrill screams of a woman on the second floor. Later

[5] Education and employment information pertaining to Anslinger's early years (1892-1917) is taken from a resumé he composed for application in the federal civil service: File "Counsel for the Traveler in Europe," Box 1, Anslinger Papers (Special Collections Department of Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University) (hereafter, AP); and OPM File.

Anslinger also studied at the School of International Relations at The Hague (1919-1921) and in 1930 received an LL.B. degree from the Washington School of Law, now part of American University in Washington, D.C. Curiously, on one of his resumés and in other papers Anslinger included an LL.D. degree from the University of Maryland's Law School. However, an extensive search by the registrar through that institution's records failed to confirm that. There is no evidence that Anslinger was ever enrolled for classes or that he was awarded an honorary degree.

he learned that she was addicted, like many other women of that period, to morphine, a drug most medical authorities did not yet recognize as dangerous. Soon her husband ran down the stairs and sent him to town to pick up a package at the drugstore. Within minutes after the husband administered the drug, the woman's screams stopped and she was again at ease.[6] Harry Anslinger never forgot those anguished screams of the woman suffering the pains of addiction. Nor did he forget that the morphine she required was sold to a naive twelve-year-old boy—no questions asked. In 1906, however, in the absence of any federal anti-drug legislation, this indiscriminate selling of narcotics was not unusual. Anslinger's experience may well have been exaggerated, but he was convinced that there was a need for strict regulation and control over the use of narcotics. He also remained steadfast in his belief that enforcement and a punitive approach to narcotics—even though "post hoc justification"—were necessary to eradicate the problem of drug addiction.

Anslinger's exposure to the kind of men he worked with on the railroad also later affected his behavior as a narcotics commissioner. Working his summer vacations away from Penn State on a "Pennsy" construction crew landscaping flower beds, he often came into contact with Italian immigrants. Occasionally he would overhear them talk, in broken English, of a "Black Hand."[7] Although he did not know precisely the nature of the organization, he could sense from the context of their conversation that it was a kind of extra-legal society brought from the old country. The Italians did not discuss it openly or in a casual manner; rather, they spoke of it in awe. They referred to it as an invisible government that effected a mutual protection for its members and enforced it with violence and brutality.

Anslinger's story of the "Black Hand" may indeed have been apocryphal and later exploited for political benefit, but he frequently made reference to it as the basis for his all-out war on the "Mafia" in the 1940s and 1950s. The "Black Hand" experience also would induce him to be the first federal law enforcement officer to ac-

[6] Harry J. Anslinger and Will Oursler, *The Murderers: The Story of the Narcotics Gangs* (New York, 1960), 8.

[7] See ibid., 9-10, where Anslinger describes his confrontation with "Big Mouth" Sam, an extortionist who collected a "terror tax" from his fellow immigrants.

knowledge the existence of the "Mafia."[8] It was a conviction he held thirty-five years later when he testified before the Kefauver Senate Crime Investigating Committee that the "Black Hand" was what the Italian immigrants referred to as the "Mafia" back in Italy. As an impressionable young man, Anslinger heard about and witnessed the nefarious activities of this secret society. As Commissioner of Narcotics, he became obsessed in his attack on the "Mafia" and the evil it represented.

Anslinger's work on the Pennsylvania Railroad so impressed division superintendent G. Charles Port that when the latter was called to Harrisburg by Governor Martin G. Brumbaugh to head the state police, he asked Anslinger to accompany him. In September 1916 Anslinger went to the state capital, where he was responsible for reorganizing a department and a field force of 2,500 personnel. Eventually he was appointed deputy fire commissioner in charge of arson investigations. He remained in Harrisburg a year—until the United States entered the war in Europe to "make the world safe for democracy."[9]

At five feet, eleven inches and 190 pounds, Anslinger was a vigorous and healthy twenty-five-year-old. His railroad experience as a detective and investigator made him highly desirable as an inductee in the armed forces. Initially he applied for admission to the Officers' Training Camp program, but when he was not accepted, he volunteered as an enlisted man. Both times, though, he was rejected because, due to an eye injury he had sustained as a boy, he could not pass

[8] Additional information pertaining to Anslinger's account of the "Black Hand" was related to the writer by the aforementioned Hollidaysburg acquaintance.

There is considerable controversy over the existence of the "Black Hand" and its connection with the "Mafia," if any. For example, in *Murder, Inc.* (Garden City, 1952), 87-88, Burton B. Turkus and Sid Feder are critical of the Kefauver Committee for referring to "Mafia," "Black Hand," and "Unione Sciliano," as one and the same organization. Frederick Sondern, however, in *Brotherhood of Evil* (New York, 1960), 3, holds that in reality the "Black Hand" did not even exist as a society of any kind.

For an excellent historiographic study of syndicate crime and its origins, see Chapter 1, "Syndicate Crime: A Prelude to its Conceptualization," in Joseph L. Albini's *The American Mafia: Genesis of a Legend* (New York, 1979), 1-17. One of the best scholarly sources on the "Black Hand" is Humbert S. Nelli's *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (Chicago, 1976), 69-100.

[9] File "Counsel for the Traveler in Europe," Box 1, AP; and OPM File.

the physical examination.[10] Refused acceptance for active military duty, Anslinger contributed his talents by serving his country during wartime in the Ordnance Department where, as assistant to the Chief of Inspection of Equipment, he was in charge of recruiting civilian personnel and checking the honesty of manufacturers and other personnel. Anslinger had ample opportunity to exhibit initiative and tact in proving himself capable of handling intricate military transactions.

Early in 1918 he was recommended for commission as Second Lieutenant in the Ordnance Reserve Corps, and from this point he continued a rapid progression up the ranks. Opportunity must have seemed like a close companion for Harry Anslinger. In May he was offered a position with the American Car & Foundry Company "at a very high salary"; however, wanting to remain with the federal government, he applied for a position with the diplomatic corps in the State Department.[11]

With his qualifications as an investigator and his ability to speak the fluent German he had learned from his parents, Anslinger was assigned as an attaché in the American Legation at The Hague, where he quickly mastered Dutch as well. During his three years in the Netherlands, he performed consular-related work and also participated in behind-the-scene intelligence reports and investigations. Anslinger's duties assumed new importance in late 1918, as the end of the war appeared imminent. In his capacity as an intelligence gatherer, Anslinger attended social affairs, dinners, and garden parties. He mingled

[10] Anslinger proved himself as a competent investigator when he refused to accept a husband's allegations that negligence on the part of the railroad contributed to his wife's death when she was struck by a train. After its initial investigation the railroad was ready to settle the claim. Anslinger persisted with his own theory, however, and was able to demonstrate that the wife probably committed suicide. See John C. McWilliams, *The Protectors: Harry J. Anslinger and the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, 1930-1962* (Newark, 1989), 26-27.

When he was seventeen, "Inky" Anslinger was involved in horseplay with several friends one summer afternoon when he was accidentally struck in the left eye by a thrown pear. He suffered a detached retina and never regained sight in that eye. Consequently, he was not considered to be "physically fit" by army doctors examining prospective inductees. Interview with anonymous source. Taken from interviews with several of Anslinger's Hollidaysburg friends, Jan.-March 1985; and OPM File.

[11] The "high" salary offered to Anslinger by ACF was $3,500. Memo from Major L.H. Van Deusen to Captain Moffitt, May 3, 1918, OPM File; Captain Erskine Barins to Major L.H. Van Deusen, May 8, 1918, File "Correspondence 1921," Box 3, AP.

with nobility and heads of state who might willingly or inadvertently reveal some bit of information concerning their country's intentions. When Kaiser Wilhelm II prepared to abdicate his imperial throne, the Netherlands granted him asylum. Anslinger was immediately ordered to Count Bentinck's castle in Amerongen, where the Kaiser would live in exile. According to the young attaché, the American government did not want the Kaiser to abdicate, because the "Social Democrats will bring on revolution, strikes, and chaos."[12] It was therefore vital that information pertaining to the Kaiser's abdication and what course the Germans would follow be relayed to the right people. Anslinger's mission in this quiet Dutch town potentially could have altered the course of events in the postwar era; consequently, Secretary of State Robert Lansing ordered him "not to divulge to any person by word of mouth, or in writing, either by letter or telegram, or by any other means of communication, your point of destination in Europe."[13]

As an accomplished linguist, Anslinger provided invaluable services to the American minister. He also was sent on several other secret assignments. On one of them he assumed the identity of a harsh-speaking German, bluffing his way past Dutch security guards to gain clearance to travel with the Kaiser's entourage without interference. He later passed himself off as a member of the Dutch intelligence corps in order to relay information to one of the Kaiser's court counselors that abdication was entirely useless and unnecessary. Anslinger carried out his assignment and conveyed the message to the proper authorities, but the Kaiser did not remain on the throne.[14]

From The Hague Anslinger was transferred to Hamburg, Germany, as the American Vice-Consul. There he helped repatriate American seamen. More important for Anslinger's lifelong career after the

[12] Anslinger and Oursler, *The Murderers*, 10-14.

[13] "Order" from Secretary of State Robert Lansing to Harry J. Anslinger, File "Correspondence 1921," Box 3, AP.

[14] In Anslinger and Oursler, *The Murderers*, 14-16, and in numerous pieces of correspondence in his papers, Anslinger tells that he obtained the field utility kit and "certain other minor personal possessions of His Imperial Highness, Kaiser Wilhelm II." Throughout his life, though, he would not divulge how it happened, stating only that it "must remain a state secret." In 1957 he donated the Kaiser's field utility kit and other items to the Smithsonian Institution.

war, there he first witnessed international narcotics problems. According to Anslinger, Hamburg operated as a worldwide distribution center for illicit drugs. He was in the German city only two years, however, before he was reassigned to La Guaira, Venezuela, in September 1923.[15]

Anslinger sailed to his new station with his bride, the former Martha Denniston (a relative of Andrew Mellon, the Secretary of the Treasury) and her thirteen-year-old son, Joseph. The social and cultural amenities were less than he was accustomed to, and after a dreary, almost unbearable three-year stint in the coastal South American city, Anslinger was reassigned to Nassau in the Bahamas. Both the climate and his duties in the Bahamas better suited him.

The Bahamas in the 1920s were an important way station for American rum-runners who were transporting illicit supplies of liquor to American bootleggers. Native Bahamians, unencumbered by American Prohibition laws, grew rich while American Treasury agents, already overwhelmed with the problem of how to stop domestic smuggling, remained almost powerless to stop the flow of contraband liquor from the Bahamas. Brigadier General Lincoln C. Andrews, former chief of the Prohibition Bureau, complained bitterly that the problem was further aggravated by Great Britain's lackadaisical attitude and refusal to cooperate with the United States in suppressing the trade from its colony. Only after months of badgering by the American government did Britain accede to demands for a conference on how its cooperation was necessary to stop the smuggling. Young Anslinger impressed Andrews when he convinced the British officials to accept greater responsibility and take a more vigorous role in the enforcement of Prohibition laws.[16]

When General Andrews returned to Washington, he remembered Anslinger's administrative abilities. He took Anslinger with him to

[15] He also supervised all activities relative to the extension of American trade, American shipping, immigration, and "other matters of importance to the United States government." "Statement of Training and Experience of Harry J. Anslinger," File "Correspondence 1929," Box 3, AP.

[16] For information on Anslinger's assignment in the Bahamas, see "Altoona Man Directing Fight Against Narcotics Smugglers," undated article; Frank Buckley, "Dynamic Destroyer of Drug Rings: Harry J. Anslinger, Commissioner of Narcotics," undated article; and "Native Altoonan Handles Big Job Combatting Dope," June 26, 1939, all in Box 5, Scrapbook 1-B, 1930-1944, AP.

organize and work as Chief of the newly created Division of Foreign Control in the Prohibition Unit. As Chief, Anslinger's primary duty was to carry out the provisions of the London arrangement he had helped to negotiate. In what was a job tailor-made for the former consul, Anslinger applied his diplomatic approach as a solution to ameliorating the smuggling of illegal liquor into the United States. He secured additional treaties affecting Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Vancouver, Cuba, and Antwerp. In 1926 and 1927, as a delegate to conferences in London and Paris, he dealt with the control of smuggling through international agreements and exchanges of information. In 1929 he was rewarded for his work by a promotion, effective October 30, to the post of Assistant Commissioner of Prohibition in the Division of Foreign Control to oversee the Narcotics Control Board at an annual salary of $6,500.[17]

Anslinger's responsibilities in Foreign Control were not limited to the enforcement of Prohibition. He also was assigned to study the international aspects of the fight against narcotics smuggling, which had increasingly become a matter of concern to governments around the world. Since the passage of the Harrison Narcotic Act in 1914, subsequent laws had been enacted which further defined and restricted the use of narcotics in the United States. Prompted by international treaty obligations to control the flow of opium, and aided by the efforts of Dr. Hamilton Wright who believed in the total elimination of narcotics except for medical purposes, the Harrison Act was intended primarily as a revenue measure.[18]

Enforcement of the act was assigned to the Bureau of Internal Revenue in the Treasury Department and would remain there until October 1919, when the Volstead Act was passed. With the added

[17] Secretary of Treasury Andrew W. Mellon requested of the Secretary of State that Anslinger be "detailed to the Treasury Department for a temporary period commencing July 3, 1926, in order that he might accompany Hon. L.C. Andrews, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in charge of Customs, Coast Guard, and Prohibition, to England." Mellon to Secretary of State, July 6, 1926, File "Correspondence 1926," Box 3, AP.

[18] An act of Feb. 9, 1909, limited the importation of opium to medicinal use only but contained no enforcement measures. For a more comprehensive account of American drug legislation relative to international policies in the early decades of the twentieth century, see David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotic Control* (New York, 1973), 24-53; and Arnold H. Taylor, *American Diplomacy and the Narcotics Traffic, 1909-1939* (Durham, 1969).

burden of enforcing Prohibition, Treasury officials realized that the existing bureaucratic apparatus was inadequate for prosecuting both narcotics and liquor law violations. A special committee appointed by Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo recommended the creation of separate agencies, one to handle the Harrison Act, the other to enforce Prohibition. It was anticipated that these agencies would solve administrative problems while providing the Treasury Department with efficient and effective enforcement. Throughout the 1920s, however, corruption—particularly widespread in the Prohibition unit, which relied on political patronage to fill agents' positions—and an emphasis on the enforcement of Prohibition made coordination between the narcotics and Prohibition agencies all but impossible. To achieve more efficient enforcement and greater coordination, more extensive bureaucratic reshuffling was required.[19]

In 1930, Congressman Stephen G. Porter of Pennsylvania introduced legislation for a new and independent Bureau of Narcotics.[20] With only three inconsequential amendments pertaining to language, H.R. 11143 was passed by the Senate in early June. Just a few days later, on June 9, 1930, President Herbert Hoover signed the bill into law. After sixteen years of co-existing in the same agency, narcotics and liquor law enforcement finally were separated into distinct bureaus. The act created a Bureau of Narcotics within the Treasury Department. A commissioner, appointed by the president with the consent of the Senate, would run the Bureau. The duties of the new commissioner were primarily to enforce the Harrison Act, with powers conferred upon him as provided in the Narcotic Drugs Import-Export Act pertinent to the regulation of narcotic drugs.

Upon the recommendation of Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, Hoover named Anslinger as acting commissioner on July 1, 1930. The selection of Anslinger did not come as a complete surprise, for he had been under consideration since late spring. His hometown newspaper, the *Altoona Mirror*, praised his informal candidacy but

[19] Laurence F. Schmeckebier, *The Bureau of Prohibition: Its History, Activities and Organization* (Washington, 1929), 52; and Musto, *The American Disease*, 135-50, 183-207.

[20] See U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Ways and Means, *Bureau of Narcotics Hearings before the Committee on Ways and Means on H.R. 10561.* 71st Cong., 2nd sess., 1930. Also see letter from Secretary Mellon to Harry J. Anslinger, July 1, 1930, OPM File.

noted that Anslinger was low-key about his chances and "was not actively seeking the part."[21]

During the summer of 1930 the White House received dozens of letters commending Anslinger's work and recommending that Hoover keep him on as commissioner. In the first two weeks of July, for example, California state senator Sanborn Young wrote Hoover twice to "express my appreciation of your appointment of Harry J. Anslinger as Acting Commissioner" and "the gratitude of all of us who are interested in this cause [narcotics enforcement]." Young added that he "greatly hope[d]" the appointment "will be made permanent."[22] Many letters of support arrived from other state politicians, U.S. Senators, Republican party workers, and private citizens. The appeals worked to good effect, for on September 23, 1930, Hoover officially appointed Anslinger Chief of the Bureau of Narcotics in the Treasury Department.[23] By this time Anslinger also had gained the support of the National Association of Retail Druggists (NARD), the American Medical Association, and the Hearst publishing empire. Congressional allies consisted of several key people, including Fiorello H. LaGuardia, who regarded Anslinger as a "most efficient commissioner who is building a real service of competent men."[24]

On December 9 the Senate Committee on Finance voted to report favorably on the nomination. Anslinger's confirmation appeared all but certain until one week later, when Senator Royal S. Copeland asked that the nomination be postponed until the next executive session. For two days Copeland delayed Anslinger's nomination until he was satisfied that the candidate was deserving. Speaking on the Senate floor just before Congress adjourned for Christmas recess, he explained that he requested the delay in order to convince himself of Anslinger's qualifications. As a physician and the Health Commissioner of New York prior to his election, Copeland held some

[21] "Urge Altoonan as Narcotics Chief," *Altoona Mirror*, May 8, 1930.

[22] Sanborn Young to Herbert Hoover, July 6, 1920, Box 416, Herbert Hoover Papers (Herbert Hoover Presidential Library); and Young to Hoover, July 11, 1920, File "Correspondence 1930," Box 3, AP.

[23] "President Announces Two Appointments," Sept. 24, 1940, Box 54A, Herbert Hoover Papers.

[24] U.S. Congress, House, "Remarks of Congressman Fiorello H. LaGuardia," 71st Cong., 3rd sess., Dec. 5, 1930, *Congressional Record*, *74*:274.

concerns about a person with no medical background being named narcotics commissioner. On December 18 Copeland ended the delay when he stated in his address

> I have had a visit with Mr. Anslinger and made investigation of certain criticisms which had been brought to my attention. I am satisfied after due consideration, that the appointment is a worthy and proper one, and I move that the nomination be confirmed.

It is not certain whether Anslinger was able to reassure the senator that his lack of medical expertise would not hinder his ability to perform as commissioner, or if Copeland was impressed with the Bureau's seizure of a million dollars' worth of narcotic drugs the day before. If Anslinger was grandstanding with a timely seizure, it was effective. In fact, it made such an impact on Copeland that he had an account of the raid in the *Washington Herald* inserted in the *Congressional Record*, commenting that "This commendable act is evidence that Mr. Anslinger is going to make an effective and useful commissioner."[25]

It had taken Anslinger only a decade to rise from a clerk in the consular service at The Hague to Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. By the time he was appointed, he had done intelligence work for the State Department in Europe and enforced Prohibition for the Treasury in the Bahamas. At thirty-eight he was a youthful but experienced bureaucrat with definite ideas on narcotics policies and law enforcement. Neither Senator Copeland nor anyone else could have known in 1930 that Harry Anslinger, more than any other individual, would dominate federal drug policy for the next three decades.

The 1930s would be crucial years for the new commissioner for several reasons. First, since he was the top administrator of a specially created Narcotics Bureau, every policy he instituted would be subject to public scrutiny, if not criticism. Second, because the legislation setting up his agency was a reaction to the widespread corruption in the Prohibition Bureau, it was imperative that his agents maintained

[25] "Senate Confirms Harry Anslinger," *Altoona Mirror*, Dec. 20, 1930; and U.S. Congress, Senate, "Senator Royal S. Copeland on the confirmation of Harry J. Anslinger," 71st Cong., 3rd sess., Dec. 18, 1930, *Congressional Record*, *74*:1043.

high moral and ethical standards. This formative period was also significant in that it was necessary for the Bureau to recruit and train agents skilled in investigating and prosecuting narcotics cases both within and outside the borders of the United States. No other agency had focused exclusively on enforcement of this nature before.

In 1930 no one foresaw that during the next three decades Anslinger and the FBN would become involved in diverse activities that would extend far beyond the scope of the Bureau's original mandate. During his career at the FBN, Anslinger dealt with narcotics traffickers, as was his charge, but he also chased underworld criminals, cracked an illegal ring of racetrack odds-makers, played an active role in the intelligence community, and by the 1950s exerted influence in political circles. Commissioner Anslinger would not achieve the level of notoriety that J. Edgar Hoover did, but many of his accomplishments were no less consequential.

Unlike Hoover, Anslinger operated successfully on a world stage. In order to combat drug traffic effectively, Anslinger and the FBN had to establish working relationships with foreign governments. To that end, Anslinger involved the FBN in the intergovernmental organization known by the acronym "INTERPOL." Essentially a global police network, INTERPOL originated in 1914 to facilitate the apprehension of criminals who evaded police forces that had no legal authority beyond their national borders. Through the 1930s, when INTERPOL wanted to enlarge its membership, the United States approached the unique agency with cautious consideration. INTERPOL was eager to have the United States as a member, but Hoover, America's preeminent and most domineering lawman, was reluctant to join. When he was about to acquiesce in 1938, after membership was authorized by Congress, Hitler's Nazis began storming through Europe, and Hoover severed all connection with INTERPOL.[26]

In 1946 the United States finally did join, but when the new communist government in Czechoslovakia demanded in 1950 that INTERPOL aid it in returning ten refugees who had fled to West

[26] U.S. Department of Justice, *A Guide to Interpol: The International Criminal Police Organization in the United States*, Report of the National Institute of Justice (Washington, Aug. 1985), 19.

Germany, Hoover vehemently objected to American participation in the organization. Arguably the most powerful policeman in the world, Hoover considered such a request inappropriate and feared that it would encourage further political exploitation by other Soviet satellites.[27] Because INTERPOL was so potentially valuable in illicit drug trafficking, however, Anslinger continued an informal association with it until 1958, when the Attorney General designated the Treasury Department as the representative of the United States. With Hoover no longer a delegate, Anslinger readily acknowledged INTERPOL as a developing but important switchboard of information.

Anslinger had been aware of the benefits of exchanging information on an international level long before the United States formally joined INTERPOL in 1958. In 1931 he organized and coordinated for eight years a "Committee of One Hundred," a highly secret panel to function as a "mini" INTERPOL of chief narcotics enforcement officers from London, Cairo, Ottawa, Rotterdam, Berlin, and Paris.[28] The committee remained operative until 1939, when World War II disrupted European and global affairs, but Anslinger always held a special interest in the concept of "narcotics intelligence." It was for that reason that in 1958 INFORM, a private intelligence organization, recommended that Anslinger be appointed to a committee, along with "General Fellers, General Albert Wedemeyer and . . . that great patriot, J. Edgar Hoover, to investigate problems in the chain of communication with the White House, State, and Defense."[29] Two years later Anslinger was recognized by one private foundation as the "strongest, toughest, and most competent intelligence authority in the United States."[30]

[27] *A Guide to Interpol*, 19; and Tom Tullet, *Inside Interpol* (New York, 1965), 60.

[28] "Committee of One Hundred," 1931, in File "Initiation, Awards, Articles by Anslinger," Box 1, AP.

[29] Newsletter from J. Edward Johnston, Jr., to INFORM subscribers, July 19, 1958, File "Correspondence 1958," Box 2, AP.

[30] Special letter to ICI Trustees and Supporters, May 10, 1961, File "Correspondence 1961," Box 2, AP.

At least since 1920, when he communicated information from the diplomatic corps at The Hague to Buffalo attorney William J. Donovan, Anslinger had an appreciation for the value of intelligence. See William J. Donovan to Harry Anslinger, Aug. 11, 1920, File "Correspondence 1921," Box 2, AP.

On Dec. 15, 1941, Herbert Gaston of the Treasury Department reported to Secretary

Anslinger's sensitivity to international affairs and his tapping of worldwide intelligence sources helped the United States in several instances. One of the most important examples of Anslinger's foresightedness was his anticipation, several years before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, that global war would have an adverse effect on the flow and distribution of narcotics used for medicinal purposes. Anslinger adopted plans to insure that the Bureau of Narcotics would be able to do its part in a war effort. In 1935 he reported to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morganthau that the current supply of narcotics, which was entirely in the hands of retailers, would last only until January 1937. The federal government had no supply at all. If the United States was drawn into war at that time, shortage was imminent and inevitable. To counter the threat, Anslinger recommended that the federal government order 169,000 pounds of opium for 1936, of which 30,000 pounds would be held on reserve in London or Amsterdam. Morgenthau agreed with Anslinger's reserve plan; he approved an order for 130,000 pounds of opium to be distributed among retailers and an additional 50,000 pounds to be kept in the Treasury's vaults in Washington.[31]

In the next few years Anslinger made purchases of the precious pain-killer drug from sellers in Turkey, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Afghanistan. By 1940 the Narcotics Bureau had stockpiled 300 tons of opium in the Treasury vaults in Washington, which had become vacant when the gold reserves were transferred to Ft. Knox. Normally seventy-seven tons of cured opium were legally imported annually; Anslinger had hoarded enough to last nearly four years. In December 1941 he testified before the House Appropriations Committee that in addition to making the various opium derivatives available for American civilians and armed forces personnel, the FBN also was

Henry Morgenthau that Donovan requested Anslinger take a job full-time in connection with some intelligence work. Anslinger was willing to offer his services but only on a part-time basis, fearing that there were too many important problems in narcotics. Apparently, Morgenthau did not consider Anslinger indispensable to the Bureau and replied sardonically, "Let him [Donovan] have him." See "Treasury Department Conference," Dec. 15, 1941, Henry Morgenthau Diary, pp. 36-37, Box 473, Henry Morgenthau Papers (Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library).

[31] "Meeting in Secretary Morgenthau's office," Nov. 22, 1935, Morgenthau Diary, Book 12, p. 137.

supplying the "medical needs of alot of our friends." In particular he referred to South America, the Netherlands Indies, Russia, and other areas of the world formerly supplied by European manufacturing countries. But even the casualties suffered by Allied armies did not exhaust the Bureau's 300-ton opium stockpile, much of which was still intact after the war.[32] Some of the drug was allocated for use at veterans' hospitals; the unused supply remained locked in the Treasury vaults. The effect of Anslinger having virtually cornered the opium market during the war years was staggering: the price soared an incredible 300 percent.

Though Anslinger was not a politician in the purest sense, his influence in formulating and enforcing narcotics laws often brought him into contact with official Washington. By the late 1940s, Anslinger's notion that narcotics addiction and communism were synonymous, inseparable evils made it difficult to keep the Narcotics Bureau out of politics. Consequently, as he divulged in his book *The Murderers*, he once found himself caught in the middle of a tense and awkward situation.

In this particular incident a narcotics addict, whom Anslinger did not insist should be sent to the federal hospital in Lexington, was one of the most influential members of Congress. He was described by Anslinger (anonymously) as the head of one of the most powerful Congressional committees whose "decisions and statements helped to shape and direct the destiny of the United States and the free world."[33] The man was Senator Joseph McCarthy. On discovering that McCarthy was a confirmed morphine addict who vehemently resisted help to control his addiction, Anslinger was fearful that, because of McCarthy's role in sensitive issues, there was an "imminent danger

[32] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Treasury Department Appropriations Report for 1943, Hearings*, 77th Cong., 2nd sess., 1943, p. 160. According to former agent and New York District Supervisor George Belk, some of the opium still remains in those vaults. Interview with George Belk, Jan. 7, 1987, Washington, D.C.

[33] Anslinger and Oursler, *The Murderers*, 181-82. In an undated newspaper clipping in the Anslinger Papers, entitled "Witness of Reform," Anslinger was sharply criticized for his inconsistent position on ambulatory treatment for addicts. Described as the "darling of the 'treat-em-tough school of narcotics suppression,' " Anslinger was criticized for admitting to arranging a continuous supply of drugs—the 'feeding station' technique—for a "morphine-addicted Congressman who was not prosecuted and in fact was permitted to continue functioning as a lawmaker."

that the fact would become known," which would do irreversible damage to the integrity of the American government.

Anslinger instructed agents to contact McCarthy to persuade him to accept medical treatment. When McCarthy flatly refused any suggestions to seek help, Anslinger confronted the addict himself. McCarthy was intractable; he defied Anslinger to cut off his source of supply and threatened to go directly to the pushers if the Narcotics Bureau interfered with his habit. Realizing the power McCarthy wielded and the potential for public scandal that Anslinger feared would embarrass the country, Anslinger agreed not to force McCarthy into hospitalization or to expose him. Instead, Anslinger secured a pledge from him not to go to the pushers; in return, McCarthy would be supplied with all the drugs he needed. Anslinger was uncomfortable with the arrangement but rationalized his action on the premise that he was acting out of loyalty to his country. He also justified maintaining the addict's habit because he could control the supply, since the prescriptions would be filled by Anslinger's own personal pharmacist.

Anslinger protected the identity of the influential McCarthy until the most publicized anti-communist in the country died in 1957 at the age of forty-seven. The official cause of death was listed as acute hepatitis, or inflammation of the liver, cause unknown. None of McCarthy's biographers has given any indication that they were aware of his addiction to morphine. In the latest and most comprehensive study of McCarthy, David M. Oshinsky also accepted alcoholism as a contributing cause of death and noted that in 1956 McCarthy was treated at the Bethesda Naval Hospital "for a variety of ailments: hepatitis, cirrhosis, delirium tremens, and the removal of a fatty tumor from his leg."[34] When Anslinger's trusted druggist leaked the story

[34] Maxine Cheshire, "Drugs and Washington, D.C.," *Ladies Home Journal* 95 (Dec. 1978), 180-82. Cheshire confirmed the Anslinger-McCarthy "agreement" with retired narcotics agents and Will Oursler, who concurred with the agents on McCarthy's addiction that "Yes, I'm sure that that is correct."

In addition to Oshinsky's *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy* (New York, 1983), 502-6, see Richard H. Rovere, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York, 1959); Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge, 1967); Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear: Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate* (Lexington, 1970); Richard M. Friend, *Men Against McCarthy* (New York, 1976); and Thomas C. Reeves,

to a syndicated columnist, the commissioner threatened the reporter with the Harrison Act's two-year jail provision for anyone revealing the narcotics records of a drugstore. On the day McCarthy died, Anslinger wrote: "I thanked God for relieving me of my burden."[35]

While the commissioner was instrumental in sustaining McCarthy's illegal morphine habit, the FBN was persistently trying to expose what Anslinger believed was the primary source of drug trafficking in the United States. Over a thirty-year period, from 1930 to 1960, when few people seriously considered the concept of organized crime, Anslinger's agents were continually arresting people connected with syndicate or criminal organizations.[36] From breaking up the Lonnie Affronti drug syndicate in Kansas City in 1931 to the conviction of Vito Genovese in 1960, Anslinger demonstrated repeatedly that the Bureau of Narcotics was not reluctant to penetrate the "invisible empire" of the "Mafia." Nor did Anslinger concentrate solely on mob activites within the United States.

The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy: A Biography (New York, 1982).

Former senior agent John T. Cusack, who was with the Narcotics Bureau from 1947-1978 and served as Chief Counsel on Congressman Charles B. Rangel's House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control from 1980-1987, also acknowledged that morphine was prescribed for McCarthy by a physician. According to Cusack, Anslinger wanted his pharmicist to dispense the drug to McCarthy so the commissioner could exert some measure of control. Interview with John T. Cusack, Jan. 6, 1987, Washington, D.C.

[35] Anslinger and Oursler, *The Murderers*, 182.

[36] According to Anslinger, the top ten bosses in descending order of importance were Vito Genovese, Guiseppe (Joe) Profaci, Gaetano (Thomas) Lucchese, Carmine Galente, Santo Sorge, Joseph ("Little Rabbit") Biondi, Joseph Bonanno, Vincenzo Gutroni, Salvatore Mannarino, and Santos Trafficante. See "Commissioner Sued for Libel," *Altoona Mirror*, Jan. 29, 1965.

For scholarly discussions of the controversy pertaining to the origin, structure, and existence of the "Mafia," see Albini, *The American Mafia*; Annelise Anderson, *The Business of Organized Crime: A Cosa Nostra Family* (Stanford, 1979); Alan Block, *East Side—West Side: Organizing Crime in New York, 1930-1950* (Swansea, Wales, 1980); Donald R. Cressey, *Theft of a Nation: The Structure and Operations of Organized Crime in America* (New York, 1969); Philip Jenkins and Gary Potter, *The City and the Syndicate: Organized Crime in Philadelphia* (Lexington, 1985); Nelli, *The Business of Crime*; and Peter Reuter, *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Visible Hand* (Cambridge, 1983).

It is significant that during the 1951 Senate Investigation of Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce (more commonly known as the Kefauver Committee) two of the Bureau's senior agents, Charles Siragusa and George H. White (who also functioned as an investigator for the Committee), gave testimony supporting the theory that crime was syndicate-organized. See William Howard Moore, *The Kefauver Committee and the Politics of Crime* (Columbia, 1971).

When Bureau agent Charles Siragusa traced the distribution routes of illegal heroin coming into the United States, Anslinger knew that stopping the traffic would require infiltrating internationally organized drug rings. In 1953 Siragusa identified Beirut, Lebanon, and Turkey as the points of origin for most of the opium that was shipped into Europe by the Sicilian Mafia. From locations in Italy it was transported to French-Corsican associates in Marseilles, who converted the poppy extract into heroin and morphine. From that French port city the drugs were smuggled to Montreal, Canada, and distributed from there to New York and other major cities in the eastern United States.

By 1960 the Bureau had arrested Angelo Tuminaro of New York and French trafficker Etienne Tarditi, both of whom were involved in the actual distribution. But it was the arrest of Jewish gangster Harry Stromberg (alias Nig Rosen), whose power bases were in Philadelphia and New York, that effectively disrupted what has since been popularized as the "French Connection." Stromberg was not only the brains of the Marseilles-to-Montreal connection; he paid for the heroin through financial machinations involving anonymously numbered Swiss bank accounts. Once Stromberg's heroin reached the United States, it was sold to such *mafiosi* as Vito Genovese and Frank Scalise, who distributed it as far south as Miami. With the arrest of Stromberg, the financier of an international drug ring and former strong-arm man for Lepke Buchalter, the Bureau had disrupted at least temporarily a major supply of heroin. In federal court Stromberg was convicted of violating federal narcotics laws, but he received only a sentence of five years in prison and a fine of $10,000, a ridiculous sum for a man who was running a $20 million-a-year business.[37]

As late as 1962, contrary to Anslinger's theory, some law enforcement officials accepted the possibility that there might have been a

[37] "6 Imprisoned by U.S. in Narcotics Ring; Stromberg, Leader Gets 5 Years and Fine," *New York Times*, April 24, 1958, p. 27; "Letter to H.J. Anslinger from James C. Ryan," July 26, 1957, File "Correspondence 1956-1957," Box 2, AP. See also Jenkins and Potter, *The City and the Syndicate*, 13-23. In addition to the official charge of conspiracy to violate federal narcotics laws, Stromberg also was involved in labor racketeering, gambling, extortion, and trafficking in heroin. U.S. Congress, Senate, *Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, Hearings on S. Res. 278*, 88th Cong., 1st and 2nd sess., 1963-1964, p. 787.

loose association of criminals operating in various cities throughout the United States, but those same officials maintained there was no evidence of a tightly knit nationwide syndicate controlling or coordinating illegal operations. Indeed, one of the most respected adherents to this theory was J. Edgar Hoover, who wrote in the January 1962 issue of *Law Enforcement Bulletin* that "No single individual or coalition of racketeers dominates organized crime . . . , but that there were loose connections among controlling groups."[38]

Several hypotheses have been advanced as to why Hoover refused to acknowledge the existence of a "Mafia" while his counterpart in the Narcotics Bureau insisted that there was such an organization. In his study of organized crime as a corporate venture, Donald R. Cressey argues that a jealous rivalry between Hoover and Anslinger prevented any interdepartmental cooperation.[39] Since Anslinger believed the "Mafia" existed, the theory goes, Hoover denied it. Cressey himself questions this hypothesis, and not without justification. Whatever Hoover's reasons were for steering the FBI away from the "Mafia" (and they are not within the purview of this study), there is no evidence that a rivalry was the cause.[40] What is significant is Anslinger's dogged pursuit of "Mafia" drug traffickers even when FBI support in that effort was lacking.

In addition to its regulatory and enforcement responsibilities, the Bureau of Narcotics also was involved in highly classified "research." During the war years Anslinger not only implemented the stockpiling of opium, he also headed a special group within the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) that was created essentially to find a drug that would induce people to tell the truth against their will. Notations in Bureau agent George White's diary confirmed that he and Anslinger conducted experiments with narcotics on ways to control human behavior that would break down the psychological defense of enemy agents

[38] J. Edgar Hoover, in *Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Jan. 1962, pp. 8-11.

[39] Cressey, *Theft of the Nation*, 21-23.

[40] Several agents did admit that there was a rivalry between the two law enforcement agencies in the field, but contended that there was a more harmonious liaison between the bureaus at the administrative levels. See especially J. Edgar Hoover to Harry Anslinger, Aug. 1, 1933, File "Correspondence 1933," Box 3; and Hoover to Anslinger, June 3, 1970, File "Correspondence 1967-70," Box 2, AP.

when subjected to questioning by American intelligence officers.[41] "We are trying to discover a truth drug," Anslinger later admitted in a 1968 interview, "by using peyote and sodium amytal."[42] When neither of those drugs proved effective, they resorted to marijuana, the "killer weed." Entries in White's early diaries stamped "SECRET" in bold red letters show that experiments with a marijuana derivative he identified as tetrahydro-cannabinol acetate were begun in Washington in 1943. On at least one occasion White volunteered himself to smoke a cigarette laced with the chemical when no other subjects could be found. According to the agent, the result of the test was to "knock myself out."[43]

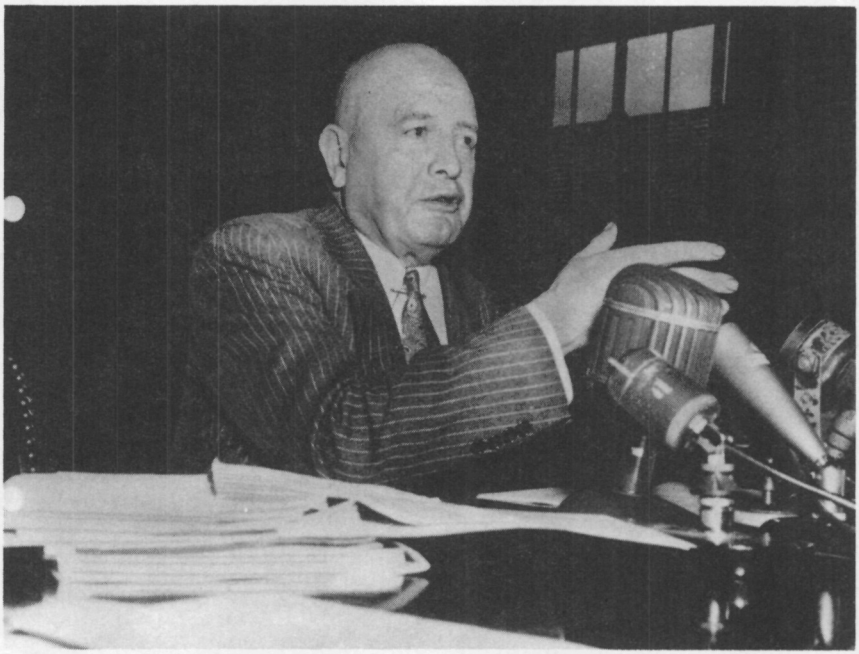
Acts of patriotism—including agents working for the OSS during the war years and Anslinger himself assisting in recruiting these men—are well documented, but it is not so clear as to what part Anslinger played a few years later when Dr. Sidney Gottlieb, a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) research chemist, approached the commissioner about "borrowing" George White (and probably Charles Siragusa) to conduct drug experiments. Although Harry Anslinger had been deceased two years when Senator Edward M. Kennedy's subcommittee opened an investigation into the CIA's drug experimentation program, better known as MK-ULTRA, and so was spared the embarrassment of having publicly to explain his motives, he had to know at the time of his death that the secret project would soon be discovered.[44] Had Anslinger testified, he might well have provided answers to lingering questions such as the nature of Siragusa's relationship with the CIA, why George White was taken off the FBN payroll, how many FBN agents were involved in MK-ULTRA, and how many innocent people became involuntary human guinea pigs. It also would have been possible to question Anslinger about the role his agents played in other CIA-related extracurricular activities.

[41] George White's diaries, currently held by the Perham Electronics Museum, Los Altos Hills, California, provide valuable insight into White's dual role in narcotics enforcement and intelligence operations. John M. Crewdson, "Files Show Tests for Truth Drugs Began in O.S.S.," *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1977, p. 1.

[42] James Sterba, "The Politics of Pot," *Esquire* 75 (Aug. 1968), 60.

[43] Crewdson, "Files Show Tests for Truth Drugs Began in O.S.S."

[44] See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Human Resources, *Human Drug Testing by the CIA, 1977, Hearings, before the Subcommittee on Health and Scientific Research of the Committee on Human Resources, on S. 1893*, 95th Cong., 1st sess., 1977, pp. 201-2.



Harry J. Anslinger testifying before a congressional appropriations committee in the early 1950s. From the Historical Collections and Labor Archives, Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.

That agents in the Federal Bureau of Narcotics were deeply involved in certain CIA affairs is beyond dispute. The activities of FBN agents White and Siragusa in clandestine operations from the early years of the OSS in the 1940s through the 1960s amply justify suspicions about their roles in numerous covert projects. Unfortunately, their links to some of these operations and their association with other agencies are difficult to establish conclusively. It is, however, evident that both independently and in cooperation with the CIA, Anslinger and the Narcotics Bureau played various roles in the federal government's endeavors to preserve national security.

Throughout his three decades as commissioner, Anslinger consistently acted as an efficient and competent bureaucrat with a talent for survival whose interests were not limited to the control of narcotics. He was a multi-dimensional figure who, with several of his agents, made up vital elements in the formation and operation of the nation's

intelligence activities.[45] Anslinger's contributions to the American intelligence network have been largely overshadowed by his part in shaping such important anti-drug legislation as the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937, the Boggs Act in 1951, and the Narcotic Control Act in 1956. Such an emphasis is understandable, for Anslinger realized the importance of domestic enforcement and welcomed media attention on FBN successes in the United States.

Anslinger also was an astute politician. In 1936, an election year, when southwestern politicians especially wanted the government to do something about the marijuana problem, Anslinger endorsed the Marijuana Tax Act. He also sought legislation that would outlaw what he and other trained professionals—physicians, botanists, chemists, and jurists—perceived to be a threatening and dangerous drug. In 1936, and at other times, Anslinger was looking to protect his and the Bureau's own interests as any resourceful bureaucrat would under similar circumstances. He responded to congressmen because it was politically prudent to do so. Notwithstanding Roosevelt's proclamation that the narcotics commissioner should not be a political appointee, Anslinger's position was tenuous in the early years of his appointment. His bureaucratic instinct for self-preservation was hardly unprecedented.

Anslinger's power derived in part from his bureaucratic modesty. As one observer has pointed out, Anslinger "promised no budget increase and indicated an unwillingness to allow his agents to spend great amounts on marihuana cases."[46] Throughout his career he consistently requested only moderate increases in appropriations, once commenting, "We have enough funds and men."[47] Nor was Anslinger

[45] Recent authors who have dealt with Anslinger at length have neglected Anslinger's intelligence gathering contributions by limiting their inquiries to Anslinger's role as commissioner of the FBN. See Richard J. Bonnie and Charles H. Whitebread, II, *The Marihuana Conviction: A History of Marihuana Prohibition in the United States* (Charlottesville, 1974); Jerome C. Himmelstein, *The Strange Career of Marijuana: Politics and Ideology of Drug Control in America* (Westport, 1983); Rufus King, *The Drug Hang-up: America's Fifty-Year Folly* (New York, 1972); H. Wayne Morgan, *Drugs in America: A Social History, 1800-1980* (Syracuse, 1981); Musto, *The American Disease*; and Sloman, *Reefer Madness*.

[46] John F. Galliher and Allynn Walker, "The Puzzle of the Social Origins of the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937," *Journal of Social Problems* 24 (Feb. 1977), 374.

[47] Benjamin DeMott, "The Great Narcotics Muddle," *Harper's Magazine* 224 (March 1963), 47.

an "expansionist" out to establish a law enforcement agency that would rival J. Edgar Hoover's FBI in size, prestige, and notoriety. Contrary to evidence suggesting there was a rivalry, irregular correspondence between Hoover and Anslinger from 1933 to 1970 indicates a relationship based on mutual respect and admiration. In light of the nature of Anslinger's and the FBN's involvement in clandestine activities, it would be unusual and self-defeating for Anslinger to draw unneeded attention to himself. None of several agents interviewed by the author, including those who were in supervisory or administrative positions either in the old Federal Bureau of Narcotics or the new Drug Enforcement Administration, felt that Anslinger and Hoover ever engaged in "one-up-manship." In Anslinger's thirty-two years as narcotics commissioner, the Bureau's force "grew" by approximately 200 agents, from 180 in 1930 to just under 400 in 1962; never did the budget exceed $4,000,000. These were the institutional characteristics of a bureaucrat, not an empire-builder in the traditional sense who sought huge appropriations to employ thousands of agents.

But in a different context Anslinger greatly expanded the Narcotics Bureau's powers well beyond its official responsibilities. At least since the end of World War II, when Anslinger propagandized and greatly exaggerated the threat of a communist invasion of narcotics in the same style that he capitalized on and promoted the marijuana scare in the 1930s, the FBN was involved in numerous sensitive operations shrouded in secrecy. When the Bureau began to branch out into so many unrelated activities—protecting McCarthy, moving into Cuba in the early 1960s, and collaborating with the CIA in drug experiments—an empire of a different sort was established. In the process of enlarging his domain, Anslinger resorted to such underhanded tactics as entrapment and legal harassment, threatening suspects with indictments, and generally intimidating those who opposed Bureau policies. Alfred Lindesmith, a sociologist at the University of Indiana, for example, was under constant surveillance because of his criticisms of Bureau policies, especially its treatment of drug addicts.[48]

[48] Anslinger's successor, Henry L. Giordano, refused to discuss the Bureau "interest" in Lindesmith's research. Interview with Commissioner Henry L. Giordano, March 27, 1985, Silver Spring, Maryland.

As a "preservationist," Anslinger manipulated annual addiction figures (high rates to show that there was a problem and thereby a need for the Bureau, or lower rates to demonstrate the Bureau's effectiveness), distorted the "problem" of drug use among the juvenile population, and advanced unproven links between drugs (especially marijuana) and crime. As a figure of both national homage and controversy, he was passionately defended by supporters who viewed his advocacy of repressive sanctions as a deterrent. They saw him as a dedicated opponent of the insidious drug traffic that threatened to weaken the character of the American people. His ardent belief in strong legislation and vigorous enforcement won their approval, as did his opposition to people they considered to be high-minded theorists and "bleeding-heart" humanitarians who advocated leniency and rehabilitation for drug users.

As commissioner, Harry Anslinger was the dominant figure in shaping federal narcotics legislation for the thirty-two years he headed the Federal Bureau of Narcotics. He endured attempts to merge and reorganize the FBN with other enforcement agencies in the Treasury Department and survived repeated efforts by vexed detractors to oust him from office. Although volatile international relations, domestic politics, economic conditions, and public opinion had at varying times adversely affected his anti-drug policies, Anslinger not only remained in power but continually extended his sphere of influence and affirmed his autonomy.

His determination to disrupt the apparatus of international criminal conspiracies required Bureau agents to thwart smuggling rings from remote field offices in Asian, Middle Eastern, European, and Latin American countries—in essence global "hot spots" where "Anslinger's army" worked undercover to break up the web of distribution points for opium, heroin, cocaine, and marijuana. These were also strategic locations vital to American interests during the Cold War era.

Anslinger no doubt experienced mixed emotions as he anticipated the celebration of his birthday in 1962. On May 20 one of the most controversial men in Washington was seventy years old, the mandatory retirement age for federal government employees. The commissioner submitted his resignation to President John F. Kennedy at that time, but since his successor was not immediately decided, Anslinger agreed to stay in his $18,500-a-year post until one could be

named.[49] In early May 1962 Anslinger said he had given no thought to retiring and cited a number of instances in which other agency heads had remained in office past age seventy. Two months later the *New York Times* reported that he wanted to remain in office past his seventieth birthday. On other occasions, however, he complained of "burnout," and the reader of his personal correspondence is left with the impression that he wished to retire.[50]

Conflicting reports have emerged from the White House regarding the circumstances of Anslinger's retirement. Rufus King, who was a member of the ABA-AMA Joint Committee, stated that Anslinger's fondness for Robert Kennedy was not reciprocated, that the Kennedys detested the commissioner's hard-line approach to law enforcement and wanted him out.[51] But because they suspected Anslinger would vigorously protest being replaced in 1961, President Kennedy and his Attorney General decided to wait for him to reach the mandatory retirement age. Privately that may well have been the case, but

[49] "Narcotics Bureau Head Retiring," *New York Times*, July 2, 1962, p. 2.

[50] Judge Twain Michelsen to H.J. Anslinger, July 20, 1962, Harry J. Anslinger Papers (Harry S Truman Presidential Library); and Frank Cormier, "Narcotics Chief Is Quitting His Post," *DuBois [Pa.] Courier Express*, July 9, 1967; interview with John T. Cusack, Jan. 7, 1987.

[51] Of the five presidents Anslinger served under, he held the greatest admiration for Harry Truman because he was "crisp, a man of decision," but he also had tremendous respect for the Kennedys, in particular the Attorney General. Despite the fact that their political ideologies were incompatible, Anslinger had been impressed with Robert Kennedy since the two met during the McClellan Committee hearings in 1958. Initially it was Kennedy's determination to reverse the increasing crime rates that most appealed to Anslinger. But the commissioner also extolled what he perceived as the Attorney General's fearlessness in going after the "big criminals" or "untouchable" members of the "Mafia."

Anslinger sharply criticized past Attorneys General with whom he had worked (Tom Clark in the Truman administration was the lone exception) because they occasionally "let loose a blast against the underworld" but never followed their words with actions. Compared to these men "who only went half way in their efforts," the commissioner reflected, "Kennedy would go the distance." It may have been a strange alliance between Anslinger and the Attorney General, but the commissioner attributed the conviction of Vito Genovese, John Ormento, Joe Valachi, and Carmine Galente to the resoluteness of Kennedy, who had encouraged the Narcotics Bureau to apprehend them. "One of these days," Anslinger prophesized, "the country will realize what it owes Bobby Kennedy for trying to free the public from the claws and tentacles of these gangsters, racketeers, and hoodlums."

See Harry J. Anslinger, *The Protectors: Narcotics Agents, Citizens, and Officials Against Organized Crime in America* (New York, 1964), 87; and Rufus King, *The Drug Hang-up*, 70.

publicly Pierre Salinger, the White House Press Secretary, insisted that "it was Mr. Anslinger's wish to retire."[52] Especially puzzling was the reaction of Dave Powers, one of Kennedy's top White House aides. In response to an inquiry about the circumstances surrounding the association between the commissioner and the Kennedy administration, Powers stated: "I was with John F. Kennedy from 1946 until that tragic day in Dallas, and I can recall no 'relationship between President Kennedy and Harry Anslinger.'"[53]

Although no longer the dominant force at the Bureau of Narcotics after his retirement in 1962, Anslinger still remained active in current affairs as the United States representative on the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In that capacity he continued to attend annual conferences on international narcotics control in Geneva and other European cities until he retired from the post in 1970. His successor at the FBN, Henry L. Giordano, kept him informed of news from headquarters in Washington, and, of course, he followed with great personal interest the "evolution" of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics to the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) in 1968 when it was transferred to the Department of Justice, and reorganized again as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1973.

The commissioner was far removed from the seat of the federal government, but he was not forgotten by friends and neighbors who had followed his activities in the newspapers over the years. On August 8, 1962, his hometown observed "Harry Anslinger Day" in honor of its most famous citizen. In homage to the commissioner, a picnic was held at the American Legion Park, followed by a testimonial. Joining the townspeople in paying tribute to Anslinger were several public officials, including Giordano; Nicholas Katzenbach, Deputy United States Attorney General; Congressman J. Von Gary, a ranking member of the House Appropriations Committee; and Congressman Jimmy Van Zandt, a personal friend of Anslinger who represented his district. As a demonstration of the town's appreciation of "an outstanding record of achievement . . . skill, perseverance and ingenuity," the town presented Anslinger with a special plaque, which

[52] "Narcotics Commissioner Named," *New York Times*, July 5, 1962, p. 2.
[53] Dave Powers to John C. McWilliams, Sept. 11, 1985.

now hangs as a permanent fixture on the wall in the main corridor of the Blair County Courthouse.[54]

Neither honors nor retirement tempered Anslinger's outspokenness or influenced his views on the drug problem. In a 1968 interview, he continued to categorize marijuana as a deadly drug and castigated those people wanting to legalize the drug or at least to reduce the criminal sanctions against it. "To legalize marijuana would be to legalize slaughter on the highway," he argued. When asked to justify the penalties for marijuana when alcohol, a legal drug, also contributed to traffic fatalities, Anslinger countered laconically with, "Why condone a second hazard?"[55]

In conjunction with the marijuana menace as a problem among young people, Anslinger put the blame squarely on "permissive parents, and college administrators, pusillanimous judiciary officials, do-gooder bleeding hearts and new-breed sociologists with their fluid notions of morality." He also cautioned the American public to be on guard against drug addicts and dealers and an impending drug revolution, which he believed was "nothing less than an assault on the foundation of Western civilization."[56] For that reason he once claimed that "the only persons who frighten me are the hippies."[57]

Anslinger's last years brought ill health and gnawing anxieties. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics had been dismantled completely and was absorbed with another agency to form the new BNDD. Worse, many of the fifty agents whose terminations, resignations, or transfers resulted from the so-called Wurms investigation of the New York City district office in 1968 had been hired while Anslinger was still commissioner.[58] He could not have been personally responsible for

[54] "Hollidaysburg Community Picnic," *Blair Press*, Aug. 7, 1963, p. 8; "H.J. Anslinger Honored at Hollidaysburg Picnic," *Altoona Mirror*, Aug. 9, 1963; and "H.J. Anslinger Plaque Placed in Courthouse," ibid., Aug. 16, 1963.

[55] Ted Humes, *The Crisis in Drugs*, (pamphlet) Saint Francis College (Summer 1969), 9. Anslinger made Hollidaysburg, just south of Altoona, his home after the death of his parents.

[56] Humes, *The Crisis in Drugs*, 9.

[57] Carol Parks, "Harry Jacob Anslinger: Distinguished Citizen," *Town and Gown*, Sept. 1968, p. 47.

[58] Edward J. Epstein, *Agency of Fear: Opiates and Political Power in America* (New York, 1977), 105-6.

Ivan Wurms was involved, but the investigation was led by Andrew C. Tartiglino, of

their activities, but it reflected poorly on top-level administrators in the FBN. His private life was nearly as disconsolate. His wife's debilitating multiple sclerosis less than a year before he left office exacted tremendous emotional and mental anguish. She died in 1961. No doubt that personal trauma accounted for his ambivalence about retirement in 1962. With the exception of an occasional trip abroad, Anslinger spent his retirement years as a widower in his hometown of Hollidaysburg because, he reasoned, "I was born and raised here, these are good people, nice people to talk to in a pleasant town."[59] By 1973 Anslinger began to experience serious physical problems. He had become totally blind and suffered from an enlarged prostate gland which severely limited his mobility. He also was plagued with angina for which he took morphine to dull the pain, an incredible irony for the man who devoted his adult life to the control of such narcotics. He died in November 1975.

Harry Anslinger will be most remembered as the nation's primary force in formulating federal drug laws. But because of the nature of his agents' clandestine activities, Anslinger's Bureau established an international network of intelligence gathering that stretched around the world. For forty years very little happened in the world of drugs or international affairs that Anslinger did not know about. At times it appeared that he was virtually omnipresent. Whether chasing *mafiosi* across Europe, condemning communist aggression in testimony at congressional hearings, or coordinating a nationwide "bust" of pushers and peddlers, the commissioner always took an active role above and beyond Bureau affairs. His policies may have been controversial, and to many unpopular—particularly in retrospect—but this unsung

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the Bureau's internal security unit. Approximately fifty agents were fired, transferred, or resigned. Interviews with Tom Tripodi, who worked for the Narcotics Bureau and the CIA from 1960-1985, July 30, 1987, Alexandria, Virginia; and Thomas G. Byrne, currently Deputy Assistant Administrator in the DEA's Office of Intelligence, Dec. 30, 1987, Washington, D.C.

[59] Humes, *The Crisis in Drugs*, 8-9. Anslinger's wife, Martha, died of a heart attack at her Pine Street home in Hollidaysburg on Oct. 8, 1961. *Altoona Mirror*, Oct. 9, 1961. Prior to her death she suffered from multiple sclerosis and since late 1960 had been confined to her room. Harry J. Anslinger to William McCarthy, Jan. 26, 1961, File "Correspondence 1961," Box 2, AP.

"partner against crime" made a distinct, indelible impression on the history of federal narcotics legislation and intelligence.

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