

Book With A Shock Theory

Hoover Charged With Assassination Cover-Ups

Former FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover may have withheld from the Warren Commission vital information about the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert, and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Why would Hoover have done that? Because he was delighted with the deaths of all three — and may even have played a role in the killings.

That's the shocking premise of a provocative new book, which — though clearly labeled fiction — is so intertwined with real people and actual events that the author's true feelings about Hoover are unmistakable.

The book is called "The Chancellor Manuscript." The author is master storyteller Robert Ludlum, writer of six major bestsellers in the past six years and an author with an impressive reputation for plausibly blending historical fact with speculative intrigue.

In his new book, just published by Dial Press, Ludlum paints a devastating portrait of Hoover, describing him as a monstrous blackmailer, closer in practice to the spirit of Nazism than to the principles of democracy. The book casts Hoover as a man who used the power and prestige of the FBI to compile scurrilous files, often faked, on thousands of political, business, and educational leaders — including Presidents — which he used to twist the nation's leaders to his will.

Through his fictional characters, Ludlum implies that many in Washington knew of Hoover's filthy files, but even the most powerful figures in government and the press hesitated to speak out for fear the files would be turned against them. And there seems little room for doubt that Ludlum's fictional characters reflect his own well-researched conclusions about Hoover. He even suggests

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that because of the fear generated by the files, the full story of Hoover's reign of terror may never be told in any form other than fiction.

Just what is the full story? It's outlined in a conversation the book's hero, writer Peter Chancellor, has with a woman Washington newspaper columnist. Though the conversation is fictional, the reader is left feeling it's chillingly close to what Ludlum learned in preparing his book.

He writes: "She spoke of senators and congressmen and cabinet members made to toe the Hoover line or face the Hoover wrath. She described powerful men weeping, remaining silent when silence was abhorrent to them. She detailed Hoover's actions following the assassinations of both Kennedys and Martin Luther King. His behavior had been obscene, his joy apparent, his responsibility denied."

At one point, the woman says of Hoover: "The press is convinced he withheld damaging evidence from the Warren Commission. God knows

how devastating it was; it might have altered the judgments at Dallas. And Los Angeles and Memphis. We'll never know."

The talk then shifts to Hoover's blackmail tactics: "She outlined Hoover's use of electronic and telephone surveillance; it was worthy of the Gestapo... Tapes had been spliced and edited; guilt had come by remote association, innuendo, hearsay and manufactured evidence."

Says another character, later in the book: "No one knows how far it went. How far it was going. What assassinations could be attributed to Hoover. Or who would be called an enemy next."

The book goes on to suggest that Hoover's evil influence pervaded even the White House, and was strong enough for Hoover to back down three Presidents — Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon — who wanted his resignation.

It implies that Hoover even used blackmail to influence national elections, and there is a clear suggestion that Sen. Edmund Muskie's fast fade from Presidential contention could have been Hoover-induced.

"The Chancellor Manuscript" is about a writer who decides to tell the truth about J. Edgar Hoover, but is forced to write fiction because he cannot possibly document all that he learns.

And it's evident that the reader is meant to regard the writer's plight as being — in many respects — closer to fact than fantasy.

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HOOVER USED FAKE FILES to blackmail powerful government figures.