



The Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover

For five decades, the FBI's famed chief amassed highly personal information on key politicians. These documents, now being released, tell some startling stories.

The government is lifting the lid of secrecy from the confidential files of J. Edgar Hoover—records once so sensitive that the FBI treated them, in one official's words, "like three cabinets full of cancer."

Dealing with Presidents, lawmakers and other political bigwigs, the material ranges from reports of their sexual hanky-panky to accounts of behind-the-scenes infighting—all gathered by agents and sequestered by Hoover in his own office during the nearly half a century in which he headed the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Even top bureau officials were barred from looking at these "official and confidential" files without their chief's permission.

Now, more than 7,000 pages of the documents have been released under the Freedom of Information Act to scholars and others. Many of the allegations are hearsay; many are unproven. Still, though heavily censored, the files are a treasure-trove for historians, providing insights into the operations of one of the country's most powerful agencies from Hoover's appointment in 1924 until his death in 1972.

Among records examined by *U.S. News & World Report*:

- Memos summarizing alleged sexual adventures of John

Kennedy as a naval officer, senator and President, and describing how Hoover handled these reports.

- A thirdhand account of a White House meeting that was described as a stormy session in which Army Counterintelligence Corps (CIC) officials played for Franklin Roosevelt a recording of a supposed sexual liaison between his wife Eleanor and a young GI in a hotel. The sexual-misconduct charge is vehemently denied and remains unproven. The surveillance of Mrs. Roosevelt, however, figured in the near dismantling of the CIC during World War II.

- Memos detailing how Lyndon Johnson sent the bureau on political errands and then demanded that no record be kept of his requests.

- Reports on FBI investigations of alleged homosexual activity by White House and subcabinet officials, including long-buried information on the forced resignation of the State Department's No. 2 man during World War II.

- Accounts of Hoover's secret aid to Thomas Dewey in his losing GOP drive against Harry Truman in 1948, plus critical dossiers on Democratic presidential nominees Adlai Stevenson, beaten by Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956, and George McGovern, who lost to Richard Nixon in 1972.

- Documents describing politically inspired wiretapping conducted by the FBI at the behest of the Truman White House.

After Hoover died, his loyal aides were so nervous about what his files contained that they denied the documents' very existence at first. When newly appointed FBI officials looked into these files in 1975, they were called to account by members of Congress worried that the bureau held dossiers stuffed with the most intimate secrets of their lives. The FBI men explained that the bureau routinely kept information that came into its hands, no matter how personal, farfetched or unsubstantiated, because it might someday help solve a serious crime such as blackmail of a senator or the assassination of a President.

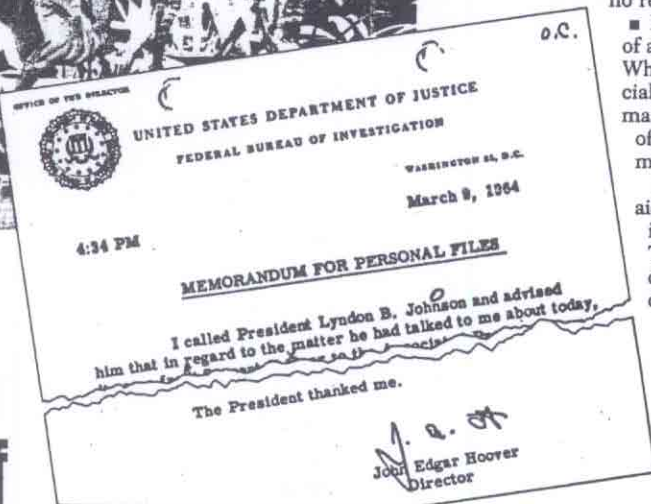
The records examined by the magazine's staff members show that the bureau's instinct for self-protection often dictated its actions. The files also corroborate reports from some of Hoover's ex-aides that he drew on the wealth of defamatory information at his fingertips to curry favor with Presidents and other officials and used the bureau's resources to intimidate persons who criticized him or the FBI.

Even so, the documents available—less than half of Hoover's private files—leave questions unanswered. There are voluminous files on Kennedy but little on Nixon and Eisenhower. Why? Was Johnson alone in demanding that the bureau keep no record of his irregular requests, or did other Chief Executives make similar demands?

The Dossier on JFK

In the 20 years since John F. Kennedy's death, reports of sexual exploits by the late President have been widely published. While Kennedy was living, however, such stories circulated only among a few Washington insiders. All went into Hoover's files, with little attempt to check accuracy.

In July, 1960, when the Massachusetts senator was on the verge of becoming the Democratic nominee for President,



FBI analysts pulled together a nine-page report on him for their chief. One section said:

"As you are aware, allegations of immoral activities on Senator Kennedy's part have been reported to the FBI over the years. . . . They include data reflecting that Kennedy carried on an illicit relationship with another man's wife during World War II; that (probably in January, 1960) Kennedy was 'compromised' with a woman in Las Vegas; and that Kennedy and a world-famous male entertainer had "in the recent past been involved in parties in Palm Springs, Las Vegas and New York City."

The memo further related that JFK and the entertainer were "said" to be the subjects of "affidavits from two mulatto prostitutes in New York" in the possession of *Confidential* magazine, a scandal sheet that flourished from 1955 to 1958 before collapsing under an avalanche of libel suits.

Pet speech. Available files do not indicate whether Hoover conveyed word to Kennedy about these allegations or whether the President-elect was aware of them when he announced on Nov. 10, 1960, two days after his election, that he was asking Hoover to stay on as FBI director. The record does show that when Hoover picked up a report of sexual misconduct by an important politician, he often found occasion to pass the word on. "I know there's no truth to this. I'll never speak of it to anyone," Hoover would promise. "It was one of his favorite speeches, one he gave often to politicians," recalled the late William Sullivan, a longtime aide who had a bitter falling-out with him in 1971.

An August, 1962, memo indicates that the bureau informed Robert Kennedy, who as Attorney General was Hoover's boss, when it received allegations that he "was having an affair with a girl in El Paso." The Attorney General was quoted as replying that he had "never been to El Paso."

The collection of data on John Kennedy did not cease when he became President. On March 20, 1962, bureau officials assembled from their files reports that Judith Campbell, a free-lance artist in Los Angeles, had made a series of telephone calls to President Kennedy's secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, at the White House. Campbell was being watched because of her friendship with two mobsters.

"The nature of the relationship between Campbell and Mrs. Lincoln is not known," a memo to Hoover said, but added: "[deleted] referred to Campbell as the girl who was 'shacking up with John Kennedy in the East.'"

"This is being submitted as the director may desire to bear this information in mind in connection with his forthcoming appointment with the President," a covering letter said.

Hoover and Kennedy lunched together on March 22, but there is no record of what was discussed. The last telephone call from Campbell to the White House was logged a few hours after that session. Still, the FBI kept her under close surveillance. An August, 1962, document told how an FBI agent saw a man enter Campbell's Los Angeles apartment from a balcony. Although the agent witnessed what may have been a burglary in progress, FBI officials decided not to inform the police "in view of the highly sensitive nature of our inquiries concerning Campbell."

Agents vied with each other in providing tidbits on political figures that ranged from corroborated intelligence to outright gossip. A 1940 memo told how Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter was pulling strings with his "stooges in the administration" to influence the appointment of the Secretary of War. Decades were to pass before historians caught up with the bureau's inside knowledge of how politically active Frankfurter was while holding a position supposedly above politics.

Hoover often let his agents know that he appreciated the information. In a letter on June 10, 1958, he wrote: "I certainly appreciate your bringing to my attention personally the many interesting items." On Oct. 29, 1965, he thanked another agent for "advising me of the immoral activity existing in certain circles in Washington, D.C."

Hoover sometimes used these "interesting items" to ingratiate himself with the powers that be. Francis Biddle, Attorney General and Hoover's superior in the Roosevelt administration, recalled later how Hoover had titillated him with "intimate details" about his fellow cabinet members. Likewise, when Johnson was in the White House, Hoover sent him what officials have since described as transcripts of recordings made in civil-rights leader Martin Luther King's hotel rooms.

Many of the reports from agents that Hoover and his aides relied on for the inside gossip they relayed to political leaders ended with the line, "Unless otherwise indicated,

the material set forth above has been obtained from confidential technical means." This was the bureau's euphemism for bugs or wiretaps.

The First Lady and the Sergeant

In 1943, at the height of World War II, FBI officials watched in amazement as the Army's spy-catching arm, the Counterintelligence Corps, was all but dismantled in just a few months. Its headquarters was closed down, agents were reassigned, files were burned. By early 1944, the CIC was hard put to fill an urgent request from General Eisenhower for agents to support the Normandy invasion.

What accounted for such seeming lunacy? Four decades would pass before the story became public. But top FBI leaders received an explanation in a memo dated Dec. 31, 1943, from agent G. C. Burton. Two disgruntled colonels had told him, he reported, that the torpedoing of Army counterintelligence stemmed from a colossal CIC misstep: Its agents had bugged what they portrayed as a liaison between Eleanor Roosevelt and Joseph P. Lash, then 33, an Army Air Forces sergeant under surveillance because of his association with leftist groups.

Burton reported that he was told FDR learned of the eavesdropping and summoned two top Army intelligence officers to the White House at 10 o'clock one night for a meeting that lasted until dawn. The embarrassed officers played a recording that "indicated quite clearly that Mrs. Roosevelt and Lash engaged in sexual intercourse during their stay in the hotel room," Burton's memo said.

"After this record was played, Mrs. Roosevelt was called into the conference and was confronted with the informa-



Hoover with John and Robert Kennedy. The FBI kept collecting allegations of womanizing by JFK even after he was President.

tion, and this resulted in a terrific fight between the President and Mrs. Roosevelt," the memo continued. "At approximately 5:00 a.m. the next morning the President called General Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Corps, and upon his arrival at the conference ordered him to have Lash outside the United States and on his way to a combat post within 10 hours.

"After the conference was over it was learned that the President had ordered that anybody who knew anything about this case should be immediately relieved [sic] of his duties and sent to the South Pacific for action against the Japs until they were killed," the memo said.

Doubts and denials. So steamy a tale of sin and vengeance within the First Family must have astonished the FBI's top echelon. But how much truth was in the account?

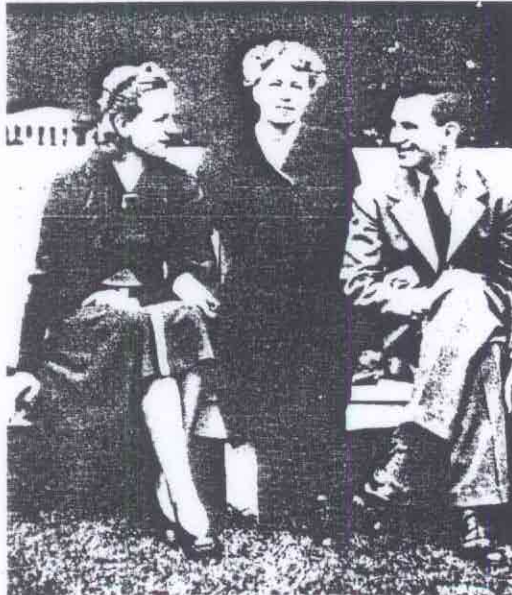
Burton, who now lives in Sun City, Ariz., says he knows no more than what he was told. He neither heard the recording nor saw CIC reports on the surveillance of Lash.

Substantial reasons exist to doubt major aspects of the story. Lash, who now lives in New York, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act many of the FBI and CIC documents referring to him and published some of them last year in his book *Love, Eleanor*. A friend of both Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt, Lash vehemently denies having had an affair with the First Lady, who was 26 years his senior. In a foreword to the book, Franklin Roosevelt, Jr., says of the White House meeting described by Burton: "I find the episode unbelievable. It would have been out of character for my father and mother to have acted the way they are reported to have acted."

An analysis of the records suggests that agent Burton or his sources, neither of whom was present at the White House meeting, may have gotten two CIC documents mixed up. A later FBI memo clearly confuses the two. One CIC report covers a meeting between Lash and Mrs. Roosevelt at the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel in Urbana, Ill., on March 5, 1943. It makes no mention of bugging the hotel room assigned to Lash or the adjoining room of Mrs. Roosevelt and her aide, Malvina Thompson, or of any sexual misconduct. The investigator sent to watch Lash remained in the lobby until 10:15 p.m. and then received instructions to "discontinue surveillance of the subject," the CIC report said.

One week later, Lash stayed at the same hotel with Trude Pratt, who later became his wife. This time the room was bugged. The lieutenant conducting the surveillance wrote that Lash and his friend "appeared to be greatly endeared to each other and engaged in sexual intercourse a number of times."

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT



Mrs. Roosevelt poses with Trude Pratt and Joseph Lash at the White House 2½ years before Army spying episode.

The CIC headquarters at Fort Holabird, Md., was closed in February, 1944.

What was behind it all? As far as the public knew, the CIC was broken up because of a mess the inspector general uncovered. A different explanation is given in documents that were classified until recently. Col. H. R. Kibler, wartime head of the CIC, told an Army historian in 1953 that the move was ordered by Gen. George Marshall, Army chief of staff, because of an investigation conducted by agents in Washington and Chicago involving "something that would be personally embarrassing to the Roosevelt family."

FBI reports on the episode were tucked away in Hoover's closely held files but not forgotten. They were pulled out in 1951 when a senator asked if the FBI had ever investigated the ties between Lash and Mrs. Roosevelt. Hoover's aides concluded that, since the reports were not in the main files and only a few top bureau officials knew of them, it was "thoroughly safe" to tell the senator that "FBI files do not contain any such information."

Burton's explosive memo was recalled again in 1954 when an aide sent a copy to Hoover with a note saying:

"The thought occurs that if the President [Eisenhower] does not know of the furor that was caused in G-2 [Army intelligence] some years ago as the result of G-2's investigation of [Lash and] his connections with Mrs. Roosevelt, you might want to consider mentioning this incident to him." Available documents do not reveal whether Hoover passed this juicy bit of hearsay along to Eisenhower.

Orders From Lyndon Johnson

Hoover's files suggest that President Johnson often demanded favors of the FBI and that Hoover usually granted them. Only when the bureau appeared in danger of being dragged into a damaging political donnybrook did he say no.

In 1966, for example, when rumors began circulating that Senator Thomas Dodd (D-Conn.) was involved in illegal activities, the Johnson White House ordered the FBI to check out the rumors "discreetly" but not to open an investigation or interview Dodd. Later, when it was learned that columnist Jack Anderson had obtained Dodd's office records, Johnson gave the green light for an FBI investigation. But the

The youthful FBI director with FDR in the Oval Office.



White House cautioned the bureau that "no record should be made in FBI files regarding the fact that the White House had previously requested that no investigation should be conducted regarding Senator Dodd."

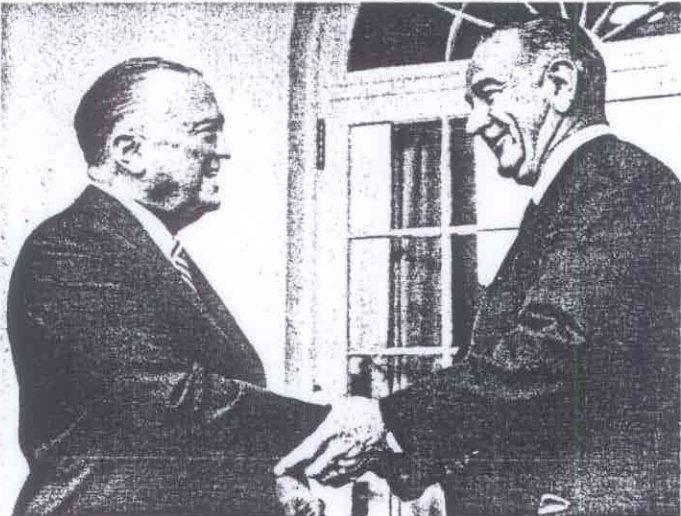
Hoover penned at the bottom of a memo from an aide: "We certainly got into a squeeze play through no fault of our own." Dodd was censured by the Senate in 1967 for irregularities in his financial affairs and was defeated for reelection in 1970. He died the following year.

Johnson was ever fearful that his contacts with the bureau would leak out. In 1966, his aides instructed the FBI to respond to White House queries on "matters of extreme secrecy" with "blind" memoranda—reports with no indication of the source, on paper without watermarks. In 1967, Johnson asked specifically that this protection be given to White House requests dealing with the case of Bobby Baker, the former secretary of the Senate and protégé of LBJ's who was later convicted of fraud. Johnson, in fact, wanted the FBI itself to keep no records of his demands and inquiries—an order Hoover ignored.

"Put a surveillance on him." Other records show how Johnson several times used the FBI to lean on journalists he considered unfriendly. In June, 1962, he called in a bureau official to report that he was "very angry" about a critical editorial in *Farm and Ranch* magazine. Hoover approved agents interviewing the editor and preparing a report for Johnson, who at that time was Vice President.

In June, 1965, Johnson, by then President, complained to Hoover about a number of adverse articles and cartoons in the *Washington Evening Star*. A Hoover aide reported to the director that he had "discussed this matter on a very discreet basis with at least five officials of the *Evening Star*, including the editor, Newbold Noyes," and received an accounting that showed the paper had published more favorable than unfavorable articles about the President.

Another journalist to stir Johnson's ire was the late Peter Lisagor of the *Chicago Daily News*. In February, 1966, a White House aide told Hoover "the President feels Lisagor is tearing him apart and getting information from someplace and thought we ought to put a surveillance on him to find out what he is doing and where he is getting his information." To satisfy the President, agents questioned other reporters about Lisagor and his sources.



Hoover gets a Lyndon Johnson-style handshake. LBJ called on the FBI to perform a variety of political errands.

The limit of the bureau's willingness to do the bidding of Johnson was reached in June, 1962. A Johnson aide asked that FBI agents be sent to interview Representative William Cramer (R-Fla.), who was publicly threatening impeachment proceedings against the Vice President for allegedly being involved with Billie Sol Estes, a Texas wheeler-dealer later imprisoned for fraud. The proposed interview may have been seen as a way of calling Cramer's bluff or scaring him off.

An FBI official told the Johnson man that Cramer would "holler like a stuck pig" if the bureau approached him on the basis of a request from LBJ. The next morning, lobbyist Thomas Corcoran, a Johnson acquaintance, telephoned the FBI to request the Cramer interview in his own name. Hoover scribbled on a memo a comment describing Corcoran as "the devious 'Tommy.'" When a top Hoover assistant objected that "we could very well be setting ourselves up as the bird in a badminton game," the director drew the line: "I agree—I think we should keep out of this completely."

Hoover's "devious 'Tommy'" epithet was in character. From his vantage point at the FBI, he kept up a running commentary about the actors on the Washington stage both in memos for his files and in cryptic notes written in blue ink at the bottom of the papers that came across his desk.

On Oct. 28, 1941, reacting to a critic of the bureau, he wrote: "I do want to make certain that we do everything proper to thoroughly handle all aspects of this case so as not to give this little whelp any real basis for howling."

On March 7, 1959, at the bottom of a memo reporting controversy over remarks by Robert Kennedy, then engaged in his brother's presidential campaign, Hoover penned: "Re: Robert Kennedy—this is what happens when the prodigal son gets too far away from home and papa."

The Railroad Ride of Sumner Welles

Hoover's confidential files show how allegations of homosexuality in government during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s damaged reputations and sometimes ruined careers.

One case involved Sumner Welles, scion of a rich and distinguished family who became under secretary of State in 1937. When Welles resigned in 1943, he cited his wife's poor health. The press speculated that Roosevelt had finally had enough of the constant feuding between Welles and Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

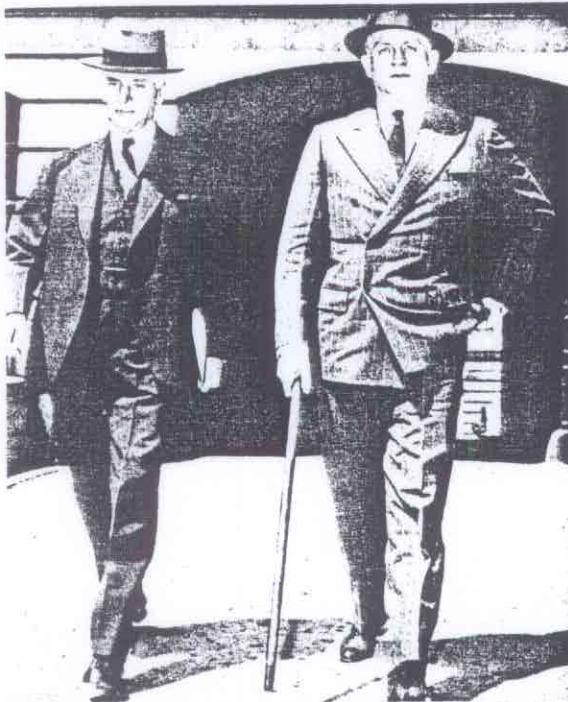
Hoover's records tell a more complicated story—one of a President who had reason to fear that his No. 2 man at the State Department was about to become the target of a congressional inquiry for alleged sexual misconduct.

The problem stemmed from a September, 1940, train trip taken by Roosevelt, Welles and other administration figures. A Secret Service agent reported after the journey that Welles had "propositioned a number of the train crew to have immoral relations."

Welles was an imperious man with many enemies. They got wind of the episode and immediately began retailing the story around the capital. One foe, William Bullitt, ambassador to France, wanted President Roosevelt informed, but he was afraid to deliver the bad news himself, fearing that the informant "would get his own legs cut off." Welles and FDR, two Eastern aristocrats, had long been friends.

When Roosevelt learned of the allegations, he ordered an FBI investigation. Hoover reported the results several weeks later, offering no conclusion on the validity of the charges. He quoted the patrician diplomat as saying he "had been drinking rather heavily" and remembered nothing about the trip except that he had become ill.

FDR chose to let the matter pass. But enemies of Welles made sure the whispering continued. Hoover described what happened next in memos for his files: Welles's boss and chief antagonist, Secretary Hull, called Hoover to his



Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, right, with his rival, Cordell Hull. Incident on a train helped drive Welles from office.

apartment in October, 1942, and asked for a copy of the FBI's report. Hoover politely suggested that Hull get it from the White House. Hull said several senators' wives were buzzing about Welles's transgressions and that he was going to warn the White House of the risk of "considerable embarrassment unless some steps were promptly taken."

The next spring, Senator Owen Brewster (R-Me.), a frequent Roosevelt critic, spoke to Hoover about the "disgraceful action" of Welles and said he would press for a Senate investigation and a "report to the Senate." The tale of sin on the rails was beginning to reach journalistic ears, and in September, 1943, Hoover told Roosevelt aides that a Los Angeles police official and three persons from the Hollywood film industry were overheard talking about the alleged incident. Two weeks later, Welles was eased out of office.

A glimpse of Hoover's views on homosexuality can be seen in a 1953 memo recounting a conversation with Senator Joseph McCarthy (R-Wis.). Hoover recalled criticizing the State Department for considering homosexuality "strictly a personal matter." At the same time, Hoover told McCarthy that "it was very difficult to prove a charge of homosexuality" and that "it was often a charge used by persons who wanted to smear someone." From the government's standpoint, homosexuality was worrisome because it could lead to blackmail.

In a 1957 memo to top aides, the FBI chief wrote that three employes of the Eisenhower White House had resigned after being accused of homosexual acts.

In 1969, the FBI looked into an allegation by a Nixon White House aide—brought to the FBI's attention by a journalist—that three colleagues were homosexuals. FBI official Cartha DeLoach reported to Hoover that he had told the reporter that "the FBI of course could not sit on a story of this nature." DeLoach added that the "matter is of such consequence that [Hoover] may desire to personally advise the President."

Writing for his files, Hoover turned his wrath on the press. He suggested that the journalist was "a rat of the worst type." If he took no action, Hoover mused, the reporter "could say this information was supplied to the bureau . . . and it was hushed up by the White House or the

Attorney General." On the other hand, Hoover noted that investigating the case would give the journalist an opportunity to write that the FBI was probing the charges. The three men "under oath emphatically denied" the allegations, apparently ending the matter.

The Director Is Accused

Hoover was hounded by persistent, but never substantiated, rumors that he himself was a homosexual—rumors fed by his practice of taking aide and fellow lifelong-bachelor Clyde Tolson along on out-of-town trips. The files show that the FBI chief and his agents took strong exception to—and sometimes action against—those who cast such slurs.

In 1944, for example, agents in the New York City field office told Hoover that a man they were interviewing had remarked that he "had heard a rumor to the effect that Mr. Hoover was a 'queer.'" Hoover scribbled on the report: "I never heard of this obvious degenerate. Only one with a depraved mind could have such thoughts."

The previous year, an agent reported to headquarters that an FBI employe had remarked at a bridge party in Cleveland that Hoover "was a homosexual and kept a large group of young boys around him." After the FBI's head agent in Cleveland called the employe into his office and "chastised her most vigorously," Hoover was told, she "thoroughly understood the untruth of her statements."

A 1951 episode sent agents further afield in defense of their boss. While having her hair done in a Washington, D.C., beauty parlor, an employe of the FBI heard the owner say Hoover was "a queer" and "was being paid off by bookies." Agents were promptly dispatched to interview the offending woman, who denied making the statements. In a three-page memo on the episode, bureau official L. B. Nichols lamented that such "women have so little to lose . . . and it is always difficult to catch up with gossiping rumormongers."

Stalking White House Hopefuls

Presidential elections worried Hoover: A new Chief Executive might someday end his long tenure at the FBI. At times, he helped the White House aspirants he liked.

In 1948, while Hoover was serving under President Truman, he worked behind the scenes as an adviser to Republican presidential nominee Thomas Dewey. The director's files show, for example, that Hoover told Dewey he saw "definite possibilities" in the candidate's proposal to force Communist Party members to register with the government. He promised to have material from the bureau's files flown to Dewey so he would have it the next morning.

Hoover deflected a move against an earlier GOP presidential candidate, Wendell Willkie. In 1940, he refused a request from Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes that the FBI look into a report that Willkie had changed his name from "Wulkje." Hoover aide Edward Tamm advised that it would be "a serious mistake" for the Department of Justice to conduct political investigations.

Hoover took this advice in the Willkie matter, but sometimes acted differently when it came to liberal Democrats. The FBI, for example, kept an open file on Adlai Stevenson when he sought the Presidency in 1952 and 1956.

Hoover suspected the Illinois governor was sympathetic to Communism—a charge that is not supported by the documents released. Rumor, hearsay, trivia and unflattering newspaper stories fill the fat dossier. Agents had trouble spelling Stevenson's first name. It showed up in their reports as "Adley," "Adlee," "Adlei," "Adlai," "Adalai," "Adali," "Adelai" and "Adelaide." His last name at times was recorded as "Stephenson."

George McGovern was another Democratic presidential aspirant Hoover came to despise. In February, 1971, McGov-

ern lambasted Hoover for the forced resignation of an agent who had made the mistake of criticizing the FBI in a letter to a professor. Hoover's response to the McGovern attack was to order his 21 top aides to write "unsolicited" letters to the South Dakota senator lauding their boss. McGovern gleefully inserted the testimonials in the *Congressional Record*, poking fun at so transparent a move.

Hoover sought a way to get even. The director's confidential files show that thought was given to use of FBI "power" against McGovern. But the bureau's legal counsel, D. J. Dalbey, cautioned that it was better to let the controversy "fade out." He said that if McGovern "wants to be President, he'll have to run on something other than a campaign against the director. There is no act that would get political sympathy for McGovern quicker than the belief of the other politicians that the director had used the power at his disposal against McGovern. There is no gain here to justify the risk."

The Big Ears of Harry Truman

When Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, and Harry Truman succeeded him, the new President's "Missouri Gang" of advisers found themselves competing with vast numbers of Roosevelt loyalists inside and outside the bureaucracy.

For help in keeping control over them, the new Chief Executive turned to his FBI director. The files show that Hoover obliged by setting up wiretaps on at least one administration official and on a prominent lobbyist.

The official was Edward Prichard, Jr., a 30-year-old lawyer who was Fred Vinson's top assistant. At the time of the wiretap, Vinson headed the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion and then became Secretary of the Treasury.

The records do not reveal why Prichard specifically was tapped. Now an attorney in Lexington, Ky., Prichard suspects it was because he had expressed his "dim view" of Truman and the "numbskulls" he had brought into his administration after Roosevelt died. The wiretap on "PR"—as Prichard was identified in the FBI logs—began in May, 1945, and stopped when he left government and returned to Kentucky the next fall. "The whole thing is a damned outrage," he declares. "It was illegal as hell."

Along with the reports on "PR," the Truman White House got summaries almost daily from another tap: This one was on "CO"—Thomas Corcoran, a former New Deal braintruster who had become one of Washington's most potent lawyer-lobbyists. Truman feared that he would use his ties to friends throughout the government to thwart key administration policies.

The President asked Atty. Gen. Tom Clark to authorize surveillance in late 1945, because he wanted to make sure that Corcoran's "activities did not interfere with the proper administration of government," Hoover wrote in a confidential memo. The tapping went on until 1948, ending when Corcoran somehow learned that his phone was "loaded." In one of the final conversations recorded, he was overheard warning a caller, "Watch this telephone! There's a record on this phone! I'll call you over some other phone later in the afternoon, huh?"

Footnote: The Corcoran wiretap may have backfired on Truman and helped Hoover save his job. FBI agents heard a caller say that the President had told him he was seeking a way to remove Hoover without stirring a public protest. The director promptly wrote to a Truman aide telling him of the "loose talk" his agents had overheard—destroying any hope the White House may have had of taking Hoover by surprise.

Still More Secrets

The FBI's release of portions of Hoover's confidential files came in response to a Freedom of Information Act request by Athan Theoharis, a historian at Marquette Uni-

versity in Milwaukee. Theoharis sees the documents as "a very valuable collection, especially in terms of understanding how the bureau dealt with sensitive policy matters. They provide fascinating insights into the operations of the bureau under Hoover." Still, the 7,000 pages released tell only part of the story. Almost every page has been censored, ranging from the blacking out of certain names to the elimination of entire paragraphs.

In addition, the FBI has withheld altogether more than 10,000 other pages, citing national security, personal privacy or other grounds that exempt material from the Freedom of Information Act. Charging that the extent of the FBI's deletions is "totally unwarranted," Theoharis is asking Justice Department officials to release many more of the documents. But even if his appeal succeeds, hundreds if not thousands of pages are likely to remain sealed.

Decades more could pass before the world learns the last of J. Edgar Hoover's secrets. □

By ORR KELLY with TED GEST and JOSEPH P. SHAPIRO



William Webster has been FBI director since 1978.

FBI Today: Living by New Rules

In the dozen years since J. Edgar Hoover died, far-reaching reforms have been adopted by Congress, the executive branch and the FBI itself to discourage what a special Senate committee has called misuse of the bureau's power—

- No director will be able to perpetuate himself in office decade after decade. The law sets a fixed 10-year term for FBI chief William Webster and his successors.

- Court approval is required for all electronic surveillance in domestic and national-security cases.

- Guidelines issued by the Attorney General tell the bureau what it may and may not do. Although recently relaxed, such rules have led to a sharp decrease in the FBI's gathering of information on political groups.

- Actions of the FBI are monitored by outsiders more than ever before—by the public, through use of the Freedom of Information Act, and by congressional intelligence committees.

- The FBI no longer maintains the special political files Hoover kept at his elbow. Civil libertarians warn, however, that there is no cause for complacency. They note that the bureau's main files still contain a reservoir of sensitive information on millions of Americans.