

agencies

# Hoover's Secret FBI Files

FOR YEARS there had been rumors that the seemingly indestructible J. Edgar Hoover had used his FBI agents to gather material on the human weaknesses of high government officials — from Presidents on down.

Hoover, who had ruled the agency with an iron hand for more than four decades, never deigned to respond to such charges and no one apparently dared to press the matter — until after Hoover's death on May 2, 1972.

The first official confirmation that Hoover not only collected but probably used tales of illicit sex, drunkenness, homosexuality, marital problems, etc., to maintain and enhance his power came early in 1973 from L. Patrick Gray.

Gray had been selected by President Nixon to succeed Hoover. During his confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Gray said he had seen "files so hot" there was no way of destroying them without risking hurting some subjects. He would like to burn them, said Gray, but the law gave the National Archives final say over the documents.

"I would go through Archives but I don't want anyone, not even an archivist to read some of the rot in some of these files."

This revelation was lost among headier scandals. Gray was never confirmed. He was left to "twist slowly in the wind" of Watergate. And Watergate so preoccupied the nation and its legislators Hoover's famous files were all but forgotten.

But by last week the House Subcommittee on

Civil and Constitutional Rights was busy trying to find out the truth about the "hot files" and the new image of the late FBI's czar as a manipulator not above using his "black-mail" files to get his own way.

On a higher level, the committee's investigation sought to discover whether the FBI had violated the rights of citizens during the course of its duties and find ways to prevent any future abuses.

The new Attorney General, Edward H. Levi, after less than a month on the job, told the committee he had discovered the hot files; that the FBI apparently had violated citizens' rights in some instances; and he had learned that

## **Tales of illicit sex, drunkenness, homosexuality . . .**

previous Presidents (apparently Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon) had misused the FBI for their own political purposes.

Levi said Hoover had kept personal files since 1920 on "public figures or prominent persons (including) Presidents, executive branch employes and 17 individuals who were members of Congress."

There was evidence, said Levi, that in at least one instance an FBI agent "forwarded derogatory information to Mr. Hoover concerning a Congressman who had attacked the director" and Hoover disseminated the information to others in the executive branch.

Clarence Kelley, president director of the FBI,

confirmed that Hoover had made personal files, had kept them up over nearly 50 years of activity, had "purged" them as recently as the year before his death (1971) and had moved much of the material to his home in the northwest area of Washington.

As for political misuse of the FBI, Levi did not name names or instances, but Justice Department aides said. President Johnson's press aide Bill Moyers during the 1964 campaign against Senator Barry Goldwater (Rep-Ariz.) had asked the FBI to gather data on Goldwater's aides. This was done and no derogatory information was found.

Johnson also allegedly used information overheard from a wiretap of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the Democratic National Convention in 1964.

In 1968 the FBI obtained the telephone toll records of members of then vice presidential candidate Spiro T. Agnew, a request by a Johnson aide made on the basis of national security.

Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon allegedly all asked the FBI chief to give them information on the activities of members of Congress.

Both Levi and Kelley told the committee, headed by former FBI man Don Edwards of California, the FBI still receives and files allegations that have no connection with any criminal or national security investigation on the theory the material "might be useful in the future."

They were unable to say how much of the bureau's 6.5 million files (not counting criminal conviction and



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arrest records) were made up of such unconfirmed allegations.

Both Levi and Kelley agreed that the FBI director must never maintain any "files on specific individuals in his own personal offices . . ." But Levi, speaking to a Chicago Bar Association luncheon in Chicago a week ago complained that getting rid of Hoover's hot files was not easy.

"It's too easy to say, 'Destroy all that material!' Suppose Kelley had found Hoover's files and destroyed them? What would have been the response then? The ability to destroy is just as dangerous as the ability to keep files," said Levi.

But the Justice Department did set about dismantling a computerized intelligence-gathering unit and locking up the files collected on thousands of individuals involved in civil disorders in the late 1960s.

The action was disclosed in a letter by Levi to Senator John Tunney (Dem-Calif.), who estimated some 22,000 Americans had been fed into the machinery by the Interdivisional Information Unit (IDIU) created by Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark in 1967 to put together all reports by the FBI and other federal investigators on civil disorders and the individuals involved in them.