



'Blackmail' Files

Fuller column filed Hoo.

Jack Anderson

WE HAVE established beyond reasonable doubt that the late J. Edgar Hoover kept blackmail files on prominent people, including Presidents John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon.

These raw files contained gleanings from FBI offices around the country. Hoover's minions, knowing he liked derogatory information about people in power, kept him well supplied.

His agents spent a great deal of time, for example, observing and reporting on the sexual adventures of celebrities. The late FBI chief kept the most sensitive folders in his personal custody.

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THESE FILES could have had no possible purposes except blackmail. Their existence is disturbing evidence that Hoover had turned the FBI into a political police force whose snooping practices had become all too similar to those of Adolf Hitler's Gestapo and Joseph Stalin's KGB.

Hoover was not an overt blackmailer. His power depended on the good will of the nation's elected leaders, whose favors he curried. He, therefore, posed as their friend who wanted only to protect them from the whispers their enemies might spread.

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BY THIS approach, he made them aware subtly that he, too, knew their secrets. Inevitably, the word filtered through Washington that Hoo-

ver had a dossier on every influential figure in town. This whispered word had the effect of blackmail, without Hoover having to resort to the ugly practice.

We spoke to former aides of every President since Franklin D. Roosevelt. Without exception, even the Presidents themselves were convinced that Hoover had files on them.

The reaction of the late President Kennedy was typical. He was reviewing some FBI reports in the Oval office one day. Suddenly, he looked up from his reading and remarked to an assistant: "I'd sure like to see the file the FBI has on me."

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HOOVER also used gossip from his files to entertain a few key figures, whose support he sought to cultivate. In his private conversations with them, he might drop some intimate details about their contemporaries. Or if those he courted showed an interest, he might furnish them with actual samplings from the files.

President Eisenhower got an occasional chuckle from his FBI reading, a former associate admits.

President Johnson was an avid reader of Hoover's titillating tidbits, which were submitted to the White House in secret memos for his bedtime reading.

Sources close to President Nixon tell us that he sometimes asked Hoover for derogatory details about his enemies.