

# Hoover's Dossiers: Gossip to Slander

By Jack Anderson  
and Les Whitten

We have established beyond reasonable doubt that the late J. Edgar Hoover kept blackmail files on prominent people, including Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and 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 choice tidbits, ranging from gossip to vicious slander, were swept into fattening folders.

The late FBI chief kept the most sensitive folders in his personal custody. They were removed after his death, according to our sources, by his faithful factotum, Clyde Tolson.

These files could have had no possible purpose 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 for a half-century on the good will of the nation's elected leaders, whose favor he curried. He, therefore, posed as their friend who

wanted only to protect them from the whispers their enemies might spread.

By this approach, he made them aware subtly that he, too, knew their secrets. Inevitably, the word filtered through Washington that Hoover 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. There were few important personages in Washington who didn't wonder nervously how much the FBI chief knew about them.

We spoke to former aides, for example, 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 John F. 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."

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 samplings from the files.

President Truman made it clear that he had no interest in the FBI's turgid prose,

his former aides recall. President Eisenhower, on the other hand, got an occasional chuckle from his FBI reading, a former associate admits.

President Kennedy's ex-aides insist that he didn't care to read about the sex lives and drinking habits of the high and mighty. But Washington Post editor Benjamin C. Bradlee, a close personal friend of the late President, has quoted Kennedy as telling: "Boy, the dirt (Hoover) has on those senators. You wouldn't believe it."

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. Johnson had a fine appreciation, his erstwhile aides agree, for a story about some big muckamuck's extracurricular love life.

Sources close to President Nixon tell us that he sometimes asked Hoover for derogatory details about his enemies. On at least one occasion, he personally phoned Hoover and solicited dirt about us from FBI files.

The truth is out now. Hoover's agents followed the affairs, sexual and political, of the nation's leaders. The FBI also spied on other famous personalities who had committed no crimes. This was an abuse of power that should be outlawed by Congress. © 1976 United Feature Syndicate, Inc.