



J. Edgar Hoover: The Man and the Secrets

By Curt Gentry

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Shocking, grim, frightening, Curt Gentry's masterful portrait of America's top policeman is a unique political biography. From more than 300 interviews and over 100,000 pages of previously classified documents, Gentry reveals exactly how a paranoid director created the fraudulent myth of an invincible, incorruptible FBI. For almost fifty years, Hoover held virtually unchecked public power, manipulating every president from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Richard Nixon. He kept extensive blackmail files and used illegal wiretaps and hidden microphones to destroy anyone who opposed him. The book reveals how Hoover helped create McCarthyism, blackmailed the Kennedy brothers, and influenced the Supreme Court; how he retarded the civil rights movement and forged connections with mobsters; as well as insight into the Watergate scandal and what part he played in the investigations of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a richly textured biography of the former FBI director who died in 1972, Gentry, coauthor of *Helter Skelter*, takes a decidedly unfriendly look at the man and his career, revealing how Hoover found his niche in life as a "hunter of men," served under 10 presidents over a period of five decades, creating what Eleanor Roosevelt characterized as an American Gestapo. We're shown Hoover scheming to help Thomas Dewey replace Harry Truman in the White House in return for a promise that he would be appointed attorney general; making use of secret information on Senator Joseph McCarthy while at the same time contributing significantly to "McCarthyism"; stalking John F. Kennedy even before he went into politics; covertly helping Richard Nixon become president, then virtually forcing the Nixon administration to embark on the road to Watergate. Hoover believed that America's morality was very much his business and, as Gentry demonstrates, the director equated morality with sexual abstinence. His horrified fascination with homosexuality (mixed with a strong streak of misogyny) are masterfully depicted here, as well as his virulent racism, disclosed in fresh material on Hoover's efforts to destroy Martin Luther King Jr. It is hard to imagine another portrait of Hoover that could surpass this one for detail, depth and sheer vitriol. Gentry makes clearer than previous biographers how J. Edgar Hoover became and, for the greater part of his tenure, remained the most powerful man in Washington. Photos. 75,000 first printing; \$100,000 ad/promo; BOMC selection; author tour.

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From Library Journal

Since his death in 1972, there has been an increasing fascination with Hoover and the immense power he wielded as director of the FBI. Although there have been two recent major biographies--Athan G. Theoharis's *The Boss* (LJ 6/1/88) and Richard G. Powers's *Secrecy and Power* (LJ 2/1/87)--this massive new study promises to be the most extensive and controversial yet. Gentry, who coauthored *Helter Skelter* (LJ 11/15/74), has based his account of Hoover on more than 300 interviews and on access to previously classified FBI documents. Beginning with a behind-the-scenes description of Hoover's death and the search for his "secret files" that is novelistic in technique, Gentry paints a portrait of Hoover as the "indispensable man," with many provocative revelations about his political dealings. This is a chilling look at the darker side of American politics, especially concerning Hoover's enemies list and his relentless investigation of Martin Luther King Jr.'s personal life. The book's lively readability is balanced by lengthy footnotes and by an extensive list of source notes and interviews, and it will be in demand in both academic and public libraries. Previewed in *Prepub Alert*, LJ 5/15/91; see also *From the Secret Files of J. Edgar Hoover*, reviewed in this issue, p. 125.--Ed.

- *Thomas A. Karel, Franklin & Marshall Coll. Lib., Lancaster, Pa.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Based on more than 300 interviews and 100,000 pages of previously classified documents, this enormous, blistering expos, seems hellbent on proving that the legendary FBI director had not feet of clay, but cloven hoofs. Gentry, coauthor of *Helter-Skelter*, depicts a bureaucrat par excellence who over 48 years maintained an empire through secret files that one anonymous politician called "political cancer." Hoover's carefully burnished reputation as the incorruptible defender of the American way of life was largely a fraud, Gentry argues. Much of this book provides additional material on how Hoover sought to undermine his long list of enemies, which included Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry Truman, the Kennedys, Emma Goldman, Martin Luther King, Jr., and his most enduring nemesis, OSS head "Wild Bill" Donovan (whom Hoover foiled in his

ambitions to become attorney-general and CIA director). More important, many revelations here will further tarnish Hoover's reputation, including how the director suppressed information unfavorable to the Bureau during the Warren Commission's investigation of JFK's murder; how he destroyed congressmen and even Supreme Court Associate Justice Abe Fortas; and how he became a "petty thief" by misappropriating government funds and concealing royalties from bestselling books, movies, and the TV-series *The FBI*. Unfortunately, unlike Richard Gid Powers's more balanced and subtle *Secrecy and Power* (1987), Gentry scarcely acknowledges Hoover's organizational genius or the middle-class milieu that was the source of his political and moral conservatism. A revealing and grimly fascinating political horror tale--which, however, too frequently caricatures Hoover as a sinister *minence grise* rather than as a 20th-century power broker shaped (or misshaped) by his late-Victorian upbringing. (Seventy-one b&w photographs.) -- *Copyright* ©1991, *Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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