

Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice
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Address delivered by J. Edgar Hoover, Director,
Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Justice,
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THE TEST OF CITIZENSHIP

It is with pride that I meet with you this morning upon the occasion of the 49th Continental Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Yet the pleasure of our meeting must be tempered with the necessity for bringing certain facts into the open where we may face them with the courage demanded for their remedy. These are not bright days for the America which your forefathers fought so valiantly to preserve.

Your organization has witnessed in the past a succession of remarkable instances of patriotic cooperation designed to aid our Nation toward a better plane of existence. Therefore, because you are one of the truly great influences which have molded this Nation, I want to discuss with you a most important problem concerning our country's welfare. It may be stated in simple language. Foreign isms are seeking to engulf Americanism; this must not be allowed to happen. It need not happen, for we have had ample warning.

No finer job has ever been done in the history of the American press than that which now is being performed by the rank and file of our truly American publications. Heroic efforts are being made by them to separate the facts from propaganda, the true from the false, the pure from the impure. Hard-working journalists and editors have given of their best efforts and thought that we might be correctly informed, and this without hysteria.

Meanwhile, the editorial staffs of magazines which have a real national conscience have striven as never before to place before us a correct and sincere evaluation of the world's problems, seeking not to influence, but to educate. The same, of course, may be said for the responsible men and women of the radio and screen.

But while all this has been taking place, there has been a contrary effort in the underworld of literacy. By oral and printed attack, numerous thinly camouflaged organizations of questionable background and endeavor have sought to wash away our national foundation in an ink-stream of vilification. It seems inconceivable that in a land dedicated to freedom, and existing under a Constitution ordained for the well-being and protection of its every citizen, there should be so many despicable ingrates.

Many of them come from countries where political murderers have stained their hands with the blood of thousands, where every decent thing in life has been ravaged, where every man is expected to spy upon his neighbor and betray his best friend, and where the underlying fundamental principle of government seems that of harassing humanity and defying God.

Cloaking themselves with the guarantees of our Constitution and the things for which it stands, they have the inconceivable effrontery to tell us that they are seeking to bestow upon us the blessings of Utopia - instead of degrading us to the level of the blood-smearred countries for whose principles they are the bought-and-paid-for traveling salesmen. And I say that there is no place in America for such purveyors of hate and horror.

One may rightfully ask why I, as Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, should direct your attention toward revolutionary efforts in America. A main reason, of course, is the fact that by Presidential Order, the FBI has been designated as the central agency of the Federal Government to receive and give attention to complaints of espionage, sabotage and matters pertaining to our national defense. In addition, there is a distinct connection between the professional destructionist and the professional criminal. Both are in a state of revolt against the American way. Both are racketeers.

However, what I have to say to you today should be construed as an appeal to common sense, and a desire for a calm, common sense appraisal of existing circumstances. While there is yet time, we must lock our national stable before the horse is stolen. If we use our heads today, we will not be forced to use our rifles, our airplanes and our battleships tomorrow. And one thing is certain. We in the United States want peace.

I must remind you that in times like these, there is great danger of misguided efforts on the part of over-zealous groups of individuals who are often the victims of those motivated by a desire to further their own selfish ends. Let me warn you against the patriotic racketeer; the only things lower are the vipers of alien isms whose poisonous fangs are fatal.

Our national apathy toward the subject of crime represents a condition which in fact is an incubator for the things which are anti-American. Our anti-social groups grow rapidly; it is a fact that today one out of every 26 persons in America has been arrested for an offense more serious than a traffic violation. Every 21 seconds witnesses the commission of a murder, aggravated assault, burglary, car theft, robbery or larceny.

If we do not accomplish more toward the wiping out of this crime front, the enemy within our shores will steadily make wider use of its possibilities for the destruction of American institutions. You have seen recently in the constantly changing story of Europe, the

vast inroads which have been made in neutral nations by the employment of spies, traitors, and saboteurs.

Before this year comes to a close, unfortunately, we may expect that one out of every 17 homes will be a victim of crime - either some member will be charged with an offense, or will have suffered a loss, ranging from petty larceny to life itself. Our army of criminals numbers into the millions.

The representative of gangster governments finds a fertile field for his recruits in the underworld. He sings his hymn of hate in our prisons and penitentiaries, he skulks in the dives of desperate men, there to paint his picture of the glories to come when, to quote a manifesto of the Communist Party, there will be established "a stern dictatorship***. It will confiscate the banks, the factories, the railroads, the mines and the farms of the big corporations."

Perhaps you have labored under the mistaken impression that the radical who dreams of overthrowing our government classes as his future victims only persons of enormous wealth. Regardless how meager your possessions - someone will want them. If you lose them it makes little difference whether they are taken by an ordinary murderer or an international pirate masquerading as a self-appointed savior of a country whose language he can barely speak! Again I ask, why don't these perverted busy-bodies go back and save the countries which espouse their views? Can it be possible that there would be no money in such a venture?

The average American has understandably been so confused by the muddled charges and denials made regarding various revolutionary organizations that, with typical American apathy, he is more than eager to shrug it all away with the belief that it is a great deal of smoke and very little fire. We haven't the time, we say, to understand what the proponents of foreign isms are working toward and why they want it. That is exactly what these destructionists desire. Their tactics are to becloud the issue, to let others connected with ostensibly reputable organizations "front" for them, to cover their tracks with confusing statements, to confound the average brain so that they may be able to proceed toward their goal with the slightest resistance.

These ism advocates and their fellow-masqueraders point to our forefathers as their historical sponsors. The Preamble to the Constitution of the Young Communist League states that its organization "**** cherishes the ideals of Americanism embodied in the democratic traditions of our Nation and its great patriots ****" such as Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln. This organization then desecrates the memory of these great Americans by stating that it "**** derives inspiration from those great teachers and guides of all mankind: Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V. I. Lenin, and Joseph Stalin." Others exploit the working man, the colored races, the farmer, the renter, and the white collar class by any and all hokum by which they can create a smoke screen for their real

endeavors. On the surface, their claims, to the unthinking person, look enticing.

However, if the claims of such organizations are so meritorious, why have they not proven of worth in the countries which sponsor the ideals of these disturbers? Is there any such thing as peace or happiness or liberty in places where the populace is ruled by the fear of secret police, where one must live or die by decree, where children are reared to the godless lullabies of rattling machine guns, the horrible burst of airplane bombs, and the juggernaut progress of clattering tanks, belching flame and death upon those who flee before them?

It is amazing what credulity such proponents of brutality attribute to us, and it makes little difference from what foreign ism they emanate; recent unions of allegedly opposing factions have ended much necessity to differentiate. They are of the same stripe - they use the same approach, both openly and brazenly they flaunt democracy. What the worshippers of one bloody creed desire is also the desire of others.

These newly-allied destructionists stand for the complete overthrow of all American institutions. They plan for the destruction of all religion. They would strangle patriotism, or to quote the words of a youth publication of the Communist Party: "You must fight against teachings which tell you to be a patriot in your country." That is why, incidentally, as the result of propoganda, there have recently been many examples of a growing disrespect for the American flag and a cynicism toward the freedom for which it stands.

To these scoundrels the sanctity of the American home is meaningless. They dream of the day when every American school shall become their own training ground. They are under instructions to permeate our Army and Navy with proponents of revolution. Agitators have worked among farmers, particularly sharecroppers, painting rosy pictures of the day when skies shall be red with the flames of destruction, and that which has belonged to others shall change hands - simply for the taking.

The cry among these defamers of American traditions is always for more youth to be fed into the maws of deceit. In manifestos and training manuals, plan upon plan is urged for the infiltration of agitators and destructionists into youth-serving organizations.

It should be a matter of greatest national concern that while exponents of hatred, vice and atheism seek youth with the rapacity of a starving wolf, we should be so apathetic to the needs of our civilization that of all our crime, nearly twenty per cent is committed by boys and girls of less than voting age. To whom will these boys and girls listen while in jail, reformatory or prison - to the chaplain with his earnest hope that they will proceed upon a better life, or to the skillful agitator and his fawning promises of a place at the table of luxury if only help be forthcoming on the day when freedom shall fall, outraged and bleeding before the assault of international terrorists?

You should remember that since the Federal Bureau of Investigation is in the first line of national defense against the saboteur, the espionage agent, and the revolutionist, it also is among the first to bear the brunt of attack. And I might add that no method is too foul, no lie too rotten, for these people, who dedicate themselves to the teachings of the leader of all Communism, Lenin, who wrote: "We must know how to apply at need, knavery, deceit, illegal methods, hiding truth by silence***."

Therefore, since we know in advance that every trick of falsehood will be employed to lead us astray, let us look at the truth, so that we may know the lies when we hear them.

It is ever the cry of the ism advocate that his Constitutional rights and civil liberties are constantly in danger. These destructionists care nothing about violating the civil rights of others, and they would revile our Constitution except for the smoke screen of defense it gives them while they dig deep at our foundations of decency and liberty.

Therefore, let us have an understanding in this matter here and now. I charge that accusations indicating a purpose on the part of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to become an OGPU, a GESTAPO, a national police, or anything resembling such bodies, emanate, directly or indirectly, from certain anti-American bodies who hope to discredit the FBI as a step in a general plan to disrupt the entire United States or from well-meaning but misinformed persons who have fallen to the lies and utterly false information of those who would tear asunder America's machinery of law enforcement.

Such monstrosities as the OGPU or the GESTAPO are foreign born. They are inhuman, uncivilized and un-American. Any person who charges that such methods have been condoned or even considered within the Federal Bureau of Investigation deliberately purveys a malignant falsehood.

Let us proceed a bit further and really look at the record of the FBI. During the past 12 years, the FBI has investigated more than 52,000 cases in which convictions have been obtained. Not in a single instance has a conviction been reversed in a court of appeal for the alleged violation of civil liberties during the course of the investigation. In not one single instance has a conviction been reversed on a charge of brutality, third degree tactics, cruel or inhuman treatment.

Recently, in Washington, the Federal District Attorneys from the entire Nation unanimously adopted a resolution commending the FBI for its preservation of the Constitutional rights and civil liberties of persons arrested by its representatives. These prosecuting officials of the Federal Government are in daily contact with our Special Agents in their work and are intimately acquainted with all of the policies, regulations, and practices of the FBI.

And I might remark that those who now seek to traduce the FBI

as a first line of espionage defense are most eager to have you forget those dark days when fear stalked through every nursery, when the gruff voice of gangsterism made its demands for family fortunes, threatening meanwhile the death or disappearance of American boys and girls.

Those were the days when thousands of mothers placed their faith in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where brave men stood ready, day and night, as they do now, to battle gangsterism on its own grounds. More than one of those men now lie in their graves, sacrificed to the underworld in your defense, their memories immortal to us who were their comrades.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation of today is exactly the same organization which battled the underworld in the black hours of the kidnaping menace and which has successfully solved 177 of 179 kidnapings since June, 1932. It is the same organization which has successfully met the extortion and bank robbery menace. There have been no changes in motive, in policy, in fundamental methods or in the fidelity, bravery, and integrity by which we have sought to protect you. However, certain individuals have hoped that the lapse of time may have lured you into disregard for the events of the past.

All I can say is that if the FBI was a good organization when fiends like Bruno Richard Hauptmann, John Dillinger, Alvin Karpis and hundreds of other blood-crazed gangsters roamed America, then it is still good today when personalities like Earl Browder, Fritz Kuhn, and other representatives of un-American organizations, no matter under what name they masquerade, seek to lead you by lies, smoke screens and innuendoes into treacherous trails.

The extent of these efforts sometimes reaches almost unbelievable depths. Only last week, for instance, orders emanating from the Communist Party of America, demanded national and concerted action against the FBI. With fantastic belief in American credulity, these plotters announced that every effort must be made by members of their organization to involve FBI Special Agents in situations where they might be accused of crimes or improper activities. Then, said these Communist leaders, with its reputation stained by the "smearing" and discrediting of some of its men, destruction of the Federal Bureau of Investigation could proceed unmolested.

Anyone in public life must, of course, expect criticism - it is wholesome and beneficial when constructive. This applies particularly to law enforcement. It is your duty to criticize freely when there is need; it also is the American duty to stand by the brave, honest, efficient officers who give of their best for the communities they serve. A law-enforcing agency is only as good as its popular support, regardless of whether it is a constable's office, a county sheriff, a metropolitan police department or a Federal agency.

Despite the tremendous obstacles that have had to be overcome,

the character of law enforcement is today on a higher plane than ever before. Members of the law enforcement profession, in many instances, have faced almost insurmountable odds in overcoming the barriers of apathy and venality, to say nothing of propagandist efforts everywhere, designed to picture the officer as a brute and the civilian as an object of oppression. Remember that all propaganda is not of the direct sort. The most dangerous type is that designed to make you doubt and distrust American methods, American habits, American institutions.

You have noticed that I have not designated all of our ism enemies by name. There is a good reason; it is a part of present-day strategy among these different assailants of liberty to claim all good things for themselves and all bad things for the organization down the street, thus creating confusion while they attack our institutions. Therefore, the test of American citizenship lies in the ability to have nothing to do with any of them. The real test of citizenship is our devotion to the preservation of the American Democracy for which our forefathers fought and died, and which we are permitted to enjoy as a blessed heritage.

Let us consider the miserable type of destructionist who seeks to be our self-appointed savior. Look into his background; study his so-called panaceas. Read the recent history of the countries which he so proudly points to, or by which he has been duped. What do you find? Ruthlessness, the destruction of civil rights, destruction of happiness, destruction of freedom and the destruction of life, often in such great numbers that they beggar statistics. From a land of starvation, hatred, envy, greed, brutality and mass-murder, they come fawning to us with their lethal drugs. Let us have none of them.

Our job is to keep to the path which has led us to happiness in the past and to regard with suspicion any winding trail or alleged shortcut, no matter how alluring it may be portrayed. These praters against the American way of life are in reality a gang of international confidence men, seeking to steal our wallets by promising us the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow which no one will ever reach. Apply to every self-appointed savior the acid test of Americanism and if he cannot pass that, suggest that he go to the lands of stinking death which incubate his ideas.

And, I hope that today you will pledge yourselves with me to a solemn re-dedication of citizenship. That you will give more of your efforts, more of your being and of your hearts to the task of teaching and emulating Americanism. That you will strive ceaselessly to focus the spotlight of truth upon the ism scum which seeks to undermine the foundations of our Nation. By doing so, you will illuminate the world with the brilliance of American democracy, and demonstrate the sacred character of honest, decent, human elements which, God willing, our Stars and Stripes may forever symbolize.

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