

# When Tragedy Distilled STATESMANSHIP

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It was inevitable that a document as complex as the Warren Report, dealing with events surcharged with emotion, should raise some questions. But fair-minded Americans must acclaim the competence, objectivity and dedication of Chief Justice Earl Warren and his associates on the Commission.

We have read with particular care the sections of the Report analyzing the roles played by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service, the State Department, CIA and the Dallas police. As a result we found the excerpts from the testimony of the veteran director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, as published in the *Washington Star* on October 2nd absorbingly interesting—and reassuring for the American future.

The information on the Oswald case which he provided is pertinent and compelling. But even more significant, we believe, are Mr. Hoover's solemn warnings against restrictions on the civil liberties of the individual American in the name of Presidential security. His testimony in this connection has been reported; but its deeper implications—his deliberate emphasis on the sanctity of personal rights under our American system—have not as yet received the focused attention they deserve.

To appreciate the drama of this aspect of his testimony, it should be recalled that Mr. Hoover has been smeared and pilloried by fire-eating Left-wingers who dishonor a noble word by calling themselves "liberals." Some of these gentry in times past had the effrontery to compare him with Himmler and to equate the organization he heads with the Gestapo. Nearly all of them attributed to him a passion for more and more power.

These mindless slanders are too obviously imbecilic to affect the reputation of the man and the organization he has directed for some forty years.

For here is J. Edgar Hoover, the man who under our Federal setup comes closest to being the "police chief" of the United States, rejecting and denouncing the additional police powers implicit in what he calls "totalitarian security." **Firmly and eloquently he cautions his countrymen against eroding our traditional concepts of civil liberties, no matter how great the provocation.**

"I don't think you can get absolute security," he told the Commission, "without almost establishing a police state, and we don't want that."

The 100 percent security being advocated in some quarters, he pointed out, would require the authorities to round up or place under house arrest all known or suspected subversives and "extremists" in every town or city visited by the President. "Now I don't think there is any place in this Country for that kind of thing," Mr. Hoover declared. **Isolation and detention of people without due process of law, he maintained, was intolerable in a free society and could constitute a long leap toward the police state.**

## AMERICANS WILL APPLAUD

"I am particularly concerned that we don't become hysterical," he went on, "and go too far in restricting the citizens of our Country from exercising their civil and constitutional rights.... I think that the enforcement of security and the enforcement of laws dealing with subversion ought to be handled in the American manner."

**Genuine liberals and responsible conservatives alike, we submit, will understand and applaud these views and warnings.** They carry exceptional weight because they come from a man who, probably more than any other single American, is aware in concrete terms, not as generalizations, of the threats posed by subversives, extremists and assorted crackpots.

We believe that J. Edgar Hoover by this clearheaded defense of essential civil liberties has earned the gratitude of all thinking Americans who value our democratic institutions. It is devoutly to be hoped that his detractors on the fanatic Left, at least those who have not sold their brains and conscience for a mess of ideological pottage, will reconsider their conduct in the light of Mr. Hoover's testimony. Those who vilify the FBI and its seasoned director should be helped to understand that they are doing a grave disservice to themselves and to this Country.

J. Edgar Hoover has drawn a sharp line between legitimate police powers and near-totalitarian techniques. In effect he

has given the American people timely reassurance that their freedoms are safeguarded.

**This is what the late President John F. Kennedy understood so well. His profound concern for the rights of the individual and basic freedoms was perhaps his greatest legacy. Fortunately his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, wholeheartedly embraces and carries forward that legacy.**

## FLOODGATES OF VIOLENCE

Mr. Hoover's reaffirmation of the priority of civil liberties is especially important in the present period of great stress, when law and order is endangered by zealots. The peril-packed doctrine is nowadays being preached in words—and worse, practiced in action—that the law may be flouted to promote a "good cause." But this is a suicidal fallacy.

Once the floodgates are opened to "justified" violence, the Country would be launched on a catastrophic course. Innumerable individuals and groups could then proclaim the justice of their own brands of violence, and the whole concept of legality—the only reliable foundation for the civil liberties Mr. Hoover champions—would begin to crumble. There simply is no room in our Country for lawlessness, whatever the alibi or the provocation.

So we salute J. Edgar Hoover for his memorable pronouncement before the Warren Commission. We salute him for holding fast to the rock-bottom principles expounded by Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. His cautions against hysteria and totalitarian methods should have a sobering effect on our Country. Moreover, his clearheaded approach will heighten the moral authority of the FBI in carrying out its strictly limited but all-important functions.

## IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

We believe it is incumbent upon every newspaper, every radio and television station, every writer and speaker with access to an audience, to make Americans—especially the new generation growing up in a time of tensions and confused counsel—aware of Mr. Hoover's spirited defense of our living freedoms, his unswerving allegiance to due process, to law and order, to the foundation principles of American democracy.

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