

Hoover Warning-- Security Excesses

New York Times

FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover warned the Warren Commission against tightening protection of the President to the point where the United States would have "totalitarian security."

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

Portions of Hoover's testimony before the commission were printed in yesterday's Washington Evening Star. It was believed that Hoover or an aide leaked the material in an effort to rebut criticism of the FBI in the commission report.

The report said the FBI had taken "an unduly restrictive view of its role in preventive intelligence work" before President Kennedy's assassination last November 22. It said a wiser view might have led the FBI to warn the Secret Service about Lee Harvey Oswald, whom the commission found to be the assassin.

This conclusion is known to have stung Hoover and other FBI officials. Some said privately that they thought Chief Justice Earl Warren, the commission chairman, had an animus against the FBI.

The commission report ad-

Hoover Warning Against 'Totalitarian Security'

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mitted that the passage on the FBI was written with the benefit of "hindsight." And brief note was made of the dangers of too sweeping security measures.

Hoover's testimony was to have been made public shortly in any event, along with the many other volumes of commission transcripts. The feeling was that this advance leak was designed to gain extra public attention.

SOURCE

A bureau spokesman, asked whether any FBI official had made the transcript available to the newspaper, said, "I do not think so." He added: "I don't know just where it came from."

In his testimony, on May 14, Hoover made two main points that related to the commission's subsequent criticism of the FBI.

One was that total preventive security for the President would mean rounding up all suspect persons in a city he was to visit, or placing them under House arrest. That, Hoover said, would be intolerable.

REPORT

Secondly, he claimed that information available on Oswald did not indicate that he was a potential assassin. He said the Bureau had seen a "report of the State Department that indicated this man was a thoroughly safe risk."

The State Department issued a statement last night saying that a thorough search of its files disclosed no document that made or

implied any such finding on Oswald.

The release of Hoover's testimony together with the State Department's answering comment, was the first crack in the Government's unity and caution on the whole question of the assassination. Some observers here were concerned that there would be further inter-agency squabbles.

EMBASSY

Hoover's testimony indicated that he was referring to a report of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow when Oswald changed his mind about defecting to the Soviet Union and wanted to come back to the U. S.

"The Embassy gave him a clean bill," Hoover testified. "He had seen the error of his ways and disliked the Soviet atmosphere."

Hoover said Oswald was "no doubt a dedicated Communist," but he discounted any claim that Oswald had been acting on behalf of the Soviet Union.

PRECAUTIONS

On the broader question of what precautionary measures can be taken when a President is visiting a city, Hoover took a position sensitive to civil liberties.

He said that during a recent presidential trip to Chicago, local police took a list of names supplied by the

FBI and held those persons "almost in a house arrest."

"It is in that area that I am particularly concerned that we don't become hysterical and go too far in restricting the citizens of our country from exercising their civil and constitutional rights. The mere fact that a person disagrees with you in a matter of communism doesn't mean he should be arrested," Hoover said.