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### To Quarantine Communism: J. Edgar Hoover Speaks to the American People

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Because J. Edgar Hoover rarely appeared before congressional committees, his 1947 HUAC testimony was unprecedented. The FBI director's stature and alleged expertise ensured that the views he expressed in this statement received wide circulation. Politicians, journalists, academics, and opinion leaders of all political persuasions adopted his formulations and recycled them in countless speeches, position papers, judicial decisions, and magazine and newspaper articles. Hoover's testimony is also part of the FBI's campaign to criminalize the Communist party by prosecuting it under the 1940 Smith Act's provisions against teaching and advocating the overthrow of the government "by force and violence." As the excerpts in Document 10 from the transcript of the 1949 Smith Act trial of the party's top leaders reveal, many of the arguments the FBI director presented to HUAC were repeated almost word for word by the prosecutors and their witnesses two years later.

Hoover also used his HUAC appearance to call for supplementing the government's legal assault on communism with an organized campaign to weaken the party by exposing its members and its alleged machinations. His testimony about the party's infiltration of the labor movement, film industry, and federal government points to what would become the main battlegrounds of the McCarthy era, just as his final invocation of "old-fashioned Americanism" reveals the traditional mentality that undergirded so much of the anti-Communist crusade.

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J. Edgar Hoover, testimony, House Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings on H.R. 1884 and H.R. 2122*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 26 Mar. 1947.

## J. EDGAR HOOVER

### *Testimony before HUAC*

*March 26, 1947*

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...The aims and responsibilities of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the Federal Bureau of Investigation are the same—the protection of the internal security of this Nation. The methods whereby this goal may be accomplished differ, however. I have always felt that the greatest contribution this committee could make is the public disclosure of the forces that menace America—Communist and Fascist. . . . This committee renders a distinct service when it publicly reveals the diabolic machinations of sinister figures engaged in un-American activities. . . .

The Communist movement in the United States began to manifest itself in 1919. Since then it has changed its name and its party line whenever expedient and tactical. But always it comes back to fundamentals and bills itself as the party of Marxism-Leninism. As such, it stands for the destruction of our American form of government; it stands for the destruction of American democracy; it stands for the destruction of free enterprise; and it stands for the creation of a "Soviet of the United States" and ultimate world revolution.

The historic mission: The preamble of the latest constitution of the Communist Party of the United States, filled with Marxian "double talk," proclaims that the party "educates the working class, in the course of its day-to-day struggles, for its historic mission, the establishment of socialism."

The phrase "historic mission" has a sinister meaning. To the uninformed person it bespeaks tradition, but to the Communist, using his own words, it is "achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat"; "to throw off the yoke of imperialism and establish the proletarian dictatorship"; "to raise these revolutionary forces to the surface and hurl them like a devastating avalanche upon the united forces of bourgeois reaction, frenzied at the presentment of their rapidly approaching doom."

In recent years, the Communists have been very cautious about using such phrases as "force and violence"; nevertheless, it is the subject of much discussion in their schools and in party caucus where they readily admit that the only way in which they can defeat the present ruling class is by world revolution.

The Communist, once he is fully trained and indoctrinated, realizes that he can create his order in the United States only by "bloody revolution."

Their chief textbook, *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, is used as a basis for planning their revolution. Their tactics require that to be successful they must have:

1. The will and sympathy of the people.
2. Military aid and assistance.
3. Plenty of guns and ammunition.
4. A program for extermination of the police as they are the most important enemy and are termed "trained Fascists."
5. Seizure of all communications, buses, railroads, radio stations, and other forms of communications and transportation.

They evade the question of force and violence publicly. They hold that when Marxists speak of force and violence they will not be responsible—that force and violence will be the responsibility of their enemies. They adopt the novel premise that they do not advocate force and violence publicly but that when their class resists to defend themselves then they are thus accused of using force and violence. A lot of double talk. . . .

. . . The American Communist, like the leopard, cannot change his spots.

The party line: The Communist Party line changes from day to day. The one cardinal rule that can always be applied to what the party line is or will be is found in the fundamental principle of Communist teachings that the support of Soviet Russia is the duty of Communists of all countries.

One thing is certain. The American progress which all good citizens seek, such as old-age security, houses for veterans, child assistance, and a host of others is being adopted as window dressing by the Communists to conceal their true aims and entrap gullible followers. . . .

The numerical strength of the party's enrolled membership is insignificant. But it is well known that there are many actual members who because of their position are not carried on party rolls.

. . . The *Daily Worker* boasts of 74,000 members on the rolls.

What is important is the claim of the Communists themselves that for every party member there are 10 others ready, willing, and able to do the party's work. Herein lies the greatest menace of communism. For these are the people who infiltrate and corrupt various spheres of

American life. So rather than the size of the Communist Party, the way to weigh its true importance is by testing its influence, its ability to infiltrate.

The size of the party is relatively unimportant because of the enthusiasm and iron-clad discipline under which they operate. In this connection, it might be of interest to observe that in 1917 when the Communists overthrew the Russian Government there was one Communist for every 2,277 persons in Russia. In the United States today there is one Communist for every 1,814 persons in the country.

One who accepts the aims, principles, and program of the party, who attends meetings, who reads the party press and literature, who pays dues, and who is active on behalf of the party "shall be considered a member." The open, avowed Communist who carries a card and pays dues is no different from a security standpoint than the person who does the party's work but pays no dues, carries no card, and is not on the party rolls. In fact, the latter is a greater menace because of his opportunity to work in stealth.

Identifying undercover Communists, fellow travelers, and sympathizers: The burden of proof is placed upon those who consistently follow the ever-changing, twisting party line. Fellow travelers and sympathizers can deny party membership, but they can never escape the undeniable fact that they have played into the Communist hands thus furthering the Communist cause by playing the role of innocent, gullible, or willful allies.

Propaganda activities: The Communists have developed one of the greatest propaganda machines the world has ever known. They have been able to penetrate and infiltrate many respectable and reputable public opinion mediums. . . .

The Communist propaganda technique is designed to promote emotional response with the hope that the victim will be attracted by what he is told the Communist way of life holds in store for him. The objective, of course, is to develop discontent and hasten the day when the Communists can gather sufficient support and following to overthrow the American way of life.

Communist propaganda is always slanted in the hope that the Communist may be aligned [*sic*] with liberal progressive causes. The honest liberal and progressive should be alert to this, and I believe the Communists' most effective foes can be the real liberals and progressives who understand their devious machinations.

The deceptiveness of the Communist "double talk" fulfills the useful propaganda technique of confusion. In fact, Lenin referred to their

peculiar brand of phraseology as "... that cursed **Assopian** [*sic*] **language** ... which ... compelled all revolutionaries to have recourse, whenever they took up their pens to write a legal work."

Lenin used it for the purpose of avoiding "censorship." Communists today use it to mislead the public.

The use of the term "democracy" by the Communists, we have learned to our sorrow, does not have the meaning to them that it does to us. To them it means communism and totalitarianism and our understanding of the term is regarded by them as imperialistic and Fascist. . . .

Motion pictures: The American Communists launched a furtive attack on Hollywood in 1935 by the issuance of a directive calling for a concentration in Hollywood. The orders called for action on two fronts. (1) An effort to infiltrate the labor unions; (2) infiltrate the so-called intellectual and creative fields. . . .

. . . The entire industry faces serious embarrassment because it could become a springboard for Communist activities. Communist activity in Hollywood is effective and is furthered by Communists and sympathizers using the prestige of prominent persons to serve, often unwittingly, the Communist cause.

The party is content and highly pleased if it is possible to have inserted in a picture a line, a scene, a sequence, conveying the Communist lesson, and more particularly, if they can keep out anti-Communist lessons.

Infiltration: The Communist tactic of infiltrating labor unions stems from the earliest teachings of Marx, which have been reiterated by party spokesmen down through the years. They resort to all means to gain their point and often succeed in penetrating and literally taking over labor unions before the rank and file of members are aware of what has occurred.

With few exceptions the following admonitions of Lenin have been followed:

It is necessary to be able to withstand all this, to agree to any and every sacrifice, and even—if need be—to resort to all sorts of devices, maneuvers, and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuge, in order to penetrate into the trade-unions, to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work in them at all costs. (p. 38, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*. V. I. Lenin, 1934, International Publishers Co., Inc.)

I am convinced that the great masses of union men and women are patriotic American citizens interested chiefly in security for their fami-

lies and themselves. They have no use for the American Communists but in those instances where Communists have taken control of unions, it has been because too many union men and women have been outwitted, outmaneuvered, and outwaited by Communists.

The Communists have never relied on numerical strength to dominate a labor organization. Through infiltration tactics they have in too many instances captured positions of authority. Communists have boasted that with 5 percent of the membership the Communists with their military, superior organizational ability and discipline could control the union. . . .

If more union members took a more active role and asserted themselves it would become increasingly difficult for Communists to gain control. Patriotic union members can easily spot sympathizers and party members in conventions and union meetings because invariably the latter strive to establish the party line instead of serving the best interests of the union and the country. . . .

. . . The party for the past 18 months has been giving special attention to foreign language groups. . . . The Communists now seek strength from foreign groups who may have relatives in countries which Russia seeks to influence.

Government: The recent Canadian spy trials revealed the necessity of alertness in keeping Communists and sympathizers out of Government services. . . .

Since July 1, 1941, the FBI has investigated 6,193 cases under the Hatch Act, which forbids membership upon the part of any Government employee in any organization advocating the overthrow of the government of the United States. . . .

One hundred and one Federal employees were discharged as a result of our investigation, 21 resigned during the investigation, and in 75 cases administrative action was taken by the departments. A total of 1,906 individuals are no longer employed by the Government while 122 cases are presently pending consideration in various Government agencies.

The FBI does not make recommendations; it merely reports facts, and it is up to the interested Government department to make a decision. Almost invariably, of course, subjects of investigations deny affiliation with subversive groups, often despite strong evidence to the contrary. . . .

Mass and front organizations: . . . The Communist Party in the United States immediately took up the [united front] program and a systematic plan was worked out of infiltrating existing organizations with Communists. . . .

... Front organizations ... solicited and used names of prominent persons. Literally hundreds of groups and organizations have either been infiltrated or organized primarily to accomplish the purposes of promoting the interests of the Soviet Union in the United States, the promotion of Soviet war and peace aims, the exploitation of Negroes in the United States, work among foreign-language groups, and to secure a favorable viewpoint toward the Communists in domestic, political, social, and economic issues.

The first requisite for front organizations is an idealistic sounding title. Hundreds of such organizations have come into being and have gone out of existence when their true purposes have become known or exposed while others with high-sounding names are continually springing up. ...

... I feel that this committee could render a great service to the Nation through its power of exposure in quickly spotlighting existing front organizations and those which will be created in the future. ...

The Communist Party of the United States is a fifth column if there ever was one. It is far better organized than were the Nazis in occupied countries prior to their capitulation.

They are seeking to weaken America just as they did in their era of obstruction when they were alined [*sic*] with the Nazis. Their goal is the overthrow of our Government.

There is no doubt as to where a real Communist's loyalty rests. Their allegiance is to Russia, not the United States. ...

... What can we do? And what should be our course of action? The best antidote to communism is vigorous, intelligent, old-fashioned Americanism with eternal vigilance. I do not favor any course of action which would give the Communists cause to portray and pity themselves as martyrs. I do favor unrelenting prosecution wherever they are found to be violating our country's laws.

As Americans, our most effective defense is a workable democracy that guarantees and preserves our cherished freedoms.

I would have no fears if more Americans possessed the zeal, the fervor, the persistence, and the industry to learn about this menace of Red fascism. I do fear for the liberal and progressive who has been hoodwinked and duped into joining hands with the Communists. I confess to a real apprehension so long as Communists are able to secure ministers of the gospel to promote their evil work and espouse a cause that is alien to the religion of Christ and Judaism. I do fear so long as school boards and parents tolerate conditions whereby Communists and fellow travelers, under the guise of academic freedom,

can teach our youth a way of life that eventually will destroy the sanctity of the home, that undermine[s] faith in God, that causes them to scorn respect for constituted authority and sabotage our revered Constitution.

I do fear so long as American labor groups are infiltrated, dominated, or saturated with the virus of communism. I do fear the palliation and weasel-worded gestures against communism indulged in by some of our labor leaders who should know better but who have become pawns in the hands of sinister but astute manipulations for the Communist cause.

I fear for ignorance on the part of all our people who may take the poisonous pills of Communist propaganda. ...

The Communists have been, still are, and always will be a menace to freedom, to democratic ideals, to the worship of God, and to America's way of life.

I feel that once public opinion is thoroughly aroused as it is today, the fight against communism is well on its way. Victory will be assured once Communists are identified and exposed, because the public will take the first step of quarantining them so they can do no harm. Communism, in reality, is not a political party. It is a way of life—an evil and malignant way of life. It reveals a condition akin to disease that spreads like an epidemic and like an epidemic a quarantine is necessary to keep it from infecting the Nation.

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