



Young J. Edgar: Hoover and the Red Scare, 1919-1920

Kenneth D. Ackerman

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On June 2, 1919, bombs exploded simultaneously in nine American cities. One destroyed the home of the Attorney General of the United States, A. Mitchell Palmer. In the aftermath of World War I, America faced a new enemy—radical communism. Palmer vowed a crackdown, and, to lead it, he chose his youngest assistant, twenty-four year-old J. Edgar Hoover. Under Palmer’s wing, Hoover helped execute a series of brutal nationwide raids, bursting into homes without warning, arresting over 10,000 Americans and assembling secret files on hundreds of thousands of suspects and political enemies. A handful of lawyers like Clarence Darrow and future Supreme Court Justices Felix Frankfurter and Harlan Fisk Stone dared to defend accused radicals in the name of free speech and civil liberties. **YOUNG J. EDGAR** brings to life Palmer’s raids and Hoover’s coming of age, a metaphor on post-9/11 America. It reaches the heart of our current debate on personal freedoms in a time of war and fear. Editorial Reviews “[F]eatures demagogues; terrorists; a gullible, xenophobic public; rogue law enforcement officials; and good guys, both in and out of government, who discredit the raids. Ackerman captures well the pathological character of the young Hoover.... “ --Publishers Weekly “[A] history to savor.” -- Richmond Times-Dispatch Ackerman (“Boss Tweed”) does an outstanding job portraying the Teflon quality of Hoover.... ‘Young J. Edgar’ is a book that demonstrates forcefully the corrupting nature of power in the hands of flawed government officials. It’s panoramic, detailed and extremely timely. -- Huntington News As hard as Mr. Ackerman is on Hoover, he does not demonize him.... [A] chilling account of how the rule of law in a war on terror can be subverted into a war of terror. --New York Sun "Ackerman's extremely well-written and thoroughly researched history ... convincingly refuted Hoover's dishonest effort to minimize his own central role in promoting the first Red Scare of the World War I and early 1920s era." -- Athan Theoharis, Emeritus Professor at Marquette University and author of *The FBI and American Democracy*, and *The Quest for Absolute Security*.

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