

***Homeland Insecurity: Aliens, Citizens, and the Challenge to American Civil Liberties in World War II***

Stephen Fox

iUniverse (2009)

ISBN 9781440155550

Reviewed by Ron Standerfer for Reader Views (11/09)

It was a period of American history when the most cherished and basic human rights of our society were trampled, suspended, or ignored altogether -- a time of profiling, FBI bungling, military commissions, secret arrests, suspension of due process and habeas corpus, deportation, extraordinary rendition, second class citizenship and other forms of harassment -- all in the name of homeland security during a war being fought overseas. This sounds very familiar doesn't it? Surely "Homeland Insecurity," by award-winning author Stephen Fox, was written to further expose the sometimes draconic and often illegal activities of the Bush administration to protect our citizens after the bombing of the World Trade Center. But in fact, the setting of this well written and carefully documented book is World War II where families of German and Italian ancestry were systematically relocated, interned, or in some cases, repatriated to a homeland they did not remember or had never visited.

The cast of characters in "Homeland Insecurity" run the gamut from historically famous people to anonymous families who endured the ruin of their reputations, assaults on their wellbeing and, in some cases; loss of lives. Notable among the former group are Franklin Roosevelt and J. Edgar Hoover. As it turns out, both of these men harbored insecurities and prejudices that when acted out, resulted in a tragic assault on the Bill of Rights.

Without question "Homeland Insecurity" is a scholarly work. In particular, Fox's thematic analysis of the impact of the government's actions on the lives of German immigrants appears to be based on an in-depth review of FBI and Immigration and Naturalization Service documents, the results of which are meticulously footnoted and documented. But the thing I like best about the book is the narratives provided by the immigrants themselves. They make for a compelling enjoyable read. Some of the immigrants were unabashed Nazi supporters and it is not hard to understand why they were dealt with swiftly and harshly. Most of them, however, were good and decent citizens who considered themselves Americans and who found themselves caught up in a system they could not comprehend or defend against.

"Homeland Insecurity" begins with a quote by Jon Carroll which is worth repeating here, "It is said that those who don't remember history are doomed to repeat it. I suspect that those who do remember history are doomed to repeat it too. Human nature is human nature, and is an even deeper driving force than memory." Was human nature the driving force behind the actions taken by our government to secure our borders during World War II or for that matter, was it the face behind the mask of overzealous prosecutions after the bombing of the World Trade Center? This book is a must read for all Americans concerned about their freedom.