

Modern day witch hunt essay

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Modern Day Witch hunt The First Red Scare began after the Bolshevik Russian Revolution of 1917 and during the First World War (1914–18). Anarchist and left-wing political violence and social agitation aggravated extant national social and political tensions. Historian L. B. Murray reports that the “Red Scare” was “a nation-wide anti-radical hysteria provoked by a mounting fear and anxiety that a Bolshevik revolution in America was imminent — a revolution that would destroy [private] property, Church, home, marriage, civility, and the American way of Life. Newspapers exacerbated those political fears into xenophobia — because varieties of radical anarchism were perceived as answers to popular poverty; the advocates often were recent European immigrants exercising freedom of speech protected under US law, (cf.

hyphenated-Americans). Moreover, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) effected several labor strikes in 1916 and 1917 that the press portrayed as radical threats to American society inspired by left-wing, foreign agents provocateur; thus, the press misrepresented legitimate labour strikes as “Crimes against society”, “Conspiracies against the government”, and “Plots to establish Communism”. In April 1919, police authorities discovered a plot for mailing thirty six bombs to prominent members of the US political and economic Establishment: J. P. Morgan, John D.

Rockefeller, Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, US Attorney General Alexander Mitchell Palmer, and immigration officials. On 2 June 1919, in eight cities, eight bombs simultaneously exploded at the same hour. One target was the Washington, D. C. , house of US Attorney General Palmer, where the explosion killed the bomber, whom evidence indicated was an

Italian-American radical from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Afterwards, Palmer ordered the US Justice Department to launch the Palmer Raids (1919-21) — executed by J. Edgar Hoover, who instructed that said political prisoners be forcefully interrogated without legal counsel, and that they remain imprisoned via prohibitively-high bail. Yet, in 1918, before the bombings, President Wilson had pressured the Congress to legislate the anti-immigrant, anti-anarchist Sedition Act of 1918 to protect wartime morale by deporting putatively undesirable political people.

Law professor David D. Cole reports that President Wilson's “. . .

federal government consistently targeted alien radicals, deporting them . . . for their speech or associations, making little effort to distinguish true threats from ideological dissidents. ” Initially, the press praised the raids; the Washington Post said, “ There is no time to waste on hairsplitting over [the] infringement of liberty”, and The New York Times said the injuries inflicted upon the arrested were “ souvenirs of the new attitude of aggressiveness which had been assumed by the Federal agents against Reds and suspected-Reds. In the event, the Palmer Raids were criticised as being unconstitutionally illegal by twelve publicly-prominent lawyers, including (future Supreme Court Justice) Felix Frankfurter, who published A Report on the Illegal Practices of The United States Department of Justice, documenting systematic violations of the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments to the US Constitution via Palmer-authorized “ illegal acts” and “ wanton violence”. Defensively, Palmer then warned that a government-deposing left-

wing revolution would begin on 1 May 1920 — May Day, the International Workers' Day.

When it failed to happen, he was ridiculed and lost much credibility. Strengthening the legal criticism of Palmer was that fewer than 600 deportations were substantiated with evidence, out of the thousands of resident aliens illegally arrested and deported. In July 1920, Palmer's promising Democratic Party bid for the US presidency failed. Consequent to the newspaper-induced xenophobia and police suppression characteristic of the First Red Scare, liberal and left-wing organizations, such as the Industrial Workers of the World, the Communist Party of the United States, and the like, lost many members. In 1919-20, several states legislated "criminal syndicalism" laws outlawing advocacy of violence in effecting and securing social change; the restrictions included free speech limitations.

Passage of these laws, in turn, provoked over-aggressive police investigation of the accused persons, their jailing, and deportation for being suspected of being either communist or left-wing. Regardless of ideologic gradation, the Red Scare didn't distinguish among communist, socialist, or Social Democrat — because all were "foreign" (European) "ideologies", thus, "un-American".