

# Red scare



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

It was November 18, 1918, the day WWI had officially ended. The last cry of help had been heard and peace was supposedly coming to the United States or it had seemed. An ideological war which prompted mass paranoia had caused, among many other things, what would be known as the Red Scare (\*\*\*\*). The Red Scare was the label given to the actions of legislation, the race riots, and the hatred and persecution of "subversives" and conscientious objectors during that period of time.

The purpose of this research is to explore the threat that plagued the United States in its' time of great panic and anxiety, during the "first" Red Scare which lasted between 1919 to 1921. This powerful threat turned out to be Communism and it was greatly feared by almost every U. S. citizen. Communism is "system of social and economic organization in which property is owned by the state group, to be shared in common or to be distributed among members of the community equally or in proportion to their respective needs.

In 1919, no more than one-tenth of the adult American population belonged to the newly formed communist movement, and even this small percentage were greatly persecuted. After the real war ended in 1918, the ideological war, turned against conscientious objectors and other radical minorities such as Wobblies, who were members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and also Socialists. It was thought that the Wobblies and the Socialists were trying to overthrow the United States government. Wobblies, were persecuted against for speaking out against the capitalist system.

Most of what they said, was only to attract attention, but it was taken seriously by the government. From the very beginning of the Red Scare, the

Wobblies were attacked by the government because they were a symbol of radicalism. The government placed legislation not only against the Wobblies but also against Socialists and Communists. In 1917, the US government made a law which gave the Secretary of Labor the power to arrest or deport any alien advocating or teaching destruction of property or the overthrow of government by force. The government used deportation as a cure for the antigovernment views of its enemies.

The unfair legislation passed by the government, everything was soon to become a disaster. All that everyone needed was for someone to take advantage of the anti-radical legislation and that is what Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer did in the years 1919-1920. Palmer deported members of the IWW. His Palmer raids had two main targets, which were the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party. These two groups grew out of the IWW and the largest of the three, the Socialist Party of America, had split because of a dilemma over World War I.

The Palmer Raids were attempts by the United States Department of Justice to arrest and deport radical leftists, especially anarchists, from the United States. The raids and arrests occurred in November 1919 and January 1920 under the leadership of Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Though more than 500 foreign citizens were deported, including a number of prominent leftist leaders, Palmer's efforts were largely frustrated by officials at the U. S. Department of Labor who had responsibility for deportations and who objected to Palmer's methods.

Once Europe entered the war, the split occurred; this break up hurt the Socialist party and many who were not Socialists opposed the draft, but the

party was the point of opposition. These people became targets for attack by American nationalists and the American government; members were lynched and important Socialist documents were burned. One Friday, January 2, 1920 to be exact, agents from the Department of Justice raided a Communist hideout and began arresting thousands of people in major American cities throughout the nation. They raided people who stayed in private homes, clubs, pool halls and coffee shops.

The raiding got so hectic that in many places that they started arresting citizens and aliens, Communists and non-Communists. Destruction of meeting halls and property began as well and along with putting their victims in prison, agents held them without an attorney and interrogated them. Prisoners were released a few days later unless they were members of the Communist Party or the Communist Labor Party. These two groups were formed from the American Communist movement and in only two days nearly five thousand people were arrested. Nearly five thousand were seized in the cleaning up that followed during the next two weeks.

The arrests were carried out with total disregard for the rights of the prisoners. At this point and time Americans during this time were continuously on the verge of attacking anyone who wasn't "American". These people were extremely patriotic and ready to rid their nation of any intruder that seemed to threaten them, mainly the minorities whom they were very hostile with. Palmer wasn't the cruelest or the most extreme of these anti-radicals. Senator Kenneth McKellen of Tennessee went so far as to propose sending all native-born radicals to a special penal colony on the island of Guam.

Liberal journalist tried to mock Palmer in many different ways. In some occasions they would compare his actions to the shaving of a dogs hair and how by this it would promote growth in the society. Palmer ignored the journalist, and frankly he didn't care what they said about him and his actions. He still went on with all his raids. On December 27, around 250 deportees sailed for Russia from New York ion the U. S. S. Buford. On Friday, January 2, 1920, agents of the Justice department raided a Communist headquarters and began to arrest thousands of people all throughout the cities.

In a period of two days, 5000 people were arrested and 1000 jailed. There was no reason for this doing and the treatment the prisoners got was unacceptable. The peace and security of the American nation was now being destroyed by the Wobblies and Socialists. The attacks were now focused on them, not anymore on the objectors. They were targeted by the use of the Espionage Act of 1918. " This act penalized anyone who obstructed the operation of the armed forces, or displayed disloyalty within the forces. The Justice Department convicted more than 1000 people.

Surely among this number were a large number of Socialists and Wobblies. The Espionage Act was not the only law that was made by legislators to discriminate against antiwar groups. In October 1918, Congress passed the Alien Act, which gave the Secretary of Labor the power to deport any alien who, at any time after entering the United States, is found to have been at the time of entry, or to have become thereafter a member of any anarchist organization. This gave Palmer the authority to conduct his raids, during

which thousands of people were arrested and detained without actually having been charged.

Many tries to repeal the legislation, many Socialists became prominent figures due to their attempts to gain release for their imprisoned friends. The government had formulated and put into effect their plan to rid the country of unwanted foreign radicals, but the problem remained as what to do with those radicals were citizens of the United States. This was not to go unanswered for long, however. America was now in a state of disturbed peace and could not calm down until it rids its country of its disruptions.

In the Fall of 1918, The Russian Revolution occurred and may also contribute to America's unrest. Out of nowhere in an extremely violent manner, the Communists citizens took control of the Russian government and murdered the Tsar and his entire family along with thousands of "nonconforming" Russians. Communism was established on the political philosophy of Karl Marx and was dedicated to establishing a society where there is no private ownership of property and where the government would control the making and distribution of all goods.

Karl Heinrich Marx (German pronunciation: [kaʁl ˈhɛnʁɪç maʁks], 5 May 1818 - 14 March 1883) was a Prussian-German philosopher and revolutionary socialist. His ideas played a significant role in the establishment of the social sciences and the development of the socialist movement. Marx's work in economics laid the basis for our understanding of labor and its relation to capital, and has influenced much of subsequent economic thought. [4][5][6][7] He published numerous books during his

lifetime, the most notable being *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (1867-1894).

Due to the horrible misconduct and the overthrow of government, Americans began to panic. If it could happen in Russia, why couldn't it happen here? No plot to overthrow the government was ever uncovered. Yet, it was the paranoid fear of Communists that drove many Americans to violence. Another reason for the Red Scare was the strike held by mine workers. They were thought to be making threats against the Capitalist system through subversive Socialist organizations. These strikes were part of a series of events which took place in 1919.

This strike, which occurred in February, was of 60, 000 coal mine workers. In that September, steel workers attacked. Of course the blame was put upon the American Communists, although many communists tried to oppose this strike. Nationalist Americans called for the stop of the Bolshevik Revolution that was taking place in America. This panic traveling through the United States, made a series of bombs occur. Immediately the Socialist were accused. Attorney General Palmer took advantage of the panic of the public and asked Congress for fund appropriations to help avoid further danger.

Congress not only supplied funds, but made sure that all foreign radicals were deported. This plan went very well, but then the government didn't know what to do when the radicals were US citizens. During my research of this this topic, I have learned a number of things. First of all, America was caught in a web of fear and conspiracy. No one could trust his neighbor or his father for fear that he was involved in the Communist movement.

Americans were not happy with their government at this time, but this didn't mean that they wanted Communism as an option.

Hyphenated Americans were particularly suspected. I have also learned that although Communism might have caused a lot of panic, no plot of Communism was ever found to be true. However, just because nothing was found doesn't mean that there wasn't anything to be found. America was extremely prejudiced toward anyone who wasn't a "pure American". The Red Scare provided Americans with a scapegoat, now that we were no longer fighting the Germans. People really believed that Communists were everywhere and were plotting to overthrow the government.

Citizens were now being treated like the women who were accused of being witches in the Salem Witch Trials. It didn't matter if you were or we're not a Communist if someone accused you of being one. You were branded for most of your life. The biggest fear on people's minds was a communism takeover. People thought that Russia was going to cause an internal revolution within the US that would eventually end up removing the democratic government and replacing it with a dictator and communist government. The thought of Russia even attempting to do an attack was foolish from the beginning.

America was also happy with its democratic government and was sure that they would have defeated the revolution. This is why America never had any true reason to fear a communist takeover occurring in the United States. The entire Red Scare was meant to keep communism out, and the main reason they wanted to do that is so they could remain free. " On the evening of Monday, December 29, 1919, members of the Central Executive Committee



of Buffalo's Communist party gathered for a meeting in party headquarters in the second floor of the Teck Theater on Main Street.

At about 9: 30 p. m. , thirty police officers climbed the building's front and rear staircases, and the fire escape, forced open the doors of the meeting hall and burst in. As the party members stood quietly and watched, the police confiscated party records, including a membership list, communist pamphlets, hundreds of copies of the manifesto of the Communist party of America, a small printing press, a mimeograph machine and two typewriters. Then the police arrested twenty-two party members and locked most of them up in the third precinct police station on Pearl Street. Working through the night, police raided the homes of other party leaders, picking up George Till at 1: 00 a. m. , and Christopher Keegan at 2: 00 a. m. Raiders aroused Franklin Brill from sleep at his Williamsville home and brought him before District Attorney Guy Moore at 3: 00 a. m. " The Committee commonly known as the Lusk Committee, after its chairman State Senator Clayton R. Lusk of Cortland—had been established in March 1919 to investigate individuals and organizations suspected or promoting the overthrow of the United States government.

The raids in November, December, and early January were the culmination of months of activity that had left the country in general, and Buffalo in particular, in a state of panic. On April 28, there was a bomb found in the mail of Seattle's outspoken mayor, Ole Hanson. Another bomb was found, exploded and blew the hands off a Georgia senator's maid. One time a New York postal clerk found sixteen more bombs that had not been sent due to a plethora of insufficient postage. Not even a month later after the April 28th

bomb scare, another bomb destroyed the front of the home of Attorney General A.

Mitchell Palmer in Washington. May Day riots occurred in several major U. S. cities, summer race riots in others and even the Boston Police strike in September, followed by the nationwide steel strike and coal strike heightened animosity against socialists and radicals who were already held to be pariahs because of their pacifist stance during World War I. In June 1919, New York state officials raided the Rand School of Social Science in New York, as well as the headquarters of the I. W. W. along with the Socialists.

This raids were created by the New York legislature action that created the Lusk Committee. The idea behind this committee was anti-radical, and its tactics spread nationwide very quickly. Even with the legislation in place, Attorney General Palmer complained that not enough was being done to deportees. Even though after the Red Scare, he argued for the release of a Socialist that was imprisoned during the Scare and during it he helped convict many. In August of 1919, Palmer created an intelligence department to deal with problems that originated with anarchists.

He appointed J. Edgar Hoover to lead the new agency. One of the first assignments of this agency was to raid The Union of Russian Workers in New York. The Red Scare finally came to an end after a series of actions by high government officials. Assistant Secretary of Labor Louis F. Post began to reject most of the immigrant related cases that were brought to him. Even the Secretary of Labor himself, William B. Wilson turned against Palmer. Out of 6, 000 warrants issued during the raids, less than 1, 000 resulted in deportations.

Even though everyone opposed his actions, he still had the dream of running for president. But He was never nominated. By 1920, the Red Scare, was disappearing and by 1921 it was virtually gone. The hysterical anti-radical outbreak in 1919 and 1920 was relatively short-lived but that it left its mark on immigration policy, labor relations, and Constitutional liberties that lasted for generations. Higham argues that the Scare grew out of a fear that a huge part of the American population during World War I derived from enemy territory