

6 Red Scare

Communists were called *reds* after the red flag of the International, which was the worldwide communist organization.



"Whose country is it anyway?" Uncle Sam takes care of "reds."

Some people in America were scared by Russia's ideas. They were afraid of *communism*. Others were attracted to those ideas. Under communism, most property and goods belong to the state. People are expected to share. That sounds noble; it just never seems to work unless forced upon people. Communist nations have not been free nations.

After the world war, some people were scared that communists wanted to take over in the United States. There were a few communists in this country—but the communists were not successful.

Russia Revolts

Russia fought with the Allies in World War I until the Russian people decided they'd had enough of the war. It was more important, as far as they were concerned, to solve their own problems. They wanted to get rid of their ruler—the tsar (ZAR). They wanted to end the big gap between rich and poor in Russia. They wanted what Americans had wanted in 1776. They wanted freedom. So they had a freedom revolution.

At first, it looked as if they might get freedom. The people who overthrew the tsar (in 1917) were trying to create a democratic

government. Then a revolutionary named Vladimir Lenin, who was living in Europe in exile, came back to Russia. That man changed the fate of Russia and the world. He became dictator of Russia. He didn't believe in democracy.

Things had been bad in Russia when the tsar was ruler. They got much worse under Lenin and the ruler who followed, Joseph Stalin. Lenin and Stalin brought totalitarianism to Russia. They brought repression, murder, state control, and misery. They brought an economic system called communism.

Lenin took Russia out of the

war. That let Germany move troops from eastern Europe to France. It made the Great War tougher for the Allies.

What does all this have to do with U.S. history? A lot. You see, the world had become smaller. Not smaller in size, but in accessibility. At the beginning of the 19th century, it took at least two years for a ship to go from Salem, Massachusetts, to China and back. Now, with the telephone, communication was almost instantaneous. Modern technology meant that the ideas of one nation could spread quickly to others.

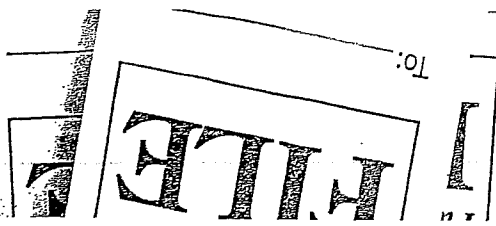


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WAR, PEACE, AND ALL THAT JAZZ



In September 1920, a bomb exploded on Wall Street, killing 38 people and injuring more. It fueled the fears of those who thought communists threatened the nation's existence.

Most American people were not attracted to communism.

In that same postwar time, there were also some *anarchists* in America. Anarchists don't believe in government at all. You don't have to be very smart to realize that anarchy doesn't work. But, when the anarchists looked around and saw poverty, war, and evil, they thought that this was the fault of governments. Some may have really believed that the answer was to do away with all governments. A few tried to do that by setting off bombs intended to kill government leaders. That, of course, was

criminal behavior. Newspapers made big headlines of the bombs. Many Americans were frightened. But what about A. Mitchell Palmer, President Wilson's attorney general, did was irresponsible and criminal. (He got away with it—but not in the history books.)



A. Mitchell Palmer

Palmer went on a witch hunt. The witches he went after were communists and anarchists. He took the law in his hands, and, in two days of raids in major cities (in 1920), agents invaded homes, clubs, union halls, pool halls, and coffee shops, rounding up nearly 5,000 people, who were held in jail, not allowed to call anyone, and treated terribly. Those without citizenship papers



Sacco and Vanzetti

Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were accused of murdering a paymaster and his guard at a shoe factory in South Braintree, Massachusetts. Did they do it? Even today, no one is quite sure. But they were convicted and sent to their deaths. Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists, and many said it was radical beliefs that were on trial. The trial was a *cause célèbre* (which, in French, means a famous happening).

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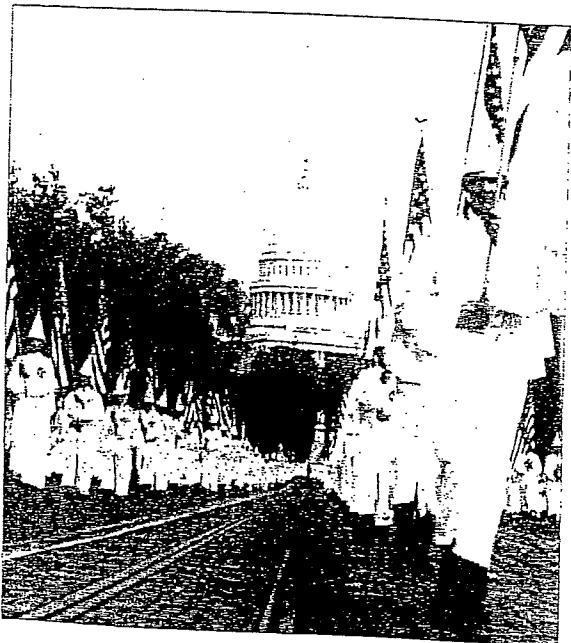
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A HISTORY OF US



In 1789, Congress passed an Alien law. It kept certain people from emigrating to the United States. A sedition law made it a crime to speak against the government. People were jailed for their ideas. The people who supported those laws said they wanted to keep "dangerous foreigners" out of the country. At the time, the foreigners they feared were French.



Behind the red scare was a fear of foreigners. These men being taken to prison are all immigrant aliens.

were sent out of the country—to Russia. Most weren't guilty of anything.

Communists are sometimes called *reds*. Mitchell Palmer took advantage of America's fear of communism. He helped create a "red scare." He hoped it would make him president. During the red scare, Americans were not free to speak out about communism. They weren't free to criticize the government. Some people's lives were ruined.

Witch-hunting turns up every once in a while in American history. (It happened at Salem, Massachusetts, in colonial days; it happened after World War II with a senator named Joe McCarthy.) The good thing is that it never seems to last long. Persecution for ideas is not the American way.

The First Amendment (part of our Bill of Rights) says: *Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech.* Does that mean that communists and anarchists are free to speak out here—as long as they do not engage in criminal activity or plot to overthrow the government?

Thomas Jefferson wrote: *Truth is great and will prevail if left to herself, and errors cease to be dangerous when it is permitted freely to contradict them.* He believed that when everyone's ideas are heard, people will make wise choices. Do you agree with him?

The Ku Klux Klan grew hugely in the 1920s. The Klan no longer limited its hatred and bigotry to blacks; it was anti-foreign, anti-communist, anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish.



Everywhere reds were under the bed—or, as in this cartoon, slithering under cover of the Stars and Stripes.

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Harding in 1885, when he graduated from college and went to school for a year

ergy to walk for a while. Just two years later, he was elected hero. Now he had to have no use for

Sitting next to the candidate the following year—as 29th president (see-lee-ul) Harding was elected president's portrait looked presidential and distinguished.

The Pierce signed his last office in the Senate the center of the Capitol. He presided over the president's