

US History
Social & Political History of the 1920s

Learning Target:

I can identify and examine four main problems facing post-war America, nativism & isolationism, the Red Scare, labor unrest, and race relations.

2. Postwar Issues – Fears of Communism & The Red Scare

- The Red Scare – A period of anticommunist hysteria during 1919 and 1920
- Communism – An economic and political system based on a single-party government ruled by a dictatorship. In order to equalize wealth & power, Communists would put an end to private property, substituting ownership of factories, railroads, and other businesses.

1917 Russian Revolution –

- Resulted in the establishment of a communist government
- Russian government owned and controlled all private property
- Vladimir Lenin's stated goal –
 - To encourage a world-wide communist revolution and to overthrow capitalism
 - The idea that Lenin's goals could take root in America scared many

The Socialist Party of America –

- Led by Eugene Debs who ran for president 5 times between 1900 and 1920
- Envisioned a peaceful transition to socialism through democratic means
- Did not support violent revolution like the Bolsheviks
- The public viewed all labor radicals as threats and did not care

Palmer Raids –

- After a series of bomb threats on prominent Americans like John D. Rockefeller, Attorney General Mitchell Palmer launched an anticommunist crusade
- Palmer's house was also damaged by a bomb

- Created special government office to track radicals
 - Placed J. Edgar Hoover in charge
 - Palmer Raids – Nov. 1919 – Jan. 1920
 - Thousands arrested with little to no proof
 - By summer 1920 public hysteria died down

***Document-Based Investigation Historical Source - Textbook
Palmer and the Red Scare***

1. What are some words and phrases that Palmer used to stir emotions?
2. Why do you think that Palmer doesn't provide any evidence of his claims?

Sacco and Vanzetti –

- Red Scare had helped to fuel hostility towards foreigners and radicals
- Sacco and Vanzetti – Two Italian immigrants who happened to be anarchists
- Charged with murder during a payroll robbery of a shoe factory in Boston
- Their radical political views and military avoidance hurt them in trial
- Jury returned a guilty verdict
- Both men executed with guilt in question
- Did their political views doom them regardless?