Rise of Socialism and the Red Scare

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

“A variety of economic and political theories advocating collective or government ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods and services.”

Webster’s Dictionary

“Socialism is the belief and the hope that by proper use of government power, men can be rescued from their helplessness in the wild cycling cruelty of depression and boom.”

Theodore H. White, Fire in the Ashes, 1953
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WHY DID MANY AMERICANS DURING THE 1900’S BELIEVE IN SOCIALISM?

• Industrialization created a huge gap between the rich and poor, which many working class Americans thought was unfair.

• Some Labor Unions, like the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.), felt that all workers should unite (black, white, men, women, skilled, & unskilled) to fight for their rights to fair pay and work hours.
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Eugene V. Debs
(American Labor Union Leader)

"The world's workers have always been and still are the world's slaves . . . They have conquered all things but their own freedom"

Upton Sinclair
(American Novelist & Muckraker)

"when a worker is willing to work and is able to work but cannot work, that is a problem. Or when an entire family is working but not succeeding, that too is a problem.

*Social Party Acceptance Speech, 1913*
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WHAT IS COMMUNISM?

“The final stage in radical Marxist theory advocating the elimination of capitalism (private ownership of the factors of production) in favor of a totalitarian system in which the people (or state) controls the production and distribution of goods and services.”

Webster’s Dictionary

“Communism may be summed up (simply as) the Abolition of Private Property; the Abolition of all rights of Inheritance; the Centralization of the means of credit, communication, and transportation in the hands of the state.”

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, 1848
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WHY WERE MANY AMERICANS CONCERNED ABOUT COMMUNISM DURING THE 1900’S?

• The violent methods used by the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution (ie: The murder of the Tsar and his family and savage attacks on towns and villages by Cossacks)

• The call for a world revolution by all working classes by Communist Leaders like Vladimir Lenin

• The increased activism of Anarchists in the U.S.A.
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Karl Marx

"The Communists . . . openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."

The Communist Manifesto, 1848

Vladimir Lenin

"The revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is power won and maintained by the violence of the proletariat."

The Proletariat Revolution, 1918
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WHAT PARALLELS MIGHT SOME AMERICANS HAVE DRAWN BETWEEN THE SITUATION IN THE U.S. & RUSSIA?

• Rising Inflation and Higher Taxes for the Working Class

• Increasing Gap between Rich Nobles / Industrialists versus Poor Peasants / Working Class

• Increased Dissatisfaction with Government Policies
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Poor Working Conditions in Factories

In both Russia and the United States

Plus Wages failed to keep up with Inflation
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Poor Living Conditions for the Working Class

In both Russia and the United States
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Bloody Sunday (1905)
96 Dead & 333 Seriously Injured by Tsar’s Troops

Pullman Railway Strike (1894)
34 Dead, 53 Seriously Injured, over 700 Arrested by Federal Troops
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Women Workers Strike (1917)

NY Shirtwaist Strike (1909)

International Working Women’s Day sparked Russian Women to Strike resulting in over 128,000 participants

National Women’s Trade Union sparked a Garment Strike involving over 20,000 participants
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The Rise of Radical Activists

Bolsheviks in Russia

Anarchists in the U.S.

And the increased need for Wartime Production during WWI intensified the problems
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WHAT OTHER FACTORS IN AMERICA INFLUENCED THE RED SCARE?

- Revival of Nativism in 1900’s
  - Irish anti-Catholic attitudes
  - Anti-German attitudes due to World War I
  - Anti-Russian attitudes due to the Russian Revolution
  - Anti-European attitudes due to the Rise of Anarchists
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WHAT OTHER FACTORS IN AMERICA INFLUENCED THE RED SCARE?

• Revival of the KKK in 1900's
  ✓ Release of the 1915 Silent Film, "Birth of A Nation"
  ✓ 1915 Lynching of a Jewish Businessman, Leo Frank, who murdered a young white girl
  ✓ New anti-immigrant concerns by White Supremacists
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WHAT OTHER FACTORS IN AMERICA INFLUENCED THE RED SCARE?

• Increased American Misconceptions about Anarchists
  ✓ Beliefs that All Anarchists wanted to Overthrow any and all Governments using Violence
  ✓ Beliefs that All Anarchists were also Radical Socialists or Communists
  ✓ Beliefs that Anarchists were infiltrating both the Industrial and Government sectors through Unions
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WHAT OTHER EVENTS IN AMERICA INFLUENCED THE RED SCARE?

Espionage Act of 1917

- Redefined Constitutional Rights During times of National Emergency

Sedition Act of 1918

- Redefined the Constitutional Right of Free Speech in America

“To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize.”
- Voltaire
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WHAT OTHER EVENTS IN AMERICA INCREASED THE RED SCARE?

LA Times Bombing (1910)  Wall Street Bombing (1920)

By the McNamara Brothers (Members of a Local Union)

By local Anarchist followers of Italian Luigi Galleani
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WHAT OTHER EVENTS IN AMERICA INCREASED THE RED SCARE?

Boston Police Strike (1919)

Strike over demands for more pay resulted in the police being accused of being Bolshevik Traitors.

Steel Mill Strike (1919)

350,000 Workers from US Steel went on strike, and 18 were killed by local police and militia units.
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WHAT OTHER FACTORS IN AMERICA INCREASED THE RED SCARE?

• Overreaction by key Government Officials
  ✓ U.S. Attorney General Mitchell Palmer
  ✓ Initiated unauthorized “Witch Hunt” for suspected socialists, communists, and anarchists
  ✓ Took the law into his own hands by ordering raids of homes, clubs, union halls, and coffee shops (1919-1920)
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- Galleani Anarchists tried to assassinate Palmer with a Bomb on his Front Porch

- By 1920: Palmer Raids had rounded up and arrested nearly 6,300 suspects

- Many of these people were held in jail without the right to counsel

- Those without citizenship papers were deported as suspected “Reds” even though they were innocent
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Palmer actually deported 249 to Russia on the USS Buford.
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What other events occurred due to the Red Scare attitudes?

- Sacco and Vanzetti
  - Robbery and Murder Case in 1921
  - Two Italian’s who were admitted Anarchists
  - Tried, Convicted, and Executed for Murder based on little evidence
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- Convicted Mainly due to them being admitted Anarchists
- The Sacco & Vanzetti trial caused protests from the U.S. to Europe
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WHAT WAS THE LEGACY OF THE RED SCARE IN AMERICA?

• Violation of Constitutional Rights
• Deportation of Innocent People
• Increased Nativism and Social Prejudices
• Fueled Anti-Union Sentiments across the nation
• Increased American distrust of the Government's Power