

The
Palmer
Raids and
the First
Red Scare

THE ROOTS OF LIBERAL ANTICOMMUNISM
IN THE UNITED STATES

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or one reason or another, there is much more literature about the second “Red Scare,” now known as McCarthyism, than there is about the First Red Scare.

Perhaps it is only because the second one, which occurred in the late 1940s into the early 1960s is more recent and many of those who lived through it are still alive today. Maybe it is because the second one coincided with the intensification of the Cold War that has had such a profound impact on the U.S.’s collective understanding of history and culture. There’s even the theatre of HUAC hearing and the Hollywood Ten. It is also plausible that the First Red Scare, which occurred from around 1917 into the mid-1920s, was much more violent,

repressive and does more to harm the reputation of the U.S. as a bastion of democracy and freedom.



Arguably the most important part of the First Red Scare is what became known as the Palmer Raids from December 1919 to January 1920. These were a series of government raids on the offices and headquarters of leftist radicals all across the country. They're named after the Attorney General of the time A. Mitchell Palmer. They were carried out specifically against radical organizations such as the IWW, the Socialist Party, and especially the newly formed Communists parties following the formation of the Third International.

The Palmer Raids matter precisely because they fit within a continued history of class struggle in the U.S. and throughout the world. Unfortunately, many of the histories of these raids downplay this fact. Well intentioned liberals, and some moderates look at events like the Palmer Raids and proclaim that these were glitches, mere mistakes that the collective we (whoever this "we" means is never spelled out) made and have now learned from. Yet, this completely misses the point.

The late 19th and early 20th Centuries saw massive growth and support for socialist, communist and other radical political

groups and aims, including the elections and appointments of 73 socialist mayors and 1,200 small-time officials throughout 340 towns and cities in 1911.¹ In this context it should not be a surprise that at this moment of increasingly left radicalism the bourgeois government would lead a massive attack on leftist organizations and people. Understood this way, the violence and violations of the Palmer Raids were not a poorly thought out decision, hastily made by politicians swept up by the Red Scare. Rather, they fit into the larger context of class antagonism, and within the framework and very functions of a state.

One of the major deficiencies of current histories is that they either ignore class conflict or downplay its importance, and take away the agency of individual radicals and radical organizations. They tend to paint the victims of the raids as passive subjects or at most "philosophical radicals" who simply held some controversial ideas. Current histories rarely include the voices of the victims, and instead we hear retellings by some liberals and progressives. While these liberals and progressives often offer a strong indictment of the government's overreach and in defense of the raid's targets, they do so by ignoring the larger antagonism at play. In so doing, it perhaps improves the argument that the raids were excessive and wrongful violations, but at the cost of understanding the full history. These narratives ignore the fact that there were revolutionary groups and people who were in fact organizing and working toward revolution, and understood that they were doing exactly that.

The aim of this essay is to add important context to existing literature on the raids. Most scholarship does point to the

antagonisms between labor, primarily radical workers, and the interests of industry, which is closely linked to the government, especially during wartime. However, the basis for this antagonism, namely class struggle, is almost never mentioned. Often, historical narratives point to the motives of individuals, like Palmer's political ambitions, or missteps by government organizations in the wake of "public hysteria." That these things influenced the outcome of the raids is undeniable. However, these histories feed into the "great men of history" myth, and paints individual dissenters like Louis F. Post as brave freedom fighters who defended the poor helpless victims of a misguided government that was mistakenly violating the rights of the victims. Yet, there is an underlying basis that remains excluded if scholars stop there. A Marxist analysis has greater explanatory power precisely because it is able to contextualize these events to show that they share a continuity with the rest of U.S. and world history. Therefore, this essay will use a Marxist analysis to show that the Palmer Raids were a part of ongoing class struggle, that the "victims" were not passive subjects without agency, and that a more accurate history must include these key elements.

BEFORE THE RAIDS

Though there has always been an element of antiradicalism toward the left in the U.S., one of the first times it came into major conflict with the government and its aims was during WWI. It was during this time that the two major leftist groups, the Socialist Party and the International Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies), a

radical labor union, came out in opposition to the war. Both groups saw this, much like Lenin, as a war between imperialist powers where the poor would die for the profits of international capitalists. The press, politicians and superpatriots loudly denounced these groups, and the government began its suppression by suspending many of their constitutional rights, mostly in regards to the First Amendment.²

In addition to the antiwar stance of the radical left, the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that was spreading across Europe at the time contributed even more to this antiradicalism. While the Bolsheviks were gaining popularity and influence, especially throughout Eastern Europe, organized labor in the U.S. continued its struggle with successes, often using militant tactics and strikes. The forming of the Third International in 1919, which aimed to guide revolutionaries around the world to help spread world socialism, further fed the flames of antiradicalism. There were also opportunists in the media, public office, and some in the business community who seized this moment to push antiradicalism against the left even further. There are even those who believe that on some level there were people within the U.S. who wished to fill the void of the now-ended WWI with a new enemy, replacing the German "Hun" with radical left agitators, especially foreign born ones.³ This connection was not a mere fabrication. While the Communist Labor Party at the time was mostly native-born, the Communist Party was 90 percent foreign, out of 60,000 members.⁴

Another one of these "enemies" were labor unions. The most militant of the labor unions was the IWW. What made the IWW

different from other labor unions is that they wished to not only bargain for the interests of workers, but also aimed to eventually overthrow the existing structure of capitalism. The IWW's preamble read:

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of the working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the Earth.⁵

This is roughly the same goal as that of the Socialist Party, both of which aim to take control of the means of production in order transfer ownership away from a handful of industrialists and into communal and democratic ownership of the workers themselves. Similarly both aimed at this radical transformation of society through the use of nonviolent tactics. In the case of the IWW, “[t]he revolution was to be achieved by a series of strikes, leading to a general strike, which would force the capitalists to capitulate. Thus the IWW was to be both the embryo of the new society and the revolutionary instrument for achieving it.”⁶ Additionally we can compare this with the tactics of the Socialist Party that aimed to raise class consciousness and use electoral politics to move toward socialism. This can also be seen through the electoral successes of socialists as mentioned above.⁷

In this context of increasing influence of left groups and parties, the end of the war ushered in a period of stagnating and falling wages, and increasing living costs. This spurred unionization efforts and labor kept on the offensive. On top of this, a series of bombs targeting many public officials were uncovered. Perhaps most importantly, one of the bombs was designated for Palmer himself in a spectacular dynamite explosion that destroyed the front of his house in Washington, D.C.⁸

Historians are divided over what actually sparked the full-scale Palmer Raids. Murray offers a fairly nuanced account, trying to contextualize the times that were filled with growing militancy among labor, the string of anarchist bombings, growing fear of the “Red menace,” and the xenophobia toward Eastern European, Jewish and Russian immigrants. Renshaw marks the start of the antiradical crusade with the trial of IWW leaders in Chicago in 1918.⁹ However, historians almost unanimously point to all or most of these complex factors. Regardless of what specific event or events sparked the Red Scare, the seeds had been planted, and the attitudes and forces behind it have been a part of U.S. history long before the raids and First Red Scare. “Anti-Communism, anti-union activity and nothing short of an all-out war against the organised left had been a constant feature of life in American in the previous half century.”¹⁰ Really, the only difference now was that the government had found legal backing and a public that was whipped up by the “hysteria” of the changing times.

THE PALMER RAIDS

Although the government and even individual vigilante citizens attacked left radicals leading up to and during WWI,¹¹ the most thorough and harsh attack came in 1919 with the Palmer Raids. As mentioned earlier, there were a complex host of events leading to the Palmer Raids. WWI brought a massive increase in industrial output that in turn increased demand for workers to fill the labor shortage. This left workers with increased bargaining power that allowed them and their representative unions to push for greater demands. But after the war, unemployment and high prices put strain on already tense relations between labor and capital. Also, President Wilson had a very mixed record on labor issues, a fact that certainly didn't make matters any better. "He certainly had no love for the pre-World War I period with its progressive reforms and its New Freedoms, and he had eyed apprehensively the growing power of labor. Therefore, with the cessation of hostilities, he was more than happy to engage labor in battle."¹²

In this almost perfect storm, "[t]he result was a sharpening of class antagonisms and an increase in the number of labor strikes across the continent, including the first general strikes, most notably in Seattle and Winnipeg, in addition to major steel and coal strikes later in the year."¹³ On top of all this, there was one last factor that would be used against the radicals: anti-immigrant fears.

Radical agitators have long been tied to foreign influence by those who wish to discredit them. One of the oldest attacks against those who speak out against



specific wars or just war in general, is the idea that they are secretly on the side of the enemy. During WWI, this was also the case and those who opposed the war were loudly denounced as agents of the Kaiser.¹⁴

Believing that radicals were largely foreign born prompted the U.S. to pass legislation aimed at foreign-born radicals. In the U.S., one of the most important events that turned anger toward immigrants was the assassination of President McKinley. Despite the fact that his assassin was actually a native born American, his foreign sounding name was enough. Leon Czolgosz's killing of McKinley in 1901 sparked much anger against foreigners and anarchists. While he was a native born citizen, Czolgosz was also a self-professed anarchist. As a result, in 1903, Congress passed an Immigration Act that, for the first time, prohibited entry of immigrants into the country



solely based on their beliefs and political ideology. It was aimed at those radicals who believed in violent revolution or anarchy.¹⁵

Then in 1917 came a new Immigration Act that not only could exclude radicals from entry, but could also deport radicals for teaching and advocating for radical ideas.¹⁶ The final solidifying of anti-immigration laws came on Oct. 16, 1918, usually referred to as the Deportation Act. This act was much stricter and punitive than all previous ones, removing the time limit on deportations and the burden of proving individual guilt. Now, “[t]here was no longer a time limit for anyone. Any unwanted alien could be deported at any

time. Belief in certain ideas or membership in certain organizations was sufficient cause for deportation. Proof of individual guilt was no longer necessary. [And although it was applied much broader, it] was passed with the IWW in mind.”¹⁷

Louis F. Post was the Secretary of Labor under President Woodrow Wilson during the events of the First Red Scare and the Palmer Raids. Because of his position as Secretary of Labor, he was in charge of immigration. While so many other government officials either remained passive or fully supported the deportations and suppressions of the First Red Scare, Post actively dissented. He

thought that the Wilson administration was going too far, and that the deportations were wrong, legally and morally. Additionally, Post published his personal account in 1923, almost immediately after the events of the First Red Scare, *The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-twenty*.

Among many of the things he writes about, one of his concerns was the excessive bail to keep immigrants detained for longer periods of time.¹⁸ He also notes the lack of probable cause that the arrest warrants for the raids had:

The accompanying affidavits of probable cause appeared to the Solicitor to be so flimsy that he refused to sign the warrants in behalf of the Department of Labor as Acting Secretary, without first scrutinizing the proof in each case, and the proof had not been made available to him. The general grounds for the proposed arrests were membership in the Communist Party and Communist Labor Party. Evidently the detectives intended to make another sensational 'round up' of 'dangerous' aliens charged in fact with nothing more dangerous than formal membership in a proscribed organization.¹⁹

According to Post, Wilson was against this broad application. It is unclear exactly why Wilson appears to have, at least to some extent, been hesitant to commit to such overarching deportations. On the one hand, it is clear he was willing to do quite a lot to weaken and destroy militant labor movements. He didn't hesitate to pass sedition laws and signed into law the Deportation Act. Post's account here seems to contradict that of most other narratives of the First Red Scare.

However, one important fact that Post writes about in his book is the preparation leading up to the raids. According to Post, the Department of Justice had field agents across the country that had infiltrated radical groups, specifically the Communist Party and the Communist Labor Party. They were given specific instructions to instigate or call meetings for a predetermined date.²⁰ In this way, government agents could be sure that when they raided the offices of these radical parties, they would find them full of members, making arrest and

"On 7 November 1919, the second anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, Palmer's agents raided left-wing organizations in 18 cities and summarily deported nearly 250 people, including such notorious anarchists as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. In January 1920 about 10,000 people were arrested in seventy cities, many of them IWW members or sympathizers."²¹ The Communist Party of America's newspaper reported in February 1920 that 3,000 of their members alone were being held for deportation solely because of their membership in the party.²²

deportation easier.

Understanding the Raids

A Marxist-Leninist understanding of the state as not a neutral entity is critical to understanding the raids, and why liberal historians tend to distort its retelling.

Paraphrasing Marx, Lenin writes that “the state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another; it is the creation of ‘order,’ legalizing and perpetuating this oppression by moderating the clashes among the classes.”²³ Liberals, progressives and many on the far right object to this notion of the state, thinking that it is an inherently neutral body, and that in a “democracy” the state is merely the institutions that carry out the will of the “people.” However, Lenin’s point is that the state arises out of the need to limit the conflicts and resolve them in a way that leaves the integrity of the state intact, thus protecting the interests and power of the dominant class.

exists to prevent the workers from simply violently and forcefully taking the factories and wealth from its owners. It legalizes and legitimizes property relations, and to the extent necessary, gives concessions to workers in the form of welfare programs to ease discontentment and prevent violent confrontations. “Above the economically necessary minimum there has also been a politically determined lowest level, a measure of welfare willingly accepted by elites in hopes of preserving their position.”²⁴

This point is important enough in relation to the First Red Scare, but it’s only part of the story. As mentioned above, labor was able to win important victories during WWI and continued this push after. This intensified class antagonisms enough, but coupled with the recent victory of an actual socialist revolution in Russia, and a string of bombs many people attributed to radicals, tensions increased even more. While many historians downplay the radicalism of many of the targeted groups, there were people and organizations that were fully committed to violent revolution that were operating within the U.S.

Murray’s account is somewhat confused and unclear about the actual strength of the radical left. For instance he continuously downplays the radicalism of the Union of Russian Workers (URW), something that Grueter believes is a fundamental flaw in his work. The mistake, according to Grueter is that historians have largely ignored the actual writings of the URW because they are primarily written in Russian.²⁵ Yet, Murray dedicates a whole chapter, titled “The Fire behind the Smoke,” that paints

Put simply, in capitalist society, the state

a picture of a somewhat strong radical left, pointing out that the 70,000 official members of both major Communist parties offer a flawed view. He notes that more than 50 Bolshevik publications began circulating in 26 languages after the formation of the two Communist parties. He further points out that in addition to these Bolshevik publications there were 471 radical publications circulating in the U.S. in 1919 that called for a violent revolution to overthrow capitalism.²⁶ Murray concludes the chapter by writing, “[e]ven so, it remains clear that the 70,000 members of the two Communist parties do not tell the whole story. And although the postwar trend of events, both domestically and internationally, tend to exaggerate the importance of the Communist menace, the nation’s fears were not predicated entirely on mere figments of the imagination. There was some fire behind and the smoke.”²⁷

In the context of the First Red Scare and the success of the Bolsheviks, it was widely believed by the government and individual citizens that “Reds” from Russia were infiltrating the labor movement and generally trying to instigate a violent revolution in the U.S. These fears are not totally unfounded. In 1918, Lenin himself wrote and published “Letter to American Workers.” In it, he urges Americans to follow the lead of the Bolsheviks in taking state power from the bourgeoisie. He pointed to the American Civil War as an example in U.S. history of revolutionary violence and tried to convince readers that a new civil war to overthrow the system of capitalism would be similarly justified and a worthy cause.²⁸ Although most Communists, then and now, tend to agree with Lenin that violent

revolution in the U.S. was probably still not likely in the near future in 1919/1920, this letter became widely circulated with an estimated readership of about 5 million.²⁹

All of this is to say that the fears of revolutionaries desiring and working toward the overthrow of the government were not complete fabrications. Additionally, the people and groups targeted were not innocent of the charges, mere “philosophical radicals” that many of the authors claim were the main targets. It is of course the case that innocent people became victims of the raids, and prosecuted and deported as a result. Hoyt tells many anecdotal stories about people who were caught up in the raids because their membership in one social organization or another somehow got transferred to a radical one without them knowing.³⁰ Murray claims that the URW was mostly a social organization that had no intention of working toward violent revolution or anarchy.³¹ In virtually every source, the radicalism of the victims is downplayed and the raids are portrayed as a major unjustified violation of civil liberties.

Yet, this interpretation misses the point. “Such claims are made to strengthen arguments against the abuses of the Palmer raids in the defense of civil rights: the more the URW’s political essence can be denied, the more illegitimate the raids appear to be.”³² This is an appealing logic. Defenders of free speech and civil liberties scarcely want to be accused of defending the rights of violent political agitators and those who wish to destroy the current way of life in the U.S. Painting the victims as unintentional radicals caught up by

xenophobia and antiradicalism is a useful narrative. “The general attitude taken toward the URW is condescending; it is often suggested, for example, that URW members were incapable of or uninterested in reading and understanding, even in their native Russian language, the clear statements of revolutionary anarchist principles printed in their membership books. The members should be pitied as victims, not respected as autonomous actors whose ideas and actions might be of some interest to scholars.”³³

However, while painting the raids and the victims in this way, scholars often miss the underlying class conflict driving these events. Drawing from a book by Beverly Gage, Grueter notes that during investigations into the wrongful actions taken by officials during the Palmer Raids, none of the victims or those targeted were even invited to the Congressional hearings.³⁴ The result is that we are left with an interpretation of events that leave out the voices of important groups, obscuring their motives and leaving it to liberals and progressives trying to paint themselves as the true protagonists who rushed in to protect the civil liberties of all Americans.³⁵

Not only are these historical narratives often self-serving, they also serve the ruling class as a whole in that they obscure the history of radicals. What this does is paints events like the Palmer Raids as momentary blips of poor decision making on the part of leaders, while at the same time twisting narratives to make it seem like there were checks-and-balances and people who tried to bravely resist in the face of a hysteric public and power-

hungry politicians like Palmer. This way, the Palmer Raids aren’t part of a continuity of radicals struggling against a powerful government to help bring about a more egalitarian society. Consider this lengthy quote that sums this point up well:

Gage’s analysis helps explain how and why scholarship on the Red Scare went off on the wrong track. From the beginning, Gage argues, there was a concerted effort to downplay the radicalism of communists and anarchists to make a stronger legal case against the raids and deportations:

Horried at the excesses of McCarthyism, many liberal historians... went out of their way during the postwar years to minimize past controversies over violence, terrorism, and class conflict. They tended to depict the Red Scare as an anomalous episode, the result of paranoid delusions, not genuine social conflict.

In this context, the great bomb cases of earlier decades began to be understood as cautionary tales about McCarthyism, more important for the “hysteria” and repression they produced than for the tensions they revealed . . . Many of the social historians who transformed the study of American radicalism and labor in the 1960s understood their task as a redemptive one, an effort to move beyond tired images of bomb throwers and dangerous subversives. They emphasized the unequal nature of class violence . . . and they were

admirably sensitive to the ability of those in power to channel public fear into campaigns of repression. In the process, however, they robbed at least a few revolutionaries of their militancy.³⁶

The key, as Gage points to, is that the events of the Palmer Raids and the First Red Scare reveal the underlying conflict. This conflict has been carefully glossed over, as scholars ignore and downplay

voices of radicals. To fully understand the history of the raids and the First Red Scare, scholars must understand the motivations of radicals. This requires an acknowledgement of class struggle, something the radicals openly proclaimed they were waging. It is in fact the politicians and liberal scholars who deny that such motivations were behind the violence and suppression directed toward political radicals.

Even Murray grants that there were radicals and that there were indeed many



who aimed for violent revolution. Yet, in his conclusion, he offers the typical liberal analysis. He believes that while the raids and violence of the Red Scare was a mistake, the U.S. should genuinely resist communism and political radicalism. Murray still wishes to destroy political radicalism and communism, but thinks “hysteria” and the accompanying crackdowns and suppression are ineffective methods. In his analysis, the best cure is “by retaining our national sanity and by removing the turmoil, the tension, the race prejudice, and the poverty which communism exploits, we stand a much better chance of rendering the doctrine impotent. The real key to fighting communism is not spy hunts, congressional investigations, or loyalty oaths; it rests instead in combating those very problems which bring the issue of communism to the fore – low living standards, sickness and disease, illiteracy, racial intolerance, unequal opportunity, and war.”³⁷ In his prescription, there is no real, genuine class conflict. “Sanity” will simply put an end to these antagonisms if only we had the will to maintain our “sane thinking,” and preserve individual liberties and freedoms.³⁸ This seems to be nothing more than wishful thinking, given centuries of class conflict, and instance after instance of government repression and violence against those who wage class struggle on behalf of the proletarians.

Legacies of the Palmer Raids

As this essay has attempted to show, the Palmer Raids did not arise out of nowhere, a spontaneous hysteria whipped up by a combination of opportunistic politicians

and businesspeople, sensationalistic media, and a frightened public. What is interesting is the almost paradoxical way in which so many scholars portray the mass of American citizens. On the one hand, the public was the source of the hysteria that politicians were supposedly responding to when they launched the repressive measures. They were also apparently pleased at first with the raids.³⁹ On the flip side, perhaps Renshaw is right when he writes that the raids “shocked the conscience of liberal America.”⁴⁰ However, this shock is likely confined to liberals. Radicals who understand the aims and nature of the state are likely not to be terribly surprised.

Renshaw, Murray, Hoyt, Feuerlicht, and countless other historians paint the events of the First Red Scare as mere unfortunate mistakes that resulted from panicked decision making or miscalculations. However, it’s important to note that the raids were monumentally successful, and these government agents knew exactly what they wanted to accomplish. This is class war, and the bourgeois government had largely succeeded in their goals of weakening the radical left by fracturing its organizational structure, and by intimidating leftists and dissuading any others from thinking about joining radical groups. On this front, the raids accomplished exactly this:

"In the final analysis, the raids on the Communist parties accomplished their purpose. Both the Communist party and the Communist Labor party were driven underground and



demoralized. So complete was this demoralization that it was impossible to know just how many of its members were lost. Benjamin Gitlow estimated that both groups dropped from about sixty thousand members in 1919, to a hard core of less than ten thousand a few years later. Furthermore, the raids struck terror into the hearts of those who remained, especially if they were foreign-born."⁴¹

Murray further adds that by 1923 the labor movement was thoroughly decimated, losing more than a million members in two short years.⁴²

Reading the histories, many authors point out that the raids and the Red Scare should be seen as a cautionary tale, and that we've since learned our lesson about the excesses of antiradicalism. The narratives offer a neat ending: Post was vindicated, Palmer discredited after his May Day predictions were false, Congressional investigations were held, and the public as a whole began to see the perils of sacrificing civil liberties for security. Curious, then, that a mere 25 years later an almost identical wave of antiradicalism took hold, and once again Americans rallied behind the idea that the government should lead the fight against domestic Communists, once again eviscerating civil liberties and free speech rights. Instead of honestly looking into this history and revealing the deeply entrenched conflicts, historians crafted

lofty narratives that downplayed these divisions and minimized the role of class struggle in shaping these events.

Conclusion

Scholarship on the First Red Scare is limited, and lacking in diversity. The voices and perspectives of the radicals who were the targets of the raids are difficult to come by. Similarly, there is virtually no scholarship on the raids coming from a right-wing or conservative political view. Almost all scholarship comes from liberals and progressives. As noted above, these groups found a convenient narrative in the Palmer Raids and First Red Scare. These progressives and liberals distanced themselves from the radicalism of targets and victims, then downplayed the radicalism of the actual targets. Conservatives likely avoid this topic because it illustrates the extreme excesses that can result from reactionary right-wing politics. For obvious reasons, this lack of diversity makes balanced scholarship difficult, though not impossible.

Further research on this topic should include a more thorough look into the writings of the groups targeted. This was difficult. Some barriers were simply that much radical literature, as Grueter pointed out, was written in foreign languages. Additionally, many of the targeted groups are no longer in existence.

This essay has chosen to take a relatively narrow focus, though important historical and philosophical context was added to guide the reader. A longer essay could have included more information on Palmer himself, a man who had a

complicated political career, and perhaps on President Wilson and his stroke. The author chose instead to avoid focusing too much on individuals. Care was taken to avoid an analysis that is typical of the “great men of history” narratives that oversimplify complex conflicts and social interactions. After all, there was in fact a whole other Red Scare, which came to be known as McCarthyism. The outcomes of this second Red Scare were roughly the same even though almost all of those involved in the first were no longer in any meaningful positions. Therefore, analyzing the events of both Red Scares by focusing on individuals is insufficient.

This paper has attempted to show that the events of the First Red Scare and the Palmer Raids are best understood through a Marxist-Leninist framework that emphasizes class struggle and the repressive nature of the state. Further, it is important to understand the motives of the groups involved. On the one hand, there were the radicals who did wish to overthrow the government in a class war, and on the other hand there was the government and bourgeoisie who wanted to crush radical groups at a time when they were gaining influence. Though most scholars agree the radicals scarcely had any real chance of waging a successful violent revolution, the aims of the Palmer Raids and accompanying violence and suppression was to crush dissent and weaken the power of labor.

It should be the goal of Communists and historians both to not forget how and why the First Red Scare occurred, and why another such another red scare happened shortly after. It should also be the goal of Communists to take back this history. As

this essay has shown, the retelling of this history has been largely ignored, and when it is told, it's left to self-serving liberals. As Communists we also should recognize that the bourgeois governments of the world will use the full force of their repressive apparatuses to prevent workers from gaining power.

Above all, we should take inspiration from the workers of past generations who struggled to end the misery of capitalism and hoped for a better world.

Endnotes

- 1 Howard Zinn. *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005), 353
- 2 Julian Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism*, 2-3. Also consider countless Supreme Court cases, such as Charles Schenck and Eugene Debs, or the refusal of the government to allow the postal service to mail leftist publications. More on this can be found in later chapters of Jaffe and countless other sources.
- 3 Ibid, 3.
- 4 Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare: A Study of National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), 53.
- 5 "Preamble to the IWW Constitution," Industrial Workers of the World, <https://www.iww.org/culture/official/preamble.shtml>
- 6 Patrick Renshaw, "The IWW and the Red Scare, 1917-1924," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 4 (1968), 64.
- 7 Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism*, 2. Also here we can see this tactic as part of the general strategy of the Second International throughout most of Europe that worked toward greater democratization and representation of workers by using electoral politics. For more info on this see Eley, Geoff. *Forging Democracy: the History of the Left in Europe, 1850- 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Chapter 4.
- 8 Murray, *Red Scare*, 78.
- 9 Renshaw, "The IWW and the Red Scare," 63.
- 10 Nick Shepley, *Palmer Raids and the Red Scare: 1918-1920 : Justice and Liberty for All*. (Luton: Andrews UK Limited, 2011) 5.
- 11 Countless sources recall citizens beating, tarring and feathering, and general harassing of IWW members. A great example of vigilantes being supported by government officials is the Everett Massacre of IWW members.
- 12 Murray, *Red Scare*, 8-9.
- 13 Mark Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship, Class Conflict, and the Case of the Anarchist Union of Russian Workers, 1919," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 11, no. 1 (2017), 55-56.
- 14 Murray, *Red Scare*, 34. Interestingly, this was also applied to Lenin himself who many claimed was working for Germany, even though he denounced the war as imperialistic and criticized Germany heavily for their imperialism.

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- 15 Roberta Strauss Feuerlicht. *America's Reign of Terror: World War I, the Red Scare, and the Palmer Raids* (New York, N.Y.: Random House, 1971), 64.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid, 66-67.
- 18 Louis F. Post, *The Deportations Delirium of Nineteen-twenty* (Chicago: C.H. Kerr & Company, 1923), 75.
- 19 Ibid, 78
- 20 Ibid, 88.
- 21 Patrick Renshaw, "The IWW and the Red Scare," 69.
- 22 *The Communist*, vol. II, no. 1, Feb. 15, 1920.
- 23 V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (Penguin Books, 1992 [1918]), 9.
- 24 Peter Baldwin, *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State, 1875-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.
- 25 Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship," 55. Though he mentions Murray here specifically, he believes almost all historians are guilty of this. His paper focuses largely on the radicalism of the URW, by examining the primary source writings of the organization.
- 26 Murray, *Red Scare*, 53. I quote this from Murray, who claims he got these numbers from the Annual Report of the Attorney General, 1920, and from Investigation Activities of the Department of Justice.
- 27 Ibid, 56.
- 28 V. I. Lenin, "Letter to American Workers" (*Pravda* No. 178, August 22, 1918) accessed from <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/aug/20.htm>.
- 29 Murray, *Red Scare*, 46.
- 30 Hoyt, Edwin P. *The Palmer Raids 1919-1920: An Attempt to Suppress Dissent* (New York, N.Y.: Seabury Press, 1969), 115. Hoyt gives one example here of a man named Thomas Truss, but there is no shortage of examples in the literature.
- 31 Murray, *Red Scare*, 196-197.
- 32 Grueter, "Red Scare Scholarship," 54.
- 33 Ibid, 55.
- 34 Ibid, 64. Grueter's citation is: "Beverly Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded: A Story of America in Its First Age of Terror*" (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 239. NPGL had close ties to the newly founded American Civil Liberties Union."
- 35 This should be obvious enough, but Post's whole book is of this character.
- 36 Ibid, 65. Here I quote again from Grueter who is quoting Gage. I thought it useful to include Grueter's contextual introduction to the quote, rather than going straight to Gage's

source. Grueter cites the same source as follows: “Gage, *The Day Wall Street Exploded*, 7.”

37 Murray, *Red Scare*, 280.

38 Ibid.

39 Feuerlicht, *America’s Reign of Terror*, 98.

40 Renshaw, “The IWW and the Red Scare,” 69.

41 Jaffe, *Crusade Against Radicalism*, 192.

42 Murray, *Red Scare*, 269.

Suggestions for Further Reading

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