

## POST WWI AMERICA

### **100 Percent Americanism**

- The end of World War I brought great rejoicing but also many problems.
- An influenza epidemic from Europe had spread to the U.S., killing more than half a million Americans.
- Farms and factories that had prospered during war years closed down as demand for products fell.
- Returning soldiers had trouble finding work.
- The emotional turmoil had disturbing political effects, as wartime patriotism turned to hatred of Germans.
- These sentiments gave rise to a movement known as 100 Percent Americanism, which celebrated all things American while attacking all ideas, and people, it viewed as foreign or anti-American.

### **The Red Scare**

#### **Rise of the Bolsheviks**

- Americans worried about a new enemy.
- The **Bolsheviks**, a revolutionary group led by Vladimir I. Lenin, gained control of Russia during World War I.
- Five years later Russia became part of a new nation called the Soviet Union.
- The Bolsheviks wanted **communism**, a new social system without economic classes or private property.
- Lenin believed all people should share equally in society's wealth.
- Soviets called for the overthrow of capitalism and predicted communism would inspire workers to rise up and crush it.

#### **American Reaction**

- Many Americans were frightened by communism.
- Americans embraced capitalism and feared a rise of the working class.
- The picture of "the Hun," a German symbol, Americans focused hatred on during WWI, was replaced by a new target: communists, known as Reds.
- Communist parties formed in the U.S. after the war, some advocating violent overthrow of the government.
- A **Red Scare**, or widespread fear of communism, gripped the nation.

## **Plots, Laws, and Raids**

·Radical communists might have been behind a failed 1919 plot, in which bombs were mailed to government officials, including U.S. Attorney General **A. Mitchell Palmer**, a former Progressive.

·Though the communism threat was probably not very great, the government took it seriously.

·New York legislatures voted to bar five legally elected socialists from office and passed a law making it a crime to call for government revolution.

·The Supreme Court found the law unconstitutional in the 1925 case of *Gitlow v. New York*.

·Palmer was a key leader in the government's anti-Communist campaign, attacking radicals in the **Palmer raids** and justifying them with wartime laws that gave the government broad power against suspected radicals.

·For **aliens**, or citizens of other countries living in the U.S., just belonging to certain groups considered radical could lead to **deportation**, or being sent back to one's own country.

·In late 1919 Palmer's forces arrested thousands and deported hundreds.

·In time, the Red Scare died down, as overseas communism began to fail.

## **Problems for Laborers**

### **Post-War Difficulties**

- During the war, President Wilson sought good relations with workers who were keeping the troops clothed and equipped.
- Organized labor won many gains, including shorter hours and higher wages, and labor leaders hoping to build on this were frustrated by several factors.
  - Wilson now focused on promoting his postwar peace plan, not labor.
  - The sinking postwar demand for factory goods hurt many industries.
  - Returning soldiers expected jobs that weren't there.
  - Unhappy workers and strikers were replaced.
  - The Red Scare damaged labor's reputation, making many suspicious of organized labor.

### **Labor's Losses**

- The showdown between labor and management in 1919 devastated organized labor.
- Unions lost members and national political power.
- It took another decade and another national crisis to restore organized labor's reputation, status, and bargaining power in the U.S.

## **Major Strikes, But Not Major Victories**

- The year 1919 was one of the most explosive times in the history of the American labor movement.
- Some 4 million workers took part in over 3,000 strikes nationwide, and labor lost in nearly every case.
- A few strikes in 1919 hold a place in labor history.
- In Seattle, Washington, labor unrest at the shipyards spread across the city, igniting what became the nation's first general strike, or one in which all industries take part.
- The conflict shut down the city yet failed.
- The strike discouraged industry in Seattle for years.
- In Boston, the police force went on strike to protest low wages and poor working conditions.
- The city descended into chaos, and Governor Calvin Coolidge called in the militia to end the strike, making him a national hero.
- The United Mine Workers had a "no strikes" pledge during the war, but a strike in 1919 won a large wage increase but not better hours.
- The steel industry also struck in 1919.

## **Limiting Immigration**

- Competition for jobs was fierce, and combined with the Red Scare, a backlash against foreigners struck the nation.
- The rise of **nativism**, or distrust of foreigners, produced a culture clash between the country's earliest immigrants and its newer ones.
- Many nativists were Protestant Christians whose roots were Northern and Western European, and they targeted newer arrivals from Southern and Eastern Europe.
- Many of the newer arrivals were Catholics and Jews, and nativists argued that these groups were less willing to become "Americanized."
- Labor leaders, along with nativists, pushed for immigration restrictions because new arrivals were usually willing to work for low wages.

## **Reaction to Immigration Government**

- A 1921 law established a quota, or set number, of immigrants to be allowed into the U.S. from various nations.
- Then, the National Origins Act of 1924 set quotas for each country at 2 percent of the number of people from that country currently living in the U.S., clearly to reduce immigration from certain countries.
- The act nearly eliminated immigration from Asian countries.

## **The KKK**

- Nativism produced a 1920s revival of the Ku Klux Klan.
- The Klan's terror group had originally targeted African Americans in the South but began also to target Jews, Catholics, and radicals.
- The Klan slogan of the 1920s was "Native white, Protestant supremacy."
- The Klan moved from the South into other parts of the country.

## **Sacco and Vanzetti**

- In the late 1920s a court case in Massachusetts proved nativist and anti-radical feelings.
- Two men named Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were arrested for armed robbery and murder.
- The two men were Italian immigrants and also proclaimed **anarchists**, or radicals who seek the destruction of government.
- The evidence against the two men was weak, but it was apparent that the two were on trial for their beliefs as much as for the crimes.
- Amid great publicity and protests in Europe and South America as well as in the U.S., the two men were convicted and sentenced to death.
- Their 1927 executions were highly controversial, but by then the nation had largely recovered from the Red Scare and the turmoil of the postwar years.