

## The Red Scare

The so-called "Red Scare" refers to the fear of communism in the USA during the 1920's. It is said that there were over 150,000 anarchists or communists in USA in 1920 alone and this represented only 0.1% of the overall population of the USA. However many Americans were scared of the communists especially as they had overthrown the royal family in Russia in 1917 and murdered them in the following year. Americans were determined that no Bolshevik (Communist) Revolution would happen in the United States.

The leader against American radicals was President Wilson's Attorney General, **A. MITCHELL PALMER**. From 1919 to 1920, Palmer conducted a series of raids (*Palmer Raids*) on individuals he believed were dangerous to American security. He deported 249 **RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS** without just cause. With Palmer's sponsorship, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was created under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover. In January of 1920, federal agents broke into the homes of suspected anarchists without search warrants, jailed labor leaders, and held about 5,000 citizens without respecting their right to legal counsel. Palmer felt that American civil liberties were less important than rooting out potential wrongdoers. Eventually most of the detainees were released, but some were deported. Very few people complained about the legality of these arrests such was the fear of communism. The judicial system seemed to turn a blind eye as America's national security was paramount.

# **THE RED MENACE IS REAL!**



## Emergency Quota Act

The most important legislation from the early twentieth century came in 1921. Referred to as the 1921 Quota Act, this legislation utilized immigration statistics to determine a maximum number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States from each nation or region. The numbers were skewed to favor immigration from western European nations while severely curbing immigration from areas perceived to be undesirable.

According to federal officials scattered throughout European consulates, literally millions of Europeans hoped to immigrate to the United States in the aftermath of World War I (1914-1918). Some of these would-be immigrants could be considered as coming from the "desirable" classes of western and northern European nations, but it appeared that the vast majority of the potential immigrants would be coming from southern and Eastern Europe.

Many Americans held the perception that individuals from southern and Eastern Europe could not be assimilated properly into the culture of the United States. Their languages, customs, and religions were thought to be too different from those of preceding generations of immigrants for full-scale integration into American culture. The fear was that these newer immigrants would always be "hyphenates," or citizens who would call themselves, or be called by others, by such hyphenated names as "Polish-Americans," "Greek-Americans," and "Italian-Americans." Beyond the fear of being swamped by unassimilable immigrants from eastern and southern Europe was the fear that these immigrants' increasing numbers would depress wages for American workers. In addition, some people feared the potential of the rising political power of the new class of immigrants.

The new immigration quotas utilized immigration statistics from the census of 1910 to determine the eligibility of immigrants coming from certain regions. Theoretically, this would allow a fixed flow of immigrants, however, immigration statistics show that this turned out to be overtly prejudice. The new legislation utilized a national origins formula that took the number of foreign-born immigrants that lived in the US in 1910 and would then allow three percent of each demographic to enter the country. The immigration quotas of 1921 started a long line of legislation that attempted to block certain types of immigration.

# NEW IMMIGRATION LAW NOW IN EFFECT

Number Permitted to Enter  
Limited to 3 Per Cent. of  
Various Nationals Here.

## DEPORTATION FOR SURPLUS

When Quota for Month Is Reached  
Those Who Arrive Cannot Be  
"Passed"—Total for Year 77,206.

The new immigration law went into  
effect at midnight. In every immigra-



## Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

A paymaster and a security guard were killed during a mid-afternoon armed robbery of a shoe company in South Braintree, Massachusetts in April of 1920. Out of this rather unremarkable crime grew one of the most famous trials in American history and a landmark case in forensic crime detection.

Both Fred Parmenter and Alessandro Berardelli were shot several times as they attempted to move the payroll boxes of their New England shoe company. The two armed thieves, identified by witnesses as "Italian-looking," fled in a Buick. The car was found abandoned in the woods several days later. Through evidence found in the car, police suspected that a man named Mike Boda was involved. However, Boda was one step ahead of the authorities, and he fled to Italy.

Police did manage to catch Boda's colleagues, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who were each carrying loaded weapons at the time of their arrest in May 1920.

Sacco and Vanzetti were anarchists, believing that social justice would come only through the destruction of governments. In the early 1920s, mainstream America developed a fear of communism and radical politics that resulted in an anti-communist, anti-immigrant hysteria.

The judge at their trial – Judge Thayer – was known to hate the "Reds" and 61 people claimed that they saw both men at the robbery/murders. 107 people claimed that they had seen both men elsewhere when the crime was committed. Regardless of this both men were found guilty. They spent 7 years in prison while their lawyers appealed but in vain. Despite many public protests and petitions, both men were executed by electric chair on August 24th, 1927. Historians still debate the fairness of the trial these men were given and whether or not they were truly guilty of murder or just guilty of being a foreign anarchist in a nation that feared such things.



## The Resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan: “Keep America American”

Spreading far beyond its roots in the Reconstruction South, the resurgent Klan of the 1920s was a short-lived but potent phenomenon. By equating white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism with "true Americanism," it fueled intolerance for blacks, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants.

In the guise of protecting community morals, it expanded its victims of vigilante justice to those it deemed lawbreakers, bootleggers, unfaithful spouses, corrupt politicians, etc.—all with no judge or jury beyond the local secret "klavern." Whippings, tar-and-featherings, threats of violence, and for black victims, lynching, became common practice in some regions of the South, Southwest, and Midwest (Indiana was the stronghold of Klan power in the decade).

The KKK sponsored public picnics, parade floats, and free speakers (and for the members, of course, secret nighttime cross-burnings), and they promoted Klan sympathizers for political office.. During the early 1920s, the Klan helped elect 16 U.S. Senators and many Representatives and local officials.

By 1924, when the Klan had reached its peak in numbers and influence, it claimed to control 24 of the nation's 48 state legislatures. That year it succeeded in blocking the nomination of Al Smith, a New York Catholic, at the Democratic National Convention.





"The Dark Shadow Spreads"

At its peak in the 1920s, Klan membership exceeded 4 million people nationwide.



## **Nativism, Xenophobia and Deportations**

**Nativism Definition:** a belief system or policy that is anti-immigrant

**Xenophobia Definition:** a fear of foreigners (immigrants)

**Deportation Definition:** Legal process by which a government expels noncitizens from its country

Between the passage of the first deportation law in 1882 and 1924, the U.S. government typically deported a few hundred—at most, a few thousand— people each year. In the Immigration Act of 1924, Congress introduced the national origins system, which led to a number of significant changes in American deportation policy. Under the national origins system, the Bureau of Immigration began deporting thousands more immigrants each year. In 1922, just prior to the passage of the new law, the bureau deported 4,283 immigrants. In 1925, the first year after Congress passed the new law, the government deported 9,402 immigrants. By the end of the 1920s, 16,631 immigrants were deported.

In the 1920's, a series of laws expanded the number of deportable crimes to include espionage, explosives, wartime offenses and crimes involving 'moral turpitude' In this sense, deportation was no longer limited to unwelcome foreigners. Any noncitizen who had already been admitted into the United States now faced the possibility of deportation.

A category particularly important during the pre- and post-1924 periods was that of alien radicals. Greater number of deportations occurred for people who were classified as "new immigrants" and those who had political ideologies that differed from the standard.

As deportation scholars have increasingly noted, deportation holds a power far greater than the actual numbers deported — its impact lies also in the imposition of a regime of terror over immigrant populations, perennial vulnerability, and a persistent fear that at any moment, you or your family member could become a target.



## **The Scopes Trial**

In Dayton, Tennessee, the so-called “Monkey Trial” begins with John Thomas Scopes, a young high school science teacher, accused of teaching evolution in violation of a Tennessee state law.

The law, which had been passed in March, made it a misdemeanor punishable by fine to “teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.” With local businessman George Rappalyea, Scopes had conspired to get charged with this violation, and after his arrest the pair enlisted the aid of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to organize a defense. Hearing of this coordinated attack on Christian fundamentalism, William Jennings Bryan, the three-time Democratic presidential candidate and a fundamentalist hero, volunteered to assist the prosecution. Soon after, the great attorney Clarence Darrow agreed to join the ACLU in the defense, and the stage was set for one of the most famous trials in U.S. history.

In the courtroom, Judge Raulston destroyed the defense’s strategy by ruling that expert scientific testimony on evolution was inadmissible—on the grounds that it was Scopes who was on trial, not the law he had violated. The next day, Raulston ordered the trial moved to the courthouse lawn, fearing that the weight of the crowd inside was in danger of collapsing the floor.

On July 21, in his closing speech, Darrow asked the jury to return a verdict of guilty in order that the case might be appealed. Under Tennessee law, Bryan was thereby denied the opportunity to deliver the closing speech he had been preparing for weeks. After eight minutes of deliberation, the jury returned with a guilty verdict, and Raulston ordered Scopes to pay a fine of \$100, the minimum the law allowed.

