

Document A: "The Case Against the "Reds" (Modified)

In 1917, Russia became a communist country. Also, right after WWI, the country experienced high inflation, high unemployment, and a number of labor strikes. Against this backdrop, the United States began arresting and deporting anyone suspected of "radical" thinking (e.g., communism, socialism, anarchism, pro-labor). These arrests became known as the "Palmer Raids" after the Attorney General of the United States, A. Mitchell Palmer.

Like a prairie-fire, the blaze of revolution was sweeping over every American institution a year ago. It was eating its way into the homes of the American workmen, its sharp tongues of revolutionary heat were licking the altars of the churches, leaping into schools, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes, burning up the foundations of society.

My information showed that thousands of aliens supported communism in this country.

The whole purpose of communism appears to be a mass organization of the criminals of the world to overthrow the decencies of private life, to usurp property that they have not earned, to disrupt the present order of life. Communism distorts our social law.

The Department of Justice will pursue the attack of these "Reds" upon the Government of the United States with vigilance, and no alien, advocating the overthrow of existing law and order in this country, shall escape arrest and prompt deportation.

Vocabulary

Aliens: Foreigners

Usurp: take over

Distort: Twist out of shape

Source: Excerpt from an essay written by A. Mitchell Palmer called "The Case Against the 'Reds,'" 1920.

Document B: Emma Goldman Deportation Statement (Modified)

I wish to register my protest against these proceedings, whose very spirit is nothing less than a revival of the ancient days of the Spanish Inquisition or Czarist Russia (when anyone who disagreed with the government was deported or killed). Today so-called aliens are deported. Tomorrow American citizens will be banished. Already some “patriots” are suggesting that some native-born American citizens should be exiled.

The free expression of the hopes of a people is the greatest and only safety in a sane society. The object of the deportations and of the anti-anarchist law is to stifle the voice of the people, to muzzle every aspiration of labor. That is the real and terrible menace of these proceedings. Their goal is to exile and banish every one who does not agree with the lies that our leaders of industry continue to spread.

Emma Goldman
New York, October 27, 1919

Vocabulary

Banish= Exile= Deported= Kicked out of the country

Aspiration: hope or ambition

Menace: danger, threat

Source: Excerpt from the statement Emma Goldman gave at her deportation hearings. Goldman was an anarchist and socialist who sympathized with the working poor. She was deported during the Palmer Raids.