

**THE PARTY OF FEAR**  
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**CHAPTER 11**

**THE RED SCARE**  
**1919 – 1920**

The Civil War arrested the growth of nativism in America. The Great War, 1914 – 18, stimulated it.

While the great powers of Europe sent their men to slaughter in the grotesque trench struggles of the western front, the United States had maintained an uneasy neutrality to spring 1917. But a war so vast and convulsive could not be ignored and was not contained; eventually the debate over American involvement and the passions evoked by this conflict eclipsed all else. The Progressive Era faded from view, another victim of World War I. Then the long tradition of American separation from the affairs of the world powers was violated, when Woodrow Wilson finally brought the United States into the war in April. In the emotional and divisive process leading to American entry, not only the age of reform and the age of isolation were at least temporarily ended. A period of relative quiet in the history of nativist activity also quickly dissolved as the debate over involvement in a war against foreign foes led some "real Americans" to seek out the enemy within, the link between the alien menace in the United States and the dangerous situation across the ocean. The Civil War had unified native-born and immigrants, Anglo-Saxon Protestants and Catholic ethnics, because the common enemy of all Unionists was the Confederacy. The Great War had the opposite effect. It provided a setting for new divisions between Americans in a world at war.

At first, the new nativism focused on once-familiar adversaries, German-Americans. Second only to the Irish as objects of Know Nothing hostility, German-Americans had been so successful in their journey to assimilation that few ugly words were directed at them by those fervid patriots from the nativist fraternities of the

1890s. But the war changed all that. Even in the years of neutrality, public opinion was solidly behind the British and French in their conflict with the German Empire. Shrewd manipulators of propaganda in the New World, the British had furthered the process, stimulating anger at "Hun atrocities" in Belgium and at the autocratic militarism of the kaiser's nation. Now German-Americans suddenly were seen as agents of an alien state. After demonstrations by German-American organizations favoring an embargo on the shipment of war supplies to Britain (Germany already was effectively cut off from U.S. ports by the British naval blockade) and meetings by group leaders in Washington, the *New York Times* accused these activists of being "completely subservient to foreign influence and a foreign power," of demonstrating "the un-American spirit." Theodore Roosevelt, out of power and anxious to test himself and his nation in military combat once again, not only beat the drums for war but assailed German-Americans, at least "those who spiritually remained foreigners in whole or in part." When the United States declared war on Germany, this nativist rhetoric was replaced by the politics of repression.<sup>1</sup>

The new anti-German nativism was unlike the old. This time the New World paradise was not threatened by Catholic immigrants, agents of a Jesuitical conspiracy. German-Americans were now seen as an arm of the official enemy. Their sin was not their religion but their nationality. In fact, anti-Catholicism quickly declined during the days of war fever. The *Menace*, that anti-Catholic newspaper which had experienced a brief celebrity, soon lost most of its subscribers and passed from view. In place of the old nativist fears were new ones: German-Americans poisoning food, spoiling medical supplies, and undermining public support for the war effort. German-language training was dropped by many public schools, German names were changed, and German dishes disappeared from restaurants. German shepherd dogs became Alsatian shepherds; Boy scouts burned German-language newspapers in the streets of several cities; musical organizations purged Wagner, Schubert, and Beethoven. German-Americans were assaulted in a number of communities. In his pamphlet *The Tentacles of the German Octopus in America*, published by the National Security League, Earl E. Sperry declared that "overwhelming proof is afforded that large numbers of German-Americans are disloyal citizens." It was now a mark of patriotism to throw a rock through butcher Schultz's window. Vio-

lence spread from acts of individual hostility to the organized work of vigilantes like the Knights of Liberty. In Chicago, a group that would gain quasi-official status as an auxiliary to the Justice Department, the American Protective League (APL), emerged under the leadership of an advertising executive named A. M. Briggs. The APL (which claimed a quarter of a million members) sought out and tried to silence the proponents of un-American beliefs. But this new crusade was not limited to ethnic German-Americans. In the crucible of America's first major war in half a century, the enemy became not only the descendants of immigrants from the wrong fatherland but all opponents of the war effort. The Military Intelligence Division of the United States Army, working through field offices across the country, received reports on the activities of German-Americans and radical groups. Because radicals seemed most outspoken in their resistance, the stage was set for dramatic new nativist developments after the war.<sup>2</sup>

The Socialist party now was assailed as "dominated by men who are not American, but pro-German in sentiment," for "giving aid and comfort to the conscienceless enemies of mankind," for being "tools of the Hohenzollerns" "branded made in Germany." The National Security League, the patriotic propaganda organization, enlisted academics to make this case. Theodore Roosevelt joined the attack. "Russian exiles of the Bolshevik type," he exclaimed, these "Germanized Socialists" are "more mischievous than bubonic plague"; they would "lead our people into. . . subjugation to German autocracy." This bizarre effort to link "Reds" and "Huns" also informed the assault against the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).<sup>3</sup>

The Wobblies, anarchosyndicalists who used the rhetoric of class warfare, had been objects of antiradical activity and victims of persecution in earlier years. The IWW was revolutionary: it called for the overturning of institutions. But its real crime, in the view of its enemies, was its insistence that the American way of life was a fraud, that millions of American workers never had a chance to experience social mobility but instead were manipulated and exploited by capitalist bosses, then cast shamelessly aside when they were old or sick or tried to change the system. Wobbly dissenters had been guilty of the unpardonable sin of questioning the American dream; now they could be prosecuted for un-American activities in wartime.

The instruments were the Espionage Act of June 1917, which outlawed statements "obstructing the war effort" or "aiding the enemy," and the even more draconian Sedition Act of 1918, which held that disloyal opinion and demeaning references to the flag or form of government could be punished by a twenty-year sentence. In addition, the Immigration Act of February 1917 contained provisions excluding people belonging to revolutionary organizations and allowing deportations to "their homeland" of aliens found expressing such views anytime after entry. Encouraged by this nativist legislation emerging from a Congress afire with war passion, vigilantes, sheriffs' posses, and federal agents descended on the IWW and other radicals. Wobbly strikers in the West were beaten, tarred and feathered, or packed into freight cars to be dumped on the desert. One Wobbly was kidnapped and lynched by masked gunmen in Montana as simultaneous government raids ordered from Washington ended with the arrest of hundreds of Wobbly and radical leaders in different parts of the nation. Included among those jailed in 1918 were William "Big Bill" Haywood, the most important Wobbly spokesman, and Socialist notable Eugene V Debs. Victor Berger, a member of the national executive committee of the Socialist party, was sentenced to twenty years. Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis said he would have preferred to have "Berger lined up against a wall and shot." (The Supreme Court later set Berger's verdict aside.) Some of the activists were held for deportation even though they were non-German aliens. Attorney General Thomas Watt Gregory was sure that Germany was bankrolling the IWW, and wartime hysteria made this mindless suspicion the *raison d'etre* for persecution based on nativism, now the official policy of the American government.<sup>4</sup>

The United States had not been prepared for war. It suffered not only from the lack of arms production and the failure to recruit and train sufficient divisions but from the absence of political and emotional preconditioning. America was to be neutral "in thought as well as action," said Woodrow Wilson, a leader reelected on the slogan "he kept us out of war" as late as November 1916. How could public support be mobilized for a total war effort that began scant months later? It would be a moral crusade, the president explained, a war to end all wars, a war to make the world safe for democracy. Despite this idealistic rhetoric, the nation still would be asked to send its men to fight and die in a great power conflict

for the first time in a hundred years with little warning that such a thing was possible. For many Americans, the need suddenly to justify this struggle meant making the enemy into a caricature of evil. They were encouraged in this direction by a vast campaign of government propaganda organized by George Creel's Committee on Public Education. It meant that all opponents of the war effort were sinister agents of an enemy conspiracy.

But even as war passions were heating up in 1918, it was over. The war had lasted barely twenty-one months, and significant numbers of U.S. troops had been in the front lines for only a few months. Unlike the British and French, allies who lost almost 2.5 million men dead during their four-year nightmare in the attrition battles of a conflict that began for them in 1914, Americans had to find a way to handle their new-found hatred of the Hun adversary. The allies, bitter at their foe but exhausted by their struggle, had fewer problems with postwar national hostility. In the United States, the German menace lingered in the public mind after German capitulation at Compiègne and the November Armistice. War fever could not easily be cured; postwar conditions would add to the problem.

### **The Setting for Antiradical Activity**

After the war, the nation faced a difficult adjustment to a peacetime society. Population shifts stimulated by the war had brought large numbers of blacks from southern farms to northern cities, where factory jobs were available for all. Race riots ensued in several communities. Women were entering the urban labor force as well, their presence on the job a matter of patriotism as well as national policy. Traditional relationships would not easily be resumed in postwar America. There were also searing economic problems. With the dismantling of those powerful federal agencies which planned and controlled production, wages, and prices during the war, a spiraling inflation threatened to wipe away the gains made by so many during the conflict's boom years. In 1919, food prices were up over 80 percent, clothing over 125 percent, and the value of the dollar sank to less than half its worth in 1913. In the labor strife and social unrest to follow, Germanophobia was put

to use in explaining the eruption of "radical" activity. The anti-German nativist groups at work during the war, the National Security League, American Defense Society, and American Protective League, endured, seeing the Teutonic hand behind strikers and labor organizers. Clayton R. Lusk, freshman state senator in New York, called radicals "paid agents of the German Junker class." It was only with some effort that Attorney General Gregory could persuade the APL to disband. But in time the anti-German themes would be fully replaced by antiradical ones, as the social upheavals brought on by war offered new reasons for people to seek the comforting community of a crusade against an alien enemy, seen as responsible for the postwar disorder.<sup>5</sup>

Everywhere there seemed evidence that America was coming apart. As in the earlier eras, social stress was the setting for nativism. In 1919, the Seattle general strike was called to be crushed in the end by red-baiting Mayor Ole Hansen, who reveled in his heroic image as defender of democracy against revolution, outrageously exaggerating the specter of the Red menace and calling on "the people of Seattle to show their Americanism." When a bomb mailed to the mayor was intercepted by his staff and when other bombs exploded in Washington or were discovered before injuring the variety of prominent government and business figures to whom they were addressed (including John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, and Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes) the fear of revolutionary terrorism was felt across the land.

Labor discontent was spreading in 1919. The strike of over-worked and underpaid Boston policemen was viewed widely as new proof of radical activity which threatened social chaos. The giant walkout of more than 350,000 steel workers, protesting average salaries of less than \$1,500 yearly and average work weeks of sixty-nine hours, was attributed to "red agitators, catspaws of the Bolsheviks." The coal strike in the fall was called by a major newspaper the result of "men being soaked in the doctrines of Bolshevism." In Gary, center of the strike against big steel, where the U.S. Steel Company's autocratic chief executive, Judge Elbert Gary, had railed against the alien revolutionaries, vigilantes of the Loyal Legion reported that they maintained law and order by using blackjacks to break the hands and wrists of "these foreigners." In fact, those "foreigners"-many of them immigrants and their sons-were striking not only for higher wages in the midst of raging inflation but in

response to their own growing confidence that their future was in the New World, not the Old. After all, they had provided the industrial muscle that won the Great War. But this spirit was missed by their enemies, who saw them only as aliens. Emerson Hough, admiring chronicler of the American Protective League, reported from Gary that Germans, Austrians, Italians, and "Chinamen" were all part of the problem. Aided by Russian Jews "with Americanized names," they were helping the "organization of the Red movement," and "like rats infested with plague, they should be exterminated or driven from the country."<sup>6</sup>

The drive to repress, jail, or deport what the president-general of the Daughters of the American Revolution characterized as "these foreign leeches" who will destroy "this free Republic if they are not cut and cast out," would proceed with little basis in objective reality. The bombs that had caused such fear were not the work of a powerful revolutionary cabal but of a handful of deranged anarchistic individuals. "Bolsheviks" in America also were less than formidable. They represented the majority of the seventy thousand people emerging from the left wing of the Socialist party in early 1919. These left-wingers responded to the cataclysmic events in the new Soviet Union, particularly the creation of the Comintern, the Third Communist International. They had formed two new political groups within the United States. One was the Communist party, claiming fifty-eight thousand members but probably much smaller, an organization with pretensions to becoming a militant cadre of revolution but in fact organized around foreign-language federations, a party many of whose members could not speak English, who sought community in the comradeship of other ethnic outsiders. The second was the American Communist Labor party, a much smaller group of ten thousand, led by men such as John Reed, advocates of a more opportunistic program tailored to American realities. Neither Communist sect threatened the nation in 1919. But all "Reds"-including Wobblies, socialists, and some foreigners who had nothing to do with any left group-now became fair game.<sup>7</sup>

Postwar nativism took a dramatic turn with the bombing of the home of the new attorney general, A. Mitchell Palmer. A poor boy from Pennsylvania, a Progressive legislator who had served as Wilson's alien property custodian, Palmer was not only an ambitious politician who dreamed of the presidential nomination but a man

schooled in the antialien tradition. As a college student in the 1890S he had embraced nativism's hostile vision of southeastern European immigrants. Always responsive to the nativist passion, he now became the leader of the new Red Scare.<sup>8</sup>

Palmer replaced Gregory as head of the Department of Justice in March 1919. At first he seemed willing to reverse the repressive policies of his predecessor. He reaffirmed the decision to disband the APL, observing that "espionage conducted by private individuals and organizations is entirely at variance with our theories of government." He rejected remaining APL material dealing with German wartime propaganda as "gossip and hearsay," dismissed hundreds of suits pending under the Espionage Act, and granted clemency to many others convicted under the act. But after the May Day bombs were discovered at the New York Post Office--one of the thirty-six bombs was addressed to Palmer--and the May Day riots erupted in a number of cities, Mitchell Palmer lost interest in protecting civil liberties. The riots had rocked Detroit, Boston, Chicago, and New York City, when mobs broke up radicals' May Day parades and meetings as well as wrecking offices of socialist papers. In Cleveland, victory loan workers and army veterans stormed a socialist gathering, killing one person and injuring forty; 106 socialists were arrested but none of their assailants. The *New York Times* now called for "vigorous prosecution if the Bolshevist movement is to be held in check." Speakers at the first National Convention of the American Legion, meeting in St. Louis on 10 May, called for the "deportation of every one of those Bolsheviks." Soon afterward a bomb exploded at the attorney general's house, doing extensive damage. Palmer and his neighbor, Undersecretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, found the mutilated remains of the terrorist and some anarchist pamphlets in the debris. A. Mitchell Palmer now announced plans "to run to earth the criminals who are behind this kind of outrage."<sup>9</sup>

### **The Palmer Raids**

In early August, Palmer created the General Intelligence Division in the Justice Department, to collect information about radicals and coordinate efforts to meet the radical threat. Under the

leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, this antiradical division reviewed newspapers and pamphlets published by radicals and "ultra-radicals" and issued lengthy "Weekly Bulletins on Radical Activities" sent to other federal agencies. Hoover and associates apparently were impressed by the strident but baseless posturing of that wide variety of warring anarchist and communist factions which had tiny constituencies and no real hope of influence. Hoover and Palmer moved to meet the sinister conspiracy. The attorney general had persuaded Congress to allocate \$500,000 to investigate the enemy within. The labor strife of 1919 now was headline news, and he was being attacked by major newspapers in the fall for failing, as one editorialist put it, "to have these alien seditious, anarchists, plotters against the Government of the United States arrested, punished, deported." He later complained that "I was shouted at from every editorial sanctum from sea to sea; I was preached upon from every pulpit to do something and do it now!" He responded with the Palmer Raids.<sup>10</sup>

On 7 November, the second anniversary of the Russian Revolution, agents of the Department of Justice raided meeting places of Russian workers in twelve cities. In New York, the Russian People's House was invaded, many were beaten, and 200 people inside were taken to jail. Some were members of the Union of Russian Workers, some were radicals, some were not. Throughout New York City, homes were searched without warrants and men arrested without stated cause. In all, 650 were incarcerated in New York. When the transport *Buford*, the "Soviet Ark," sailed in late December with almost 250 anarchist and socialist deportees bound for the Soviet Union (an inhospitable home for such non-Bolshevik radicals as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman) Palmer was widely praised in the press and saluted by the American Legion. Meantime, word was circulating of the ugly confrontation in Centralia, Washington, on 11 November between Wobblies and "patriots!" Wobblies in Centralia had been beaten and driven from town in 1918 for opposing the war effort. When they reopened the IWW Hall in the fall of 1919, the members of the Citizens Patriotic League attacked them on Armistice Day. The Wobblies responded with gunfire, and three antiradicals were killed. The IWW Hall then was destroyed, Wobblies rounded up and jailed throughout the state, and one member, Wesley Everest, taken from jail to be mutilated and lynched. The nativist fever was building to a climax.<sup>11</sup>

The nation was without presidential leadership at this crucial juncture. Woodrow Wilson, exhausted from his arduous and often acrimonious negotiations with the French premier and British prime minister at the Versailles Conference, had returned from Paris to face mounting opposition to the peace treaty he had approved and to the League of Nations covenant, the instrument he hoped would justify his decision to lead America into the war. During the bitter struggle to win senatorial consent, he had suffered a stroke. Throughout the tumultuous events of the late fall, Wilson lay in a darkened White House, guarded by his doctor and wife, unable to control or even comprehend the full meaning of the Red Scare. And hysteria was spreading. In 1919, twenty state governments passed bills concerned with "criminal anarchy." In the House and Senate, bills were being debated providing draconian sanctions for those uttering "seditious" statements. Palmer, believing his own presidential ambitions might be fulfilled if he grasped the moment and responded to public clamor for antiradical action, now launched the expanded raids of 2 January 1920.

These were more sweeping than before, including dozens of cities. For days the operation continued, and smaller raids occurred in different parts of the country for the next six weeks. More than three thousand people were arrested and thousands more were taken into custody; held for hours or weeks without charges. In Chicago, hundreds of communist or IWW members—real or suspected—had been rounded up on New Year's Day by the district attorney, a Republican apparently attempting to upstage the Democratic attorney general. But Palmer could take credit for the wholesale assault on civil liberties. In thirty-three cities, Justice Department agents and local police broke into homes and meeting halls, indiscriminately arresting everyone in sight. In Detroit, 800 men were arrested and imprisoned for three to six days in a dark, windowless, narrow corridor circling the central areaway of the old Federal Building. Sleeping on bare stone floors, bullied by police, refused showers, given use of one drinking fountain and one toilet, deprived of food for almost twenty-four hours, denied communications with relatives or attorneys, their crime was that they had attended a dance or a class or had eaten at the House of the Masses, Detroit's Communist party headquarters. Almost half later conclusively demonstrated no interest in radicalism. In Boston, hundreds of Justice Department captives were shackled together and

marched through the streets to be harassed by the taunts of "real" Americans. In Pittsburgh, 115 were seized although authorities had warrants for only 20. In Seattle, the victims were arbitrarily selected by police who went to pool halls and other places "where foreigners congregated" and then called for trucks to "take all of them away."<sup>12</sup>

Palmer's action at first was warmly received. One magazine called the "Fighting Quaker of the Cabinet" a hero, "Uncle Sam's Policeman, the Rooter Out of Reds," a man who showed a "quality of courage for practicing his ideas. . . we love him for the enemies he has made." Another monthly noted "the approval of all law abiding, government loving" Americans for their attorney general, the "scourge of the Bolsheviks." Palmer himself presented "the case against the Reds" in the *Forum*, explaining that "robbery is the ideal of Communism," that Reds are "obviously criminal aliens," that "the American Government had to act" because the nation was "in jeopardy." He now made the linkage between un-American ideas and un-American peoples: "My information showed that Communism in this country was an organization of thousands of aliens. . . direct allies of Trotsky, aliens of the same misshapen caste of mind and indecencies of character." In the *Annual Report of the Attorney General*, he stressed the point: "Fully 90 percent of Communist and anarchist agitation is traceable to aliens." Other writers had been developing this theme since 1919. A Colorado senator used a national magazine to argue that "the United States must restrict immigration and suppress all radical and anarchist groups in the name of law and order"; real Americans are not aliens or "descendants of aliens, the ark of Democracy's covenant was committed to Anglo-Saxon keeping long ago." In the *American Legion Weekly*, an article titled "Where Do the Reds Come From? Chiefly Imported, and So Are Their Red Theories" pointed more directly to the new immigrants from southeastern Europe: "In the 80'S, the steerage space steamers" brought these aliens "who were not of our sort," who "could not speak English, were hostile to American institutions," people easily "recruited to the Red cause." A. Mitchell Palmer characterized the leadership of the movement as "disreputable aliens," particularly "a small clique of autocrats from the East Side of New York." He was referring to Jewish radicals; anti-Semitism was present in this Red Scare. The most frightening foreign enemy was no longer the papist conspirator.<sup>13</sup>

Nativism had taken a new turn. The setting was reminiscent of earlier episodes: social disorder that sent many in search of scapegoats, economic and political crises that divided instead of uniting Americans. The vision of the New World also remained the same for these nativists as in 'the past: America was the favored land, but it was a fragile paradise, susceptible to destruction from the enemy within. And alien people were the problem once again: foreigners, ethnics, non-Anglo-Saxons, folks "not of our sort." But in 1919-20, it was alien ideas that generated the brief pandemic of fear that energized the Palmer Raids, un-American ideas propagated by un-American peoples. The alien menace was partly old and partly new. This was a transitional period to a different era of crusading against un-American activities. In the Red Scare, nativists were no longer anti-Catholic and not even anti-German but antiradical, yet they remained the scourge of dangerous immigrants and their un-trustworthy descendants.

The raids of 1920 offered an early vision of the anticommunist probes of the 1950S, with the vital difference that in the first period foreigners were accused of embracing un-American ideas. There were other dissimilarities as well, notably that A. Mitchell Palmer, unlike Joseph R. McCarthy from 1950-54, barely had a year of national support for his efforts. During that time, some fellow activists throughout the country tried to share his spotlight. State Senator Lusk in New York headed the Joint Legislative Committee Against Seditious Activities. The Lusk Committee, conceived in the board rooms of the exclusive Union League Club in Manhattan, conducted raids on radical papers, investigated alleged radicals, and encouraged the expulsion of five duly elected Socialist party members of the state legislature. Lusk, like Palmer and others, attributed the "criminal anarchy rampant in the state" to the "shiftless and radical types" among the immigrant classes: "Less than five percent arrested in New York's raid on Communism are Americans." Radical hunters like Lusk saluted Palmer's plan for a final solution to the Red menace in America. Deportation seemed the appropriate measure for dealing with communism, an ideology inextricably connected by nativists to their fear of foreigners.<sup>14</sup>

The attorney general planned the deportation of more than 3,500 "red aliens." But in the spring of 1920 he was blocked by the acting secretary of labor, a forceful and reflective seventy-one-year-old independent thinker named Louis F. Post, who refused to authorize

what he later characterized as "these illegal persecutions, symptoms of a popular frenzy." Post canceled deportation orders for 2,202 aliens. Despite the attorney general's angry rebuttal, the Red Scare now began to abate. The labor conflict of earlier months was ending, and it was ending in victory for management. Labor would be weakened for the rest of the decade by these events. But because of their success, business leaders in the spring of 1920 turned away from the attack on immigrant labor and grew disinterested in "equating aliens with radical unrest." As historians of these years have observed, the capitalist managers now would recall the value of the vast immigrant work force. Perhaps they also were free at last to recognize the irrational component in the Red Scare. Certainly many influentials seemed to turn against Palmer in the spring. The Inter-Racial Council, the American Constitutional Association, and the National Founders Association spoke out against the anti-alien movement. Twelve prominent legal figures, including Roscoe Pound, Zechariah Chafee, Jr., and Felix Frankfurter, produced a document titled *To the American People: Report Upon the Illegal Practices of the U.S. Department of Justice*, assailing the "continued violation of the Constitution and the breaking of laws by the Department of Justice of the United States Government:" chronicling in detail "utterly illegal" techniques used by Palmer in pursuing his antiradical program. In courthouses in major cities, judges now found against the Justice Department. In Boston, Judge George W Anderson exclaimed in dismissing the cases resulting from the raids: "Talk about Americanization! What we need is the Americanization of the people who carry out such proceedings as these."<sup>15</sup>

Palmer and the Red hunters were now facing heavy weather. The attorney general's call for a peacetime sedition act was rejected by the powerful American Newspaper Publishers Association. Publishers were opposed to a law that might expose citizens as well as aliens to prosecution for expressing proscribed ideas. When A. Mitchell Palmer announced in April that radicals would call a general strike on May Day and that revolutionaries were planning to explode a number of enormous bombs at the same time, this last desperate ploy marked the final chapter in the Red Scare.

Hoover's division issued bulletins about threatened assassinations and bombings for ten days before I May. Major cities ordered police to prepare for the emergency, state militias were called to service, and federal troops were on standby. Nothing happened.

Palmer was discredited. Already the target of a counterattack by civil libertarians, he now became almost a comic figure. He was caricatured in newspaper cartoons wearing a heavy overcoat on a fine spring day; a pathetic and foolish alarmist. In September, when a huge bomb did explode on Wall Street, damaging the headquarters of J. P. Morgan and the Stock Exchange and killing twenty-nine people, there was no rekindling of the Red Scare. The prospect of an economic upturn and the end of large-scale social disorder made the final difference. Palmer was finished, the "Fighting Quaker" now laughed aside as the Quaking Fighter, or the Faking Fighter, a man with no hope of winning his party's nomination for president in 1920. When the ensuing campaign resulted in victory for a conservative Republican, one of Warren Harding's first announcements was that "too much has been said about Bolshevism in America."<sup>16</sup>

The Red Scare was over. The debate about its effects would long continue. One result it had was to drive the infant Communist parties underground. Its purge of these "conspirators"! temporarily created conspiratorial organizations. It also left a running scar across the decade; the Sacco-Vanzetti case, which began during the hysteria, ended only with the execution of the anarchists, accused of a payroll robbery-murder in Massachusetts, in 1927.<sup>17</sup>

But what was the ultimate meaning of the Red Scare? One analyst, borrowing from the work of a contemporary anthropologist, called it a "revitalization movement" and argued that like millenarian outbreaks in other cultures and other eras, it represented the response to unbearable social stress in America after the war. Traditional social "mazeways" had been disrupted by the upheavals caused by the war. The Red Scare offered some frightened and disoriented people a way of reconstituting their vision of a stable order.<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that this nativist phenomenon did emerge in a period reminiscent of the setting for the Know Nothings and the APA in the mid- and late nineteenth century. Postwar social and economic upheaval temporarily raised fears for many that their mobility would be blocked, that personal gains in the wartime economy would be lost; "relative deprivation" threatened those whose prospects now suddenly seemed less bright than before. As in earlier years, nativism projected these anxieties on the alien. The bombings, the strikes, the rumors of sinister plots also temporarily made many fear for the future of political institutions. For them, the psy-

chological correlates of disaster would be there if something was not done.

But there were significant differences between the nativist movements of the past and the Red Scare. In 1919 and 1920, federal and state government officials became the leaders of the movement, national and state policies the instruments of repression. In addition, although there were no organizations with membership roles and initiation rituals this time, it was clear that many influential men in the circle of business and social elites endorsed and encouraged these developments, if only for a few months. The Know Nothings and the patriotic fraternities of the 1890s never won real government power and rarely had the support of society's wealthiest and most powerful people. Most significantly, these nativists in 1919 were fixated on the un-American nature of the aliens' ideas not religion but ideology enraged them, another first. In the Red Scare, the changing nature of political extremism of the Right was on view. Before long, it would not be Catholic and Jewish immigrants but radicals who would be the sole object of the protector's wrath.

The legislation that would further this process and erode the structure of the old nativism was being put in place in these years. Senator William P. Dillingham, the man who had led the Immigration Commission when it issued its restrictionist and pessimistic report in 1911, drafted the bill that would limit immigration according to a national quota system. The Emergency Quota Acts and Immigration Acts from 1921 to 1924 represented the final flowering of nativists' dearest hopes. The "destructive and inferior" outsiders now would no longer be allowed entry to the promised land. Quotas would restrict immigration, and only a small percentage of south-eastern European immigrants would be allowed in the country. This was particularly true after the last piece of legislation—the John-son-Reed Act—tailored quotas to national groups on the basis of the population mix in the United States in 1890, before the new migration began.<sup>19</sup>

The *raison d'être* for nativism finally would be removed by the new acts. The problems of fresh new arrivals would no longer compound ethnic hatreds and national tensions. The old nativism—based on alien people and an alien religion—inevitably would wane. But before that happened, there would be one last dramatic outbreak of the old fervor. In the tumultuous 1920s, the setting was

right for traditional nativism's last stand. The vehicle was a fraternal organization, a secret society, a movement reminiscent in many ways of the "patriotic" orders of the 1850s and 1890s. But it owed its name and its liturgy to a very different heritage. It was the Ku Klux Klan.

## CHAPTER 11

1. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (1955, 2d ed. New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 194-204; *New York Times*, 1 Feb. 1915.

2. Emerson Hough, *The Web: A Revelation of Patriotism* (Chicago: National Directors of the American Protective League, 1919), pp. 63-69, 420-46; La Vern J. Rippley, *The German-Americans* (Boston: 1\AoIayne, 1976), pp. 185-86; John A. Hawgood, *The Illgedy of German-America* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), pp. 296-97; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, pp. 200-218; Earl E. Sperry, *The Tentacles of the German Octopus in America* (New York: National Security League, 1918), pp. 2, 7-12; Albert Bushnell Hart, ed., *America at War* (New York: National Security League, 1918), pp. 316-17; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), pp. 57-307; Harold M. Hyman, *To Try Men's Souls: Loyalty Tests in American History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 267-97. On Military Intelligence Division monitoring, see reports of "possible German activities in W.W.I." in *Globe*, Arizona, 11 May 1917, Italian anarchists in Sagamore, Massachusetts, 13 June 1917, and alleged sabotage plans for Great Lakes shipping, 18 June, 10 July 1917, in *U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917-1941*, a microfilm project (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1984), from Record Group 165, Film Series 101120, Reel I, Numbers II, 58, 60, National Archives (hereafter *Surveillance of Radicals*).

3. Mercer Green Johnston, *Patriotism and Radicalism* (Boston: Sherman, French, 1917), pp. 21-22; Archibald B. Roosevelt, comp. *Theodore Roosevelt on Race Riots, Reds, Crime* (Sayville, N.Y.: Probe Publishers, 1969), pp. 36-37 (this "compilation" of TR's comments and writings on a variety of subjects presents a distorted picture based on material taken out of context, but some passages do reflect the former president's views in 1918. See also Arthur L. Frothingham, *National Security League Handbook of War Facts and Peace Problems* (New York: Committee on Organized Education of National Security League, 1919), pp. 104, 190. The Military Intelligence Division investigated "reports" of "German sources" funding the IWW and German spies encouraging Wobblies to secure work in shipyards and then slow down production through a "folded arms" strategy. See *Surveillance of Radicals*, Reel I, No. 69, and Reel 9, No. 753.

4. Paul L. Murphy, "Sources and Nature of Intolerance in the 1920's," *Journal of American History* 51 (June 1964): 62-64; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, pp. 202-4, 209-10, 220-22; Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962) pp. 22-24; William

Preston, Jr., *Aliens and Dissenters: Federal Suppression of Radicals, 1903-1933* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 88-207; *New York Times*, 7 July, 11 Aug., 15, 21 Sept. 1918. See also *Surveillance of Radicals*, Reel 9, No. 753, "JWW Situation in Northwest, April 29, 1918"; Sidney Lens, *Radicalism in America* (New York: Crowell 1969); pp. 254- 55.

5. Robert K. Murray, *Red Scare* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), pp. 2-15; Clayton R. Lusk, "Radicalism under Inquiry;" *American Review of Reviews* 61 (Feb. 1920): 167-68; Julian F. Jaffe, *Crusade against Radicalism: New York during the Red Scare, 1914-1924* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1972), p. 119; Frothingham, *National Security League Handbook*, pp. I05-6; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, p. 223. On the Creel Committee, see George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), pp. 16-221.

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9. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-207; *New York Times*, I, 2 Apr., 4 May 1919; "May Day Riot in Cleveland," in Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace, eds., *American Violence: A Documentary History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. 351-53; Murray, *Red Scare*, pp. 71-76; *Proceedings and Committees: Caucus of the American Legion, First National Convention* (St. Louis: American Legion, 1919), pp. 114-17. See also "Anarchist Bomb Plot, June 2, 1919" (Chicago) and "Bomb Plot, Aug. 4, 1919" (Boston) in *Surveillance of Radicals*, Reel 14, Nos. 1282, 1285.

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