

THE TWENTIES IN CONTEMPORARY COMMENTARY



— “Reds” and “Americans” —

Public anxiety after a war drives an urgent need to redefine THEM and US in the war's aftermath. In America after World War One, the new THEM were the “REDS,” whose menace could be defeated by US—“true AMERICANS.” But who were these adversaries? There were radicals, of course, who advocated the overthrow of American capitalism, especially after the 1917 Russian Revolution, but who were they? All immigrants? All union members? What about socialists, pacifists, liberals, and city dwellers? And there were many loyal Americans, of course, who would defend the nation's institutions—but who were they? Only native-born citizens? white Protestants? rural churchgoers? The fervor to define “Red” and “American” led to a brief but traumatic period in the years after World War One—the “Red Scare.”

Soon after the armistice ending World War One was signed on November 11, 1918, the red Soviet was displayed at a socialist parade up Fifth Avenue in New York City, leading to confrontations with war veterans.

“Down with the Red Flag”
 Editorial, *The Washington Post*
 November 28, 1918

The red flag of bolshevism and anarchy, though displayed in a parade of socialists, no longer has any place in the United States. It signifies defiance of law, order, and constitutional government. It is an insult to the Stars and Stripes.

The liberty of the world has just been won at an awful sacrifice of blood and treasure. Shall that liberty be tainted and polluted by the anarchy of bolshevism? Is the autocracy of kings and emperors to be succeeded by the autocracy of the mob? Is America to be the scene of activity for soviets and soldiers and workmen's councils, with license for the mob to rob and pillage and with no protection to life and liberty?

Let the red flag be squelched at the very beginning! The activities of crack-brained radicals and unreconstructed aliens who fail to appreciate the blessings of a free government must be suppressed. Following recent socialist demonstrations which have ended in riots, the board of aldermen of New York has adopted an ordinance prohibiting the display of red flags in parades or public meetings in that city and fixing a maximum penalty of \$100 fine and ten days' imprisonment for violation of it. And the New York police are ready with valiant nightsticks to enforce it, backed by 3,000,000 loyal citizens willing to assist. . . .

Not alone should states and municipalities prohibit the display of the flag of anarchy, but the federal government should take any steps within its power to crush anarchy in whatever form it may take. With bolshevism rampant in Europe, we may expect a flock of radical agitators in the United States in the near future, come here to preach the gospel which has worked such havoc in Russia and which is threatening the safety of the governments set free by the war. Every alien who comes to these shores and begins preaching against the United States government should be imprisoned at once. Deportation is not sufficient; it would merely leave him free to afflict some other land.

Bolshevik Threat

**Headlines from the
Washington Post**

WORLD RULE RED AIM

Unchecked Bolshevism Leads to War, Says Bernstein.

MOBILIZES FORCES OF HATE

No Peace Possible While Russia Is Center of Strife.

January 27, 1919

'REDS' BEYOND REACH

Bolshevik Revolution Now Being Organized in America.

LAWS FAIL TO MEET PERIL

Statutes to Cope With Menace Must Be Enacted by Congress.

Reptile Press, Unhindered by Espionage Act Since Signing of Armistice, Spreads Poison of Anarchy—Whole Country Covered by Growing Circulation of Publications Favoring Anarchy.

February 15, 1919

REDS AIM AT AMERICA

Dr. McKim Urges Army of 200,000 to Stamp Out Bolshevism.

DISHONOR IN COMPROMISE

Proposal to Treat With Lenins Said to Be Policy of Weakness.

Crimes of Soviet Leaders Declared More Monstrous Than Excesses Committed During French Reign of Terror—Yestry Indorses Sermon—Dr. Gordon Declares Debs Should Be Jailed at Once.

April 7, 1919

REDS TO BE DEPORTED

Palmer Speeds Cases to Drive Out 391 Caught in Raids.

DANGER IN RUSSIAN UNION

Supreme Court Upholds Conviction of Four Pamphleteers.

Finds That Anarchist Writings Sought to Arouse Workers Against the Government—Justice Brands and Holmes Dissent. Attorney General Declares "Clean Up" of the Country Will Go On.

November 11, 1919

Report of the U.S. Senate Overman Committee, June 1919

In February 1919 Senator Lee Overman of the Judiciary Committee was assigned to lead an investigation of Bolshevik propaganda in the United States. After hearing testimony from numerous witnesses, the committee released its lengthy report (two weeks after anarchist bombings targeted government officials nationwide). While written in dense bureaucratic prose, its main conclusions and recommendations are clear in these excerpts from the introduction.

. . . The investigation which [the] committee has conducted convinces it that few of either the advocates or opponents, in this country, of the present Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, are familiar with the fundamental principles upon which this government is attempting to perpetuate itself. Consequently the agitation growing out of developments in Russia has largely degenerated into appeals to the prejudices and the animosities that are inherent in the selfish natures of most individuals and little or no appeal has been made to the intelligence of the people.

It is therefore not surprising that the word "Bolshevism" has now become merely a generic term, and in America is nothing more than a slogan of the elements of unrest and discontent. By reason of their ignorance as to what Bolshevism as a code of political and social morals in Russia means, almost every dissatisfied element [group], from the radical anarchist to the theoretical idealist, has seized upon it as approaching something of a Utopian [perfect/idealistic] nature. . . .

The word Bolshevism has been so promiscuously applied to various political and social programs that we feel that it is of paramount importance that the delusions and misconceptions as to what it really is, as it exists today in Russia, should be, as far as possible, removed and that the people of the United States should be thoroughly informed as to just what this much-discussed institution really is, both in theory and in practice.

[The] committee is of the opinion that the best answer that can be given to the argument of the champions of this Russian institution is a true explanation of its real nature and the actual principles upon which it is founded as well as the unavoidable consequences that would follow its adoption. . . .

. . . The Bolsheviks have inaugurated a reign of terror unparalleled in the history of modern civilization, in many of its aspects rivaling even the inhuman savagery of the Turk and the terrors of the French Revolution. . . . In Bolshevik Russia every instrument available for the exercise of force and power is in the possession of [the] government, and those opposed to the government are completely suppressed and absolutely powerless. . . .

Every activity of the Bolshevik government indicates clearly the antipathy of the Bolsheviks toward Christianity

SENATORS BARE PLOTS OF HUN AND BOLSHEVIK AGAINST U. S. IN REPORT

**Overman Committee Shows Kaiser
Spent Millions in Conspiracies;
"Reds" Found Real Menace.**

Brewers Controlled Newspapers, Political Organizations and Candidates, Investigators at Work Since Last September Declare. Berlin Agents Said to Have Had \$185,000,000 Fund to Tie Up Industries—Horror of Lenine and Trotzky Policy Exposed and Vivid Picture Drawn of What Will Happen if "Reds" Get Footfold in America. "Parlor Bolsheviks" Here Denounced.

The Washington Post, June 15, 1919

Bolsheviks Threat

**Headlines from the
Washington Post**

LAW TO CRUSH "REDS"

Attorney General Palmer Lays
Draft Before the Senate.

URGES NEW ESPIONAGE ACT

Present Statutes Do Not Make Re-
volt Campaigns a Crime.

Declares Growth of Radicalism Is
Due to Inadequacy of Federal
Laws—Has 60,000 Under Surveil-
lance—Shows Menace of Foreign-
Language and Negro Newspapers.
Publications Believed to Be Re-
ceiving Money From Outside
Sources.

November 16, 1919

WARFARE ON "REDS"

Palmer Declares There Will Be
No Let-Up in Coming Year.

ARE MOSTLY ALL CRIMINAL

20,000,000 Liberty Bond Owners
Losers if Soviet Is Established.

Advocates Would Abolish Ownership
of Property, Religion and God,
Says Attorney General's Statement
Asking Careful Study of Formi-
dable Doctrines Now Controlling
Russia and Threatening World.

January 1, 1920

WARNS OF RED PERIL

Fall of Poland Means a Soviet
World, Says Ludendorff.

SEES CIVILIZATION'S END

Former German Chief Thinks Peo-
ples and Governments Asleep.

Bolshevik Propaganda Victimized
Both Radicals and Conservatives.
Pictures Steady Advances of So-
viet in Asia and Asia Minor—Be-
lieves Reds Are Working Success-
fully in United States.

July 28, 1920

ANTI-'RED' LAWS WEAK

Palmer Asks Better Means of
Combating Extremists.

GRAVE MENACE TO NATION

Wants Means to Punish Citizens
Guilty of Offenses for Which
Aliens Would Be Deported—Rev-
olutionary Groups Reorganizing
to Evade Statutes.

February 28, 1920

and the Christian religion. Its program is a direct challenge to that religion. The Christian church and Bolshevism cannot both survive the program that is being developed by the Russian dictatorship and which it is undertaking to extend throughout the world. . . .

The activities of the Bolsheviki constitute a complete repudiation of modern civilization and the promulgation of the doctrine that the best attainment of the most backward member of society shall be the level at which mankind shall find its final and victorious goal. . . . To carry this message to the uttermost parts of the earth, they have appropriated enormous sums of money, and, incidentally, their process of [social] equalization in Russia was promoted by the starvation which the funds thus expended might have been utilized to alleviate. Their messengers and their friends have afflicted this country, and their new civilization has been represented as Utopian in its nature. Many well-disposed persons have been deceived into the belief that they were promoting a social welfare movement in advocating it. . . . Yet while these people who have been popularly called "parlor Bolshevists" are contributing to these Bolshevik agents, these same agents are appealing to the hatred and lowest instincts of the more ignorant elements of the population, . . .

It is significant, however, that in the United States only a portion of the so-called radical revolutionary groups and organizations accept in its entirety the doctrine of the Bolsheviki. They have, however, all seized upon Bolshevism as a rallying cry and are undertaking to unite all of these elements under that banner for the purpose of accomplishing the initial step in their common formula, to wit, the overthrow of existing governmental institutions and the complete demoralization of modern society. With this accomplished each group hopes that it can muster sufficient strength to maintain a supremacy in the new social order and invoke the policies of its particular creed. Most of these groups accept the common ground that forcible, as distinguished from political, action should be used as the instrument to secure the overthrow of the present government and in so doing defy and repudiate the democratic form of government which guarantees under our Constitution the rule of the majority. . . .

The radical revolutionary elements in this country and the Bolshevik government of Russia have, therefore, found a common cause in support of which they can unite their forces. They are both fanning the flame of discontent and endeavoring to incite revolution. Numerous newspapers are openly advocating revolution. Literature and circular matter [pamphlets, handbills, etc.] demanding a resort to violence are being widely circulated. Bombs and high explosives have been used in many parts of the country in an attempt to inaugurate a reign of terror and to accomplish the assassination of public officials. The demonstration of the consequences of this movement in Russia, no matter how graphic the description, is a distant, faraway picture to the average citizen of the United States. While entertaining and perhaps amusing him, much as the novel in modern fiction does, it fails to impress him as an actual existing institution, in a world growing smaller and smaller through the accomplishments in transportation and communication, that must be considered and met as an actuality. To understand and realize its real consequences, it must be brought home to the citizen and applied to the life and institutions which he knows.

“Says Bolshevik Peril Here Now”
The Atlanta Constitution
September 21, 1919

Bolshevism is now an existing institution in the United States and should be stamped out by the cooperation of every member of Congress, said Rep. Horace M. Towner of Iowa in an address to the House on the 132nd anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution. He warned that the Communists’ party, recently organized in this country, belongs to the same group of international socialists as the Bolsheviks of Russia. . . .

Judge Towner said the socialists are bent on destroying the American form of government. . . . Just now it is urged [by the Communists] that the government should take over the railroads. Constitutionally, the government might be justified in taking over the railroads for the purposes of carrying mails, which would be a public use. If, however, the government should purchase or condemn the railroads for the purpose of turning them over to private persons in whole or in part, such taking would not be justified. . . .

“This is only part of the socialistic program. It is also proposed that the government take over the canals and all shipping, both foreign and domestic, as well as the telegraphs, telephones, and other means of communication. The mines are also to be ‘socialized.’

“With the mild socialists the program outlined stops there. But with the radical socialists it goes on to the absorption and “nationalizing” of the farms. The factories and all other productive facilities, the distribution and disposition of all products—in short, the abolishment of all private property, its confiscation by the government, and the establishment of a socialized state in which the government shall own all the property and control and regulate the lives of the people.

“That means only an abandonment of the Constitution but also of every fundamental principle of government that America represents. . . .

. . . If there was ever a period when we should unhesitatingly repel attacks upon the Constitution from whatever quarter they may come, it is now. If there every existed conditions which require that the people stand firm against any surrender of their constitutional powers, such conditions exist now.

“We should warn the people against the dangers that would follow its destruction.”

BOLSHEVIK MENACE

Alongside newspaper accounts of anarchist bombings and radical activism in the U.S. appeared updates on the expanding Russian civil war and Communist uprisings in western European nations. If a Bolshevik takeover was imminent in Germany or Switzerland, many Americans asked themselves, how soon could it happen here?

BOLSHEVIK CONTAGION SPREADING OVER EASTERN EUROPE

The Lexington [Kentucky] Herald, Jan. 2, 1919

BOLSHEVIK SOLDIERS MARCH THROUGH STREETS OF MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Dallas Morning News, March 6, 1919

BOLSHEVIK FURY DIRECTED AGAINST RUSSIAN CLERGYMEN

The Montgomery [Alabama] Advertiser, March 16, 1919

BOLSHEVIK RIOTS BREAK OUT IN SWITZERLAND

Chicago Tribune, June 16, 1919

BOLSHEVIK REGIME MAY GET CONTROL ALL OVER RUSSIA

The Atlanta Constitution, Aug. 12, 1919

BOLSHEVIK ARMY SWEEPS RUSSIA

The Atlanta Constitution, Jan. 9, 1920

BOLSHEVIK MENACE STIRS SOUTH AMERICA

The Atlanta Constitution, Jan. 11, 1920

BOLSHEVIK INVASION FEARED BY JAPANESE

The Atlanta Constitution, Feb. 11, 1920

BOLSHEVIK ARMY MASSING ALONG POLISH FRONTIER

Chicago Tribune, Feb. 16, 1920

REDS AT CHINESE FRONTIER

Los Angeles Times, Feb. 27, 1920

BOLSHEVIK FORCES ARE ADVANCING ON ARMENIA

The Charlotte [North Carolina] Observer, July 20, 1920

BOLSHEVIKS GET THEIR FOOT IN DOOR OF WORLD

Poland’s Fall Defeat of Powers

Chicago Tribune, July 28, 1920

REDS MAKE FINAL DASH TO CAPTURE POLAND’S CAPITAL

The [New Orleans] Times-Picayune, Aug. 14, 1920

BOLSHEVIK UPRISING STARTED IN MEXICO

Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Aug. 24, 1920

Nicholas Murray Butler
 "Our Bolshevick Menace"
The Forum, January 1920

Butler was the president of Columbia University in New York City. He campaigned for the Republican presidential nomination, which Warren Harding received later that year.

We are face to face, not with a secret revolution, but with a revolution openly fomented, openly preached, whose message is falling upon ears some of which are not sufficiently instructed in Americanism to treat it as it deserves. The following record of testimony [of a founder of the American Communist Party] . . . is instructive.*

The examining public officer:

Q. What do you mean by social revolution?

A. Social revolution means the overthrow of the existing system.

Q. In what way?

A. That is immaterial, but it is not to be the methods of the ruling class, that is plain.

Q. What other way?

A. By organizing the revolutionary workers, making them class-conscious. It is like the depositors in a bank. So long as there is a feeling that the bank is stable, they will deposit their money, but so soon as a doubt comes in their minds, there is a mass movement, and a panic seems to enter them all at once and they all rush pell mell to draw out the money. The workers will be in the same position as the depositors in the bank toward the present government. They will feel that they have lost all faith in it through our propaganda, I admit, and through the gradual breakdown of the existing system. Wages will not rise to meet it and they will feel that they are always on the ragged edge. When that condition prevails, and we can instill into their minds doubt and distrust and lack of faith in the present capitalistic methods . . . to meet the tremendous reforms necessary—when that stage has been reached and breakdown of industry comes, the revolutionary organizations will spring into existence and will take over the control of your government from the capitalistic class. . . .

We forget in our easy-going optimism how many there are who have come to our shores to take places in our industrial life and to share in our political responsibility to whom our traditions are meaningless. We forget how many there are to whom the names of Washington and of Lincoln are as remote as the names of Nebuchadnezzar and of Nero. We forget how many have come to us under conditions of revolt and violent dissatisfaction with government at home and who have carried with them that distrust of government, all ready to furnish quickening soil for the seed of the agitator when he puts distrust of America in place of the old distrust of the autocrat or of the tyrant in the homeland they had left.

We forget how earnestly we must address ourselves to the task of making sure that these newcomers, from whatever land, do see the meaning of America, do get a chance to understand America, do learn the history and the opportunity of America. And we must do it quickly . . .

* Dr. Maximilian Cohen, a founder of the American Communist Party (1919), testimony, 14 August 1919, before the Joint Legislative Committee Investigating Seditious Activities, New York State Legislature, in *Revolutionary Radicalism* (committee report), 1920 [not cited in Butler article].



"A Man Is Known by the Company He Keeps," *Life*, January 8, 1920. The feared influence of immigrant and Russian-inspired Communists (note the stereotypical bomb-wielding Bolshevik) on the honest but ingenuous American worker was regularly portrayed in the American press.



"Kill It NOW!" *Life*, May 6, 1920. The American Federation of Labor strove to affirm its loyalty to American democracy and capitalism and to distance itself from the radical Marxist ideology of the International Workers of the World (IWW).

Current copyright holder of *Life* (1883-1936) unidentified; search in process.

A. Mitchell Palmer
"The Case against the 'Reds'"
The Forum, February 1920

U.S. Attorney General Palmer led the infamous "Palmer Raids" of 1919-1920, in which thousands of suspected radical activists, most of them immigrants, were arrested and hundreds deported without legal due process. The overzealous hunt, spurred by recent anarchist bombings and the fear of Bolshevik-inspired violence, revealed the danger of homebred violation of American principles. Here Palmer steadfastly defended his policies.

...
... In the confused information that sometimes reaches the people, they are compelled to ask questions which involve the reasons for my acts against the "Reds." I have been asked, for instance, to what extent deportation will check radicalism in this country. Why not ask what will become of the United States Government if these alien radicals are permitted to carry out the principles of the Communist Party as embodied in its so-called laws, aims, and regulations?

There wouldn't be any such thing left. In place of the United States Government we should have the horror and terrorism of bolsheviki tyranny such as is destroying Russia now. Every scrap of radical literature demands the overthrow of our existing government. All of it demands obedience to the instincts of criminal minds, that is, to the lower appetites, material and moral. The whole purpose of communism appears to be a mass formation 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 regardless of health, sex or religious rights. By a literature that promises the wildest dreams of such low aspirations, that can occur to only the criminal minds, communism distorts our social law.

The chief appeal communism makes is to "The Worker." If they can lure the wage-earner to join their own gang of thieves, if they can show him that he will be rich if he steals, so far they have succeeded in betraying him to their own criminal course.

Read this manifesto issued in Chicago [Sept. 1919]:

THE COMMUNIST PARTY MANIFESTO

The world is on the verge of a new era. Europe is in revolt. The masses of Asia are stirring uneasily. Capitalism is in collapse. The workers of the world are seeing a new light and securing new courage. Out of the night of war is coming a new day.

The spectre of communism haunts the world of capitalism. Communism, the hope of the workers to end misery and oppression.

The workers of Russia smashed the front of international Capitalism and Imperialism. They broke the chains of the terrible war; and in the midst of agony, starvation, and the attacks of the Capitalists of the world, they are creating a new social order.

The class war rages fiercely in all nations. Everywhere the workers are in a desperate struggle against their capitalist masters. The call to action has come. The workers must answer the call!

The Communist Party of America is the party of the working class. The Communist Party proposes to end Capitalism and organize a workers' industrial republic. The workers must control industry and dispose of the product of industry. The Communist Party is a party realizing the limitation of all existing workers' organizations and proposes to develop the revolutionary movement necessary to free the workers from the oppression of Capitalism. The Communist Party insists that the problems of the American worker are identical with the problems of the workers of the world.

These are the revolutionary tenets of Trotsky and the Communist Internationale. Their manifesto furthers embraces the various organizations in this country of men and women obsessed with discontent, having disorganized relations to American society. These include the I.W.W.'s, the most radical socialists, the misguided anarchists, the agitators who oppose the limitations of unionism, the moral perverts, and the hysterical neurasthenic [weak and stressed] women who abound in communism. . . .

When we realize that each member of the Communist Party of America pledges himself to the principles above, set forth, deportation of men and women bound to such a theory is a very mild reformatory sentence. . . .

It is my belief that while they have stirred discontent in our midst, while they have caused irritating strikes, and while they have infected our social ideas with the disease of their own minds and their unclean morals, we can get rid of them! and not until we have done so shall we have removed the menace of Bolshevism for good.

National Popular Government League
*To the American People: Report on the Illegal
Practices of the U.S. Department of Justice*
May 1920

Among the mounting criticism of the Palmer Raids was a report by twelve prominent attorneys and law professors, including the future Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter, providing extensive documentation of the rights violations conducted through the raids.

TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE:

For more than six months we, the undersigned lawyers, whose sworn duty it is to uphold the Constitution and Laws of the United States, have seen with growing apprehension the continued violation of that Constitution and breaking of those Laws by the Department of Justice of the United States government.

. . . Wholesale arrests both of aliens and citizens have been made without warrant or any process of law; men and women have been jailed and held *incommunicado* without access of friends or counsel [legal aid/attorney]; homes have been entered without search warrant and property seized and removed; other property has been wantonly destroyed; workingmen and workingwomen suspected of radical views have been shamefully abused and maltreated. Agents of the Department of Justice have been introduced into radical organizations for the purpose of informing upon their members or inciting them to activities; these agents have even been instructed from Washington to arrange meetings upon certain dates for the express object of facilitating wholesale raids and arrests. In support of these illegal acts, and to create sentiment in its favor, the Department of Justice has also constituted itself a propaganda bureau, and has sent to newspapers and magazines of this country quantities of material designed to excite public opinion against radicals, all at the expense of the government and outside the scope of the Attorney General's duties.

We make no argument in favor of any radical doctrine as such, whether Socialist, Communist or Anarchist. No one of us belongs to any of these schools of thought. Nor do we now raise any question as to the constitutional protection of free speech and a free press. We are concerned solely with bringing to the attention of the American people the utterly illegal acts which have been committed by those charged with the highest duty of enforcing the laws—acts which have caused widespread suffering and unrest, have struck at the foundation of American free institutions, and have brought the name of our country into disrepute.

The introduction continues with a list of specific constitutional violations, documentation of which comprises the substance of the report.

Since these illegal acts have been committed by the highest legal powers in the United States, there is no final appeal from them except to the conscience and condemnation of the American people. American institutions have not in fact been protected by the Attorney General's ruthless suppression. On the contrary those institutions have been seriously undermined, and revolutionary unrest has been vastly intensified. No organizations of radicals acting through propaganda over the last six months could have created as much revolutionary sentiment in America as has been created by the acts of the Department of Justice itself. . . .

It has always been the proud boast of America that this is a government of laws and not of men. Our Constitution and laws have been based on the simple elements of human nature. Free men cannot be driven and repressed; they must be led. Free men respect justice and follow truth, but arbitrary power they will oppose until the end of time. There is no danger of revolution so great as that created by suppression, by ruthlessness, and by deliberate violation of the simple rules of American law and American decency.

It is a fallacy to suppose that, any more than in the past, any servant of the people can safely arrogate to himself unlimited authority. To proceed upon such a supposition is to deny the fundamental American theory of the consent of the governed. Here is no question of a vague and threatened menace, but a present assault upon the most sacred principles of our Constitutional liberty.

**RETRACT CHARGES,
DEMANDS PALMER**

**Attorney General Tells Frank-
furter Latter's Accusations
Were Proven False.**

SAYS ALIENS RECANTED

**Denies He Has Criticised Any
Lawyer for Defending Them
in Deportation Cases.**

The New York Times, June 5, 1920

Leonard Wood
Address
early 1920

The fear of Bolshevism spawned a campaign to define and foster "true Americanism." Wood, a renowned Army major general, made these remarks while campaigning for the 1920 Republican presidential nomination.

Americanization must be taken up earnestly and systematically. "America first" must be stamped upon every heart. There should be but one language in the public grade schools—the language of the Declaration of Independence, of Abraham Lincoln, of Theodore Roosevelt. A common language is one of the strongest influences for building up a spirit of national solidarity. We must emphasize that hand in hand, with equality of privilege and opportunity, goes equality of obligation in war and in peace, in fair weather and in storm.

There is no room in this country for any flag except our own. There is no room for the Red flag. It is opposed to everything our government stands for. It stands for anarchy, chaos, and ruin. Smash it! True liberty is found within the law.

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Address, Democratic National Convention
August 9, 1920

Asst. Secretary of the Navy during World War One, Roosevelt made these remarks in his address accepting the 1920 Democratic vice-presidential nomination.

Much has been said of late about good Americanism. It is right that it should have been said. And it is right that every chance should be seized to repeat the basic truths underlying our prosperity and our national existence itself. But it would be an unusual and much to be wished-for thing, if in the coming presentation of the issue a new note of fairness and generosity could be struck. Littleness, meanness, falsehood, extreme partisanship: these are not in accord with the American spirit. I like to think that in this respect also we are moving forward.

Let me be concrete. We have passed through a great war. An armed conflict which called forth every resource, every effort, on the part of the whole population. The war was won by Republicans as well as by Democrats. Men of all parties served in our armed forces. Men and women of all parties served the government at home. They strived honestly, as Americans, not as mere partisans. Republicans and Democrats alike worked in administrative positions, raised Liberty Loans, administered food control, toiled in munitions plants, built ships. The war was brought to a successful conclusion by a glorious common effort—one which in the years to come will be a national pride.

"WHAT IS AMERICANISM?"

Definition Contest, *The Forum*, 1926

Recruiting readers' definitions for terms looming large in current discussion was a regular feature of the periodical *The Forum*. In June 1926, twenty definitions chosen by the editors were published, inviting readers to vote for their favorites; below is a representative sample.

Americanism: an idea of loyal patriotism, religious tolerance, righteous freedom, fearless courage, honest integrity, abiding faith in the commanding destiny of the United States, and a fathomless love for the principles which led our forefathers to found this commonwealth.

—Ivan C. Hall, Denver, Colorado

Americanism is not identical with Americanitis, that unhappy combination of selfishness and conceit which, shouting "America first!" and purblind to whatever faults America may have, covets a maximum of possessions, prosperity, and influence, with a minimum of obligation to the rest of the world; but genuine Americanism combines, rather, an intelligent and discriminating appreciation of the achievements and the perils of America, and of her transcendent opportunities for greatness and usefulness, with a loyal and unselfish devotion to her ideal development—material, political, social and moral—including the fulfillment of her pre-eminent possibilities for world service and international leadership.

—K. P. Harrington, Middletown, Connecticut

Americanism means: Tolerance to the Tolerant. An excuse for Intolerance to the Intolerant. Glory to the Patriot. A Mask to the Traitor. Tradition to the Brave. A Refuge to the Coward. A Mecca to the Oppressed. Liberty to the Oppressor. Opportunity to the Poor. A Nationality to the Homeless. It symbolizes Party to the Partisan. A Platform to Congressmen. A Rumor to Wall Street. A Plot to Main Street. Rehabilitation to Noblemen. Easy money to Europe. Mixed feelings in Mexico. Extinction to the Indian. An Experiment to God.

—Steve Baker, Lincoln, Nebraska

Americanism stands for worldwide freedom and democracy. It is akin to that age-old universal yearning to be free from tyranny and oppression, and is not a product of America so much as America is a product of it. . . .

—A. V. Curtis, Terre Haute, Indiana

Define Americanism? Simple enough! Just find the common denominator for: George Washington, Washington Irving, Irving Berlin; Mary Garden, Mary Pickford, Mary Baker G. Eddy; Henry Ford, Henry Adams, O. Henry; Joseph Smith, Al Smith, Smith Brothers; Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson; Stephen Wise, Jesse Lasky, Oscar Straus; Judge Gary, Gene Debs, Babe Ruth; Jackie Coogan, Marion Talley, Red Grange; Jonathan Edwards, Billy Sunday, Harry Emerson Fosdick, and so forth.

—Llewellyn M. Buiell, Syracuse, New York

James W. Gerard
Address
mid 1920*

Ambassador to Germany during World War One, Gerard delivered these remarks while campaigning for the 1920 Democratic presidential nomination.

If any man is afraid of bolshevism in America, I know how to cure him. Let him visit a few schools. Then let him talk to a few farmers. He will quickly discover that good old-fashioned Americanism is not dead. The farmer, in spite of the fact that he does not get a fair return on the product of his labor, is faithful to the principles on which this country was founded. School children are still taught the fundamentals of constitutional democracy. As long as this is so, we are far from danger of revolution.

Our national life is disturbed because of the high cost of living, industrial unrest, and political conflict. These are temporary problems if they are handled intelligently. Anybody has the right to advocate anything whatever, except a forcible change in our government by violent means. I know of no greater safety valve than to let a man talk. The dangerous ones are the ones who don't do any talking, at least in public.

Henry Seidel Canby
"Radical America"
The Century, September 1919

Canby was a literary editor, Yale scholar, and frequent commentator on current affairs.

I do not believe that the youths who will make the coming generation—the youths that fought the war—are going to be radicals in the sense that I have called European [radicals]. If the ideas of Marx and Lenin ever take root in America, it will be because social injustice, such as we have not yet been cursed with, makes a soil for them. If they take root, they transform in the growing, like foreign plants in California weather. But the new generation is not like the old. It is more sensitive to the winds of doctrine. It is less empirical, less optimistic, less self-assured. . . .

The American radical in the future, I take it, will still be idealist, but not Bolshevik. . . . He will remain an idealist; but a sharpening of his intellect will give teeth to his idealism, and the practical common sense he will carry over from the days when his kind were pioneers in a new world will steady him. What he will want is not yet clear, except that it will certainly not be the world of Marx or the kaiser [German emperor] (himself in many respects a radical). What he will do I cannot venture to guess. But if one dare not prophesy, one may at least hope.



Poster for Warren Harding's campaign as the Republican presidential nominee, 1920



Russian Communist poster, 1920 ["Down with capitalism — long live the dictatorship of the proletariat"]

* Listen to the recorded addresses of Wood, Roosevelt, Gerard, and others in American Leaders Speak: 1918-1920, American Memory, Library of Congress, at memory.loc.gov/ammem/nfhhtml/. The 1920 presidential election was the last in which campaign addresses were recorded and sold as vinyl recordings for the public. After 1920, they were replaced by the broadcasting of campaign speeches on commercial radio stations.

Hiram Wesley Evans
 "The Klan of Tomorrow"
 Address, September 1924

The Americanism campaign reached excesses of its own, especially in the white supremacist ideology of the Ku Klux Klan. Evans, the Klan's "Imperial Wizard," delivered these comments at the second "Imperial Klonvocation" of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in Kansas City, Missouri.

We must look first at the crisis in our civilization, now near its height. Americans find today that the aliens, whom we had believed would join with us to preserve the liberties which they share with us, have, instead of joining, challenged and attacked us. They seek to destroy Americanism in the name of philanthropy [i.e., the good of all], by substituting for patriotism universalism [allegiance to a global ideology] under which freedom and representative democracy alike would die. . . .

There is danger that our heritage will be torn from us by men whose racial instincts, temperament, and education [render them] unfit them for Americanism.

Many of our intellectual leaders seem to accept the destruction of Americanism as an accomplished fact. Befuddled with the philosophy of a Communistic universalism, they shrug their shoulders and prepare to accept defeat. There are people, however, who refuse to accept for a moment that America is dead or will die. They are of the American stock—native, white, Protestant.

Alma White
*Klansmen: Guardians
 of Liberty*, 1926

Founder of the Pillar of Fire Church, White promoted the Klan's battle for "100% Americanism," the superiority of the "native-born white Protestant," and the suppression of other ethnic and national groups.

Pure Americanism has nothing in common with Romanism [Roman Catholicism], Socialism, and Communism. The aims and purposes of those belonging to the first group are to Romanize America and bring it into subjection to the iron-clad, medieval, liberty-destroying autocracy of a vain, pompous, corrupt ecclesiasticism [strict adherence to church principles]. Their purpose is to make the Roman Pontiff [pope] the dictator of American destinies. The purpose of the last group is to *internationalize* America and to destroy its social and political history. To this class belong the Pacifists, those who are calling for a reduction of armaments and the destruction of our national defense. . . . The foreign propagandists who are heading such movements have their headquarters in Russia, and would abolish all patriotic traditions and sentiment, junk the navy, and disband the army. Their determination is to reduce all people to the same social and economic level, and advocate any means whatsoever for the accomplishing of this, from mere legislation and political revolution to a reign of terror.

The sentiment of an unenlightened public is, Can there be any cause for alarm, since we have had 150 years of glorious history and have proved ourselves equal to every emergency without or within our borders? But such optimism is extremely dangerous at this time, when without a doubt we are up to a national crisis, and men and women of the purest American blood will be needed to meet the issues.



Illustrations by Branford Clark in
 Alma White's *The Fiery Cross*, 1924



Will Rogers
Syndicated weekly column
February 22, 1925*

Widely read through his nationally syndicated column, “cowboy philosopher” Will Rogers offered common-sense political wisdom in his signature folksy style. Here he likened an analysis of the “American Animal” to corraling and examining a branded steer.

The last few days I have read various addresses made on Lincoln’s Birthday. Every Politician always talks about him, but none of them ever imitate him. They always make that a day of delivering a Lecture on “Americanism.” When an Office Holder, or one that has been found out, can’t think of anything to deliver a speech on, he always falls back on the good old subject, AMERICANISM. Now that is the one thing that I have never delivered an Essay on, either written or spoken. They have all had a crack at it every Fourth of July and Lincoln’s Birthday. So now I am going to take up the subject and see what I can wrestle out of it. Let’s get our rope ready and turn it out, and we will catch it and see really what brands it has on it. Here it comes out of the Corral. We got it caught; now it’s throwed and Hog Tied; and we will pick the Brands and see what they are.

The first thing I find out is there ain’t any such animal. The American Animal that I thought I had here is nothing but the big Honest Majority, that you might find in any Country. He is not a Politician. He is not a 100 per cent American. He is not any organization, either uplift or downfall. In fact I find he don’t belong to anything. He is of no decided Political faith or religion. I can’t even find out what religious brand is on him. From his earmarks he has never made a speech, and announced that he was An American. He hasn’t denounced anything. It looks to me like he is just an Animal that has been going along, believing in right, doing right, tending to his own business, letting the other fellows alone.

He don’t seem to be simple enough minded to believe that EVERYTHING is right and he don’t appear to be Cuckoo enough to think that EVERYTHING is wrong. He don’t seem to be a Prodigy, and he don’t seem to be a Simp. In fact, all I can find out about him is that he is just NORMAL. After I let him up and get on my Horse and ride away I look around and I see hundreds and hundreds of exactly the same marks and Brands. In fact they so far outnumber the freaky branded ones that the only conclusion I can come to is that this Normal breed is so far in the majority that there is no use to worry about the others. They are a lot of Mavericks, and Strays.

Sarka B. Hrbkova
“Bunk’ in Americanization: A Laudable
Propaganda Infected by Ignorance”
The Forum, April/May 1920

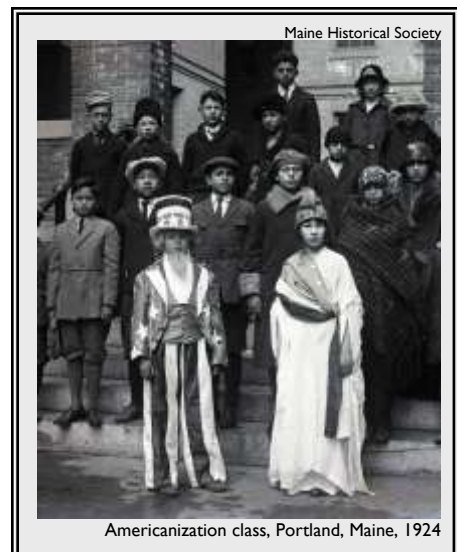
Concerns about overzealous Americanism were voiced by immigrants and native-born citizens alike. Sarka Hrbkova, a Czech-American and former professor of Slavonic studies at the University of Nebraska, warned of the rush to “Americanize” immigrants without clearly defining what that meant.

Today practically every national organization in the United States—religious, social, industrial, economic, and political—has incorporated an Americanization department in its sphere of activities. Their combined funds to be spent for “Americanization programs” runs up into the tens of millions. . . .

“57 Varieties” of “Americanization”

As a matter of fact, “Americanization” does not mean the same thing to any two organizations engaged in their self-appointed tasks. To certain of them, it means merely the naturalization and attainment of citizenship by the foreigner. To others, it means the acceptance of a certain veneer or brand of religion along with the “dose.” Some have a broad conception inclusive of every virtue under the sun. Another class, chiefly those heading large industrial establishments, regards Americanization as a fight on radicalism and bolshevism . . .

The “57 Varieties” of Americanization programs proposed by national, state, or local organizations in more or less incoherent or general terms which sound big and inflatedly Fourth-of-Julyish involve the expenditure of millions of good American dollars. From such an investment one should reasonably expect some results.



Frederick Lewis Allen
*Only Yesterday: An Informal History
of the Nineteen Twenties, 1931**

Labeling himself a “retrospective journalist,” Allen published an informed and widely popular narrative of the 1920s just two years after the decade ended. In this section he viewed the calming of American anxiety about the “Bolshevik menace” by 1921.

The Big Red Scare was slowly—very slowly—dying.
What killed it?

The realization, for one thing, that there had never been any sufficient cause for such a panic as had convulsed the country. The localization of Communism in Europe, for another thing: when Germany and other European nations failed to be engulfed by the Bolshevik tide, the idea of its sweeping irresistibly across the Atlantic became a little less plausible. It was a fact, too, that radicalism was noticeably ebbing in the United States. The Fighting Quaker’s [Atty. Gen. Palmer’s] inquisitorial methods, whatever one may think of them, had at least had the practical effect of scaring many Reds into a pale pinkness. By 1921 the A. F. of L. [American Federation of Labor] leaders were leaning over backward in their effort to appear as conservative as Judge Gary [judge in the 1886 Haymarket trial], college professors were canceling their subscriptions to liberal magazines on the ground that they could not afford to let such literature be seen on their tables, and the social reformers of a year or two before were tiring of what seemed a thankless and hopeless fight. There was also, perhaps, a perceptible loss of enthusiasm for governmental action against the Reds on the part of the growing company of the wets, who were acquiring a belated concern for personal liberty and a new distrust of federal snoopers. Yet there was another cause more important, perhaps, than any of these. The temper of the aftermath of war was at last giving way to the temper of peace. Like an overworked businessman beginning his vacation, the country had had to go through a period of restlessness and irritability, but was finally learning how to relax and amuse itself once more.

A sense of disillusionment remained; like the suddenly liberated vacationist, the country felt that it ought to be enjoying itself more than it was, and that life was futile and nothing mattered much. But in the meantime it might as well play—follow the crowd, take up the new toys that were amusing the crowd, go in for the new fads, savor the amusing scandals and trivialities of life. By 1921 the new toys and fads and scandals were forthcoming, and the country seized upon them feverishly.



Al Posen, “Dance This to the Trotsky Trot,” *Them Days Is Gone Forever*, *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1922

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