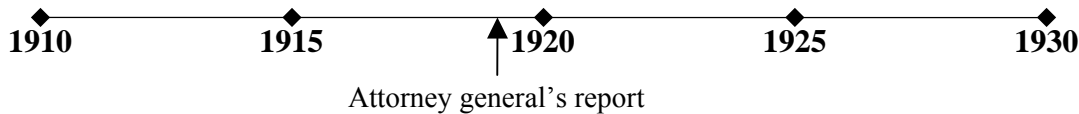


LESSON 6: NATIONAL SECURITY, 1919–1920

Student Handout 2



PROBLEM

You are U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in November 1919. Your job is to protect the country and enforce the law. Read the report below and decide what kind of actions, if any, you will take to safeguard the security of the country.

REPORT TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ON THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES

The security of the United States is under a serious threat. Communists are using terrorism to bring about revolution in the United States.

In 1917 communists (also called Bolsheviks) overthrew the Russian government. The communists are currently fighting a civil war in Russia against non-communists, and the outcome is unclear. The United States has troops in northern Russia fighting against the communists, trying to stop the spread of their dangerous ideas and barbaric practices. Communists in Russia have executed thousands of innocent people. Their goal is to create a dictatorship in Russia and take away the rights of its people. Communists advocate the violent overthrow of all capitalist countries' governments, including that of the United States. This year, the communists established the Third Communist International, an organization that aims to spread the revolution across the globe. The revolution has already spread to Germany, Poland, and Hungary.

Evidence shows that a revolution is impending in this country as well. Last year, radicals bombed the homes of numerous businessmen, a police officer, and a state judge. This year, American businesses have experienced 3600 strikes, a number many times what is normal. One of the largest strikes, in Seattle, began with shipyard workers, who were quickly joined by workers from other industries. Many people blame communists for leading the strike. A newspaper headline screamed, "REDS DIRECTING SEATTLE STRIKE—TO TEST CHANCE FOR REVOLUTION." General strikes, in which all types of workers strike, rather than just workers in one industry, are a favorite communist tactic used to shut down an entire region of a country and encourage revolution.

Keep in mind that the Communist Party in the United States numbers at least 70,000 people. But there could be hundreds of thousands more: communists operate in secret, so

it is impossible to know how many there are. During the war, the communists continually opposed the war effort and tried to undermine it. Many communists are immigrants who brought their foreign ideas with them to the United States. You have the ability to break up their conspiracy by deporting them back to their own countries.

In April, postal workers intercepted 34 mail bombs addressed to prominent people, including J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, a senator, and even you. One slipped through, however, and blew the hands off the maid who opened it. The bombs were all wrapped in the same type of paper and addressed in the same way, strong evidence that the bombs were part of a conspiracy by the Reds to weaken the government.

On May 1st, the day on which Russian communists celebrate their revolution, communists marched in the U.S., causing riots in many American cities. Police arrested hundreds of communists for rioting. The simultaneous May Day riots demonstrate the advanced organization of the communist radicals.

On the evening of June 2nd, bombs exploded in eight cities, including one that damaged your home. The radical that carried the bomb intended for you apparently tripped and blew himself up before he reached your door. The explosion scattered body parts in the street and in nearby yards. If the man had made it to your house, the bomb might have killed your entire family. The fact that the bombs exploded in one evening shows that the coordinated conspiracy of terrorism continues to spread. The man outside your house also carried a copy of an anarchist magazine.

In September, police in Boston went on strike, leaving the city in chaos. Meanwhile, steelworkers throughout the country went on strike. Then in November, just last week, coal miners also went on strike. Newspapers reported that all three strikes were conducted under Bolshevik leadership.

Congress has criticized you and your department for not taking bold steps to stop these revolutionary actions.

On October 2nd, President Wilson suffered a stroke, leaving the United States effectively without a president at this crucial time. The communist conspiracy for revolution is at its height.