

**Palmer Raids - Part II**

**Lead: In June 1919 the house of U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer was bombed. The bomber tripped and blew himself up along with the front part of the house .**

**Intro.: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts.**

**Content : Ironically, for a nation of immigrants the people of the United States go through frequent periods of reaction to immigration. In the wake of the Mitchell bombing, a wave of anti-immigrant fever spread across the**

**country. Coming as it did in the years following the Russian Revolution, much of the press and many citizens believed the bombing and others like it that spring and summer were the work of left-wing radicals and communists, many of whom were Eastern European immigrants.**

**Palmer assigned 24-year-old former librarian and government agent J. Edgar Hoover with the task of keeping up with the radical movement in the United States. He began cataloguing the individuals and groups associated with radicalism and prepare for government action against them. The problem was that there was no legal basis for this anti-radical campaign. Most of the radicals were citizens, the**

**Justice Department had no authority to deport anyone, and there was no federal law making it a crime to be a socialist, Communist or radical.**

**Sensing the threat of anarchy, Palmer began to turn up the rhetorical heat. As unemployment began to grow at the end of 1919 and discontented workers began to riot and strike, the Attorney General said, "like a prairie fire, the blaze of revolution is sweeping over every institution of law and order, eating its way into the homes of the American workman seeking to replace marriage vows with libertine laws, burning up the foundations of society.**

**Using Hoover's documentation, Palmer conducted a series of raids in**

**late 1919 arresting radical and communist leaders, many of whom were immigrants, in twelve cities around the country. A major problem facing the government was Rule 22 of the Immigration Act. This required that immigrants should be able to examine the warrant against them and be represented by counsel. The rule was suspended, 3,000 radicals were arrested, and agents raided meeting halls and residences with little regard for due process. They seized literature, books, papers and membership lists. The aliens arrested were often roughed up, denied access to lawyers, and sometimes were even fed improperly.**

**The result was a wave of reaction to the government's high-handed tactics.**

**Palmer was called before now hostile congressional committees and most of the warrants were canceled. This particular version of the Red Scare was over but the career of J. Edgar Hoover had just begun. He went on to become the long-time Director of the FBI and continued to amass data on those persons he thought a threat to the national interest as well as many individuals about whom he was simply curious.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

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## Resources

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**Powers, Richard Gid. *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover.* New York, NY: Free Press, 1987.**

**Theoharis, Athan G. *The Boss: J. Edgar Hoover and the Great American Inquisition.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1966.**