

Red Scare Characters

Socialists/Labor

Eugene Debs: Socialist leader who wanted to change the political and economic structure of the US so that the laboring men and women would have part ownership of the businesses, instead of the traditional system of an owner and worker. The workers would all own the business together and make decisions about it democratically. Debs spoke out against World War I (the Great War at that time) because he felt it was a war of imperialist nations trying to control the globe for colonial power. He felt the poor people of the world were dying in a rich man's war. He was jailed for speaking against the government and the war through the Espionage Act.

Emma Goldman: Anarchist leader from Russia who argued that governments are corrupt and that society should be run through groups of people mutually agreeing to work together. Government and laws should be abolished because they put the government in a position of too much power compared to the common person. She argued against marriage because she felt women became slaves to men. She argued for birth control for women so they could decide how many children they would have. She also argued against the wealthy business owner and World War I. She is deported under suspicion of trying to spread the Russian communist revolution to America.

John Nichols: This is a fictitious character based on real events. He is a Polish factory worker in a textile mill in Lawrence, Massachusetts. He works fifty-six hours a week for \$6.00 (a week, not a day). He and his daughter (his wife died on the boat trip over) live in a one-room tenement shack with no heat, water, or electricity. There is a strike at his mill when the workers are given only partial payment. The strikers are beaten up by the police.

Father Katzinsky: This is a fictitious character based on real events. He is a priest in New York City and struggles with how to help his parishioners. They are angry and want revenge on the wealthy business owners. They confess desires to hurt the managers of factories, burn the owners homes down, etc. because they are tired of working fourteen hours a day and not earning enough to feed their families. He sees the injustice of the wealthy treating his people so badly and feels they are justified in their anger, but isn't sure what to do to help them. He tries to preach forgiveness and to "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," but he also feels anger and resentment at the wealthy and their treatment of the poor immigrants.

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Government/Business

A. Mitchell Palmer: He was appointed by President Wilson as attorney general for the United States. He became convinced the immigrants coming from Russia were trying to start a communist revolution in America through speeches and strikes. He hired J. Edgar Hoover who began an extensive file card system where they kept track of people who attended speeches by Eugene Debs, Emma Goldman, and other labor leaders such as Bill Haywood. They would arrest people for giving speeches, going to speeches, protesting, striking, etc. Eventually he arrested 10,000 “communists” during what became known as the Palmer Raids. Most were eventually released because they had no evidence to charge them with crimes, but 248, including Emma Goldman, were deported to Russia.

Henry Ford: Best known for his use of the assembly line to increase the speed and lower the cost of making cars. He represents the self-made man who feels he has the right to make as much money as he wants because that is the America Dream. He felt the immigrants from Asia and Eastern Europe were a bad influence on the morals and work ethic of America. He felt they were lazy, alcoholic, and un-Christian so he felt immigration should be stopped and their leaders should be shipped back to protect the traditional American way of life.

Nathan Jones: This is a fictitious character based on real events. Mr. Jones is a textile manufacturer whose business makes American flags and patriotic decorations. He complains about the stiff competition he faces. He wants to pay his workers more, but if he did, he might go out of business. He makes his own fabric, but must purchase the weaving machines, sewing machines, poles, grommets, etc. from other manufacturers. This means expenses, which cut into his profits. If he paid his workers more, he would have to fire some of them, which would put them out of business and he wouldn't be able to compete as well with the other flag businesses.

Officer Sean O'Reiley: This is a fictitious character based on real events. Officer O'Reiley has been on the police force for 20 years in New York City. He is being accused of limiting the freedoms of citizens, especially foreigners, by breaking up strikes and protest rallies. He believes in the legal system and works hard to keep the people of his community safe. He himself faced discrimination as an Irish Catholic when he first started on the force. However, he sees these foreigners as different because they protest the war, which he views as unpatriotic. He feels he has to limit their freedom of speech because they incite the people listening to commit violence and disturb the peaceful communities he's trying to protect.