

A. Mitchell Palmer

I am speaking to Congress today as a faithful law-enforcement officer trying to save America from being overtaken by foreign revolutionary radicals. I was appointed by President Wilson as attorney general for the United States. My main concern is the huge numbers of immigrants flooding into our country from Russia, which just suffered a revolution in which communists inflamed the peasants to overthrow their government.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer this question:

1. Is this character real or fictitious? What is his current position?

“Like a prairie-fire, the blaze of revolution is sweeping over every American institution of law and order. It is eating its way into the homes of the American workmen, its sharp tongues of revolutionary heat are licking the altars of the churches, leaping into the belfry of the school bell, crawling into the sacred corners of American homes, seeking to replace marriage vows with libertine laws, burning up the foundations of society.”

Recently an Italian anarchist sent thirty-eight bombs to leading politicians and successfully blew himself up outside my home right here in the Washington, DC, our nation’s capital. Not 20 years ago, in 1901, our President William McKinley was shot by anarchist Leon Czolgosz who we’re sure was inspired by the speeches of Emma Goldman and other radical revolutionaries.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer this question:

2. What is Palmer’s fear?
3. What evidence does he have to support his concern?

Therefore, the moment to act is now. Deporting these radicals is our only hope for keeping our country safe. Most of the time our legal system requires us to wait until someone commits a crime to arrest them or lock them away. We can not afford to wait this time. The crimes these people commit are not direct. They do not mail the bombs or shoot the guns. Instead they give inflammatory speeches about our government, business leaders, and policies and incite poor, ignorant, often illiterate people to strike, commit vandalism, destruction of property, and even violence.

With the help of my assistant, J. Edgar Hoover, we have been able to maintain detailed biographical notes on index cards on these radical, foreign revolutionaries. Hoover’s experience working at the Library of Congress gave him this excellent idea. This has allowed us to keep important information on their political speeches, attendance at rallies, strikes, and gatherings.

Vladimir Lenin and the leaders of the Bolsheviks in Russia are behind this foreign revolutionary movement and we must stand up to it. Therefore, On November 7, 1919 (the 20th anniversary of the Russian Revolution) I stopped an insurgency by arresting 10,000 communists and anarchists based upon our top-secret documentation and held them in jails. Our courts made us release many of these radical revolutionaries, because they say we lacked evidence. We did not lack evidence but simply did not want to present our top-secret information because it would jeopardize our future ability to research and prosecute these deadly plots against our government. However, we have been successful in deporting 248 of the very worst of the worst including "Red Emma" Goldman and many others.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer this question:

4. What is Palmer's suggestion for stopping the revolution?
5. What evidence does he have to support idea?

Goldman has worked for years to incite people to violence, both men in factories, and women to leave their husbands and begin sexually promiscuous lives. She can be held accountable for much of the decline in moral values among our women. Arguing marriage is a slave-like contract for women and wanting birth control, she is telling our young women to behave in un-Christian and un-American ways. She is also telling our working men and women not to trust in the Christian men who own the businesses for their well-being but to organize themselves into angry mobs who make their demands not through polite conversation, but through fists, rocks, and guns. She criticizes our country while in war, causing our troops to question our support of their fine and heroic efforts in Europe. She advocates we surrender our fine Constitution and free-enterprise society where every man can make of himself what he chooses using the skills and talented God gave him for a political system based on chaos, violence, and total anarchy. She wants an economic system that promotes laziness and whining rather than hard work and personal responsibility. Worse, she and her fellow radicals incite people to do their own dirty work. Instead of taking action herself, she cowardly encourages recent immigrants to mail bombs, commit vandalism, incite mobs, etc. while she sits in her apartment and gives speeches. For this she and the leaders of this foreign revolutionary movement have been deported and America is safer for it.

With your group, pause in your reading to discuss and answer this question:

6. List Palmer's charges against Goldman and her followers?
7. Why does he feel violating her rights are justified in this case?