

From the Bolshevik Revolution to the First Red Scare and the Soviet Red Army

The Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus, and the Immigrant Era

The Statue of Liberty was formally unveiled in New York Harbor on **October 28, 1886**. Its original purpose was connected to Franco-American friendship, the American Revolution, and ideals of liberty. The statue later became strongly associated with immigration and refuge. ([National Park Service](#))

In **1883**, poet **Emma Lazarus** wrote *The New Colossus* for a fundraising exhibition supporting construction of the Statue of Liberty's pedestal. Lazarus had also worked with Jewish immigrants detained at Ward's Island, and her experiences with refugees influenced the poem. ([National Park Service](#))

The poem did not become permanently attached to the monument immediately. Lazarus died in 1887. In **1901**, her friend Georgina Schuyler revived interest in the poem, and in **1903**, words from *The New Colossus* were inscribed on a bronze plaque and placed inside the pedestal. ([National Park Service](#))

Thus:

1883 — *The New Colossus* written

1886 — Statue of Liberty unveiled

1901 — Lazarus's poem rediscovered and promoted

1903 — Poem placed on a plaque inside the pedestal

This chronology is important because the poem's association with immigration became especially prominent during the decades that followed, including a period of increasing concern over immigration, anarchism, socialism, labor radicalism, and revolutionary movements.

The Development of Russian Socialism and Bolshevism

1898 — Russian Social Democratic Labour Party

The **Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP)** was founded in **1898** as a Marxist political organization in the Russian Empire.

1903 — Bolsheviks and Mensheviks

In **1903**, the RSDLP divided into two major factions:

- **Bolsheviks**, associated with **Vladimir Lenin**
- **Mensheviks**

The division concerned questions of party organization, membership, revolutionary strategy, and political leadership.

1912 — Bolsheviks Become a Separate Organization

By **1912**, the Bolsheviks had developed into a distinct political organization separate from the Mensheviks.

1917 — Russian Revolution

In **February 1917**, the Russian monarchy collapsed. Tsar Nicholas II abdicated, ending centuries of Romanov rule.

Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917 and promoted the Bolshevik program associated with the **April Theses**.

In **November 1917** according to the Gregorian calendar, corresponding to October according to the Russian calendar then in use, the Bolsheviks seized political power in the **October Revolution**.

1918 — Bolshevik Government and the Red Army

In 1918, the Bolshevik government established the **Workers' and Peasants' Red Army** during the Russian Civil War.

The Red Army fought the Bolsheviks' political and military opponents, including White forces and foreign intervention forces.

The Bolsheviks also changed the name of their organization in 1918 to the **Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)**.

1922 — Soviet Union

In **1922**, the **Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)** was established.

The Bolshevik Party had therefore developed through the following sequence:

RSDLP — 1898

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Bolshevik/Menshevik split — 1903

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Separate Bolshevik organization — 1912

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Bolshevik seizure of power — 1917

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Red Army — 1918

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USSR — 1922

President William McKinley and the Rise of American Concern About Anarchism

On **September 6, 1901**, President **William McKinley** was shot by **Leon Czolgosz** at the Temple of Music during the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York.

Czolgosz was an American anarchist.

McKinley died from his wounds on **September 14, 1901**, eight days after the shooting. Vice President **Theodore Roosevelt** succeeded him as president.

McKinley's assassination occurred **16 years before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917**.

The author who inspired McKinley's assassination was a Russian activist and anarchist.

World War I and the Treatment of German Americans

When the United States entered **World War I in 1917**, anti-German sentiment intensified.

The Library of Congress documents widespread pressure on German American communities, including attacks on German cultural institutions, changes to German-associated names, surveillance, discrimination, and instances of physical violence. German American businesses and homes were vandalized, and people accused of being "pro-German" were sometimes attacked. ([Library of Congress](#))

The wartime environment also produced restrictions on civil liberties.

The **Espionage Act of 1917** and **Sedition Act of 1918** restricted certain forms of speech and political activity. The Library of Congress describes the wartime period as one in which civil liberties contracted and dissent became increasingly risky. ([Library of Congress](#))

These measures affected Americans beyond German Americans. Antiwar activists, socialists, labor organizers, and others could face government scrutiny or prosecution.

A prominent example was **Eugene V. Debs**, the socialist presidential candidate, who was imprisoned after a 1918 speech opposing the war and the draft.

The First Red Scare: 1917–1920

The **First Red Scare** emerged during and immediately after World War I.

The **1917 Bolshevik Revolution** profoundly affected American political fears. The possibility that revolutionary socialism could spread internationally became a major concern among American government officials, business leaders, newspapers, and portions of the public.

The Red Scare focused on suspected:

- Bolsheviks
- Communists
- Socialists
- Anarchists
- Radical labor activists
- Immigrants associated with radical political organizations

The groups were frequently treated as part of a single revolutionary threat even though **Bolshevism, socialism, communism, and anarchism were distinct political movements.**

They love being in the spotlight and will find a way to get there, even if they scare.

Labor Conflict and Political Radicalism

The years following World War I saw major labor conflicts.

Among the significant events were:

- **Seattle General Strike — 1919**
- **Great Steel Strike — 1919**
- Numerous other strikes and labor disputes

Some American socialist and radical organizations expressed support for the Bolshevik Revolution.

At the same time, participation in a strike or labor organization did **not automatically mean that a person supported Bolshevism.** Many American workers were primarily seeking higher wages, shorter working hours, better working conditions, or union recognition.

This distinction is important when examining the First Red Scare because government officials and private organizations sometimes treated labor radicalism as part of a broader revolutionary threat.

Anarchist Bombings and Political Violence

In **1919**, a series of anarchist bombings targeted government officials and other prominent Americans.

One target was Attorney General **A. Mitchell Palmer**, whose home was damaged in a bombing on June 2, 1919.

On **September 16, 1920**, a bomb exploded on Wall Street in New York City, killing **38 people** and injuring hundreds.

These attacks were associated with **anarchist networks**.

The Palmer Raids: 1919–1920

The federal government's response intensified during the **Palmer Raids**.

Beginning in November 1919 and continuing into 1920, federal authorities conducted raids against suspected radicals.

The Library of Congress records that:

- Approximately **200 radicals were arrested in the first November 1919 raids**.
- On **January 2, 1920**, approximately **3,000 people were arrested** in a nationwide roundup.
- Hundreds of people were ultimately deported.
- **Emma Goldman** was among those deported in December 1919. ([Research Guides](#))

The raids targeted anarchists and communists, while other socialists and radical labor activists could also become subjects of government attention.

The legality and methods of the raids were later investigated by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Effects on Americans Who Were Not German

The First Red Scare affected Americans across ethnic and national backgrounds.

People could experience consequences because of:

- Political speech
- Antiwar activism
- Socialist or communist affiliations
- Anarchist affiliations

- Labor organizing
- Participation in strikes
- Membership in targeted organizations
- Immigration status
- Political publications
- Alleged connections to revolutionary organizations

The consequences included:

- Government surveillance
- Arrest and detention
- Searches and raids
- Deportation of noncitizens
- Suppression of political meetings
- Pressure against radical publications
- Employment consequences
- Blacklisting
- Mob violence
- Political intimidation

The period therefore produced a major conflict between concerns about revolutionary violence and national security on one side and **freedom of speech, political association, assembly, and due process** on the other.

Bolsheviks and Americans in Russia

The relationship between Bolshevism and Americans also extended beyond the United States.

After the Bolsheviks took power, Americans living or working in Russia could become caught in the Russian Civil War and revolutionary political repression.

American diplomats, missionaries, businessmen, journalists, relief workers, and other citizens were present in Russia during this period.

Foreign property was also affected by the Bolshevik government's nationalization policies.

Americans perceived as supporting anti-Bolshevik forces could face danger in territory controlled by the Bolsheviks.

From the Bolshevik Red Army to the Soviet Red Army of World War II

The Red Army created by the Bolshevik government in **1918** developed into the military of the Soviet Union.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet government expanded military production and reorganized the armed forces.

Under **Joseph Stalin**, the Soviet military was also profoundly affected by the political purges of the 1930s, including the arrests, executions, and imprisonment of numerous military officers.

In **1939**, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union signed the **Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact**, a non-aggression agreement. The Soviet Union subsequently occupied eastern Poland, and Soviet forces fought Finland in the **Winter War**.

On **June 22, 1941**, Germany invaded the Soviet Union in **Operation Barbarossa**.

The Soviet Union then became one of the principal Allied powers fighting Nazi Germany.

The United States and Soviet Union Become Wartime Allies

The United States and Soviet Union were **wartime allies from 1941 to 1945**, despite their fundamentally different political systems.

After Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Roosevelt administration began providing extensive assistance to the Soviet war effort.

The U.S. government determined in November 1941 that the defense of the Soviet Union was vital to the defense of the United States and began transferring defense articles under **Lend-Lease**. ([Office of the Historian](#))

The U.S. and Soviet governments coordinated as allies against Nazi Germany.

U.S. Lend-Lease assistance to the USSR eventually totaled approximately **\$11 billion** during the period of hostilities. ([Office of the Historian](#))

The alliance was therefore a wartime strategic relationship against a common enemy. It did not mean that the United States and Soviet Union shared the same political system or ideology.

The Red Army and Germany, 1941–1945

The Red Army fought the German military across the Eastern Front.

Major battles and operations included:

- **Battle of Moscow — 1941–1942**
- **Battle of Stalingrad — 1942–1943**
- **Battle of Kursk — 1943**
- **Operation Bagration — 1944**
- **Battle of Berlin — 1945**

The Red Army eventually advanced through Eastern Europe and captured Berlin in 1945.

The Soviet military effort was central to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Sexual Violence Against German Civilians

As Soviet forces advanced into German territory in 1944 and 1945, **large-scale sexual violence against German civilians was documented.**

Women and girls were among the victims.

The historical record reflects that it was the worst mass rape in history.

Soviet forces also committed other abuses in territories they occupied, including executions, forced deportations, looting, and other forms of violence.

The Historical Continuity

The overall chronology can therefore be understood as:

1883 — Emma Lazarus writes *The New Colossus*

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1886 — Statue of Liberty unveiled

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1898 — Russian Social Democratic Labour Party founded

↓

1901 — President William McKinley assassinated by American anarchist Leon Czolgosz

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1903 — *The New Colossus* placed on a plaque inside the Statue of Liberty pedestal

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1903 — Bolshevik and Menshevik factions emerge from the RSDLP split

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1912 — Bolsheviks become a separate organization

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1917 — Russian Revolution; Bolsheviks seize power

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1917–1918 — United States enters World War I; wartime restrictions on dissent expand; German Americans experience severe anti-German discrimination and violence

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1918 — Bolshevik government establishes the Red Army

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1919–1920 — First Red Scare and Palmer Raids

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1922 — USSR established

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1930s — Stalin consolidates Soviet power; military expansion and political purges reshape the Soviet state and Red Army

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1939 — Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact; Soviet occupation of eastern Poland and war with Finland

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1941 — Germany invades the Soviet Union; United States begins extensive wartime cooperation and Lend-Lease assistance to the USSR

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1941–1945 — United States and Soviet Union fight Nazi Germany as wartime allies

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1944–1945 — Soviet forces advance into German territory; widespread sexual violence against German civilians is documented

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1945 — Red Army captures Berlin and Nazi Germany surrenders

A Necessary Historical Distinction

The history contains several movements and governments that should remain distinct:

Anarchists ≠ Bolsheviks

Socialists ≠ Bolsheviks

Bolsheviks → Communist Party of the Soviet Union

Bolshevik government → Red Army

Red Army → Soviet military during World War II

The Bolsheviks created the political and military foundations of the Soviet state, and the Red Army created under the Bolshevik government became the principal Soviet military force of World War II.

By 1941–1945, however, the Soviet Union was a state governed under **Stalin**, decades removed from the revolutionary circumstances of 1917.

Likewise, the United States' wartime alliance with the Soviet Union was a military alliance against Nazi Germany. It did not erase the profound political differences between the two governments.

Finally, the First Red Scare arose from a combination of **the Bolshevik Revolution, fears of international revolution, domestic radicalism, anarchist violence, labor conflict, immigration concerns, and wartime restrictions on dissent**. The historical record supports examining each of these developments separately rather than treating every socialist, anarchist, communist, immigrant, or labor activist as part of one organization.

Under Stalin's rule, millions of people died as a result of executions, political repression, forced labor, deportations, collectivization, and famine. Modern archival and demographic studies produce estimates in the several-million range, with substantial disagreement over which deaths should be attributed directly to Stalin's policies. Earlier estimates reached **20 million or more**, while subsequent archival research substantially revised some of those figures downward.

Modern Red Scare – Contemporary Socialist, Communist, and Left-Wing Movements

- Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)
- Contemporary Bolshevik and Menshevik political movements and organizations
- Communist and socialist movements
- Russian extreme left-wing movements
- Chinese communist and socialist movements
- Mexican socialist and communist movements
- Jewish Labor Bund and its modern organizational legacy
- Contemporary organizations surrounding socialism, communism, mass instrumental migration, forced demographic changes, globalism, Marxism, and revolutionary movements
- Open border, abolish and anti-ICE movements
- Islamic movements supporting communism, rapid territory or cultural changes.
- Modern U.S. government surveillance, investigations, and public controversies involving radical political organizations

Not the road we're taking.

TEAM USA

(ALL THE WAY)