

# UC Santa Barbara

Volume 4, Issue 2 (Fall 2024)

## Title

Evolution And Revolution:Anarchist Imaginaries Between Biology And Politics In The Early Twentieth Century

## Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/02g3h7n7>

## Journal

The UC Santa Barbara Undergraduate Journal of History, 4(2)

## Author

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## Publication Date

2024-10-01

Peer reviewed

FALL 2024

# UC SANTA BARBARA

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## THE UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL OF HISTORY

Vol. 4 | No. 2



© **The UCSB Undergraduate Journal of History**  
3236 Humanities and Social Sciences Building  
The Department of History, Division of Humanities and Fine Arts  
The University of California, Santa Barbara  
Santa Barbara, California  
93106-9410

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**Evolution And Revolution:  
Anarchist Imaginaries Between Biology And Politics In The Early Twentieth Century**

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The development of the anarchist movement, spearheaded in the U.S. by the followers of the theorist of anarchism, Petr Kropotkin, presents a paradox. How did Kropotkin's theory, which negated Charles Darwin's emphasis on struggle and competition, emphasizing instead cooperation and mutual aid in both social and biological realms, spur a trend of anarchist terrorist acts in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century? This paper tries to answer this question by considering, in turn, the entanglement of the theories of anarchism with Darwinian evolutionary thought in the late nineteenth century, the acts of terrorism allegedly committed by the anarchists in the U.S. in the early twentieth century, and the ways that the United States government put forth a series of provisions to suppress the anarchist movement while demonizing it via racialized and eugenics-driven portrayal of the anarchists. In its attempt to fight terrorism by linking it to anarchist ideology, the U.S. Congress had put forth stringent immigration legislation in place and constructed an infrastructure of national security steeped in surveillance, xenophobia, and eugenics. This response, I argue, only contributed to the radicalization of the anarchist movement, justifying the goal of revolting against the coercion of the state in the name of establishing statelessness. The actions of both sides raise the question of any type of political advocacy: can the ends justify the means?

### **Evolutionary Theory and Anarchist Philosophy**

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution was published in 1859, prompting various interpretations and appropriations. Darwin's findings and his theory were utilized, added upon, and changed by many thinkers and philosophers beyond the natural sciences, who appealed to evolution in their thinking about the place of God, the role of women in society, the nature of wars, poverty, and nationhood.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Elena Aronova, "The Darwinian Revolution" (HIST 107C, University of California, Santa Barbara, Winter 2024). Lecture "Religious Encounters with Evolution," 29 January 2024.

The theorists of anarchism were among those who appealed to Darwin's ideas and applied them to the matters they found most pressing: specifically, the evolution of societies toward a stateless system of organization. Two prominent theorists of anarchism, the Russian aristocrat and naturalist Peter Kropotkin and the French geographer Elisée Reclus, argued that a stateless society was the next stage of human evolution.

Petr Kropotkin proposed a theory of mutual aid as a factor of evolution as a reflection of his observations as a participant in the expedition surveying Siberia, where he observed first-hand the struggle for existence in nature.<sup>3</sup> His experiences and observations, however, were quite different than those of Darwin, whose travelogue Kropotkin was reading while traversing the vast inhabitable Siberian landscape. In a bitter cold, where both life and means of survival were scarce, he did not observe severe competition between members of the same species that Darwin described. Rather, as he “would write in his book outlining his theories on mutual aid and cooperation in “nature, survival was based on the mechanism of community and support. He repeatedly noted that populations that practiced mutual aid were most abundant. Competition, Kropotkin reasoned, was not the only factor for survival and the evolution of species: mutual aid was also necessary to the progression of a species. In his book *Mutual Aid: a Factor of Evolution*, Kropotkin described how his observations evolved into a philosophy for human society, stating that the human inclination for mutual aid “...is the unconscious recognition of the force that is borrowed by each man from the practice of mutual aid; of the close dependency of every one's happiness upon the happiness of all; and of the sense of justice, or equity, which brings the individual to consider the rights of every other individual as equal to his own.”<sup>4</sup> Thus, Kropotkin perceived human generosity as not just a moral obligation but an evolutionary *drive*, arguing that sociable qualities among both animals and humans helped survival and the ability to continue to evolve. Kropotkin's conviction that helping one another was the natural state of humankind underpinned his theories regarding anarchist communism, as mutual aid seemed to be the core to the progression of society.

While working on his biological theory in exile, Kropotkin advocated for the abolition of classes, social equality and freedom for all.<sup>5</sup> In his pamphlet “Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles,” written in 1891 after he fled Russia and found refuge in London, Kropotkin stated: “The ideal of the Anarchist is thus a mere summing up of what he considers to be the next phase of

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<sup>3</sup> Elena Aronova, “The Darwinian Revolution” (HIST 107C, University of California, Santa Barbara, Winter 2024). Lecture “Darwin without Malthus,” 14 February 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid; a Factor of Evolution*. (New York: McClure, Philips & Co., 1902), p. XIV.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Alekseevich Kropotkin, *An Appeal to the Young*. Pamphlets. [Social Democratic Federation], 1881, 1. <https://jstor.org/stable/60229756>.

evolution.” He described this next phase as the “...socialization of wealth and integrated labor, combined with the fullest possible freedom of the individual.”<sup>6</sup> In this pamphlet, he consistently justified his ideas of anarchy by appealing to evolution: anarchism is the natural state of human nature and a manifestation of the moral evolution of human thought. Kropotkin argued that these two prongs of the human condition cannot be satisfied with more government. Consequently, Kropotkin viewed Socialism as a flawed solution, for it would be solving the problem of government with more government. Class distinctions were not a fixable feature of the system, rather, hierarchy was the objective of the system. Therefore, Kropotkin reasoned, “...in a society where capitalist and labourer has disappeared there is no need of such a government; it would be an anachronism, a nuisance.”<sup>7</sup> As human morality progresses as a stem of evolution, he argued that the government would then become an antiquated institution, ripe to be overthrown, and reasoned that the unnecessary nature of government would imbue a revolution and allow anarchism to gain prominence. Therefore, in Kropotkin’s view, anarchism based on mutual aid was the natural direction of society.

Kropotkin’s colleague, Elisée Reclus, was a renowned French geographer and noted anarchist philosopher. His contributions to the field of geography were impactful to the study of how humans and nature interacted to create modern society; however, Reclus’s fame in the anarchist circles stemmed from his theories that connected geography to radical political thought, most particularly anarchism.<sup>8</sup> Kropotkin and Reclus communicated with each other and held shared beliefs that anarchism was the natural state of society. They frequently corresponded through letters outlining their research and plans for publication regarding geography.<sup>9</sup> Elisée Reclus compounds upon the idea of anarchism being a human instinct, arguing that revolution is the natural condition of human progress. In his work entitled, “Revolution and Evolution,” Elisée Reclus defined evolution as “...synonymous with gradual and continuous development in morals and ideas“ and stated that due to this, “Must not revolution necessarily follow evolution, as action follows the desire to act?”<sup>10</sup> Reclus argued that revolution was integral to the evolution of humankind, for as morality continues to develop, so does the need for progress to continue; therefore, revolutionaries “...are the true evolutionists.”<sup>11</sup> There was an overt effort in Reclus’ work to connect the evolution of humankind

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles*. (London: Freedom Press, 1913), p. 4, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Alekseevich. *Anarchist Communism*, p.8.

<sup>8</sup> Marcelo Lopes de Souza, “The City in Libertarian Thought: From Élisée Reclus to Murray Bookchin-and Beyond,” *City (London, England)* 16 (2012): pp. 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Federico Ferretti, “The Correspondence between Élisée Reclus and Pëtr Kropotkin as a Source for the History of Geography,” *Journal of historical geography* 37:2 (2011): p. 216.

<sup>10</sup> Elisée Reclus, *Evolution and Revolution*. 4th ed. (London: W. Reeves, n.d.), p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Reclus, *Evolution and Revolution*, p. 4.

with an anarchist revolution, rooting the political ideology of anarchism in a scientific justification. Revolution, for Reclus, was innate to the progression of the human race.

Reclus' theories regarding the connection between human progress and anarchism became the foundational basis for Kropotkin's activism toward the end of the nineteenth century. For Kropotkin, anarchism was the natural direction of humanity as people morally evolved past class distinctions. By arguing that anarchism was an organic step forward in the progression of humankind and pairing it with the notion that revolution is a scientific constant in evolution, Kropotkin made the case that anarchists must take revolutionary action. As Kropotkin's fame grew, he became a recognized figurehead of a sprawling anarchist movement. Kropotkin's pamphlets and revolutionary ideas spread throughout Europe and the United States, which in turn incentivized him to become more involved in the organizing circles within the anarchist movement.<sup>12</sup> His presence extended past his initial role as a philosopher; he started traveling, giving lectures and statements encouraging anarchists to act, traveling to the United States many times in the late nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> As the anarchist movement within the United States grew, Kropotkin's endorsement lent it legitimacy and momentum.

### **The Spark for the Movement: The Haymarket Executions**

As Kropotkin's theories gained traction, the anarchist movement found itself a new home in the United States. In the late nineteenth century, industry and manufacturing increased in pace and output significantly, leading to an expansion of urbanization and demand for factory workers. The wage gap significantly increased in this period, as employers and company/capital owners began to consolidate profits and cap the wages of factory workers while increasing the number of hours within the workday; poverty felt rampant, as much of the working classes were not earning livable wages. Working class laborers began to resist "...the privileges and corruption of the American political system, the growth of a small, immensely wealthy class, the results of corporate industrial organization, and the economic and social condition of the wage-earners at large and certain groups of them in particular."<sup>14</sup> The working class began to protest monopolies and working conditions regularly, frustrated by their condition that seemed inescapable. As they began to develop class consciousness, wage laborers began to unionize.

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<sup>12</sup> Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets: A Collection of Writings*, Edited by Roger N. (Roger Nash) Baldwin, (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Avrich, "Kropotkin in America," *International Review of Social History* 25:1 (1980): p. 165. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44554593>.

<sup>14</sup> Henry David, *The History of the Haymarket Affair: A Study in the American Social-Revolutionary and Labor Movements*, Second edition, (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), p. 12.

As labor organized and unionized, it was demonized as well. Critics tried to link the pleas for labor rights to anarchism. The Haymarket Affair of 1886 is a case in point. What started as a “...relatively commonplace labor rally in Chicago” ended in violence, which the prosecutor attributed to anarchism.<sup>15</sup> The gathering at Haymarket was a response to an instance of widespread police violence two days prior, where strikers and strikebreakers happened to meet in a timing conflict at the McCormick Reaper Factory.<sup>16</sup> The police fired a gun during the tussle, leaving many hurt and one man dead. The speakers at Haymarket Square employed some anarchist rhetoric in their statements; however, the overall sentiment was of the mistreatment of strikers by police and labor agitation. When police moved to end the event, a bomb was thrown their way. Chaos and rioting ensued, leading to eight deaths, some of which included police, with many referring to the incident at the “Haymarket Riot.”

Despite lack of evidence, eight men were put on trial for the throwing of the bomb, accused of both committing the terrorist act and of being anarchists. For the prosecution, anarchy became a fear tactic to deter the labor concerns brought forth at Haymarket. August Spies, one of the men sentenced to death by the jury, proclaimed in his speech before being executed by the State that “By simply designating the defendants as Anarchists and picturing them as a newly discovered tribe or species of cannibals, and by inventing shocking and horrifying stories of dark conspiracies said to be planned by them, these good Christians zealously sought to keep the naked fact from the working people and other righteous parties, namely: That on the evening of May 4, two hundred armed men, under the command of a notorious ruffian, attacked a meeting of peaceable citizens!”<sup>17</sup> The prosecution looked to target anarchists and socialists by dehumanizing them through slanderous descriptions of the defendants. Within his speech, he stipulated that the real crime was the police attack on a group of peaceful gatherers and that the trial was a red herring for the larger crime against workingmen.

Anarchism was the target of the trial, for the identity of the bomb thrower- the person responsible for the death of an officer- could not be corroborated.<sup>18</sup> Spies, widely known by the public as a radical labor activist, stated at multiple points within his last words that the prosecution and judge

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<sup>15</sup> Avrich, “Kropotkin in America,” p. 163. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44554593>.

<sup>16</sup> John S. Keabian and Julius S. (Julius Sprague) Grinnell, *The Haymarket Affair and the Trial of the Chicago Anarchists, 1886: Original Manuscripts, Letters, Articles, and Printed Material of the Anarchists and of the State Prosecutor, Julius S. Grinnell (Grinnell's Own Collection)*, (New York: H.P. Kraus, 1970), p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Lucy E. Parsons (Lucy Eldine) and August Vincent Theodore Spies, *The Famous Speeches of the Eight Chicago Anarchists in Court: When Asked If They Had Anything to Say Why Sentence of Death Should Not Be Passed upon Them: October 7, 8, and 9, 1886*. 4th ed, (Chicago, Ill: Lucy E. Parsons, 1910), p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Keabian and Grinnell. *The Haymarket Affair and the Trial of the Chicago Anarchists, 1886*, p. 7.



were involved in an effort to silence the labor movement. Michael Schwab, another defendant sentenced to death, validated Spies' perspective, proclaiming simply that Schwab was "... condemned to die for writing articles and making speeches...anarchy was on trial[,] little did it matter who the persons were to be honored by the prosecution."<sup>19</sup> Schwab also claimed that he was collateral damage in a larger effort to stifle the socialist and anarchist movements, for even though there was no evidence pointing to his guilt, he would now be sentenced to death for his ideology. His speech represents a common sentiment across all of the defendants: the sentiment of injustice and a lack of due process. The speeches given pre-execution illustrated a group of men incredibly passionate about labor rights and economic equality, yet not a group of terrorists nor organized anarchists. The prosecution and trial were a consolidated effort to alienate the activists from their cause, perpetuating the idea that anarchists were violent and deranged. To bring forth charges on eight men, with accusations of violence lacking any substantial evidence other than their writings of ideology, shifted the public's attention from police misconduct at a seemingly peaceful labor rally to fear regarding radicals and extremists.

Spies and his colleagues, who were sentenced to death, countered their charges of violence by defining anarchism as a pursuit of peace and equality, pulling heavily from Kropotkin's theories. Spies' definition of anarchism completely opposes how the state characterized the bombing, for he argued that "Anarchism does not mean bloodshed; does not mean robbery, arson, etc. These monstrosities are, on the contrary, the characteristic features of capitalism. Anarchism means peace and tranquility to all. Anarchism, or Socialism, means the reorganization of society upon scientific principles and the abolition of causes which produce vice and crime."<sup>20</sup> Spies attributed violence to capitalism, defining anarchism as the opposite, thereby accusing the government of unjustly ruling that they were guilty. In this speech, August Spies even stated plainly that "It was not our desire to have bloodshed," for "It is because of our sensitiveness that we have gone into this movement for the emancipation the oppressed and suffering," outlining how anarchists, socialists, and labor activists were opposed to violence, as well as emphasizing the anarchist proclivity for empathy.<sup>21</sup> By proclaiming himself and the entire anarchist movement as an innocent endeavor, Spies marketed the values of anarchism while simultaneously indicating that the prosecution's circumstantial evidence was faulty. By invalidating the government's only charge, that the defendants were anarchists and socialists and therefore apt to violence, Spies reveals an overzealous government that held no regard for justice. The intention behind Haymarket was not casualties; rather, it was the gathering of people in opposition to violence and to stand in solidarity with the Chicago labor movement. The execution of four men, barely connected to the bombing, showed to many activists that the United States government was willing to sacrifice innocent

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<sup>19</sup> Parsons and Spies, *The Famous Speeches of the Eight Chicago Anarchists in Court*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Parsons and Spies, *The Famous Speeches of the Eight Chicago Anarchists in Court*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>21</sup> Parsons and Spies, *The Famous Speeches of the Eight Chicago Anarchists in Court*, p. 24.

civilians to further their political agenda and order, just as the police had done at the McCormick Reaper Factory. These killings became very compelling propaganda to imbue young anarchists to act.

The Haymarket Affair came to be remembered by anarchists as a tragic moment for the cause and a powerful justification for the fight for anarchism. Despite the prosecution's hope that the trial would deter future anarchist action, the trial and subsequent executions of the Chicago Eight popularized the anarchist movement further. Peter Kropotkin raised a lot of concerns regarding the basis of the execution, writing to American newspapers and calling the affair "a retaliation upon prisoners taken in the virtual civil war that was going on between the two classes," bringing attention to the incident.<sup>22</sup> Anarchists made efforts to publicize the Haymarket death sentences, for they believed the injustice of innocent men being killed by the federal government would catch American citizens' attention. In Colson's article "Propaganda and the Deed: Anarchism, Violence and the Representational Impulse," he notes that the Haymarket Affair led "...many American radicals turned to anarchism as a direct result of the violence in Chicago," for the ideals spoke of in the eight men's trial both inspired others and embedded an element of martyrdom into the anarchist movement.<sup>23</sup> The execution was popularized in such a way that the ideals preached by the Haymarket Eight became more publicized due to the prosecution's actions, even though their original intent was to stifle the movement. Thirty years later, when notorious anarchist Emma Goldman wrote of political violence, she referenced the case as an inciting incident, for "No one who is at all familiar with the case can possibly doubt that the Anarchists, judicially murdered in Chicago, died as victims of a lying, bloodthirsty press and of a cruel police conspiracy."<sup>24</sup> It inspired Emma Goldman to act further in the anarchist movement. Goldman's recollection of the Haymarket Affair illustrates how the anarchist movement utilized the Haymarket Affair as political justification for their ideologies; for if the government could put eight people up for death (a few were eventually pardoned), then in their view, that government was not competent to rule. The conflict operated as evidence of the need for anarchism and for anarchism to be realized urgently and presently.

The Haymarket Affair and the reaction post-executions illustrated that government violence inspired further anarchist action rather than halting it. The government was ineffective when retaliating with the same, if not more force, to that of the activists, proving that resistance was necessary in the face of an unruly government. By utilizing terror and withholding the Haymarket Eight's rights to due process, the government justified and inspired the anarchists' use of violence in the

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<sup>22</sup> Avrigh, "Kropotkin in America," p. 166. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44554593>.

<sup>23</sup> Dan Colson, "Propaganda and the Deed: Anarchism, Violence and the Representational Impulse," *American Studies* 55/56 (2017): p. 168. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44982624>.

<sup>24</sup> Emma Goldman, *The Psychology of Political Violence*, (New York (State): Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1911), p. 9.

future. Rather than squashing a small anarchist movement, the decision to prosecute eight men only brought more attention to the systematic issues that the defendants were criticizing; the collective punishment that the prosecution sought out achieved the exact opposite effect. Furthermore, the result of the Haymarket Affair and the government's extreme reaction to an initial incident became a pattern in how the State approached anarchy as a social ill. This, coupled with the growing distribution of anarchist pamphlets and literature, set a stage for each side to swing to extremely radical methodologies, even without just cause.

The justification for terrorism has always been a contentious topic in political and historical circles. For how can one justify the murder of another? What thought processes cause a terrorist to find their actions moral and just? The line is easier to cross than one may surmise. The extreme reaction by supporters to anarchist ideologies was met with an equal and opposite reaction by the United States government, which further justified anarchist violence: both parties believed that sacrificing innocent civilians was necessary for achieving their means, utilizing their opponents' actions as a moral rationalization.

### **Killing in the Name of Life: A Violent Discourse**

Post Haymarket, radical ideology termed 'Propaganda by the Deed' began to gain more popularity within anarchist circles in America as a reaction to the United States government's violence toward anarchists and labor activists. Propaganda by the deed refers to the idea that acts of terror or destruction will inspire further revolutionaries to act, creating a general revolution as a result of one event of violence; propaganda by the deed as a concept was inspired out of a general sense of collectivism from class unrest, and a deep assumption that *many* resentful laborers were willing to act in violence to achieve a better society. Despite the prosecution's best intentions, the Haymarket Affair illustrated that violence could be utilized as a tool to garner public attention- and possibly public support. Anarchist coalitions comprised mostly of immigrants from Eastern Europe were already incredibly familiar with propaganda by the deed, as anarchists in Europe had been utilizing it as a strategy for much of the late nineteenth century. In fact, "Between 1894 and 1902, Italian anarchists alone killed a President of France, a prime minister of Spain, the empress of Austria and made unsuccessful attempts on the lives of King Leopold II of Belgium, Italy's prime minister, and Umberto I (before Bresci succeeded)."<sup>25</sup> Supporters of propaganda by the deed as a viable strategy for revolution had witnessed examples of its success in eliminating members of the ruling class. If ruling class figureheads could be 'taken out' in Europe, it seemed plausible that it could be effective within the United States.

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<sup>25</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants Against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 60.

Emma Goldman, a prominent figure within anarchist circles at the time, was a strong proponent for propaganda by the deed, justifying why anarchist radicals deemed it an effective political strategy. Goldman most consistently throughout her time as a leader in the anarchist community of the vindication for violence. In her essay, “What I Believe,” she condones propaganda by the deed, saying, “I know that some Anarchists have committed acts of violence, but it is the terrible economic inequality and great political injustice that prompts such acts, not Anarchism.”<sup>26</sup> This message of these acts being *necessary* when revolting against a government of a violent nature is a pinnacle of propaganda by the deed rhetoric; Goldman expands this line of reasoning further in 1911, just three years after “What I Believe.” The framing of propaganda by the deed is that anarchists are forced to take action — Goldman and her followers believed that the structural violence left them no choice but to fight back. Goldman’s book-length argument, *The Psychology of Political Violence*, gives further insight into the psychology of propaganda by the deed, as it describes the paradox of conviction for better human life and the vindication that violence is a necessary means for revolution. An overarching theme of justification stemmed from the idea that the United States was inherently unjust and that any harm that one or two anarchists could do was not proportionate to the harm that the State incurred. Scoffing at government claims of the horrors of anarchist terrorism, Goldman rebuts, “As if the teachings of anarchism in its extremest form could equal the force of those slain women and infants, who had pilgrimed to the King for aid...As if any spoken word, ever so eloquent, could burn into a human soul with such white heat as the life blood trickling drop by drop from those dying forms,” placing the blame for violence and human suffering back upon the governments of the period.<sup>27</sup> She argued that anarchist ideology, no matter in what radical form, could ever amount to more harm than the current establishment because one operates to create and maintain oppression. In contrast, the other operates to establish freedom. By comparing propaganda by the deed to the acts of the federal government, Goldman and her supporters diminish the harm of their acts of violence, as they place the impacts and blame of acts out of propaganda by the deed back onto the government and the ruling class.

Alexander Berkman, who would later be the spouse of infamous anarchist Emma Goldman, illustrated United States organized anarchists’ complex relationship with violence and propaganda by the deed. Stabbing Henry Clay Frick in 1892, a manager who brought in strikebreakers at the steel factory Homestead Works, Berkman was sentenced to fourteen years in prison. Alexander Berkman wrote of his decision to kill Frick from prison in 1912, stating that “The People--the toilers of the world, the producers comprise, to me, the universe. They alone count. The rest are parasites, who have

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<sup>26</sup> Emma Goldman, and Alix Kates. Shulman. *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*. 3rd ed., (Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Goldman *The Psychology of Political Violence*, p. 27.

no right to exist.”<sup>28</sup> In calling capitalists parasites, Berkman justified his decision to kill Frick, for in his mind, he was protecting the people from embodiments of the disease of capitalism. This rhetoric speaks to the nature of propaganda by the deed philosophy. It works to justify killing human beings by putting himself in the light of the martyr: a man self-sacrificing to protect good. Within this memoir, Berkman acknowledged that while not all anarchists believed violence was moral or just, his justification and counterargument for anarchist violence was that “Human life is, indeed, sacred and inviolate. But the killing of a tyrant, of an enemy of the People, is in no way to be considered as the taking of a life. A revolutionist would rather perish a thousand times than be guilty of what is ordinarily called murder.”<sup>29</sup> Alexander Berkman created a distinction between human life and a tyrant, effectively dehumanizing the victims of said terrorist acts, writing them off as both collateral damage and cogs in a “sick” system. Moreover, he categorized propaganda by the deed as inherent to the life of a revolutionist, especially emphasizing self-sacrifice as a main characteristic. Berkman’s attempt at propaganda by the deed, and his writing from prison, demonstrated how the radical sect of the United States anarchist movement felt vindicated in their plans and follow through of violence. However, Berkman’s attempt to defer charges of harm is ineffective in addressing the fallacy of propaganda of the deed as an inciter for the progress of the anarchist ideals within broader society, which is the main intention of this nature of terrorism.

Rather than being embraced by his anarchist comrades, many anarchist leaders condemned the actions, noting that Berkman’s terrorism had damaged the image and cause of anarchism.<sup>30</sup> Especially because Berkman’s actions did not further the cause, nor were they fully effective since Frick lived, they were not justified by propaganda by the deed, making many anarchists perceive his actions as superfluous to counterproductive. At the time of the stabbing, different parties of anarchists were beginning to form, from those who advocated working closer with unions, “anarchist-syndicalists,” to those who pursued living out anarchist ideals individually, “bohemian anarchists.” Those who believed in the propaganda by the deed were considered “insurrectionary anarchists.” Most anarchist groups in the United States began to withdraw support from actions made in the name of propaganda by the deed, for “By the end of the century, however, it was becoming apparent that propaganda of the deed prompted intense, sweeping repression of anarchists, exposed the movement to agent provocateurs, and alienated working people more often than it inspired them.”<sup>31</sup> To many anarchists, Berkman’s

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1912), p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Berkman, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Colson, “Propaganda and the Deed,” p. 173. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44982624>.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), p. 32. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520961845>

actions of reckless violence only ostracized anarchists and their ability to organize against the government, as it fed into the press's narratives of all anarchists being threats. Even Johann Most, "...who for years had called for acts of revolutionary violence and even authored an instructional explosives manual for that purpose, responded to Berkman's attempt by stating, 'In a country where we are so poorly represented and so little understood as in America, we simply cannot afford the luxury of assassination,'" condemned his stabbing attempt due to its antithetical result.<sup>32</sup> Most's disapproval of Berkman's actions illustrates not only the evolving theory of applicable anarchy, but also demonstrates how the United States' anarchist movement was not a monolith by any means, as it possessed a variety of different notions of action and visions. The stabbing of Frick reveals the fruition of propaganda by the deed: messy, controversial, and ultimately, ineffective in resisting the federal government.

Hence, violence and terrorism within the anarchist movement had conflicting and often hypocritical justifications. Much of anarchist terrorism was short-sighted, without a clear message or substantial means of justification to the public. In the U.S. military's records from 1920 about Goldman, much of which implicate Berkman by association, it is clear that the anarchist movement utilized violence as a last resort and in very specific events. Pulling from Goldman's "Mother Earth" newspaper extensively, the case file quotes an article that Berkman wrote in 1914, in which he stated the accomplishment that "[The anarchists] have taught people that violence is justified, aye, necessary in the defensive and offensive struggle of labor against capital."<sup>33</sup> The insertion of both terms, defensive and offensive, when discussing violence exemplifies the position that violence is necessary to the cause, even if it seems unjustified. Berkman, years later, was still insistent on the necessity of violence. The military noted this as further evidence of Goldman and Berkman's propensity for terrorist acts. Within this file, it also becomes clear that when investigating Goldman, officials were not concerned with her innocence, as they attempted to connect her to the McKinley assassination once more, which makes this source less reliable when examining the pair's degree of enthusiasm and commitment toward violence. Regardless, it can be asserted that while violence was a tool utilized by anarchists in the late eighteenth century and early twentieth century, the use of violence remained controversial in practice. To speak of taking violent action was a far different cry than taking up violence oneself. While

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<sup>32</sup> Kenyon Zimmer, *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> Military Intelligence Division, U.S. Army, "Emma Goldman Activities," 1920, 5, U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917-1941, Folder #10110-1688 Emma Goldman.

<https://hv-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/historyvault/docview.jsp?folderId=002371-015-0901&q=&position=-1&numResults=0&numTotalResults=>

anarchists had many justifications for violence in a revolutionary sense, the actions that can be credibly traced to anarchists regarding violence in the United States are not as extensive as was publicized during the period.

Propaganda by the deed, and manifestations of the ideology, gave police and government more ammunition to legislate and enact violence against anarchists, for any act of violence they could easily attribute to anarchists. Goldman writes, “That every act of political violence should nowadays be attributed to Anarchists is not at all surprising... [for] it is a fact known to almost everyone familiar with the Anarchist movement that a great number of acts, for which Anarchists had to suffer, either originated with the capitalist press or were instigated, if not directly perpetrated, by the police.”<sup>34</sup> When examining both the Haymarket Affair as well as Leon Czolgosz’s killing of President McKinley, these themes seem to be substantiated, for neither act of killing was claimed by an anarchist organization. Propaganda by the deed made it difficult for anarchists to disavow unaffiliated acts of violence or the instances in which the government misattributed an event to anarchists. Goldman also references another case in which the press claimed she was connected, yet there was no evidence to corroborate the panic. According to a *New York Times* article published shortly after the incident in 1908, a young man named Lazarus Averbuch, “...an avowed anarchist and follower of Emma Goldman...” attempted to attack the Chief of police of Chicago, George Shippy.<sup>35</sup> In the pamphlet, Goldman remarks that she “...did not know Averbuch; in fact never before heard his name, and the only way [she] could have possibly ‘conspired’ with him was in [her] astral body.”<sup>36</sup> The instance of Averbuch once more demonstrates the presumption of guilt of anarchists by both newspapers and the United States government. Government and police officials were eager to connect all violence to anarchism as a means of discrediting the movement and its ideologies of equality and liberation. As a result, the stereotype that all violence was at the hands of anarchist actors called into question the viability of utilizing violence as propaganda by the deed; if the anarchist label was being attached to those who had no connection to the ideology of the movement, the violence was not as impactful because it had lost its meaning through misrepresentation. Propaganda, by the deed, fueled government narratives of deranged and dangerous anarchists, making it easier to turn public opinion against their cause.

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<sup>34</sup> Goldman, *The Psychology of Political Violence*, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup> “Police Chief Kills Anarchist In Fight: Shippy Of Chicago, His Son, and Driver Wounded in Battle in Official’s Home,” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, 3 March 1908. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/police-chief-kills-anarchist-fight/docview/9688699/7/se-2>.

<sup>36</sup> Goldman, *The Psychology of Political Violence*, p. 12.

### The Assassination of President McKinley

By the end of the nineteenth century, anarchism was equated with terrorism to the point that acts of violence were routinely attributed to anarchist ideologies, underlying unsubstantiated claims regarding anarchist organizations' orchestration of the most horrific terrorist acts. Thus, when rogue actor Leon Czolgosz assassinated President McKinley on 6 September 1901, he was proclaimed to be an anarchist, his act inspired by Goldman's speeches.<sup>37</sup> This created mass panic, for the president of the United States was perceived to be dead at the hands of anarchy. Indeed, Czolgosz himself made statements of being a follower of Goldman, but Czolgosz was never associated with or affiliated with any anarchist group or organization. According to the National Commission on the Causes and the Prevention of Violence in 1968, "He began reading about anarchism and went to Cleveland to listen to a lecture by Goldman, a leading anarchist, whose speech, incidentally, did not advocate violence... Czolgosz tried to join an anarchist group, but acted so strangely that he was thought to be a police spy. The group published a warning against him just five days before he killed McKinley."<sup>38</sup> The fact that anarchists published a warning about Czolgosz demonstrates that Czolgosz, his viewpoints, and ultimately, his assassination of President McKinley were independent actions and not a concerted effort by anarchists. His lack of interaction with organized anarchists and their aversion to his behavior reveals the contradiction between governmental and media interpretation versus anarchist ideologies and activists. The assassination may have been *inspired* by an anarchist framework but was not connected to the anarchist movement in any tangible way.

Despite a lack of evidence, Leon Czolgosz and the assassination were deemed to be the fault of anarchism. Emma Goldman denounced her participation or involvement in the assassination, but her word was not credible due to her support of propaganda by the deed in previous instances. In *Psychology of Violence*, she noted that "Today, even, nine years after the tragedy, after it was proved a hundred times that Emma Goldman had nothing to do with the event, that no evidence whatsoever exists to indicate that Czolgosz ever called himself an anarchist, we are confronted by the same lie..."<sup>39</sup> Goldman's proclamation that Czolgosz was never involved in the anarchist movement exemplifies how quickly the government and newspapers jumped to conclusions to demonize anarchists. This narrative was tough to counteract, given the previous demonstrations of propaganda by the deed. Moreover, the speculation by the United States government that Goldman was a conspirator that persisted for years, despite any corroborating evidence, shows how anarchists were all perceived as terrorist threats, even

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<sup>37</sup> Colson, "Propaganda and the Deed," p. 176. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44982624>.

<sup>38</sup> James F. Kirkham, Sheldon G. Levy, and William J. Crotty, *Assassination and Political Violence: A Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, (Washington, D.C: For sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1969), p. 55.

<sup>39</sup> Goldman, *The Psychology of Political Violence*, p. 10.



when there was a preponderance of facts pointing to their innocence. Previous demonstrations of propaganda by the deed made it difficult for anarchists to be believed when claiming they had no involvement because they had been associated with terrorist actions and assassinations in the past; claimed violence was seen by the press and the United States government as representative of the movement as a whole, which made it difficult for the public to view Czolgosz as an isolated actor. The case of Leon Czolgosz demonstrates the danger of any implication of anarchism attached to terrorism: it put all other active anarchists at risk of false accusations and, more importantly, extreme government retaliation.

In the wake of the McKinley assassination, anarchists all over the country were sought after to be interrogated, and many have been imprisoned. Calls from both the press and the government for extreme measures against anarchists began to gain momentum. In Chicago, a newspaper wrote that “Twelve avowed Anarchists are now in cells in Chicago police stations, and at least five of these acknowledge an acquaintance with Czolgosz...they declare, however, that he is no more than a rattle-brained follower of their cult with whom they never conferred and of whose plans for shooting the President they know nothing.”<sup>40</sup> Czolgosz was a rogue actor, yet his assassination of President McKinley led to widespread panic throughout the United States, for this act of terrorism marked for many in the United States a need for government policy. Anarchist terrorism could no longer be addressed on a case-by-case basis. For instance, three days after the assassination, the newspaper, *The Atlanta Constitution*, called for further legislation against anarchists since “It is unhesitatingly declared by men high in authority that this country has grown to be the dumping ground for the most vicious and determined followers and supporters of anarchy, [...] lured to the United States by the freedom from molestation to be enjoyed here in their plottings.”<sup>41</sup> The article argued that anarchists from other countries were coming to the United States due to the United States’ merciful legislation toward anarchists; later in this article, Governor Candler of Georgia advocated for anyone with anarchist ideals to be sentenced to death. Calls for immigration reform and the policing of anarchist ideologies became widespread in the wake of McKinley’s death. Despite Czolgosz’s lack of association or verified

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<sup>40</sup> “Assassin Finds An Inspired In This City.: Assailant Of The President Meets Local Anarchists During a Visit In July,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922)*, 8 September 1901. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/assassin-finds-inspiration-this-city/docview/173033703/se-2>.

<sup>41</sup> “Law Lax on Anarchists, Say Lawyers, Crime Of Czolgosz Merits The Noose: Gov. Candler Favors State Legislation Redefining Conspiracy,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1881-1945)*, 9 September 1901. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/law-lax-on-anarchists-say-lawyers-crime-czolgosz/docview/495692457/se-2>.

subscription to anarchist ideals, his background as an immigrant, as well as the radical nature of his violence, imbued the government to further legislate against immigrants and political radicals.

### **Taking Legal Action Against Anarchism: The Immigration Act of 1903**

The panic that had erupted post-assassination led to great unrest regarding anarchists' presence within the United States. To soothe public fears, Congress would have to take action against anarchists as a whole, regardless of Czolgosz's true association with the organizers. The government positioned Czolgosz's immigrant identity as just cause to retaliate against anarchists and immigrants as a whole; through this, the government continued to build on narratives of fear-mongering and dehumanization.

Following the moral panic, where anarchists and immigrants alike were rounded up and interrogated in the wake of the assassination, lawmakers were pressured to take action against anarchism. Fixation on Czolgosz's immigrant status by the press and government created a narrative that legislating against immigrants was the only plausible way to prevent anarchist terrorism. Compounding on Czolgosz's identity as an immigrant, many prominent anarchists were also immigrants from Eastern Europe, leading to anarchism being identified as a foreign threat to domestic security, therefore making immigration legislation pose as an appropriate measure: "Restrictive and exclusionary immigration law, therefore, became a means of safeguarding the United States from an external danger."<sup>42</sup> The press and public officials adopted a narrative that Czolgosz's actions, as well as other terrorist acts that had been attributed to anarchists, were byproducts of *foreign* ideologies and, therefore, should be treated as such.

The notion that anarchy was an *imported* ideology received a powerful expression when President Theodore Roosevelt delivered a message to the Senate and House of Representatives addressing McKinley's assassination. Roosevelt strongly condemned Czolgosz, but more importantly, he categorized anarchists as one of the most pressing dangers to the nation, using militarizing verbiage that categorized anarchists as "...more dangerous than any other [criminal] because he represents the same depravity in a greater degree."<sup>43</sup> In advocating for a severe increase in immigration laws, Roosevelt referenced anarchist acts of propaganda by the deed in Europe, stating that "Such individuals as those who not long ago gathered in open meeting to glorify the murder of King Humbert of Italy perpetuate a crime, and the law should insure their rigorous punishment. They and those like them should be kept out of this country; and if found here they should be promptly deported to the country whence they

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<sup>42</sup> Mary S. Barton, "The Global War on Anarchism: The United States and International Anarchist Terrorism, 1898–1904," *Diplomatic History* 39: 2 (2015), p. 304.

<sup>43</sup> 57-1 Cong. Rec 82 (1901) (statement of F. Roosevelt).  
<https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t19.d20.cr-1901-1203?accountid=14522>

came; and far-reaching provision should be made for the punishment of those who stay.”<sup>44</sup> By connecting domestic anarchists to those responsible for the assassinations of world leaders abroad, Roosevelt both reinforced this notion of a foreign threat, as well as stipulated that all anarchists are immigrants and dangerous. His language positioned the United States as an unwitting safe haven for terrorists, which strengthened his call for strict immigration bars. Moreover, due to the examples of violence in Europe that were very prominent in the conception of the stereotypical anarchist, propaganda by the deed worked in favor of those calling for immigration tightening, for it worked as evidence of the “violent nature“ of anarchists. The narrative that the assassination of President McKinley was a byproduct of organized anarchism, driven by immigrants who infiltrated the United States, empowered Congress to act swiftly and rashly when prosecuting and deporting anarchists.

Prompted by the President and feeling pressure from the press and the local officials, Congress promptly worked out what became the Immigration Act of 1903. This was the first immigration legislation that discriminated specifically against political ideologies within the United States. The Immigration Act of 1903, also called the Anarchist Exclusion Act, defined anarchists as “...persons who believe in or advocate the overthrow by force or violence of the Government of the United States or of all government or of all forms of law, or the assassination of public officials.”<sup>45</sup> In addition, this act required immigration officials to ask incoming immigrants if they believed in anarchy or identified as anarchists. The language of the immigration bill directly referenced Czolgosz’s actions, which was understandable given the direct phrasing of the act regarding assassinations. However, the vague nature of the definitions in the act allowed the state officials to easily deport and prosecute immigrants labeling them anarchists, regardless of their proven affiliation with an organized anarchist group or adherence to anarchist ideology. The Anarchist Exclusion Act speaks to an effort by the federal government to prevent the ideology as a foreign threat rather than addressing the deep-rooted issues that made anarchist ideology seem attractive to individuals residing in the United States. Anarchism was not simply a foreign problem; plenty of domestic actors supported the ideology, especially in working-class spheres. Excluding immigrants that align with anarchism displays the United States’ harsh and extreme response to the small anarchist movement within the nation, as well as a deeper prejudice against immigrants overall. Given that the acts of violence undertaken by Czolgosz and the small few that advocated for propaganda by the deed were already illegal, barring all immigrants that aligned with anarchist ideologies and groups demonstrates how Congress utilized the McKinley assassination to push for further immigration bans as a whole. This is especially stated since there is ample evidence that Czolgosz was not claimed by any anarchist group. The action of one rogue

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<sup>44</sup> 57-1 Cong. Rec 82 (1901) (statement of F. Roosevelt). <https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t19.d20.cr-1901-1203?accountid=14522>

<sup>45</sup> Alien Immigration Act, ch. 1012, 38 Stat. 1213, 1214 (1903).

extremist supplied the government with the ammunition to take a severe approach to immigration, disregarding the fact that not all anarchists were immigrants or violent.

Anarchists felt targeted by the United States government. They viewed the Anarchist Exclusion Act as an attempt to silence the voices of those advocating for the working men in the United States. For instance, Kropotkin, who had made multiple visits to the United States, touring and giving speeches, could never enter the nation again, and wrote, "...to Emma Goldman, bourgeois society 'throws its hypocritical liberties overboard, tears them to pieces — as soon as people use those liberties for fighting that cursed society.'"<sup>46</sup> As Kropotkin wrote to Goldman, the legislation felt staunchly hypocritical and displayed to many anarchists the flexibility of a government attempting to maintain power. To them, if liberties were that easily disposable, the entire government could be, as well. U.S. officials polarized the domestic movement by identifying anarchy as a foreign problem. They forced it to grow domestically while simultaneously othering and marginalizing anarchists as a group unfit to be American. The overlapping identities of being lower class, immigrants, and holding alternative ideologies fueled the extreme stigmatization of anarchists, leading organized anarchists to feel the need to take more extreme action out of desperation.

The Anarchist Exclusion Act of 1903 not only created a legal definition of the anarchist but functioned to categorize anarchists as 'undesirables' in all immigration legislation following; categorizing anarchists as undesirables empowered the United States to further marginalize eastern Europeans. The next prominent piece of immigration legislation passed concerning anarchists was the Immigration Act of 1907, in which anarchists were once more included in the excluded classes, with "...idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane persons..." as well as criminals and those who were ill.<sup>47</sup> While this immigration law was written to primarily exclude those with disabilities and illness, the insertion of anarchism and the definition found in the original act illustrates how the Anarchist Exclusion Act was used in continuity as further immigration legislation was passed. Furthermore, by grouping anarchists with those that the government deemed were "feeble-minded" or "idiots," the law conflated anarchists with the two groups, effectively declaring that anarchists lacked intelligence and were less human, as all groups were included under the category of "defective persons." This remained significant in constructing the anarchists as undesirable throughout the twentieth century.

The Immigration Act of 1907 stoked a greater push to criminalize anarchists. In reaction to the passage of the act, the Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Labor, Oscar S. Straus, directed

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<sup>46</sup> Avrich, "Kropotkin in America," p. 33. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44554593>.

<sup>47</sup> Public Law 59-96-2 [S. 4403] *Immigration Act of 1907*, 10 March 2024, 899. [https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t41.d42.59\\_pl\\_96\\_2?accountid=1452](https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t41.d42.59_pl_96_2?accountid=1452)

all “Commissioners of Immigration and Immigrant Inspectors in Charge” to be hypervigilant about locating and deporting anarchists by working with local police to locate anarchists. The purpose of the direction was that “the cooperation of said officials should be requested, making it clear that in order that any particular anarchist or criminal may be deported evidence must be furnished showing (1) that the person in question is an alien, subject to the immigration acts; (2) that he is an anarchist or criminal, as defined in the statute...”<sup>48</sup> The Secretary’s comments illustrate the longevity of the anarchist definition as a means of further criminalization, as well as how the Immigration Exclusion Acts also sparked a renewed focus on prosecuting anarchists domestically. This is further exacerbated later in the letter when Straus states the intentions of his order: “It is desired that the above-indicated steps shall be taken at once and that no proper effort shall be spared to secure and retain the cooperation of the local police and detective forces in an effort to rid the country of alien anarchists and criminals falling within the provisions of the statute relating to deportation.”<sup>49</sup> The call to action by local police personnel to ascertain which citizens were really anarchists, based on an immigration act, implies that immigrants were to be surveilled and profiled as anarchists who needed to be deported; the perceived correlation of the two identities made it so that any Eastern European would be targeted within the initiative to eradicate anarchy from the United States. This push to deal with the anarchist problem was further extrapolated as figures in the press criticized the government for being too lenient in dealing with anarchists. When covering Straus’s direction, the *New York Times* wrote, “The laws, in the first place, are held to be too lenient, and, secondly, they are not administered with the severity the situation demands.”<sup>50</sup> The article illustrates the fear-mongering and intense calls by the press for full eradication of anarchist ideology. The government’s immigration legislation against anarchists further anarchist dehumanization, as it lent itself to the further public construction of anarchists as all being dangerous, ‘defective’ criminals. While it began with the Anarchist Exclusion Act, the marginalization of anarchy developed into a greater policing and surveillance of immigrants as

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<sup>48</sup> Commerce and Labor Department, *Deportation of anarchists and aliens of criminal classes under Immigration Act of Feb. 20, 1907*, 10 March 1907, <https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t66.d71.c104-163?accountid=14522>.

<sup>49</sup> Commerce and Labor Department, *Deportation of anarchists and aliens of criminal classes under Immigration Act of Feb. 20, 1907*, 10 March 1907, <https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t66.d71.c104-163?accountid=14522>.

<sup>50</sup> Special to The New York Times. 1908. “To Drive Anarchists Out Of The Country: Secretary Straus Orders Immigration Men To Cooperate With Police In Locating Criminals. Indorsed By Roosevelt Added Precautions To Be Taken In Excluding Aliens -- Three Assassinations Were Plotted In Chicago.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, 4 March 1908, p. 1. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/drive-anarchists-out-country/docview/96821674/se-2>.

a whole, for the government and press had effectively intertwined the two identities into one undesirable class.

### **Dehumanizing Anarchism Through Eugenics**

Throughout the story of the American anarchists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the public and government categorized them as less than human, unable to grasp how one could be convinced of the ideology, assuming it must be a genetic deficiency. Their majority status as immigrants, as well as their positioning in the working class, led to a very distinct stereotype of anarchists that drew upon racializing tropes. By depicting anarchists as deranged, animalistic characters through the justification of eugenic theories, the press and government drew upon the majority of immigrants to racialize and marginalize anarchists, leading to mistreatment within the justice system and racial profiling.

Newspapers and the government exaggerated the deranged and animalistic characteristics of anarchists to racialize them and further demonize them, dehumanizing anarchists and turning the public against them. Since the beginning of anarchists' emergence into the American limelight, the media turned the radical nature of their ideals and identity into tropes. Following the Haymarket Affair, newspapers capitalized off of the looks and demeanor of the eight men, for their exposure "provided the stock anarchist-communist figure of the newspaper cartoonist- a short, bushy-whiskered, foreign-looking person carrying around a dynamite bomb, a glowing fuse projecting from it, perhaps with a dagger in one hand or gripped in his teeth."<sup>51</sup> The heightening of these traits by the press — of the hairiness, the overly embellished violent demeanor — lent itself to one very specific trope of those who identified as anarchists. The stereotype presented similarly to other traits of 'unfavorable' classes of the time and persisted past Haymarket, becoming a depiction that anarchists were unable to defy.

As time progressed into the early twentieth century, anarchists' identity as immigrants also played into the trope. Given that, at the time, Eastern and Southern European immigrants were regarded as "inferior" by the press and American public,<sup>52</sup> drenched heavily in nativist prejudice, the overlapping ideology and identity gave the press freedom to dehumanize and villainize anarchists. This notion of inferiority manifested into an extremely dangerous character, for "Newspaper editors and cartoonists routinely depicted as animals, infectious pests, and as tools of the devil. When graced with a human form, anarchists were nearly always drawn with dark skin, scraggly beards, a hunched posture, and bulging eyes," utilizing characteristics that were also used to represent other marginalized groups,

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<sup>51</sup> Keabian and Grinnell. *The Haymarket Affair and the Trial of the Chicago Anarchists, 1886*, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth F. Cohen, *Illegal: How America's Lawless Immigration Regime Threatens Us All*, First edition, (New York: Basic Books, 2020), pp. 89-90.

since “...such imagery implied insanity, it also keyed to the era’s stock racist depictions of African Americans.”<sup>53</sup> The construction of an animalistic, insane, violent anarchist drew upon other traits that had already been racialized within the United States, leading to anarchists and Eastern Europeans alike being othered as inferior beings, genetically different, and not fully human. Anarchists’ identities as Eastern and Southern immigrants, along with their ethnicity, were redefined as interchangeable with their anarchistic ideology. Not only did the media dehumanize anarchists, but the depictions of anarchists in the press stipulated a monolith of identity, behavior, and genetic makeup: the illustrations and descriptions perpetuated the ideal that *all* anarchists were violent and subject to insanity, and due to strong correlation, this trope implicitly stated that *all* Eastern and Italian immigrants were violent. The caricaturization perpetuated within the press and by public officials worked to further the process of the marginalization of immigrants from Europe, with the term ‘anarchist’ essentially operating “...as a racializing term during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when the racial status of European immigrants was uncertain.”<sup>54</sup> The connotation of identifying as an anarchist was that the individual was inherently violent and animalistic, a notion that lent itself to the perception that anarchists were genetically different than proper United States citizens.

If anarchism and the proclivity to violence were unchangeable, as in the construction, it was thought of as the anarchists’ natural impulse, then the next rationale was that the United States was dealing with dangerous animals that should be treated as such. This language can be observed throughout the passage of anti-anarchist legislation and fueled much of the justification for such severe and drastic measures. The narrative that violence was inherent to the anarchist as a character and as a group made the idea that anarchists could be peaceful or obedient to the law unfathomable- in the construction of the character of the anarchist, the only way to keep the American people safe was to keep them out of the nation. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s State of the Union following McKinley’s assassination illustrates this narrative, as he rationalizes his recommendation of the anarchist immigration ban by noting that “The cause of [anarchist] criminality is to be found in his own evil passions and in the evil conduct of those who urge him on, not in any failure by others or by the State to do justice to him or his.”<sup>55</sup> Roosevelt argued that the anarchists’ nature is evil, not based on ideology, but on his genetic makeup. In stating that the anarchist’s organic behavior is violence, Roosevelt reinforced the racialization of the anarchist, insinuating their inferiority and uncivilized nature. Compounded by the repeated notions that all anarchists are immigrants who act as a monolith, all

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<sup>53</sup> Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, p. 45. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520961845>

<sup>54</sup> Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, p. 46. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520961845>

<sup>55</sup> 57-1 Cong. Rec 82 (1901) (statement of F. D. Roosevelt). <https://congressional.proquest.com/congressional/docview/t19.d20.cr-1901-1203?accountid=14522>

supporting and enacting violence, the construction of the anarchist lent itself to dangerous enforcement practices.

The Anarchist Exclusion Act legitimized the real-life implications of the racialization of anarchists, for state officials were empowered to make many false arrests and deportations, profiling immigrants as anarchists without due process. The Palmer Raids were a reaction to an attempted- and failed- bombing of Attorney General Mitchell Palmer's home, as well as other smaller anarchist bombings.<sup>56</sup> In the wake of the bombing, Palmer used his capacity as Attorney General to begin raiding and rounding up suspected anarchists without search warrants or other constitutional protections. While prosecuting those who committed terrorist acts was under Palmer's jurisprudence, his hypervigilance and overreach only resulted in collective punishment for immigrant communities, especially given the violent and invasive nature of these raids and round-ups. Moreover, the intention of eradicating anarchists did not come to fruition, as through "...investigation [Assistant Secretary Louis Post] discovered that only 40 or the thousands arrested in the Palmer Raids actually admitted that they favoured the overthrow of the United States government. He also discovered that among these dangerous radicals, only three revolvers had been found in the course of 5,000 arrests."<sup>57</sup> This investigation demonstrates the strong role of anarchists' immigrant identity, as well as the construction of their violent disposition, which was the justification and target for Palmer's violation of Constitutional rights. The statistics of immigrants that expressed support for anarchist ideology (not quite guilty of terrorist actions), compared to that of innocent immigrant individuals, illustrates the baseless claims made by Palmer, as well as how dangerous the racialization and construction of the anarchist figure was in execution.

The profiling of Eastern and Southern European immigrants lent itself to many innocent individuals being jailed, unjustly questioned, and deported, often without probable cause. During the Palmer Raids, officials targeted immigrants that fit their perception of an anarchist, even if the individuals had not committed or were suspected of a crime. For instance, one case published in a newspaper described an immigrant who "...had been detained eight months by the immigration authorities on an open charge after he had been arrested without a warrant other than a liquor search warrant other than a liquor search warrant and no liquor was found on his premises."<sup>58</sup> The article

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<sup>56</sup> "Palmer Raids," FBI, 18 May 2016. <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/palmer-raids>.

<sup>57</sup> Edwin P. (Edwin Palmer) Hoyt, *The Palmer Raids, 1919-1920: An Attempt to Suppress Dissent*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p. 105.

<sup>58</sup> Clippings-General: Deportations, Volume 52. 1917-1919. TS, The Roger Baldwin Years, 1912-1950: Sub-Series 5: General – Clippings, 1912-1950. Mudd Library, Princeton University. *The Making of Modern Law: American Civil Liberties Union Papers* (accessed 8 February 2024).



further stated that this immigrant's admittance of being a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, a labor organization that at times included anarchists, enabled officials to withhold his release. Being detained based on a fabricated liquor search warrant demonstrates the profiling that many Eastern and Southern European immigrants were experiencing during the Palmer Raids. Another article described an Italian man who "...wanted to become an American citizen and bring his family from Italy" and claimed that "...he did not belong to any organization teaching anarchy, nor the overthrow of either the Italian or the American government."<sup>59</sup> The lack of due process, the false premise for arrest, and continual incarceration despite a lack of criminal activity or evidence of anarchism shows how the racialization of anarchists operated to justify unjust police conduct. Immigrants were being arrested based on their presentation, not on their actions. The profiling within the Palmer Raids was a byproduct of how dangerous the conflation of anarchist ideology and ethnic identity was for immigrants in the country: identity became a valid charge in the court of law, and Eastern and Southern European immigrants were subject to unconstitutional treatment on the basis that they were inherently violent terrorists.

The Palmer Raids resulted in mass arrests, leading to hearings for immigrants to determine whether or not there was just cause to deport them. Included in these deportation hearings were Goldman and Berkman, who were mentioned earlier as strong advocates and actors for propaganda by the deed. While there was ample cause to deport the couple, many of the immigrants subject to the hearing process were not anarchists nor implicated in any crime. The hearings are significant in that many immigrants were forced to defend themselves against the charge of anarchism, accused by police and deportation officials due to their immigrant identity rather than their behavior. Search warrants were rarely presented, and Miranda Rights were often not stated to the defendants. Especially striking within the hearing record is this statement, where the nature of the deportation cases is exposed fully, where the Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor condemns the consequences of these deportation cases.

As a rule, the hearings show the aliens arrested to be workmen of good character who have never been arrested before, who are not anarchists or revolutionists, nor politically or otherwise dangerous in any sense. Many of them, as in this case, have

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<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/GBHJDW955606191/ACLU?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=bookmark-ACLU&xid=e51c794e&pg=2>.

<sup>59</sup> Clippings-General: Deportations, Volume 52. 1917-1919. TS, The Roger Baldwin Years, 1912-1950: Sub-Series 5: General – Clippings, 1912-1950. Mudd Library, Princeton University. The Making of Modern Law: American Civil Liberties Union Papers (accessed 8 February 2024). <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/GBHJDW955606191/ACLU?u=ucsantabarbara&sid=bookmark-ACLU&xid=e51c794e&pg=2>.

American-born children. It is pitiful to consider the hardships to which they and their families have been subjected during the past three or four months by arbitrary arrest, long detention in default of bail beyond the means of hard-working wage earners to give, for nothing more dangerous than affiliation with friends of their own race, country, and language, and without the slightest indication of sinister motive or any unlawful act within their knowledge or intention.<sup>60</sup>

This quote serves as an illustration of the actual agenda of the deportation cases: the targeting of ethnic minorities under false pretenses to deport them. Many individuals detained were not even aware of the ideology of anarchy until taken into custody, left to dispute charges they didn't understand. On its face, these cases are a result of how the stereotypes and construction of anarchists as immigrants harmed immigrant communities greatly, leaving them vulnerable to overzealous police and deportation entities. The profiling of anarchists as all Eastern and Southern European immigrants reinforces the implication of anarchists as racialized threats to American society; despite the preponderance of evidence that these immigrant individuals were innocent of crimes, their identity made them subject to deportation. There is a clear targeting of marginalized communities based on their ethnicity, and the byproduct is the destruction of families and deportations based on unfounded claims, all due to the characterization and racialization of anarchists.

The racialization of anarchists, as well as making the political ideology inseparable from the Eastern and Southern European identity in the American mind, functioned to justify police violence and extreme immigration laws. The Immigration policies and Palmer Raids were both seeped in heavy nativist sentiment, fueled by eugenic ideas of the perfect American race. Eugenic social societies, steeped in ideals of maintaining a perfect nation inspired by Darwin's theories of evolution, began gaining popularity in elitist circles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, "Members of some of the nation's most elite families, many of whom were Ivy League graduates, joined forces in associations like the Immigration Restriction League and the American Protective Association. These groups lobbied for restrictions and populated Congress with their members to help their cause: preventing the immigration of the southern and eastern European immigrants whom they viewed as less valuable, and possibly less human, than their own kind."<sup>61</sup> The racialization of anarchists, through depictions as animalistic, functioned to further exclude Eastern and Southern European immigrants from 'qualifying' as American, deemed as undesirable to their ethnicity. The Immigration Act of 1924 represents how this racialization functioned in allowing the full dehumanization of immigrants. The characterization of anarchists, steeped in nativism and eugenic ideals of maintaining

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<sup>60</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Select Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, *Communist and Anarchist Deportation Cases*, 66th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 17.

<sup>61</sup> Cohen, *Illegal*, pp. 91-92.

the “perfect” American race, inspired this severe immigration ban for “Laughlin, Johnson, and the East Texas congressman John C. Box—all members of the American Eugenics Society—collaborated with political allies to secure passage of the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act [...] also known as the National Origins Act, was biased heavily against southern and eastern Europeans and debarred nearly all immigration from Asia.”<sup>62</sup> What started with the Anarchist Exclusion Act in 1903, as well as the Immigration Act of 1907, ended in severely excluding Eastern and Southern Europeans from entering the United States. The initiation of this immigration act from eugenic advocates illustrates how much of the government policy at this time was aimed toward preserving the false notion of a perfect American race.

While anarchist terrorism was a threat in the minds of the American public, the organized anarchist groups committing violence were, in reality, very few. Acts and the rhetoric of propaganda by the deed created an even more exaggerated perception of anarchy and gave the United States government an opening to legislate against Eastern and Southern Europeans overall. Through the conflation of ideology and identity, the government and press racialized anarchists, overgeneralizing to all immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. In creating depictions of an uncivilized, deranged group, lawmakers were then justified to deport and ban immigrants from those respective areas, pointing to the violence of a few individuals as a means to criminalize the entire immigrant population. This action empowered the United States’ eugenics advocates to get one step closer to preserving and protecting the ‘Nordic’ race. The implications of this series of events were deep: it set a precedent for criminalizing immigrants, as well as ideological radicals, and set up the infrastructure to stifle and suppress freedom of speech, all the while uplifting racist, white supremacist policies with the justification of ‘keeping Americans safe.’

What started as Kropotkin’s venture in evolution and the place of mutual aid in nature morphed, after acclimating in the volatile climate of increased inequality and frustration over labor conditions, into a decades-long ebb and flow of radical violence and extreme retaliation by the United States government. Anarchists justified their violence through the principle of “propaganda by the deed.” At the same time, the state officials manufactured an image of a villainous anarchist character in the public narrative, pulling from racialized representations of the anarchists and their immigrant identity. The implications in the United States were far-reaching; the anarchists’ use of violence empowered the government to increase police and immigration infrastructure in a manner that has persisted throughout the century, affecting far more than just those who identified as anarchists in the early twentieth century. Anarchists’ propaganda by the deed further fueled the nativist narrative that immigrants were inherently violent, a narrative that is false but is still being circulated today.

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<sup>62</sup> Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, Second edition, (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), p. 67.