



Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943

Regin Schmidt

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The anticommunist crusade of the FBI and its legendary director J. Edgar Hoover during the McCarthy era and the Cold War has attracted much attention from historians, but little is known about the Bureau's political activities during its formative years. This book breaks new ground by tracing the roots of the FBI's political surveillance to the involvement of the Bureau's predecessor, the Bureau of Investigation (BI) in the nation's first period of communist-hunting, the "Red Scare" after World War I. The book is based on the first systematic and comprehensive use of the early BI files from 1908 to 1922, which have only survived on difficult-to-read microfilms deposited in the National Archives, as well as numerous collections of personal papers. The FBI's political surveillance was an integrated part of the attempt by the modern federal state, to regulate and control any organized opposition to the political, economic and social order, such as organized labor, radical movements and African-American protest. The detailed reconstruction of the BI's role in the Red Scare during 1919-1920 show that federal intelligence officials played a crucial role in initiating the anticommunist hysteria in the United States. Even though the staff was small, the BI was able to dramatically influence national events through various methods including using Congressional committees to spread its message.

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