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Fanning the Flames: Interpretations and Reactions to McCarthyism

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Fanning the Flames:
Interpretations and Reactions to McCarthyism


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Introduction

Over the past fifty years, the United States has faced a wide range of domestic conflicts, and every time the word “un-American” is thrown around reporters and commentators immediately refer to McCarthyism. Every few years a new political or social movement is regarded as the “new McCarthyism”. The term has been cast upon a large cross section of American society, including politically correct advocates, anti-terrorists, baseball fans, Republicans, Democrats, university trustees, the academic left, the academic right, homophobes, anticommunists, and anti-anticommunists. Journalists and commentators use the term to grab readers with flamboyant headlines, yet in some cases, they never make mention of the man or the era in their writings. One could easily get the idea that writers believe the term itself carries enough weight that no explanation is needed. McCarthyism has become a term that often has little to do with the actions taken by the infamous Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph McCarthy, or even the Red Scare from the post World War II era.

The dilemma forces us to define what McCarthyism really was and what it means to our contemporary society. Stuart Taylor Jr., writing for the *National Journal*, developed a succinct definition of McCarthyism referring to it as a “zeal to punish dissenters from prevailing orthodoxies.”¹ This definition is simple, and it implies that McCarthyism is really a formal name for a preexisting human condition. Under that definition, the one taken by contemporary name throwers, it would mean that McCarthyism has little to do with the events of the Red Scare in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The current use of the word McCarthyism, and the scholarly view of McCarthyism, do not necessarily go hand in hand. Moreover, McCarthyism and Joseph

¹ Stuart Taylor Jr., “Where McCarthyism Really Reigns,” *National Journal*, October 24, v30, p 2480.

McCarthy are also different subjects, and the degree of separation depends on the writer and the time period being studied. For the purposes of this paper, I will separate the two only to a small extent. I will use the term McCarthyism to define the Red Scare that took place from the end of World War II to around 1955. McCarthyism itself really predates McCarthy because the scare began before McCarthy gained any notoriety as a major player in the anti-communist movement. Since, it is often difficult to separate the two, the main focus of this paper will be on the way in which writers have covered both the man and the era.

Interpretations of McCarthyism

Immediately following Joe McCarthy's brief fame, scholars had many different interpretations of McCarthyism. Some saw it as a fascist movement, while others saw it has a sign of a grass roots Republican movement. Others pointed to it as a revolt against elites, while still others pictured the movement as a justified and democratic crusade. There were even Marxist interpretations that pointed to the movement as proof of a split in the Republican Party between Eastern financial elites and Midwestern industrialists. Invariably, conservatives and liberals have had different interpretations, which were more acute in years immediately following McCarthyism. Conservatives were more sympathetic to McCarthy's actions and defined him as a courageous man who brought a serious threat to light despite using methods that were a bit ungentlemanly. Their focus was less on McCarthy's tactics and more on explaining the severity of the communist threat to the United States during the New Deal era. The conservative stance has certainly changed over the past fifty years. The mainstream conservatives distanced themselves from the pro McCarthy view; however, one does not have to search very hard

to find historians that still try to portray McCarthy as an American hero. Liberals depicted McCarthy and his informants as political opportunists willing to break any rule and trample any liberty to gain more fame and power. The focus for them was more on the tactics used by McCarthy and the outcome of many of his actions upon the individuals whose reputations were ruined.

Historians have only recently begun to shy away from biographies of Joe McCarthy and examine the fall-out from the Red Scare years. Within the last twenty years there has been an emphasis on finding out the effects that McCarthyism had on different American institutions and movements. There have been studies of its impact on social work, the Democratic Party, the American Communist Party, foreign policy, the labor movement, American universities, and the Civil Rights Movement. Modern-day historians seem to be more interested in how McCarthyism impacted America beyond the years of Joe McCarthy's rise and fall. Their findings suggest that McCarthyism was much larger than originally thought to the point where it defined a political era.

New evidence has also been made available over the past ten years that has changed some of the interpretations of the time. After the Cold War, the United States government, and the Russian government released formerly classified material pertaining to espionage of the Cold War in the 1940s. During the writing of this paper 900 pages of documents pertaining to McCarthy's behind the scenes investigations were made public. As historians sift through this information, it will certainly add new understanding and raise new questions about the man and the era.

Interpretations Immediately Following McCarthyism

In the twenty years following McCarthyism, interpretations varied widely, yet certain themes did seem to influence much of the writing. The Cold War certainly played heavily on the minds of all of those commenting on the issue. The Korean War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the space race, the arms race, détente and wide range of other Cold War issues influenced the thoughts and arguments that arose about McCarthyism. It is obviously impossible to determine exactly how much it influenced interpretations of McCarthyism and Joe McCarthy, yet at the same time, one needs to be aware of the political atmosphere of the era.

David M. Oshinsky, a distinguished scholar on the life of Joe McCarthy, begins his biography of the Senator describing a memorial service for him. Oshinsky describes a service for McCarthy at his burial place in Appleton, Wisconsin in 1975. The Reverend Hugh Wish made mention of the fact that the turnout for the event had been getting smaller each year and that Americans were forgetting a great patriot. The views of the fifty mourners lofted McCarthy to a saintly status, describing him as a man who gave his life for America. One woman was quoted as saying, "I want my baby to see this... and to remember this man and what he stood for."²

The memorial service reveals several factors that influenced the writers of the first twenty years following McCarthyism. It shows us that even 18 years after his death, many people still had strong opinions about McCarthy and his crusade. All most all of the commentators that wrote about McCarthyism during this period were influenced by the debates and hysteria of the times because they lived through it. As the memorial

² David M. Oshinsky, *A Conspiracy So Immense the World of Joe McCarthy*, (New York and London: The Free Press, 1983) 1.

service also shows, the feelings about the time period were still quite strong. Granted this was a memorial for McCarthy, one would expect see that kind of devotion there; however, these strong political feelings are evident in many of the works of the time. Each of these factors need to be considered when interpreting the writings of the immediate aftermath of McCarthyism.

As recently as 1995, William F. Buckley Jr., author of McCarthy and His Enemies written in 1953, gets quite energetic in his attacks of those writers that were overly critical of McCarthy. In an updated forward to the aforementioned book, he writes:

There are already those who are embarrassed by the lengths to which McCarthy's enemies went in prosecuting their myth. Lord Bertrand Russell actually said that McCarthy had made it unsafe for Americans to read Thomas Jefferson.³

This quotation was one of many sarcastic and overt attacks against those who were overly critical of McCarthy. Buckley clearly shows that McCarthyism can still invoke a heated response from those that were alive and cognizant of the time. McCarthyism provoked a great deal of political frustration and anger. People's careers were at stake, and many saw the existence of democracy in jeopardy. These fears prompted enthusiastic and often enraged opinions on the topic. Many people also look back at the time period and feel ashamed at the way in which they behaved by becoming caught up in the issue. These kinds of charged feelings certainly influenced the study that was done during this period.

The fascist perspective on McCarthy was given serious consideration by many scholars. Canadian scholar Dennis Wong in 1954 took up the argument that McCarthy

³ William F. Buckley Jr., and L. Brent Bozell, McCarthy and His Enemies: The Record and the Meaning (New Introduction by William F. Buckley Jr.), (Washington, D.C.: Regenery Publishing, Inc, 1995, first published in 1954) ix.

was a closet fascist. He developed a wide range of arguments to support the claim. Wong suggested that McCarthy's cross class support made him a fan of the new rich from the post war period. A group that Wong described as, "Plebian, uncultured, often even uneducated and aggressive, resembling somewhat the robber barons of the last century."⁴ Wong also noted McCarthy's support of the mid-western Populists, which showed that McCarthy's following came from all economic classes. He made a substantial leap when he compared McCarthy's cross cultural support to Hitler's support of Ruhr industrialists and his mass popularity. Wong based part of his argument on the fact that both leaders had support of groups from both the top and the bottom of the economic scales.

The argument is a stretch, and it relies on too many generalizations, yet given the time period of the article (1954) it is not hard to see why it was given a note of authenticity. Fascism was still a word that carried a great deal of weight. It almost seemed to be an attempt to divert American's from the fears of communism and redirect them to fascism.

An other leading interpretation painted McCarthy as a demagogue, this one has stood the test of time. Reinhard H. Luthin developed this argument in his description of McCarthy's actions during his hunt for communists and communist sympathizers. Luthin shows many of the unprofessional and immoral tactics that McCarthy used in an effort to gain fame and power. McCarthy came off looking like an attention-starved man that would take up any cause to claim the spotlight. McCarthy was careless with his words, often accusing people with little or no evidence. He was also keen on avoiding direct

⁴ Dennis Wrong, "McCarthyism as Totalitarianism," ed Earl Latham, The Meaning of McCarthyism, (Lexington Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973) 31.

questions with vague answers and delaying tactics. McCarthy was also portrayed as a bully especially when describing the way he treated the witnesses that came before his investigative committee.⁵

Another view that originated during this time period defined McCarthy as a populist. McCarthy's uncouth behavior and what Leslie Fiedler calls "fear of the intellectuals," made McCarthy look like the common man. Fiedler described McCarthy as a man whose arguments were not based on logic or reason. Couple this with his distrust of authority and lack of respect for it and it portrays him as a leader for a new populist movement. To Fiedler, McCarthy really seemed to represent what happens when an uneducated small town farmer comes to power.⁶

It seems that much of the early historical interpretations of McCarthy were focused on trying to define him or place him into some type of preexisting schema. By comparing him to a fascist or a populist, people were trying to make sense of a chaotic time. The repercussions of McCarthyism spread so quickly that it was hard to make sense of it all. McCarthy rose from obscurity to the national stage so quickly that people were caught off guard. As the dust started to settle, writers quickly tried to place him into a category and define what it was that they lived through. Perhaps it also had something to do with the thinking of the times. The interpretations were also written in that same voice, with rigid methodical arguments. One historian, Willmoore Kendall, used such a logical argument to describe the political hostilities created by McCarthy that it looked

⁵ Reinhard H. Luthin, "The Making of McCarthy," ed Earl Latham, The Meaning of McCarthyism, (Lexington Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973) 3-29.

⁶ Leslie Fiedler, "McCarthy as Populist," ed Earl Latham, The Meaning of McCarthyism, Lexington Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1973) 87-100.

more like a philosophical argument than a historical one. He cut the issue down to separate truths and argued each one separately in a logical pattern.

Class conflict also seemed to arise in many of the interpretations of McCarthy. There seemed to be a great deal of concern over what his fame meant to the American hierarchy. In each of the present day readings that I researched, very little attention was given to McCarthy's anti-elite status or his broad based appeal to rural small town Americans. It seems as though the class issues that McCarthy was raising, intentionally or not, were given a great deal of coverage in the Fifties and Sixties; whereas little thought had been given to it in the last twenty years. He was seen as a populist because of his rural small town support, while at the same time, others saw him as a fascist because of his populist support and his support of the new rich industrialists of the Midwest. Perhaps class issues were focused on more because of the communist threat that so many Americans felt upon them. It may reveal that the threat of class warfare was something that many considered a true vulnerability to America. It may also have been that class struggles were a real problem in America and many were concerned over its potential for disruption. Further study would need to be done to determine the degree to which this argument could be made.

II. Contemporary Studies: The Universities

Over the past twenty years, the study of Joe McCarthy and McCarthyism have drifted away from trying to examine who or what he was. The scholars of contemporary times have placed more focus on the affects McCarthyism had on various aspects of American culture and society. Ellen W. Schrecker provides us with an in depth look at the way in which McCarthyism affected American universities. Her book, No Ivory

Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities, is referred to on virtually every article or review that discusses McCarthyism and American Universities. Schrecker's extensive research and in depth look at the ripple effects of McCarthyism reveal how the sacred towers of academic freedom were invaded by the Red Scare.

Schrecker's work is one of the best examples of the modern period of historical research into McCarthyism. She is quite critical of the universities for the way in which they seemingly abandoned the principles of academic freedom and the freedom of speech. Schrecker writes:

They [teachers, administrators and trustees] said that they were opposing Senator McCarthy and the more rabid red-baiters of the period. Yet, when given an opportunity to transform that opposition into something more concrete than words, almost all of these essentially liberal academics faltered. Either they participated in and condoned the dismissals or else, when they opposed them, did so in such a limited fashion that they must have known they would not succeed.⁷

She believed that had many of these academics wanted to, they could have stopped many of the purges that took place. Schrecker was overly critical of academics because of their perception as being the protector of civil liberties. The universities were supposed to act as garrisons of western thought and civilization. Nevertheless, when faced with the same circumstances as other institutions, the intellectual elite crumbled in much the same way.

Schrecker provides an exhaustive account of different examples of how communists and communist sympathizers were dealt with in American universities. She sites several cases where scant evidence caused the release of professors from their positions. Schrecker also shows how many radical thinkers were purged because they were communists or may have had indirect connections with them. Schrecker dismisses the idea that these communists or communist sympathizers were a threat to the nation and

⁷ Ellen W. Schrecker, No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 10.

notes that most of them were loyal citizens. She saw the purges as both unnecessary and unconstitutional.⁸

In 1955 a study was done by an offshoot of the Ford Foundation among faculty at several universities. The purpose of the study was to examine the affects McCarthyism was having on their careers and teaching. The study found that most teachers did not expect to be defended by other faculty if they were charged with being a communist. The results also showed 25% of professors were afraid of the loyalty boards, especially liberals.⁹ This fear most certainly affected what was taught in their classrooms.

Schrecker points out that no one knows how much teachers of the time were self-censoring themselves because of the fear of McCarthyism. She sees the need for further study in the area of academic self-censorship to establish how far teachers limited their speech as a result of their fears during this time period.¹⁰

Schrecker does a good job of showing the details of many cases that ended up forcing many professors to resign. She also does well to show how the faculty, administration and trustees responded to these incidents. In providing such an in-depth look at how many universities dealt with McCarthyism, we can see first hand how celebrated institutions dealt with such an ideological issue. Nathan Glazer, in a review of No Ivory Tower, was quite impressed with the detail that Schrecker offered. He writes, "We have in No Ivory Tower as thorough an examination of the facts of these cases as we are ever likely to see."¹¹ She relied on all sources available to gather information, including a heavy reliance on interviews of over 100 people. Glazer was also impressed

⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁹ Ibid, 310.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Nathan Glazer, "No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities (book reviews)," The New Republic, (Oct 6, 1986) v20 p40.

with Schrecker's depiction of how many of these purged faculty survived without the benefit of academic life. Some ended up on welfare, while others were able to return to the university setting when tensions eased up.

III. The Communist Threat

One of the issues that has been raised by a number of modern historians is the level of danger that the communists in America posed when McCarthy came onto the scene in 1950. While giving Schrecker a good overall review, it is in this area where Glazer disagrees with her. Glazer does not accept the idea that communists were an innocent group with little threat to American national security. Theodore Draper also follows Glazer on this point. Draper gave a very harsh review to Schrecker's study, yet he concedes that he knows little of the intricacies with the individual cases. Draper holds the zeal of his criticism for her account of the American Communist Party. He criticizes the innocent way in which Schrecker portrays the communists in universities. Draper's main problem with the book is that it portrays communists as freethinking people who were patriotic citizens with unpopular views. He notes that these communists were never free thinking since their ideas came from the communist leaders and that their loyalty to the Party blinded them from having an objective view of Stalin.¹²

It would be easy to believe that the Cold War feelings of the 1980s were still strong and that those hostilities still caused historians to overstate the communist threat during McCarthyism. However, David Oshinsky also follows Schrecker in the belief that the Communist threat in the United States was minimal during McCarthyism. In Oshinsky's biography of McCarthy (1983), he states that communism was all but gone in

¹² Theodore Draper, "No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities (book reviews)," The New Republic, (Jan 15, 1987) v196 p29-37.

1949 before McCarthy gained national fame.¹³ Although, it was only then that Americans were learning about threats from years past. It was at this time that Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury and the Rosenbergs scandal broke. At the same time, Truman's executive order 9835, which forced all federal employees to sign loyalty oaths, did more to advance the cause of the anticommunists than any other event, according to Schrecker. This action caused many people to believe that there was a serious communist threat within the federal government. These events, compiled with other international Cold War issues, created an environment of fear and paranoia. It was in this environment that McCarthyism was able to spread and prosper.¹⁴

The general contemporary view of historians seems to be that the communist threat was certainly not as severe as the McCarthyites led on. Nevertheless, there is still considerable disagreement over the threat the American Communist Party posed to America. Oshinsky does not portray the communists as innocent and non-threatening as Schrecker, yet they both agree that the threat of communism at the time was minimal and quite exaggerated. Each of them seems to take the opinion that the environment of the Cold War created the situation, which led to McCarthyism. However, new evidence has emerged that has complicated this matter.

At the end of the Cold War, new information from the Venona project shows messages sent from KGB agents to their American conspirators. In 1943 the U.S. military began to intercept these messages and start the process of decoding them. They found that the Soviets had recruited between 200 and 400 agents within the United States. The information was not released during the Cold War in order to use the spies and leak

¹³ Oshinsky, 102.

¹⁴ Schrecker, 5.

information to them. More information is also becoming available from recently opened Soviet archives.¹⁵

This new evidence has renewed anticommunist arguments, and it has forced historians to draw new conclusions based on evidence that is somewhat circumstantial. Arthur Herman wrote an updated biography on McCarthy published in 2000. The biography uses the newly released evidence to show that McCarthy was right in his suspicions, yet wrong in his methods. The book, which received universally deplorable reviews, also makes the assumption that the New Deal liberals were ideologically tied to communism. William O'Neill points out Herman's misuse or misreading of the new evidence. According to O'Neill, the spies that were detected by the Venona project were neutralized by 1948 when the FBI was given the information from the military. Truman's loyalty oaths also took care of many other suspected Communists. Herman also relies on information from J. Edgar Hoover to corroborate his argument of a substantial Communist threat. Hoover claimed that there were virtually 500,000 Communist sympathizers together with 50,000 Communist Party members in America. O'Neill argues that there is no evidence anywhere that would suggest that there were half a million Communist sympathizers.¹⁶

Any evidence that Hoover gave would certainly have to be examined with a critical eye. Hoover regularly provided McCarthy with information and informants on where to find suspected communists. Hoover fanned the flames during the Red Scare and in many cases instigated the fires. McCarthyism has sometimes been more accurately referred to as Hooverism. Hoover was on the scene long before McCarthy

¹⁵ William L. O'Neill, "Joseph McCarthy: Reexamining the Life and the Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator (Book Review)," The New Leader, (Dec 13, 1999) v82 p21.

¹⁶ Ibid.

even during the first Red Scare in the Twenties. His treatment of the Communists and the actions taken by the FBI helped lead to McCarthyism. He regularly presented the public with data on the ever-present communist influence in America. Hoover remarked that there were Communist influences in all aspects of American life keeping Americans paranoid and fearful of a Communist revolution.

The two bachelors, Hoover and McCarthy, spent a lot of quality time together gambling and dining. The thought that McCarthy was a pawn of Hoovers' has never been proven, but it is not hard to imagine. Bob Morris, a well-known loyalty security investigator, recalled the relationship with the two men, "Hoover knew that Joe wasn't the best guy in the world to be doing this job. We all did, but his attitude was, 'thank God somebody's doing it.' They were fighting the same enemy, you know."¹⁷ Further study is necessary to examine this relationship and see the extent of Hoover's influence on McCarthy. Either way, it is appropriate for historians to be a bit tentative about relying on information from Hoover.

There has yet to be clear agreement on how to interpret the new evidence made available after the Cold War. While Herman takes what most historians consider a misguided approach, it is still not clear how much weight this evidence should be given until further research is done or more information is made available. Victor Navasky, writing for The Nation, warns of making premature conclusions from the Venona evidence. He states,

For me, the Venona documents come freighted with so many mysteries, surface contradictions and inaccuracies, anonymous footnotes based on questionable

¹⁷ Oshinsky, 258.

assumptions, and the possibility of internal misinformation and inflated claims that serious historians should be wary of drawing factual conclusions from them.¹⁸

Thus, the new evidence does not seem to have answered nearly as many questions as it has raised. It has forced historians to reexamine the question of a Communist threat, and therefore, a reexamination of our judgments of McCarthy. Both McCarthy supporters and anti-McCarthyites place great stake in the interpretations of the evidence because it can somewhat vindicate him or further demonize him. If there was a true threat, then it would force many historians to rethink their assessment of the man. While most will still agree that McCarthy's methods were wrong, his intentions can be made to seem a bit more honest. Conversely, if the evidence proves that there was no threat, then it strengthens the argument that he was just a political opportunist. Based on the reviews thus far, it seems as though the evidence reveals nothing to support any of McCarthy's allegations; however, it does show that there was a valid concern about the threat of communism. If there were 200 to 400 spies that the government was aware of in 1946, then certainly many would have had reason to believe that there were at least some unknown spies in 1952.

IV. Affects on Foreign Policy

Over one hundred thousand Americans died fighting communism in East Asia between 1950 and 1975. The anticommunist wars in Asia were fought, to contain the spread of communism in an area of the world that Americans at the time knew little about. Recently historians have tried to determine why the United States was willing to pay such a heavy price to stop the spread of communism. One conclusion that is being considered reveals how McCarthyism changed the political landscape in such a way that

¹⁸ Victor S. Navasky, "Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America (Book Review)," The Nation, (July 20, 1998) v267 p28-32.

only stern anticommunist measures abroad would be met with favorable public opinion domestically. Democrats had to counter the claims that they were being too easy on communism by intensifying their stance against it. This change in domestic politics led to fierce anticommunist positions among Democrats and Republicans. In the groupthink atmosphere created by McCarthyism, no sympathetic view of communism could be tolerated. This created a genuine lack of discussion on how to approach the issue of communism both domestically and internationally. Therefore, the dissenting opinion to containment was eliminated during McCarthyism.

In a discussion on the Korean War, Doug Dowd gives his views as to why Truman and his administration decided to go to war in Korea. Of course the reasons are deeper than the invasion of North Korea into South Korea. The Soviets had been supporting the North Koreans, while the U.S. was supporting the South. Both Korea sought reunification, yet their differences were exacerbated by the Soviet-U.S. conflict. When North Korea did invade South Korea, it was after the South had already begun an attack two days earlier. Little thought was given to the well being of North or South Korea when the United States involved itself into the war. In fact, Koreans on both sides of the 38th parallel were commonly referred to as “gooks.” During the war, a general lack of concern for the Korean people resulted in the deaths of nearly three million Koreans.¹⁹

The point here is not to judge America’s role in the war, but only to show the effects McCarthyism had on the U.S. and the world. Dowd does not make a direct connection between McCarthyism and the Korean War; yet, he does suggest that McCarthyism was a factor in the decision to go to war. Dowd notes that the events of the

¹⁹ Doug Dowd, “Cry ‘Havoc!’ and let slip the dogs of war: McCarthyism, Korea, and other nightmares,” Monthly Review, (April 1997) v48 pp32-43.

time created an intense atmosphere that made it hard for Truman not to go to war. He also notes that Truman was in a difficult position after having been accused of handing China to the Communists.²⁰ Truman was pushed into taking a hard line stance against communism because of political pressures from the Republicans. The fear that communism was expanding in Asia was certainly exaggerated given the climate of the times. To have made an objective decision on whether or not to go ahead with war was akin to committing political suicide.

Dowd also asserts that were it not for the Korean War and McCarthyism, the war in Vietnam would quite possibly never have happened. Others have given this argument serious consideration. In 1995 former Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, openly admitted that the Vietnam War was a mistake. He discussed several factors that led to war, one of which was McCarthyism. McNamara claimed that McCarthyism was responsible for purging the federal government of much needed experts on Southeast Asia. Top East Asian advisors from the State Department like John Paton Davies Jr., John Stewart Service and John Carter Vincent had all been let go during McCarthyism. Without the expertise of people like these advising the leadership decisions were made based on misinterpreted information, or lack of understanding. McNamara writes:

I—badly misread China's objectives and mistook its bellicose rhetoric to imply a drive for regional hegemony. We also totally underestimated the nationalist aspect of Ho Chi Minh's movement. We saw him first as a Communist and only second as a Vietnamese nationalist.²¹

No one can say with any degree of certainty whether or not the Vietnam War would have taken place had it not been for the purges of McCarthyism. Nevertheless, one cannot

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Robert S. McNamara with Brian VanDeMark, In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam, (Toronto: Times Books Random House, 1995) 33.

ignore the correlation, and it most certainly affected our ability to understand the movements taking place in that region.

By 1960, the Democrats had come a long way from the New Deal days of Roosevelt. Kennedy was a strong outspoken anticommunist who criticized Eisenhower of being too soft on the Soviets. The Democrats shifted their anticommunist stance to be, in some cases, even more belligerent than the Republicans. This shift had come after severe political losses to the Republicans. In 1946, the Republicans regained control of the Congress in a landslide victory over the Democrats, a victory that placed McCarthy and Nixon in the Senate. The Republicans accused Truman of being soft on communism after the Hiss case, the Chinese revolution and the loyalty oaths. His attempts to counter this claim with the Korean War had moved the Democrats to the anticommunist camp. Kennedy and his administration made a concerted effort not appear weak on communism. This anticommunist trend most certainly played a role in the eventual war in Vietnam.

V. McCarthyism and the American Left

While examining the affects of McCarthyism on the Vietnam War, it only seems appropriate that historians would also focus on its affects on the Civil Rights Movement. Eric Foner draws some connections between the two in his book The Story of American Freedom. His Cold War Freedom chapter begins with a discussion of the “Freedom Train.” In 1947, the non-profit American Heritage Foundation sponsored the Freedom Train with the backing of the Justice Department. The Freedom Train went all over the United States making some of Americas most cherished and historical documents available for all to see. The purpose of the train was to reconnect America with the ideals of freedom, after witnessing the destruction of Hitler and fascism. What is interesting are

the racial issues that ensue with the documents selected and the cities that the train visits. Missing from the train were the Wagner Act, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Yet, with the Truman administration's anti-segregation stance, the organizers declared that there would be no segregated viewing of the train. The train organizers even canceled stops in Birmingham and Memphis, where local authorities would not permit integrated viewing. The differences between Nazi tyranny (and later Soviet tyranny) and American freedom would give more opportunities for blacks to bring their cause onto the national scene. However, it also gave white supremacists another opportunity to marginalize blacks as a threatening minority.²²

Early on, the NAACP took a strong stand against Truman's loyalty oaths, and many of its members wondered why communism was considered un-American but racism was not. Yet, it did not take long before the NAACP was also conducting communist purges of its own. The reversal of positions was made after the government began to crack down on the anti-Cold War stance of Paul Robeson and W.E.B Du Bois who were both respected and influential black leaders. Robeson's views caused the government to deprive him of his passport. Du Bois was also indicted for failing to register as an agent of the Soviet Union (a ridiculous charge that he was acquitted of).

While embracing the anticommunist stance black organizations began to combat the hypocrisy of fighting tyranny abroad, while condoning racism at home. The criticism did catch the ear of President Truman who advocated for the end of school segregation when he urged the Supreme Court to consider, "the problem of racial discrimination... in the context of the present world struggle between freedom and tyranny."²³ The Brown v.

²² Eric Foner, The Story of American Freedom, (W.W. Norton and Co, 1999) 249-250.

²³ Ibid.

Board of Education ruling in 1954 has been praised as one of the first major moves by the government to combat discrimination and racism. The rhetoric needed to inspire Americans to fear communism and Soviet aggression also played into the hands of African Americans. There was an undeniable contradiction that was hard to ignore.

VI. Institutions

After two decades of New Deal politics, Republicans were searching for any means possible to rid America of policies that went against their laissez-faire views. New Deal programs became the target of the Republican leadership after the 1946 take-over and during Eisenhower's presidency. Michael Reisch and Janice Andrews did an in-depth study of the effects McCarthyism had on one of the major offshoots of the New Deal. The profession of social work, imbedded in New Deal programs, changed its stance and position in America because of McCarthyism. Social workers were leading progressive and reform-minded professionals that were forced to change their ways when their liberal tendencies looked too much like communism. The authors assert that the adjustments that were forced upon the profession would severely decrease the role they were able to play during Johnson's war on poverty years later.

Reisch and Andrews begin their study by explaining the limitations of their study based on a lack of sufficient evidence. Most of the evidence used in their study comes from oral histories. The authors interviewed hundreds of social workers from the Fifties and used a survey questionnaire for other selected groups. They identified several problems with their evidence. Many social workers, for reasons of confidentiality, were still not able to divulge many of their stories. Many others were ashamed of their actions and withheld information that could have been useful. Still others feared another wave of

hysteria could occur and refused to respond. Not surprisingly, many also forgot a lot of the details of events from so long ago. With these shortcomings, the authors still felt that their findings were valuable and enlightening.²⁴

Their account provides a short history of social work from the days of the settlement houses to the groundbreaking New Deal era. The authors show that social workers were very political during the Thirties. They worked to develop political coalitions to support their agendas and candidates. By the end of the Thirties, a substantial radical group was splintering away from the mainstream professional coalition. A good example that shows the degree of radicalism taken by one sect of the social workers was shown when Mary van Kleeck was honored with a reward on a paper she had written. During her acceptance speech, she denounced Roosevelt's New Deal as being too conservative.²⁵ The full force of McCarthyism came to bear down on these radicals during the Forties and Fifties. The authors show how many of them were hounded by the FBI and forced to change jobs frequently leading to the ostracism of many. McCarthyites attacked the liberal and radical elements that existed in social work and led to the purge of many leftist members. Many were Communists, or supported Communist ideals; however, as with many other fields, people often lost their jobs because of unpopular viewpoints. In one case, a social worker lost her job for signing the Stockholm Peace Appeal and maintaining her opposition to atomic bombs.²⁶

According to the authors, social workers responded with less emphasis on welfare reform and more emphasis on the professional aspects of social work. The social work

²⁴ Michael Reisch, and Janice Andrews, "Uncovering a Silent Betrayal," The Oral History Review, (Summer-Fall, 1999) v26 p87.

²⁵ Ibid, 94.

²⁶ Ibid, 95.

being done was reorganized with less radical members that were not devoted to helping the poor and more focused on helping middle-income groups. The authors believe that this caused social workers to be ill prepared to deal with the “rediscovery of poverty” that Manifested in the Sixties.²⁷

It seems as though virtually all sections of society were purged of their more radical and leftist elements during McCarthyism. The universities became too politically minded to hire Communists or Communist sympathizers. The NAACP purged its membership of the more radical groups and social workers also eliminated their radical elements. In a study of farm workers, William Pratt also shows how the farm worker’s union purged itself of the substantial communist core.²⁸ The same was true of the entire American labor movement as David Oshinsky reveals in his work Senator Joseph McCarthy and the American Labor Movement.²⁹ Each of these works show how the labor movement was forced, much like the social workers, to distance itself from the radicals of the New Deal era.

One begins to see McCarthyism more and more as a reactionary movement against the radicals of New Deal politics than a specific action against communists. The radicals were able to gain positions of power in a wide array of social and economic institutions during the Great Depression. The economic problems of the time put an intense strain on the economy and society, and the American people were willing to accept a degree of radicalism if it promised to help their struggles. The full employment of World War II was a time devoted to battling a different foreign enemy, not radicals, at

²⁷ Ibid, 96.

²⁸ William C. Pratt, “The Farmers Union, McCarthyism, and the Demise of the Agrarian Left,” The Historian, (Winter, 1996) v58 p329-343.

²⁹ David M. Oshinsky, Senator Joseph McCarthy and the American Labor Movement, (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1976).

home. Therefore, it was not until 1946 that America could devote its attention to eliminating the radical groups that were entrenched in many institutions. The Republican sweep in the election of 1946 does, to some degree, show the nation's backlash against the liberals of the New Deal.

During the New Deal years, the Republicans were in the minority and they were waiting for any weakness in the Democratic line. The new threat of the Soviet Union provided the Republicans with a perfect opportunity to go after the radicals at home as many of them were Communists or Communist sympathizers. At the same time, it is fair to say that people were afraid of the Communist threat within America. They had good reason to suspect that there were Soviet spies in the government immediately following World War II. However, by 1950, when McCarthy came on to the national scene, the spies were largely neutralized by the loyalty oaths and other government purges. At this time, the government may have been purged of most of the Communists, but many of the labor unions and other social organizations were not. McCarthyism was responsible for eliminating the radical element from the rest of America. It does not appear to have been planned, yet it did succeed in creating an environment where radicals were not welcome. Labor unions were forced to purge their communist elements, as were social workers, universities and the NAACP.

VII. McCarthyism and its Importance in Our Classrooms

After discovering the phenomenal impact that McCarthyism had on the course of American history, I'm certain that future generations will study McCarthyism as a separate unit of study. McCarthyism was so much more than the actions of one demagogue; it truly defined a political movement in our history. At the present moment,

the current emphasis on the effects of McCarthyism by historians still has room to develop. Therefore, it will probably be some time before the curriculum in our schools adjusts to accommodate for it. Nevertheless, it will almost certainly be a topic that receives more coverage than it currently does today.

Current American History curriculums place a great deal of emphasis on the New Deal and the Great Depression. Students are taught to see the New Deal as the origin of the modern welfare state. Government is shown to undergo a radical transformation from the laissez-faire days of Hoover to the deficit spending of FDR. Then World War II gets in the way and there is never an adequate discussion of how the nation reacted to the New Deal changes after the Depression was over. It is necessary for our students to study the reactionary measures that were taken to combat the radicals that gained power during the Depression. McCarthyism influenced the politics of the time in virtually every aspect. It was a looming threat to all politically minded people and it changed America's domestic and international policies. Students of history need to see the connection.

Studying McCarthyism is also important for modern-day understandings of political events. As stated earlier, McCarthyism is a term that is thrown around in many directions. It is easy for students to get an erroneous image of McCarthyism based on the modern day definition of it. Today it is seen as a "zeal to punish dissenters from prevailing orthodoxies," as was discussed earlier. McCarthyism did take this form during the Red Scare, but it was much deeper too. It was a reaction against radicalism from very difficult times. It was also made possible to by a severe foreign threat that could have annihilated our country and the rest of the world. Our students need to understand what

McCarthyism really was so that they can be critical of the media's use of the term in today's forum.

VIII. Future Study of McCarthyism

The study of McCarthyism and Joe McCarthy is most certainly not complete. I don't claim to have read all of the material on the subject, yet it seems fair to say that certain areas have not been studied adequately.³⁰ While many historians have suggested that McCarthyism purged the top advisors on East Asia, no comprehensive study has been made to link McCarthyism and the Vietnam War. At the same time, if McCarthyism purged so many East Asian advisors, then how did it affect our relationship with China? Perhaps a study on McCarthyism and the State Department is in order in much the same respect as was done with social workers, labor unions and American universities.

One area devoid of emphatic study was McCarthyism's impact on various conservative groups. What role did McCarthyism play in the changes of the Republican Party that brought a McCarthy ally to the white house in 1969? The rise of Richard Nixon was most certainly influenced by McCarthyism, yet in the studies that I read, little attention was given to the connection. The Republican Party certainly changed shape after McCarthyism, yet little was mentioned about it. There were studies on the institutions that were affected in obvious ways by purges; however, there were not many studies on how it affected more conservative groups that would have escaped the brunt of the scare.

³⁰ For this particular section it needs to be stated that my research on the topic is still in the preliminary stages. Therefore, any areas where I see lack of study may only mean that I am not aware of the research done in that field.

It would be interesting to see a study done on the leadership of American businesses. Business leaders certainly participated in instituting loyalty oaths, but perhaps their participation in McCarthyism went deeper. How did American business leaders view McCarthy? They were certainly pleased to see Republicans gain power and begin to disassemble parts of the New Deal, but were they afraid of McCarthy or did they embrace his anticommunism? These questions deserve further study in order to get a better picture of McCarthyism's overall affect on American history.

Reactions From Rochester: A Localized Perspective of McCarthyism

During the mid part of the Twentieth Century, America was wrought with paranoia over communism, both at home and abroad. There were those that stood idly by as the reputations of their colleagues and friends were destroyed. There were also many that cheered on the fervent anti-communists like Senator McCarthy or J. Edgar Hoover. Yet, there were others that turned to the principles etched into our national framework, abiding by the Constitutional rights of all individuals, despite their beliefs. Virtually everyone agreed that the nation was facing a threat; although, the weight of the threat and the exact location of it, was debated.

Great threats and fear have an interesting way of revealing the hidden and often obscured views of people. This fear generates a great passion in people to express their views and thoughts to anyone who will listen. Heated debates and arguments develop as next-door neighbors discuss the controversial issues from the front pages of their newspapers. Family dinners delve into political debates as the battle lines are drawn. While most of these encounters are never recorded or even remembered, there are a few records left behind that can help us understand the debate and discussions that took place all over America during the Red Scare.

Letters to the editor and editorials can animate the debates of the past in a way that we cannot get from discussions on the floor of the Senate or from a speech made by Harry Truman. These statements can give us a glimpse as to what ordinary citizens may have been thinking and discussing about many issues of the time. In order to understand the reactions of citizens in a particular region, this type of research is best done on a local level. Using over 200 editorials and letters to the editor from the two major Rochester

newspapers, the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle and the Rochester Times Union, I hope to gauge the reactions and feelings of Rochesterians on the Red Scare. How did Rochesterians react to the McCarthy investigations, the Rosenberg trial or just communism in general? These questions could be answered, at least in part, by the letters to the editor.

There was a surprising amount of activity in Rochester over the issue of communism. The citizens of Rochester were active in fanning the flames of fear and unrest in Rochester and throughout the nation. There were raids on Communist Party rallies and investigations into the lives of local residents. The FBI conducted investigations in Rochester and even arrested and then convicted a Rochester native for being a communist. By researching these events, we can see how the Red Scare affected Rochester's citizens and how they also participated in it.

I. Responses

The response of the citizens of Rochester to the various events of the Red Scare was both predictable and alarming. The responses often show a feeling of immense worry and paranoia that America would fall to the communists, either from Moscow, from within or both. There were fearful Americans that believed a communist was a person that did not blindly follow Senator McCarthy. On the flip side, there were always the people that saw McCarthy as a greater danger than the communists. And at all times there was the voice of the constitutionalist who sought its guidance in troubling times. After reading through the many letters, several categories of similar responses emerged. From the various McCarthy investigations to local events dealing with communism, we find similar reactions by the people of Rochester.

The Paranoid Insider

The paranoid insiders were people that were fearful of anything that looked or smelled like communism. These writers held the belief that leaders in Moscow were pulling the strings of communists everywhere. To them, the communist conspiracy was obvious, and it angered them that others did not see the truth through the web of red propaganda. These were the people that often called for any action at America's disposal to stop communism everywhere and anywhere. Not surprisingly, these respondents were behind McCarthy almost universally without criticism. They favored the death of the Rosenbergs and viewed world politics as a fight between good and evil.

Perhaps the best example of the paranoid insider comes from Ernest Briars whose letter was published in May of 1953. He was responding to an essay about the dangers of Senator McCarthy by Rev. A. Powell Davies, minister of All Souls Church in Washington D. C. Briars was not pleased with the Reverend's remarks about Senator McCarthy, and the following is a selection from his four paragraph response.

Seriously however, the above shows how this insidious, brain washing, communistic, propaganda can affect the minds of those of our citizens who presumably belong to the higher realm of thought.

The resulting confusion of one blind mind attempting to wash the brains of another could eventually get us into the trap the Commies are setting for us.³¹

In this case, the propaganda has infected a reverend who, in Briars's mind, should be smart enough to avoid the "brainwashing." This type of response was common especially among the anti-communists. It discredits someone's opinion without having to actually acknowledge the basic arguments made. Labeling a person as a communist was a dangerous thing. Therefore, Briars claimed the reverend was duped by communist

³¹ Ernest Briars, "Beware of the Trap," Times Union, May 23, 1953.

propaganda. This was an easy way to explain why a person disagrees with the anti-communists or McCarthy.

The last part of Briars's statement is the most intriguing, and it was the part that was believed by so many of Rochester's citizens. Briars believed that the communists were setting a trap for Americans. To the paranoid insider, the evil hand of communism was everywhere. Many held that every institution within America was crawling with closet communists who were waiting for the right opportunity to strike. They also believed that the Soviet leaders in Moscow were gearing up for a quest to take over America and the rest of the world. The paranoid insiders were on the look out at all times for the slightest hint of communism so that they would not be caught off guard by its subversive organizers.

Given the gift of 50 years between the response and this paper, it is easy to think the paranoid insiders were a bit out of touch with the actual plans of the communists. However, it is not hard to see why people like Briars believed in a communist conspiracy. After all, Senator McCarthy was speaking the same language. He made false accusations and covered the pages of newspapers with unproven statements of large communist plots. Even Rochester had its own political leaders willing to perpetuate the cause of McCarthyism. Peter Barry was one of Rochester's rising stars within the Republican Party. Oddly enough, he shared a few interesting similarities with Senator McCarthy. He was a veteran, like McCarthy; a naval commander during World War II. Before he went into politics, he was an executive at Rochester Gas and Electric, and he had old family connections within Rochester. He was elected as a City Councilman in 1949 and later became mayor in 1955. He was also a bachelor, and following in line with the

Senator, Barry was an ardent anti-communist.³² It appears as if Barry was riding the wave of anti-communist sentiment when he wrote the following statement in the Times Union in 1953.

The Communist High Command is perhaps, the world's most expert group in the fields of propaganda, infiltration and subversive influence. Their methods are devious and adroit and only too often are crowned with success. It is most important that the American public be kept fully advised of any such activities in this country and that they be shown the pattern of the methods used in order that they may recognize the magnitude of the danger and provide their government officials with adequate power to combat it.³³

Given Barry's response, it is not hard to see why so many Americans thought as Briars did. People from all levels of government were in line warning of the great communist threat. It would not be much of a leap to imagine these paranoid insiders violating the liberties and confidence of other Americans because of the perpetual fear and skepticism magnified by people like McCarthy and Barry. Think of the millions of Americans taking these ideas to heart. Ernest Briars was one of them, and it is easy to see why he would think Reverend Davies was duped by communist propaganda for seeing McCarthy as a threat. People like Barry were creating the witch-hunt by perpetuating the fear of communism to gain a political advantage. It caused ordinary Americans to think twice before they accepted any argument or opinion. If someone were to question these outspoken anti-communists, it would be easy to assume the critic could be communist too.

There is another aspect of the paranoid insider that needs to be considered. The notion that the communists were setting traps with propaganda assumed that there was a master plan created by leaders in Moscow that would eventually take over the world. To

³² Blake McKelvey, Rochester, an Emerging Metropolis 1925-1961, (Rochester, NY: Christopher Press Inc., 1961) 200, 222, 234.

³³ Peter Barry, "Councilman Urges You to Read Report," Times Union, Sept. 17, 1953.

many, it seemed to be an evil omnipotent influence. It is not surprising that many equated the battle as a religious one between good and evil. There were several letters written by people that warned of the effects of the moral decay of Americans. It was their argument that communism arose in the hearts of the weak and weary. As America's moral and religious spirit waned, the communists would fill in the gaps. Frank E. Spring wrote the following letter in November of 1953,

We fail to recognize that the enemy has his agents planted within our army, navy, our intelligence, in the highest branches of government, in our schools and universities and even to some extent in our clergy. While Belshazzar and his lords and ladies engaged in a drunken orgy of revelry, vice and pleasure, the Medes were at the entrance to the palace. It will be repeated here in America unless the people awake for "as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" and unless we devote ourselves to the task of cleaning up America, atheism and moral decay will destroy us even though our leaders may cry peace and security when there is no peace. America's dangers are within its own domain and should America perish it will because corruption, crime vice and Godlessness have caused moral and spiritual decay which has destroyed nations in the past.³⁴

Communism was the price for losing America's values and religious vigor. This type of argument assumes several things. First, it assumes that Americans have brought communism upon themselves. While Americans were losing their spirituality, communism crept in. Second, it equates communism with evil and American ideals with good. The communists arise as Americans fall out of line with God. The entire Cold War then becomes a battle of good versus evil. Taken to the next level, we can see how people would easily equate a critic of McCarthy, or even a defender of the individual rights of communists, as a communist and thus an agent of evil. This argument gave more power to religious-minded people who wanted to halt the spreading "moral decay."

³⁴ Frank E. Spring, "Moral Decay," Democrat and Chronicle, Nov. 20, 1953.

Spring's viewpoint makes it easier for us to see why Congress added "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1954.

Constitutionalist

The most reassuring aspect of the letters was the constant reference to the principals established in the United States Constitution. It remained a constant stabilizing force for all debate within the letters. As the accusations were increasing, name-calling reaching a crescendo, and paranoid insiders getting louder, the voice of the constitutionalist could always be heard. The constitutionalist brought the discussion back to the principles of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Constantly reminding people of the right to freedom of speech, even the rights of the accused to be innocent until proven guilty, or the right to peacefully assemble regardless of political opinion. These people often spoke of McCarthy and his cronies as representing a larger threat to the nation than the communists. These were the voices that warned of the dangers posed to American ideals by some of the anti-communists. To the constitutionalist, losing civil liberties would have been a greater threat than a communist takeover.

William F. Jenks wrote a response to a man who portrayed McCarthy's tactics as heroic.

McCarthy is pounding away against some very basic principles of American life. He is substituting trial by innuendo for trial by jury. To flush one Communist, McCarthy is willing to ruin the lives of scores of people by wanton and unfounded charges....

Right now McCarthyism is more dangerous than Communism within this country.³⁵

It is easy to look back in history and believe that most Americans were caught up in the Red Scare. When studying the time period, it may be assumed that most Americans were

³⁵ William F. Jenks, "McCarthy is Front Page News, He Finds," Democrat and Chronicle, Dec. 6, 1953.

in line with the thinking of Senator McCarthy. However, the majority of letters published on stories relating to McCarthy were more critical of him than favorable. There were many Rochesterians who were able to see through the headlines and recognize the danger that McCarthy posed. Moreover, they were not all afraid to speak out against him. Jenks represents a large number of people in this country that were able to openly criticize McCarthy and his tactics.

The constitutionalists were not willing to ignore the possible threat of communism. To do so would cast too much doubt upon their loyalties. Therefore, each constitutionalist offered a legal and democratic way to fight communism. This seemed to provide a way for them to strike the anti-communists and communism at the same time. To do otherwise would have made it too easy to brand a person a communist, or at least one duped by their propaganda. Allan Wendt fell in line with this way of thinking. He too responded to the letter by Edward Burley. Wendt stressed the importance of the justice system and the notion that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Wendt also added to the critique of McCarthy and those that ally themselves to him.

One of the most serious problems in present-day politics is the tendency to join with any group that opposes the things which you oppose...Such a principle 15 years ago would have put the opposer in Hitler's camp. There is a third side to this question too—it is possible to disapprove of both demagoguery and communism.

Senator McCarthy has never offered written proof of his charges, if "written proof" means proof that will support an indictment in a court of law.³⁶

While many of Rochester's citizens would criticize McCarthy, few were willing to do so without being certain to show their disdain for communism. Wendt clearly disliked McCarthy, yet was also apt to point out how one can be against McCarthy and still be an anti-communist. He also gives us cause to believe many Americans were

³⁶ Allan Wendt, "Attitudes and McCarthy," Democrat and Chronicle, Dec 9, 1953.

aware of McCarthy's lack of success when searching for communists. McCarthy was never able to prove that he had uprooted any communists, and it appears as though at least some Americans were aware of this at the time.

Wendt also uses history, at least to some degree, to guide his argument against McCarthy. While not the popular response, a few people responded to the issues of communism and the Red Scare by taking a backward glance. Parkhurst Whitney made an argument that has stood the test of time when looking at interpretations of McCarthy. Whitney argued that McCarthy was simply a political opportunist riding the wave of anticommunism to power and fame. Whitney uses history to prove his case. In the early Nineteenth Century the "Menace of the Masonry" was a hot political issue. According to Whitney, a revengeful Mason gave up some of the secret rituals of his lodge. After which some of the local Masons kidnapped and murdered the man. As the story broke, the Mason's were vilified in the press and even black listed. Doctors and lawyers lost clients, people had to convince the public that they were not members of the Masons. Whitney even notes that many of the political leaders of the day including William H. Seward, Millard Fillmore and Thurlow Weed, achieved their status by riding the wave of fear towards the Masons. Whitney equates McCarthy and his "witch hunt" to the issue with the Masons. He believed the Red Scare was the result of "Self-seeking and unscrupulous politicians."³⁷

We can learn a good deal from this reaction to McCarthy. Americans of the time were not completely unaware of the lessons of history. The fact that the Democrat and Chronicle was willing to publish this several hundred-word essay tells us that there were

³⁷ Parkhurst Whitney, "Communism Will Be an Issue, in this McCarthy is Right," Democrat and Chronicle, December 28, 1953.

many who would likely find interest in the historical comparison. What is even more interesting is that many Americans did see McCarthy as an opportunist. To some, his tactics were obviously intended for political gain. McCarthy, and company, did not lead the entire country on a witch-hunt. There were many who saw through these tactics and were not afraid to openly reveal them.

Comparisons

A popular response to the threat of communism was the comparison. People liked to compare their views of the Soviets or communists to Americas. It was common to read letters, which highlighted the lack of civil liberties in communist countries with reference to different atrocities. Writers were often creative in their different ways to compare America to the USSR, and it was usually done to bolster America's image and reaffirm negative images of the Soviets. However, there were those that took all of the self-examination seriously. Many were quick to point out the variety of problems within America. While many were apt to find ways to demonize the Soviets, others were all too aware of the internal problems at home.

The *Rosenberg* case became a hot topic in Rochester. There was a wave of responses about their eventual execution and their communist ties. The debate arose out of the question of capital punishment but most brought in the issue of communism. One of the more common arguments in favor of executing the Rosenbergs was to compare the treatment of convicts in America to that of Russia. Eleanor Crane Kalsbeck compared Russia and the United States in her argument in favor of the execution.

Just suppose, for instance, Russia did not have the complete atomic bomb secret and the Rosenbergs supplied the information they needed to complete it. This country, America, will never use it as an aggressor; we would use it only to save

further aggression of the enemy and lives of millions and their freedom. We cannot say the same of Russia....

The only other punishment which I would consider worse than death would be to send them to Russia, where they would not know from one day to the next what their fate would be, no matter what their temporary rank....

We have our men there [Korea], that Russia might not move forward in her ruthless desire to enslave the countries of the world....

We are a great nation; that fact is recognized all over. If ever a nation was able to help the lesser countries, and has endeavored to do just that, we are that nation....³⁸

Kalsbeck describes America as a fair country that has responsible leaders who act rationally towards a threat and are gracious with poorer countries. The Russians however, were not to be trusted. Kalsbeck suggested that their motives were to enslave everyone in their ruthless desire for more power. The message from this type of response was in America people were treated with justice while their counterparts in Russia were not. Kalsbeck, and others like her, attributed a wide variety to negative characteristics to the communist countries to further demonize them.

The responses given suggest a very limited understanding of communism and communist countries. It is not that some of the accusations that Kalsbeck makes are untrue; it is that few facts were accompanied with them. People had impressions of communist countries and communism, impressions that were almost universally negative. Therefore, when they heard a new negative impression, it was easy to believe. In all of the responses examined, very few offered any tangible evidence as to the nature of the communist countries. This seems to reveal a gap in the actual understanding of the Soviet Union or communism. A politician like McCarthy, or even Peter Barry, would be able to take advantage of that ignorance. The lack of understanding makes them easier to

³⁸ Eleanor Crane Kalsbeck, "2 Writers Support Verdict In Rosenberg Case," Democrat and Chronicle, Jan. 18, 1953.

manipulate. It is easy to scare someone or manipulate them when they do not know any better.

The newspapers did not do very much to alter the situation either. Both papers were not apt to offer articles to educate the public about communism, instead there were many articles to fan the flames of hatred. It would be unfair to blame either paper's editors when an y article showing even the slightest amount of sympathy to anything communism was met with the furry of the readers. There were many critical responses to the way in which each paper's reporters covered the issues of the Red Scare. The market forces certainly forced the editors to publish articles more critical of communism. Therefore, any attempt to educate the public in a fair and objective way was not easy. As a result, articles were generally critical and biased.

One such article titled, "No Escape From Reds, DP Finds," explains how this unidentified man escaped from an unidentified communist Eastern European country. When this man escaped, he came to Rochester and then tried to send for his wife and children. However, he was eventually told that his marriage was annulled and his children made property of the state because he left his country without permission. The article seems fairly objective until you read the first line and the last line "You can escape physically from the Russian Communists—but can you escape mentally?" The article ends with a quotation from James Tipping who was the director of the Chamber of Commerce in Rochester. He states, "The man is physically free but the Communists have trapped his mind with fear—fear of what they might do, or have already done, with his wife and children."³⁹ When these stories are the only kind available, it is not difficult to see why so many people believed everything bad about communism. That is not to say

³⁹ "No Escape From Reds, DP Finds, Democrat and Chronicle, Mar 3, 1952.

that the negative stories were inaccurate, it is just that only negative stories seemed to make it to the presses.

The lack of reliable information was recognized by a great deal of people.

Several of the writers seemed curious about communism because they had been taught so little of it. C. C. Bailey admitted to reading the Daily Worker so that they could learn more about communism. He wrote the following explanation for reading the magazine:

One cannot combat Communism by turning his back on this parasite. We cannot offer closed minds, ignorance and prejudice to deal with this social and economic cancer. Knowledge will enable us to understand what we're struggling with and enable us to find methods to deal with the problem.⁴⁰

Bailey was not alone in this idea. Many writers pledged their support for teaching the facts of communism in schools so that students could get a better understanding of it. While Bailey seemed convinced before he read the communist literature, he still tried to at least understand his enemy.

The Democrat and Chronicle had a column called "What Folks Say." A reporter would ask random people at one location their opinion on various issues. On May 22, 1953 the question was "What do you think is the most effective way to fight Communism in this country?" Interestingly enough, each one of the respondents answered that education was the best weapon against communism. Joseph Fuelhart stated, "If more people could know the facts of true Communism and the facts of Russian Communism, through education, the power of the Party eventually would be lessened."⁴¹ People were curious about communism and wanted to know more. It seems as though the threat of communism did inspire a lot of people to learn more about it both out of curiosity, and a desire to find ways to defeat it.

⁴⁰ C.C. Baily, "Yes, He Reads Daily Worker Profitably," Democrat and Chronicle, Oct. 25, 1953.

⁴¹ "What Folks Say," Democrat and Chronicle, May 22, 1953.

While many were quick to point out the drawbacks of life under communism, some were more critical of the problems in America. George McLain, Chairman of the California Institute of Social Welfare wrote of the need to feed America's starving people before sending aid to Germany. He made this request after President Eisenhower sent \$15 million in surplus food to East Germany in 1953. McLain offers some statistics about the meager payments given to America's disabled and poor. While not overtly critical of the United States, it does show that people were not completely unaware of the problems in America. Yet, McLain was not very critical of Eisenhower, and he even commends the President for his charity to the East Germans. Similarly he is careful not to place the problems in America in the same league as those in "Communist East Germany."⁴²

There were also those that saw deeper problems in the United States and expressed those ideas in their letters. C. C. Bailey, the reader of the Daily Profit, also wrote a letter critical of bigots. He was upset that so many Americans accepted bigotry but were quick to find all faults with communist countries. He wrote the following excerpt in September of 1953.

I don't like to hear people speak against Communism and then discriminate in any way against a race, color or creed. To me that's fascism, which to me is more prevalent in this country than any other ism. The bigot is a terrible ally to have against Communism because the bigot cannot represent truth in any encounter with an evil, as his mind is clouded and confused with hate.⁴³

It is noteworthy that some people were willing to acknowledge the glaring internal problems of racism in the United States. Bailey shows us that racism was a problem in Rochester, and that at least some people were aware of it. With so many

⁴² George McLain, "Feed Our Own Needy," Democrat and Chronicle, July 3, 1953.

⁴³ C. C. Bailey, "Cleaning the Air," Times Union, Sep. 25, 1953.

Americans revealing the problems of communist countries some were willing and able to take a look in the mirror. While these kinds of responses were not overly common, they do show that constant negative references to communism may have caused some people to look more closely within America.

One cannot really say how much this introspection impacted the United States. However, as so many were apt to point out the problems of communism, many others were quick to counter with America's problems. With so many Americans viewing the Cold War as a battle of good versus evil, or civilization versus barbarism, there was little room in the middle. America was propped up as the city on the hill. With people like Frank Spring, and Ernest Briars elevating it with their views of good America versus evil communism. However, once America was put on the pedestal then there were those that tried to knock it down. By making America out to be perfect people left too much room for criticism. This may have given a voice to many in the Civil Rights movement. It gave African Americans a leg to stand on when they voiced their protests over their unequal treatment. It is doubtfully coincidental that the Civil Rights movement began in the early 1950s when so many Americans were preaching about liberty and freedom. This point has not been lost on historians, as was pointed out in the first part of my paper.

From the responses of Rochester's citizens, it becomes clear that America was undergoing an identity crisis. Many were comfortable with the idea that America was always right and good, while communist countries always acted in sinister ways with corrupted motives. Others also used the constant comparisons to their advantage. While everyone could agree the injustices displayed by communist countries was wrong, how could they also disagree that injustice in America was wrong. This took Americans down

a new path of which forced them to reevaluate themselves and even question fundamental American traditions.

II. Anti-Communist Actions in Rochester

Before the McCarthy investigations or even the Rosenberg verdict, Rochester's own citizens provided an unusual controversy. In 1948 members of the Catholic War Veterans and the Veterans of Foreign Wars raided a Communist Party meeting. What began as a picket of the meeting turned into a raid when some of the veterans conferred with some of the Communist Party organizers and both agreed to stop the meeting. However, it did not end without some shoving and a few thrown elbows. The supposed climax took place when some of the veterans came out of the hall in the rain with an armfuls of communist literature. Reporter Ted Klee wrote, "Then in the small fenced-in enclosure before the building they touched a match to the piled up loot and hooted as it developed into a smoke-smudgy fire."⁴⁴ This event symbolizes the beginning of the Red Scare years in Rochester. Over the next six years the citizens of Rochester would continue to face other Red Scare issues as tensions rose both at home and abroad.

It should be noted that Rochester's political landscape throughout the Twentieth Century was quite conservative. The Republicans had held onto the Mayor's seat, and much of the City Council for most of the century with the exception of some of the New Deal years. In 1957 Curt Gerling, author of the famous Rochester critique, Smugtown USA, wrote a witty analysis of Rochester's political situation.

Warren Moscow, political reporter for the New York Times took the words right out of the mouths of local pundits when he described political Rochester as "a product of a well-established big-business paternalism."

⁴⁴ Ted Klee, "Extra Police Called To Halt Disorder In Joseph Ave.," Democrat and Chronicle, April 22, 1948.

He could have added, “and safely Republican” – probably did not as even the moderately intelligent realize that big business and republicanism mix even more magnificently than scotch and soda.⁴⁵

Given the political climate, Rochester was never a hot bed for communist organizers. The Republican stronghold within Rochester was largely responsible for keeping the Unions out of Rochester. Rochester has always had a reputation for being a non-union town. Even by the mid-1950s Rochester was well below the state average for worker participation in unions. Some of the area’s best-known companies including Eastman Kodak, Gleason Works, RG&E, Bausch and Lomb were never unionized.⁴⁶ Given the communist influence in many of the unions, it is not hard to see why the Communist Party was never able to organize a significant number of people.

The actual numbers of Communist Party membership is hard to come by since much of it was done underground by the 1950s. This is not surprising given the incident at the Ukrainian Workers Hall in 1948. However, the director of the F.B.I, J. Edgar Hoover, who was notorious for exaggerating the number of actual CP members claiming that there were some “half million fellow travelers and sympathizers ready to forward Communist efforts in any way they can,” did offer information on communists in Rochester. While Hoover claimed that New York State had the highest number of communists in the country, in 1950 he indicated that Rochester had somewhere between 20 and 25 CP members.⁴⁷ Rochester certainly had its share of communists, and Hoover was probably close on his prediction given his propensity to estimate a bit high.

⁴⁵ Curt Gerling, Smugtown U.S.A., (Rochester NY: Plaza Publishers, 1993) 150.

⁴⁶ Lou Buttino and Mark Hare, The Remaking of a City: Rochester, New York 1964-1984, (Dubuque, Iowa; Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1984) 125.

⁴⁷ “Commies, Make Little Headway In City, FBI Chief Finds,” Times Union, Aug. 22, 1950.

Because of the political nature of Rochester, the reactions of the people there may be a bit different than other cities of similar size. We cannot assume that all medium sized cities would have responses to the Red Scare as was the case in Rochester. It may have been that Rochester's citizens could view the scare with a more calm and rational perspective, since the issue was not on its doorstep as was the case in other cities. One could also conclude that this conservative environment would have made the citizens more belligerent towards communists, and thus more vocal in their criticisms of it. It is hard to say how Rochester's responses to communism differ from that of other similarly sized Northeastern cities without doing similar studies.

III. Education

The threat of communist propaganda infiltrating the area's universities and public schools was a fear that seemed to weigh heavily on the minds of Rochester's citizens. While Rochester saw very little actual controversy over this issue, there was a great deal of attention devoted to it. F.B.I officials did indicate that there may have been "intellectual" communists or "parlor pinks" at the University of Rochester.⁴⁸ These comments, and other investigations surrounding professors at the University caused some concern over the Universities in the area. Despite the investigations, nothing of any substance came from their efforts at the universities.

In 1953 The Board of Regents also conducted an investigation into all of New York's public schools in an attempt to uncover anyone who even sympathized with communism only to find no violators. The editorial staff at the Times Union, responded to the investigations with great pride. The schools seemed to become a battleground against communism. They responded with the following position.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

There is no disposition to cover up in the schools. The National Education Association, the State Education Association and the Rochester Teachers Association were on record against Communists in schools before many citizens were alert to the dangers, as Superintendent James M. Spinning has pointed out. And in the one spot where Communism had made real inroads—New York City—educational authorities have made a courageous and continuous fight to rid their system of them, often against pressure from well meaning but misguided fuzzy thinkers.⁴⁹

Education was the one area where many of the area's citizens believed the fight could be won or lost. Indeed, as has already been stated, many of the area's citizens believed that education was the best weapon against communism. This placed the spotlight on America's public schools and universities, and it was certainly the motivating factor behind the investigations by the Board of Regents. One can only guess at the changes that took place within the classrooms of Rochester. It is hard to calculate or even investigate the ways in which teachers adjusted their curriculum because of these investigations or other Red Scare issues. When teachers had to worry about investigations for even sympathizing with a communist group, there is little doubt that they were more inclined to steer clear from many otherwise innocent issues. With the spotlight on, many teachers would have certainly been careful in the way they taught communism or even world politics. One has to wonder what kind of effect this had on the generation of baby-boomers educated during the Fifties and Sixties.

IV. Spreading the Truth

In the late Winter of 1953 the Freedom Crusade swept through Rochester collecting funds for Radio Free Europe and Asia. The idea behind the program was for private individuals to raise money to help spread the "truth" to people living in communist countries. It is no surprise that the program received a great deal of attention

⁴⁹ "Simple Way to Rid Schools of Reds," Time Union, Feb. 26, 1953.

in Rochester given the number of people that wrote about the elaborate propaganda of the communists. Some 300 people who went door to door to collect funds from Rochester's citizens serviced the fundraiser. The Monroe Country American Legion organized the collection, and its success was hard to judge.

Nevertheless, what is interesting is the following statement, which followed every article written about the event. "Each donor signed a "freedom-gram" that will be sent into Red held nations to show that the broadcasts are sponsored by the American people, not by their government."⁵⁰ This provided a chance for many Americans to help in the Cold War, and do something to fight communism. To those donating, it was important to know that it was not the government sending the anti-communist message, it was ordinary Americans. This shows that Rochester's citizens did want to do something in the war against communism. Actions like the Freedom Crusade provided them with a sense of empowerment, and perhaps settled some of their fears.

In conjunction with the fundraising drive a group of 20 high school students from Colgate Rochester Divinity School suggested having a day under communism. The idea would be to show people what life would be like under a communist dictatorship. The plan called for Legionnaires to take over all of the city's institutions for one day. Radio stations, churches, government, and the newspaper would be under the control of the dictators.⁵¹ City officials never went along with it, but the plan demonstrates the extent to which people were willing to go to fight communism. It would have been interesting to see how people would have acted under such a plan, and what actions would have been taken.

⁵⁰ Crusade For Freedom Collects \$2,000 in 1-night Campaign," Democrat and Chronicle, March 2, 1953.

⁵¹ "Divinity Group Hits 'Red Uprising' Plan," Times Union, Jan. 28, 1953.

It would be incorrect to assume that the Voice of America fundraiser did not stir up some controversy. Many were critical of the idea and expressed their opinions in their letters to the editor. One such critic, H. F., wrote about the hypocrisy of the Voice of America. He responded to a story, which told of the United States refusing to release certain information from the Russian Embassy because it apparently did not tell the “whole truth.”

How about the “Voice of America” which this country is broadcasting to Russia and all over Europe to the tune of many millions of taxpayers’ dollars? Does the “Voice” tell the whole truth about this country. Though I have not heard the “Voice” I will wager dollars to doughnuts that it makes no mention of the min coat, deep freeze and other Washington scandals.⁵²

While the papers were quoted over and over again stating that the Voice of America was broadcasting the “truth” to communist countries, everyone did not accept it. The mention of the word truth seemed to stir up the ire of many. It really forced people to think about what the truth was. Whose truth were they going to broadcast, and what is truth anyway? Americans seemed to be hung up on this concept and it was facilitated by the rhetoric surrounding the Voice of America. When the reporters continued to use the word “truth,” it forced people to wonder what they meant. This led to questioning by Americans; however, seldom did anyone give specifics as to what the truth was. Consider another editorial from the Times Union about the Voice of America.

Criticizing the emotional and inciting qualities of both Radio Free Europe and Voice of America programs, Okoniewski [former Polish soldier who spoke to the Monroe County American Legion] said:

“The main object should be to rebuild confidence in America’s moral purposes. This should be by telling the truth—nothing else.”

This is the whole answer to inherent distrust of propaganda as an instrument of national policy. No fancy theories of mass psychology can equal the wisdom of this man’s simple definition of the ends and means.

⁵² H. F., “Inadequate,” Democrat and Chronicle, March 13, 1953.

What we want in the Voice of America is no more and no less than to rebuild confidence in our moral purposes. And the means to that are, indeed, telling the truth nothing else.⁵³

Again there is a call for the truth, and spreading America's moral purpose, yet there is no explanation as to what they message should say. Clearly many of Rochester's citizens had very idealistic views of America. To think that the government or an agency like Voice of America could tell the truth is somewhat of an arrogant thought. Socrates and Plato could never completely understand the complex notion of truth, but the American Legion and the U.S. government could? This is the type of arrogance that manifests from the constant good versus evil concept fostered by many of America's and Rochester's citizens. When it has been established that one side is good and the other is evil, then it is easy to assume that one side is always right while the other is always wrong.

There was one other interesting discussion of truth in America that is worth mentioning. In 1951 some folks in South Carolina came up with the Greenwood Plan with the goal of taking the fight of democracy and communism to the local cities and neighborhoods across America. A proposal by a Rochester man was given a high rating by the organizers, and was published by the Associated Press. His plan was to bring homeless children from around the world to America. They would be raised in America and "taught fully the American way." As adults they would be sent back to their homelands to spread the "truth" about America.⁵⁴ The plan seems quite simplistic, and very idealistic, yet many Americans believed it had some merit. Indeed the general principles of the idea, spreading the principles of America on an individual basis, were

⁵³ "Truth in Voice of America," Times Union, Mar. 21, 1953.

⁵⁴ "City Man Proposes Plan to Beat Reds," Democrat and Chronicle, Dec. 10, 1951.

similar to that of the Voice of America. It is also quite similar to the Peace Corps, which originated some ten years later.

The propaganda war was certainly not one sided. It is highly doubtful that the communist leadership was as successful or far-reaching with their propaganda as many would think. Peter Barry's comments about the communist propaganda machine being "the world's most expert group in the fields of propaganda," and their methods were often "crowned with success," was certainly an exaggeration.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, communist countries and communist groups did infiltrate the United States with various kinds of propaganda. One popular method was letter writing. Communist countries would send letters to former citizens who lived in the United States making pleas with them to return home. According to one of the recipients, the letters stressed the problems of a capitalist society and the oppression accompanied by it. Other letters were sent to students at the University of Rochester from the Labor Youth League, which was known as a communist front organization. The letters were critical of the situation in Korea. One student who received the letter was also a Korean War veteran. The Democrat and Chronicle reporter paraphrased his response, "He pointed out it was a first-hand experience with the methods of the Communists."⁵⁶

These and other attempts like it were widely publicized. They show that Rochester area citizens were put into the middle of the propaganda war. They both contributed to it, and were victims of it. While they sent the "truth" to communist countries, these countries responded with their own version of the truth, and many of Rochester's citizens were caught in the middle.

⁵⁵ Peter Barry, "Councilman Urges You to Read Report."

⁵⁶ "Ur Students Get Red Propaganda, Not Impressed," Democrat and Chronicle, May 15, 1954.

V. The Court Cases and Investigations

The McCarthy investigations, like no other event, defined the Red Scare, and they did not escape Rochester. The F.B.I. brought the hunt for communists into Rochester on a few occasions, always stirring up the local media. They targeted one particular family with communist ties dating back to the early years of the Great Depression. Using provisions under the Internal Security Act and the Smith Act, federal agents prosecuted three different communists from the Rochester area. The Internal Security Act states that an alien who was a communist when he entered the United States could be deported. The Smith act made it a crime to belong to an organization that has the expressed goals of taking over the government. Between 1953 and 1954 Paul List, and his brother-in-law Leonard Costa, residents of Honeoye, were both prosecuted under the Internal Security Act and deported for having been members of the Communist Party while aliens. List was said to have been at meetings back in the early Thirties, while evidence had Costa involved in organizing communists up to the late Forties.⁵⁷ In 1956 John Francis Noto, a graduate of East High, was convicted under the Smith Act for belonging to the Communist Party.⁵⁸ All three cases were part of the F.B.I's investigations into communist activity around the country.

A few apparent Communist Party cells were discovered in Rochester during the mid 1950s. F.B.I. investigations led agents to James J. Miller, a former United Electric Workers union president who was accused of trying to organize other union workers into the Communist Party. The UEW was ousted from the CIO for being communist dominated, and Miller claimed that he only took the job of president because no one else

⁵⁷ "Second Deportation Hearing Ordered," Times Union, May 19, 1953.

⁵⁸ "Noto Taken to Jail," Times Union, Sep. 2, 1955.

wanted it. He maintained that he was never a communist, yet the government had a witness who testified that Miller tried to organize the Communist Party in Rochester in the mid 1940s.⁵⁹ One employee from Kodak was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Leo M. Hurvich, was questioned about his experiences at Harvard and at the Army's Frankfort, Pa., arsenal which tested cold-weather instruments. Hurvich declined to answer questions on either topic. A special committee in Congress with the goal of investigating defense industries set up this investigation.⁶⁰

From these investigations we can see that the Red Scare, which swept across the country did not miss Rochester. There were some communists in Rochester, nevertheless the government did not step over Rochester just because there was such a small number of them. Politicians were calling for the investigations in what might have been an attempt to express their stance against communism and to show they were at the forefront of the fight. Bernard Kearney, a Congressman from Gloversville, New York, was able to get onto a committee to investigate communists in defense industries. He directed the investigators to Rochester and all of Western New York.⁶¹

The investigations seemed to be for show more than substance. Of all the people questioned or arrested the F.B.I. was only able to offer two people who might have been communists at the time of the investigations. Costa and Noto were thought to have been active up to the time of their arrests. However, the other investigations were directed at former communists or events that had taken place ten or twenty years earlier. Even the Noto and Costa cases did not uncover any substantial communist plot or organization in Western New York, or the Rochester area. It appears as if these investigations were done

⁵⁹ "Red Labor Cell Met In City, Probe Told," Times Union, April 9, 1954.

⁶⁰ "City Man Refuses Reply to Prober's Question," Times Union, Apr. 21, 1953.

⁶¹ "Probe Set of Reds in Upstate N.Y.," Times Union, June 3, 1953.

to appease the public's desire for some action. People wanted to see that their government was active in the fight against communism. With all of the headlines in the papers, the rhetoric, the constant propaganda, people wanted to feel safer and the investigations may have been a way to achieve that end. They also served the interests of politicians who wanted to appear strong in their stance against communism.

VI. Conclusion

It would be foolish to think that any part of America escaped the wave of fear and paranoia that swept across the country during the Red Scare. Yet each local area responded to it in unique ways. To understand the Red Scare it is essential to analyze local areas to see how the Red Scare actually affected normal Americans. A great deal of understanding is missed when we only study the McCarthy investigations, or the anti-communist laws, the speeches, or the international relations with communist countries. We can get an overall picture of the Red Scare; although, that is not the complete picture. To understand how the Red Scare affected America it is essential to investigate how it played out in the lives of ordinary Americans. The arguments and comments of ordinary American citizens from Rochester give us great insight into the actual events of the Red Scare.

A great deal of conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented in this paper, and many of them have been discussed. The sheer magnitude of the Red Scare is surprising in itself. This movement, which uncovered very few communists after 1948, swept across the nation and kept people paranoid and afraid for years to come. Rochester was no exception as a great deal of energy was devoted to it. There were investigations, hearings, fundraisers, countless discussions, arguments, meetings, demonstrations and

even book burnings all within the city of Rochester. The Red Scare sparked a real social movement that changed many of America's institutions. The systems of education, government, religion, and law were all changed as a result of this movement.

One has to wonder what the effects of this massive movement were. The Civil Rights movement was certainly influenced by it, as was the Vietnam War (this was discussed in the first part of the thesis project). How much did the Red Scare play a role in those events and were there other events of the Sixties and Seventies that took place because of the Red Scare? How much did the economy suffer from fearful Americans or hesitant investors? Would the Sixties have been such a turbulent decade of social strife? Would blacks have been able to achieve the gains made during the Sixties? Would the United States have become such devoted allies with the Israelis? If not would we have had the oil embargo of the 1970s or the economic recession that followed? Imagine how our relationships with other countries would have adjusted were it not for the ongoing paranoia that was born out of the Red Scare.

We have only begun to grasp the enormous fallout from the Red Scare. Events of that magnitude, which energize cities across the country, as the Red Scare did in Rochester, are not simply contained to within one set time period. These things cause long-term changes in a society, and as of yet it seems as though historians have only begun to examine them. Future study is need to get more of a grasp on this topic so that it can be delivered to this generation of Americans. In the wake of the attacks of September 11, many of the same fears and concerns swept across the nation. The wave of responses to the events surely changed America forever. We are only beginning to see how the Red Scare changed America and the world, now America is embarking on a new

scare before we have been able to fully understand the effects of the last one. Based on what we are learning about the effects of the Red Scare and in a large sense, the Cold War, we can see that the war on terrorism will change America in ways that we could never have imagined.

Teaching McCarthyism: A Collection of Materials for Educators*Purpose*

The materials provided within this work are meant for the individual use of American History teachers. The material on McCarthyism, and the Red Scare of the 1950s is quite extensive, and therefore, quite unreasonable to use in one unit given the time constraints of the curriculum. Consequently, this work is organized so that teachers can pick and choose various lesson ideas, or materials that would best fit their individual needs. Each document, or collection of documents, will be accompanied by some suggestions for how to use them.

Local connections with the Red Scare and McCarthyism

Making history an animated subject to our students can be quite difficult. Yet, it is important for history teachers to try and bring the subject as close to the students as possible. Studying local history with its impact on national trends, and its reflection of historical eras, can make a stronger connection with our students. It becomes more concrete and it allows them to see their own role in history. The impact of McCarthyism on Rochester provides us with a good example of how the people of this area dealt with a national trend. Letters to the editor show students a primary source about what ordinary citizens were thinking during this time period.

Topics the students need to study before reading these letters:

1. The Red Scare
2. Senator McCarthy and the Senate hearings
3. Communism
4. Voice of America
5. Containment

Letters

Seriously however, the above shows how this insidious, brain washing, communistic, propaganda can affect the minds of those of our citizens who presumably belong to the higher realm of thought.

The resulting confusion of one blind mind attempting to wash the brains of another could eventually get us into the trap the Commies are setting for us.

--Briars, Ernest. "Beware of the Trap." Times Union. May 23, 1953.

The Communist High Command is perhaps, the world's most expert group in the fields of propaganda, infiltration and subversive influence. Their methods are devious and adroit and only too often are crowned with success.

It is most important that the American public be kept fully advised of any such activities in this country and that they be shown the pattern of the methods used in order that they may recognize the magnitude of the danger and provide their government officials with adequate power to combat it.

--Barry, Peter. "Councilman Urges You to Read Report." Times Union. Sept. 17, 1953.

We fail to recognize that the enemy has his agents planted within our army, navy, our intelligence, in the highest branches of government, in our schools and universities and even to some extent in our clergy. While Belshazzar and his lords and ladies engaged in a drunken orgy of revelry, vice and pleasure, the Medes were at the entrance to the palace. It will be repeated here in America unless the people awake for "as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth" and unless we devote ourselves to the task of cleaning up America, atheism and moral decay will destroy us even though our leaders may cry peace and security when there is no peace. America's dangers are within its own domain and should America perish it will because corruption, crime vice and Godlessness have caused moral and spiritual decay which has destroyed nations in the past.

--Spring, Frank E.. "Moral Decay." Democrat and Chronicle. Nov. 20, 1953.

McCarthy is pounding away against some very basic principles of American life. He is substituting trial by innuendo for trial by jury. To flush one Communist, McCarthy is willing to ruin the lives of scores of people by wanton and unfounded charges.... Right now McCarthyism is more dangerous than Communism within this country.

--Jenks, William F.. "McCarthy is Front Page News, He Finds." Democrat and Chronicle. Dec. 6, 1953.

Just suppose, for instance, Russia did not have the complete atomic bomb secret and the Rosenbergs supplied the information they needed to complete it. This country, America,

will never use it as an aggressor; we would use it only to save further aggression of the enemy and lives of millions and their freedom. We cannot say the same of Russia....

The only other punishment which I would consider worse than death would be to send them to Russia, where they would not know from one day to the next what their fate would be, no matter what their temporary rank....

We have our men there [Korea], that Russia might not move forward in her ruthless desire to enslave the countries of the world....

We are a great nation; that fact is recognized all over. If ever a nation was able to help the lesser countries, and has endeavored to do just that, we are that nation....

--Kalsbeck, Eleanor Crane. "2 Writers Support Verdict In Rosenberg Case." Democrat and Chronicle, Jan. 18, 1953.

One cannot combat Communism by turning his back on this parasite. We cannot offer closed minds, ignorance and prejudice to deal with this social and economic cancer. Knowledge will enable us to understand what we're struggling with and enable us to find methods to deal with the problem

--Bailey, C. C.. "Cleaning the Air." Times Union. Sep. 25, 1953.

How about the "Voice of America" which this country is broadcasting to Russia and all over Europe to the tune of many millions of taxpayers' dollars? Does the "Voice" tell the whole truth about this country. Though I have not heard the "Voice" I will wager dollars to doughnuts that it makes no mention of the min coat, deep freeze and other Washington scandals.

--F., H.. "Inadequate." Democrat and Chronicle. March 13, 1953.

Use in a classroom

1. Each of these letters reveal different opinions, fears and concerns on the part of millions of Americans during the Red Scare. Teachers could use one, several, or all of these letters in a variety of ways. One key focal point of the letters is the fact that they were all written by people from the Rochester area. That point needs to be stressed to our students in order to show how the Red Scare was not just a problem or issue from people far away. It was a sensitive and major issue among people within this area.

2. These letters could also be used to show the level of fear that many Americans had concerning communism. Many of the writers show clear signs of paranoia and base their opinions of generalizations as opposed to sound evidence. A good way to have the students analyze these letters would be to have them rate the arguments made by the writers. Give students five letters and have them place them in order of the best argument to the worst. The students could develop criteria for a good, well-written argument and one for a poor argument. After the letters are categorized the students could write up a basic explanation for their choices.
3. The students should also answer some questions about the documents so that we can draw their attention to some of the more important themes within the letters. Questions should emphasize concepts and facts being taught within the unit.

Some possible questions to consider:

- a) Which writer(s) would be more in favor of a containment policy? Explain your answer.
- b) Barry: Does Barry give any evidence to suggest why he thinks the Communists are so good at using propaganda and subversive activities?
- c) Spring: How does Spring think America's moral decay could lead to a Communist uprising?
- d) Jenks: Why does Jenks think McCarthy could be more dangerous in America than Communists?
- e) Bailey: How does Bailey hope to combat against Communism?

- f) Kalsbeck: Why do you think Kalsbeck has such a low opinion of the Russians? What does he/she say about them?
- g) As you are reading underline the different ways in which the Communists and Russians are described.

Stalin's View of The West

While many people in America had their opinions about how evil and malicious the Russians were, the same was true for the Russians towards the Americans. At least it was true among many Russians. The following selection is from a speech made by Joseph Stalin in 1952 in which he highlighted the reasons why the Communist Party had to remain strong in defense against the capitalist powers of the world.

Topics and vocabulary the students need to study before reading these letters:

1. Bourgeoisie
2. Capitalism
3. Fraternal Parties
4. Shock Brigades
5. Draconic Laws
6. Tsarism

<http://www.marx2mao.org/Stalin/SNPC52.html>

SPEECH AT THE NINETEENTH PARTY CONGRESS

October 14, 1952
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
MOSCOW 1952

This distinguishing feature of mutual support is to be explained by the fact that the interests of our Party do not contradict, but, on the contrary merge with the interests of the peace-loving peoples. (*Loud applause.*) As to the Soviet Union, its interests are altogether inseparable from the cause of world-wide peace.

Naturally, our Party cannot remain indebted to the fraternal parties, and it must in its turn render support to them and also to their peoples in their struggle for emancipation, and in their struggle for the preservation of peace. As we know, that is exactly what it is doing. (*Loud applause.*) After our Party had assumed power in 1917, and after it had taken effective measures to abolish capitalist and landlord oppression, representatives of the fraternal parties, in their admiration for the daring and success of our Party, conferred upon it the title of "Shock Brigade" of the world revolutionary and labour movement. By this, they were expressing the hope that the successes of the "Shock Brigade" would help to ease the position of the peoples languishing under the yoke of capitalism. I think that our Party has justified these hopes, especially so in the Second World War, when the Soviet Union, by smashing the German and Japanese fascist tyranny, delivered the peoples of Europe and Asia from the menace of fascist slavery. (*Loud applause.*)

It was very hard, of course, to perform this honourable mission so long as ours was a single and solitary "Shock Brigade," so long as it had to perform this mission of vanguard almost alone. But that was in the past. Today the situation is quite different. Today, when from China and Korea to Czechoslovakia and Hungary, new "Shock Brigades" have appeared in the shape of the People's Democracies -- now it has become easier for our Party to fight, ay, and the work is going more merrily. (*Loud and prolonged applause.*)

Those communist, democratic, and workers' and peasants' parties which have not yet come to power and are still working under the heel of bourgeois draconic laws are deserving of particular attention. For them, of course, the work is harder. But it is not as hard for them to work as it was for us, the Russian Communists, in the period of tsarism, when the slightest movement forward was declared a severe crime. However, the Russian Communists stood their ground, were not daunted by difficulties, and achieved victory. So it will be with these parties.

Formerly, the bourgeoisie could afford to play the liberal, to uphold the bourgeois-democratic liberties, and thus gain popularity with the people. Now not a trace remains of this liberalism. The so-called "liberty of the individual" no longer exists -- the rights of the individual are now extended only to those who possess capital, while all other citizens are regarded as human raw material, fit only to be exploited. The principle of equal rights for men and nations has been trampled in the mud; it has been replaced by the principle of full rights for the exploiting minority and no rights for the exploited majority. The banner of bourgeois-democratic liberties has been thrown overboard. I think that it is you, the representatives of the communist and democratic parties, who will have to raise this banner and carry it forward, if you want to gather around you the majority of the people. There is nobody else to raise it. (*Loud applause.*)

Formerly, the bourgeoisie was regarded as the head of the nation; it upheld the rights and independence of the nation and placed them "above all else." Now not a trace remains of the "national principle." Now the bourgeoisie sells the rights and independence of the nation for dollars. The banner of national independence and national sovereignty has been thrown overboard. There is no doubt that it is you, the representatives of the communist and democratic parties, who will have to raise this banner and carry it forward, if you want to be patriots of your country, if you want to become the leading force of the nation. There is nobody else to raise it. (*Loud applause.*)

Down with the warmongers! (*All rise. Loud and long continuing applause and cheers. Cries of "Long live comrade Stalin!" "Hurrah for Comrade Stalin!" "Long live*

Use in the Classroom

1. This selection from Stalin offers a good deal of insight into the way in which many Soviets may have viewed the United States and other Capitalist nations. Granted, no one could say that Stalin was the only voice for all of the Russian people; nevertheless, he did represent the views of a large portion of Russians. This document would best be given to students after having read the letters to the editor from the previous section. It contrasts with many of the statements made in the letters to the editor. The website for the entire speech is listed before the speech. I did erase a few of the paragraphs, but I chose to leave much of the

speech intact. There are several excellent statements made that give a glimpse into Stalin's interpretation of the West. These can be edited or cut down to make the document easier to read for the students. The questions below could accompany the reading of the speech.

- a) In the first paragraph Stalin sights the Soviet Union's main goal. What is it?
- b) According to Stalin, who saved the people of Asia and Europe from fascism?
- c) What is stopping the worker and peasant parties around the world from gaining their freedom?
- d) According to Stalin, what happened to the liberty of the individual in the bourgeoisie counties?
- e) What do bourgeoisie nations do with the rights of other nations?
- f) Develop a list of the problems of bourgeoisie and capitalist nations from Stalin's speech. After studying the Cold War, and America's policies during that time period, how many of Stalin's views on capitalist countries are untrue? Be specific and explain your answers.

The Red Scare and the War on Terrorism

The war on terrorism has certainly changed the way Americans think and act. In times of war our basic civil liberties are always put to the test against the fears invoked by our enemies whether they are real or imagined. The following two documents offer a way to connect the issues brought up during the Red Scare with issues in our society today. Each document represents the propaganda and different view points being presented on the war on terrorism. The Voice of America, which began broadcasting to many Communist countries in Eastern Europe and Asia in the 1950s, was a beaken of American propaganda. The Russian counter part, Pravada, too was infamous for its slanted perspective throughout the Cold War. Interestingly enough, both propaganda machines are still in operation attempting to influence the minds of select groups around the world. Each of these documents illustrates the very different perspectives of people around the world dealing with the war on terrorism.

Topics and vocabulary the students need to study before reading these letters:

1. Al Qaida
2. U. S. Patriot Act
3. Taleban
4. Saddam Hussein
5. State of the Union Speech

From <http://www.voanews.com/index.cfm>

Bush Says War on Terrorism is Dismantling al-Qaida

VOA News

23 Jan 2004, 23:01 UTC

President Bush says the U.S.-led war on terrorism is slowly but surely dismantling the al-Qaida network. The president told a conference of mayors of U.S. cities Friday in Washington that the terror network's board of directors may still be largely intact, but its middle management is "retired."

Mr. Bush said the war on terrorism is a new kind of war for the 21st century that requires new methods. He cited specifically the U.S. Patriot Act - recent legislation that broadens law enforcement agencies' powers to track terrorists. Civil Rights activists say the Patriot Act violates basic liberties, but the President said again today it must not be allowed to expire.

President Bush said the world is better off for the success of the U.S.-led campaign to drive the Taleban from power in Afghanistan, and better off since Saddam Hussein was taken into custody in Iraq. He said there is no hole deep enough to allow terrorists to escape U.S. justice.

From <http://english.pravda.ru/usa/>

Defending the Undefendable - 01/21/2004 15:52

Bush's third State of the Union speech unconvincing and unimaginative

In his third State of the Union speech, George W. Bush appeared more like a schoolboy who had been caught bullying, trying to defend his actions to an irate headmaster, than a president striding towards an election, summing up what was supposed to be a meaningful first period in office and presenting exciting new policies for the second.

George Bush's declarations concerning US foreign policy during his term in office are risible for two main reasons - the president's own well-known ignorance of foreign affairs and the sheer failure of policies which are criticized in the international community. Trying to justify what George Bush sees as a fight between the USA and the invisible enemy by mentioning the war against Iraq, President Bush proves once again how naive, ignorant and pliable he is, dangerously so for a man in his position.

George Bush himself has declared on more than one occasion that there has never been any link made between Saddam Hussein and 9/11 and it should be remembered that Saddam Hussein himself was the first Arab leader to express his condolences after the event - he himself had had problems with Osama bin Laden - their mutual hatred was no secret.

In his second State of the Union speech, in January 2003, George Bush stated that Saddam Hussein had enough anthrax and botulinium to kill several million people, apart from reiterating the existence of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction. Shortly after this speech, the Bush administration stated many times that they knew where the WMD was hidden inside Iraq.

Ten months on, after an illegal war which flouted every fibre of diplomatic norms, international law, the UN Charter and the Geneva Convention, in which tens of thousands of people were left dead, destitute or maimed for life, the WMD search teams leave Iraq empty-handed. Where, then, is the *causus belli* upon which George Bush launched this war and where, then is any possible justification for this act of butchery unprecedented in recent history? Is this the legacy of which the president of the USA should be so proud?

Far from leaving America a safer place, the foreign policies pursued by George Bush have divorced Washington from the international community, resulting in the USA being derided as a pariah by world public opinion. Proof of this is the fact that George Bush dare not step off an airplane in most countries around the world and the fact that he was the only visiting Head of State to have to leave Number 10 Downing Street by the back door due to security preoccupations, and this in the home of his closest ally.

George Bush has gone too far in his foreign policy and must be held accountable for the war crimes which his administration has sanctioned. Regarding domestic policy, he leaves every US taxpayer with a massive bill to pick up after his globe-trotting war-mongering, a bill running into tens of billions of USD per year in the Middle East - and every year, if the situation in Iraq is not stabilized in 2004.

Use in the Classroom

1. If these articles were used in conjunction with the Stalin speech, it would be useful to show how Russian and American relations are still strained. As with the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union did not see eye to eye on many issues. These articles show that serious divisions still exist between these two countries.
2. These articles present a perfect opportunity for students to learn the importance of bias and perspective. The questions for each document should be directed toward getting students to understand why it is so important to know the source of information before

reading any document. Below are some possible questions that could be used to direct student learning.

“Bush Says War on Terrorism is Dismantling al-Qaida”

- a) What reason does the President site for keeping the PATRIOT Act?
- b) How does the President characterize the war on terrorism?
- c) Why does the President refer to Saddam Hussein’s capture in his statements on the war on terrorism?

“Defending the Undefendable”

- e) How does the author characterize President Bush’s leadership in foreign policy?
- f) What does the author say about the link between Saddam Hussein and 9/11?
- g) What does the author write about the legality of the US led war in Iraq?
- h) This articles in from a Russian perspective. Why do you think the Russians are so critical of President Bush?

Both Articles

- i) What reason could account for such different interpretations of how the President has dealt with foreign affairs?
- j) Why is it so important to know the source of the article or information before reading it?

The Red Scare and the Salem Witch Trials

The Red Scare and McCarthyism represented a malicious aspect of human behavior. It brought forth an aspect of human nature that was not new to America. Senator McCarthy's investigations, and others that followed in so many different board rooms, and political chambers, were essentially witch hunts. The actions of many Americans in the 1950s are quite similar to the actions of the Massachusettes colonists in the 1690s. It is the same part of our human nature that perpetuated both witch hunts, and that connection deserves to be further analyzed.

Pat Makseyn, an American History teacher put together an Internet search and questionnaire which appears, in an edited version, below. For this particular lesson, the students would be able to access various web sites to find information and connections between McCarthyism and the Salem Witch Trials. There are more than enough web sites for the students to find all of the information needed, yet I included them all because some Internet programs block some of them. When I use these with my students I narrow it down to five or six sites with the information needed.

The Salem Witch Trials vs. McCarthyism

By: Pat Makseyn

<http://socialstudies.com/c/@lsSjq1qY8POWw/Pages/SalemWitch.html>

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10200 Jefferson Blvd., Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232

Topics and vocabulary the students need to study before reading these letters:

1. A general understanding of McCarthyism and the Salem Witch Trials

Chronology of Events leading up to Salem Witch Trial

<http://www.salemweb.com/memorial/default.htm>

Notable Women Accused of Witchcraft:

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nwa/witch.html>

The Salem Witch Trials:

www.agnon.org/projects/integrated/sarahf/Salem%20Witch%20trials.htm

<http://earlyamerica.com/review/summer97/carey.html>

Witchcraft: A Brief History:

<http://www.salemwaxmuseum.com/history.html>

National Geographic's site

["http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem/)

The Discovery Channel's site:

<http://www.discovery.com/stories/history/witches/witches.html>

Witchcraft in Salem (Actual documents)

<http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/>

"The Devil hath been raised"- introduction:

["http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/Intro.html](http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/Intro.html)

The Seeds of the Salem Witch Hunt:

<http://socialstudies.com/article.html?article@PFF482A>

20th Century Witch Hunter:

<http://socialstudies.com/article.html?article@PFF482B>

Historic Salem:

<http://www.historyplace.com/tourism/index.html>

Puritanism:

Puritans and who they were:

<http://socialstudies.com/article.html?article@PFF467B>

Puritanism:

<http://www.gonzaga.edu/faculty/campbell/enl310/purdef.htm>

McCarthyism:

McCarthyism:

<http://cbird.8m.com/history/mccarthy.htm>

The Cold War:

<http://www.stmartin.edu/~dprice/cold.war.html>

Essay on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy:

<http://www.mhrcc.org/hfcsd/essay.html>

Essay on Blacklisting in Hollywood:

<http://www.mhrcc.org/hfcsd/essay97.html>

CNN, 50 years later:

<http://gabrielmedia.org/news/blacklist.html>

McCarthyism-A Multimedia Presentation:

<http://webcorp.com/mccarthy/mccarthypage.htm>

McCarthyism In The 1950s:

<http://www.port-aransas.k12.tx.us/HS/HIST/mcCarthy1.html>

Dr. Fred Schwarz, "You Can Trust the Communists (to be Communists)":

<http://dept.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/schwarz-cover.html>

How to Learn From the Blacklist:

<http://dept.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/learn-from-blacklist.html>

Naming Names-"The Social Costs:

<http://www.english.upenn.edu/%7Eafilreis/50s/navasky-social-costs.html>

Hollywood Blacklist: <http://www.english.upenn.edu/%7Eafilreis/50s/navasky-social-costs.html>

<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/blacklist.html>

<http://classicfilm.about.com/movies/classicfilm/library/weekly/aa032899.htm>

<http://www.gis.net/~scatt/blacklist.html>

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~kemarsh/mccarthy/hollywood.html>

http://www.linklane.com/h/hollywood_blacklist.htm

Use in the classroom

1. With all of the information provided within these web sites there is a multitude of different directions that any teacher could take the students. First however, students need to be directed to look for certain information with some leading questions. Below are some possible questions to use with your students.

PURITANISM:

- a. What was the basic religion of the villagers of Salem during the 1690s?
- b. Did their religious beliefs have any influence? What about the devil?
- c. How did the Puritans look upon witchcraft?

SALEM WITCHES:

- a. Who were the victims of this hysteria?
- b. Is there such a thing as "good" witch, "bad" witch? What started the hysteria?
- c. What was the punishment handed out?

McCARTHYISM:

- a. Who was Senator Joseph McCarthy? Why was he such a strong anticommunist? What is his political legacy?
- b. Who were the major victims of the McCarthyism hysteria?
- c. What does the term "Red Scare" mean? What does "blacklisted" mean?
- d. What type of punishment was given out?

GENERAL:

- a. Who were the accusers or finger pointers of these witch-hunts? Do you see any similarities between the two witch-hunts?
- b. What was it about the victims in each event that caused them to be branded?
- c. What type of evidence was used in both events? Was the evidence any stronger against the Communists and the Salem witches?
- d. Why did people keep silent about the events especially knowing that an innocent person was falsely accused?

e. Would you compare either event with the investigations against terrorists in the United States today?

f. What did McCarthyism prove or accomplish?

2. The findings from the Internet research could also be used to generate an essay on the similarities and differences between McCarthyism and the Salem Witch Trial. A political cartoon showing the similarities could also prove to be helpful in revealing the underlying human connections. Once the students begin to understand that these witch-hunts are not unique to any one period in history, then they can begin to look for them in other areas of society. There have been other events throughout US and world history, which display many of the same characteristics. In the 1820s there was a similar wave of hysteria over the Freemasons. Their influence stretched deep into the political power in America, which eventually scared Americans into a witch-hunt of sorts. One cannot deny the current connections between the actions current administration against suspected terrorists and other witch-hunts. Any of these connections could be developed further.

The Cinematic Connections with McCarthyism

There are a fair amount of movies that touch on issues that relate very well to the McCarthy investigations and the Cold War. The Cold War film with the most acclaim may be Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, the satirical Cold War classic by Stanley Kubrick offer an interesting look into the Cold War. The movie seems to reveal the absolute insanity of the arms race and the frenzy of all that were involved. The black comedy displayed depicts the leaders of both the United States and the Soviet Union as comic figures out of touch with reality.

The following is some very basic information about the film.

Running Length: 1:33

MPAA Classification: No MPAA Rating (Mature themes, sexual innuendo)

Cast: Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Slim Pickens, Sterling Hayden, Peter Bull

Director: Stanley Kubrick

Producer: Stanley Kubrick

Screenplay: Stanley Kubrick, Peter George, and Terry Southern based on the novel Red

The Crucible, a play by Arthur Miller written in 1952, is a powerful film not immediately known for its connections to McCarthyism. The film version, created in 1996, portrays the hysteria that spread throughout Salem during the witch trials in the 1690s. Miller was making an unmistakable connection between the events in Salem with the Red Scare. While teachers should caution their students on some of the sexual material in the film, it is certainly a movie suitable for older secondary students.

Cast: Daniel Day-Lewis, Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield

Director: Nicholas Hytner

Rating: PG-13

Running Length: 2 hours 3 minutes

Other Cold War Movies:

Ice Station Zebra

The Day After

The Spy Who Came in from the Cold

The Manchurian Candidate

Fail Safe

Use in the classroom

1. Dr. Strangelove

One way to bring home the seriousness of the arms race is to show how close the United States and the Soviet Union have come to a nuclear war, or how close we've been to accidentally detonating a nuclear bomb. The following scenarios are from some of the more well known nuclear accidents.

Nuclear Accidents

<http://www.nuclearfiles.org/kinuclearweapons/anwindex.html>

20 Mishaps That Might Have Started Accidental Nuclear War

by Alan F. Philips, M.D.

February 13, 1950

A B-36 Bomber drops a nuclear weapon from 8,000 ft. over the Pacific Ocean before crashing after experiencing serious mechanical difficulties on a simulated combat mission. Only the weapon's explosive material detonates. The bomb was never recovered from the ocean.

March 10, 1957

A U.S. Air Force B-47 bomber flying from Florida to Europe with two capsules of nuclear materials for bombs fails to meet its aerial refueling plane. No traces are ever found.

July 28, 1957

A C-124 aircraft en-route from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, loses power in two engines and jettisons two nuclear weapons over the Atlantic ocean. The nuclear weapons were never found.

March 11, 1958

A B-47 bomber accidentally drops a nuclear weapon over Mars Bluff, South Carolina. The conventional explosive trigger detonates, leaving a crater 75 feet wide and 35 feet deep.

November 4, 1958

A B-47 catches fire on take-off and crashes, killing one crew member. The high explosive in the nuclear weapon on board explodes leaving a crater 35 feet in diameter and 6 feet deep. Nuclear materials are recovered near the crash site.

January 23, 1961

A B-52 bomber carrying two 24 megaton bombs crashes at Goldsboro, North Carolina. On one of the bombs, five of six interlocking safety devices fail, and a single switch prevents detonation. The explosion would have been 1,800 times more powerful than the bomb exploded at Hiroshima.

January 17, 1966

A B-52 bomber carrying nuclear weapons has a midair accident while refueling and drops four nuclear weapons on Palomares, Spain. Although no nuclear explosion occurs, conventional explosions in two of the weapons scatter radioactive material over a populated area.

January 21, 1968

A B-52 bomber crashes while attempting an emergency landing at Thule Air Force Base, Greenland. The high explosive components of all four nuclear weapons aboard detonate, producing plutonium contamination over an area approximately 880,000 sq. feet.

June 3, 1980

A 46-cent computer chip fails, causing the mistaken detection of a Soviet missile attack by the NORAD system. About 100 B-52 bombers were readied for take off along with the President's airborne command post before the error is detected.

September 20, 1980

A technician dropping a wrench and breaking a fuel tank causes an explosion in the silo of a Titan II Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile. The explosion blows off the 740-ton door and sends the re-entry vehicle with its 9-megaton warhead 600 feet into the air, killing one man and injuring 21 others.

2. The Crucible

This film could weld together very nicely with the Internet research on the connections between the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism. The piece does culminate in a portrayal of the very thing that all of the research points to. While not historically accurate, it still reveals the paranoia and hysteria that goes hand in hand with both events. The film has another upside as well. The interdisciplinary connections with an English class are quite evident. The students could read the play in conjunction with the film. In either case, there are some powerful themes that could be pointed out with discussions about the film or questions for students to answer.

a. Environment

What aspect of Puritan life may have made them more apt to a scare like this?

b. Opportunists - Motive

What was Abigail Williams's true motives for claiming that she had seen the Devil? What was it that she wanted?

c. Hysteria

Why and how did the accusations of witchcraft spread to many innocent people?

d. Abuse of Power

In what ways did the different characters abuse their power?

Abigail Williams

John Proctor

Reverend Parris

Judge Danforth

e. Normal Legal traditions fail

Why didn't the normal legal proceedings work in Salem? Why were they abandoned?

Xenophobia and Paranoia, a Simulation

Reading documents and analyzing arguments is important for students when trying to grasp what was happening during the Red Scare. However, it is also helpful to get the students to simulate the feelings and thoughts of people who lived in the 1950s. This activity establishes an environment that persuades students to make decisions based on fear and insinuation. It is modeled after the Cold War and the way in which a foreign threat changes society from within. I call this activity Survivor Social Studies.

Objectives

The students will be able to...

1. Develop their philosophies of government and economics
2. Analyze how societies react to foreign threats
3. Examine the ways in which civil liberties are compromised when facing a foreign threat
4. Show how the power of a military increases when societies face a foreign threat.

Overall Summary of the Lesson

The students pretend that they are stranded on a Pacific island and forced to design a government and economy with the other survivors of a ship wreck. Things seem innocent enough until the survivors discover another tribe of survivors on the other side of the island. The foreign tribe is beginning to encroach on their space, and the conflict reaches its peak when one tribe accidentally kills a member of the opposing tribe. The way in which the students react to the other tribe shows how Americans and Russians reacted to one another during the Cold War. Each country posed a threat to the other, and the conflict resulted in drastic changes within each society. From the different reactions

given by the students teachers can usually relate just about everything that took place during the Cold War with the activity. For example the students are usually very militaristic and create many devices that could kill the other tribe members. This is an obvious connection with the Arms Race during the Cold War.

The simulation also has one other aspect to it. The assignments and scenarios are written from the perspective of each of the two tribes. The students in class are given only the perspective of one tribe, while an opposing group of students is given the perspective of the other tribe. When the students finally realize this, they are asked to negotiate some type of truce. This adds another dimension to the activity. Now students have to be made aware of different perspectives. This helps them understand that there are always two sides to everything, which was especially true during the events of the Cold War.

Survivor Social Studies Worksheet 1

Suppose you and your group members are among a group of 10 shipwrecked travelers. None of you know one another, and you land on a beautiful island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. As far as you know no one else lives on the island; however, it is quite large. You have no reason to suspect any rescue efforts because it was believed that your ship sunk with no survivors. You have to develop a way to survive on the island quite possibly forever.

Island Resources

1. Coconuts, bananas and other fruits and Fresh Water
2. Some signs of small wildlife: rodents, rabbits, monkeys etc...
3. Fish in the ocean
4. The Island is covered with a dense jungle, and the only habitable areas are near the ocean shore.

Group Basic Needs

1. Shelter
2. Need to get the food and water
3. Fire
4. Cooks

Group organizational needs

1. Rules and Consequences
2. Division of Labor
3. Some type of government and leadership
4. Distribution of goods

Questions (Answer on a separate sheet of paper, one for each group)

1. Will everyone in your group be equal? (Assume everyone is your age) Why or Why not?

2. Design your government or basic leadership structure. How will the leader or leaders be chosen, and what will his/her powers be?

3. How will you decide who does which jobs?

4. How will the products made (shelter), caught (fish or game) or gathered (fruit) be distributed?

5. What rules will be established? Who will enforce them? What will the consequences be?

Survivor Social Studies Worksheet 2A

Enter: a rival

A few months after the shipwreck some of your tribe begin to notice signs of other humans. They noticed footprints, footpaths, and fruit on your trees were disappearing. Soon after some of the members of your tribe came into contact with another group of shipwrecked people. It becomes very clear that their tribe has been living on the half of the island that your tribe has not used. Several problems arise immediately.

Problems

1. The coveted coconut trees near the middle of the island are being used up and each tribe is claiming ownership of the trees. The trees are important for food and for the milk inside.
2. Hunting parties from each tribe are entering very close to the other tribe's living areas.
3. The other tribe is also using one of your drinking ponds for a bathing pond.
4. The situation was made worse when a member from the opposing tribe speared a member of your tribe when he was hunting. The spear thrower was then speared and killed by your tribe members. Your tribe member was not badly injured. He was hit in the leg and soon recovered.
5. Your tribe members are satisfied with the retaliation, and believe that it will send a message to the other tribe not to mess with your hunters. Though, the situation has made your tribe nervous about retaliation from the other tribe.

Questions

1. What actions will you take to protect your tribe from the other tribe?
2. Will the roles of your leader change based on the new threat?
3. What new laws will be made based on the new threat?
4. What do you plan to do in order to keep control of the Coconut trees, and the drinking pond?

Survivor Social Studies Worksheet 2B

Enter: a rival

A few months after the shipwreck some of your tribe begin to notice signs of other humans. They noticed footprints, footpaths, and fruit on your trees were disappearing. Soon after some of the members of your tribe came into contact with another group of shipwrecked people. It becomes very clear that their tribe has been living on the half of the island that your tribe has not used. Several problems arise immediately.

Problems

1. The coveted coconut trees near the middle of the island are being used up and each tribe is claiming ownership of the trees.
2. Hunting parties from each tribe are entering very close to the other's tribe.
3. Their tribe is claiming that one of your tribe's most beautiful bathing ponds is their main source of drinking water.
4. The situation was made worse when one of your hunters mistook a well-disguised hunter from the opposing tribe for a wild boar. In a wave of fear and apprehension your hunter flung his spear at the object. When your hunter saw his mistake he tried to apologize and help the speared man, but it was too late. The disguised hunter was not alone and his fellow hunters quickly and brutally speared your tribesman to death. The incident was witnessed by another of your hunters, who was too scared to stop the killing.
5. Many in your tribe are calling for an immediate attack on the opposing tribe. Many are also worried that more hunters will be coming, and the entire tribe is in danger of eradication.

Questions

1. What should be done about the death of your tribesman?
2. What actions will you take to protect your tribe from the other tribe?
3. Will the roles of your leader change based on the new threat?
4. What new laws will be made based on the new threat?
5. What do you plan to do in order to keep control of the Coconut trees, and the bathing pool?

Survivor Social Studies Worksheet 3

Negotiate

Before hostilities erupt, it has been agreed upon by both groups, to have a meeting to discuss the recent situation. Neutral ground was chosen: the disputed coconut tree area, for the meeting. The leaders of the two groups decided to discuss the current situation, and possibly find a way to deal with it peacefully. Many in your group are also afraid that a traitor is among you. There is widespread suspicion that one of your group members has been collaborating with the other tribe.

Questions:

1. What will your goals be at the negotiations?
2. Is war inevitable, or can you reach a solution?
3. What will be done with members of your group that disagree with whatever decision you decide on?
4. How will you seek out the traitor?
5. What new rules or laws will be made to deal with the threat of spies? Will you try to enlist spies among the other tribe?

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