

PowerPoint accompaniment for Carolina K-12's

Joe McCarthy and the Red Scare

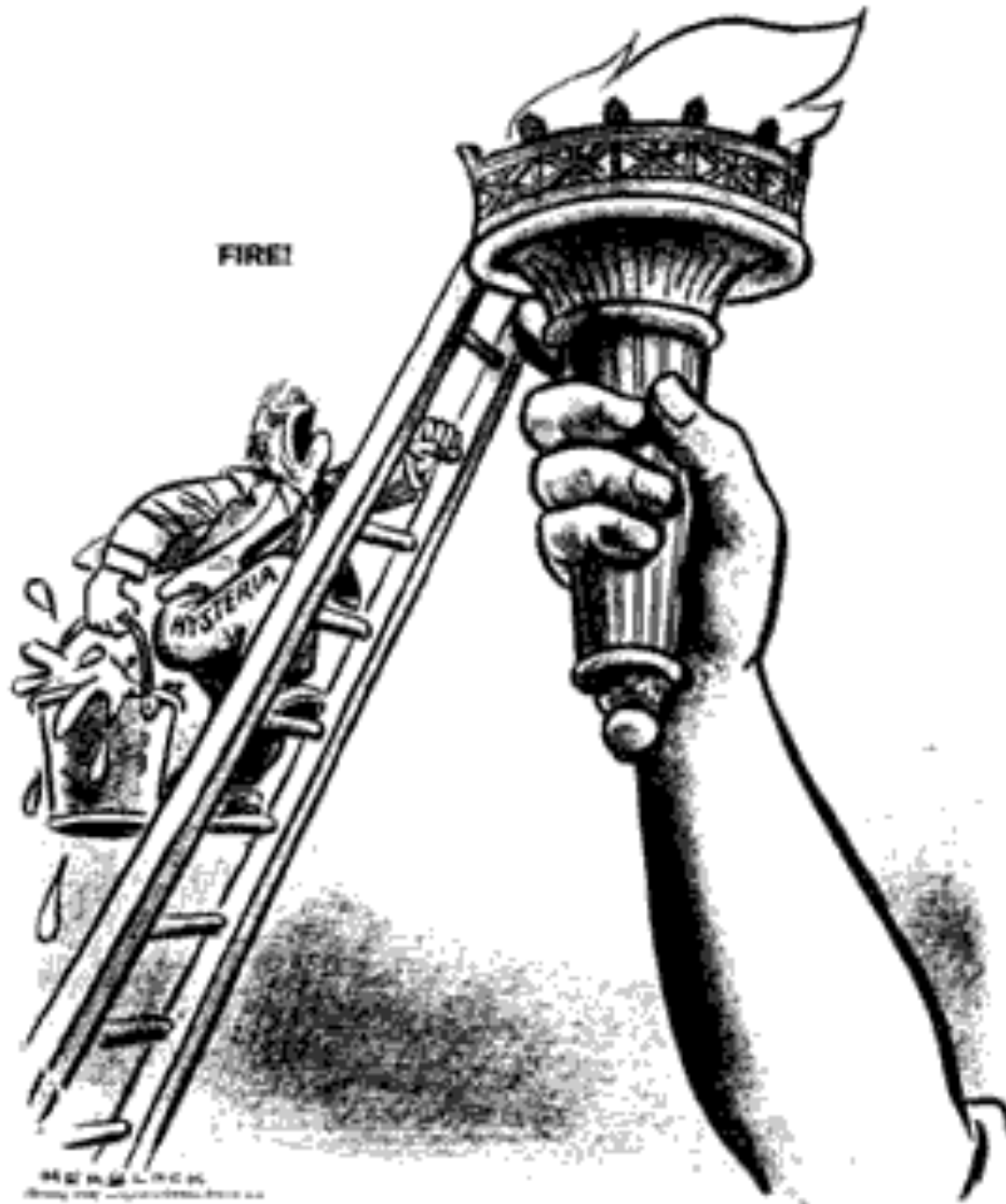


Figure 28. Put Them Out and Keep Them Out

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FIRE1



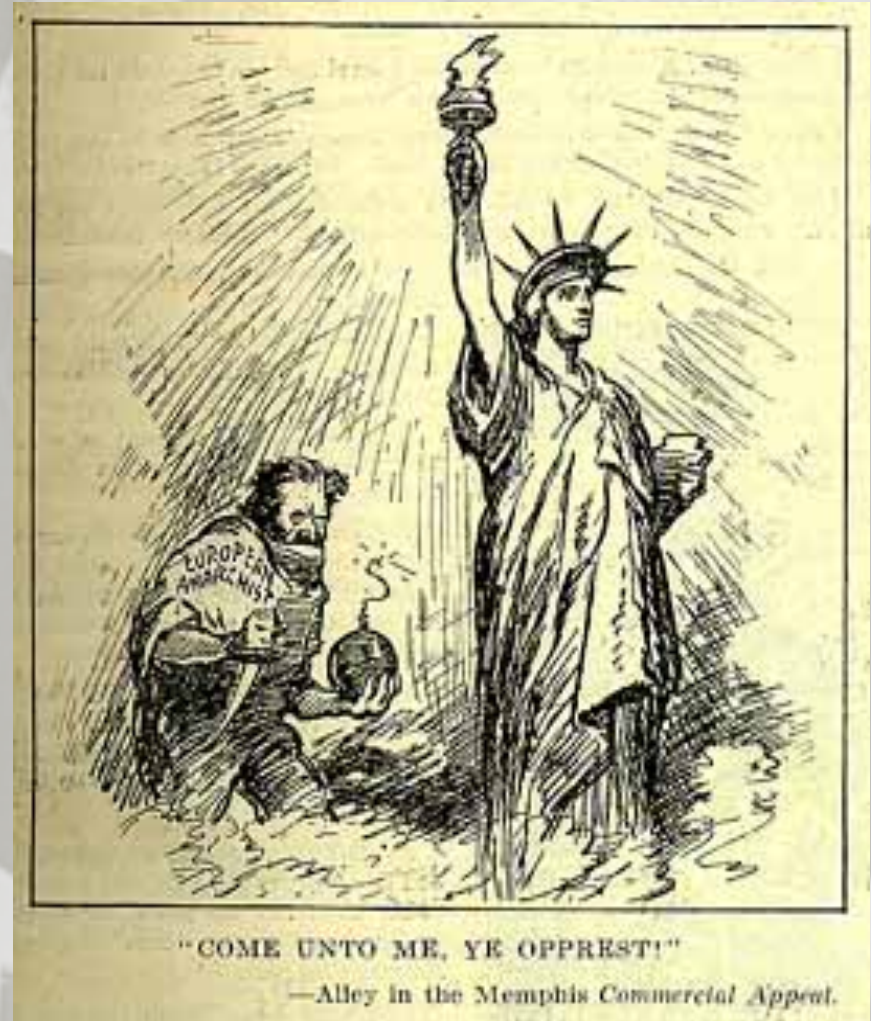
The Red Scare – An Overview

In the aftermath of World War II, Americans reacted with dismay as relations between the United States and the Soviet Union deteriorated, the Russians imposed communist control over much of Eastern Europe, and China was on the verge of going communist. People worried that **communists** might try to subvert schools, labor unions, and other institutions. Government agencies and private groups began to look for evidence of subversive activity. In this climate of fear and suspicion, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which Herb Block had opposed since its inception in the 1930s, became active. Herb Block recognized the danger to civil liberties posed by such activities and warned of them in his work.

Source: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/fire.html>

The First Red Scare

- The first Red Scare took place during the late 1910's and early 1920's.
- It was a reaction to:
 - The Russian Revolution (1917)
 - Comintern
 - Labor unrest/strikes in the US
 - The Palmer Raids
 - Anti-immigrant feelings
- After Palmer was discredited, the first Red Scare died down.



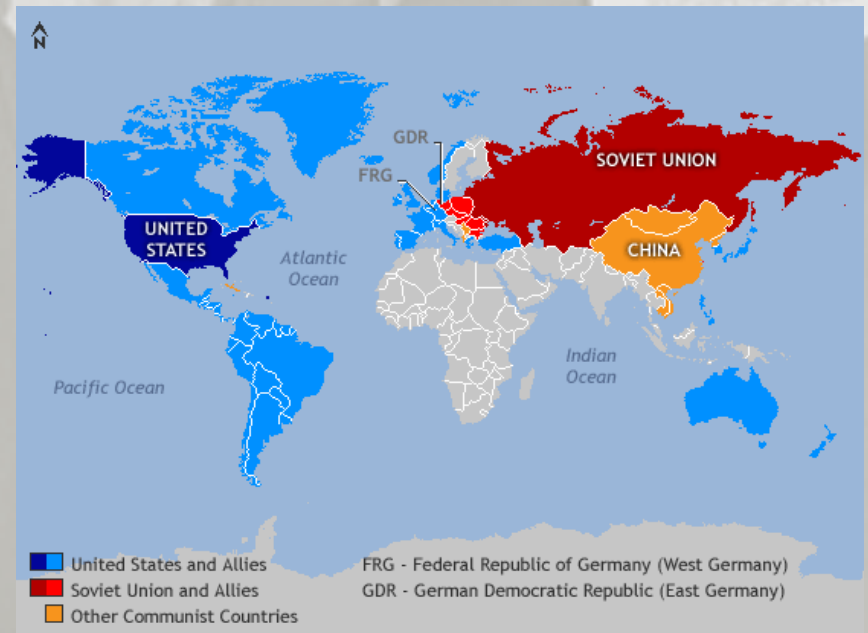
The Second Red Scare

- After WWII, the US and USSR emerged as the only two superpowers.
- The subsequent Cold War helped to start a second – longer and more intense – Red Scare.



Second Red Scare

- International Events that helped lead to a Second Red Scare:
 - USSR refusal to allow free elections in Eastern Europe after WWII.
 - Berlin Blockade/Airlift 1948
 - The “Fall of China” in 1949.
 - Korean War 1950
- Why would these events influence American’s at home?

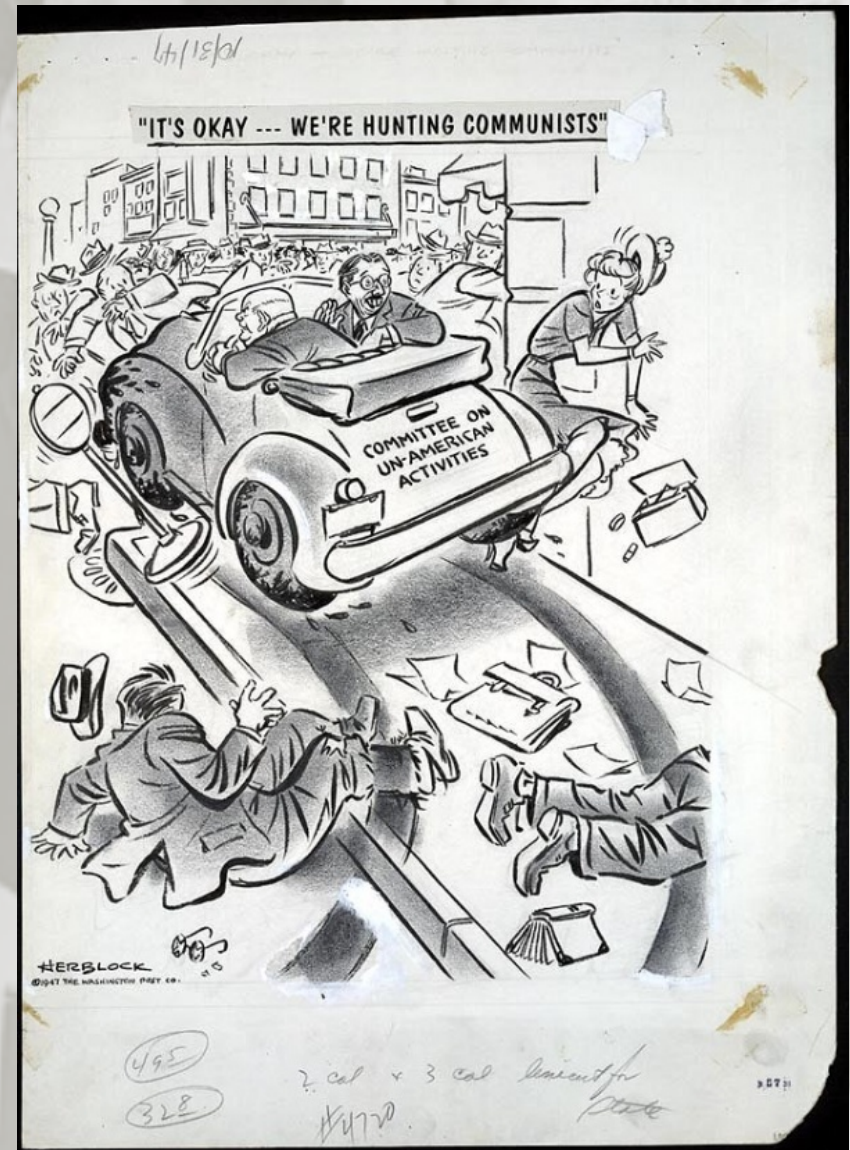


Second Red Scare

- **Domestic events that helped fuel the Red Scare:**
 1. **House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) (1938)**
 2. **Federal Employee Loyalty Review Program (1947)**
 3. **Hollywood Blacklist (1947)**
 4. **Alger Hiss Perjury Conviction (1948)**
 5. **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (1950)**

House Committee on Un-American Activities

- Formed in 1938
- Investigated subversive activities by fascists, Nazis, or communists.
- Held highly publicized hearings on:
 - Government
 - Armed forces
 - Unions
 - Education
 - Science
 - Newspapers
 - Hollywood



Federal Employee Loyalty Review Program

- Created by President Truman because of concerns of communist infiltration of the government
- FBI investigated federal employees for signs of disloyalty
- Around 3,000 employees were dismissed or resigned after the investigations
- Attorney General compiled a list of “totalitarian, fascist, or subversive organizations” in the US.
- Many people associated with organizations on this list were harassed or dismissed from their jobs.

Hollywood Black List

- Mid-twentieth-century list of screenwriters, actors, directors, musicians, and other U.S. entertainment professionals who were denied employment in the field because of their political beliefs or associations, real or suspected.
- Artists were barred from work on the basis of their alleged membership in or sympathy toward the American Communist Party, involvement in liberal or humanitarian political causes that enforcers of the blacklist associated with communism, and/or refusal to assist investigations into Communist Party activities
- Some were blacklisted merely because their names came up at the wrong place and time.
- While the blacklist was rarely made explicit and verifiable, it caused direct damage to the careers of scores of American artists and promoted ideological censorship across the entire industry.
- You'll learn more about this and the "Hollywood 10" later in the lesson.



Alger Hiss

- Alger Hiss worked for State Department and UN
- Whittaker Chambers, a former communist, accused him of being a communist spy and he denied it under oath.
- Later, evidence surfaced that he lied and he was convicted of perjury.
- Some doubted his guilt, but subsequent evidence suggests that Hiss was a spy.



Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

- Charged with passing on nuclear secrets to the USSR
- Many people doubted their guilt because the case against them was based upon the word of a confessed spy.
- They claimed they were being persecuted for holding unpopular beliefs.
- They were convicted and executed for espionage.
- Much later evidence emerged of their guilt



Joseph McCarthy



- Although the Red Scare started before him, many historians consider Senator Joseph McCarthy to be its personification.
- He rose to prominence in the early 1950's as a fervent Anti-Communist.
- The previously discussed events contributed to his rise to power.
- In February 1950, he gave a speech in West Virginia that captured the imagination of many Americans

McCarthyism

- In your group, define McCarthyism.
- Then read the two McCarthy speeches provided aloud in your groups.
- Answer the questions on a separate piece of paper.
- After reading the speeches and answering the questions, has your definition of McCarthyism changed? If so, how?

"YOU MEAN I'M SUPPOSED TO STAND ON THAT?"



J. K. B. 1954
FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

What Happened to McCarthy?

- Many scholars agree that the Army-McCarthy hearings ultimately led to his downfall.
- For the first time the American public was able to see Joe McCarthy bully witnesses, make baseless accusations, and act in a reckless manner.
- Public opinion quickly turned against him.

What Happened to McCarthy?

- He was censured for his behavior by the Senate in December 1954 and as a result lost all of his power and influence.
- He died in 1957 of hepatitis brought on by alcoholism.

Ongoing Debate

- After the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in the early 1990's declassified documents were released that some felt vindicated McCarthy.
- The defenders of McCarthy frequently cite new evidence, in the form of decrypted documents from the Venona Project - an secret code breaking operation run by the US during the 1950's and 60's.
- Other authors have said that Venona and the Soviet archives have revealed that the scale of Soviet espionage activity in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s was larger than many scholars suspected, and that this too is a vindication of McCarthy.

Ongoing Debate

- These viewpoints are considered revisionist by many scholars.
- Challenging such efforts aimed at the "rehabilitation" of McCarthy, historian John Earl Haynes argues that McCarthy's attempts to "make anti-communism a partisan weapon" actually "threatened [the post-War] anti-Communist consensus," thereby ultimately harming anti-Communist efforts more than helping.
- After reviewing evidence from Venona and other sources, Haynes concluded that, of 159 people identified on lists used or referenced by McCarthy, evidence was substantial that nine had aided Soviet espionage efforts. He expressed an opinion that a majority of those on the lists could have legitimately been considered security risks, but that a substantial minority could not.
- Former Reagan Administration Secretary of Education and conservative writer William Bennett has been quoted as writing critically of McCarthy in his 2007 book *America: The Last Best Hope*:

“The cause of anti-communism, which united millions of Americans and which gained the support of Democrats, Republicans and independents, was undermined by Sen. Joe McCarthy ... McCarthy addressed a real problem: disloyal elements within the U.S. government. But his approach to this real problem was to cause untold grief to the country he claimed to love ... Worst of all, McCarthy besmirched the honorable cause of anti-communism. He discredited legitimate efforts to counter Soviet subversion of American institutions.”