

Red Scare in Hollywood & the Age of Nuclear Anxiety

The Cold War

Post-War Tensions

- Once World War II is over, tensions between the victorious “powers” kicks up
- Once wartime allies, in the waning months of the war the US, Britain and Soviet Union were now faced with recognizing their ideological differences and their competing interests in the postcolonial world
- Stalin wanted to keep much of the eastern European territory wrested back from the Germans as part of a Soviet sphere of influence; Poland’s fate becomes a bone of contention at Yalta and Potsdam conferences in 1945
- Churchill did NOT trust Stalin, ultimately blaming him for the “iron curtain” that now divided the continent, while FDR hoped to win over Stalin to a vision of eastern Europe (and the world) as a place where national self-determination and freedom could flourish

Post-War Tensions

- When FDR passes away in spring of 1945, Churchill's suspicious approach is adopted by Harry S. Truman and the entire tenor of negotiations shifts
- American-style freedom is defined by democracy and the protection of fundamental liberties (classical liberalism), whereas the idealized Marxist vision rested upon equality of result and the nationalization of the means of production necessary to achieve it
- While Soviets distrust western capitalism, religion, and traditional European colonialism, the Americans and Brits distrust Soviet totalitarianism

Truman Doctrine

- “Containment” of the Soviet brand of colonialism becomes the US goal (US diplomat George Kennan’s 1946 “Long Telegram”)
- **Truman Doctrine:** In 1947, Truman responds to Russian attempts to gain inroads in “free” Europe by offering monetary aid, accusing the Soviets of terrorism, pressure tactics, and manipulation of vulnerable populations in Greece, Turkey, and beyond
- FDR’s “Four Freedoms” strategy always involved attempting to win over the hearts, minds, and economies of the postcolonial world with the American way of life
- With Europe’s colonies transitioning into “independent” states after the war, there was opportunity for the US to have strong, influential ties with nations around the world: The American Century (but only if the Russians don’t get there first!)

Marshall Plan

- **“Marshall Plan” (European Recovery Plan)** introduced by Sec’y of State George Marshall in the same year: \$13b for European nations to rebuild their postwar economies and secure their commitments to classical liberalism
- Soviets retaliated with offers of their own (“Molotov Plan”), winning Polish cooperation and strong-arming Czech cooperation with threats
- In 1948, an already-divided Germany is permanently separated (for over forty years) as the Soviets moved to blockade West Berlin in an attempt to take control
- American airlifts bust the blockade, but the damage is done; in 1949, Germany is formally split into two nations and the “iron curtain” is a firm reality

A Cold War

- Postwar “iron curtain” politics spurs the US and its allies to create the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for mutual defense against Russian invasion and harassment
- Communist victories in the Chinese civil war (1949) hastens US interest in investing in global military activity, and over the next several decades leads the US to enter direct military conflicts in Korea and Vietnam
- With the development of nuclear weapon technology, sought by both Soviets (1949) and Americans and first achieved by the US (1945), geopolitical tensions now present potentially annihilative consequences (Hiroshima and Nagasaki)

Red Scare

- The Truman administration's hard-line containment strategies plus real fear of nuclear engagement takes the pre-war mistrust between Americans and Soviets to a frightening new level
- Truman feels electoral pressure to take a tough stance against communism at home
- While socialist and communist movements within the US had never been very popular (and many who had associated with these movements were loyal Americans), right-wingers and rivals of the Democratic incumbents attempt to manipulate popular sentiments of fear against the president, and it worked

Red Scare

- Truman issues the “Loyalty Order” in 1947, requiring “loyalty reviews” of all Federal employees
- Anticommunism is primarily a right-wing invention, but...
- The mainstream left in general was also inspired to take strong stances against communism, including the Democratic Party, the NAACP, &c.
- The House UnAmerican Activities Committee and Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations launched investigations of communist activities in the United States

Red Scare in Hollywood

- After the war, HUAC is reorganized to investigate communist activity in the US. Their hearings actively exploit fears of communism!
- An investigation of Hollywood pulls entertainment celebrities like actor Ronald Reagan and Walt Disney into the fray, testifying against “communists”
- HUAC also subpoenas actors, writers, directors, et al. to testify about their own, and others’, political activities and allegiances
- Hearsay and vague notions of “communist” behavior or beliefs is used against members of the entertainment community who unionized or expressed certain progressive beliefs
- Those who refused to testify against others, or who were deemed too connected to or sympathetic to subversive activity, were in effect blacklisted from working in Hollywood

Red Scare in Hollywood

- *Salt of the Earth* (1954) is the independent effort of blacklisted artists
- Directed by Herbert J. Biberman (blacklisted), written by Michael Wilson, and Produced by Paul Jarrico
- Fights back by asserting the fundamental Americanism of workers' rights, union activity, and fighting for equality of all kinds
- Uses a number of real-life union workers and New Mexico locals - none of them professional actors (only five actors were professionals, and all of them had career trouble after participating in this movie)
- The film itself was blacklisted for a decade, as were many of those involved in making it

Salt of the Earth

- What do you think qualifies as “American values” in the late 1940s and early 1950s, according to the mainstream?
- How does this film reconcile Americanism with left-wing politics?
- What is fundamentally American about the political attitudes presented by the filmmakers?
- Besides promoting collective bargaining rights, what other progressive ideas does the film promote?
- How do you think this film would have been received in early 1950s America? Why?

Red Scare

- In Congress, state legislatures, and universities during the late forties and early fifties, anticommunist policies result in the investigation and harassment of many Americans
- Professors who refuse to take loyalty oaths are fired
- Members and former members of the Communist Party of the USA are investigated; former members Ethel and Julius Rosenberg are actually executed for allegedly passing nuclear secrets to the Soviets
- State Department official Alger Hiss is accused of communist activities by HUAC member Rep. Richard Nixon

McCarthy

- Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin won his Senate seat by essentially running against communism
- His *Wheeling Speech* from 1950 is peak Red Scare
- What are the accusations he levels in this speech?
- How does he frame the differences between the US and Soviet Union?
- What accusations does he level? What actions does he prescribe? What's his ultimate goal?
- What's wrong with his approach? How do you think he would react to the artists who produced *Salt of the Earth*, and the messages they present?

McCarthy

- In the speech, he accused the State Department of harboring as many as 205 (in an advance copy of the speech) “traitorous” communists, essentially attacking the Truman administration and accusing government employees of being “silver spoon” elites
- It’s a vicious smear; he never reveals any names or any proof, and ends up amending his total number of alleged communists to 57
- He describes a “show-down fight...between two diametrically opposed ideologies”
- Claims this is a war: Christian/morality vs. atheist/immorality
- Eisenhower sees religiousness as proof of moral superiority, but he doesn’t put it in the same terms, does he?

McCarthy

- Claims that Stalin is actively engaging in war already, and that liberal populations are shrinking while communist populations are growing
- Makes much of Lincoln's birthday, quoting him: "When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be from enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within" (COMMIES HEER!)
- His follow-up letter to the president accuses him and SoS Acheson of failing to act to rid the Dept of State of traitors/communists, and basically attempts to paint the Democratic Party with the broad brush of "COMMUNIST SYMPATHIZERS"

McCarthy

- McCarthyism, and the Red Scare in general, represents a crusade not just against “communism” or far-left-wing ideologies, but against social “deviance” of many kinds
- Atheism, feminism, homosexuality, and pretty much anything that threatened the traditional order was painted with the same brush
- As our textbook authors write, the movement was essentially a right-wing reaction against the policies of the New Deal and the political left-wing and moderates that supported them

Costs of the “Cold War”

- While not a “direct” war between the US and Soviets, the conflict becomes a battle of proxies around the world
- In some conflicts, the US becomes directly involved in the fighting, with boots on the ground: Korea and Vietnam
- The results are long- and hard-fought stalemate (Korea), tremendous expense and loss of life for ultimate failure (Vietnam), and having to back regimes that might be anticommunist, but weren’t exactly democratic (multiple examples)

Costs of the Cold War

- “The American Century” turns into what some thought was essentially a perpetual state of war or threat of war
- The “cold” part of the Cold War refers to the maintenance of massive arsenals (including nuclear weapons) essentially designed to scare the other side out of making too bold a move
- President Eisenhower’s *Atoms for Peace* speech to the UN General Assembly in 1953 - what was his solution to the dangers of a rapidly-nuclearizing world?

Atoms for Peace

- Cooperation to reduce nuclear weaponry
- Using atomic technology for peaceful means: nuclear power is clean and efficient
- Promote actual, lasting peace so we not only won't need the weapons, but together, we won't feel like we'd need them in the first place

Costs of the Cold War

- The US defense industry, mobilized during the war, becomes a major, permanent part of the US economy
- President Eisenhower warns against the economy's dependence on the defense industry for growth.
- The “Military Industrial Complex” has economic power that could translate into political power - war means \$\$\$ for this industry!
 - By 1961, 3.5m Americans work in the defense industry
 - The Cold War “arms race” and “space race” means government spending on defense and defense-adjacent technology (SPACE!) is on the rise

Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961)

- What does President Eisenhower feel is the United States' international role? What should she be endeavoring to achieve?
- What does he accuse the Soviets of doing to thwart our goals?
- What did our response to this become? How do we deal with them?

Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961)

- According to Eisenhower, what were the pitfalls of our defense plans?
- What exactly is the “military-industrial complex”?
- Why is it a threat to American goals and values, according to Eisenhower?
- How does he propose to deal with the problem in the future?

Eisenhower's Farewell Address (1961)

- “Throughout America's adventure in free government, our basic purposes have been to keep the peace; to foster progress in human achievement, and to enhance liberty, dignity and integrity among people and among nations.”
- The Soviet ideology is hostile to ours, and they are ruthless in their attempts to “take over.”
- Defense is key to protection, but needs to be employed in a balanced way to keep peace
- A permanent armament industry makes us feel strong and safe, but there is a cost: those who benefit from a robust defense industry could lead us to betray our peaceful values
- Don't let private interests, research institutions, and policymakers get too cozy

VR 7

- Using *The Salt of the Earth* and our three primary sources for the unit, discuss the positive and negative results of the Cold War.
- How did Cold War-related policies and attitudes help the US become strong, powerful, and prosperous? How did the Cold War harm American citizens, American international standing, and American values?
- Give examples from the film and readings.