

1. THE RED SCARE AND MCCARTHYISM

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the reasons for the Red Scare, including the Cold War
- Understand the impact of events in the USA on the Red Scare
- Understand the role of McCarthy and the impact of McCarthyism on the USA.

Following the 1917 Russian revolution, many Americans feared the spread of communism. After 1945, this fear increased dramatically due to the spreading influence of the Soviet Union and the events of the Cold War. Many people believed that a communist takeover of the USA was a real possibility. Thousands of people were questioned in private and public hearings and, sometimes with false evidence, some went to criminal trials and were convicted. Cases such as the Hollywood Ten, Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs seemed to prove to many that the communist threat was very real. Thousands of people lost their jobs, some with very little proof they had done anything wrong.

Encouraged by individuals and agencies such as the FBI, fear and suspicion of people who could be communist spies gripped the nation. As communists were known as 'reds', this became known as the Red Scare. The Red Scare reached a peak of total hysteria in the early 1950s, largely due to the actions of Senator Joseph McCarthy.

1.1 BACKGROUND: THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Understand the way the US government works.

Throughout this book you will find terms such as 'the **Constitution**' and '**Congress**'. These are all part of the political system in the United States of America. How does that system work?

The Constitution of the United States was produced in 1791, when the USA won its independence from Britain. The Constitution established a system of government for the new country.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

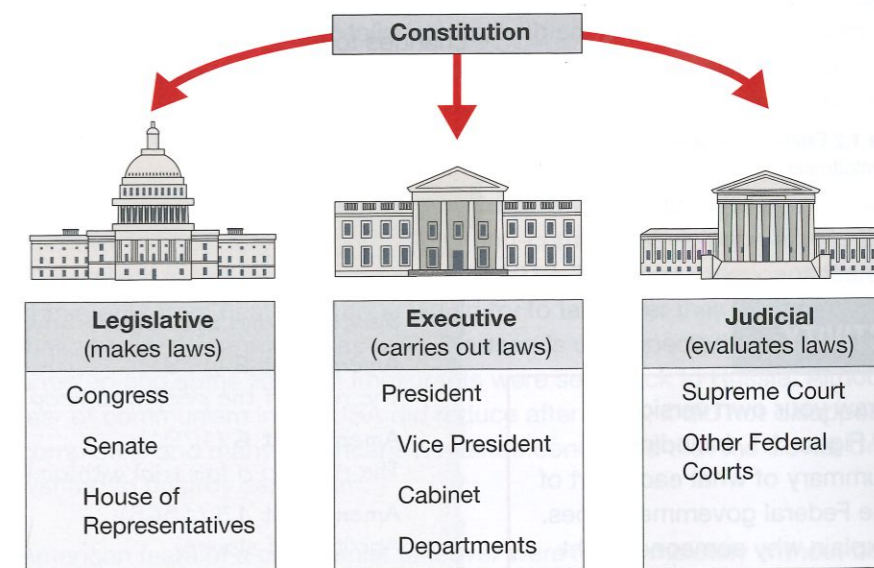
The United States is exactly what the name suggests – a union or **federation** of individual states. Each state has its own government, which has a lot of power within that state. The Federal government, based in Washington DC, is the government for the whole country.

KEY TERMS

constitution a set of basic laws and principles that a country or organisation is governed by

Congress the group of people chosen or elected to make laws in the USA

federation a group of people, states, etc.



► Figure 1.1 The American system of government

The Executive part of government runs the country. It is led by the president, who is helped and advised by the vice-president and **cabinet**. The departments that carry out government policies are led by secretaries chosen by the president. Departments include the **State Department**, **Treasury** and **Defense**. All members of the Executive are known as that president's administration.

New laws are made by Congress, which is made up of two Houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Supreme Court and other Federal courts make sure that the laws passed are constitutional and clear. Judges are chosen by the president, but have to be approved by the Senate. The president, vice president and members of Congress are voted for by US citizens. Elections for president and Congress are separate, so the president might not come from the political party that has a majority in the Senate or House of Representatives. This can limit a president's power to introduce the laws they want.

The US system of government was designed to limit the powers of each group or person, including the president. For example, laws passed by Congress can be **vetoed** by either the president or the Supreme Court but Congress can **impeach** the president and Supreme Court judges and remove them from office.

STATE GOVERNMENTS

KEY TERMS

impeach prosecute a person in government for misconduct while in office

amendments (political) changes to a bill or constitution

ratified given formal approval

Each state government also has its own political system, with a governor, a **legislature** and a supreme court. While the Federal government is responsible for foreign policy and some **taxation**, state governments have control over most of the laws that apply within each state. Examples include laws on education and use of the **death penalty**. In the period of this book, 'states' rights' was a cry often heard by those trying to prevent a Federal law being passed or to defend a state law. Each state also has a National Guard, commanded by the governor, to enforce the law. This armed force can be taken over by the president in an emergency.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

There have only been 27 additions or **amendments** to the US Constitution. An amendment to the Constitution requires a two-thirds majority of both Houses of Congress and has to be **ratified** by three-quarters of the states. The first ten amendments were ratified months after the Constitution was made final and set out the rights of all US citizens. The other amendments have made changes to the system of government or added new rights for citizens. Amendments will be mentioned frequently in this book.

► Figure 1.2 Examples of amendments to the US Constitution

ACTIVITY

- 1 Draw your own version of Figure 1.1, including a summary of what each part of the Federal government does.
- 2 Explain why someone might be committing a crime in one state of the USA but not in another state.

Amendment 1 (1791):

Freedom of religion, speech and the press, and the right to gather peacefully and petition the government

Amendment 2 (1791):

The right of the people to keep and bear arms

Amendment 6 (1791):

The right to a fair trial with an impartial jury

Amendment 13 (1865):

Abolition of slavery

Amendment 14 (1868):

Civil rights for all American citizens – equal protection of the law

Amendment 15 (1870):

Granting African American men the right to vote

Amendment 19 (1920):

Granting women the right to vote

Amendment 24 (1964):

Banned the use of a poll tax (or other tax) for voter registration

1.2 REASONS FOR THE RED SCARE: THE COLD WAR

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand how the Cold War developed
- Understand how the Cold War led to the Red Scare in the USA
- Understand how the events of the Cold War increased the fear of communism in the USA.

In 1945, the Second World War came to an end when the USA and its **allies** (including Britain and the **Soviet Union**) defeated Germany and Japan. The USA and the Soviet Union had emerged as the two most powerful nations in the world. They may have fought on the same side since 1941, but there was much distrust between the two **superpowers**. In the years following the end of the Second World War, this distrust developed into the **Cold War**.

COMMUNISM VERSUS CAPITALISM

KEY TERMS

capitalist someone who supports capitalism, an economic and political system in which businesses belong mostly to private owners, not to the government

communist someone who supports communism, a political system in which the government controls the production of food and goods and there is no privately owned property

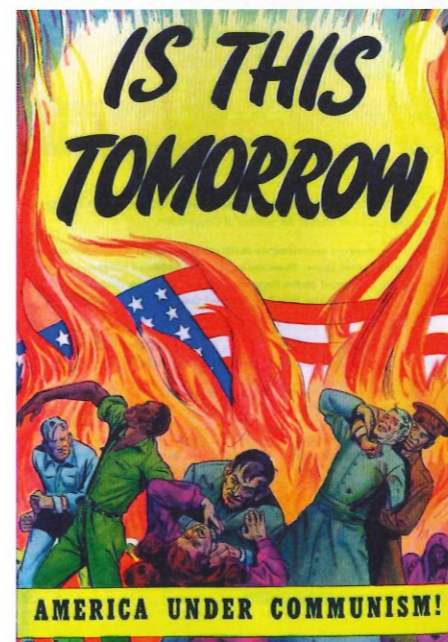
The USA is a **capitalist** democracy. This means that the government is voted for by people during regular elections and that businesses are owned privately by individuals, free of government control. There are usually huge differences in wealth in capitalist states, with some people who are very rich and others who are extremely poor. In a **communist** state, the only candidates in elections are communist and businesses are owned and run by the government. There is usually more equality in this kind of state.

In the revolution of 1917, the Russian **Empire** was taken over by communists. Shortly after this, there was a wave of anti-communist violence across the USA, which led to the first Red Scare of 1919–20. Many Americans feared immigrants from Eastern Europe would try to take over their government and make the USA communist as well. Thousands of suspected communists were arrested and some Russian immigrants were sent back to Russia. Although fear of communism in the USA did reduce after 1920, it did not disappear completely and many Americans remained concerned that the Soviet Union wanted to destroy capitalism.

American fears of a communist takeover were not completely without basis. One of the stated aims of some Russian communists in 1917 had been world revolution and to encourage communism in other countries. In contrast, the USA wanted the rest of the world to be capitalist because it needed other countries to trade with so its businesses and people would grow richer.

SOURCE A

The front cover of a magazine sold and given away free by a church group in the USA in the 1940s and 1950s.



EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

THE 'RED' SCARE

The colour red was used instead of the word 'communist' in many instances such as the 'Red' Scare and 'Red' Menace. Red was the main colour in the flags of the communist Soviet Union and Chinese communists who were trying to win the Chinese civil war. The colour red has long been associated with left-wing groups, going back to the 18th century. Some historians believe the colour red was chosen to represent the blood of the workers who died in the 'war' against capitalism.

THE COLD WAR BEGINS

ACTIVITY

Start to create your own timeline of the Cold War and Red Scare. On an A3 piece of paper, draw a vertical line down the centre and mark the years 1945 to 1955, making sure there's plenty of room to write events for each year.

As you read through this section, complete the left-hand side of the timeline with the international events that added to the fear of communism in the USA.

In the last months of the Second World War, Eastern Europe had been liberated from the **Nazis** by the Red Army of the Soviet Union. When the war was over, Soviet **troops** remained in the liberated countries. Between February and July 1945, communist governments were set up in some of these countries (see Figure 1.3). To Soviets, this provided a **buffer zone** of protection against another invasion from the west – up to 25 million Soviets had been killed in the Second World War. However, to many in Western Europe and the USA, it looked like the Soviet Union was trying to take over Europe.

On 16 July 1945, the USA successfully tested an **atomic bomb**. Despite being allies, the Soviet Union had not been told that the USA was developing this technology and saw it as a threat. On 6 and 9 August, the US Air Force dropped two atomic bombs on Japan and the whole world witnessed the horror and devastation. Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, immediately boosted the Soviet atomic research programme with money and scientists to try to develop his own bomb as soon as possible.

In 1946, communists in Greece tried to take over the government. Although the Soviet Union did not send materials or troops to help the Greek communists, it did voice encouragement. This added to American fears of a communist takeover of Europe, so the US government sent money to the Greek government to remove the communists. Throughout 1947 and 1948,

SOVIET EXPANSION IN EUROPE

► Figure 1.3 Soviet expansion in Europe by 1950



EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

A GIFT FROM THE SOVIET UNION

In 1946, the US ambassador to the Soviet Union was given a wooden copy of the Great Seal of the USA as a gift from the Soviet Union. In 1952, a listening device was discovered hidden inside the Great Seal – the Soviets had been able to hear everything that had been said in the US ambassador's office for nearly 6 years!

the remaining countries under Soviet influence in Eastern Europe became communist. Some were taken over by force while others held elections in which the only candidates allowed to stand were members of the Communist Party. By 1950, all the countries of Eastern Europe had communist governments and most had become **satellite states** of the Soviet Union.

THE TRUMAN DOCTRINE AND MARSHALL PLAN

SOURCE B

From the speech where President Truman announced the Truman Doctrine, 12 March 1947.

Today, nearly every nation must choose between opposing ways of life. I believe the US must support peoples resisting attempted control by armed minorities or outside pressures. I believe our help should be mainly economic aid to restore economic stability and orderly [well-organised] political progress.

To try to prevent more countries becoming communist, in March 1947, the US government, led by President Truman, announced the Truman Doctrine. This promised help to support any country resisting takeover by other groups or countries (by which they meant communists). In other words, the USA would help any country at risk of a communist takeover. The US government decided to back up the Truman Doctrine with financial help in the belief that communist ideas were more likely to take hold in areas of poverty. The Marshall Plan therefore gave millions of dollars of aid to many European countries suffering from economic problems after the Second World War. The Soviet Union saw this as the USA trying to extend its influence and Stalin did not allow Eastern European countries to accept the aid offered.

EXTRACT A

From a modern textbook.

Even though there was pressure on Truman at home, he did deliberately exaggerate the threat of communism to get support for his policy in Greece and to get the Truman Doctrine passed [through Congress]. He and Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, exploited the Soviet threat as they wanted the United States to take a more active and forceful role in the world. This included 'getting tough with Russia', as Truman put it in 1946. It was time he said to 'stop babying the Soviets' [treating them so well].

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A04

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

Study Extract A.

What impression does the author give about the US government and the threat of communism?

You **must** use Extract A to explain your answer.

(6 marks)

HINT

In questions asking 'what impression' does the author give, it is a good idea to choose language from the extract to illustrate your point.

THE BERLIN CRISIS

It was in Germany in 1948–49 that it looked as though the Cold War might turn into a 'Hot' War, with armed conflict. In 1945, Germany had been split into four, with the USA, the Soviet Union, France and the UK each controlling a zone. The German capital, Berlin, was also divided into four zones, but the city was inside the Soviet zone of Germany. In 1946, without consulting the Soviet Union, Britain, France and the USA combined their zones into one area that later became West Germany. By 1948, there were signs that the western zone of Germany was beginning to recover from the effects of the war. The Soviet Union feared the threat of a recovered Germany.

In June 1948, Stalin blocked all road, rail and canal supply lines into West Berlin in an attempt to make the whole of Berlin dependent on the Soviet Union and free from Western influence. President Truman saw this as a test of the Truman

Doctrine. He was not prepared to leave West Berlin to become communist and the Western allies decided to take supplies by aircraft into the city. Stalin knew that firing on the aeroplanes would start a war so there was nothing he could do. In May 1949, he reopened the supply lines. To the Soviets, this was a moral defeat and also left Berlin as a crisis point in the years to come.

THE COLD WAR ESCALATES

The events of 1949–50 convinced many Americans, including people in government, that the Soviet Union wanted world domination. It was providing support for the communists in the Chinese civil war and to North Korea in its attempt to take over South Korea. Despite substantial US support for their opponents, the Chinese communists won the **civil war** and took control of China in 1949. There were other communist **uprisings** in Malaya, Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines. Then, in 1950, communist North Korea invaded capitalist South Korea. The US government persuaded the **United Nations** to send military help to South Korea. The United Nations forces came from 15 different countries, but the vast majority were American. North Korea, on the other hand, was supported by the Soviet Union. The UN forces managed to push the North Korean forces back beyond the original border, threatening China. This provoked the Chinese into joining the war in support of North Korea and the UN forces were forced back to the original border. Neither side made further gains despite 2 more years of conflict. Fighting ended in July 1953.

Another very important development was the Soviet Union successfully testing its own atomic bomb in August 1949. Americans were shocked and afraid – their country's biggest enemy now had a weapon capable of huge destruction. The world suddenly appeared to be a far more dangerous place.

ACTIVITY

- In pairs, discuss the impact of each of the international events below on people in the USA. How would each crisis have made US citizens feel?
 - Eastern Europe becoming communist
 - communist uprising in Greece
 - the Berlin Crisis
 - communist uprisings in Asia
 - China becoming communist
 - Soviets developing the atomic bomb
 - the Korean War.
- Decide which of the events listed in question 1 caused the biggest fear of communism in the USA. Give reasons for your choice.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

Explain **two** effects of the Cold War on the USA.

(8 marks)

HINT

This question is about the impact of events. You need to give two effects, with supporting details for each one.

A01

A02

1.3 REASONS FOR THE RED SCARE: EVENTS IN THE USA

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the increase of anti-communism in the USA due to the work of the FBI
- Understand the influence of HUAC, including the case of the Hollywood Ten, on the Red Scare
- Understand the impact of the Hiss and Rosenberg cases on the Red Scare.

ACTIVITY

As you read through this section, complete the right-hand side of the timeline you started on page 6, with the events of the Red Scare in the USA.

THE ROLE OF THE FBI

KEY TERMS

Federal Bureau of Investigation the USA's domestic intelligence and security service

hearings where evidence is presented and people testify to a court or government body; not the same as a criminal trial

intelligence (n, political) information about the secret activities of foreign governments, the military plans of an enemy, etc.

The director of the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** was J. Edgar Hoover. He had very strong anti-communist views and played a major role in arresting suspected communists during the first Red Scare of 1919–20 (see page 5). As the Cold War began, the FBI started creating files of evidence on those it suspected of spying for communist Russia.

FEDERAL LOYALTY BOARDS

Hoover was concerned about communist spies working within Federal government departments and wrote to President Truman stating his belief that this was a serious problem. In response, in March 1947, Truman gave an order that allowed government employees to be removed from their posts if there were 'reasonable grounds' to believe they were disloyal to the United States.

Hoover's FBI then set up Federal Loyalty Boards to investigate government employees to find out if they were communists or had links to communism. Between 1947 and 1951, around 3 million government workers were investigated and up to 3,000 people were either fired or forced to **resign** because they were considered to be a security risk. However, no evidence of actual spying was found.

As fear of communism grew, many states, cities and even private businesses investigated their workforce and thousands of employees, some of whom were only suspected of being sympathetic to communists, lost their jobs.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

The House Committee on Un-American Activities (known as HUAC) had been set up by the US government in 1938 to monitor **extremist** groups suspected of 'Un-American' activities. Members of Congress were selected to be on the committee. In the climate of 1947, it began public **hearings** on the threat presented by the Communist Party of America. Hoover was the most important witness (see Source C) and saw HUAC's potential in educating the public and exposing **traitors**. The FBI began secretly passing **intelligence** to HUAC. HUAC then called suspected communists and witnesses to be questioned. The committee asked suspects, 'Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?' and sent people for criminal trial depending on the answers they received.

ACTIVITY

Read Source C.

- 1 What does Hoover imply about the size of the American Communist Party? Why does he say that this does not matter?
- 2 Find examples of language in the source that Hoover used to convey his belief that communism was a huge threat to the USA.

KEY TERMS

propaganda information, which is often false or exaggerated, to make people think or believe certain things

First Amendment the right of everyone to their own views and free speech

blacklisted marked as unacceptable and therefore not used

SOURCE D

A poster advertising the anti-communist film, *The Red Menace*, made in 1949.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

ONE OF THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

Hollywood screenwriter Dalton Trumbo was one of the Hollywood Ten imprisoned and blacklisted for refusing to give the names of other communists to HUAC. He continued to write in secret throughout the 1950s under false names and won Oscars, though he could not receive them, for *Roman Holiday* and *The Brave One*. When the film *Spartacus* was released in 1960, Trumbo was openly acknowledged as its writer, which helped to break the blacklist.

SOURCE C

On 26 March 1947, J. Edgar Hoover testified before HUAC.

[Communism] stands for the destruction of our American form of government; it stands for the destruction of American democracy; it stands for the destruction of free enterprise; and it stands for the creation of a Soviet of the United States and ultimate world revolution...

What is important is the claim of the communists themselves that for every party member there are 10 others ready, willing and able to do the party's work. This is the greatest menace of communism. For these are the people who infiltrate and corrupt various spheres of American life. So rather than the size of the Communist Party, the way to weigh its true importance is by testing its influence, its ability to infiltrate...

THE HOLLYWOOD TEN

At a time when millions of people went to the cinema, there was a concern that communists would try to use the film industry to spread **propaganda**. From October 1947, HUAC called 41 writers, producers and directors for questioning about communism in **Hollywood**. They named 19 people as communists. When these 19 were ordered to appear before HUAC, ten refused to answer any questions and pleaded the **First Amendment** of the US Constitution. All ten were jailed for 1 year for **contempt** and were **blacklisted**. Most of them never worked in Hollywood again. The impact of investigating Hollywood was that it gave huge publicity to HUAC's work and increased anti-communist **hysteria**. It also had a big impact on Hollywood as film makers increased their production of anti-communist films.



ACTIVITY

- 1 Explain why J. Edgar Hoover thought HUAC would be useful in his fight against communism in the USA. Why would the investigation into Hollywood help with this?
- 2 Write a news headline and short report for a news website on either a) Hoover's testimony to HUAC (Source C) or b) the Hollywood Ten.

THE HISS CASE

Alger Hiss was a member of the State Department who had been an important adviser to President Roosevelt in the 1930s and during the Second World War. In 1948, during a HUAC hearing, Hiss was named as a member of a communist group. HUAC called him for questioning, but Hiss denied being a



SOURCE E

Alger Hiss.

communist. Richard Nixon, a member of HUAC, insisted that Hiss had been **leaking** information to the Soviet Union, so Hiss went to trial in 1949. In January 1950, Hiss was sentenced to 5 years in prison for lying to the court. Although he was never **convicted** of spying, many people thought that he had been a spy, because he had been found guilty of something and sent to prison. Hiss had worked at the highest level of government, so this seemed to prove that Hoover was right – communist spies were everywhere, even in the highest offices in the land.

THE ROSENBERG CASE

In February 1950, Klaus Fuchs was arrested in Britain for passing on information to the Soviets on how to develop an atomic bomb. Fuchs confessed and was sentenced to 14 years in prison by the British court. He also named other spies, including David Greenglass. Greenglass was arrested in the USA and named his sister and brother-in-law, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. The Rosenbergs denied all charges of spying at their trial in March 1951. The evidence against them at the time was weak (although some historians today are sure of their guilt), but they were found guilty and sentenced to death. They were **executed** on 19 June 1953.

THE IMPACT OF THE FBI'S AND HUAC'S WORK

Many in Hollywood defended the Hollywood Ten and the weak evidence used to send the Rosenbergs to their deaths led to large protests against their sentence. However, these were unusual reactions as most Americans seemed to believe their country was in the grip of a communist **conspiracy**. International events seemed to support this.

It was during Hiss' trial that news arrived of the Soviet Union's successful testing of an atomic bomb. This, combined with the Hiss case, meant that US fears of communists had never been greater. Congress passed the McCarran Internal Security Act in August 1950, which made all communist organisations register with the government.

The Rosenbergs were arrested after the outbreak of the Korean War. Some Americans believed in their **innocence**, but many more blamed the Rosenbergs for helping the Soviets to make atomic bombs. They thought this had led to North Korea's invasion of South Korea.

The number of **prosecutions** due to the work of the FBI and HUAC, and the public nature of HUAC's hearings combined with international events, made Americans worry that communists were everywhere. Many people believed that they were surrounded by communist spies looking to bring down the USA. People were suspicious of colleagues and neighbours and afraid of being accused themselves.

The McCarran Act was strengthened in 1952:

- Communists were not allowed US passports.
- Communists were not allowed to work in certain jobs.
- In an emergency, anyone suspected of '**subversion**' could be put in a **detention camp** without facing trial.

President Truman tried to stop the act but few agreed with him in Congress, so the act was passed. A major reason why so many members of Congress supported it was the activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy. '**McCarthyism**' had increased anti-communist hysteria even more.

KEY TERM

McCarthyism a term used to describe the anti-communist hysteria of the 1950s

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A01

A02

SKILLS

PROBLEM SOLVING, REASONING,
DECISION MAKING, ADAPTIVE
LEARNING, INNOVATION

'The work of HUAC was the main reason for the Red Scare in the 1940s.'

How far do you agree? Explain your answer.

You may use the following in your answer:

- the work of HUAC
- the Cold War.

You **must** also use information of your own.

(16 marks)

HINT

For all questions like this one, you need to make a judgement on how far you agree with the statement and support your judgement with relevant points.

ACTIVITY

- 1 In pairs, discuss the impact of each of the factors below on people in the USA. How would each factor have made US citizens feel?
 - Federal Loyalty Boards
 - HUAC hearings on the threat posed by communism
 - the Hollywood Ten
 - Alger Hiss
 - Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.
- 2 Decide which of the factors listed in question 1 caused the biggest fear of communism in the USA. Give reasons for your choice.

1.4 THE ROLE OF MCCARTHY IN THE RED SCARE

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand the methods used by Joseph McCarthy
- Understand the growth of opposition to McCarthy
- Understand the overall impact of McCarthyism on the USA.

KEY TERMS

Republicans one of the two main political parties in the USA. Generally more right-wing than the Democrats

Democrats one of the two main political parties in the USA. Generally more left-wing than the Republicans

Joseph McCarthy became **Republican** senator for Wisconsin in 1946. His time as Senator was unimpressive but, after the Hiss trial, in February 1950, he made a speech claiming to have a list of 205 members of the Communist Party who worked in the US State Department. He then made several more speeches where the numbers varied until the number on the list was reduced to 57. Despite this, many senators and members of the public demanded an investigation. The Tydings Committee, made up of members of Congress, was set up to investigate but found that McCarthy's **accusations** were untrue. McCarthy's response was to call Senator Tydings 'un-American' and a communist **sympathiser**. Tydings was not re-elected later that year.

McCarthy had accessed the greatest fear of many Americans. His accusations also helped to explain why the Korean War, and the Cold War itself, was not going well for the USA. Therefore, despite the information found by the Committee, McCarthy still had the support of the Republican Party to carry out further investigations. In fact, the Republicans encouraged McCarthy as they realised he was popular and it gave them an issue on which to attack the **Democrats** in the 1952 election **campaign**. The Republicans won the election and most Democrats who had opposed McCarthy, like Tydings, lost their seats. The new president, Eisenhower, made McCarthy Chairman of the Government Committee on Operations of the Senate and, for the next 2 years, he led investigations into various government departments.

SOURCE F

Speech by Senator Joseph McCarthy, 9 February 1950.

The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency [powerlessness] is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores... but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not been the less fortunate, or members of minority groups who have been traitorous to this Nation, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest Nation on earth has had to offer... the finest homes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government we can give.

This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths [i.e. wealth and privilege] are the ones who have been most traitorous... In my opinion the State Department, which is one of the most important government departments, is thoroughly infested with communists.

ACTIVITY

Read Source F. What do you think would have been the reaction of many Americans hearing this speech?

METHODS USED BY MCCARTHY

McCarthy held hearings, firstly in private and then in public. He used bullying and aggressive questioning of many suspected communists, especially attacking high-profile figures to gain more publicity. He tried to get them to confess. McCarthy gathered evidence, much of which was fed to him by the FBI. He also fabricated more evidence against those he accused. There were Democratic senators and journalists who spoke out against him, but he simply attacked them for being communist themselves or being 'soft on communism'.

Even though nobody accused by McCarthy was ever convicted of spying, he continued to win popular appeal. Thousands attended McCarthy's speeches and millions watched his television appearances. Just being called by McCarthy for questioning ended people's careers as others assumed they were guilty. It seemed like the whole of America was in the grip of McCarthyism.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

The comic movie actor is probably the most famous victim of the Red Scare. He was born in London but spent most of his life in the USA. The FBI and HUAC were suspicious of Chaplin because he had never applied for US citizenship and they thought they saw evidence of communist propaganda in his films. Chaplin denied being a communist when he appeared before HUAC in 1947, but his public reputation was damaged forever. When he visited Europe for a holiday in 1952, he was not allowed back into the USA. He spent the rest of his life in Switzerland.

MCCARTHY'S DOWNFALL

McCarthy's accusations grew increasingly extreme. He accused a popular war general – George Marshall – of helping the 'Communist drive for world domination' through the Marshall Plan (see page 7) and through his failure to prevent the communist victory in China. President Eisenhower, himself a popular war general, did nothing to support his friend because he was afraid of losing votes. **Opinion polls** in 1953 still showed that McCarthy's actions were popular with a majority of the American public, but that was to change, largely because of McCarthy's own actions.

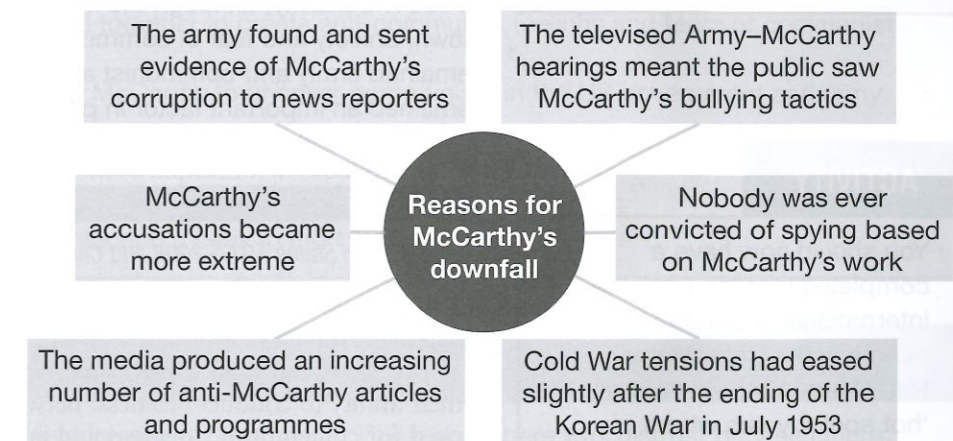
By the autumn of 1953, McCarthy was leading a new Senate sub-committee on communist influence in the US Army. In Spring 1954, the Army–McCarthy hearings began. They were televised and, for the first time, the American public could see McCarthy at work. They were shocked by his bullying. The army itself fought back, finding evidence of McCarthy abusing his **privileges** as a member of Congress and sending this to reporters who were known to be critical of McCarthy. More anti-McCarthy material then appeared in the press. On 9 March, Ed Murrow broadcast an entire episode of his *See It Now* show on McCarthy, using video footage of McCarthy's speeches and actions to criticise him. Many historians credit this show as an important reason for McCarthy's downfall.

SOURCE G

Senator McCarthy showing a photograph during the Army–McCarthy hearings. It was supposed to provide evidence against the secretary of the army, but was later proved to have been faked.



► Figure 1.4 Reasons for McCarthy's downfall



On 2 December 1954, the Senate formally condemned Joseph McCarthy for 'improper conduct' by 67 votes to 22. McCarthy continued his work, but the media no longer wrote about it. He died from alcoholism in 1957.

SOURCE H

Journalist Edward Murrow on the television show, *See it Now*, CBS-TV, 9 March 1954.

The line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one and the junior Senator from Wisconsin [McCarthy] has stepped over it repeatedly. His primary achievement has been in confusing the public mind, as between the internal and the external threats of Communism. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it – and rather successfully.

ACTIVITY

- 1 Find and watch the *See It Now* episode and/or Army–McCarthy hearings on the internet. What does it show about the methods he used?
- 2 Create a mind map of McCarthy's methods.

THE IMPACT OF MCCARTHYISM

McCarthyism had a direct impact on the thousands of people who lost their jobs or whose careers and lives were damaged by McCarthy's allegations. Companies and institutions were affected too. For example, the State Department lost hundreds of intelligent and talented people who may have steered US policies in another direction if they had remained.

However, the indirect impact of McCarthyism was bigger – hysteria was so common that almost everyone in America was affected by fears of the 'enemy within'. Thousands of ordinary Americans gave information to the FBI on people they suspected might be communists. People were seen as 'red' if they had **radical** or **socialist** ideas or even just different opinions. Trade unions were seen as communist organisations, which drastically reduced their influence and they rarely called for strikes. Fewer workers joined unions because they were afraid of being seen as communist. Many people stopped talking about politics or world events altogether for fear of being accused or seen as guilty. The Red Scare and McCarthyism also had a huge impact on politics as politicians rarely campaigned for **left-wing** policies and those who did were rarely elected. The USA was also damaged internationally because it was seen as intolerant of people with different ideas and more people became anti-American.

Some historians argue that the Red Scare lasted until the end of the Cold War in 1991. Certainly, although the mass hysteria of the McCarthy years cooled down, anxiety and fear of communism lasted long after 1954. US foreign policy remained firmly anti-communist and being seen as 'tough on communism' remained an important factor in presidential elections until the 1990s. However long it lasted, the Red Scare undoubtedly had a massive impact on America.

KEY TERMS

radical radical ideas are very new and different, and are against what most people think and believe

socialist relating to socialism, an economic and political system in which large industries are owned by the government and taxes are used to redistribute wealth

left-wing liberal, progressive views that believe in equality and government intervention to help enforce this

ACTIVITY

You should now have a completed timeline of all the international and domestic events of the Cold War and Red Scare, 1945–55. Identify 'hot spots', years where you think the Red Scare and McCarthyism reached particularly high levels.

EXAM-STYLE QUESTION

A04

SKILLS ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

Study Extract B.

What impression does the author give about the impact of the Red Scare?

You **must** use Extract B to explain your answer.

(6 marks)

EXAM TIP

For these questions, you need to firstly state what impression the author gives and then show how the author does this.

RECAP

RECALL QUIZ

- 1 What are the main differences between capitalism and communism?
- 2 Why did people in the USA fear communism?
- 3 Give two reasons why the Red Scare happened.
- 4 What do 'HUAC' and 'FBI' stand for?
- 5 Who were the following: J. Edgar Hoover, Joseph McCarthy, Alger Hiss, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg?
- 6 What were the Hollywood Ten imprisoned for?
- 7 What were the terms of the McCarran Act?
- 8 What methods were used by Joseph McCarthy to find communist spies in the US government?
- 9 Give three impacts of McCarthyism on the USA.
- 10 In what year did the following happen: the start of HUAC's investigation into communist spies; the trial of Hiss; the Rosenberg trial; the Soviet Union's testing of the atomic bomb?

CHECKPOINT

STRENGTHEN

- S1** Explain why international events had a big impact on the Red Scare in the USA.
- S2** Explain how the FBI and HUAC worked together to create anti-communist feelings and fears of communist spies in the USA.
- S3** Describe the methods used by Joseph McCarthy to uncover communists in the US government and army.

CHALLENGE

- C1** Were international or domestic events more important in creating the Red Scare?
- C2** Why did so many people believe the accusations of Joseph McCarthy?
- C3** Explain why anti-communist hysteria reached a peak in the 1950s.

SUMMARY

- The USA was capitalist and the Soviet Union was communist. This meant there was distrust between them, which increased after the Second World War to become the Cold War.
- During the years 1945–54, anti-communism in the USA increased as international events seemed to indicate that communists were trying to take over the world, including the USA.
- The FBI and HUAC launched investigations and public hearings on the threat of communism. This led directly and indirectly to thousands of people losing their jobs.
- Two famous spy cases – Alger Hiss and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg – seemed to prove to many Americans that there were communist spies everywhere, passing secrets, including information on how to create atomic bombs, to the Soviets.
- Anti-communist hysteria reached a height in the early 1950s, in large part because of the work of Senator Joseph McCarthy, who used controversial methods to question suspected communists and fabricate evidence against them.
- There was opposition to McCarthy and the Red Scare hysteria generally. This increased as McCarthy's accusations became more extreme, until he was discredited and the Red Scare cooled down. However, anti-communist feelings did not disappear completely.