

Anti-communism in america

Politics, International Relations



- Analyse the impact of anti-communism in the USA from the late 1940's to 1953 and the impact this had on tensions between the superpowers during this time. In the years between 1940 and 1953 the capitalist nations of the world such as USA became very concerned about the communist ideologies and its possible spread in the world. As a result, the ideological war period known as the “ Cold War” was developed. With the end of World War II, the USA emerged with a renewed sense of confidence as they believed that their role in the Allie alliance was a key factor when defeating their enemy powers.

It was not long, however, before ironically, this alliance between USA and USSR would be the cause for rising tensions in the world. It can be suggested that the rise of Cold War tensions led to the Anti-communist policy being developed in the USA which not only impacted its own country but also renewed Cold War tensions. This is evident when examining McCarthyism, the Witch-Hunts and Trials, and the Propaganda campaign. The US historical period known as “ McCarthyism” began long before Joseph McCarthy's own involvement.

There were many factors that contributed to its beginning including; the increased membership in the “ Communist Party of the United States” during the late 1930's and early 1940's along with Soviets establishing communist regimes across Central and Eastern Europe. Later USA was concerned with Soviet espionage inside government institutions, and at the same time politicians were slowing down social reforms or criticizing President's arguing they had been influenced by communism. (R) This practice of making

accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or treason without proper regard for evidence was later known as, McCarthyism.

Joseph McCarthy's own involvement began with a speech he made: " I have here in my hand in my hand a list of 205 – a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department. (McCarthy,). (R) As a result of McCarthyism there were many Anti-communist committees, as well as private agencies, carrying out investigations about possible communists in the USA.

Furthermore the federal government, under Harry Truman's administration with the help of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover initiated a program of Loyalty Review for Federal Employees, with the aim of determining if government employees were disloyal to the government. (R) Hoover's extreme sense of communist threat and numerous illegal practices including burglaries, opening mail and illegal wiretaps, resulted in thousands of government workers losing their jobs after unfair accusations or sometimes even without having any process. R) Among these victims was, Robert Oppenheimer, scientific director of the Manhattan Project who built the first atomic bomb. Historian Ellen Schrecker has written; " in this country, McCarthyism did more damage to the constitution than the American Communist Party ever did". (R) It was later proved that Soviet espionage did exist in the USA, but besides that fact it can be suggested that the American government could possibly had a greater threat of danger in order to react in such an extreme way, which created divisions still present in the USA.

The House Committee on Un-American Activities(HUAC) was perhaps the most involved in Anti-communist investigations government committee. Earlier, this committee had investigated a number of activities including German-American Nazis during World War II, and later focused on communism, investigating an espionage case against Alger Hiss, American politician accused of perjury, in 1948. It was not until 1947 that HUAC achieved its greatest fame with the investigations into the Hollywood film industry.

These investigations involved screenwriters, directors, and other professionals in testifying about their known, or suspected membership in the Communist Party, within its members, or support of its beliefs. The “Hollywood Ten”, as it was known, was a group of people formed by the first ten film industry witnesses that decided not to cooperate, and instead cited the First Amendment’s, which guaranteed freedom in speech and beliefs, but failed and were sentenced to prison (R).

Later victims had the option of either being informants, and thus, give names of communist sympathizers or going to prison if refused to cooperate (R). On November 25 of 1947, Eric Johnston, President of the Motion Picture Association of America published the “Waldorf Statement”, which announced the firing of the Hollywood Ten, and stated they would not employ any communist or member of a party which advocates to overthrow the government (R). This generated a “Hollywood Blacklist”, through which over 300 actors, authors and directors were denied to work in the film industry.

Those actions taken by the government not only placed USA's famous "freedom" in question and showed an excessive use of power until the point that citizen's rights were constantly violated but also created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion, which sometimes resulted in hysteria. These extreme measures led to a great division in the country that is still present these days. Distribution of Anti-communism propaganda was, without a doubt, one of the most successful measures taken by the USA government during this period of time.edu. au