

# The Red Scare

## **Background:**

After World War II ended in 1945, tension quickly developed between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviets were slowly taking control eastern Europe, placing the countries there under a communist form of government. President Harry Truman, other politicians, and many Americans were concerned that the Soviets could expand their influence outside of eastern Europe. They believed the US was not safe either. Many people feared that communist influence would find a way into the US and threaten American democracy. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin is famous for stirring these fears. McCarthy claimed that the US government had been infiltrated by communist spies. He claimed that Soviet spies could be film producers, politicians, journalists, or anyone that seemed to support “non-American” values. This created a widespread fear that almost anyone or anything could be working for the Soviet Union. As a result, many people were accused of being Soviet spies or communists. Some were innocent, others were not.

## **Standard:**

3.4.TS.7.B.a With guidance and support, use visual tools and informational texts to interpret, draw conclusions, make predictions, and communicate information and ideas.  
3.TS.7.E.a Generate supporting questions about social studies’ topics.

## **Materials Needed:**

Red scare booklet  
Biography sheets  
Discussion questions

## **Vocabulary:**

Communism- a form of government in which all people are provided the same amount of resources. There is no private property. Everyone contributes and receives based on their own abilities and needs. The government alone is responsible for making sure all people get the things they need.

Soviet Union- a massive country with parts in Europe and Asia. They were allies with the US during WWII, but quickly turned into a bitter enemy after the war ended. The Soviet Union used a communist form of government.

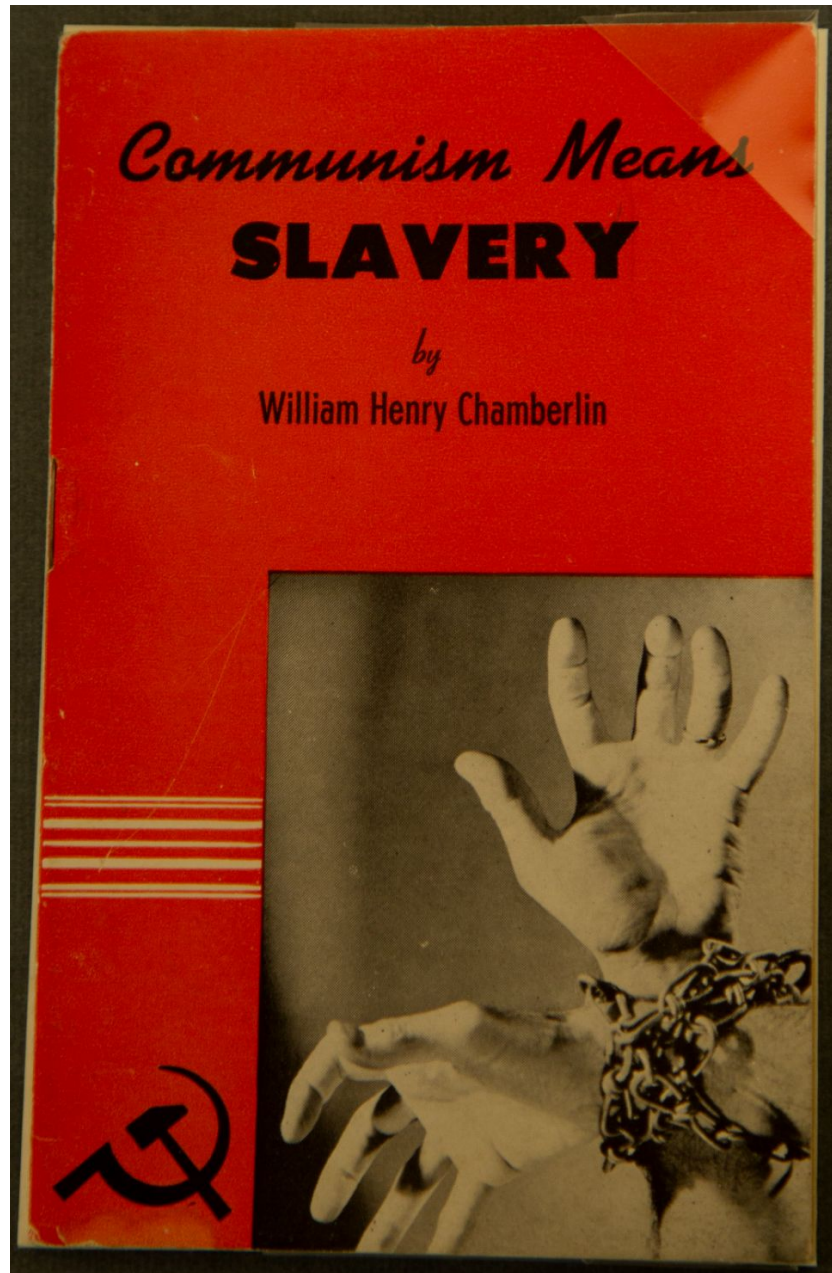
Joseph McCarthy- a senator from the state of Wisconsin responsible for building a fear that the US was internally threatened by Soviet spies and communist influence

## **Procedure:**

1. Discuss background information with the class
2. Define vocabulary words
3. Activity 1: Observe and discuss Red Scare booklet and the Soviet flag
4. Activity 2: Read/role play 6 characters to “Find the Communist”

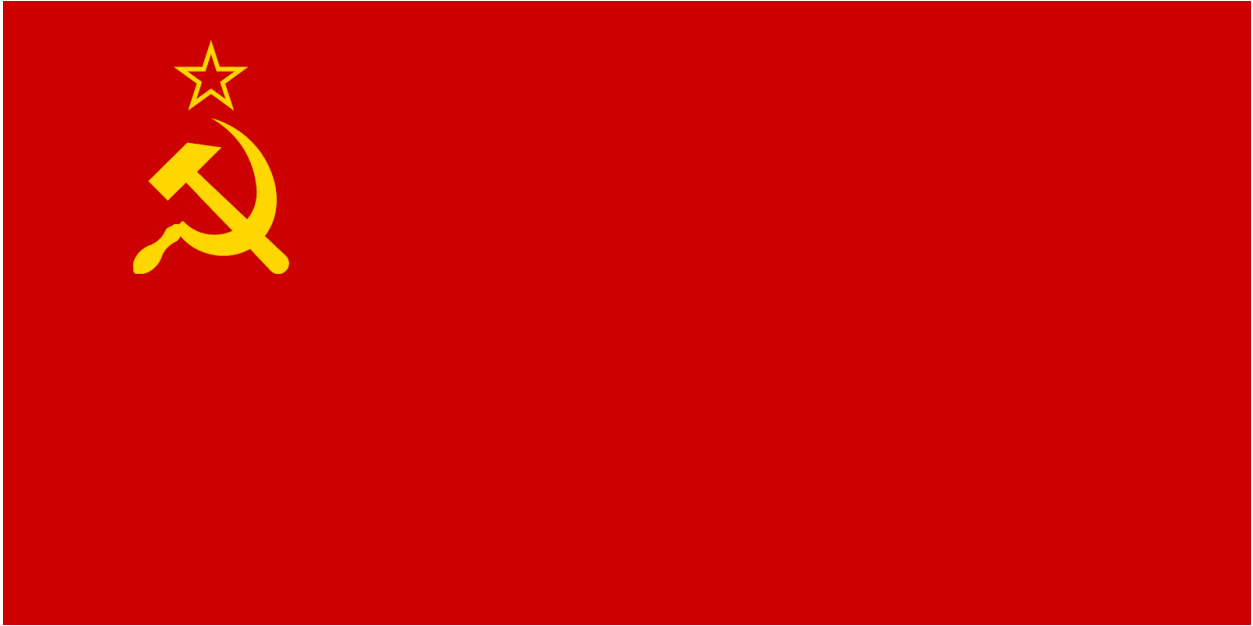
**Assessment:** Discuss the fears that Americans had during this time and what it might have been like to be accused of being a communist. Using the information you know about communism write 3 questions you would have asked someone to see if you could find who was a communist spy.

## Red Scare Booklet



This booklet describes Communism and its potential effects on American society. These publications were part of a larger social and political movement called the Red Scare – a fear that the spread of Communism could end democracy and the free world.

## The Flag of the Soviet Union

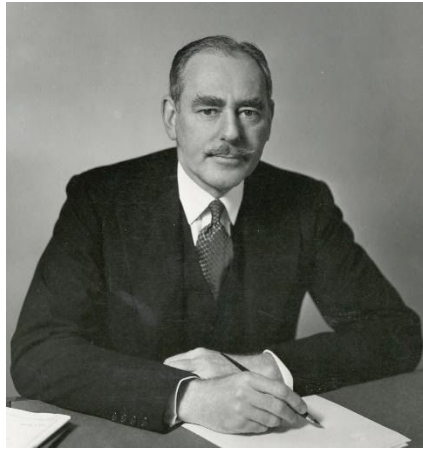


This is the flag of the Soviet Union. The Red Scare gets its name from the color of the Soviet flag. The color red soon came to represent communism.

**Activity 2:** In groups of 6, students can role play and read about each person. Each group can discuss, predict and present who the Communist spy is and share what information they had that made them think that. Ask them what additional information may have been helpful for them to figure out who was the communist.

## Who is the Communist?

Dean Acheson – Secretary of State



- Parents were immigrants from Canada
- Blamed for allowing China to become communist
- Criticized for allowing Soviet Union to make their own atomic bomb
- Joseph McCarthy accused him of protecting American communists
- Accused of not being tough enough on communism

Margaret Chase Smith – US Senator from Maine



- Publicly denounced Joseph McCarthy
- One of the first people to speak out against the Red Scare
- Claimed that every American had the right to criticize, to hold unpopular beliefs, to protest, and to have independent thought
- Nicknamed “Moscow Maggie” for her anti-Red Scare opinions

Edward R. Murrow – CBS Journalist



- Reported on World War II from overseas
- Criticized American Cold War policies
- Published a special report on his show, *See It Now*, that criticized Joseph McCarthy – McCarthy responded by calling Murrow a communist
- Investigated by the FBI for being a potential communist

Marilyn Monroe – Actress



- Investigated by the FBI for being a potential communist
- Was friends with suspected communists
- Married Arthur Miller, a playwright and a suspected communist
- Helped found the Hollywood branch of SANE, an organization that criticized America's use of nuclear weapons

Charlie Chaplin – Actor/Filmmaker



- Criticized American economic policies
- Argued against nuclear warfare
- Attended events put on by Soviet representatives
- Publicly accused of being a communist
- Investigated by the FBI for being a potential communist
- Banned from reentering the United States

Alger Hiss – Federal Employee/Lawyer



- Worked as an attorney for the US State Department and other agencies
- Helped create the United Nations
- President of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- Attended the first United Nations conference with President Harry Truman
- Accused of being a Soviet spy

## Answer

On August 3, 1948, Alger Hiss was formally accused of being a Soviet spy by Whittaker Chambers, a writer and editor. Chambers claimed that Hiss was a Soviet spy and that they had worked with each other as a part of an underground communist organization. Chambers showed evidence that Hiss allowed confidential State Department documents to be retyped and given to the Soviets. Chambers also led investigators to a hollowed-out pumpkin on his farm which contained leaked documents provided by Hiss. These became known as the "Pumpkin Papers."

Because too much time had passed since Hiss committed his spying crimes, the government could not charge him for it. Instead, they charged him with perjury (lying in court while under oath). Hiss served three years and eight months in prison.

Hiss's case proved that communists in the federal government were a real concern. Joseph McCarthy used Alger Hiss's case to convince the nation that communism was a serious problem in the United States.

Explain that many people of various backgrounds were accused of being communists. Highly trusted government employees were also accused. It did not matter who you were. Anyone and everyone could be accused.