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**Public Image of the USSR in the US between  
1947 - 1956**

*Diplomová práce*

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## **Bibliografický záznam**

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## **Abstrakt**

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá tím, jak Američané na počátku Studené války, mezi lety 1947 a 1956 vnímali Sovětský svaz. Cílem práce je předložit ucelený obraz toho, jaké názory americká veřejnost zastávala a pokusit se nastínit, jaké faktory tyto názory ovlivňovaly. Práce identifikuje tři hlavní témata, skrze která obyvatelé Spojených států vnímali svého studenoválečného nepřitele: špionáž a ideologickou subverzi, atomovou válku a totalitní podobu komunismu, tedy jeho podobu s nacismem.

První kapitola se zabývá špionáží a subverzí, obdobím, které se souhrnně nazývá jako Mccarthismus. Spíš než analýza procesů je zde cílem souvislost mezi takzvaným honem na čarodějnice a veřejným míněním. Druhá kapitola se zabývá především kampaní civilní obrany, která se spustila po úspěšném sovětském testu atomové zbraně. Cílem je zjistit, jaké informace měli k dispozici lidé organizující tuto kampaň a porovnat je s tím, co sdělovali veřejnosti. Třetí kapitola se pak zabývá tím, jak soukromá media a spolupracovala s vládními agenturami na takové kampani a také jak se ruku v ruce s oficiální propagandou snažila vykreslit Sovětský svaz a komunismu jako jiné podoby Třetí říše a nacismu.

## **Abstract**

This thesis describes how Americans perceived the Soviet Union at the beginning of the Cold War, between 1947 and 1956. The aim of the thesis is to provide a comprehensive image of what opinions the American public held and to try to show what factors

influenced the opinions. Three main topics that dominated the perceived image of the Soviet union are identified: espionage and ideological subversion, nuclear warfare, and the totalitarian nature of communism i.e., its likeness with nazism.

The first chapter focuses on the espionage and the subversion: the era now called McCarthyism. Rather than analyzing the processes, it aims at finding connections between the so called witch hunt and the public opinion. The second chapter is concerned with civil defense campaign, which started after the successful Soviet atomic test. The main target is to determine what information the people responsible for the campaign had and to compare it with what they told the public. The third chapter, then, deals with how private media cooperated with the governmental agencies on said campaign and how they tried to show the Soviet Union and communism as different forms of the Third Reich and nazism.

## **Klíčová slova**

**Sovětský svaz, Spojené státy, Atomové zbraně, McCarthismus, Propaganda**

## **Keywords**

**Soviet Union, United States, Atomic war, McCarthyism, Propaganda**

**Rozsah práce: 137 392**

## **Prohlášení**

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3. Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zpřístupněna pro studijní a výzkumné účely.

V Praze dne ... **15.5.2014**

Jiří Pondělíček

## **Poděkování**

Rád bych poděkoval svému vedoucímu za pomoc s hledáním materiálů a za přístup během celé doby psaní práce. Dále také musím poděkovat doktorce Marry Curryové a doktoru Williamu Burrovi z National Security Archive ve Washingtonu za jejich pomoc při přípravě podkladů pro práci. V neposlední řadě také dlužím díky svým nejbližším, bez jejichž podpory a pomoci by tato práce nikdy nemohla vzniknout.

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**V čem se oproti původními zadání změnil cíl práce?**

The main aim of the thesis has not changed. The main focus shifted and the thesis should describe and explain the period of nuclear scare rather than the momentous shift in the American perception of the USSR immediately after the Second World War.

**Jaké změny nastaly v časovém, teritoriálním a věcném vymezení tématu?**

There have been suggestions to shorten the period examined in the thesis. This could be done be either focusing on the period of 1945 to 1950 and exclude the Korean War and after, or by focusing on the era of late 1940s and first half of the 1950s with just a brief explanation of the preceding period.

**Jak se proměnila struktura práce (vyjádřete stručným obsahem)?**

The thesis should include following chapters.

1. Introduction - what, when, how and why
2. From ally to enemy - brief exposé of the years 1945-1947
3. Red menace - McCarthyism, witch hunt and
4. A Communist World - How the American media and propaganda perceived the communist aspiration on World Domination
5. Nuclear Scare - How the American media and propaganda reported on the USSR's nuclear capabilities, mainly its ability to hit the U.S. mainland.
6. Conclusion

**Jakým vývojem prošla metodologická koncepce práce?**

The methodology remains as intended in the original project.

**Které nové prameny a sekundární literatura byly zpracovány a jak tato skutečnost ovlivnila celek práce?**

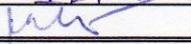
Some new and possibly fruitful primary sources and literature have been suggested: minutes of the meetings of particular governmental agencies, literature more focused on different aspects of Cold War which at the same time could affect my viewpoint. However, those are unavailable at the moment and so they could not have affected either the structure or the idea of the thesis.

**Charakterizujte základní proměny práce v době od zadání projektu do odevzdání tezí a pokuste se vyhodnotit, jaký pokrok na práci jste během semestru zaznamenali (v bodech):**

1. The most important change is the one in the time span of the thesis. The examined period should be significantly shortened.
2. This affected the structure of the thesis. The second chapter, which should briefly explain

important events and aspect of the period directly preceding the era investigated in the thesis, will most probably be shortened and it can even be integrated in the introduction.

Podpis studenta a datum: 2.3.2012 

Schváleno:	Datum	Podpis
Vedoucí práce	1.3.2012	
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## **Introduction**

The Cold War brought many firsts. It was the first war in which the atomic weapons were available to both sides. Owing to that, it was the first war which could hardly be decided by the use of force. It was the first war that was, with a few exceptions of indirect confrontations of the superpowers, fought with ideology; it was the first war fought prevalently with propaganda. Therefore, the minds and hearts were often more important than tanks and guns. While the last statement does apply to the whole period of the American-Soviet rivalry, the first two axioms are much more complicated. The Soviet Union did not have the A-bomb until 1949, which made the United States the only nuclear superpower of the start of the Cold War. Furthermore, the capacity for destruction of the new fission weapons, though terrifying, was limited. It was not until the late 1950's that the use of strategic nuclear weapons became unthinkable.

In other words, the war between the USSR and the US was a real, if unlikely, possibility between 1947 and 1956. However, there were certain limiting factors to the potential conflict. For the better part of the period, the Soviets lacked the means to hit the US mainland with their atomic stockpile and even in the later years just before Sputnik ushered in the age of ICBMs, they had only handful of bombers with sufficient range. The main Soviet offensive thrust, including the atomic bombing, would, therefore, take place in Europe. The Americans had to supply arms and men in order to convince the Soviets that such an attack would have been costly to them. This meant expensive armaments programs and the kind of interest in the European affairs the Americans had not been used to.

The early stage of the Cold War brought the Americans the entanglement on the continent, which they had always wanted to avoid, and the huge standing peace-time

army, which they had always feared. The question is, how they coped with this unprecedented situation and how they justified the sacrifices they had to make. The focus of this thesis is to see how the Americans in that period saw the likelihood of the war with the USSR and how they perceived the communist Russia as a nation. This thesis will deal both with how the average Americans saw their adversary and how their government and establishment presented or tried to present the enemy. As we will see, it was often not the same thing; the average Americans adopting in turn more radical and more moderate attitudes.

Three issues became the central points of the Soviet image in the US in that period: spies and an ideological subversion, a surprise atomic attack, and the likeliness of communism and nazism. The first topic will be discussed in the first chapter. The second will span chapters two and three; the second chapter will depict what the governmental officials knew about probability of such an attack and what they told the people, while the third will focus on how privately owned media joined the campaign. One part of the third chapter will also deal with the last issue. The reason is that this campaign was, as opposed to the civil defense campaigns, the result of both private and governmental effort. While the civil defense campaigns were initiated by the government and the private media were reacting to rather than setting the topic, the anti-totalitarian movies were produced at the same time, making it impossible to say with certainty which side created the topic and which reacted to it.

Since the topics are very dissimilar in their nature, it would be impossible to describe all of them using the same group of sources and the same methodology. Therefore, each chapter is slightly different in terms of sources and documents used and the way they are utilized. The first chapter will focus on what is generally, though not accurately, called McCarthyism. As the mechanics of this particular period of the

American history is quite well documented and addressed in many historical works, I will not try to answer the question of how justified or paranoid the spy-hunts were. This does not mean that the question will not arise at all, to be sure. Nevertheless, it will not be central, due to several facts.

Firstly, the answer to the question is not that much important to the main research question, which is how it influenced the view of the average Americans. Secondly, the answer to the question is complicated beyond the scope of the one chapter of this thesis. And thirdly, the answer to this question, even to this day, depends to a large extent on the political affiliations of the respective authors. I will be using books by authors of either persuasion. The books include Richard M. Fried's *The Nightmare in Red: McCarthyism in Perspective*, John Earl Haynes's *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, and Tony Judt's *Reappraisals*. Original documents either published in the edition *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare, A Documentary History* by Albert Fried or available on the internet will also be cited. These will provide information on how the central figures of the era and the elites saw the events or how said events are perceived today.

The findings will be confronted with the opinion of the American public as measured by the Gallup. This should help explain whether the "media crusades" against communism, communists and spies were influencing or reacting to the average Joe's point of view; the main question of this chapter. If it is necessary to illustrate a point not directly related to McCarthyism, yet revealing to the central issue, I will rely on Vladimir Zubok's *A Failed Empire*, and James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*. One book merits a special comment, Thomas Doherty's *Cold War, Cool Medium*. Since the beginning of the Cold War coincided with the ascent of television, it is an indispensable source for all three chapters of the thesis. Doherty collected various

transcripts of TV and radio shows of the time that would otherwise be unknown, because the original tape has been lost.

The second chapter will focus on the atomic threat. After the Soviets tested their first nuclear fission bomb, the US government tried frantically to prepare for such an attack. The preparations started despite the fact that a direct nuclear attack on the US at that time was, for various reasons, nearly impossible. The second chapter will thus try to answer the question of what the people responsible for the civil defense knew about the real Soviet capabilities of delivering a nuclear blow. Furthermore, it will try to explain, what they, as a part of the civil defense campaigns, told the public. Their probable motivations for disclosing the specifics they decided to make public will also be explored. This analysis will mostly rely on the archival material from the National Archives in Washington and the National Security Archives at George Washington University, Washington.

The documents vary from secret materials such as intelligence estimates prepared by the CIA or NIA, to letters, memos and public speeches of the crucial people of the period. Official publications and film strips are used to confront the publicly accessible information with the facts that the government had from intelligence. A variety of books is also cited. Two of the books are also used in the first chapter; *Cold War*, *Cool Medium* and *A Failed Empire*. The last one is specifically about Civil Defense, *Imaginary War*. Its author, Guy Oakes argues that no defense against nuclear weapons was possible, the people in the government knew it, and that the campaign had an ulterior motive, persuading the public to support the policy of deterrence. While this point of view could not be dismissed, I will try to prove it is inaccurate. My hypothesis is that they knew that the threat was, to a large extent, bogus, they believed in the usefulness of the program, and their motives were more varied.

Finally, the third chapter will look at how the private media and production companies responded to the governmental information programs. It will illustrate the difference between the civil defense campaigns that were, at least partly, coordinated with the government and the anti-communist campaign which was, more likely, a result of more deeply rooted convictions within the American society. To demonstrate the level of coordination in the case of the civil defense, a selection of letters between the people from NSRB and FCDA and the people in the media offering their help will be used. These letters were retrieved from the National Archives in Washington. I will also use several books that relate to the topic. Those are: Frances Stonor Saunders's *Cultural Cold War*, Kenneth Osgood's *Total Cold War*, and the aforementioned work of Thomas Doherty.

The literature on the topic is available, despite the fact that the scope of this thesis is limited and none of the books addresses the question of this thesis directly. The thesis will try to answer what the image of the Soviet Union in the United States was, how it was created, what factors influenced it, and whether it was a result of a concerted effort of governmental propaganda. Based on the analyses of the three key topic areas and the way they influenced the American public, I hope to prove that the way the Americans saw the Soviets was at least as much dependent on the external factors as on the campaigns. Furthermore, I will try to show that in some cases these campaigns were reacting to the events that had caused the shifts in the public opinion. Last but not least, I would like to prove that the motivations of the crucial persons varied to such an extent that speaking about the coordinated single purpose propaganda campaign is impossible.

### **Here be spies; McCarthyism and the image of the USSR 1947 - 1954**

When considering how the Americans perceived the USSR on the brink of the 1940s and the 1950s, subversion is one of the most important words. The fear of subversive activities of the communists at home was not new to the US public in 1947. The red scare after the Second World War had been preceded by the first red scare between 1919 and 1921. In the same way, the activities of HUAC had been foreshadowed by the Dies committee operating between 1938 and 1944, investigating both Communist and Nazi sympathizers. However, neither of these spurred as much controversy as the later anti-communist crusade. To this day, the authors writing on this topic are deeply divided mainly among ideological lines; liberals tend to see it as one great abomination and a dark age for civil liberties, while conservatives defend it as necessary means to rid the government and the society of disloyal elements. Those condemning it as a witch hunt choose more absurd allegations and accusations to paint the picture of an era of paranoia. Those defending it point out that many of those alleged communist spies had in fact been working for the USSR. Surprisingly, one does not necessarily contradict another.

On the one hand, it is true that the spectacular investigation of Hollywood in 1947 and the public interest it sparked had little to do with the communist infiltration in the higher echelons of the US government. The extensive media coverage of this extravaganza and the ability to end careers of screenplay writers, actors and producers because of their suspicious opinions or past associations with communist movements really does confirm the theatrical aspect of the proceedings. On the other hand, the evidence from the declassified documents from the Soviet archives together with the

Venona project files released in 1995 and 1996 show that the allegations of the defectors like Whittaker Chambers and Elizabeth Bentley were, at least partly, true.<sup>1</sup>

McCarthyism then was both an effort to find spies and potential threats within the US government apparatus and an exercise in propaganda campaign. For Nixon, the part he played in HUAC was a stepping stone to Vice Presidency. It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to describe the individual cases and decide whether the accusations were true or false. Moreover, it has been done by many authors before and the controversy in some cases still persists. The main focus of this chapter is how the hunt for spies and communists in all walks of life instilled, enforced or made use of the image of the USSR as a hostile power.

Firstly, it is important to define what is meant by the term McCarthyism. Senator Joseph McCarthy who gave the era its name was not the only person who proved his mettle by anti-communism. HUAC hearings began in 1945, the loyalty program for the government employees was introduced in 1947 and Hiss' and White's cases, which caused the biggest uproar, both started in 1948. All of these predate McCarthy's famous speech at Wheeling, the start of his short-lived career. Thomas Doherty, the author of the book *Cold War, Cool Medium* says "McCarthy is given too much credit for McCarthyism."<sup>2</sup> For the sake of clarity and consistency, the term McCarthyism in this thesis is used to describe all the anti-communist activities including those that had occurred before the senator's rise to fame. However, there will be a distinction between the investigations into communist subversion in areas like entertainment and the investigations concerning the government offices and spies. The year 1947 was a watershed for both.

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<sup>1</sup> see John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), Kindle edition.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), Kindle edition, location 525.

The aforementioned year saw two breakthroughs; the widely publicized Hollywood hearings and the introduction of loyalty oaths program for the government employees. Doherty describes the first: "Under the klieg lights of five newsreel companies and over the airwaves of four radio (but not television) networks, HUAC staged a political-cultural fandango more akin to a gala premiere at Grauman's Chinese Theater than a somber legislative inquiry."<sup>3</sup> The hearings started on the 20th of October and the first 'unfriendly' witness, John Howard Larson, testified for the first time on the 27th of October. The same month, on 22nd of October a poll was conducted by Gallup in which nearly 58% of respondents agreed that there were many communists in Hollywood and 48% that the communists frequently got their propaganda into movies. What is even more surprising, in both cases there were fewer of those who answered "no" than those who had no opinion; 18% to 24% and 22% to 26% respectively.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that the atmosphere had been rather unfriendly towards communists, real or presumed, in the industry when the hearings started.

However strongly people felt about the need to purge Hollywood of communists, they did not unanimously accept the harsh methods of HUAC. 43% of those who had heard about the Congressional Committee's investigation agreed that the writers who refused to say whether they were members of the Communist party should be punished, 39% though they should not and 18% did not have any opinion.<sup>5</sup> There are two ways of looking at this. Obviously, the 43% who supported punishment for artists who had declined to state their political affiliation is a quite high figure. However, in the era of anti-communist paranoia and fear, as it is often described, the 39% who valued the concept of the freedom of speech in the first amendment higher than mitigating a threat

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<sup>3</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 635-38.

<sup>4</sup> "Gallup Poll #406, q. 14a, 14b, October, 1947," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> "Gallup Poll #407, q. 11d, May, 1947," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

the existence of which they believed is relatively a high number as well. It is safe to say that while there was a solid consensus on the goals, there was none on the means.

Some authors, like Albert Fried, blame the growing anti-communist zeal on the congressional elections in 1946. Fried claims the following: "The rise of McCarthyism owed much to the smashing Republican victory of 1946. [...] It was of major significance that they achieved their victory at the expense of Northern and Western liberals [...]; Southern Democrats [...] as usual suffered no losses. Congress was now very conservative."<sup>6</sup> This is, without a doubt, the immediate reason why HUAC, which had existed before, became more active. However, the Republican victory itself was a result of deep anti-communist feeling within the American society. In 1946, Republicans did not play the red card because they had won the election, but they won the election because they had played the red card. At that time, Americans were already expressing opinions unfriendly or openly hostile towards communism and the Soviet Union. 49% thought that the members of the Communist party are loyal to Russia, while only 24% considered them loyal to America and 27% had no opinion. In the same poll, 80% expressed a belief that Russia had spies in the US and 69% thought that communists should not be permitted to hold civil service jobs.<sup>7</sup> This poll was conducted in July of that year, that is before the election.

Therefore, it seems that the prevailing anti-communist and anti-soviet sentiment in the society was only reflected in the 80th Congress; the Republicans in the Congress were a result rather than a cause of the sentiment. The more active Congress, or HUAC to be more precise, did reinforce this sentiment in the American people to be sure. This seems clear from poll data from before and after the Congress started its public show. In March 1949, 70% Americans thought that the membership in the CPUSA should be

forbidden by law and that figure had actually risen from October 1947, when 61% Americans had expressed the same belief. Furthermore, the figure had been similarly high much earlier before, in May 1941.<sup>8</sup> In the same fashion, the number of those who would bar the members of the Party from holding Civil Service jobs rose from 69% in March 1947 to 84% in February 1949.<sup>9</sup> While these increases are by no means insignificant the figures had been consistently high even before the activities of HUAC started. What this seems to indicate is that the American public was more resistant to the propaganda aspect of the hearings and exercised much more common sense than popularly believed.

It seems safe to assume that the first Hollywood hearings and the case of the Hollywood Ten, while undoubtedly stirring the public opinion, did not cause immediate and widespread hysteria or paranoia. The situation for communists did worsen, to be sure; the crusade against the communists continued. Historian Richard Fried claims that the landmark year in this was 1949. He writes that "the fragile political balance that kept anti-communism in check in 1948 crumbled in the next two years as remote events bumped aside bosses and in-laws as concerns of the average Joe."<sup>10</sup> The worsening of the international situation, the Soviet atomic test and the loss of China harmed the image and the situation of the American communists more than any campaign could have done. The hearings continued and the blacklist grew. The popular opinion did not react to this with hysteria, though. The hostility towards the CPUSA had been high since 1946. The real extravaganza came with the man whose name serves as the label of

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<sup>6</sup> Albert Fried, *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare, A Documentary History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 23.

<sup>7</sup> "Gallup Poll #375, q. 7a, 7b, 7e, July, 1946," the Gallup Brain (accessed, September 10, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> "Gallup polls #237, May, 1941, #406, October, 1947, and #438, March, 1949," the Gallup Brain, (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> "Gallup polls #393, March, 1947, and #437, February, 1949," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

the era, but McCarthy gave his infamous Wheeling speech in 1950 when the situation had become ripe.

It is clear that the link between the anti-communist crusade and the public opinion is much more complicated and it is safe to say that these two phenomena influenced and at times reinforced each other rather than one being caused by the other. This is not to say that the hearings before HUAC were the best way to assuage the public opinion nor that it was legal to prosecute actors and screenwriters based on affiliation to a party that was at that time legal. It is just to say that these hearings reacted to the public demand for something to be done rather than created it. Of course, propaganda might have been responsible for the general dislike of communism and communists, but there are other possible, and more plausible, explanations. Vladislav M. Zubok points out that the cause for the hostility was in fact Stalin's behavior on the world stage. He says that "Stalin's pressure on Iran, combined with his belligerence toward Turkey, put the Soviet Union on a collision course not only with the Truman administration but also with broad segments of American public opinion."<sup>11</sup> This is another argument against the overwhelming influence of the Congressional anti-communist crusade on the public. It is likely that it was Stalin's actions that turned Americans against communism and communists at home and abroad rather than the Republican campaign.

Furthermore, the Republican party was not the only one who jumped on the bandwagon. Historian Richard Fried claims that "[...] the GOP had no monopoly on the issue. The Democrats did their own redbaiting, chiefly of Wallace and his party."<sup>12</sup> In fact, 51% of respondents of a poll conducted in June 1948 agreed that the Wallace's

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<sup>10</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), Kindle edition, 88.

<sup>11</sup> Vladislav M. Zubok, *Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), Kindle edition, 45.

Third Party is run by communists. Only 23% of them disagreed. This judgment is too harsh on Wallace, but the fact remains that he was the only influential supporter of cooperation with the Soviet Union despite Stalin's aggressive policy towards Poland, Turkey and Iran. Zubok explains that "[...] the most influential friends were gone [by the beginning of 1946]. Roosevelt's death and the subsequent departure of Harry Hopkins, Henry Morgenthau, Harold Ickes, and the other New Dealers forever ended the Soviet Union's 'special relationship' with the United States. The last ally Stalin had in the US Government was [...] Henry Wallace."<sup>13</sup>

Wallace certainly was an interesting character. In his speech "The Way to Peace" he succeeded in appearing both proponent of Realpolitik in the international relationships and a hopeless idealist regarding the Soviet intentions. On the one hand, he claimed that "on our part, we should recognize that we have no more business in the political affairs of Eastern Europe than Russia has in the political affairs of Latin America, Western Europe and the United States."<sup>14</sup> This is something that might have helped to ease Stalin's paranoia at that time. On the other hand, he also said that "the two ideas [capitalism and communism] will endeavor to prove which can deliver the most satisfaction to the common man in their respective areas of political dominance. But by mutual agreement, this competition should be put on a friendly basis and the Russians should stop conniving against us in certain areas of the world just as we should stop scheming against them in other parts of the world."<sup>15</sup> In September 1946, this seemed as nothing more than wishful thinking. Wallace was in a way swept aside by the same wave of feelings as the proponents of the Hollywood Ten and other real or alleged communists in the entertainment industry. Just as it was enough to end careers in

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<sup>12</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 46.

<sup>14</sup> "The Way to Peace. Address by Henry A. Wallace at New York, September 12, 1946," New Deal Network, 2013, <http://newdeal.feri.org/wallace/haw28.htm> (accessed August 8, 2013).

showbusiness when one did not firmly deny being or having been a communist, being soft on the Soviet Union was enough to end political careers. Having accepted endorsement from the CPUSA, Wallace received just 2,37% of the popular vote and no Electoral Votes.

Communism as a political force, never having been strong in the US, was almost completely defeated at the end of the 1940s. However, it continued to play an important part in the public life in a different way; as the image of the enemy both inside and outside, real or fictional. The members of the CPUSA were considered liability at best and traitors at worst. When asked what should be done with the Communists in the US in 1946, 24% said they did not know and 18% thought they should be left alone. In the 1948, the respective figures were 16% and 9%. Furthermore, the number of those who answered that they should be shot rose from 3% to 21%. It is of course questionable whether 21% would really support summary executions of the CPUSA members, but the growing tendency towards harsher remedies is obvious. But again, the story is not so straightforward. Close examination of the figures seems to indicate that while there was an increase in the number of those favoring a violent solution to the problem, the ration between those who did not want to do anything or at least take no legal action remained roughly the same.

There were twelve possible answers in that survey. Of those twelve, seven refer to some legal action being taken against the communists, three do not and two can be considered neutral. The two neutral are: no answer and a miscellaneous answer. The three moderate are: do nothing, should not encourage them, and let the rave but watch them. The seven calling for one form of legal action or another are: curb them, keep them out of governmental offices, try to get rid of them, deport them, shoot them or

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

hang them, jail them, and outlaw them. The neutral group scored 25% in 1946 and 20% in 1948. The second, moderate, group of answers were chosen by 24% of the respondents in 1946 and 22% in 1948. The last group of answers gained support of 51% of the people asked in 1946 and 58% in 1948.<sup>16</sup> There is a shift, but certainly not as dramatic as the one from 3 to 21% in the support of executions. The radicalization is clear and the anti-communist campaign is the usual suspect. However, it seems that there was a movement towards extremity rather among those who had already held a negative view before the hearings started.

None of what has been mentioned so far should conceal the fact that the American anti-communism did have a serious and a negative effect on the lives of many. It is also true that the sustained campaign against the reds was used to silence or at least marginalize other dissenting voices in the public discourse. Richard Fried claims the following: "Advocates of peace, civil rights, and other causes had the growing burden of proving that they were not acting as 'fronts' for of 'dupes' of communism. [...] To be leftist was to be suspect."<sup>17</sup> At the time, when anti-communist and anti-soviet sentiment ran high, it was tempting to label one's opponent as a communist and thus turning the public against him or her. Furthermore, condemning scores of actors and actresses, writers, and teachers merely for being communists or members of communist affiliated groups was an act that damaged the American concept of civil liberties more than the communists could have ever done. There is, however, an important difference between artists and educators and government officials, which is often overlooked.

At the time of a severe crisis or conflict, the sensitivity towards the rights of those who stand on the side weakens. This has happened more than once in American history, but the late 1940s and early 1950s seem to occupy a privileged position in the

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<sup>16</sup> "Gallup polls #373, June, 1946, and #418T, May, 1948," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10,

American conscience. The American concept of civil liberties does present a problem in dealing with opposition and dissent during a conflict. One such example is the suspension of the *habeas corpus* in Maryland at the outset of the Civil War. Lincoln defended his decision by saying: "'Are all the laws, but one [the right of habeas corpus], to go unexecuted,' asked the president rhetorically, 'and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated.'"<sup>18</sup> While this caused much controversy at the time, it does not present a contentious topic today. Our tolerance for such exceptions depends on how serious we consider the threat to be and as we shall see later, the threat of communist infiltration of the government was all too real in the late 1940s. Granting that the methods of HUAC served little to shed light on the communist subversion of the government, as would be demonstrated later, it is hard to deny that the government had the right to protect itself against the people who were secretly working towards its doom.

The starting gun sounded in 1947 when president Truman announced his loyalty program. Fried even labeled it "the key moment in the second Red Scare"<sup>19</sup> and he connects it more with Truman's foreign agenda than with the domestic policy when he claims that "without such a pledge to fight communist at home, the penny pinching, isolationist Republican Congress was unlikely to muster enthusiasm for fighting the Red menace abroad."<sup>20</sup> While the coincidence between the Truman's plea in Congress for money to the Greek and Turkish governments and the program, which both happened in March 1947, it is hardly conclusive evidence. John Earl Haynes provides another explanation why Truman started the program long after he had received information

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<sup>17</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 87.

<sup>18</sup> James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), Kindle edition, 289.

<sup>19</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

about the possible risks from the FBI. He claims that "in late 1945 and in 1946, the White House had reacted with a mixture of indifference and skepticism to FBI reports [...]. By early 1947, however, this indifference ended. The accumulation of information from defectors [...], along with the Venona decryptions made senior Truman administration officials realize the reports of Soviet spying constituted more than FBI paranoia."<sup>21</sup>

Truman himself expressed his concern with the possible subversion of the US government. During a press conference on April 3, 1947 he was asked a question about his having called the communist threat a "bugaboo". He said: "I am not worried about the Communist Party taking over the Government of the United States, but I am against a person, whose loyalty is not to the Government of the United States, holding a Government job."<sup>22</sup> In his statement on the program on November 14, 1947 he repeated this by saying: I believe I speak for all the people of the United States when I say that disloyal and subversive elements must be removed from the employ of the Government."<sup>23</sup> Truman was pushed to adopt even harsher methods.

The chairman of HUAC, who also tried the "Hollywood Ten", J. Parnell Thomas wrote him a public letter on April 23, a month after the loyalty program was announced. In it, he urged Truman to "step in and take a hand in this matter and direct your Attorney General to throw the full weight of his Department behind an effort [...]."<sup>24</sup> Truman's answer was very short consisting of three sentences only one of which dealt

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<sup>21</sup> Haynes and Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, Location 224-229.

<sup>22</sup>"President's News Conference, April 3, 1947," Truman's Presidential Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2178&st=loyalty&st1=> (accessed August 8, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> "Statement on the Government's Employee Loyalty Program by Harry S. Truman, November 14, 1947," Truman's Presidential Library, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1865&st=&st1=> (accessed July 20, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> J. Parnell Thomas, "Letter to Harry S. Truman," April 23, 1947, Truman's Presidential Library, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/loyaltyprogram/documents/index.php?pagenumber=3&documentdate=1947-04-25&documentid=10-11](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/loyaltyprogram/documents/index.php?pagenumber=3&documentdate=1947-04-25&documentid=10-11) (accessed July 20, 2013).

with the subject matter. He wrote: "I think you will find the Attorney General will do his duty as it should be done and in the interest of the welfare of the United States."<sup>25</sup> However, Truman did not budge; the loyalty program remained relatively sensible both in size and method. The same cannot be said about the hearings of HUAC. The purging of Hollywood was a mere overture to the most famous hearings of Harry Dexter White, Lauchlin Currie, and Alger Hiss. The three cases were sensational and stir controversy even to this day. Richard Fried is undoubtedly justified to say that: "[...] trials, like other political acts, have an educational (or theatrical) function."<sup>26</sup> This, however, does not rule out that they were, in fact, aiming at the correct target.

The question whether the infiltration of the government was real or just imagined, a result of the paranoid atmosphere of the early Cold War, is not a mere technicality. Having agreed that the methods of HUAC were doubtful at best, it still makes a difference whether there was a real basis for the allegations or they were all smoke and mirrors. As it has been argued earlier, agreeing that the threat is real weakens, for better or worse, the insistence on the civil liberties. Hayes argues that for many years, many influential authors denied any validity to the claims saying that "[...] communists were depicted as innocent victims of an irrational and oppressive American Government."<sup>27</sup> He also argues that this is simply not true, claiming that "while not every Soviet spy was a communist, most were. And while not every American Communist was a spy, hundreds were."<sup>28</sup> In August 1948, right after the first testimonies of White and Hiss before HUAC, 60% of those who had heard about the

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<sup>25</sup> Harry S. Truman, "Letter to J. Parnell Thomas," April 25, 1947, Truman's Presidential Library, [http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/loyaltyprogram/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1947-04-25&documentid=10-11](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/loyaltyprogram/documents/index.php?pagenumber=1&documentdate=1947-04-25&documentid=10-11) (accessed July 20, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 91.

<sup>27</sup> Hayes and Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America*, location 282-83.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, location 334-36.

Congressional investigations agreed that there was something to it.<sup>29</sup> It seems now that this was a justified fear.

There are three cases that are of a special interest regarding the topic of this thesis. These are the case of Judith Coplon, Harry White, and Alger Hiss. All three were widely publicized, all have been a source of controversy ever since, and more importantly, it seems that the allegations were not, in fact, baseless in any of the cases. The three trials also differ in some crucial factors; Coplon was tried by a Grand jury for espionage and conspiracy, White died after his first testimony, while Hiss was convicted of perjury, which he committed testifying before HUAC, and not of espionage. The limited scope of this thesis does not allow to examine the cases in detail and the topic of the thesis does not require it. It will suffice to describe how handling the cases planted a seed of controversy and mistrust harvest of which we reap even today.

Judith Coplon's case was the last of the three to tantalize the public opinion. Out of the three, however, it is the only one in which the person was tried in court for the actual crime of spying. Her case was quite important for two reasons. Firstly, as Richard Fried puts it: "[the trial] embarrassed the FBI, showing it had investigated such menaces as Henry A. Wallace supporters, Hollywood leftist, even the author of a thesis on the New Deal in New Zealand."<sup>30</sup> Secondly, it proved that while the legislative inquiry may have been much too eager to condemn reds, the judicial system worked. Coplon appealed and both sentences were overturned because of FBI's illegal activities during the investigation. Fried writes that "the indictment stood and Coplon's guilt seemed obvious, but she was set free by the demands of due process."<sup>31</sup> Even at the height of the

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<sup>29</sup> "Gallup Poll #423K, q. 10d, August, 1948," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 91.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

early Cold War tension<sup>32</sup> and even in the very strong case against Coplton, courts did not freely sacrificed due process. HUAC, as a legislative body, obviously did not have to adhere to the same standards. As we shall see, in the cases of White and Hiss, the public trials before the committee were much more emotional, but again, their creating a mass hysteria in the American public is questionable.

Harry Dexter White had been a subject of interest to the FBI for a long time before he was accused of being a Soviet agent and testified before the committee. The FBI informed the president through his aide on November 8, 1945 about the suspicion. In July and August 1948, White was accused of giving information to the Soviets by Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers respectively. He appeared before the committee himself on August 13 and denied the charges. Few days after that, he died. To those who opposed the Congressional hearings or those who saw it as a political battleground, White became a martyr "a victim, said his friends, of HUAC's hazing."<sup>33</sup> Many on the left saw his case as a part of a smear campaign against New Deal, just as they did with Alger Hiss and just as some see it now. Richard Fried says: "Throughout the Eightieth Congress, HUAC sought to discover the ties that it firmly suspected ran from Communist Party headquarters to the New Deal's inner sanctums."<sup>34</sup> That may be so, but the fact remains that some prominent New Dealers did not have a clear conscience.

Furthermore, it may be said that if destroying the image of the New Deal through linking it with communist subversion was the goal of HUAC, it failed miserably. In a survey of May 1952 when asked which type of presidential candidate would they favor, 63% of respondents answered that "one who claims some of the [...]"

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<sup>32</sup> the trials and appeals took place between 1949 and 1951, time of loss of China, Soviet atomic test, and the Korean War.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

New Deal and [...] Fair Deal policies have been good for the country and some [...] bad."<sup>35</sup> 19% would favor a candidate who claimed that almost all of them had been good and just 13% the one who claimed that almost all of them had been bad. New Deal and Fair Deal were not divisive issues in 1952 at the height of McCarthy's demagogical crusade. It is hard to imagine that it would have been during no less sensational but in many ways more somber hearings of 1948.

While White died so shortly after his testimony that it would have been impossible to decide about his guilt or innocence even if HUAC had the means to do so, the case of Alger Hiss remained in the spotlights for most of the period discussed in this thesis. Both cases are however similar in that the dispute over their guilt has persisted to the present. As it has been mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the scope of this thesis does not allow nor require to engage the question of the guilt. Suffice it to say that Tony Judt once wrote that "for those who do not believe in fairies, the Hiss affair is now closed."<sup>36</sup> The more interesting question is how HUAC handled the case from the theatrical aspect and how this helped or hindered the quest for truth.

The whole extravaganza started in 1948 and coincided with the birth of the most influential mass media of the second half of the twentieth century, the television. Doherty points out how symptomatic the first televisual broadcasts from Congress were: "On November 11, 1947, WMAL-TV [...] telecast testimony from Secretary of State George C. Marshall before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [...]. On August 25, 1948, the first telecast from the House [...] offered another preview of coming attractions: the inquiry [...] into the accusations by ex-communist Whittaker Chambers that Alger Hiss, [...], had operated as a Soviet agent in the 1930s."<sup>37</sup> While the TV

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<sup>35</sup> "Gallup Poll #493, q. 15, May, 1952," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 2, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Tony Judt, "An American Tragedy? The Case of Whittaker Chambers" in *Reappraisals: Reflections on the Forgotten Twentieth Century* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 299.

<sup>37</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 2584-91.

audience at that point was marginal compared with radio listeners and cinema goers, the publicity given to this trial was, nevertheless, substantial. The first testimony by Chambers had been broadcasted and filmed for newsreels; when Hiss refuted his allegations on August 5 he complained, despite the fact he was being recorded and filmed as well, the following: "Denials do not always catch up with charges."<sup>38</sup> To which Mr. John McDowell, representative from Pennsylvania, replied "[...] but I think they will in your case, [...]."<sup>39</sup> He was right; the hearings became a spectacle first on the radio and in the cinemas and, not long after that, on television. Hiss was granted his chance to deny the charges.

The whole drama achieved little in terms of clarifying the role of Alger Hiss in the presumed spy ring. This was obviously due to the fact that HUAC could only work in a very limited space and relied most heavily and almost exclusively on the testimonies. Even with this limited space, however, the committee worked surprisingly inefficiently. The results of the HUAC hearings in Hiss-Chambers case were inconclusive; Chambers' testimony was corroborated by some other witnesses, but generally he offered no proof. Judt writes that "[...] when Chambers repeated his charges [...] on a radio program, without the benefit of the legal protection [...], Hiss sued him for slander on September 27, 1948. Obligated now to come up with something more [...], Chambers finally [...] affirmed that Alger Hiss and others had been engaged in espionage. He backed his claim by [...] documents and microfilms, [...]."<sup>40</sup> It was only after that the evidence was enough to try Hiss by a grand jury for perjury. Before the Committee, the two men could have argued for hours without offering any

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<sup>38</sup> "Testimony before HUAC of Alger Hiss, August 5, 1948," University of Missouri - Kansas City (hereafter cited as Hiss's Testimony, August 5, 1948, UMKC), <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/8-5testimony.html> (accessed May 14, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Judt, "An American Tragedy? The Case of Whittaker Chambers," 301.

conclusive proof, Chambers repeating his testimony and Hiss producing new and new character witnesses for him.

The questions of HUAC did not help much either. The best example is Mr. Mundt's asking Hiss about the Yalta conference:

Mr. Mundt: Did you participate in those parts which gave Russia three votes in the Assembly?

Mr. Hiss: I was present at the conference and am familiar with some of the fact involved in that particular arrangement.

Mr. Mundt: You would say you did participate in the formation of that part of the agreement?

Mr. Hiss: I had nothing to do with the decision that these votes be granter. I opposed them.<sup>41</sup>

This answer, obviously, could not have been either confirmed or refuted before the Committee, since the documentation about this was still classified. Hiss easily scored points without having to prove anything. Mr. Mundt had similar stroke of brilliance two days before that when questioning Chambers.

Mr. Mundt: As communism is now directed by Stalin from Moscow and as his tactics are now carried out, how would you differentiate between Stalin's communism and Hitler's nazism?

Mr. Chambers: I should find that very difficult to do. I would say that they are most totalitarian forms of government, if you like. I feel quite unable to answer that.<sup>42</sup>

This obviously had nothing to do with the case, invoked the interrogated to formulate his opinion towards the whole ideology rather than to enlighten the

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<sup>41</sup> Hiss's Testimony, August 5, 1948, UMKC.

investigators about certain facts. This question, and others like it, was an inevitable result of the hearing being a public political spectacle, but it did little to invoke confidence in HUAC. The dilettantism of HUAC is, however, in itself not a proof of Hiss's innocence. It just shows us how depended the belief in the guilt of Alger Hiss and many others became on the factors other than the proceedings themselves.

This was partly inevitable. As John Earl Haynes writes: "Since the information about Soviet espionage and American Communist participation derived largely from the testimony of defectors and a mass of circumstantial evidence, the public's belief in those reports rested on faith in the integrity of government security officials."<sup>43</sup> This was true for one of the members of HUAC than for the others. Nixon was one of the most pursuant and active members of HUAC during his time in it and during this case in particular. Nixon himself understood the importance of the publicity for the hearings and the outcomes. He admitted in 1971 in a conversation about a different topic that HUAC "[...] won the Hiss case in the papers. We did. I had to leak stuff all over the place. Because the Justice Department would not prosecute it. Hoover didn't even cooperate. ... It was won in the papers."<sup>44</sup> All these factors combined and the matter of Hiss's guilt became more a question of a public consensus rather than a judicial decision. This backfired in the years after Watergate. As Richard Fried writes: "As Nixon's star dimmed, Hiss's flickered anew."<sup>45</sup>

However, it was Nixon himself who invoked the ghost of the closed case first. In 1952, he used TV and the wide publicity that the activities of the Committee granted him to his personal political goal. As the press at that time acknowledged, he succeeded.

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<sup>42</sup> "Testimony before HUAC of Whittaker Chambers, August 3, 1948," University of Missouri - Kansas City, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/8-3testimony.html> (accessed August 14, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Hayes and Kehler, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage Secrets in America*, location 241-43.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley Kutler, ed., *Abuse of Power: The New Nixon Tapes* (New York: The Free Press, 1997), Kindle edition, location 598-600.

<sup>45</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 22.

Doherty quotes from the article in "Variety" about that interview. It reads: "If Senator Richard M. Nixon isn't elected Vice President, he can always get a job as a TV actor. [...] He turned in the kind of a job that should have had GOP adherents gleeful at their sets and the Demos gnashing in frustration."<sup>46</sup> Although Nixon tried to revive the publicity of the trial that had happened two years before his interview and he admittedly succeeded at this, the time of the Committee had already passed and a new star rose among the publicly well-known anti-communist, Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy gave a new impetus to the Hollywood investigation and also to the hunt for spies and communists within the government agencies. While the HUAC hearings were in no way immune to demagogical arguments and disrespect for civil liberties, McCarthy easily surpassed it in both respects. This was, paradoxically, the reason for both his great success and his fall.

McCarthy's vigorous anti-communist campaign did not create the anti-red sentiment in the US, much like HUAC had not done before him. Nevertheless, it is clear from the surveys quoted above that he came to an arena where anti-communism was predominant. Yet, it was rather a consequence of the international situation development. Just as the American public had lost any kind of sympathy for the communist cause in 1946 and 1947 due to Stalin's ruthless foreign policy, it entered the frenzied state of mind in 1949 and 1950 because of the events on the international stage. In a survey conducted in August 1948 55% of the respondents believed that there would be another big war in ten years.<sup>47</sup> 41% of those who answered yes also thought that the responsibility for starting the war would rest on Russia, Soviet Russia, the USSR, Communist countries, or Stalin. The second most frequent opinion expressed with just 4% was that groups of people, factions, capitalists, politicians, communists, political

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<sup>46</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 2227.

parties, Negroes, or Labor would cause the war.<sup>48</sup> Those figures alone show a high level of mistrust towards the USSR and communism.

The public opinion grew more hostile in the following two years. In a poll from January 1949, only 17% of respondents believed that the Russian government sincerely desired peace and 72% thought it did not. Almost half believed that the war with Russia was just a matter of time.<sup>49</sup> That was the beginning of the year during which the Americans were to face two great shocks which presumably may have provided McCarthy the opportunity. First came the Soviet atomic test. Hayes claims that "when the Soviet Union exploded a nuclear device in 1949, ordinary Americans as well as the nation's leaders realized that [...] Stalin had just gained the power to destroy cities at will. This perception colored the early Cold War with the hues of apocalypse."<sup>50</sup> 44% of people believed that this had made another war more likely.<sup>51</sup> Since the nuclear scare will be discussed in the next chapter, it is not necessary to explore more on the issue for the time being, but the shock of it undoubtedly contributed to McCarthy's rise. Second was the emergence of the communist PRC.

McCarthy started his career as a media shooting star by his speech at Wheeling, West Virginia. In this speech Senator produced, from the propagandist point of view, a perfect mixture of fear-mongering and hope-offering. He painted a bleak picture of the outside world that is becoming increasingly communist and more and more hostile towards the American way of life. He stated the following: "Six years ago [...] there was within the Soviet orbit 180,000,000 people. Lined up on the antitotalitarian side there were in the world at that time roughly 1,625,000,000 people. Today [...] there are 800,000,000 people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia [...]. On our side,

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<sup>47</sup> "Gallup Poll #423K, q. 6a," the Gallup Brain.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> "Gallup Poll #435K, q. 3a, q. 3b, January, 1949," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 2, 2013).

<sup>50</sup> Hayes and Kehler, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage Secrets in America*, location 197-98.

the figure has shrunk to around 500,000,000.”<sup>52</sup> However shaky the figures were, they had an effect. After establishing that there is a clear and present danger and that communism is on the rise, McCarthy started pointing at the culprits. There were many of them and there were to be many more in the next four years.

The whole four years of McCarthy's crusade have been thoroughly studied and described; it is not necessary to repeat the well known facts here. Furthermore, this thesis is concerned with the public reaction to it, rather than the proceedings themselves. It is enough to say that he employed the same methods even more ruthlessly and targeted the same groups of people; mostly government employees and artists. When the senator made his charges, the reaction of the public was mostly favorable. Three months after his speech, 88% of Americans had heard about his charges and 68% thought that there was something to those charges according to a Gallup poll.<sup>53</sup> That certainly seems that as an overwhelming approval, but contrary to the popular belief, there were serious doubts both about his charges and his methods right from the start. In June 1950, a poll was conducted in which 31% of those respondents who had heard about McCarthy's charges expressed approval with them, 12% thought that there had to be some foundation for them but that they are greatly exaggerated, and 22% did not believe them at all.<sup>54</sup>

This does not seem as widespread hysteria; many people simply did not jump on the bandwagon, even though they considered the danger to be real and many more did not even believe there was any threat at all. McCarthy did achieve a political success with his accusations, because even though he was unable to prove his charges, the suspicion stuck and for some Americans that was enough. This was clear in the case of

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<sup>51</sup> "Gallup Poll #449, q. 4a, October, 1948," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 2, 2013).

<sup>52</sup> "Speech at Wheeling by Joseph McCarthy, February 9, 1950," George Mason University, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6456> (accessed May 14, 2014).

<sup>53</sup> "Gallup Poll #455, q. 3a, q 3b, April, 1950," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

Owen Lattimore, as Richard Fried writes: "Though McCarthy could not confirm his charges against Lattimore, the Democrats [on the Tydings Committee] had a hard time proving the negative - Lattimore's innocence."<sup>55</sup> While the 31% believing the charges completely may not be a majority, it can prove to be a decisive factor if they concentrate in one of the parties and if the topic is raised. McCarthy did not need to be loved by all and he certainly was not. In July 1951, 58% Americans either did not have an opinion on McCarthy or did not know him at all. 25% held unfavorable or qualified unfavorable opinions and just 16% held favorable or qualified favorable opinions. It seems that many of those who believed some truth to be in his allegations did not agree with his style and demagogy. However, McCarthy's influence on the issue had significant ramifications in a different way.

It has been established that due to unfavorable international development and foreign policy setbacks the sense of impending crisis had been strongly implanted into the American public by the early 1950s. It is clear how high the communist issue was on minds of Americans from a poll conducted in March 1952 in the anticipation of the elections. The respondents were shown a list of twelve possible actions of the future president and they were supposed to choose the three most important to them. 36% selected cleaning out communism in the US, the second most frequent answer.<sup>56</sup> McCarthy may not have helped to raise the awareness of the issue, because it had been prominent even before his entry on the stage. Nevertheless, he gathered a group of supporters who cared little for how the cleaning out process would be conducted and viewed everyone who criticized this with suspicion. This made him virtually untouchable within the Republican Party.

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<sup>54</sup> "Gallup Poll #456, q. 4b, June, 1950," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>55</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 127.

<sup>56</sup> "Gallup Poll #488, q. 13, March, 1952," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

Dwight Eisenhower offers one explanation for this in his letter that he wrote on May 18, 1953 to Mr. Harry Bullis. He writes that "this particular individual wants, above all else, publicity. Nothing would probably please him more than to get the publicity that would be generated by public repudiation by the President."<sup>57</sup> While denying McCarthy publicity could have been a valid strategy, in 1953 it was already too late for that. Richard Fried points out that Eisenhower "knew that many Republicans respected McCarthy [...]. With the Republicans holding control of Congress by only a thin margin [...], Ike sought to avoid alienating any members of his party."<sup>58</sup> In other words, the Republicans could have been hurt just as easily by the communist issue and they just may have wanted to avoid similar split as the Democrats had seen in 1947 and 1948. Either way, the Republican Party was too weak to get rid of McCarthy itself. In the end, his fall was preconditioned by the same thing that had enabled his rise; the international situation.

Stalin and his policy was the root cause for the reemergence of political anti-communism as a major political force in the years after the Second World War. In the same way, Stalin's death was the single most important event behind the decline of this political force. Shortly after his death, the unpopular Korean War ended and as Albert Fried puts it: "It was a situation hardly conducive to McCarthy's political well being."<sup>59</sup> His fall, however, was no immediate. As we have seen, the support for McCarthy and his methods had been far from universal or even overwhelming even at the time of the crisis. In 1953, these figures began to decline and in 1954 they plummeted.

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<sup>57</sup> "Letter to Mr. Harry Bullis by Dwight D. Eisenhower, May18, 1953," Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, [http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online\\_documents/mccarthyism/1953\\_05\\_18\\_DDE\\_to\\_Bullis.pdf](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/mccarthyism/1953_05_18_DDE_to_Bullis.pdf) (accessed August 25, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 132.

<sup>59</sup> Albert Fried, *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare, A Documentary History*, 178.

Apart from the easing of the tension between the US and the USSR, McCarthy experienced another setback in 1953. In July, J.B. Matthews was forced to resign from a position of a research director. Mr. Matthews had written an article called "Reds and Our Churches" in which he assaulted members of several churches for being members of communist front groups. McCarthy, who wanted to keep him, had to yield, but the attack on churches proved to be more dangerous than attacking the communists elsewhere. In March and April 1953, three months before the Matthews's affair, 51% Americans disagreed with a Congressional investigation in the churches, while 76% approved the same investigation in schools and colleges and 66% believed that even former members of the Communist Party should be barred from teaching.<sup>60</sup> Americans were much more sensitive to the attack on religious than academic freedom.

Nevertheless, the greatest mistake that McCarthy made was his attack on another institution that Americans hold in great esteem, the Army. It was Eisenhower who had declined to publicly condemn McCarthy who took the action. As Albert Fried puts it: "For Eisenhower [...] this was the last straw. He was determined to bring McCarthy down."<sup>61</sup> In the following Army - McCarthy hearings that took place at the beginning of 1954, the defiant senator from Wisconsin lost the last vestiges of the public confidence. Even towards the end of 1953, the support for the extraordinary legislative inquiries on communism had been declining. Only 37% of Americans believed that the investigation of communists in the government should be left to Congress while 43% believed it should be left entirely to the FBI and the Department of Justice.<sup>62</sup> By June 1954, the respective figures were 30% and 57%.<sup>63</sup> The very essence of McCarthyism, a public investigation by Congress, had lost support. There were to be no more showtrials.

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<sup>60</sup> "Gallup Poll #513, q. 15a, q. 15b, q. 17, March, 1953," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 2, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Albert Fried, *McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare, A Documentary History*, 179.

<sup>62</sup> "Gallup Poll #524, q. 11b, December, 1953," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 2, 2013).

<sup>63</sup> "Gallup Poll #532, q. 7b, June, 1954," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 2, 2013).

It is clear that McCarthyism was an era of great pressure on the civil liberties, and maybe of even greater pressure on a public opinion. However, as we have seen, it cannot be said that the anti-communism of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which is undeniable, was provoked by the anti-red campaigning in the form of the HUAC hearings. It was rather a result of factors outside the US domestic policy. The position of the domestic communists was very much connected to the image of the Soviet Union as a friendly or unfriendly power. The views on domestic communists reflect the mistrust of the Soviet Union and the times of the most severe anti-communist feelings within the society coincided with the most tensed moment in the international situation. The Soviet Union was viewed as a controlling power of the domestic communists. The image of communists and communism is, therefore, strongly linked to the image of the USSR itself.

It would also be a fallacy to say that the era between 1947 and 1954 when McCarthyism reigned supreme was nothing but a dark time. There is no denying of the fact that it affected the lives of many and that the hunt for communists meant large and extensive suppression of civil liberties. However, the suppression was far from being unprecedented and it was from being universal. Not all Americans supported it, as we have seen, and courts did not affirm it. Considering the sense of an urgent threat which can be detected from the opinion polls, it is rather surprising that there were not more Americans calling for harsher methods. McCarthyism never went without opposition and criticism and this critical opinion was always represented strongly, unlike the positive opinion towards the Soviet Union and communism.

### **The Enemy Never Sleeps; Civil Defense and Surprise Atomic Attack 1949 -1956**

While the communist subversion was an important part of the way the Americans viewed the USSR, the development of 1949 drew the attention to a much more imminent threat. With the first Soviet atomic test, the image of Russia and the Cold War was linked to the image of a mushroom cloud. With a certain delay, the US administration countered with a far reaching and a highly publicized program of Civil Defense. The words “Duck and Cover” used most famously in the instructional cartoon for children “Bert the Turtle” have been caricaturized ever since. Even after the end of the Cold War, the mocking continued. In one episode of South Park, the same advice – to duck and cover – is given to the citizens who are about to ascend the slopes of an active volcano. This would supposedly protect them against hot lava.

It is doubtful that many young viewers of the series knew what that referenced to. However, the image of naivety, maybe even obtuseness and definitely futility of such piece of advice is strong. That is, in essence, the way that many people and authors view the Civil Defense programs of the Cold War. As Guy Oakes puts it in his book *The Imaginary War*: “There were two versions of this policy: one official, public, and optimistic; the other unofficial, clandestine, and cynical. [...] The cynical [...] held that although the state could not protect the American people [...] and they could not [...] protect themselves, they could at least be persuaded to believe that self-protection was possible.”<sup>64</sup> This seems to be by far the most common interpretation of the Civil Defense programs of, but exclusively, the 1950’s. According to Oakes, “this conviction [of the possibility of surviving the Nuclear War] would provide the necessary support

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<sup>64</sup> Guy Oakes, *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), Kindle edition.

for deterrence, which would protect the American people by preventing a nuclear war.”<sup>65</sup>

Even though this view is not unjustified, the question of the real purpose of the program is much more complex. Many people with many different attitudes contributed. It could be said that there were optimists and pessimists and it is true that only the relatively optimistic view reached the public ears. It is impossible, however, to say that the division between optimistic and pessimistic is the same as between the official and the unofficial. The defense policy, including the civil defense, was a result of a long debate. When the conclusion was reached, it became official.

It is hardly surprising that opposing opinions uttered in confidential conversations are not publicized along with the official conclusion. This does not provide sufficient ground for accusing the government of hypocrisy. After all, considering the limited potential of the Soviet Union to strike the US mainland before ICBM's became readily available, it is more surprising that such far reaching program projecting the image of the imminent danger was put in place.

This chapter, due to the space constraints and the limited period it considers, does not try to be a comprehensive study of the Civil Defense in the United States. It will merely try to describe what information the people who formed the program and the campaigns had about the possibility of the attack and, if necessary, about the possible destructive force of such attack. The second step, then, will be to try and describe how they related this information to the public. The final purpose is to discuss their possible motivation based on their own letters, speeches and memos.

When Stalin detonated his first atomic bomb in August 1949, America was shocked. Not many people had expected the US nuclear monopoly to disappear so

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

soon.<sup>66</sup> The potential general war now loomed to bring the wholesale destruction to the American soil. That, at least, was how many saw it. According to historian Thomas Doherty, “the cultural fallout from the Bomb settled all over American culture, [...]”<sup>67</sup> There are two reasons why this neurosis was unnecessary. Firstly, the Soviet Union did not possess any considerable stockpile of weapons to threaten the US supremacy, and secondly, the delivery would have been impossible.<sup>68</sup> Neither of these important facts was disclosed to the American public, but both of them were known to the higher echelons of the government. On the contrary, the substantial Civil Defense campaign was reinforcing the notion that the nuclear attack could take place anywhere and anytime. The question, then, is why.

The first logical possibility is that the information did not reach the people responsible for those campaigns at the time. The most important person in this respect was Stuart Symington, head of the National Security Resources Board, which had dealt with Civil Defense before the Federal Civil Defense Administration was established at the end of 1951. Closely second, it was Millard Caldwell who became the first Federal Civil Defense Administrator, but had been active in the field even before. The second possibility is that they received the intelligence report, but they ignored or for some reason did not believe them. The third possible explanation is that they were deliberately working toward the time, which inevitably had to come, when the Soviets would have the means of delivering the bombs. Depending on the answer to the question, which was it, it is then possible to try and answer why the campaigns exaggerated the danger so vastly.

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<sup>66</sup> NSC 52/3, Report on Governmental Programs for National Security and International Affairs for Fiscal Year 1951, issued in July 1949 did not even discuss the possibility of Russian having the atomic weapon in the next year.

<sup>67</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 368

<sup>68</sup> Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 81.

The chairman of the NSRB was a permanent member of the National Security Council at the time. That means that Symington had access to the materials discussed at the meetings including the intelligence reports. He liked this position.<sup>69</sup> He became the acting chairman of the board in 1950 and the first report on the subject he was able to see in his new position was National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) number 3. This document deals with the Soviet capabilities and intentions. For now, I will consider only the capabilities.

The paragraph 30 of the estimate reads: “The Soviet Union has and will have the capability in aircraft and trained crews to enable it to attempt to deliver in the United Kingdom and North America the full stockpile of atomic bombs that are and will become available.”<sup>70</sup> Even though the sentence is not specific in terms of what parts of North America are in reach of the Soviet bombers and whether the UK or the US would be the main target, it hardly presents an argument for complacency.

It is a question how the capabilities of the Red Army’s Air Force were evaluated. At that point, the only aircraft capable of flying long range bombing missions with a nuclear payload the Russians had was TU-4; a copy of a successful but obsolescent American World War 2 bomber B-29. Its range was hardly sufficient to reach the mainland US on two-way missions and only allowed it to hit some areas on a suicidal one-way mission. The Americans were aware of it. In an earlier CIA report on the enemy’s bomber force from October 28, 1949 the range of TU-4 was estimated to be 5000 kilometers or almost 2700 nautical miles.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Linda McFarland, *Cold War Strategist: Stuart Symington and the Search for National Security* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 41.

<sup>70</sup> NIE 3, November 15, 1950, CREST database, Approved for Release 2012/10/24 : CIA-RDP79R01012A000200010001-9, 6.

<sup>71</sup> CIA information report, October 28, 1949, CREST database, Approved for Release 2001/03/23 : CIA-RDP82-00457R003600350016-1, 2.

There was nothing to warrant the pessimistic estimate in the later NIE 3. The estimate, however, was intended primarily for the US Army, Navy, and Air Force. Thus, even if it is plausible that the information reached NSC, NSRB or Symington personally, it cannot be proven. However, since Symington at that point was serving as the Secretary of the Air Force<sup>72</sup>, however, it is more than likely. An important question remains; how could the report for military circles in 1949 be in such a stark contrast to the report for the NSC from a year later.

One possible explanation, though it does not consider this specific case, is mentioned in the minutes from the first meeting of the Intelligence Advisory Committee from October 20, 1950. It says: “A national intelligence estimate [NIE] should reflect the coordination of the best intelligence opinion, with notation of and reasons for dissent in the instances when there is not unanimity. It should be based on all available information and be prepared with full knowledge of our own plans and in the light of our own policy requirements.”<sup>73</sup> What the intelligence opinion that deemed TU 4 able to strike the US mainland even with its range, could be seen in secret estimates (SE) number 10 from September 10, 1951 and number 36 from March 5, 1953.

SE – 10 estimated the TU 4 capability as follows: “One-way missions, from [...] bases in northeast Siberia and from bases in the Murmansk and Baltic areas, could reach any important target in the US. There is no evidence that the Soviet have [...] developed aerial refueling techniques. However, an aerial refueling would extend the range of a one-way missions [...] to reach any important target in the US even from interior [...]

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<sup>72</sup> See McFarland, *Cold War Strategist*.

<sup>73</sup> IAC – M – 1, October 20, 1950, CREST database, Approved for Release 2004/03/23 : CIA-RDP82-00400R000100010001-4, 3.

bases.”<sup>74</sup> The NIE 3, however, does not disclose the fact that the Soviets would have to sacrifice their bomber force on one-way missions.

Furthermore, even SE – 10 does not tell the full story and the ranges it works with are without an additional explanation ludicrous. The explanation comes in SE – 36. The report estimates the range of TU 4 to be 3,100 nautical miles.<sup>75</sup> More detailed description follows: “Although there is no intelligence to indicate that it has done so, the USSR is considered capable of modifying the TU 4 to increase its range in the same manner that the [...] B – 29A was stripped to produce the B – 29B. [...] its combat radius would be increased to 2,150 nautical miles and its combat range to 4,000 miles [...].”<sup>76</sup> SE – 10 seems to view TU 4 even more favorably, and more importantly, does not mention that it describes the capabilities of a “stripped down” bomber existence of which is not proven.

Obviously, it is the job of the intelligence agencies to provide the policy makers with all sorts of scenarios, but it should state when it works with proven facts and when with assumptions. That did not happen in the case of either NIE 3 or SE – 10. Therefore, it is possible that in the absence of more particular information or because of the lack of time to study the details, the decision makers did believe the USSR was capable of hitting the US mainland with atomic bombs in the crucial years of 1949 through to 1951. Although there is no definite proof that Symington or later Caldwell knew about the apparent lack of the means of delivery, there were people in the board who evaluated such threat as unlikely.

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<sup>74</sup> United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *The Soviet Estimate: SE - 10, Soviet Capabilities for a Surprise Attack on the Continental United States Before July 1952*. Washington, September 15, 1951. Digital National Security Archive. 5 March 2014.

<sup>75</sup> United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *The Soviet Estimate: SE - 36, Soviet Capabilities for Attack on the US Through Mid-1955*. Washington, March 5, 1953, Digital National Security Archive. 5 March 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

Both NSRB and later FCDA had access to the reports on the probability of war and the Soviet capabilities on demand. Coordinator of Civil Defense Planning of the NSRB William A. Gill, for example, was in contact with the Department of Defense through the liaison Colonel Barnet W. Beers. Thus, it is not possible to rule out that the original and less panicky reports and estimates on TU 4 capabilities were disseminated to the NSRB through the Army Intelligence.

Memo from Daniel Cox Fahey, Jr. to Gill uses language that proves that such information was available, even though it does not disclose the source. Fahey wrote: “The use of mass destruction weapons (atomic, BW, CW, RW [biological, chemical, radiological weapons]) on a major scale against the continental U.S. by enemy military forces is improbable – chiefly from the standpoint of the lack of capability of a potential enemy to get at U.S. areas.”<sup>77</sup> At that time, John R. Steelman was the acting chairman of the NSRB and no major civil defense information campaign was launched. It changed with Symington at the helm. 1950 was the year when civil defense entered the lives of the average Americans.

The opinion that the Civil Defense is a necessary step toward meeting the real threat of the Soviet atomic attack, however, was not shared by everyone even at that time. The NSC 68, in which the budgetary requirements of the proposed program are discussed for the first time in the NSC, was not accepted unanimously. William F. Schaub from the Bureau of the Budget, wrote in his comment: “[...] it is hard to accept a conclusion that the USSR is approaching a straight-out military superiority over us, when, for example, (1) our Air Force is vastly superior qualitatively, is greatly superior numerically in the bombers, trained crew and other facilities necessary for the offensive

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<sup>77</sup> Daniel Cox Fahey to William A. Gill, memorandum, December 23, 1949, article IV, section 2, paragraph c, page 2, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records Of the Office Of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, Records Relating to Civil Defense, 1949 -1953, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

warfare; [...].”<sup>78</sup> This view not only differed from the pessimistic view of Symington and others from NSRB, it was the exact opposite.

Little changed in the estimates of the Soviet offensive capabilities between the years 1950 and 1956. During that time Red Army’s air force successfully tested long range medium and heavy jet bombers with characteristics that would in fact have allowed them to hit the US mainland with their nuclear payload. These however, were not numerous enough to cause significant concern among the intelligence officers and planners. The SE-36 estimated the possible numbers of the different types available to the long-range bomber force as follows:

	Mid-1953	Mid-1954	Mid-1955
Medium Bomber			
Jet	Possible	10/20	120
	Prototype		
Piston	1,000	1,250	1,100
Heavy Bomber			
Total	Few	40/80	180 <sup>79</sup>

The combat radius estimated for the heavy bomber was estimated at 3,420 nautical miles and its combat range at 6,600 nautical miles.<sup>80</sup> These figures meant that the bomber could hit most targets in the US on two-way mission and any target on one-way missions. Because of the comparative low numbers, however, the principal threat was still posed by the obsolescent TU-4.

<sup>78</sup> William Schaub to the National Security Council, comment to the NSC 68, May 8, 1950, page 4, Record Group 273, Box 9, Records of the National Security Council, Policy Papers 68 -72, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>79</sup> United States. Central Intelligence Agency, *Special Estimate 36, Soviet Capabilities for Attack on the US Through Mid-1955*. Washington, March 5, 1953, NSA. 5 March 2014.

<sup>80</sup> D/I USAF Proposed Changes to Initial Draft of SE-36, 24 February 1953, CREST database, Approved for Release 2008/08/29 : CIA-RDP79S01011A000800050003-4.

NSC was briefed accordingly. The briefing that was sent to the NSC in June, 1953 concludes that: “A more modern type of aircraft may possibly appear in limited quantities by mid-1955, nevertheless, major reliance, even then, would probably be placed in the TU-4’s of Long Range Air Force.”<sup>81</sup> Throughout 1953, it was readily assumed that the principal means of delivery would be the ageing Tupolev aircraft based on a Second World War design. National Intelligence Estimate 90 states that: “Until it has a heavy bomber [...], the USSR will not have the capability to reach most of the strategically important areas in the US on two way missions. [...] about 200 [heavy bombers] may be available by mid-1955.”<sup>82</sup> It was only in 1954 when the Americans seriously considered that Russians would produce enough new bombers with significantly improved characteristics to replace the old B-29 copycat in the foreseeable future.

At the beginning of 1954, an estimate of the Soviet Gross Capabilities for Attacks on the US assumed that improved heavy bomber with sufficient range to hit the US would become available. The American intelligence evaluated three bombers that could become available; Type 39 medium jet bomber, Type 31 heavy turbo propeller bomber, and Type 37 heavy jet bomber.<sup>83</sup> At the beginning of the year, Type 31 was seen as the future backbone of the Soviet bomber force. Though it was not heavy jet bomber yet, it caused some concern. The heavy turbo propeller bomber was expected to reequip substantial part of the Soviet bomber force between the time of the estimate and the end of 1957.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> NSC briefing, *Soviet Delivery Capabilities*, June 4, 1953, 1, CREST database, Approved for Release 2008/08/29 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000100050001-0.

<sup>82</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 90, *Soviet Bloc Capabilities Through Mid-1955*, 18 August, 1953, CREST database, Declassified and Approved for Release 2012/10/04 : CIA-RDP79R01012A002900030001-8.

<sup>83</sup> Tupolev Tu-16, Tupolev Tu-95, and Myasishchev M-4

<sup>84</sup> United States. Central Intelligence Agency. *Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-2-54: Soviet Capabilities for Attack on the US through 1957*. Washington, 24 February, 1954. Digital National Security Archive. 5 March, 2014, 4.

However, later the same year, this estimate was corrected. Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-7-1954, which superseded the SNIE 11-2-54, dismissed the possibility of the turbo propeller bomber's being delivered in sufficient quantities. It said: "[...] It is highly doubtful that any substantial re-equipment [...] with Type 31 class aircraft has occurred to date. The [...] re-equipment program [...] is more likely to be accomplished by introduction of the jet bomber aircraft [...] and the Type 31 class probably will not be introduced in numbers."<sup>85</sup> The document considered the Type 39 medium jet bomber to be the replacement. This type, however, had even shorter radius and range than the old TU-4<sup>86</sup> and the Type 37, which could have finally given the Soviets the capability of hitting the US mainland without spending their bombers on one-way missions. It was estimated that the Soviets would have only about 50 planes of that type at the end of 1957.

All this information was available to Val Peterson, the FCDA chairman at the time, since he was cooperating on planning the so-called Continental Defense, part of which was the Civil Defense program. Up until the end of the period in question, the risk of Soviets bombing the US was remote if possible and the American government knew it. The launch of Sputnik in 1957, which started the ICBM age, changed the considerations instantly and had not been anticipated.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the Continental and Civil Defense programs had been preparing for the threat of conventional bombing.

The Americans anticipated throughout the 1950's that the Soviets would try and develop their long range bomber forces just as the US Air Force had been doing. This mistake in the assumption regarding what means the Soviets would rely on in delivering their atomic stockpile against the targets in the US does not warrant any change in the

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<sup>85</sup> United States. Central Intelligence Agency. *Special National Intelligence Estimate SNIE 11-7-54: Soviet Gross Capabilities for Attacks on the US and Key Overseas Installations Through 1 July 1957*. Washington, August 17, 1954. Digital National Security Archive. March 5, 2014, 6.

<sup>86</sup> 1,400 to 1,700 nautical miles radius and 2,700 to 3,100 nautical miles range, SNIE 11-7-54, 7.

considerations related to the Civil Defense. It seems safe to say, that the planning of the protection against the nuclear attack was always done with the future rather than the present enemy's capabilities in mind.

NSRB acknowledged this in its own comment on the paper. It reads: "[...] the NSRB does not concur with the 'Calculated risk' some agencies of the government are willing to take that the Soviets will not attack us by 1954 or earlier. If risk is implied one way or the other, the NSRB prefers to risk in the direction of overt and organized planning to defend the United States as best it can defended between now and 1954 rather than risk millions of lives and this country's survival on the chance the Soviet [sic] cannot or will not attack the United States in the next few years."<sup>88</sup> The agency preferred precautionary principle to calculated risk. It was not the first time, it had done so.

It is noteworthy that the NSRB internal material first mentioned the preparation for the "unconventional warfare" in 1948, more than a year before the Soviets tested their bomb. The section VI point c of the memorandum of 20 December 1948 reads: "[It is recommended] that effective means should be instituted promptly to guarantee against attack by unconventional means."<sup>89</sup> This would suggest that the planning of the civilian defense system was always ahead of the actual enemy's capability to execute the attack.

This precaution sometimes took a rather humorous form. NSRB cooperated with many other departments one of which was Department of Defense. Among other things that Civil Defense required, there was the information and estimates on the effect of the

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<sup>87</sup> see Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 123.

<sup>88</sup> National Security Resources Board to the National Security Council, comments on NSC 68, May 29, 1950, page 4, Record Group 273, Box 9, Records of the National Security Council, Policy Papers 68 -72, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

weapons that might be used against the US. In a memorandum of June 19, 1950, Paul J. Larsen of the NSRB complained to the chairman that: "[they] have not received from the Department of Defense as yet weapons effects data on such items as [...] 6-inch and over Naval projectiles, [...]"<sup>90</sup> The idea that the continental part of the US could be threatened by the Soviet surface fleet was ridiculous in the 1950's and for the whole Cold War for that matter. Stalin's program, which could have changed this, was discontinued by Khrushchev.<sup>91</sup>

The US officials knew this; the NIE 3 clearly stated that: "[the naval forces of the Soviet Union] will not be able for many years at least to dispute by surface forces the control of the major ocean communications."<sup>92</sup> The role of the Soviet Navy in the possible conflict as seen by the Americans was: "defense of sea frontiers of the Soviet Union" and "support of the seaward flanks of the Soviet Army."<sup>93</sup> Since this memo was not public, it seems that there were people in the NSRB who really believed either that the USSR had almost limitless capabilities of hitting the US, or that the US should prepare for any, even remote, eventuality.

The US had experienced similar scares in the Second World War, the culmination being the infamous "Battle of Los Angeles" in which the AA guns were firing at non-existent Japanese bombers.<sup>94</sup> Once again, being ready became the word of the day. In the end, the precaution became the preferred and official policy. Nevertheless, this reveals nothing more than normal and standard disagreements over

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<sup>89</sup> Office of Information to Members of Staff of National Security Resources Board, memorandum, December 20, 1948, page 8, Record Group 304, Box 24, National Security Resources Board, Records of the Board Secretariat, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Larsen to Stuart Symington, memorandum, June 19, 1950, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>91</sup> Zubok, *Failed Empire*, 127.

<sup>92</sup> National Intelligence Estimate 3, November 15, 1950, 6.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>94</sup> see The California State Military Museum, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/BattleofLA.html> (accessed April 30, 2014).

policy on a governmental level. It is true that the government could have theoretically bloated the Soviet threat out of proportion to rally the people in support of a higher military budget, and then tried to manage the anxieties and fears caused by the non-existing threat by the inherently inefficient defense.

The evidence, however, does not seem to suggest that. Furthermore, the same people who advocated the civil defense in public would have to hold different opinion in confidential governmental talks. As it has been mentioned, the two key figures in Civil Defense in the crucial formative moments of 1950 and 1951 were Symington and Caldwell. This necessitates at least a few words on the opinions they expressed in private to other governmental officials or to each other.

The two men were very different in many respects, but they shared the view that the USSR is a threat to US and that it would attack if and when the situation was favorable. Symington expressed his position best in a letter to James Webb from the State Department. He had been upset by information he had received from a newspaperman that "some people in State [Department] were saying we over here [in NSRB] wanted to bomb the Russians now with the atomic bomb."<sup>95</sup> He defended his colleagues and himself trying to explain their view.

The following part must be cited in full, because it summarizes in a few sentences the opinion of one of the two key persons of the Civil Defense in the early 1950's.

[We] have believed for many years that the Soviets  
have been trying to destroy this country in every way except  
through direct military action. To that end we also believe

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<sup>95</sup> Stuart Symington to James Webb, letter, February 27, 1951, page 1, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

they would use military force, if necessary, as soon as they felt their strength was adequate.

It has been our opinion, therefore, that the best way to avoid war is to negotiate our international policies against a background of relative strength instead of relative weakness.

This privately expressed opinion is the best chance of understanding Symington's view on Civil Defense and its role in the Cold War.

If we take into account what NSC 68/1, which Symington and NSRB had helped to prepare, said about the Civil Defense program, it becomes clear why he advocated a program that did not meet any real and immediate threat. When speaking about the military programs the document stated the following: "It should be realized that the forces recommended herein will not insure that the United States will be absolutely secure against attack by air or unconventional means."<sup>96</sup> Since complete and active protection against the Soviet attack was not achievable, the government opted for the next best thing: the passive defense. In the word of the same document: "The civilian defense program should contribute to a reasonable assurance that, in the event of war, the United States would survive the initial blow and go on to the eventual attainment of its objectives."<sup>97</sup>

In this light, it seems that Symington saw the Civil Defense program as an integral part of the US military strength, as did the NSRB as a whole. If the Soviets could not hope to defeat the US by atomic bombing, it would increase the relative strength of the US. It is only logical then that the program had started preparing for the nuclear war years before it became possible. In any arms race one tries to stay ahead of his or her opponent and Symington saw the Civil Defense as a weapon. Millard

Caldwell saw the situation in a very similar way. Being a southern democrat, he was staunchly anti-communist.

When defending the budget appropriations for his agency in the Congress he expressed a view strikingly similar to that of Symington. He said that: "the adequate civil defense program [is intended] for two purposes: (1) to be a major factor in helping keep peace, (2) to protect lives, property and production in case the war does come."<sup>98</sup> In other words the Civil Defense program is a vital part of the American potential for deterrence. Caldwell shared that opinion with Symington. Val Peterson, who succeeded Caldwell as the head of FCDA at the, also subscribed to the view that: "while the retaliatory power is one strong deterrent [...] another powerful deterrent is defensive power."<sup>99</sup> The deterrence in their eyes was a combination of the guarantee of a massive retaliatory attack and the impossibility of the first strike to destroy the US.

As the new Federal Civil Defense Administrator heading the department that inherited the agenda from the NSRB, Caldwell kept in a frequent contact with Symington. In a memorandum to the NSRB chairman he wrote about: "placing of Civil Defense production priorities on an equal basis with the Military."<sup>100</sup> Thus, it is clear that he too saw the program as an extension of the US military potential rather than an independent and separate issue. He also believed in rallying people behind the Civil Defense program, but not just this program. As it is often the case in democratic

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<sup>96</sup> NSC 68/1, page 15, Record Group 273, Box 9, Records of the National Security Council, Policy Papers 68 -72, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>98</sup> Millard Caldwell before the House Appropriations Committee, statement transcript, July 1952, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, Publication History Files, 1950 - 62, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington (hereafter cited as Caldwell before HAC, NARA).

<sup>99</sup> Val Peterson before the House Appropriations Committee, statement transcript, June 4, 1953, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, Publication History Files, 1950 - 62, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

societies, the money spent on defense do not bring votes unless there is a clear sense of urgency which leads to strong conviction that the spending was necessary.

Symington, having left the governmental positions after Eisenhower came to power, was one of the strongest critics of the “new look” and budgetary cuts that affected both the Air Force and Civil Defense. He still subscribed to the point of view that the US should keep the position of relative strength towards the USSR and that this position and that this position was being threatened. According to historian Linda McFarland “he attacked the Administration for ‘trying to explain its defense policy with slogans’ and still ‘not telling the American people all the truth.’”<sup>101</sup>

This was said during hearings on the floor of the Senate, but Symington urged this view everywhere. Sarasota Journal reported on his speech of March 11, 1953, in which he had said that: “It is a sad fact that for a long time some of our national leaders – in both parties – have not told us the whole brutal truth about the world in which we live.”<sup>102</sup> His words about telling the people the whole brutal truth seems to suggest that he had been trying to do exactly that while he had had the chance. Scaring the people was necessary not only to make them prepare, but to make them pay. The brutal truth, then, is to be understood as the estimates that were most unfavorable to the US.

Caldwell also agreed with Symington's view of the likelihood of the Soviet aggression and the importance of relaying the relevant information to the public. In a letter inviting Symington to speak at the opening session of the Civil Defense Staff College taking place on April 30, he wrote: "I feel that the address I am asking you to deliver will be the key address [...]. As a presentation of the 'BACKGROUND FOR

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<sup>100</sup> Millard Caldwell to Stuart Symington, memorandum, undated, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>101</sup> McFarland, *Cold War Strategist*, 59.

WAR' it will indicate the tensions [...] out of which flow our sense of the urgency of military and civilian defense. A clear understanding of these tensions can result in the development of an energetic civil defense program throughout the nation."<sup>103</sup>

It seems that both men agreed on these two major premises upon which, as a result of this concord, the Civil Defense program of the early 1950's rested. While there were doubts about the potential efficiency of the proposed program, the two men who pioneered it did not share them. They doubted neither that protection against the atomic weapons was possible, nor that the money required for such protection was a good investment. It is possible to accuse them of being too cautious or even paranoid. Although it is of course easy to say so with the benefit of the hindsight, there were people in the government at the time whose view may have been more balanced. It is impossible, however, to say that these two men did not believe in what they were telling the public.

This, of course, is not to say that they were willing to disclose all the information they had. There always was, and quite obviously had to be, some amount of simplification, misdirection and sugarcoating. We have seen that the intelligence on the possibility of the Soviet attack was full of "ifs". The Soviets could hit, if they have a stripped down version of the TU-4 and if they have perfected the air refueling technology. Furthermore, all the documents starting with those we have already discussed through to the intelligence estimates acknowledged that even though the attack was theoretically possible, the chances were remote. The reasons were mainly insufficient stockpile of the bombs and the limitations posed by the proficiency of the

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<sup>102</sup> Sarasota Journal, March 12, 1953, page 18, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1798&dat=19530312&id=nwEdAAAAIBAJ&sjid=NYoEAAAIBAJ&pg=1703,1214528> (accessed April 14, 2014).

<sup>103</sup> Millard Caldwell to Stuart Symington, letter, March 29, 1951, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

bombing crews, abort rates on such long raids, and inadequate infrastructure at the staging areas.<sup>104</sup> As it has been mentioned, the Civil Defense was seen as something that needs to be developed before it is too late.

This view is mentioned in the NSC 68/1 as well. The civilian defense program proposed in it was to be fully operational by 1954, if all the budgetary and other requirements were met. It says: "The following requirements constitute current estimates as to that Civil Defense program which, by 1954, would: a. Serve to minimize casualties [...] b. Provide emergency care and relief [...] c. Help preserve the productive core of the nation."<sup>105</sup> The included table with estimates also shows that the total budget required for the program was to rise from meager 147 million dollars in the fiscal year 1951 to the peak of 2.354 billion dollars in the FY 1953 falling back again to 89 million in 1955.<sup>106</sup> While the program operated under the assumption of and prepared for a possible attack in 1954, the publicity campaign and the instructional materials conveyed a much higher sense of urgency.

The range of publications of Civil Defense issued either by NSRB or FCDA was wide. There were films, instruction books, commixes, and radio shows. The target audiences were just as varied. The aforementioned movie *Bert the Turtle* was for children while the film and the booklet named *Survival Under Atomic Attack* looked more serious and tried to present the information in a more matter-of-fact manner. The scope of the program was also large. In one estimate of the possible budget of the newly established FCDA the price for publications and films was calculated to be 5.5 million dollars for a 18 months period from January 1, 1951 to June 30, 1952.<sup>107</sup> The program

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<sup>104</sup> see the series of Secret Estimates and the National Intelligence Estimates

<sup>105</sup> NSC 68/1, Annex No. 3, page 1, Records of the National Security Council.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>107</sup> John A. DeChant, Public Affairs Budget Estimate, sent to Alfred Hodgson, memorandum, December 11, 1950, Record Group 304, Box 13, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National

envisaged ten public booklets of 20 million copies each to be distributed into "each home in each critical target area."<sup>108</sup> Since the public participation was deemed crucial, the educational campaign was to be wide and far reaching.

FCDA published its own periodical; the *Alert* magazine which was first published in April 1951. There was the *Alert America* touring exhibit that travelled the whole country and if the official figures are to be believed was seen by tens of thousands of people in each city it visited. *Alert* reported on the tour's last days as follows: "Attendance at the exhibits increased sharply as the convoys neared the end of their original itineraries. A record was established in Los Angeles, where 52,051 spectators were counted."<sup>109</sup> It is a question, possibly one impossible to answer, whether this interest was in any way linked to the bogus enemy attack in the previous war. However, the coincidence is striking in a way.

The absolute record for one showing was established at California State Fair in Sacramento where "114,845 persons visited the exhibit [...]"<sup>110</sup> The overall number of people who saw the show in all 70 cities may have been around one million people; less than one percent of the population. Nevertheless, considering that seeing the exhibit required an active participation, the number is not negligible. Furthermore, exercises and drills were held throughout the country and the figures are staggering. The largest

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Security Resources Board, Records Relation to Civil Defense, 1949 - 1953, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> *Alert*, Vol. 8, No. 1, July 1952, page 8, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>110</sup> Monthly Field Report, No. 18, October 10, 1952, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

was held in Washington where “more than 400,000 CD workers and majority of New York City’s 8,000,000 people took part [...]”<sup>111</sup>

Of course, there were other media that arguably had far greater impact: films, radio and booklets. The films and the radio programs enjoyed potentially the largest audience. The all important question, then, is how they presented the likelihood and the prospect of an atomic war being unleashed on the American soil by the Soviets. The most poignant example of the almost hysterical tone is the series of short radio spots about the Civil Defense. The first six start with the same opening lines: “How much time do we have? Minutes? Days? Months? Years? We don’t know, but this we do know. Civil Defense is everybody’s business.”<sup>112</sup> The opening clearly implicates an immediate threat of an attack that was, as we have seen, highly unlikely if not completely impossible.

Two spots addressed the probability directly; these were TICD-B-2 and TICD-B-3. Their language was even more urgent. The B-2 spot starts with a rhetorical question: “Can we be attacked? Yes, we can! Right at this moment every major city in the United States is within reach of enemy long-range bombers.”<sup>113</sup> It is not all that surprising that once the Soviet capability to hit the US had become the consensus in the NSRB, FCDA, and NSC, the arguments supporting the opposite point of view disappeared from the official publications. However, the definiteness of the language used and the emphasis on the answer are striking. The B-3 spot then reaches a whole new level. The original question from the previous one disappears and it starts with the

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<sup>111</sup> Monthly Field Report, No. 21, January 10, 1952, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>112</sup> FCDA, radio spots texts (TICD-A-1 to TICD-A-6), Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

strong declaration: “It can happen here!”<sup>114</sup> There was to be no doubt; the nuclear attack was a real and immediate threat.

The same message was delivered by the short films that were supposed to “[...] be seen by every American.”<sup>115</sup> The two most important in the first years of the 1950s were *Survival Under Atomic Attack* and *Our Cities Must Fight!*. However, their language seems generally calmer. The first movie depicts an all American family preparing for the nuclear attack. Most of the movie contains relatively dry factual information on what to do, where to hide, and what to prepare. Even though the advice may seem ridiculous or even laughable, it can hardly be described as panic mongering. This factual and generally almost optimistic tone of the film is contrasted only at the beginning. It starts by an ominous shot of cloudy sky underlined by buzzing of airplanes’ engines. The narrator begins: “Let us face, without panic, the reality of our times. The fact that atom bombs may, some day, be dropped on our cities.”<sup>116</sup> Here, the narration seems to almost admit that the conflict is neither immediate nor unavoidable.

This, however, changes in the second film. In it two newspapermen are discussing letters to the editor that they received as a reaction to their piece on Civil Defense. They are dismayed that people are expressing their intention to leave the threatened cities instead of staying and hiding in shelters and homes. This feeling of the populace was named “take to the hills” mentality. The term was used in this film two times and James J. Wadsworth, acting director of the Civil Defense Office of the NSRB

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<sup>113</sup> TICD-B-2, the underline is from the original, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>114</sup> TICD-B-3, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>115</sup> Val Peterson to all Castle Films Dealers, memorandum, January 26, 1954, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>116</sup> *Survival Under Atomic Attack*, Castle Films, (United States Office for Civil Defense), available at Internet Archive, accessed April 15, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/Survival1951>.

had used it in his address as early as November 30, 1950.<sup>117</sup> This attitude was even worse enemy to the Civil Defense than apathy. The film starts with the editor holding in his hand a paper on which the viewer can read: “‘Lead Editorial’ The enemy will have no trouble winning the next war. Too many Americans will desert their cities at first sign of danger. This is treason!”<sup>118</sup>

The idea that leaving a threatened city is tantamount to treason appears several times throughout the film. The message of the clip is clear and simple. By likening the organized Civil Defense program to a military program and the decision to leave the cities to deserting one’s post, the authors eradicated any distinction between the military and the civilian. It corresponds to Symington’s idea that the proper Civil Defense program is part of the military potential of the country and the quote of Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett that: “Civil Defense is a co-equal partner with the military.”<sup>119</sup> The campaign, therefore, could have served a double purpose of raising the awareness of the Civil Defense and mobilizing the spirit of the nation.

There is only one reference to the likelihood of such attack occurring in the US. As in the first film, the possibility is not much discussed and is not the central topic. Whereas the lurking danger of the enemy’s bombers was represented at least visually and acoustically in the first clip, the second makes only brief remark. It is, however, significant one in terms of the language used. One of the two journalists says: “There is no getting away from it. When the time comes, each one of us must stay in our cities

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<sup>117</sup> James J. Wadsworth to the National Round Table Conference of the American Public Welfare Association, address, November 3, 1951, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>118</sup> *Our Cities Must Fight*, (Archer Productions, Inc. 1951), available at Internet Archive, accessed April 15, 2014, [https://archive.org/details/0841\\_Our\\_Cities\\_Must\\_Fight\\_14\\_38\\_14\\_19](https://archive.org/details/0841_Our_Cities_Must_Fight_14_38_14_19).

<sup>119</sup> Reprinted in *Alert*, Vol. 1, No. 10, April 1952, page 4, Federal Civil Defense Administration, Record Group 397, Box 14, Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, Office of Civil Defense, Publication Office, Distribution Branch, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

and fight.”<sup>120</sup> The narrator similarly point out that: “our biggest job will be to continue putting out equipment and fighting gear our nation depends on.”<sup>121</sup> The language used here is definite. It is not “if the attack comes” and “our job would be”; the attack will come, given time. Thus, the fight in the name of the film is not to be taken figuratively. The cities would become fighting zones and the Civil Defense serves the twofold purpose of preparing people for the fight psychologically and ensuring enough of them would survive the initial attack to continue the fight.

The Civil Defense material issued to the public could easily be interpreted that way, but the interpretation can vary and without knowing the motivations of the people behind it, it is impossible to say with any certainty what their intentions were. We have already seen that both Symington and Caldwell considered Civil Defense as an important weapon in the arsenal of the US in terms of the real power. Caldwell even said that: “a strong civil defense preparedness program [...] is not just a shield but a sword.”<sup>122</sup> However, preparing the Americans mentally for the nuclear war bore its risks. The defeatist attitude and take-to-the-hills mentality, which could result from the conviction that no effective protection is possible, were just as dangerous to the program as the belief that no protection was necessary.

That is the reason why the nuclear war was presented to the public in a rather sanitized way. There were many references to the experience of people in the Japanese cities that had been bombed by the atomic bombs in the textual materials that tried to fight the anxieties of people. The aforementioned booklet *Survival Under Atomic Attack* claims that: “in the city of Hiroshima, slightly over half of the people who were a mile from the atomic explosion are still alive. At Nagasaki, almost 70 percent of the people a

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<sup>120</sup> *Our Cities Must Fight*, Archer Productions Inc.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Caldwell before HAC, NARA.

mile from the bomb lived to tell their experiences.”<sup>123</sup> The same information was included into the film of the same name. It was logical, while many people were actually afraid that the bomb could actually obliterate a whole city in one blast. However, the actual footage from the locations was denied to the public shortly after it had been introduced.

The US Army had shot a film in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was to be used for training purposes and it was named *Everybody's Business*, the same words that characterized the radio spots. In 1951, the use of the film was discontinued. Colonel Beers, having received a request to do so, answered: “After consideration of your comments [Harold L. Goodwin’s]<sup>124</sup>, it has been determined to withhold the distribution of this film as far as Federal Civil Defense Administration is concerned.”<sup>125</sup> However, the screening of the film to the military personnel continued. The civilians could only see healthy surviving Japanese family drinking tea in *Survival Under Atomic Attack* and staged and often illustrated rather than photographed pictures of the expected damage. It seems that the real and potentially unpleasant or even terrifying images of the real atomic bombing victims were nobody’s business.

This is hardly surprising and exceptional. It is not interesting to note that the government did not tell the citizens what it knew; it is interesting to note what it chose to disclose and what to keep under the lid. The Civil Defense campaign consistently promoted the more pessimistic prospects and the more unfavorable estimates with the justification that people need to be prepared for the worst. It is safe to assume that at

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<sup>123</sup> *Survival Under Atomic Attack*, page 4, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>124</sup> Deputy Director Public Affairs Office

<sup>125</sup> Barnet W. Beers to Harold L. Goodwin, memorandum, March 1, 1951, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

least three consecutive highest executives entrusted with the Civil Defense from 1950 to 1955 believed in a vast information campaign that exploited fears of the threat that they knew was remote to say the least. In their eyes, they fought public neglect, lack of political will, and lack of funding.

They were not alone, however. Millard Caldwell did not have to be too disheartened when he complained before the Congress that: “the House slashed funds for a public education program by 75 percent.”<sup>126</sup> The Civil Defense effort was always to be shared by the civilians. While the number of volunteers never reached the intended number, there was a field in which the NSRB and FCDA met with an enthusiastic support; the independent media. General manager of the New York Times delivered a speech named *Public Opinion As a Weapon in Democracy's Fight for Survival* at the Armed Forces Information School on March 20, 1953. He said that: “In a free society, information must be the common denominator behind unified public opinion and national policy.”<sup>127</sup>

Then he went on to mention Senator Symington's nine days old speech quoting from it directly: “For years' said the Senator, ‘a few of us have tried to get the truth of our military position out to the people because we believe our national security, far from preventing the publication of this information, rather demands it.’”<sup>128</sup> In his opinion, the free press could and should help with this mission. He was certainly not the first who preached such a policy and as we will see, he was certainly not the first one to practice it. His speech, nevertheless, is at the heart of the public received the information about the Soviet capability and willingness to attack the United States. We can find a privately

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<sup>126</sup> Caldwell before HAC, NARA.

<sup>127</sup> Julius Ochs Adler, *Public Opinion As a Weapon in Democracy's Fight for Survival*, March 20, 1953, 2, CREST database. Approved for Release 2002/08/21 : CIA-RDP80R01731R000400640010-1 (hereafter cited as Adler, CREST), 2.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

published counterpart to every governmental effort to warn against the totalitarian state bound on world dominance with nuclear weapons at its disposal.

### **Public-Private propaganda: The Media and the Soviet Threat**

In the previous chapter, we saw how governmental agencies publicly presented the US former ally and Cold War enemy. While most of the propaganda effort of the US government was directed at foreign countries, the image of the Soviet Union was just as important at home. There was no counterpart to the information program by the State Department which was projected to consume more than six hundred million dollars between 1951 and 1955.<sup>129</sup> The Civil Defense campaign was the only substantial governmental program at that time that was designed to address the domestic audience. The sense of imminent danger deliberately instilled by the campaign, without a doubt, influenced the way the ordinary Americans saw the Asiatic superpower. Nevertheless, just as it was the case with the spies, it is a question whether the program fabricated the image or rather capitalized on the already negative feelings toward the USSR.

It would be incorrect to say that the Americans started to fear the Russians only after they had detonated their first atomic bomb just as it is incorrect to say that the communists might have been accepted as a part of the political scene had HUAC and McCarthy not started their crusades. The average Americans had been distrustful towards the Soviets long before they were scared by the mushroom cloud of their bomb. In a poll conducted in 1946, 66% of the respondents believed that if the Russian government had been prepared, they would have gone to war to get what they wanted.<sup>130</sup> This was in March; six months after the VJ day and the surrender of Japan. At that point in time, many influential people in the government, including James F. Byrnes the head of the Department of State, still believed that the cooperation with the Russians is possible.

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<sup>129</sup> NSC 68/1, Annex No. 5, 1.

<sup>130</sup> "Gallup Poll #368, q. 16, March, 1946," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

This discrepancy may be the reason why a different poll from the same month showed 61% Americans thought the US policy towards Russia is too soft and just 3% saw it as too tough.<sup>131</sup> Another survey from July 1946 revealed that 66% of Americans believed that their country would find itself in another war in next 25 years and of those 54% said it would be with Russia.<sup>132</sup> More than three years before Stalin even had the A-bomb, the average Americans had been afraid of his intentions. When the atomic test finally came, the minds of the Americans had already been set. It gave the old threat new urgency though. And this was even intensified by the new medium of television and huge coverage that media generally gave the power of the nuclear weapon.

For the newspapers, magazines, radios, and televisions alike, the atomic bomb was the topic that sold. Thomas Doherty describes the effect the bomb had. He says the following: "The cultural fallout from the Bomb settled all over American culture, but a series of made-for-television events sent out particularly intense shock waves. On the morning of February 6, 1951, Los Angeles stations KTLA and KTTV transmitted the first live images of an atomic blast to a select but no doubt attentive local audience."<sup>133</sup> In terms of numbers of viewers, this was to be a mere prelude. More than a year later, on April 22, 1952, the atomic bomb test from Yucca Flat, Nevada was broadcasted throughout the US.<sup>134</sup> The television entered the atomic age and was arguably the most potent and influential medium. Nonetheless, it was neither the only nor the first medium that took the issue. FCDA was more than happy to cooperate. Nevertheless, it seems that the Civil Defense campaigns, regardless if private or governmental, were reactive rather than causative. The media catered to the interest of the public and the government tried to manage fears and anxieties that had already been present.

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<sup>131</sup> "Gallup Poll #367, q. 6t, March, 1946," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> "Gallup #375, q. 8a, 8b, July, 1946," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 10, 2013).

<sup>133</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 368 - 70

<sup>134</sup> see Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 377-78

Although the number of people playing an active role in the Civil Defense program never reached the governmental goal, nuclear war was a hot topic for the average Americans. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that it was not long before it became a profitable article. What is surprising, though, is how closely the independent media cooperated with the government when reporting on the topic. A system of semi-automatic censorship evolved, in which the editors submitted their pieces to the Civilian Mobilization Office of the NSRB and later to the Public Affairs Office of the FCDA for fact-checking.

Others offered to cooperate on disseminating information on civil defense viewing it as their contribution to the Cold War effort. Even such magazine as *Harper's Bazaar* joined in. In February 1951, the magazine wanted stills from the film *Survival Under Atomic Attack* from the Department of Civil Defense. The fact that even a fashion magazine wanted to publish a piece on civil defense says a lot. Nevertheless, there are more important examples of how the government and the privately owned media cooperated. The correspondence between the agency and editors of such magazines and TV shows is particularly revealing.

Arguably the most important of the media was the television. The ascent of television combined with the eagerness of the TV networks to help the government ensure that the civil defense and the atomic bomb could hardly be forgotten. The number of TVs was growing rapidly during the whole period in question. Doherty claims that “in 1949 television was a luxurious indulgence in one out of ten American homes; in 1959, television was essential furniture in nine out of ten American homes.”<sup>135</sup> The influence of this new medium could hardly be overstated. Furthermore,

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<sup>135</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 283-84.

the atomic age provided the networks with an extravaganza that attracted audience instantly.

CBS, for example, aired a whole series produced by the Office of Civil Defense of the Defense Department. The executive producer wrote to Mr. Wadsworth of the NSRB that “from all indications, our program PRIMER FOR SURVIVAL was very enthusiastically received by our viewers. May I take this opportunity to thank you for the very considerable part you played in helping make this important program a success.”<sup>136</sup> This was both marriage of reason and love. The network did not have to pay for the production and the interest of the audience was assured. Furthermore, they had the feeling of helping their country. CBS was not alone.

NBC also wanted to help; to do their share. The language used by its Vice President in a letter to Stuart Symington would lead an unknowing reader to believe that the US was fighting an actual war at the time. Mr. Eiges wrote: “Kate Smith and Ted Collins are anxious to place themselves at your disposal to be of service in the war effort.”<sup>137</sup> It seems that at least some people in the booming industry caught the Cold War fever. They did believe, as Symington did, that the war was more than a distant possibility; they believed that the threat was all too real. The viewership figures were a considerable and pleasant bonus. It seems that the saying “bad news sell” was valid from the dawn of TV.

Occasionally, some people argued that the fear-mongering had crossed the line, but the audience did not seem to care much. This, however, was the case later when the hydrogen bomb with its much bigger destructive force blew away the atomic bomb.

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<sup>136</sup> Irving J. Gitlin to James Wadsworth, letter, September 26, 1950, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>137</sup> Sydney B. Eiges to Stuart Symington, letter, July 27, 1950, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

ABC produced a fictitious account of nuclear war in the US. The program was named *Atomic Attack*. Doherty describes it as follows: “A somber and stark projection, with no triumphalism and scant hope, *Atomic Attack* spooked viewers and critics alike.”<sup>138</sup> This was definitely the image that the government did not want to project. In all their publications, NSRB and FCDA emphasized that the survival was possible.

While the *Atomic Attack* may have gone too far, it was an exception rather than a rule. Generally, the press tried to toe the line and follow the instructions of the authorities. Some may have tried to ensure that their publication would be used as an officially approved material, as the authors of the comic book *What Can You Do, When an Atom Bomb Strikes* did. Others, like *Pageant*, simply wanted to be as accurate as possible on technical details. In some cases, the people in the media may have been sympathetic to the cause because of their previous service in the government. This was true for Clifford Kaynor, the president of the National Editorial Association. In a letter to De Chant, he wrote: “During the last war, I was Public Relations and Publicity Chairman for the Washington State Defense Council and found that the newspapers of this state gave excellent cooperation and were always willing to do everything in their power to aid the war effort.”<sup>139</sup> The reasons aside, far reaching collaboration between the government and the private sector was the norm.

In October 1950, John De Chant of the Civil Defense Office wrote to Mr. Wadsworth of the same agency that “during the past six months we have received by letter and by visit, numerous individual offers of cooperation from groups in the information field. [...] Among the major offers of service and assistance were these: 1. The American Book Publishers Council [...] 2. The Association of Comic Book

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<sup>138</sup> Doherty, *Cold War Cool Medium*, location 457-58.

<sup>139</sup> Clifford Kaynor to John De Chant, letter, November 14, 1950, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington (hereafter cited as Kaynor to De Chant, letter, NARA).

Publishers [...] 3. National Association of Broadcasters [...].<sup>140</sup> The cooperation had begun even before either the NSRB or FCDA started any major effort of its own on the information front. Furthermore, the aforementioned National Editorial Association, whose president offered his help with the publicity campaign, consisted of approximately 5,000 weekly and 570 daily newspapers.<sup>141</sup> It is, therefore, safe to say that the governmental agencies had the power to regiment what information the private corporations delivered to public.

The agencies used this influence in two ways; the TV and radio networks, hungry for any information on the topic, invited NSRB and FCDA staff to participate in their shows and the Public Affairs Office served as a sort of editorial board for printed media. There are two particularly illustrative examples of how it worked; one concerns audiovisual media and the other print media. Millard Caldwell appeared on Eleanor's Roosevelt TV show on Sunday, February 25, 1951. The correspondence within the agency about his appearance provides an interesting insight in how the topic was presented. The second example is that of aforementioned comic book *What Can You Do, When an Atom Bomb Strikes*. The authors asked for comments on the factual accuracy of their piece and they received a very detailed review.

Caldwell's appearance on TV was more than just a regular show. The materials from inside FCDA suggest how well it was managed and orchestrated. First of all, the questions that the administrator was supposed to answer were not only given in advance, but they came from within the agency. John De Chant wrote to his superior:

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<sup>140</sup> John De Chant to Mr. Wadsworth, memorandum, October 12, 1950, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>141</sup> Kaynor to DeChant, letter, NARA.

“Following are the questions we have suggested to Mrs. Roosevelt to ask you [...]”<sup>142</sup> Eight discussion points followed. The day before, Jesse Butcher, Director of Audio-visual division of the Public Affairs Office did send a letter to Mr. Henry Morgenthau III, who produced the show in which he stated the eight points.<sup>143</sup> It seems to suggest that the show was run by the agency rather than the presenter or the network. Thus, the show, without overtly admitting it, was in essence a part of the government-run information program.

Jesse Butcher had even a hand in picking the other guest, the one who was supposed to oppose administrator Caldwell’s view. It must be noted, though, that he did not ask to decide who should appear on the show with his boss and it seems that he was a bit surprised by this turn of events. In a memo to Harold Godwin, he wrote: “In the place of Governor Driscoll, Mr. Morgenthau is seeking another guest. He would like to find someone who is mildly opposed to the Governor’s views on Civil Defense. He is even willing to have the Governor [Caldwell] suggest someone!”<sup>144</sup> Copy of this memo went to Caldwell too.

The influence the agency had on the final form of the show was undoubtedly high. Instead of being questioned, the agency’s representative had an opportunity to present his views. The opposing view was to be represented, but the person was supposed to be opposed only mildly to the Administration’s view. Nonetheless, it seems that this was not a result of pressure from the agency. Rather, it is likely it was, at least in this case, voluntary effort on the side of the editor. The same could be said about

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<sup>142</sup> John De Chant to Millard Caldwell, memorandum, February 21, 1951, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>143</sup> Jesse Butcher to Henry Morgenthau III, letter, February 20, 1951, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

many other examples of how the media cooperated. In some cases, NSRB or FCDA were asked to check all the details of the published pieces and they gladly obliged.

The comic book *What Can You Do When an Atomic Bomb Strikes* provides an excellent example of how detailed the comments of the responsible agency were. Historian Kenneth Osgood claims the following: “The Federal Civil Defense Administration conducted extensive propaganda operations in the United States, using the imperative of civil defense to prepare Americans psychologically for a prolonged Cold War and armaments race.”<sup>145</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, it was part of the mission of both NSRB and FCDA. This is true at least of how the civil defense campaign was seen by the leaders; Symington and Caldwell. It was, therefore, important to find the right balance between fear and hope. The people had to believe that the attack was possible and at the same time that they could protect themselves against such an attack.

This is exactly what the agency tried to ensure in the privately published comic book. This particular case is very interesting because the surviving correspondence provides very detailed picture of how thorough the process was. The general manager of *Graphic* exchanged letters with John De Chant and Charles Ellsworth of the Public Affairs Office between November 1950 and February 1951. In the first exchange, De Chant commented on 16 out of 34 frames used in the comic book.<sup>146</sup> The comments range from minor to substantial. The necessity of protecting oneself against the atomic attack having been established, it would be logical if the comments aimed at the comic

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<sup>144</sup> Jesse Butcher to Harold Goodwin, memorandum, February 17, 1951, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>145</sup> Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 90.

<sup>146</sup> John De Chant to J.H. MacNiven, letter, December 12, 1950, Record Group 304, Box 14, National Security Resources Board, Office of the Chairman, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington (hereafter cited as DeChant to MacNiven, NARA).

book's providing the most comforting information. This, however, is not true. Mr. De Chant corrected factual errors even in the cases when the incorrect information could have had a more calming effect to the public.

In one frame, for example, the comic book suggested people could protect themselves against radiation using sheets and blankets. De Chant commented that "sheets or blankets have no effect whatever on radiation. Only dense materials such as concrete, steel, and lead can stop certain elements of radiation. At ground zero three feet of concrete would be necessary."<sup>147</sup> Not correcting the inaccurate information in this case would have been more logical if comfort had been the only intention behind the process. The fact that De Chant wanted to correct this piece of information, therefore, suggests that he believed that he was providing the public with information necessary for survival.

This assumption is further proved when we look at how the corrections made by De Chant correspond to information from the Atomic Energy Commission. AEC was supposed to provide information such as atomic bomb effects on cities to NSRB and later FCDA for the purpose of proper civil defense planning. One of the problems it was tackling was the effect of an atomic blast on certain types of buildings. This relates directly to the chances of survival of people inside. Harry L. Bowman, a consultant to the AEC prepared material for the Congress. In it, he specifies that the Nagasaki type bomb would completely destroy a wooden frame industrial and commercial building within 7,900 feet, approximately 1.5 miles, radius from ground zero. The same buildings, according to him, would suffer no damage at the distance of 10,700 feet, approximately 2 miles. The same bomb would cause utter destruction of multi-story, steel and reinforced concrete buildings within only 1,000 feet, approximately 0.2 miles.

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

All buildings of the same type standing further than 2,600 feet, approximately 0.5 mile, would escape unscathed.<sup>148</sup>

This represents the resilience towards the blast of the sturdiest and the most fragile type of building in the American cities. In the comic book, a warden character says the following: “If you are within two miles [from ground zero], your chances are about 50-50.”<sup>149</sup> De Chant replied that this was incorrect and wrote that “if you are within one-half a mile the chances against you are 10 to 1. Within a half mile and a mile, your chances are 50-50. Beyond a mile your chances are excellent.”<sup>150</sup> Accounting for the fact that the city center would be the most likely target for an atomic attack and the composition of building types in the American cities, De Chant’s calculations could not be deemed overly optimistic in relation to the information he, and others from NSRB or FCDA, received from the AEC.

The fact is that some people at that time considered any kind of protection against an atomic attack futile. The most notable example was Albert Einstein and other scientists who formed the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists. In the material that Einstein signed and the Committee sent to prospective donors they stated the following: “Preparedness against atomic war is futile and, if attempted, will ruin the structure of our social order.”<sup>151</sup> This, however, does not mean that this belief was shared by the people in the government. While it was hard to deny the credentials of Albert Einstein, the government simply had different estimates and information. It

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<sup>148</sup> Harry L. Bowman, Outline of Remarks Prepared for the Public Hearing of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy, March 17, 1950, page 1, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>149</sup> *What Can You Do if Atomic Bomb Strikes*, frame 28, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

<sup>150</sup> DeChant to MacNiven, NARA, 3.

<sup>151</sup> Albert Einstein, chairman of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, letter, November 29, 1947, Record Group 304, Entry 31A, Records of the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, National Security Resources Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington.

seems that they believed it and that is why they shared it with the public. We can argue about who was right and who was wrong, but we cannot say that the people in the government were hypocrites.

Proving to the American public that the Soviet Union had the capability of attacking the United States was one thing. The other was proving that the Russians had the intention of doing so and a plausible motive. The easiest way to do this was to liken the new enemy to the old. In this field, also the private companies willingly cooperated with the government. In a way, it could be said that the private productions had started this business long before the government launched their first movies. There are several key works of this period: *Make Mine Freedom* from 1948, *The Big Lie* of 1951, and *The Hoaxters* of 1952. Only the second one was produced by a governmental agency; the US Army.

Unfortunately, nothing is to be found in the National Archives about the army produced movie, except the copy and the fact that it was produced in 1951. Nothing is known about the details of its production. Therefore, an analysis of the symbols and images in the movie has to suffice. The movie starts with an alleged quote of Adolf Hitler: “The masses will more easily fall victim to a big lie than to a small one.”<sup>152</sup> The quote is read by a voice with a distinct German accent and the radio tower in the picture is overshadowed by a semitransparent swastika at the end of this utterance. The semitransparent swastika remains in the picture and the audience can watch a number of Nazi bosses from Hitler himself through Göring, Goebbles to Rudolf Hess and back to Hitler giving speeches.

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<sup>152</sup> *The Big Lie*, (The United States Army, 1951), available at YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS89TRQsRBk> (accessed April 15, 2014).

The narrator is saying: “The Nazi voices are still now. But the big lie lives.”<sup>153</sup> At this point, Hitler dissolves into Stalin, the swastika is replaced by the hammer and sickle and the viewers can see a procession of the communist leaders including Molotov and Berija. The voice continues: “New faces, new voices, Stalin and the Stalin gang, the big lie bigger and bigger.”<sup>154</sup> The first two scenes of the movie do not hint that there is a connection between the Communists and the Nazis, they state it outright. The whole first part of the movie continues in this way. The transitions between similar scenes of the Nazi and the Communist leaders, armies, elections and courts are done by the star wipe technique, the star being replaced by the swastika and the hammer and sickle respectively.

The quotations of the leaders of the two totalitarian regimes are translated into English, but read with strong Russian and German accents. In one part, however, German and Russian are used. In the part about the elections, when counting the votes for the only candidate, the German voice is clearly saying “Ja!” after each vote is counted and the Russian voice in the corresponding sequence is saying “Da!” in the same situation.<sup>155</sup> The first six minutes of the movie attacks the viewer with all the similarities that could possibly be found including the simple likeness of the German and Russian words for “yes”. The conclusion is inevitable; communism is the same evil as nazism with the same appetite for conquest and world domination.

The rest of the movie is dedicated to showing how much the Soviet influence had spread in the world prior to 1951. It lists the countries that had become the satellites orbiting around Kremlin. The map of the Eastern Europe is shown several times. There are inaccuracies such as the position of Poland which does not change prior and after the war in the movie. The occupation of the Baltic States is represented by black color

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

spreading to the respective territories, but the annexation of the eastern part of Poland is not. Also, Germany is still one piece on the map and belonging to the “free world” despite the fact that the German Democratic Republic had been established two years before the movie was shot.

These inaccuracies, however, do not influence how the first part of the movie must have been perceived by the audience and, therefore, can be ignored. The analogy between the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Russia could explain to the public why the Soviets and their goals were to be feared. Nonetheless, the effort of the US Army was not the first. Harding college, a privately owned liberal arts university, had produced a short animated film in 1948. The short movie called *Make Mine Freedom* celebrates the virtues of the American political system as opposed to the totalitarian, presumably the Soviet, one.

The plot of the animated movie is simple; a travelling salesman is trying to persuade people to buy a miracle remedy to all their problems. In the first part, America is described in a rather childish and blandished way. Despite the blessings of the American way, the people are not satisfied. Four characters represent four different, for the lack of a better word, classes; workers, management, politicians, and farmers. After the sugar coated introduction, they all voice their complaints. The travelling salesman offers them a cure, symptomatically named *-ism*. All four characters are persuaded without reading the terms, but the situation is saved by the citizen who refuses to sign away his freedom and lets the others taste just a little bit of this *-ism*. It is noteworthy that the salesman is not selling communism, but rather the general concept. Nazism and fascism must have surely been the other two isms in the eyes of the viewers.

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

The short movie was co-produced and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.<sup>156</sup> The same company also distributed another movie, this time a documentary, called *The Hoaxters* in 1952. The movie mentions German nazism and Russian communism in one breath, explaining how both pose a threat to the American way of life. As opposed to the case of the cooperation on the civil defense campaigns, which is well documented, the question whether the distributors and producers in this case cooperated because of their beliefs or they were somehow instructed by the government is impossible to be answered with any certainty.

Frances Stonor Saunders offers a little in a way of explaining the relations between the government and the private producers and distributors. Through C.D. Jackson, Special Assistant to the President during the Eisenhower administration, she is able to link CIA, Psychological Strategy Board and Hollywood. She writes: “he [Jackson] set down a list of ‘friends’ who could be expected to help the government: [...] Nicolas Schenk, president of MGM, and producer Dore Schary; [...]”<sup>157</sup> MGM distributed both *Make Mine Freedom* and *The Hoaxters*. Dore Schary co-produced the latter one. Saunders, however, writes about 1954 and both movies had been made earlier. Therefore it seems that while Schenk and Schary may have been sympathetic to the cause, they were not puppets in the hands of the government.

Saunders also mentions the name of Carleton Aslop, agent of the CIA. She claims that he was “[...]C.D.’s most valuable asset in Hollywood[...].”<sup>158</sup> Nevertheless, the same problem arises. While it is true that Aslop had been working for MGM much earlier before Eisenhower became president and Jackson his assistant, it is now impossible to prove if he had influenced the creation of the two works in question. In

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<sup>156</sup> Internet Movie Database, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151467/?ref\\_=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0151467/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1) (accessed May 14, 2014).

<sup>157</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders, *Cultural Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 289.

<sup>158</sup> Saunders, *Cultural Cold War* 290.

the absence of any hard evidence, it is impossible to say that the two movies would have looked differently and may not even have been produced. It seems safe to assume that at least some producers and distributors cooperated willingly and on their own accord, because they simply saw it as the right thing to do; as their part in the Cold War effort.

It is plausible that they did not even consider their activities as propaganda. Timothy Glander says the following: “‘Propaganda’ became what the other, less scrupulous, side did; they, on the other hand, were the nonideological proponents of truth and objectivity.”<sup>159</sup> It is the same attitude that we have seen with Gitling, Eiges, and Kaynor. It is also important to note that the Second World War had provided a practice ground for the way the media toed the line in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Glander explains that the propagandists of the conflict with Hitler “basked in the righteousness of combating a most heinous enemy, and [were] carefully shielded from the negative repercussions which beset World War I propagandists [...]”<sup>160</sup> The Cold War seemingly provided the same opportunity.

However, it can again be said that the external factors rather than official propaganda or pressure were the main cause. Just as with McCarthyism and civil defense, the public was more easily persuaded and the media cooperated more willingly when the sense of danger grew stronger, most notably after the first Soviet atomic test and then when the Korean War started. The sense of contributing could have been, and for many it probably were, the ultimate reward. While this will to contribute may be a perfectly acceptable explanation for documentary and quasi-documentary works, the works of fiction might have had an additional cause; the people simply wanted to see the stories about the possible conflict with the Soviets, because they had come to a

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<sup>159</sup> Timothy Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2000), Kindle edition, 27.

<sup>160</sup> Glander, *Origins of Mass Communications Research During the American Cold War*, 58.

conclusion that the USSR is a hostile power long before this opinion was expressed by the people in the government.

This would certainly not be the first example of such a phenomenon in history. Historian Niall Ferguson, for example, points out that the two decades before the First World War saw “a spate of fictional anticipations of a future Anglo-German conflict.”<sup>161</sup> The times had changed and the books were often replaced with movies, but the essence was the same. The popularity of Fleming’s *James Bond* may be attributed to the same factor. The best example of such work of fiction in the US is the movie *Invasion USA* shot in 1952.

The movie, as the name suggests, describes an invasion and occupation of the US territory. The picture is complete with atomic attacks on key areas and an all-out attack of the enemy ground, naval and air forces. It was a commercial success; with a budget of 127,000\$, it made a profit of approximately 1 million dollars. Taking relative purchase power, the respective figures today would be 1.1 million and 8.77 million.<sup>162</sup> The message of the movie is, undoubtedly, patriotic, but the main motive behind it appears to have been profit. It is hardly surprising that the Americans in 1952 showed interest in a movie that exploited the topic of the worsening international relations.

It is impossible to determine whether the production of such movies, whether fictional or documentary, was motivated by propagandist motives or simply the effort to exploit financially the fears and anxieties that the American public had had since 1946. Nevertheless, it is possible to say if it really was a concerted campaign, it was not very successful. It has been shown that the Cold War anxiety of the Americans was caused

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<sup>161</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914-1948* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 1.

<sup>162</sup> Relative worth of dollar calculator,

<http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php?use2=a%3A7%3A%3A%3B%3A6%3A%22DOLLAR%22%3B%3A1%3B%3A12%3A%22GDPDEFLATION%22%3B%3A2%3B%3A3%3A%22VCB%22%3B%3A3%3B%3A9%3A%22UNSKILLED%22%3B%3A4%3B%3A7%3A%22MANCOMP%22%3B%3>

primarily by a more aggressive foreign policy of the Soviet Union. In the same way, the Americans reacted positively when Nikita Khrushchev seemingly offered them an olive branch with his policy of peaceful coexistence. In a poll conducted in December 1954 and January 1955, 48.34 % of the respondents answered that the peaceful coexistence was a good policy for the US to follow in dealing with Russia. Only 27.59 % thought that it was a poor policy and 23.24 % had not heard of it.<sup>163</sup>

The US representatives took this as more of a problem than a solution. Chris Osgood points out the following: “According to most analyses, the Soviet peace campaign threatened to undermine free world morale [...]. [...], the Soviets threatened to weaken the resolve of the American public and of western allies.”<sup>164</sup> It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to argue whether the peace offensive had more to do with peace or offensive. Furthermore, it is utterly ulterior. The fact remains that several changes in the Soviet foreign policy crowned with the ceasefire in Korea was enough to revert the influence of the anti-Soviet covert and overt propaganda. It supports the theory that the earlier relative success of such propaganda was more connected to the urgency of the threat. When the threat disappeared, or at least diminished, the average Americans gladly changed the tune.

The cooperation of the Government and the private media and production companies was a result of cultural, political, and historical causes. Culturally, the early 1950s were not an era of wide-spread dissent movements in the American culture. The Government was still very much trusted and respected. Politically, both major parties consented to tough policies on the Soviet Union and communism. Last, but not least, the Second World War gave the American society an archetypical totalitarian enemy and a

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<sup>163</sup> "Gallup Poll #451, q. 19, December, 1954," the Gallup Brain (accessed September 20, 2013).

<sup>164</sup> Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 62.

standard pattern of fighting the enemy ideologically. Rather than a concerted effort, however, it was a piecemeal approach that sometimes resulted in patchy results. The Cold War fever of the late 1940s and the early 1950s did not diminish because the propaganda had disappeared, but because the sense of threat that gave the propaganda credibility disappeared.

## **Conclusion**

The early stage of the Cold War was undoubtedly a very confusing period for the Americans. Not surprisingly, the confusion is reflected in how we perceive the period today. Different people from different walks of life, social classes and of different political persuasion could, naturally, see the events they were experiencing differently. It was not a purpose of this thesis to describe all the possible points of view and evaluate all the different experiences. That would be impossible firstly because of the space limitations, and secondly it would have required a much broader scope of research.

What the thesis tried to accomplish was to find a unifying topic or topics that could represent how the majority of Americans felt about the tumultuous period of 1947 and 1956. Three key topic areas emerged: McCarthyism, the nuclear war, and totalitarianism. Judging by the answers the respondents gave to the Gallup researchers during that time, these were the issues of the day, so to speak. In domestic politics, there were, of course, other important issues that are not mentioned in the thesis. This is due to the fact that they bear little relation to the American-Soviet relations. It was my intention to collect the most important hopes and fears that the average Americans held with relation to the USSR, and analyze when and how they emerged and to what extent they were influenced by the official information and propaganda.

It was not, however, my goal to assess to what an extent such hopes and fears were justified. This thesis should not be read as an effort to contribute to the debate of who and what caused the Cold War. The events, if addressed, are taken as given and they are not analyzed for themselves, but as possible causes for the changes in the American public opinion. Richard Fried writes about McCarthyism when he says that “beset by Cold War anxieties, Americans developed an obsession with the domestic

communism that outran the actual threat [...].”<sup>165</sup> However, this very well describes a point of view in that the Americans hunted ghost and were afraid of phantom threats fabricated or at least exaggerated by their own government.

While part of this narrative is, undoubtedly, true, it does not give us the whole story. McCarthyism, for example, was certainly an era when the civil liberties took a beating. However, as we have seen, this temporary suppression of some civil liberties of certain groups was never supported by a majority, much less an overwhelming majority of the Americans. Furthermore, the threat was more real than some would like to admit. There were, in fact, hostile communists and communist spies in the US in that period. As Haynes summarizes it: “To say that the CPUSA was nothing but a Soviet fifth column [...] would be an exaggeration; it still remains true that the CPUSA’s chief task was promotion of communism [...]. But it is equally true that the CPUSA was indeed a fifth column working inside and against the United States in the Cold War.”<sup>166</sup>

It has also been proven that the sensitivity of the Americans to the issue of communism, spies, and the ideological subversion depended much more on the international situation than on the aggressive, loudmouth campaigns of the likes of McCarthy. Some politicians, undoubtedly, used the issue to promote their own careers. Many people were, undoubtedly, radicalized in their opinions by such politicians. Nevertheless, it does seem that the majority of the average citizens were only attracted to the banner of the brash anti-communism during the times of high tensions and they happily abandoned it and discarded it at the slightest signs of improvement.

To be sure, that does not mean that anti-communism disappeared. In the end, why would it, when the Cold War did not end. However, the end of the Korean War, the peaceful coexistence and the general thaw of the international situation after Stalin’s

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<sup>165</sup> Richard M. Fried, 1.

death cut the branch under McCarthy and the others. Their supporters after these events were relatively small though vocal minority. Nixon may have started his career in HUAC and the conservatives did continue to play the card even after McCarthy himself had been embarrassed and disappeared. On the other hand, when Nixon ran for presidency, he won with a promise of peace. The fact that he was an anti-communist was not central to his political career. Furthermore, it is hardly surprising given his political affiliation.

The attitude toward the danger of the nuclear war is much more complex. The fact is that the governmental agencies such as NSRB and FCDA tried to persuade the Americans about danger that was not, to large extent, real. The fact also is that it would have required much more money to make the civil defense program truly prepared for the case of a nuclear attack. The actual spending never reached the envisaged amount, as it is clear from the squabbles over funding that Caldwell had with Congress. Finally, it is also true that the publicity campaigns had an ulterior motive. However, it is impossible to say the whole program was a sham from the beginning.

The people in the responsible agencies believed in the necessity of preparing without delay for eventuality that, though very remote at that moment, could and did become reality in few years. That preparation, in their eyes, meant to shake the apathetic Americans by showing them that the task at hand was urgent. The urgency they conveyed was unwarranted by the facts that they had; the Soviet Union could not strike the US immediately. Nevertheless, it was warranted by their sense of the immensity of the task before them and relatively little time they thought they had.

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<sup>166</sup> Haynes, Loc. 154-56

The ulterior motives that were present are much harder to assess. However, if we take the opinions of the first two heads of the civil defense programs<sup>167</sup>, it is clear that they both believed in irreconcilable ideological differences between the US and the USSR. They both shared the opinion that if the Soviet Union continued its course, the war was very likely. Therefore, preparing for the war was their ultimate goal. They wanted to win the support of the public for far-reaching programs increasing the military might of the US. They saw the civil defense as a part of this might. The motives of others were varied and it is true that some in the government believed such programs to be unnecessary or impossible. Yet, the people who pushed the agenda were convinced of their truth.

The willing cooperation of the private media and enterprises could be explained in a similar way. Lacking the secret information about the actual threat, the responsible people relied on the same information they helped to spread. There was no official program that would require them to submit their works or to cooperate. Nevertheless, many volunteered and many more readily submitted their pieces to the scrutiny of the FCDA in order to bring their readers and viewers the information with the official approval. The chaotic results it brought fully correspond to the chaos with which the whole system worked. It was a voluntary and patchy cooperation that was achieved, due to the sense of patriotism, doing the right thing, and helping the war effort rather than due to the pressure or coercion from the government.

The same thing could be said about the films that linked nazism and communism. Although there little evidence shedding light on the creation of most of these works, nothing seems to imply that the people were pressed into the propaganda service. In fact, in many cases the links between the government and the producers in

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<sup>167</sup> Symington at NSRB and Caldwell at FCDA

these cases are almost impossible to be proven. There are some personal connections, but these do not allow us to assume anything more than that there were many people in the business who were sympathetic to the government's point of view and disliked communism.

Generally, the idea that there was some concerted propaganda campaign is rather preposterous. There was an effort to regiment the public opinion, to be sure. As Osgood claims, Eisenhower believed strongly in what he called the psychological warfare.<sup>168</sup> However, there was never one program that would have control over everything that was published. There was never a propaganda office that would have the right to control the campaigns of all the governmental agencies. Furthermore, the political competition in the country meant that the publicity crusades never went unopposed.

McCarthy was admired by some, but hated by at least as many. Even in the case of civil defense, in which the private media offered a far-reaching cooperation, the opposing opinion was heard. It was a minority opinion, to be sure, but it was not suppressed. Last but not least, in all the cases the publicity campaigns regardless of who conducted them were exploiting a feeling, anxiety, or fear that had been present before. As soon as their fears and anxieties disappeared or alleviated, the campaigns lost their power. The Americans did not start to fear communism, spies, and the Soviet atomic bomb, because their politicians and the establishment told them to do that. Their politicians and their establishment tried to exploit those to achieve their own, often varied, goals.

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<sup>168</sup> See Keneth Osgood, *Total Cold War*

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