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COMMUNISM AND THE SECOND RED SCARE

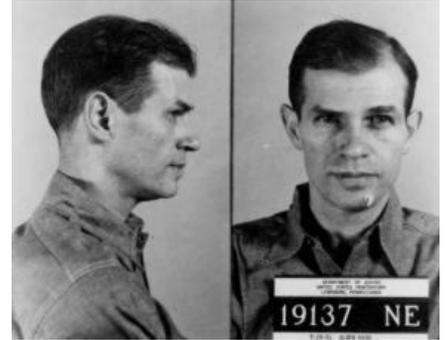
After World War II, a growing number of Americans feared that communism would gain strength in the United States. In part, this was a response to the growing Soviet occupation in Eastern Europe and the successful communist revolution in China. This led to the beginning of the **Second Red Scare**. At first, attention was primarily focused on members of the Communist Party of America because it was believed they might spies for the Soviets.

Two famous spy trials made these claims believable. First, **Alger Hiss**, a former state department official, was accused of passing secret military information to the Soviet Union and sentenced to five years in prison. Secondly, two members of the American Communist Party, **Julius Rosenberg and his wife Ethel**, were accused of passing atomic secrets to the Soviets in 1951. They were both convicted and executed.

This wave of anticommunist fears led to the development of the **House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)**. The HUAC was tasked with investigating communist activity in the United States. After hearings in which Walt Disney and Ronald Reagan testified that there was a serious threat of communists in the film industry, the HUAC began to **blacklist** actors for suspected communist ties. This meant that it would be impossible for them to find another job in Hollywood.

As fears of communism grew in the United States, some politicians played upon these fears to gain notoriety. One such politician was **Senator Joseph McCarthy** from Wisconsin. In February of 1950, McCarthy declared that he had a list of 205 State Department officials who belonged to the Communist party. Needless to say, these charges were never proven. However, McCarthy was successful at wrecking hundreds of people's careers.

The term **McCarthyism** came to stand for reckless charges against innocent citizens. McCarthy was eventually brought up on charges and faded from public view after his televised hearing, where Americans were shocked and appalled by his reckless accusations.



Mug shot of Alger Hiss.



Ethel and Julius Rosenberg after being arrested.



Senator Joseph McCarthy appearing on television.

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

1. What caused the Second Red Scare?
2. What were Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs accused of and what happened to them?
3. What was the purpose of HUAC?
4. What does it mean to be blacklisted?
5. What is McCarthyism?