



McCarthyism and Postwar America: The Red Scare in Myth and Memory (Critical Moments in American History)

Jonathan Michaels

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Joseph McCarthy was a Republican Senator from Wisconsin who became the most visible public face of a period of the Cold War when tensions fueled fears of widespread Communist subversion. He was noted for making claims that there were large numbers of Communists and Soviet spies and sympathizers inside the US federal government and elsewhere.

What is now known as McCarthyism, the practice of making accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or treason without proper regard for evidence, was, from the beginning, a phenomenon that mixed facts with the insubstantial, building on limited threats to suggest limitless menace. In fact, there were two "red menaces"-- one, the real, dangerous, but limited menace of a small group of Americans who were passing secret information to the USSR, and the other a shadowy fantasy menace, limitless in scope, of a communist takeover of the United States through the subversion of its entertainment industry and educational institutions.

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