

# Example # 1

February 26, 2015

CW DBQ

With the ideologically opposed US and USSR emerging from WWII as superpowers, competition to be the strongest nation was only natural. As Cold War standoffs intensified, the fear of a legit Communist threat to American security spread exponentially among the American public until it reached a point of absolute paranoia. This public hysteria was provoked by the rapid spread of Communism abroad, Soviet nuclear advancements, and domestic anti-subversive campaigns and resulted in the practice of defense precautions on both state and federal levels and strains on civil liberties.

The American hysteria was caused by a series of tension-escalating events, both foreign and domestic. The first to scar the Americans was the Communist takeover of China. Popular media like *Time Magazine* kept Americans informed on the expanding threat abroad and emphasized the severity of the loss of China to the democratic cause (Document 1). Americans grew increasingly fearful that if Soviet forces were strong enough to take China, they may be forceful enough to invade America too. In addition to expanded influence, Soviets were getting smarter. The announcement of atomic bombs in Soviet possession set widespread hysteria loose. With its huge nuclear advantage suddenly matched, America was forced into an intense arms race that lasted for years and produced the most highly destructive weapons to date. Americans strongly felt the pressure, especially with informative, factual news like the image provided by the *U.S. News and World Report* that intended to awaken the public to exactly how intense the arms race was becoming and how these advancements could have severe negative and deadly

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consequences (Document 6). Even the American government recognized the potential brutality of these threats as Truman proposed the Baruch Plan to restrict nations' nuclear abilities with UN inspections, but Stalin rejected it as trickery, foreshadowing crumbling diplomatic relations. ✓ O I ✓

Perhaps even more unnerving than fortified Soviets was the threat of espionage within America. ✓

The public was shocked with the convictions of top government officials and industry leaders for supposedly aiding the USSR. ✓ When questions about the Soviet's rapid development of the atomic bomb surfaced, many pointed toward traitors of the Manhattan Project, resulting in more convictions, the most famous being the Rosenbergs'. Elliot Erwitt used photography to depict how public reactions to their trial were divided yet passionate as people defended and challenged the accused link to the USSR in light of their known association with Communism (Document 3). This scandalous controversy fueled public anti-Communist hysteria, and set the perfect scene for McCarthyism to take hold of American's faith and shock them into a state of terror. ✓ As seen in the widely publicized speech to the Women's Club, conservative Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, who valued status, fame, and manipulative strategies, was strictly antiCommunist and believed he could use his power to become America's savior by portraying the government as Communist-corrupted to the public, despite his blatant lack of evidence (Document 2). Through televised hearings, McCarthyism engulfed the nation in a fear frenzy. From this point, there was no return; the Communist threat seemed not only real, but growing. ✓

The realized threat forced the government into action. Massive internal improvements fortified America's defense system. The arms race nuclear threat led to the creation of bomb shelters, which the *Life* Magazine image attempts to depict to the American public as safe, smart hideouts in the case of a bomb strike (Document 4), and the practice of evacuation drills and

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warning signals. A national highway network was built to establish clear escape routes. The necessity of these actions and Public Law 627 is shown by the historical context of the *Saturday Evening Post* article, placing this governmental response right in the age of the dreaded arms race, a period of peaked tensions and terrifying nuclear advancements, and capturing the fierce competition of the time (Document 5). Alongside the physical protection was the buildup of protection from the Communist community with HUAC investigations, the best known resulting in the incarceration of the Hollywood Ten and putting a strain on people's civil liberties to join organizations. The fear of Communism spurred organizations, such as the NAACP, to launch anti-subversive investigations and bar all Communists from admittance. The anti-Communism hysteria led to fortification of America's line of defense in more than one aspect.

Japanese interment was motivated in a likewise manner. The Japanese in 1942, like the Communist party, endured a nation's hatred and were considered a threat to national security. Because Americans were terrified that the Japanese would aid Japan and Communists would aid Soviets, these groups' liberties were violated with Japanese internment camps and anti-Communist witch hunts. Both times, the hysteria emboldened American precautions as a result of frenzied suspicions.

In retrospect, it is clear that the hysteria was a result of both reasonable and exaggerated factors, but did indeed cause a mass mobilization of America.

## Example # 2

### Cold War DBQ

As World War II came to an end, the Allies began to make plans for the postwar world. At the Yalta Conference, disagreements over the fates of Germany and Poland made it apparent that the US and the Soviet Union had very different views of the postwar world. This tension between Communist Russia and the US escalated into a period of political hostility known as the Cold War. The prospect of Communism frightened American citizens, and it threw US society into disarray. McCarthyism, China's fall to Communism, and the Soviets' acquisition of nuclear weapons frightened the American public, and this resulted in Communist witch hunts, military action, and an increased production of nuclear weapons. ✓

One major fear of the American citizens during the Cold War was that subversives would infiltrate the US government. This fear precipitated largely because of Joseph McCarthy, an extremely anti-Communist Republican. The purpose of McCarthy's speech was to inform the American public of fifty-seven supposedly Communist men in the State Department (Document 2). This statement sent the public into a frenzy because they did not want Communists to shape their foreign policy. Determined to locate the subversives, Communist witch hunts were used. The people accused of Communist beliefs had to testify in front of HUAC, and they were often blacklisted as well. <sup>Synthesis ✓</sup> Similar to the Salem witch trials in the 1600s, people were convicted of being Communists without adequate proof, just as Puritans were unjustly executed because they were believed to be witches. ✓ The purpose of "The Reaction to the Trial of Julie and Ethel Rosenberg" was to show the two perspectives of the Rosenberg trial. The accused people had no way of

proving their innocence, while the hysterical American public was determined to put all supposed Communists in jail (Document 3). Thousands of Americans were accused during this time, resulting in a period of political repression. ✓ McCarthyism was a major contributor to Cold War fears because it caused the public to fear subversives, which led to Communist witch hunts and a politically repressed society. ✓

Another prevalent fear of the American people was the spread of Communism. Truman had been carrying out a policy of containment to keep Soviet influence from spreading, but when China fell to Communism, it became apparent that the US wasn't capable of completely halting its spread. ✓ The purpose of the excerpt from *Time Magazine* was to inform the public that the Nationalist armies were defeated in China, while portraying the Communist forces as aggressive and ruthless (Document 1). ✓ The public viewed the fall of China as a failure for democracy, and they feared that Communism would spread to the US. In order to set a precedent of democratic superiority, Truman sent forces to Korea, which was on the verge of becoming Communist. O I ✓ Truman's involvement in the Korean War ended his resistance to major military buildup. ✓ The purpose of the historical statistics chart is to show the drastic increase in defense spending between 1949 and 1957 (Document 7). By improving the defense systems of the US, Truman hoped to protect the US from any potential Communist invasions. ✓ China's fall to Communism led to the fear that Communism would continue to spread to the US, and this resulted in the Korean War as well as an increase in defense spending. ✓

Another fear of the American public was that the Soviets would use nuclear weapons to attack the US. In 1949, the US discovered that the Soviets had created their own atomic bomb. This terrified the public because it created the possibility of a nuclear war. Truman was

determined to stay ahead of the Soviets in the nuclear arms race, so he went through with a program known as NSC 68. This program increased the development of the hydrogen bomb and the production of atomic bombs. In addition, the American people had to be prepared in case the Soviets did attack. The purpose of the picture from *Life* magazine was to portray the life of an average American family living during the height of this nuclear stalemate (Document 4). Bomb shelters and civil defense drills were a part of everyday life, and the threat of a nuclear war became very real to the people. Eisenhower took additional precautionary measures to protect the public. The purpose of the *Saturday Evening Post* excerpt was to announce the passage of the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways into law (Document 5). This interstate system provided an evacuation route for the American people in case a nuclear war did break out. The acquisition of the atomic bomb by the Soviets led to the public's fear of a nuclear war, and this fear resulted in precautionary measures to protect the American people.

The Cold War was a time when the American public lived in constant fear. The fear of subversives, the spread of Communism, and nuclear war resulted in measures that attempted to protect the American people as well as subdue the Soviets.

