What does a hollowed out Pumpkin have to do with this lecture?

Anti-Communism in the US, 1945-1954

How the Cold War threatened civil liberties, injected an intense ideological tone into American domestic politics, “de-radicalized” the American Left, producing a consensus around fear, and enfeebled popular culture
Comrades, take the advice of this Russian worker and turn off your cell phones so we can learn more about the threat of communism to the USA!
Themes and Topics

• Role of Government
  - Anti-Communist Politics*
  - Anti-Subversive Legislation, 1940–1952*
  - Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO)*

• Cultural Change
  - Culture of the Cold War*

• Social and Cultural Outsiders
  - The American Communist Party

*New Topics
Central Analytical Questions

• What was the greater threat to the United States?
  ▪ The internal threat from the American Communist Party
  ▪ Or the threat to civil liberties posed by anti-communist politicians and bureaucrats?
• What impact did anti-communist politics have on American domestic culture?
• What is McCarthyism? Was it qualitatively different from anti-communist politics?
Rise of Anti-Communist Politics

- Evidence of Communist spies
- Communist Party USA
- Smith Act (Alien Registration Act of 1940)
- House Un-American Activities Committee
- Truman’s initial response Executive Order 9835, issued March 21, 1947

The Chairmen of HUAC

- Martin Dies (D-Texas)
- J. Parnell Thomas (R-NJ)
Dennis v United States, 1951

• Truman’s complex motivations
  ▪ Limit anti-communist politics
  ▪ Shift focus of anti-communist politics

Eugene Dennis, Communist Party USA National Chairman
Red Front Organizations

- Attorney General Tom C. Clark announcement in December 1947 of a government subversives organization list
- Clark identified 70 organizations as mostly communist front organizations

Times-Herald, Dec. 8, 1947
Role of the FBI

- In July 1950, J. Edgar Hoover proposed creation of a list of subversives to be picked up.
- The List numbered 12K.
- Some 500 Government employees were on an FBI 'pick-up list' in case of an emergency.

J. Edgar Hoover
Whittaker Chambers

- Whittaker Chambers and the Communist Party
  - Above ground activities
  - Secret activities

- Chambers disillusionment with communism
- Chambers as informant
Alger Hiss

- Who was Alger Hiss
- Hiss versus Chambers
- Truman and Hiss
- Chambers and the “Pumpkin Papers”
- Hiss convicted of perjury, not espionage
- The making of Richard Nixon

Alger Hiss in testimony Before HUAC
Communists in Hollywood

• Why investigate Hollywood?
• Hollywood pro-Russian films from World War II
• Critics of Hollywood
• Hollywood quickly fell into line with anti-communist films
• Exceptions to the rule
• The Thaw in Filmmaking
Assault on Organized Labor

- Pressure on the Congress of Industrial Organizations
  - 11 unions identified as Communist controlled and purged from CIO
McCarthyism: What? Why?

- Joseph McCarthy, a latecomer to the party
- McCarthyism
  - Definition: Unfounded accusations
  - Background in Communist Party conspiratorial behavior

Sen. Joseph McCarthy
Truman and McCarthyism

- Truman and McCarthyism
- Truman and McCarthy
- Anti-communist politics during Truman’s presidency

Harry S. Truman, looking resolute and brave against political demagoguery
The End of McCarthy

- McCarthy empowered
- The Role of Dwight Eisenhower in the end of McCarthyism
  - Ike as anti-communist
  - Ike as anti-demagogue

McCarthy, looking like a Hollywood heavy
What Happened to the US Communist Party?

- De-radicalization of American politics and society
- Mis-reading of Ike Presidency as new Hitler
- Death and denunciation of Stalin in USSR shattered party

Star-crossed lovers, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg
FBI Begins COINTELPRO

• Role of Eisenhower Administration
• Role of the Supreme Court: 1956, 1957 decisions
• FBI priorities
  ▪ Agents assigned to anti-communism: 400
  ▪ Agents assigned to organized crime: 4
• First COINTELPRO program, 1956
  ▪ Spy on “subversives” and gather intelligence
  ▪ Use information gathered during investigations to discredit dissident political activities
Critical Thinking Question

- What is your assessment of anti-communist politics?
  - Was communism a threat to the internal security of the US?
  - Was anti-communism a threat to civil liberties of American?
Conclusions

- Anti-Communism as the Politics of Fear
  - Narrowed political discourse
  - Threatened cultural autonomy
  - Subverted economic justice
- Presidents, whether Democratic or Republican, used security loyalty programs to feign off or launch partisan attack
- Government bureaucrats used anti-communism to further undermine civil liberties
- The Supreme Court was an ineffective instrument protecting civil liberties