

**CHAPTER 12**  
**SECTION 4**  
**Section Summary**  
**THE COLD WAR AT HOME**

The **Red Scare**—public fear that communists were working to destroy America both from within and without—spurred President Truman in 1947 to investigate federal employees. About 3,000 people were dismissed or resigned. The Truman administration also used the 1940 **Smith Act**, a law against advocating violent overthrow of the government, to send 11 U.S. Communist Party members to prison.

Meanwhile, the **House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC)** investigated subversive activities throughout American life, including academic institutions, labor unions, and city halls. In 1947, HUAC targeted the **Hollywood Ten**, a group of left-wing writers, directors, and producers. They refused to testify against themselves but were sent to prison. Movie executives then circulated a **blacklist** that named entertainment figures suspected of communist ties, shattering many careers.

Two sensational spy trials increased the country’s suspicion of communists. The first one concerned **Alger Hiss**, a government employee who had helped organize the United Nations. In 1948, Whittaker Chambers, a former member of the Communist Party and an espionage agent, named Hiss as one of his government contacts. Hiss denied everything before HUAC but was sentenced to five years in prison. The second trial involved **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg**, who were accused of passing secret information about nuclear science to Soviet agents. The Rosenbergs claimed that they were being persecuted because they were Jewish and held unpopular beliefs. They were convicted in a highly controversial trial and executed in 1953.

**Joseph R. McCarthy**, a senator from Wisconsin, also fanned Americans’ fears. He claimed he had a long list of communists in the State Department, but each time he was asked to give specific names and numbers, his figures changed. Still, with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, McCarthy’s popularity soared. **McCarthyism** became a catchword for the senator’s vicious style of reckless charges. McCarthy’s targets grew bigger, and in 1954, he went after the United States Army. After viewers saw him badger witnesses and twist the truth during televised hearings, he lost his strongest supporters. The end of the Korean War in 1953 and McCarthy’s downfall in 1954 signaled the decline of the Red Scare.

**Review Questions**

1. How were the Smith Act and HUAC supposed to discourage communism in the United States?

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2. What events led to the decline of the Red Scare?

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**READING CHECK**

What happened to the Hollywood Ten?

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**VOCABULARY STRATEGY**

What does the word *academic* mean in the underlined sentence? Use context clues and your prior knowledge to help you figure out what *academic* means.

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**READING SKILL**

**Identify Causes and Effects**  
 Discuss the events that led to McCarthyism and the popularity of the senator from Wisconsin.

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