

# The Year Was... 1954

In the years following World War II, there seemed to be no respite from bad news: the explosion of the first Soviet nuclear warhead came on the heels of the Berlin Crisis, which was followed by the fall of China to communism, the installation of communist regimes in eastern Europe, and the invasion of South Korea by North Korea.

Apprehensive about the enemy outside, Americans became increasingly fearful of enemies within. The hunt for traitors reached its height in 1954, when Senator Joseph McCarthy investigated the army in 36 days of nationally televised hearings. These hearings marked both his zenith and his downfall; many were appalled by what they heard and saw, and by the end of the year McCarthy had been removed as chairman of

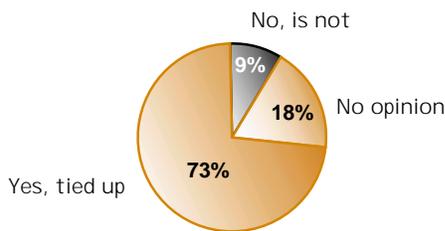
the Subcommittee on Investigations and censured by the Senate.

Recent scholarship, fed by new access to archival sources in both the former Soviet Union and the United States, seems to indicate there really was a considerable danger to US security from Americans secretly working for the Soviets in the 1950s. This does not vindicate McCarthy or excuse his methods; in fact, historian Harvey Klehr says that the anticommunist cause was actually harmed by his activities.

The question remains: was it only paranoia, or were they really out to get us? Here, we can only consider what people believed.

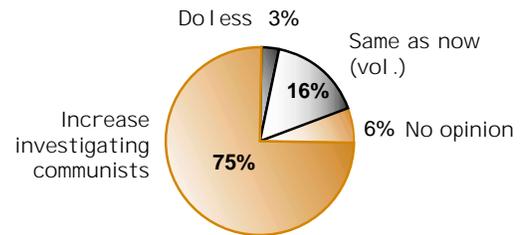
—Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

**Question:** Do you think the Communist Party in the United States is tied up with a world-wide organization to overthrow our government by force, or not?



**Source:** Survey by Opinion Research Corporation, January 1-13, 1954.

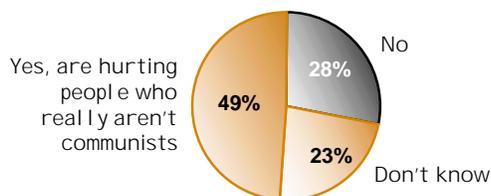
**Question:** What should the Eisenhower administration do about investigating communists and subversives in this country? Should they increase it or do less of it?



**Source:** Survey by Opinion Research Corporation, July 1954.

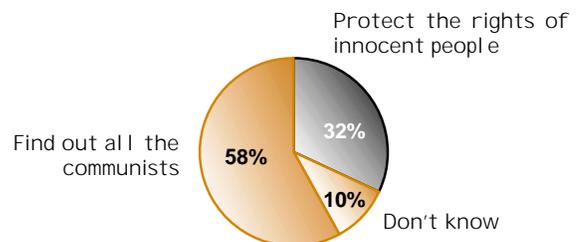
## The Lesser Evil

**Question:** It has been said that these congressional committees investigating communism are hurting the reputations of some people who really aren't communists at all. Do you think these committees are or are not hurting the reputations of some people who really aren't communists?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.

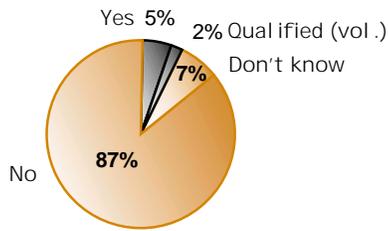
**Question:** In your opinion, which one of these two is more important? To find out all the communists even if some innocent people should be hurt [or] to protect the rights of innocent people, even if some communists are not found out?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.

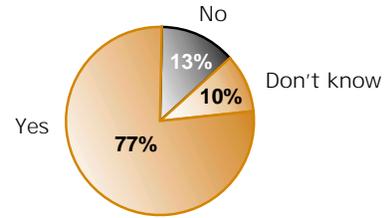
# UnAmerican

**Question:** Do you think a man can believe in communism and still be a loyal American, or not?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.

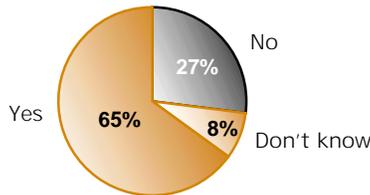
**Question:** ...Should [a man who admits he is a communist] have his American citizenship taken away from him, or not?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.

## Careless Whispers

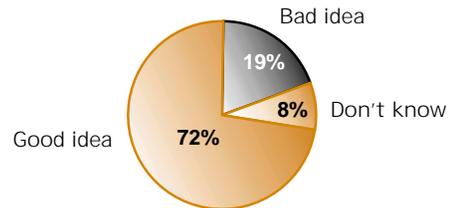
**Question:** Do you or don't you think the government should have the right to listen in on people's private telephone conversations, in order to get evidence against communists?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.

## Trust No One

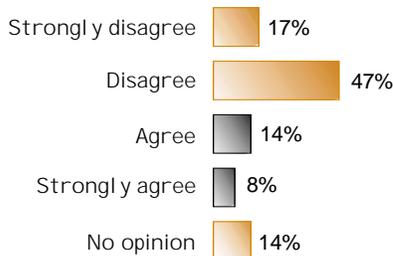
**Question:** On the whole, do you think it is a good idea or a bad idea for people to report to the FBI any neighbors or acquaintances whom they suspect of being communists?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.

## Perceptions

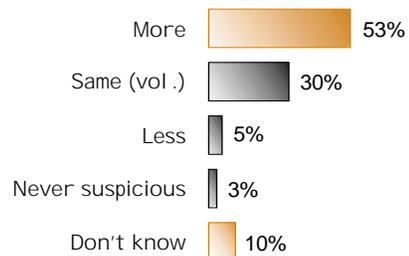
**Question:** ...Would you please tell me which of the choices on this card is closest to how you feel about each [statement]... congressional investigations are stirring up hysterical fear and suspicion that is doing more damage to democracy than the communists in this country. Agree or disagree?



**Source:** Survey by Opinion Research Corporation, January 1-13, 1954.

## Jaundiced Eye

**Question:** Do you think Americans are getting more suspicious of others, or less suspicious?



**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization and the National Opinion Research Center for Samuel A. Stouffer & the Fund for the Republic, May-July 1954.