

Famous Speeches: Joseph McCarthy's "Enemies from Within"

By Joseph McCarthy, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.20.17

Word Count **914**



Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin speaks to the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on March 14, 1950. He said that the State Department gave an important job to a former Spanish Republican Army officer, Gustavo Duran, although U.S. Army reports said he was a Russian agent. Duran was formerly an assistant to the assistant secretary of state in charge of Latin American affairs. The charges against Duran were never proven. AP Photo/Herbert White

Editor's Note: Wisconsin Republican Joseph R. McCarthy was elected to the Senate in 1946. At the time, the United States and the Communist Party-controlled Soviet Union were engaged in the Cold War, a war not of bullets, but of competing belief systems. McCarthy spread fear that communist agents were infiltrating the United States, and even the State Department, which gives the president advice on countries around the world and negotiates with them for the United States.

In a speech given on February 9, 1950, McCarthy charged that the State Department and its leader, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, were harboring "traitorous" communists. During the speech, McCarthy held up a list of people he claimed were known traitors. McCarthy never made the list of names public.

The speech made McCarthy well-known and led Congress to begin investigating supposed communists in the government. McCarthy later gave Congress the names of State Department employees he claimed were traitors. Those individuals lost their jobs, even though McCarthy never supplied evidence to prove their guilt.

Later, other lawmakers stood up to McCarthy. They said he was wrong for getting people fired without proof they had done something bad. Today, the word McCarthyism means when people accuse other Americans of hurting the United States without evidence.

Selections from McCarthy's 1950 speech are below.

"This Is Not A Period Of Peace"

Five years ago, the United States and its allies emerged victorious from the second world war. Our hearts should now be anticipating a long peace — and our minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period — for this is not a period of peace. We are now in the midst of “the cold war.” The entire world has been split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps.

The inescapable truth is that we are now engaged in a showdown fight. It is not the usual war between nations for land areas or other material gains. Rather, it is a war between two opposing belief systems.

The great difference between our western Christian world and the godless atheistic communist world is not political, gentlemen. It is moral.

"We Are Strongly Against This Attack On Freedom"

Karl Marx was communism's most important thinker. His idea that the government should control a country's land and its factories is strongly against our values.

Vladimir Lenin invented the communist police state in the Soviet Union. Its government keeps power by using the police force to control and watch over the people. We are strongly against this attack on freedom.

When Joseph Stalin took over from Lenin, his merciless putting across of the ideas of Marx and Lenin did much to divide the world, of course. However, peace might still be possible with only these differences.

"Marx Dismissed God As A Trick"

The real, basic and unsurmountable difference lies in the godlessness of communism. Communist atheism rejects those moral values that come from our faith in God. If the communist half of the world triumphs, its atheism will more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system.

Marx dismissed God as a trick. He expelled people from his Communist Party for mentioning such things as love, justice and humanity. Lenin and Stalin have both declared that no religious nation, no people who believe in a god, can exist side by side with their communistic state.

"The Two World Systems Cannot Co-Exist"

Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity.

Lest there be any doubt, let us go directly to the leader of communism today — Joseph Stalin. Three years ago he declared that it is completely impossible for the communist revolution to be carried out peacefully "within the framework of a Christian democracy." He understands fully that the two world systems cannot co-exist, and are at war with each other.

Ladies and gentlemen, can anyone here tonight be so blind as to say the war is not on? Can anyone fail to realize that this is the time for the showdown between the democratic Christian world and the communistic atheistic world?

Unless we face this fact, we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long.

In 1944, there were 180 million people controlled by the Soviet Union. Today, only six years later, there are 800 million people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia — an increase of over 400 percent. This indicates the speed of communist victories and the pace of American defeats in the cold war.

"These Traitors Are Still Working In The State Department"

The reason why we find ourselves in this position is not because the communists have sent men to invade our shores. Rather, it is because of the traitorous actions of some of our very own citizens.

As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, "When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be from enemies from without. Rather, it will be because of enemies from within."

I have here in my hand a list of 205 names that were made known to the secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party. Shockingly, the secretary has chosen to ignore this information and all these traitors are still working in the State Department.

There will be no real peace or safety until these twisted, warped thinkers are swept from the national scene. Only then will the rebirth of honest, decent government become possible.

Quiz

- 1 Read the selection from the section "This Is Not A Period Of Peace."

We are now in the midst of "the cold war." The entire world has been split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps.

The inescapable truth is that we are now engaged in a showdown fight.

How does the word "inescapable" affect the TONE of the selection above?

- (A) It conveys the sense that the Soviet Union is doomed by its ideas.
 - (B) It conveys the sense that the truth will be impossible to know until the end.
 - (C) It conveys the sense that the U.S. is trapped and victory is impossible.
 - (D) It conveys the sense that the truth is clear and must be confronted.
- 2 Read the paragraph from the section "Marx Dismissed God As A Trick."

The real, basic and unsurmountable difference lies in the godlessness of communism. Communist atheism rejects those moral values that come from our faith in God. If the communist half of the world triumphs, its atheism will more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system.

Which word from the paragraph MOST helps you understand that McCarthy believes the United States and the Soviet Union would never be able to agree?

- (A) basic
- (B) unsurmountable
- (C) triumphs
- (D) conceivable

- 3 According to McCarthy, what is the BEST way to describe how the viewpoints of the United States and the Soviet Union differ?
- (A) The United States has conservative values, and the Soviet Union has liberal values.
 - (B) The United States believes in and respects all opposing beliefs, and the Soviet Union does not.
 - (C) The United States values freedom and morality, and the Soviet Union is godless, controlling, and amoral.
 - (D) The United States values power, independence, and God, and the Soviet Union is small, weak, and manipulative.
- 4 How does McCarthy MOST convey the importance of finding and eliminating traitors?
- (A) by suggesting it is the only way for the values and the government of the United States to survive
 - (B) by explaining how many people are living under the control of the government in Soviet Russia
 - (C) by describing the actions traitors have taken to give secrets to the government of the Soviet Union
 - (D) by illustrating that many people in the United States have started to believe in communist ideas