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i Think : U.S. History

The Modern Era



by Sharon Coletti

** It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

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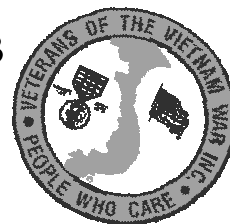
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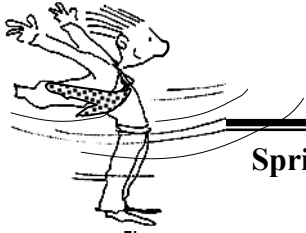
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A Chill Wind from the East

Springboard:

Students should study the “Do-It-Yourself Shelter” diagram and answer the questions.

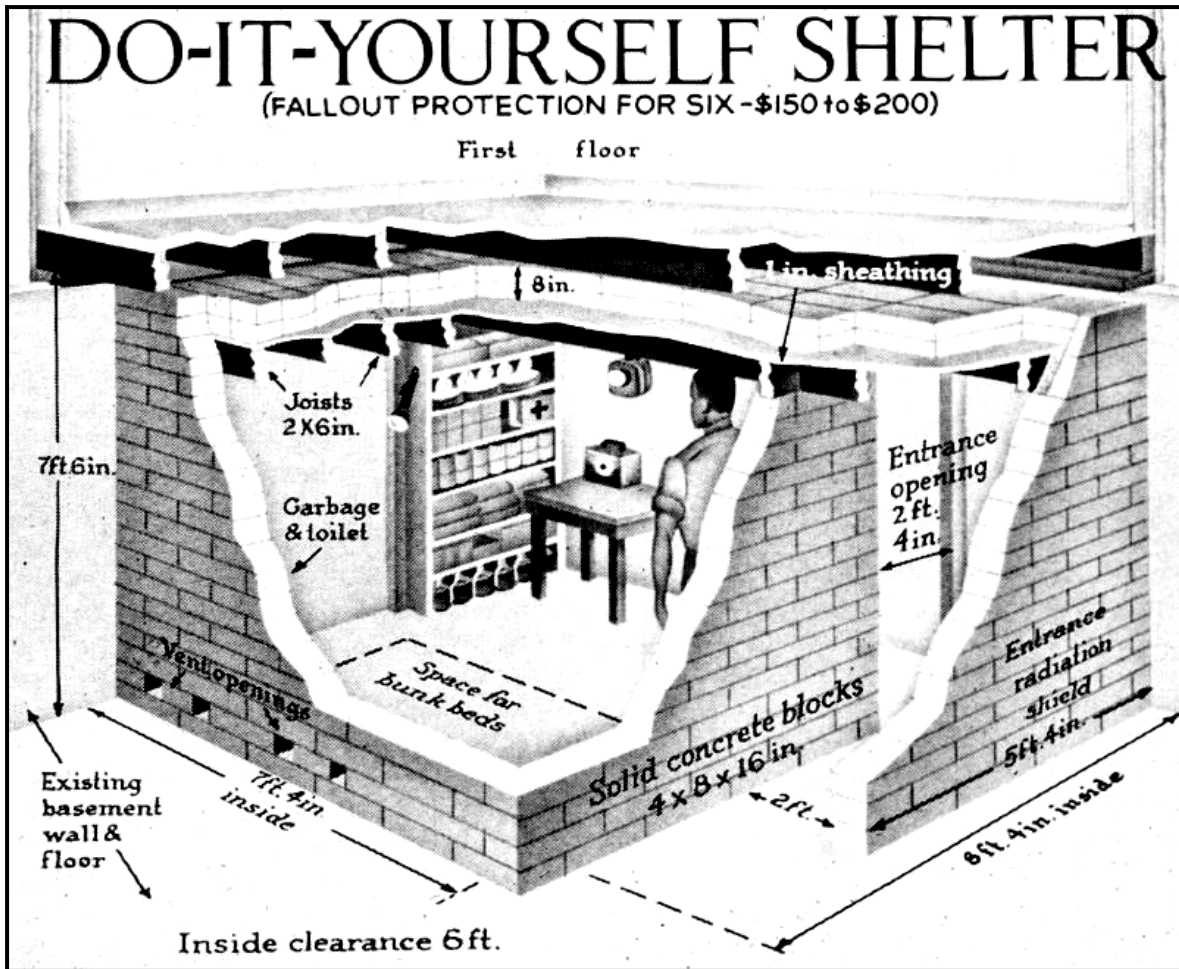
Objective: The student will be able to explain America’s role in the Berlin Airlift in the early years of the Cold War.

Materials: Do-It-Yourself Shelter (Springboard handout)
Dividing Lines (handout or transparency)
Here We Come to Save the Day (handout)

Terms to know: **Cold War** - over forty years of intense competition and tension between free and communist nations of the world
Iron Curtain - patrolled dividing line between free Western and communist Eastern Europe
sorties - individual flights of military planes during a mission

Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that in the years after World War II Americans grew increasingly fearful of the Soviet Union, and the world was straining under the tensions of the Cold War.
- Hand out or display “Dividing Lines.” Explain that Europe was divided into east and west, communist and free, (top map) and Germany was divided as well, but into four sectors. West Germany was divided into three zones among the U.S., Britain, and France and remained free. Eastern Germany was behind what was known as the “Iron Curtain” under Soviet control. Berlin, Germany’s capital located entirely within the Russian Zone, was also divided with routes connecting West Berlin and West Germany (see bottom maps). This situation set the scene for one of the most daring and heroic rescues in history.
- Hand out copies of “Here We Come to Save the Day.” Read together or have the student(s) read about the Berlin Airlift and explain that fifteen years after the Berlin Airlift ended, President John Kennedy visited the city and told the people: “All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words, ‘Ich bin ein Berliner!’ (I am a Berliner).”
- Go on to explain that for the activity the student(s) will pretend to be a Berliner during the time of the airlift. The student(s) should write three journal entries dated from the time about life in Berlin and the airlift.
- Have them share their journal entries and discuss.



From history.acusd.edu/gen/20th/1950s/paranoia.html

The diagram depicts a structure to shelter people in the event of

- A. severe weather.
- B. nuclear warfare.
- C. home invasions.
- D. terrorist attacks.

The shelter shown in the diagram is **MOST LIKELY** designed for a

- A. private home.
- B. department store.
- C. business office.
- D. manufacturing plant.

Which of these items is **LEAST LIKELY** to be found on the shelter's shelves?

- A. bottled water
- B. canned foods
- C. board games
- D. toilet tissue

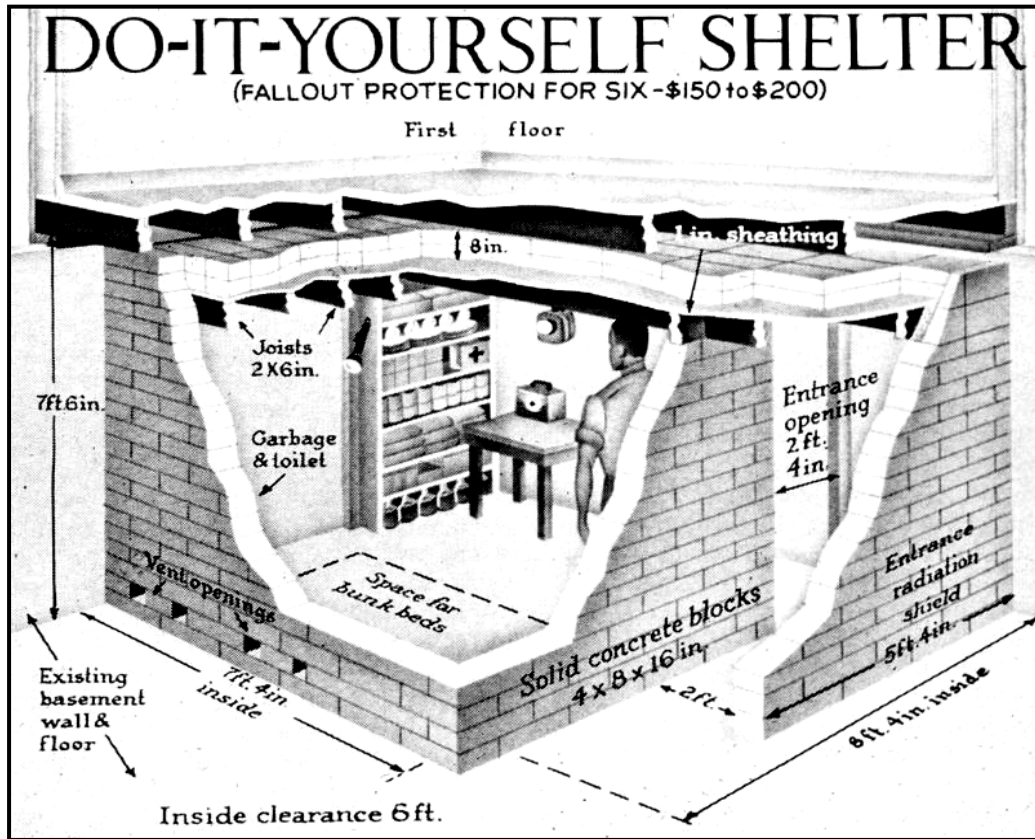
Which of these dimensions **BEST** represent the size of the shelter?

- A. 2'4" x 2' X 6'
- B. 4" x 8" x 16"
- C. 7'6" x 7'4" x 8'4"
- D. 5'4" x 8'4" x 2'6"

The cost of \$150 to \$200 shown for the shelter pays for

- A. materials.
- B. contents.
- C. construction plans.
- D. everything shown.

ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS



From history.acusd.edu/gen/20th/1950s/paranoia.html

The diagram depicts a structure to shelter people in the event of

- A. severe weather.
- B. nuclear warfare. *
- C. home invasions.
- D. terrorist attacks.

(The subtitle says the shelter is for "fallout protection" and the "radiation shield" is labeled.)

The shelter shown in the diagram is **MOST LIKELY** designed for a

- A. private home. *
- B. department store.
- C. business office.
- D. manufacturing plant.

(B-D can be ruled out since the shelter is designed as protection for only six. Option A is most likely to have six occupants.)

Which of these items is **LEAST LIKELY** to be found on the shelter's shelves?

- A. bottled water
- B. canned foods
- C. board games *
- D. toilet tissue

(While games might have been helpful, they were not required nor shown.)

Which of these dimensions **BEST** represent the size of the shelter?

- A. 2'4" x 2' x 6'
- B. 4" x 8" x 16"
- C. 7'6" x 7'4" x 8'4" *
- D. 5'4" x 8'4" x 2'6"

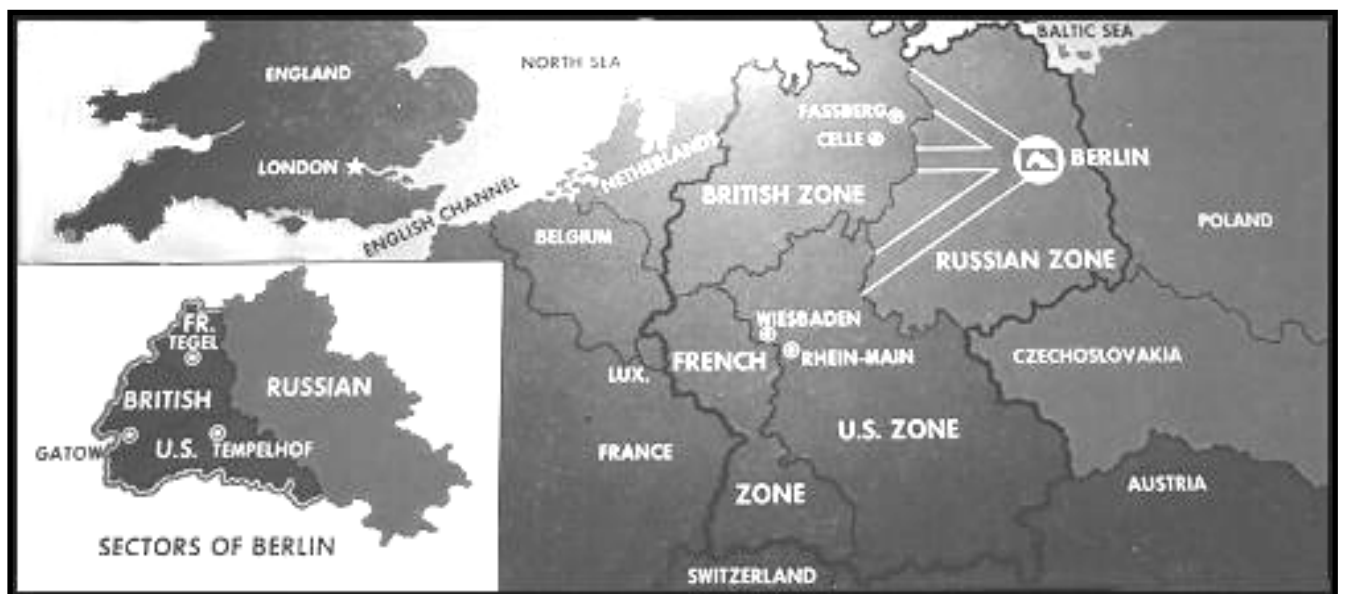
(C is really the only choice that makes sense.)

The cost of \$150 to \$200 shown for the shelter pays for

- A. materials. *
- B. contents.
- C. construction plans.
- D. everything shown.

(While this is cheap in today's terms, it was the estimated cost of what would be needed to build the shelter.)

DIVIDING LINES



From www.konnektions.com/airlift/berlin.htm



HERE WE COME TO SAVE THE DAY

After World War II, Germany was divided into four zones among the major Allies, the U.S., Great Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R., as agreed upon at a conference in 1945. Regular meetings of the four-power Allied Control Council were held to discuss progress, but little was being made. Though some rebuilding was taking place, the three free powers decided more direct action was needed to stimulate Germany's sagging economy. In June of 1947, Britain, France, and the U.S. agreed to a plan to establish the state of West Germany from their sectors, knowing the Soviet Union would refuse to allow the eastern portion to join a democratic state.

Western efforts over the next year brought exciting changes and infuriated the Russians who hoped to extend their influence and communist form of government to all of Germany and into Western Europe. The Soviets accused the Allies of breaking the 1945 Yalta agreement and set out to force the westerners from Berlin, encircled by Russian-controlled eastern Germany.

Premier Joseph Stalin ordered a halt to all traffic into and out of the part of Berlin controlled by the western Allies. Soon the numbers of armed patrols in the region increased dramatically. Soviet guards turned back all vehicles headed into the city from West Germany. Likewise trains carrying passengers were also stopped, as were ships. To make the situation worse the Russians cut electrical service, making food storage difficult. It appeared that the Communists planned to starve the West Berliners into joining their ranks.

The Allies debated their options: they could send troops to open up paths through the blockade; send armed supply trucks to fight their way through to hungry Berliners; give in to Soviet pressure; or they could begin an airlift. The first two options risked war, and the third was completely unacceptable since it would only encourage further Russian aggression. While the last choice was the clear favorite, it was not a simple task to accomplish.

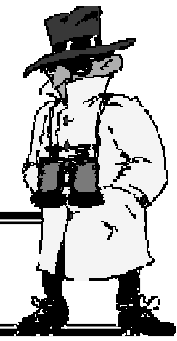
In order to meet the basic needs of West Berliners, 4,500 tons of food alone would have to be flown in per day in addition to fuel, medicines, and other items. There was also concern that this action too could provoke war. If the Soviets were to send up fighter planes against the American and British transports, the Allies would be forced to respond with military action. Although in 1948 the Soviets did not yet have the atomic bomb, they did have the world's largest military and no one wanted to fight them, especially so soon after W.W.II. Still, despite the difficulties and risks, the airlift was the West's best hope and so was begun on June 26th.

The operation started small with only 70 aircraft carrying just 225 tons a day. By the end of July when U.S. General William Turner arrived to oversee it, the tonnage was still far below the minimum required despite the addition of many planes and pilots. Turner, who had run a successful supply airlift to Chinese forces in the war, organized what he called "a real cowboy operation" in which supply planes took off and landed every three minutes round the clock from several West German bases. By October the airlifted supplies exceeded the minimum needed.

The airlift continued day in and day out through 1948 and into 1949. Finally, in May of 1949 the Russians announced they would end the blockade, but the airlift went on until October when supplies were flowing freely again by land and sea. During the almost eighteen months of the airlift, more than 2 million tons of food, over 1½ million tons of coal, and about 203,000 tons of other goods were flown into West Berlin in nearly 280,000 sorties, resulting in 32 pilot deaths and a victory for the Allies.

The victory, however, was not long celebrated. When the airlift ended, Germany was divided into two separate countries: communist and free. In September 1949, the Russians completed a successful test of their first atomic bomb. The world was a very tense place.

Spies Among Us?



Springboard:

Students should read “The McCarthy Era” and answer the questions.

Objective: The student will be able to explain how fear of Communism affected Congress and the Federal Courts in the 1950’s.

Materials:

The McCarthy Era (Springboard handouts)
GUILTY AS CHARGED! (2 handouts)
Comparing Communists (handouts)

Terms to know:

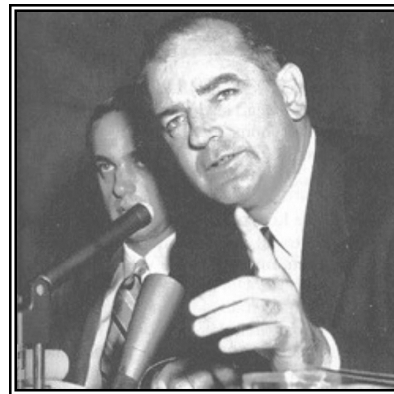
censure - a formal statement of disapproval
statute of limitations - law limiting the time for legal action to be taken for a particular crime
capital crime - one eligible for a death sentence

Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that *in this lesson the student(s) will learn about two court cases that resulted from the anti-communist hysteria of the period.*
- Hand out both copies of “GUILTY AS CHARGED!” and “Comparing Communists.” The student(s) should work individually or in small groups to read about Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs and complete the Venn diagram comparing the two cases.
- Have them share their analyses and discuss. (*Answers and explanations include:*
Comparisons: *Both Hiss and the Rosenbergs were accused of being Communists, spying for the Russians Both maintained their innocence, but ex-Communists testified to their guilt. Also, the same attorney prosecuted both cases.*
Contrasts: *Though he had an excellent reputation and years of loyal service, Hiss was tried for perjury for lying to the House Un-American Activities Committee. Though many witnesses testified to his character, one key witness spoke out against him, offering documents that he spied from 1933-1938. It took two trials to convict him, and he was sentenced to just five years in prison.*
The Rosenbergs, on the other hand, were actually tried for espionage (spying). They were simple, modest folks accused of selling secrets about America’s Manhattan Project to the Russians. Many witnesses testified against them, but only one testified in their favor. Though Ethel may actually have been innocent, both she and her husband were convicted and executed.)
- During the discussion, tell the student(s) that *Alger Hiss was sentenced to five years in prison and released after 44 months. The Rosenbergs, on the other hand, were sentenced to death and executed despite many national and international pleas on their behalf in July of 1953. Doubts over the guilt of all of the defendants lingered for years, but information revealed by the American and Russian governments in the 1990’s served to prove that Alger Hiss, Julius Rosenberg, and others involved in the two cases WERE in fact guilty of espionage. However, it is likely that Ethel was not actively involved.* (**NOTE:** Other women have been put to death since Ethel, but not as of the time the article was dated.)

The McCarthy Era

In 1949 the Soviets began building their atomic weapons, China became a communist country, and Americans were gripped with fear. By 1950 Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin (*right*) gained power and notoriety by claiming that communists were living and working in America as spies. In June of 1950 the Senate began a full-scale investigation of the senator's claims. McCarthy was asked to head up the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to help identify "traitors."



Numerous people, many of whom were in the public eye or working in the government, were brought before the committee and questioned. For such people, simply being asked, "Are you or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" ruined their lives. Since others were afraid of being seen as "guilty by association" with communists, people questioned by the HUAC often lost their jobs. A number of actors, writers, and directors were "blacklisted" making it almost impossible for them to find work.

Gradually, though, McCarthy's questionable practices began to turn against him and by 1953, President Eisenhower realized it was time to put an end to the witch-hunts. On December 2, 1954, a censure motion was passed in the Senate condemning McCarthy's investigations. After that he quickly lost power and media attention.

The term "notoriety" in the first paragraph most nearly means

- A. investigative skills.
- B. guilty by association.
- C. international superstardom.
- D. known for being disreputable.

According to the passage, many Americans ____ McCarthy and his ____.

- A. feared ... HUAC investigations
- B. appreciated ... media attention
- C. censured ... Republican Party
- D. understood ... identifications

Salem Witch Trials : witches :: HUAC hearings :

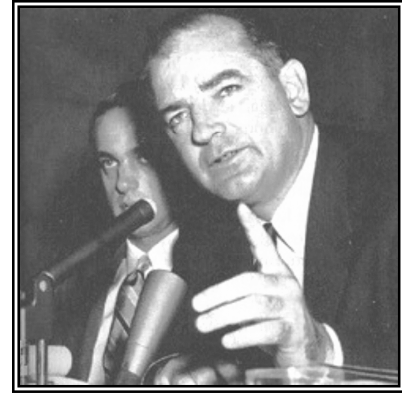
- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| A. Americans | C. communists |
| B. government | D. blacklisting |

McCarthy's HUAC investigations were "questionable" because

- A. they were unconstitutional.
- B. there were no spies in America.
- C. no one can be "guilty by association."
- D. of the media attention they received.

The McCarthy Era - Answers & Explanations

In 1949 the Soviets began building their atomic weapons, China became a communist country, and Americans were gripped with fear. By 1950 Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin (*right*) gained power and **notoriety** by claiming that communists were living and working in America as spies. In June of 1950 the Senate began a full-scale investigation of the senator's claims. McCarthy was asked to head up the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) to help identify "traitors."



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The term "notoriety" in the first paragraph most nearly means

- A. investigative skills. *(Choices A and B make no sense,*
- B. guilty by association. *and C is too extreme. If students know*
- C. international superstardom. *the word "notorious," they should*
- D. known for being disreputable. * *have no problem with this question.)*

According to the passage, many Americans ____ McCarthy and his ____.

- A. feared ... HUAC investigations * *(Both words have to fit*
- B. appreciated ... media attention *the sentence context,*
- C. censured ... Republican Party *and that is only true*
- D. understood ... identifications *for choice A.)*

Salem Witch Trials : witches :: HUAC hearings :

- A. Americans C. communists *
 - B. government D. blacklisting
- (The HUAC hearings were "hunting" communists.)*

McCarthy's HUAC investigations were "questionable" because

- A. they were unconstitutional. * *(The Constitution guarantees*
- B. there were no spies in America. *innocence until proven guilty.*
- C. no one can be "guilty by association." *The hearings violated many*
- D. of the media attention they received. *civil rights of those accused.)*

GUILTY AS CHARGED!



Hiss being sworn in

Washington - After two-and-a-half years of public debate and media attention, Alger Hiss was found guilty yesterday on two charges of perjury. The charges stemmed from statements Hiss made to the House Un-American Activities Committee about his involvement with the Communist Party. Although Hiss has always maintained his innocence, the testimonies of former communist Whittaker Chambers and others convinced the jury that Hiss had been a communist and may in fact still be.

Whittaker, an editor for *Time Magazine* and an admitted ex-communist, first accused Alger Hiss of stealing secrets for the Russians in 1948, shocking the nation. Hiss, a Harvard Law School graduate, had been working for the U.S. government for years. After beginning his career as a Supreme Court clerk, Hiss went on to hold several key government positions, attending the 1945 conference at Yalta, organizing the United Nations' Conference in San Francisco in 1945, and most recently serving as president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

It was in fact Hiss's outstanding record of service that provided the cornerstone of the defense's case. Attorney Claude Cross offered a parade of character witnesses that included Supreme Court justices and two presidential candidates for Hiss as proof that such a well-respected man could not be a traitor. Efforts were also made to show that the key witness, Whittaker Chambers, was "mentally unstable and a liar" and that a typewriter shown to be the source of a number of documents used in the prosecution's case was not owned by Hiss when the documents were created.

The prosecution offered a series of witnesses testifying to Hiss's communist involvement along with documents and microfilm they claimed to have been produced by Hiss. Whittaker Chambers testified that Hiss had been engaged in espionage since 1933, had been passing him State Department documents from early 1937, and that the two worked together until 1938. He also produced four handwritten notes, sixty-five typewritten documents dated between January and April 1938, and five strips of film. Despite defense efforts to prove the documents were not typed by Hiss, several prosecution witnesses provided testimony showing that they could have been.

For the most part the evidence presented in the case was similar to that of the first one last year but, as the saying goes, "Timing is everything." In the months since the last trial ended in a deadlocked jury in July, the Soviets have exploded their first atomic bomb, the communists have taken over China, and Americans are increasingly nervous about the communist threat. Whether these factors actually had anything to do with the verdict cannot be certain, but it is certainly possible that they did.

Also uncertain at this time is the sentence Alger Hiss will receive for lying to the House Committee. Had Hiss been tried for espionage, his sentence would have been more severe, but the statute of limitations has run out on such charges. Instead it is expected that he will be given the maximum sentence for perjury, five years in prison. A judge's ruling on the sentence is expected in the next week.