

ABSTRACT

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The House Un-American Activities Committee, popularly known as the HUAC, conducted two investigations of the movie industry, in 1947 and again in 1951-1952. The goal was to determine the extent of communist infiltration in Hollywood and whether communist propaganda had made it into American movies. The spotlight that the HUAC shone on Tinsel Town led to the blacklisting of approximately 300 Hollywood professionals. This, along with the HUAC's insistence that witnesses testifying under oath identify others that they knew to be communists, contributed to the Committee's notoriety. Until now, historians have concentrated on offering accounts of the HUAC's practice of naming names, its scrutiny of movies for propaganda, and its intervention in Hollywood union disputes.

The HUAC's sealed files were first opened to scholars in 2001. This study is the first to draw extensively on these newly available documents in an effort to reevaluate the HUAC's Hollywood probes. This study assesses four areas in which the new evidence indicates significant, fresh findings. First, a detailed analysis of the

Committee's investigatory methods reveals that most of the HUAC's information came from a careful, on-going analysis of the communist press, rather than techniques such as surveillance, wiretaps and other cloak and dagger activities. Second, the evidence shows the crucial role played by two brothers, both German communists living as refugees in America during World War II, in motivating the Committee to launch its first Hollywood probe. Third, an examination of the HUAC's practice of requiring witnesses to name names shows this to be an on-going exercise of data triangulation. Finally, the documents in the HUAC archives reveal an overriding concern with exposing the activities and practices of communist front organizations, which the Committee viewed as powerfully effective venues for communist propaganda. In summary, the newly available archival evidence, upon which this dissertation uniquely draws, indicates the HUAC operated in a less sinister manner than previously supposed and, thus, revises previous scholarship on the HUAC.

FROM THE BELLY OF THE HUAC:
THE HUAC INVESTIGATIONS OF HOLLYWOOD, 1947-1952

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my son, Joshua, who has chosen to serve his country as a Marine officer; to my son, Jeremiah, who desires to serve his community as a police officer; my son, Zechariah, who has suffered so much, but chooses to overcome; but most of all to my wife, Janice, the love of my life, who has waited patiently for me to finish this dissertation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Research Question

It is fascinating and ironic that there is a link between the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the necessity for a major reappraisal of a significant aspect of American media history. The end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the USSR were boons for historians. The failed August 1991 coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev led Russian President Boris Yeltsin to dissolve the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and take control of its assets, including its historical archives. By the end of December of that year, the Soviet Union was no more and the Russian Federation, the largest of the constituent republics of the former Soviet Union, permanently inherited most of the assets of both the former Soviet government and the organization that dominated it for its entire history, the CPSU.

For several years thereafter, the dissolution of the USSR was a notion contested by many former hard-line communists who aspired to restore the Soviet Union in some form. Thus, in an effort to discredit his communist predecessors, Yeltsin in the mid-1990s opened the archives of the CPSU. They included the historical records of the Comintern, the international organization headquartered in Moscow through which the Soviet government exercised control of various national communist parties around the world.¹ Yeltsin's idea was that a democratic society

¹ The Comintern is a shortened form of the Communist International, also known as the Third International. Too much has been written debating whether the member parties of the Comintern were under the control of the USSR to recount here. Suffice it to say that I side with the historians who fall into the anticommunist tradition and Post-revisionists, who affirm that member parties were under the effective control of the USSR and CPSU. The revisionist historians stand in opposition to this thesis. I will briefly discuss these three groups later in Chapter Two as part of my review of the significant research on the subject of this dissertation.

should be open and transparent, while at the same time historians could document just how bad the deposed Bolsheviks really were.

The Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) was a loyal member of the Comintern until its dissolution during World War II.² After the war, the American communists continued to take guidance more directly from the Central Committee of the CPSU. Before and during the Cold War, the fear of intrusive investigations by the American government led the CPUSA to secretly ship its records – sometimes on microfilm, sometimes as regular hard copy documents – to the Soviet Union for safe keeping. Until the sudden fall of the Soviet Union, which allowed President Yeltsin to open those archives, most Western historians believed these records to be permanently out of reach.

From the early 1930s to the early-1950s, American media in general and the motion picture industry in particular were an important locus of activity for the CPUSA. When investigations by a congressional committee of the United States House of Representatives called the Committee on Un-American Activities (popularly known as the HUAC) brought Hollywood under its scrutiny, the pressure of public opinion led the major studios to fire known communists and deny employment to those who refused to cooperate with the HUAC. Some of the blacklisted writers then moved to New York to work under pseudonyms in the new

² The dissolution of the Comintern was actually a political act in name only. According to Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Kyrill M. Anderson in *The Soviet World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 12, Stalin simply transferred the functions and duties of this organization to a unit of the Central Committee of the CPSU called the International Department, which continued uninterrupted operation until the dissolution of the CPSU. See Carr, E. H. *Twilight of the Comintern, 1930-1935* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) for what is probably the seminal history of this organization.

television industry, whilst others migrated to Mexico or Europe. For a decade or so, these Americans, mostly writers, were unable to work under their own names. On this historians agree.

What is in dispute is the proper characterization of the conduct of the HUAC investigations and the extent to which that communist activity warranted them. Some consider it a dark era for American democracy when the establishment repressed radical ideas and reactionaries bent on rolling back the New Deal violated the civil rights of those on the progressive cutting edge.³ Others saw the blacklisted writers as victims of their own insistence on shrouding their activities in secrecy, which led to suspicions that members of the CPUSA, thought to be under the control of a foreign power, engaged in subversive activities.⁴ Under this view, one could argue that the actions of the HUAC investigators were not only proper but even prudent to bring scrutiny upon the CPUSA.

One reason for the dispute as to the proper interpretation of this aspect of history was that, with the exception of transcripts of public testimony offered in open sessions, most of the rest of the HUAC records were sealed. This included all the transcripts of its executive sessions, during which the Committee heard a great deal of testimony. As I will discuss further at length below, this circumstance changed relatively recently. However, one fundamental reason for the unsealing of the HUAC

³ For example, see Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community 1930-1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 216.

⁴ For an extended discussion of this, see John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona: Decoding Soviet Espionage in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999) 9-22 and Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, *The Secret World of American Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 14-15.

files was the fact that, because of Yeltsin's action described above, in the mid-1990s historians had greater access to documents dealing with the CPUSA in the Moscow than in Washington. This led to new efforts by historians to petition Congress for access to the HUAC archives and in 2001 Congress relented. A very large trove of archival documents is now newly available to researchers. Hence the irony: the collapse of the Soviet Union has predicated a need for a re-evaluation of the history of Congressional investigation into communist activity in the American media, specifically the motion picture industry.

The Cold War deeply affected all of American society, particularly in its early years. Individuals and organizations had to come to terms with the idea that the United States was now one of only two superpowers and the only nation capable of defending the free world from communist aggression. The advent of nuclear warfare meant a radical change in the sense of personal security for the average American. No longer was the possibility of massive civilian casualties a threat only to citizens of far away countries. With the exception of Pearl Harbor, not since the War of 1812 was there a seriously substantial threat of destruction on American soil by a foreign power. The idea that a foreign power could strike against the United States with such immediate and devastating force was a new and terrifying reality.

Furthermore, the Cold War era witnessed the maturation of an allegation of a unique security threat that had originated shortly after World War I, i.e. the possible existence of a "Fifth Column" – a well-organized group with strong organizational ties and loyalties to a hostile foreign power. The CPUSA had financial and media resources outside its apparent ability to perform and political influence beyond its

numbers. For years, there had been indirect evidence and abundant testimony from ex-communists that the CPUSA was in fact subordinate to the Soviet communist party. With each change in the political line from Moscow came an immediate and seeming automatic change in line by the CPUSA. There were persistent stories of communist spies finding employment in key government and military positions. Moreover, with the exception of the years of the Popular Front (1936-39) and the war years after the German invasion of the Soviet Union (1941-45), the CPUSA had consistently and publicly advocated the overthrow of both the American political and economic system. Yet, despite sporadic persecution in the late 1910s and early 1920s, American society largely tolerated its domestic communists as a fringe of misguided, ineffective, marginal and, therefore, non-dangerous radicals.

The onset of the Cold War changed this. Now these radicals were closely associated with the principal enemy of the United States. The U.S. House of Representatives created what became the HUAC in 1938 as a special committee under the chairmanship of Rep. Martin Dies, a Democrat from Texas, to investigate “alien” ideologies such as fascism and communism. In 1945, it became a standing committee of the House as the result of a brilliant parliamentary maneuver by John Rankin of Mississippi, well known as a racist and anti-Semite. During the early years of the Cold War, the Committee focused the majority of its attention on the perceived communist threat and links between the CPUSA and Moscow. It launched investigations into possible communist infiltration into government, the atomic weapons program, labor unions, higher education, and the media.

Later in the early to mid 1950s, several Senate committees launched investigations of their own. For example, Nevada Democrat Patrick McCarran chaired the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, which investigated Owen Lattimore, and authored the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950.⁵ One committee chairman, Republican Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, became notorious for his unscrupulous investigatory practices and unsubstantiated, reckless allegations. At different times, opponents castigated various committee members of both parties and in both houses of Congress as demagogues, witch-hunters, and red-baiters. In fact McCarthy's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in the Senate was often confused with the HUAC. As Senator McCarthy fell in the public's esteem, it became a common tactic to characterize all anticommunists as McCarthyists.

The Truman Administration adopted a measured response, which Attorney General Tom C. Clark crafted and implemented. Truman and Clark were generally dubious of the threat of domestic communism and fearful that a widespread anticommunist backlash would needlessly harm innocent citizens. However, intense popular pressure, partly due to the fall of China to Mao's communists, dictated they had to do something to assure the public that a fifth column had not infiltrated the American government. Thus, the result was the institution of loyalty oaths for government employees and members of the armed forces. Congress enacted legislation requiring organizations working on behalf of foreign powers to register

⁵The Internal Security Subcommittee was a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee of which McCarran served as chairman from the Seventy-eighth through the Eighty-second Congresses. Although the U.S. Supreme Court later found portions of the McCarran Internal Security Act unconstitutional, some portions are still in effect.

with the government, disclosing the nature of that relationship, its leadership and financial details. The Justice Department prosecuted most of the senior leadership of the CPUSA under the Smith Act of 1940 for conspiring to advocate the overthrow of the government of the United States. In June of 1951, the Supreme Court upheld those convictions as well as the constitutionality of the Smith Act in its decision in *Dennis vs. the United States*.

The years 1947 and 1952 saw major congressional investigations of communist subversion into motion picture industry by the HUAC. Later, these investigations expanded into the other mass media of radio and television. In 1947 a number of Hollywood luminaries, who were willing to cooperate with the HUAC, gave testimony to communist activity in the movie business. Shortly thereafter, the HUAC subpoenaed nineteen industry professionals, who currently or recently were in fact members of the CPUSA. The Committee actually called ten of them to testify in the presence of a bevy of reporters and newsreel cameras. Rather than plead the Fifth Amendment, they all refused to answer the questions about their membership in the CPUSA based on a unique First Amendment defense.⁶ They also tried to read into the record various statements, including an indictment of the investigation itself.

Congress voted contempt citations against the “Hollywood Ten” or the “Unfriendly

⁶ This defense consisted of arguing that the constitutional guarantee of free speech implied a right not to speak, especially in matters of politics and conscience. On December 5, 1947, a grand jury indicted the Ten on contempt of Congress charges. They were all found guilty the follow year. In 1949, the Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia unanimously sustained their conviction and held “that compelled questions into political affiliation did not violate the First Amendment.” The Supreme Court denied their appeal certiorari in 1950. Carl Beck, *Contempt of Congress: A Study of the Prosecutions Initiated by the Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1957* (New Orleans: Hauser Press, 1959) 56.

Ten” and after a protracted appeals process, they were all sentenced to prison time for refusing to testify.

Originally, the management of most of the studios for whom the Hollywood Ten⁷ worked pledged to stand behind them, deeming their personal politics as irrelevant to their artistic contributions to the motion picture industry. Shortly after their disastrous appearance before the HUAC and before their contempt appeals could wind their way through the courts, the studios for which they worked fired the Hollywood Ten. Moreover, the major studios issued a declaration known as the Waldorf Statement, in which they vowed not to employ anyone who did not cooperate with the government in its investigation of communism. Thus, began the Blacklist era in the motion picture, radio and television industries, during which an estimated three hundred industry professionals lost their jobs. It was a decade when the demands of media economics clashed with individual artistic careers as well as personal and political loyalties. These issues resonate today with relevance to post-September 11th America, i.e. when concerns for national security collide with civil rights. The result then was amongst other things shattered friendships, destroyed careers, and the on-going dialectic of recrimination.

It has now been more than a generation since the initiation of HUAC’s investigations of Hollywood. However, the reverberation of these events still haunts the entertainment industry. Although most of the participants have long since passed away, the children of those blacklisted as a result of the investigations, many of

⁷ The Hollywood Ten were Adrian Scott, a producer; Edward Dmytryk, a director; Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, Dalton Trumbo, Ring Lardner, Jr., Albert Maltz, Alvah Bessie, Sam Ornitz and John Howard Lawson, all screenwriters.

whom also work in the media or its unions and guilds, still feel the pain of the trauma that the blacklist inflicted on their youth.⁸

The year 1997 was the fiftieth anniversary of the first significant foray by the HUAC into Hollywood and the resulting blacklist. It saw a number of articles in the news media and the trade press discussing the “travesty” of blacklisting and the suppression of political rights. Since then there has appeared a revisiting and reappraisal of those events. The Writers Guild of America has worked steadily to restore the credits of blacklisted screenwriters, which totaled eighty-two separate screen credits as of March 1999.⁹ As well, the Directors Guild of America led efforts to restore screen credits to those who worked on the black market for so many years and had recognition for their artistic achievements denied. This fueled even more commentary in the trade press. In 1998 the Writers Guild of America West, which had in the 1950s cooperated with the effort to drive communists out of the motion picture business, gave the Robert Meltzer Award posthumously to Paul Jarrico, former communist and blacklistee. This honor is given to recipients “in recognition of a singular act of courage in the defense of freedom of expression and the rights of writers.”¹⁰

⁸ I experienced this personally when approached by the daughter of a blacklistee after delivering a paper on this issue at an academic conference. The paper was “Edward Dmytryk and the Hollywood Ten: A Revisionist Approach,” delivered at the 50th Annual Conference of the University Film and Video Association.

⁹ David Robb and Dana Harris, “WGAW white-out clears 7 more from blacklist,” *Hollywood Reporter*, March 11, 1999, 1 & 56.

¹⁰ David Robb, “Late blacklisted writer gets a credit for courage,” *Hollywood Reporter*, December 4-6, 1998, 1 & 93.

Sheila Kuehl, chair of the California Assembly's Judiciary Committee, presented to the surviving sons of the late Ben Margolis, one of the lawyers for the Hollywood Ten, a resolution passed by the Assembly honoring their father. Kuehl "praised Margolis for having inspired several generations of civil rights attorneys."¹¹ This same person, lauded in 1999, was roundly criticized in the 1950s for refusing to cooperate with the HUAC and attempting to disrupt the proceedings of the California Senate Committee on Un-American Activities. Interestingly enough, his *Hollywood Reporter* obituary and the California Assembly resolution omit the fact that he was in fact a longtime member of the CPUSA and subject to party discipline.

The 1999 Academy Awards reflected the continuing bitterness generated by events occurring some fifty years before. The animosity for many had not subsided. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences decided to give film and stage director Elia Kazan its lifetime achievement award. A group calling itself the "Committee Against Silence" organized a protest of the event, because, they asserted, that it was wrong to honor a man who named names before the HUAC.¹² They urged audience members to refrain from applauding when Kazan received the Oscar and accused the Academy of an "insensitive and unconscionable act."¹³

¹¹ David Robb, "Lawyer Margolis saluted as a 'legend of our times,'" *Hollywood Reporter*, March 9-15, 1999, 65.

¹² David Robb, "Oscars protest targets Kazan's role in blacklist," *Hollywood Reporter*, February 11, 1999, 8 & 32.

¹³ David Robb, "Kazan protesters urging silent treatment at Oscars," *Hollywood Reporter*, February 16-22, 1999, 81.

Blacklisted director Jules Dassin took out a full-page ad in the *Hollywood Reporter*, branding Kazan “a traitor” who had shamed his country.¹⁴ The co-chair of this protest group, blacklisted screenwriter Bernard Gordon, asserted:

The bad old days of the HUAC and McCarthyism ... were the time when fear ruled the land – fear of dissent. Without dissent, without the freedom to express unpopular ideas or to make unpopular associations, there is no democracy and no chance to move government to the popular will. Elia Kazan cooperated with the HUAC, validating their reign of terror, blacklisting thousands of men and women, not just in Hollywood, but throughout the country, destroying all progressive organizations and crippling the trade union movement. As a result, our country has suffered a fearful regression. Internally, we have become a nation ridden with crime, poverty and homelessness and an atrocious increasing gap between wealth and poverty; externally, we have moved from ‘The Land of the Free’ to become an international bully, envied perhaps, but feared and hated. Let’s not reward HUAC, McCarthy and Elia Kazan for helping to bring about this dreadful transformation.¹⁵

An assumption underlying this rhetorical protest implies the validity of one side of the historical dispute mentioned above: namely communists in the media were merely innocent dissenters who were mercilessly hounded from their jobs and persecuted merely for holding unpopular beliefs and making unpopular associations.

In answer to the above, an organization called “The Ad Hoc Committee for Naming Facts,” affiliated with the Ayn Rand Institute, also took a full-page ad in the *Hollywood Reporter*, entitled “In Praise of Elia Kazan.” The ad listed what it called “Three Big Lies” about the blacklist era. It asserted first that the Hollywood communists by being Party members were *de facto* supporters of and apologists for Stalin and, therefore, bore partial responsibility for his reign of terror. Second, the

¹⁴ *Hollywood Reporter*, March 15, 1999, 11.

¹⁵ David Robb, “Oscars Protest Targets Kazan’s Role in Blacklist,” *Hollywood Reporter*, February 11, 1999, 32.

HUAC was justified in investigating whether an individual was a member of the CPUSA, because the latter was a subversive organization directed and financed by a hostile foreign power, both of which were dedicated to the violent overthrow of the American government. Third, there was nothing wrong with the blacklist, because studios had the right to deny employment to individuals who refused to acknowledge membership in such a subversive organization, the goals and ideology of which those studios found abhorrent.¹⁶ Thus, more than fifty years after the Hollywood Ten first sat before the HUAC, the rancorous debate is as intense as ever.

Since it is indisputable that there were in fact active communists working in the Hollywood establishment, these two ideologically grounded perspectives define the continuing debate. The radical Left and increasingly the modern Hollywood establishment aver the Hollywood communists were benign radicals bent on positive, constructive social change. They were the victims of a political pogrom led by the HUAC and the other forces of American reaction, which damaged the fabric of American democracy. The contrary conservative view: Hollywood communists were political subversives employed in a key media industry, which had a powerful effect on the shaping of public opinion. They were, either wittingly or not, under the control of a foreign enemy bent on the destruction of the United States. The Hollywood communists, therefore, represented a clear national security threat that the government could not ignore. Thus, the HUAC investigations were justified.

On the one hand, the revisionist perspective embraced by the Hollywood establishment with its recent rehabilitations and the awarding of honors ironically

¹⁶ *Hollywood Reporter*, March 1999.

ignored or summarily dismissed the recent scholarship on the American communist movement that has produced a strongly negative picture of the CPUSA as a whole. This scholarship showed the American party deeply involved in espionage for the Soviet Union.¹⁷ On the other hand, advocates of the anticommunist perspective have not produced any solid documentary evidence firmly linking Hollywood communists to the treasonous misdeeds of their colleagues, i.e. national CPUSA officials and communists working in other sectors of American society. Thus, in both the popular and scholarly press, the debate over moral, legal and political appropriateness of the blacklisting of media professionals during the 1940s and 1950s is deadlocked.

Given recent scholarship on the activities of the CPUSA, as well as the new availability of previously sealed HUAC archival materials, there is a compelling case for the necessity of a reappraisal of the HUAC's conduct of its Hollywood investigations. Thus, this dissertation will seek to answer the following central research question: In light of more complete archival information, how should we reinterpret the conduct of the investigations in the 1940s and 1950s by the HUAC into the communist infiltration of the motion picture industry? This dissertation will seek to dispassionately answer this question in an ideologically neutral manner, interpreting the evidence in the context of the national security situation of the era in question balanced against the need to tolerate unpopular dissent in a democratic civil society.

There is a strong argument for the significance of the central question of this dissertation. The debate around the history of the HUAC investigations of the media

¹⁷ See Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, *Secret World*; Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *Soviet World*; and, Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*.

lies at the intersection of difficult issues of civil rights, including the freedom of speech and free political association, and national security. Restriction on media independence in times of perceived grave national security crisis is an issue that did not originate nor die with the Cold War. More specifically, the events in question, if understood factually, may provide us with lessons in these areas, especially in the post-9/11 era in which these issues are particularly germane. Finally, the dilemma of the limits of congressional investigatory power versus constitutional protections for witnesses remains unresolved some sixty years later.

Much strident debate has transpired about the history of the HUAC's investigations of communists in Hollywood, the fate of the Hollywood Ten, and the resulting Blacklist. It is routine to describe HUAC activities as just another sad aspect of the McCarthy era. Importantly, as indicated above, this dispute has been inconclusive. Furthermore, it appears to be on the increase both in terms of intensity and acrimony. Judging from the war of words over Elia Kazan's honorary Oscar, this rancorous public discussion does not appear well informed on the continuing scholarship in the field. Rather it relies on several dated texts, which unfortunately many consider seminal and definitive. Because historians have published a great deal of new research on the activities of the CPUSA through the middle 1950's, the perspective offered in that dated historiography is very much in doubt. With the opening of access to previously sealed HUAC archives, the time has come for a scholarly reappraisal of the Committee's aims, conduct and effectiveness in these investigations.

With all the popular and media attention in the film industry to the subject, one might conclude that there has also been a similar wave of academic interest, the result being that there is little room for original and significant scholarship in this area. However, although there has been a resurgence of scholarly interest in the subject of the activities of the CPUSA as a whole, relatively little recent research addresses either communist activity in Hollywood or the resulting HUAC investigations. The review of literature in the next chapter will demonstrate a significant gap in the historical record that the current scholarly literature does not adequately address.

Although this dissertation uses the HUAC's two probes of Hollywood as a point of reference for a study of the Committee's investigatory methods, the research findings presented herein are highly relevant to the history of journalism. A key aspect of the HUAC's mandate was to investigate subversive propaganda and the Committee interpreted that to apply to the communist press, as well as a variety of publications by communist front organizations. Thus, as Chapter Five will explore in detail, communist newspapers and magazines, such as the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*, provided primary sources of information for the HUAC and such publications were objects of careful scrutiny for Committee investigators. Chapter Seven will describe how the HUAC discovered that the communist press was often less than truthful in reporting the activities of celebrities on behalf of the CPUSA and its favored causes. Finally, this study as a whole addresses the issue of the HUAC's efforts to understand the dissemination of communist propaganda in the United States.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Scholars can usefully categorize historical studies on the HUAC, American communism and their intersection in Hollywood into four groups according to their basic premises and assumptions. These groups include the anticommunist scholars and the civil society historians, both of which produced major studies in the 1950s and 1960s. More recently, the revisionists of the 1970s and on and the post-revisionists of the 1990s and later have dominated the field.

The Anticommunists. Historians writing in this school of thought were unsympathetic to both the American communist movement and international communism as a whole. The seminal historians in this tradition include the team of Irving Howe and Lewis Coser,¹⁸ Theodore Draper,¹⁹ E. H. Carr²⁰ and the early works of Harvey Klehr.²¹ These historians wrote primarily about the CPUSA and the Comintern; they did not focus on communism in Hollywood. More importantly to

¹⁸ See Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History, 1919-1957* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957).

¹⁹ See Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking Press, 1957) and Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period* (New York: Viking Press, 1963). Both are meticulously researched studies of the Byzantine historical twists and turns of the early years of the CPUSA as it transformed itself from a splintered movement of non-English speaking immigrants to a thoroughly Stalinist organization adhering to the Comintern line.

²⁰ See Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern* for the definitive history of the Comintern before the opening of that organization's archives in Moscow during the mid-1990s.

²¹ See Harvey Klehr, *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Party Elite* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978) and Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, 1984). Klehr essentially picked up chronologically where Draper left off in his second text and continues in Draper's anticommunist tradition.

this study, with the exception of William F. Buckley's *The Committee and Its Critics*, which is strictly speaking not a work of history but rather an extended investigative journalistic treatise, the anticommunists did not produce any major studies on the operation of the HUAC itself.²²

One might think the anticommunists were all conservatives, but this was not so. In fact, the most significant figure of this tradition, Theodore Draper, was a former secret Party member and later an avowed liberal.²³ In fact, much of the early impetus to the anticommunist movement came from American socialists, who warned of the profoundly anti-democratic nature of international communism. Rather than a normative political perspective, Anti-Communism was a shared beliefs about the nature of communism that bonded adherents from diverse backgrounds from the radical left to the conservative right together. The basic premise of this tradition is the assertion that by its very nature international communism was a significant national security threat to democratic governments around the world. It emphasized the effective control that the Comintern exercised on national communist parties and argued that the Third International was essentially a branch of the CPSU. Thus, a common and consistent theme of this earlier historiography is the general subservience of the CPUSA to the Comintern and in turn to the CPSU.²⁴

²² William F. Buckley, *The Committee and Its Critics: A Calm Review of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Putnam, 1962).

²³ Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Theodore Draper, Freelance Historian, Is Dead at 93," *New York Times*, February 22, 2006.

²⁴ For a broad, well-researched account of the anticommunist movement, see Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: The History of American Anticommunism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

The typical anticommunist logic was as follows: The communist movement based on Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism seeks to destroy democratic and free-market societies on ideological grounds. The Soviet Union is the leading power of the communist world. The CPUSA is under the strict control of the USSR through the former's subservience to the CPSU. This circumstance makes the CPUSA a national security threat to the United States. Ergo, the American government (and by implication, the HUAC) is justified in its attempts to unmask and destroy the power of the CPUSA.

The Civil Society Historians. These scholars emphasized the importance of the preservation the civil rights of those espousing unpopular political positions, particularly the right of free speech and the right of free association. Some held the communists in contempt for their support of Stalinism, whilst others considered them simply misguided radicals. In either eventuality, these historians argued that the HUAC investigations both in method and scope were unwarranted and detrimental to American civil society. Even when acknowledging that some domestic communists were involved in espionage, these historians asserted that the incidences typically were minor and not indicative of the conduct of the average American communist. They argued in essence that the HUAC's net was too large and indiscriminate, leaving no room for distinction between advocacy of radical ideas and associations with others of a like mind from lack of patriotism or even treasonous conspiracy. Moreover, they asserted that crudely researched and politically motivated investigations too easily ruined the lives and careers of individuals who had only a passing link to communism. Thus, in this view the result was persecution based

solely on political views and associations in which dissent from the status quo received the brand of “un-American.”

Robert K. Carr’s 1952 work entitled *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-50* represents another entry in civil society literature on the HUAC.²⁵ In fact, the book was part of Cornell University’s “Studies in Civil Liberties Series.” Carr, who served as the head of Truman’s Commission on Civil Rights and later became president of Oberlin College, was the primary author of the historic report *To Secure These Rights*. According to Truman’s Attorney General, Tom C. Clark, this document was “a blueprint of most everything that’s been done in the area of civil rights since that time.”²⁶ Carr advanced the first scholarly argument of note for the abolition of the HUAC based on a civil society argument. He asserted that the pernicious conduct of investigations by committee members and the resulting negative effects on civil society overshadowed any beneficial effects of exposing the nefarious activities of domestic communists.

John Cogley, the executive editor of *The Commonwealth*, offered the two-volume *Report on Blacklisting*²⁷ as another entry that one can include under the rubric of a civil society perspective. The Fund for the Republic, which had as its mission the promoting education in civil rights in the United States, commissioned the report. The Fund, which began operation in 1952 with a \$15 million grant from the Ford

²⁵ Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-50* (Cornell University Press, 1952).

²⁶ Jerry N. Hess, *Oral History Interview with Tom C. Clark*, (October 17, 1972 and February 8, 1973 - <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/clarktc.htm>) 97-98.

²⁷ John Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting, Vol. I: Movies and Vol. II: Radio–Television* (New York: The Fund for the Republic, 1956).

Foundation, has the goal of supporting “the elimination of restrictions on freedom of thought, inquiry and expression.”²⁸ Cogley asserted that the design of the text was educational, non-partisan and non-judgmental. Its goal was to allow an educated citizenry to pass judgment once it had the pertinent facts. However, the fact that the founding director of the Fund, Robert M. Hutchins was a firm opponent of congressional anticommunist investigations in the 1940s and 1950s was indicative of the fact that, though the report was fair and non-polemical, it was not neutral in perspective.²⁹

The impact on civil rights by the practice of blacklisting is the central issue with which Cogley’s report is concerned. He covered the issue thoroughly, discussing not only those blacklisted for links to communism, but also anticommunists who found themselves un- or underemployed before or after the HUAC inquiries. In the case of the former, there was some evidence to suggest that during their heyday of influence, communists in Hollywood sought to blackball their political nemeses. Likewise, some anticommunists who testified readily before the HUAC found their careers in a tailspin allegedly due to beliefs about their “disloyalty” to the movie business by bringing negative scrutiny to bear upon the industry.³⁰ Cogley also cites examples of ex-communists, who testified and named

²⁸ “How to Spend Money,” *Time*, August 30, 1954.

²⁹ Hutchins was a former chancellor of the University of Chicago and a well-known public intellectual of the time. For an account of his leadership of the Fund, see Frank K. Kelly, *Court of Reason: Robert Hutchins and the Fund for the Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1981).

³⁰ Cogley, *Report on Blacklisting*, 75-77.

names, also finding themselves “rebuffed” by “liberal Hollywood” and underemployed.³¹

Report on Blacklisting includes an extensive essay by Harold W. Horowitz, who was a law professor at the University of Southern California, on the legalities of blacklisting as a practice. However, Horowitz’s focus is limited to a discussion of the legal relations between and rights of employers, employees, and third parties who advocate boycotts based on the activities of certain employees in an industry. He does not address the legalities surrounding the HUAC investigations themselves.³²

The sources upon which Cogley drew were the published findings of the HUAC, newspaper accounts of events surrounding HUAC hearings and the Blacklist, and over five hundred interviews with individuals on all sides of the issue. Obviously, what he could not access were the archival records of which this dissertation takes advantage. Thus, although Cogley’s *Report on Blacklisting* represents an important addition to the literature of the civil society perspective, it does not answer the central research question posed by this dissertation.

Walter Goodman’s well received work. *The Committee*, represents the most thorough and comprehensive history of the HUAC to date.³³ It also is most likely the best known. Goodman dealt with the precursor committees that evolved into what became the HUAC, i.e. the Fish, McCormack-Dickstein and Dies Committees. He then proceeds to offer an account of HUAC investigations and hearings during each

³¹ Ibid., 111-112.

³² Ibid., 174-195.

³³ Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968).

congress from the 79th Congress in 1945, when the HUAC became a permanent committee of the House, through the 89th Congress that served through January 1967.

Goodman strived for an evenhanded approach – critiquing the conduct of both the HUAC and the “doctrinaire” communists it investigated. He argued, however, that the Committee undermined the legitimate task of investigating the CPUSA by efforts to assail the New Deal and probe the affairs of fellow travelers. “Soon the Congressmen were taking logically impermissible shortcuts; it was no longer a man’s loyalty to the U.S.S.R. that made him likely subversive, but his adherence to causes favored by those who were loyal to the U.S.S.R.”³⁴ The result was that, according to Goodman, the HUAC became for the McCarthyists “the engine of their vengeance, and for thirty years it has run on flesh and blood.”³⁵ He concludes his civil society argument for the abolition of the HUAC by asserting: “Between the Committee and the liberal spirit no reconciliation is possible, for the Committee embodies the drive to ban, censor, forbid, jail that has cursed the land for two hundred years.”³⁶

Working long before the House Judiciary Committee opened the HUAC archives to researchers, Goodman drew meticulously from congressional public reports. Thus, the author did not have at his disposal the very materials that justify the necessity for this dissertation. The result is that, although Goodman has a chapter on the HUAC’s investigations of Hollywood, all the information presented is from the then extant public record.

³⁴ Ibid., 492.

³⁵ Ibid., 494.

³⁶ Ibid.

Actor Robert Vaughn was not only Napoleon Solo in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, but also a doctoral student at the University of Southern California in the late 1960's. Writing in the civil society tradition, his dissertation, entitled *Only Victims: A Study of Show Business Blacklisting*, is an inquiry into the history and effects of blacklisting in the various sectors of the entertainment business. Later published in book form, this was the first scholarly study of the HUAC investigations into the media. Vaughn's stated goal was to examine the actual, probable and possible effects of the HUAC investigations on the American theatre between the years 1938-58.³⁷ He, nevertheless, spent a great deal of time looking at the HUAC hearings into communist activity in Hollywood and devoted almost half of the book to recounting the investigations that impacted the motion picture business.

Not only is his research question very different from the one posed in this dissertation, but the primary sources from which his research derives are very different. The main primary evidence upon which Vaughn drew in his chapters focusing on the HUAC investigations of Hollywood were transcripts of the public hearings and published reports by the HUAC, not the executive sessions. Most of the rest of his citations were from secondary sources, some of which he relied on heavily, such as Walter Goodman's *The Committee*, which was discussed above. The new primary data that Vaughn produced was the result of a survey sent to one hundred key show business figures of the Blacklist era. Moreover, Vaughn solicited that new primary data to answer a very different research question.

³⁷ Robert Vaughn, *Only Victims: A Study of Show Business Blacklisting* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1996) 17.

Ted Morgan offered the most recent study in the civil society tradition with a study of the politics of anti-communism in the United States from the Russian Revolution of 1917 through the end of the McCarthy era. In *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth-Century America*, Morgan argues that the HUAC was one of the platforms for “a long line of men who exploited the Communist issue for political advantage, recklessly smearing their opponents with false accusations.”³⁸ The book seems thematically schizophrenic. It seeks to indict anticommunist demagogues, such as Martin Dies and Joseph McCarthy, yet Morgan cannot help but acknowledge the nefarious acts by CPUSA party members: conspiracy, fraud, espionage, and even treason. Ironically, this is reflected in the contrast between its title and subtitle; is it about “Reds” or “McCarthyism?” Ultimately, he is highly critical of the negative impact on civil society by those anticommunists who struck blindly at an unseen danger the specifics of which they were ignorant. Morgan asserts that by the time of McCarthy, the CPUSA was a spent force and that the Wisconsin senator was beating a dead horse. However, the author is surprisingly silent as to what killed the horse.

Morgan does draw upon the archival records of the HUAC newly available at the National Archives, but only insofar as they addressed his research on Martin Dies. A careful review of his citations indicates that he did not conduct a systematic review of the HUAC archives on any other subject. Furthermore, he only deals with the Hollywood investigations of the late 1940s and early 1950s in a passing, summary fashion and brings no new insights on them based on new archival information.

³⁸ Ted Morgan, *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Random House, 2004) xiii.

The Revisionists. The revisionist historians gained a strong influence starting in the late 1960s and persisted through the end of the 1980s.³⁹ This group of historians came of age during the tumultuous era of Vietnam and Watergate. Their perspective is decidedly left of center and in fact represents one aspect of the New Left movement. Often neo-Marxist themselves, they are dubious of anticommunist's claims that the international communist movement sought world hegemony. The revisionist historians are generally suspicious of the capitalist system, which they believe corrupts democracy through the undue and unfair influence of corporate money. Some of these scholars are openly sympathetic to certain aspects of the American communist movement, looking to it as "a tradition that could serve both as a source of political reference and inspiration" for post-1960s leftwing activists.⁴⁰

Scholars probably most often cite *The Inquisition in Hollywood* by Ceplair and Englund as the seminal work in this area. Writing long before the unsealing of

³⁹ A selection of this historiographic tradition includes Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party during the Second World War* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); Roger Keeran, *The Communist Party and the Auto Workers Unions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980); Paul Lyons, *Philadelphia Communists, 1936-1956* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); Stephen Meyer, "*Stalin Over Wisconsin: The Making and Unmaking of Militant Unionism, 1900-1950*" (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983); Steve Nelson, James Barrett and Rob Ruck, *Steve Nelson, American Radical* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981); Fraser M. Ottanelli, *The Communist Party of the United States: From the Depression to World War II* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991); and Joseph R. Starobin, *American Communism in Crisis, 1943-1957* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). In addition there are many articles in the periodical press within this tradition.

⁴⁰ Maurice Isserman, *Radical America*, Vol. 14 (1980) 44, quoted in Theodore Draper, op. cit., 446. For an important discussion of the New Left by one of its seminal authors, see Maurice Isserman, *If I Had a Hammer... The Death of the Old Left and the Birth of the New Left* [Reprint Edition] (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

the HUAC archives, the authors write squarely in the tradition of the economic and political analysis typical of the New Left scholars of the 1970s and 1980s. Their goal is essentially to tell the story of the Hollywood Ten and the Blacklist as an outgrowth of the labor battles surrounding the founding and early years of the Screen Writers Guild, as well as the “lost opportunities” of the era’s radicalism. They attempt to trace the rise of radicalism in Hollywood with an emphasis on the activities of the local communists: their labor organizing struggles, through their participation in the Popular Front and its disintegration just before World War II, to the anti-New Deal and anti-labor backlash that accelerated with Roosevelt’s death. They recount the rise of anticommunist organizations, such as the Motion Picture Alliance, and the practices of the Hollywood communists that caused their estrangement from Hollywood liberals. They end with the famous encounter between the Hollywood Ten and HUAC, and its aftermath.⁴¹

In the “Afterword” to the paperback edition, Ceplair and Englund contend that their research is part of “...a wave of historical research about Hollywood – all are carefully researched.”⁴² This section seems to be a defense from the charge that they are “partisans” for the CPUSA and its methods.⁴³ Whilst *Inquisition in Hollywood* does provide a good deal of otherwise missing information on the subject, their focus is in fact to tell the story of the Blacklist from the perspective of the Hollywood radicals. For example, although their bibliography is comprehensive and lists works that advocate positions on all sides of the issues, once one removes purely journalistic

⁴¹ Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 440.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 431.

citations, quoted texts and in-text citations overwhelmingly emphasize those who are sympathetic to the communist side and antipathetic to those who opposed them. Most all of the interviews conducted for the book were with one-time communists or “fellow travelers,” who had never repudiated their involvement with the CPUSA. Ex-communists, who had not only repudiated the CPUSA, but also sought to oppose its activities by revealing its intentions, methods and membership were not only not quoted or even interviewed, but typically labeled “turncoats and informers.”⁴⁴ Thus, not only did the authors not have access to the HUAC archives, the aim and results of their study is very different from the purpose of this research endeavor.

Victor Navasky’s *Naming Names* is essentially a moral study of the ethics of “finking” and the politics of being a “stool-pigeon.” Certainly the book deals with historical subject matter, namely those who chose to inform to the HUAC and those who chose not to and suffered the consequences. However, *Naming Names* is not fundamentally an historical study as much as an inquiry into ethics that uses a series of historical events as an object lesson. Thus, Navasky’s is a metaphysical exercise, rather than a historical investigation of verifiable documentary evidence. He does not set out to discover the facts about what happened several decades earlier, but to compare and contrast the justifications offered by the key players in those events for their conduct. The book is more of a discussion than a narrative, which is the most common and certainly traditional approach to doing history. Rather, by juxtaposing opposing views on the issue of naming names, he creates a kind of dialectic that even

⁴⁴ Ibid., 427.

has the feel of a Platonic dialogue. Into this dialogue, he brings outside commentators and ethicists to give input on the morality of “finking.”

Not surprisingly, Navasky, the former editor of the The Nation, draws conclusions that are much the same as those of Ceplair and Englund. His argument is that although the Hollywood Reds may have had their moral failings, they paled beside the immorality of naming names and the institution of the Blacklist. Not only were the informers culpable, so were the liberals who failed to defend the civil rights of the blacklisted and cooperated with the government’s repression, either actively through their Anticommunism or passively through their silence. Thus, Navasky, writing in an essentially journalistic style based on interviews, tells the story of the Blacklist from the radicals’ perspective as well, but this time with a moral rather than historical presentation.⁴⁵ That is not to say that historians do not reach moral or metaphysical conclusions after interpreting the meaning of the evidence presented. However, that evidence derives from historical research, primarily from archival documents, and is usually presented in narrative form. Thus, like Ceplair and Englund, Navasky’s study does not address the research question posed by this dissertation and, writing in the early 1980s, he was unable to access the newly opened HUAC archives.

⁴⁵ Navasky conducted over 160 interviews of the key participants of the events in question – informers, those who resisted informing and studio executives. Navasky acknowledges thanks to a number of archives and museums for use of their materials and, yet with one exception, he does not cite them as the source of information in the footnotes. The exception is the Wisconsin Center for Theatre Research, where the Herbert Biberman/Gale Sondergaard Collection is housed. See Victor Navasky, *Naming Names* (London: John Calder, 1982) 428-430.

The Hollywood Writers' Wars by Nancy Lynn Schwartz focuses primarily on the trade union wars that characterized the founding of the first writers' union in Hollywood, the Screen Writers Guild (SWG), which was the predecessor to today's Writers Guild of America. In this, she follows a course chartered by Ceplair and Englund and like them she writes from a decidedly New Left perspective.⁴⁶ However, she places her account in the context of the upsurge in leftwing sympathy and activities that took place during the Depression. The effects of this worldwide economic disaster deeply affected Hollywood, where the studio administrations attempted to exact wage cuts from a workforce that was largely non-union.

Schwartz, like Ceplair and Englund, emphasizes the struggle of screenwriters to gain more artistic control over the ultimate disposition of their work in the face of the power of studio executives to make arbitrary changes to screenplays. The result was labor battles between an upstart writers union and the studio executives not only over wages issues, but over artistic control, which ultimately meant the structure of the industry. Because the SWG contained a large number of communists in positions of leadership, the government became interested in these events. Partisan politics – specifically support for and opposition to Roosevelt's New Deal – came into play. Ultimately, she asserts, this fed the frenzy of the hysteria surrounding McCarthyism, which ultimately led to the sad fate of the blacklistees.

⁴⁶ Writing in the preface, her mother makes this New Left perspective explicit by citing the author's ideological background and political heritage. See Nancy Lynn Schwartz, *The Hollywood Writers' Wars* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982) xi.

Like Navasky, Schwartz wrote in the early 1980s at a time in which the HUAC archives were still sealed and, thus, she did not address or answer the central research question of this dissertation.

Tender Comrades, edited by Patrick McGilligan and Paul Buhle, is the fourth book to take a revisionist perspective on the events of the Blacklist period.⁴⁷ The historiographic essay that serves as the introduction repeats the same assertions put forward by those cited above. There is the insistence that “[w]hether or not to inform was, for those who refused, above all not a question of politics, but a matter of ethics and morality.”⁴⁸ Later in the text, Walter Bernstein asserts that this was true not only of those who refused to inform, but also of those who did.⁴⁹ There is no recognition of the possibility that the opposing side might have had honorable motives. Rather, the blacklistees were victims of “left-wing turncoats and Anticommunist zealots.”⁵⁰

Tender Comrades consists mainly of interviews with thirty-five survivors of the blacklist or in some cases their widows.⁵¹ Five other academics or journalists,

⁴⁷ Buhle falls squarely in the New Left tradition. For example, see John McMillian and Paul Buhle, eds. *The New Left Revisited* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

⁴⁸ Patrick McGilligan and Paul Buhle, *Tender Comrades: A Backstory of the Hollywood Blacklist*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997) xviii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁵¹ Those interviewed were Norma Barzman (for her husband Ben Barzman), Leonardo Bercovici, Walter Bernstein, John (Jack) Berry, Alvah Bessie, Allen Borentz, John Bright, Jean Rouverol Butler (for her husband Hugo Butler), Jeff Corey, Jules Dassin, Edward Eliscu, Anne Froelick, Bernard Gordon, Faith Hubley (for her husband John Hubley), Marsha Hunt, Paul Jarrico, Mickey Knox, Millard Lampell, Ring Lardner, Jr., Robert Lees, Alfred Lewis Levitt (for his wife Helen Slote Levitt), Karen Morely, Abraham Polonsky, Maurice Rapf, Betsy Blair Reisz, Martin Ritt, Marguerite Roberts, John Sanford, Joan LaCour Scott (for her husband Adrian Scott), Lionel Stander, Bess Taffel, Frank Tarloffm Bernard Vorhaus, John Weber, John Wexley and Julian Zimet (aka Julian Halevy).

including Larry Ceplair, join the editors as interviewers. This is the reason for the book's ideological perspective: all of those interviewed are former "blacklistees," who refused to cooperate with the HUAC, and all the interviewers are tremendously sympathetic to those they interviewed. In several cases, they openly state their admiration for their interlocutors and make professions of love for their films. Thus, the book is also not a history – there is no central narrative, no use of archival or other documentary evidence, and no verification or crosschecking of sources – but a kind of oral history. Also, though *Tender Comrades* appeared in 1997, in it there is no coming to terms with the more recent historiography on the conspiratorial activities of the CPUSA.

There was one recent dissertation on the HUAC probes of the media and the resulting blacklist. John Gladchuk in *Reticent Reds: HUAC, Hollywood and the Evolution of the Red Menace, 1935-1950* argues that the HUAC represented an arm of repression that operated within the confines of an ultraconservative societal atmosphere reminiscent of Nazi tactics. This dissertation did not draw upon the resources of the newly opened HUAC archives, even though it was completed in 2006, five years after these documents were opened to the scrutiny of researchers. The substance of his argument does not cut much new ground; it basically reformulates arguments of previous New Left scholars' research on the subject. Therefore, his study does not answer the central question posed by this dissertation.⁵²

The Post-Revisionists. Recent scholarship on the relationship between the CPUSA and the USSR has tipped the balance between the anticommunists and the

⁵² John Joseph Gladchuk, *Reticent Reds: HUAC, Hollywood and the Evolution of the Red Menace, 1935-1950* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 2006).

revisionists. This is the direct result of new archival resources becoming available in the former-Soviet Union. As mentioned above, these newly accessible primary sources include a huge collection of the records of the CPUSA that were secretly shipped to the USSR for safe keeping during the height of the Cold War. At the forefront of this research are Harvey Klehr, the Andrew A. Mellon Professor of Politics and History at Emory University, and John Earl Haynes, who holds the title of Twentieth Century Political Historian at the Library of Congress.⁵³ Other historians have corroborated their findings to produce a rather damning picture of the CPUSA.⁵⁴

The conclusions drawn by this new research have validated the assertions made by many of the ex-communists who defected and became government witnesses: CPUSA members had penetrated the U.S. government, its military and atomic research program on behalf of the Soviet intelligence organizations. This is important because many scholars, including most of the revisionists discussed above, had dismissed much of this type of testimony due to the fact that some had used the issue of national security to advance partisan or personal agendas: “A number of liberals and radicals pointed to the excesses of McCarthy’s charges as justification for rejecting the allegations altogether.”⁵⁵

⁵³ See Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, *Secret World*; Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *Soviet World*; Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*.

⁵⁴ These include Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); John Barron, *Operation Solo: The FBI’s Man in the Kremlin* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1996); and Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev, *The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America – The Stalin Era* (New York: Random House, 1999).

⁵⁵ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 17.

Evidence from these new sources appears to confirm precisely what Ceplair, Englund, Navasky, Schwartz, McGilligan, and Buhle had dismissed. For example, it seems clear that Alger Hiss was a Soviet spy⁵⁶ and that Ethel and Julius Rosenberg – whom many media communists and their radical successors defended, mourned and held up as a model of courageous behavior⁵⁷ – were guilty of espionage on behalf of Moscow.⁵⁸ Also, certainly guilty was Lauchlin Currie, a key White House aide to President Roosevelt, who passed secrets to the Soviets in a manner that undermined the policies of the president for whom he was working.⁵⁹ In addition, Harry Dexter White, FDR’s Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, betrayed his country and his boss, Treasury Secretary Morgenthau.⁶⁰ Communist agents also penetrated the atomic research program and the OSS, which was the predecessor to the CIA. These are just a few famous cases of many documented demonstrating that the CPUSA was a hotbed of espionage for the Soviet Union.

Klehr and Haynes assert, “The investigations and prosecutions of American Communists undertaken in the late 1940s and early 1950s were premised on an assumption that the CPUSA has assisted Soviet espionage.... It was an explicit assumption behind congressional investigations of domestic communism in the late 1940s and 1950s, and it permeated public attitudes toward domestic communism.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ Ibid., 170-173.

⁵⁷ For example, Lester Cole, *Hollywood Red: The Autobiography of Lester Cole* (Palo Alto: Ramparts Press, 1981) 349. Also see John Wexley, *The Judgment of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* (New York: Cameron and Kahn, 1955).

⁵⁸ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 35-36 & 295-303.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 145-150.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 138-145.

⁶¹ Ibid., 21-22.

One such investigation is obviously the HUAC inquiry into Hollywood communism.

Haynes and Klehr summarize their findings by asserting:

[I]t became clear that espionage was a regular activity of the American Communist party. To say that the CPUSA was nothing but a Soviet fifth column in the Cold War would be an exaggeration; it still remains true that the CPUSA's chief task was the promotion of communism and the interests of the Soviet Union through political means. But it is equally true that the CPUSA was indeed a fifth column working inside and against the United States in the Cold War.⁶²

Thus, the most salient features of the Party are becoming indisputably clear as more and more archival information becomes known. The intellectual position for old apologists – such as Victor Navasky – for American communists and the Soviet Union is becoming increasingly difficult to defend rationally. Given this new scholarship rich in documentary evidence, serious historians will have to rethink what has become almost a ritual of branding all assertions of communist conspiracy as red-baiting and McCarthyist hysteria. This in turn requires a reappraisal of the positions espoused by the revisionist literature that has dominated the study of communist infiltration in the media for decades.

Within this post-revisionist context, *Hollywood Party* by Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley represents a more recent serious addition to the literature on Hollywood communism.⁶³ It benefits from and recognizes the more recent historiography on American communism in general.

Billingsley seems taken aback by the fact the current popular awareness in Hollywood – and by implication in the country as a whole – about the Blacklist is

⁶² Ibid., 7.

⁶³ Kenneth Lloyd Billingsley, *Hollywood Party: How Communism Seduced the American Film Industry in the 1930s and 1940s* (Rocklin, CA: Forum, 1998).

one-sided. He notes that events such as “Hollywood Remembers the Blacklist” and its accompanying rhetoric tell of how government and industry leaders struck out at “radicals” during the Blacklist period, but ignore the activities of the CPUSA that provoked those actions.⁶⁴ His book covers much of the same ground as *Inquisition in Hollywood*, dealing with problems of studio unionization, disputes over the undemocratic nature of Party discipline, friendly and unfriendly witnesses before the HUAC, and the rehabilitation of the informers. However, Billingsley’s work is concerned with trade union history as much as anything else. He spends half of the book recounting the battles between the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU) on the one hand versus the major motion picture studios and the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IA or IATSE) on the other. Billingsley devotes much less attention to the “writers’ wars” than the previous studies.

Because he has a narrower scope, i.e. this labor battle, wherein the CSU and the IA waged a war over who would represent the rank and file studio craft worker, Billingsley is able to go into more detail. His sympathies are obviously not with the CSU and the communists who dominated it. The author does a thorough job establishing that Herbert Sorrell, head of the CSU, as well as its other important union leaders, were either *de jure* members of the CPUSA or *de facto* communists by adhering to and supporting every shift in the party line.

Billingsley offered citations from the various reports of the HUAC that were far more extensive than those in the previously cited texts. His citations indicated that he drew from a more diverse set of sources: radical, liberal and conservative.

⁶⁴ Billingsley notes that there is only one reference to Communists during the entire presentation of “Hollywood Remembers the Blacklist.” *Ibid.*, 8.

However, except for HUAC reports and interviews, he relied heavily on secondary sources. There is little or no archival work evident. On the one hand, his breakthrough source was an extensive interview with AFL leader Roy Brewer, head of the I.A. during the trade union wars and probably the most influential anticommunist in Hollywood during the decade of 1945-1955. (The aging Brewer had been silent for years and ignored by earlier historians with exception of Cogley.) On the other hand, Billingsley produced no concrete evidence linking Hollywood communists to any specific conspiratorial activity that would threaten national security. He accepted the anticommunist perspective based on compelling but still circumstantial evidence. Finally, *Hollywood Party* appeared before the opening of the HUAC archives.

The other recent work within the post-revisionist context is Ronald and Allis Radosh's *Red Star over Hollywood: The Film Colony's Long Romance with the Left*.⁶⁵ Published in 2005, it benefits from the general post-revisionist scholarship that explodes the myth that somehow the CPUSA was not only subordinate to Moscow but also that it was an espionage tool of the latter. The Radoshes conducted interviews with some of the aging participants of the Blacklist era, as well as researched archival documents, such as materials in the Warner Brothers archives. They are not only familiar with the vast literature on the subject – both scholarly and popular – and work done in the Soviet archives, as well as the Venona decrypts recently declassified by the American government. Finally, they had access to and made use of the selected portions of the recently opened files of the HUAC. Thus,

⁶⁵ Ronald Radosh and Allis Radosh, *Red Star over Hollywood* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2005).

they, along with Ted Morgan, are the only scholars in this review to have incorporated this previously unavailable data.

The focus of the Radoshes' work was to demonstrate that many of the Hollywood Reds were not merely "misguided radicals," but hardcore Stalinists. Some of them had made the conversion to communism during visits to the Soviet Union in the 1930s at the height of the show trials, wherein Stalin rid himself of any threat to his power from the senior Bolsheviks through execution on trumped up charges. Furthermore, the Radoshes argued that many of these communist screenwriters were successful in putting pro-Soviet propaganda in a number of Hollywood movies – an idea dismissed by civil society scholars and ridiculed by the revisionist historians discussed above. Finally, they made a persuasive case that the Stalinist practices of the Hollywood party leadership were the main contributing factor to not only destroying the alliance with the liberal left of Hollywood and sympathy for the communist case, but also for the eventual destruction of the Party itself. In other words, the Party had only itself to blame. However, the Radoshes did not make a clear and sustained argument drawing upon any new archival material that would answer the central question posed by this study. Furthermore, their use of the newly unsealed HUAC archives was narrowly selective to cover specific topics their text addressed. They did not conduct a systematic study of those files pertaining to the Committee's investigations of Hollywood.

Other Sources. Surprisingly, there are very few scholarly biographies of the key players of the era. Bruce Cook published a biography of Hollywood Ten member Dalton Trumbo in 1977, which drew extensively on interviews with the screenwriter.

However, he reveals next to nothing about Trumbo's activities as a communist insider.⁶⁶ Gary Carr produced a doctoral dissertation on another Hollywood Ten alumnus John Howard Lawson, but his chief concern was studying Lawson's screenwriting career, rather than his political importance in the McCarthy era.⁶⁷ *Hollywood's Other Blacklist: Union Struggles in the Studio System* is an account of the aforementioned conflict between the IA and the CSU over which union would represent Hollywood below-the-line trades, such as set painters, set decorators, cartoonists and publicists.⁶⁸ One of the authors was a participant in these events; the other is a communication scholar. Methodologically, the study is hybrid; it is part oral history and part narrative history. There is little doubt that both writers come from a perspective heavily sympathetic to the ideological position of the CSU. This is the sum total of what can be reasonably categorized as scholarly or even semi-scholarly. None of the above deal in depth with the HUAC itself, and neither do they draw up the archival material made available by the post-revisionist historians.

Autobiographies of the participants, however, are far more numerous, of vastly uneven quality and none of them remotely scholarly. Edward Dmytryk's wrote two autobiographies: *It's a Hell of a Life, But Not a Bad Living*⁶⁹ and *Odd Man Out*:

⁶⁶ Bruce Cook, *Dalton Trumbo*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977) 323.

⁶⁷ Gary Carr, *The Left Side of Paradise: The Screenwriting of John Howard Lawson*. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984) x.

⁶⁸ Mike Nelson and Gene Mailes, *Hollywood's Other Blacklist: Union Struggles in the Studio System* (London: British Film Institute, 1995).

⁶⁹ Edward Dmytryk, *It's a Hell of a Life, but Not a Bad Living* (New York: Times Books, 1978).

A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten.⁷⁰ The latter is concerned specifically with experiences in the CPUSA, his break with the Party, his HUAC testimony, his prison time and his rehabilitation. Another informer, Elia Kazan, wrote *A Life* in which he vigorously defended his decision to testify before the HUAC.⁷¹

Autobiographies by blacklistees include Lillian Hellman's *Scoundrel Time*, which as the title indicates, gives no quarter to her ideological enemies.⁷² The accuracy of Miss Hellman's recollections has been seriously called into question by numerous historians.⁷³ Donald Ogden Stewart's *By a Stroke of Luck!* appeared several years before Hellman's book.⁷⁴ The unrepentant Lester Cole, who remained a faithful, doctrinaire Stalinist and a loyal supporter of the Soviet Union to his death, published *Hollywood Red* in 1981.⁷⁵ Other than expressing leftwing sentiment, it has precious little to say about being a "red" and concentrated on his Hollywood career. The autobiography of another of the Hollywood Ten, Ring Lardner, Jr., *I'd Hate Myself in the Morning* appeared shortly before his death.⁷⁶ Titled after a quip he made whilst testifying before the HUAC, like Cole's, the book is silent on Lardner's actual activities within the CPUSA. Arthur Miller wrote of his life and offered an

⁷⁰ Edward Dmytryk, *Odd Man Out: A Memoir of the Hollywood Ten* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996).

⁷¹ Elia Kazan, *A Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

⁷² Lillian Hellman, *Scoundrel Time*. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1976).

⁷³ See, for example, Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 434 and Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Munzenberg and the Seduction of Intellectuals* (New York: Enigma Books, 2004) 91-94; Radosh and Radosh, *Red Star Over Hollywood*, 203.

⁷⁴ Donald Ogden Stewart, *By a Stroke of Luck!* (New York: Paddington Press, 1975).

⁷⁵ Lester Cole, *Hollywood Red*.

⁷⁶ Ring Lardner, Jr., *I'd Hate Myself in the Morning: A Memoir* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books, 2000).

extensive discussion of his thoughts on the blacklisting phenomenon, the HUAC and the allegorical meaning of his play, *The Crucible*.⁷⁷ Other recent additions to this genre are Walter Bernstein's *Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist*⁷⁸ and Norma Barzman's *The Red and the Blacklist*.⁷⁹ Both decry blacklisting and the damage done to their lives and careers. Both offer copious amounts of gossip about media friends, but neither are very informative about CPUSA activities or their contributions to them.

The above memoirists display the numerous inherent problems with autobiographies. Citations of documentary evidence are rare and editorship is of uneven quality. The authors wrote years after the events and mostly relied on their memory, rather than contemporaneous evidence. Subject to the temptation to represent oneself in the best light, often autobiographers spend more time in self-justification formulated years after the events in question. Logic is not necessarily the forte of screen artists and, thus, one can read some arguments that defy the most elementary rules of reasoning. When two people writing in two different books dispute the facts of an event, without corroborating evidence, it is one person's word against another. Therefore, although these works are very useful as source material, they are fraught with potential traps for the historian and certainly do not answer the central question of this dissertation.

⁷⁷ Arthur Miller, *Timebends: A Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1987).

⁷⁸ Walter Bernstein, *Inside Out: A Memoir of the Blacklist* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

⁷⁹ Norma Barzman, *The Red and the Blacklist: A Memoir of a Hollywood Insider* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003).

Finally, there are a few overtly polemical works on the Blacklist era, which are perhaps of the least value to the historian, primarily because they are essentially propagandistic in nature, designed to sway public opinion in one direction or another. I would include in this list screenwriter Gordon Kahn's *Hollywood on Trial*;⁸⁰ Dalton Trumbo's *Time of the Toad*,⁸¹ (allusion of the book's title is to associate the HUAC investigation as a radical miscarriage of justice similar to the Dreyfus Affair in 19th century France); and John Howard Lawson's *Film in the Battle of Ideas*, the work of another member of the Hollywood Ten.⁸²

⁸⁰ Gordon Kahn, *Hollywood on Trial: The Story of the 10 Who Were Indicted* (New York: Boni and Gaer, 1948). Kahn was one of the subpoenaed nineteen "unfriendly" witnesses, but was never called to the stand. He was later blacklisted after his studio contract lapsed. His book was considered by the Hollywood Ten at the time to be an "objective" account of their troubles; Ceplair and Englund, op. cit., 345.

⁸¹ Dalton Trumbo, *The Time of the Toad: A Study of Inquisition in America* (New York: Perennial Library, 1949, 1972). Though Trumbo, the screenwriter for *Papillon*, never admits his own Communist affiliations, Trumbo implies that the committee's investigation was out of order because the "unfriendlies" were not Communists. This implication arises out of his assertion that the party cards used to identify them as Communists were allegedly forgeries (29). Finally, Trumbo argues that citizens have a right to secrecy, i.e. the right not to disclose political opinion or affiliation (30). He does not venture to delineate where this right ends and the illegal activity known as conspiracy begins. Trumbo does reveal an interesting belief that perhaps indicates why the CPUSA was so interested in the motion picture industry: "Even though it is customary in intellectual circles to deplore motion pictures as art, it would be a fatal mistake to underestimate them as an influence. They constitute perhaps the most important medium for the communication of ideas in the world today" (49). This ironically seems to justify the HUAC's very decision to investigate Communist activity in the movie business!

⁸² John Howard Lawson, *Film in the Battle of Ideas* (New York: Masses & Mainstream, 1953). A strident and doctrinaire Stalinist, Lawson's fondness for Marxist jargon – "superstructure," "war-mongering," "Wall Street monopolists," "United States imperialism" – makes for tedious reading. He dutifully cites Marx and offers a quote from Stalin in order to unlock the subtleties of the theory of base and superstructure (7-8). He offers this appraisal of the Communist world: "The Soviet Union emerged from the war steeled and strengthened in the anti-fascist struggle, dedicating its vast resources to peaceful reconstruction and the cultural enrichment of

On the other side of the ideological spectrum, *The Trojan Horse in America*⁸³ is worthy of mention here. The author, Martin Dies, Jr., was the original chairman of the HUAC from 1938-1944 when it was still a special committee. He attempts a justification of the need for and utility of such a body on a permanent basis based upon the activities of subversive organizations then operating in the United States. His central thesis is that the CPUSA represents an obvious allusion: the CPUSA is the equivalent of a Trojan Horse operating in stealth fashion. If its conspiratorial conduct is left unexposed, it will lead to the downfall of the American system in the same way in which ancient Troy fell. The fact that his account contains few citations, no bibliography and no index undermines Dies' argument. In other words, he presents an argument with no substantiated and verifiable evidence, which given his position in Congress ought to have been available to him.

Finally, Robert E. Stripling's *The Red Plot Against America* is a polemical argument for a strong anticommunist stand against the CPUSA with a bit of biography thrown in.⁸⁴ Stripling served as the chief investigator for the HUAC from

its people. In China and the Eastern Democracies of Europe, people's governments undertook the task of building free societies, free from private exploitation, devoted to rational progress and human rights" (9-10). This is his starting point to argue that because Hollywood is a propaganda machine for the existing order and its ruling class, motion pictures must be removed from the control of "Wall Street big money," so that socially responsible, i.e. radical, independent filmmaking can flourish. No wonder the HUAC wanted to investigate!

⁸³ Martin Dies, *The Trojan Horse in America* (New York: Dodd, Meade & Co., 1940).

⁸⁴ The biographical portion consists of his account of how he was drafted into the army in 1944 despite being over thirty, married, a pre-Pearl Harbor father with a legislative deferment. Stripling believes White House pressure led to his induction after he led the HUAC investigation of the connection of the Eislers to Eleanor Roosevelt. I will discuss that case later in this dissertation. See Robert K. Stripling,

1938-1948, brought onto the Committee's staff by Martin Dies and retained through the chairmanship of J. Parnell Thomas. His book recounts in chronological order the various HUAC investigations in which he was instrumental, including the saga of Elizabeth Bentley and the Alger Hiss-Whittaker Chambers case. The 1947 foray into Hollywood was one such inquiry. Essentially, Stripling's work summarizes in a form accessible to the average citizen the information publicly available in the HUAC various reports to the House of Representatives. There are no revelations here from closed archives and unfortunately he does not reference the material presented to primary sources.

Thus, the gap in the scholarly literature on the subject is clear. All but two texts were published before the historiographic contributions of the post-revisionist historians of the 1990s and the unsealing of the HUAC archives. Only Ted Morgan and Ronald and Allis Radosh accessed the testimony offered in executive sessions and they did so very selectively without a broad and systematic review of the files. At least in part because of this, the literature does not adequately tell the story of the HUAC's conduct as its members investigated the motion picture industry. The literature on this subject does not, therefore, provide an answer to the central research question posed by this study.

The Red Plot Against America [reprint edition] ed. Bob Considine (New York: Arno Press, 1977) 48.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Plan of Organization

Research Methodology & Conceptual Framework. I will employ a historical methodology for this dissertation. Such a statement should be relatively straightforward. Alas, however, the current academic environment is one in which postmodernism has invaded both the social sciences and the humanities. The discipline of history in particular seems to have suffered quite a bit from an assault on its intellectual foundations. Peter Novak has written convincingly about the crisis in the discipline of history concerning the concept of “objectivity.” He has attempted to show that “the evolution of historian’s attitudes on the objectivity question has always been closely tied to changing social, political, cultural, and professional contexts.”⁸⁵ However, Novak’s is a descriptive work, not a normative one. Just because many historians, such as Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, and especially Michel Foucault have called into question or abandoned the notion of objectivity, does not infer that this ought to be the case. I will not follow their example in this dissertation. Rather, I will conduct my research according to the dictates of traditional historical methodology as so eloquently defended recently by Keith Windshuttle.⁸⁶

I think that sound methodology is crucial for the historian and it is what separates the serious scholar from the dilettante and knowledge from speculation. This dissertation will adhere to traditional characteristics of well-articulated historical research, which are as follows:

⁸⁵ Peter Novick, *The Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 628.

⁸⁶ See Keith Windshuttle, *The Killing of History: How Literary Critics and Social Theorists are Murdering Our Past* (New York: The Free Press, 1997).

- The evaluation of evidence in an objective fashion, which means submitting one's assertions to the various rules of logic that have been identified over the years.⁸⁷
- The evaluation of evidence on its own terms and avoiding the use of political ideology to shape how it is interpreted.⁸⁸
- An interpretation that offers the most reasonable position given the available information.
- In order to guard against proof-texting, recognition that the historian must inevitably sift the evidence, using some and discarding some.⁸⁹
- An explicit delineation between fact and speculation, which can result from gaps in the historical record or the necessity to infer the motivations, emotions or other mental states of actors upon the stage of history.

The idea of offering a conceptual framework for research undertaken is to articulate the paradigm the scholar will employ to organize and make sense of the

⁸⁷ T. Edward Damer in *Attacking Faulty Reasoning: A Practical Guide to Fallacy Free Arguments* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1995) has lucidly and cogently identified twelve principles of sound argumentation and sixty fallacies that violate them. In addition, David Hackett Fischer in *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970) has written at length on the fallacious reasoning to which historians are prone.

⁸⁸ In this regard, I will avoid the practice common in feminist theory, neo-Marxism, Cultural Studies and postmodernism of using a conceptual framework as a political effort to rectify past wrongs and elicit social change through ones scholarship.

⁸⁹ Proof-texting is the logical and rhetorical fallacy of supporting an argument, historical or otherwise, with evidence selected out of context, creating the impression that a source document supports the findings of the researcher. Aside from the violation of context, one aspect of the fallaciousness of this practice is that the criterion for inclusion of material is the degree to which the evidence supports the thesis of the argument, rather than the overall significance of evidence. For a discussion of the process of selecting evidence in media historical scholarship, see Robert C. Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History Theory and Practice* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985) 8.

data. The advantage of a conceptual framework is that one works from an organizing principle and, thus, the ability to offer an interpretation of the meaning of the data is straightforward. In other words, a conceptual framework helps insure that the researcher can make sense of the evidence. The disadvantage of conceptual frameworks – and I believe this is particularly true with ideologically driven paradigms – is that they tend to trap the scholar into one perspective and in some sense predetermine the results of the inquiry.

I think there is a strong case for allowing the evidence itself to disclose the meaning of the facts. Insofar as a conceptual paradigm indicates the intellectual and personal “baggage” of the researcher, it can also represent a hindrance to his or her objectivity. It seems to me that objectivity is possible, if this is defined as taking the most reasonable position on an issue, given the current evidence, irrespective of one’s personal feelings. As has been argued above, adhering to the criteria of sound argumentation goes a long way towards insuring this.

One can find the intellectual justification for this approach in the writings of Immanuel Kant, whose work, if more contemporary scholars would take the time to read it, is an antidote to both the radical relativism and epistemological skepticism of postmodernism. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant lays out the cognitive structures of human understanding, showing how humans – all humans – organize and process experience. His goal is to find a sound middle ground between the naïve realism of Bacon, the idealism of Descartes and Leibniz, and the radical empiricism

of Hume.⁹⁰ In some respects, these find parallels in historiography in the “scientific” method of Leopold von Ranke, the thought of R. G. Collingwood and the post-modernistic relativism of Hayden White respectively.

Each of these approaches was and is problematic. Realism cannot adequately explain how the thinking subject, in this case the historian, interacts with the facts and possibly unwittingly shapes them. The naïve realist assumes he/she is apprehending things as they really are and relies entirely on method to preserve objectivity.⁹¹ For the idealist, sure knowledge rests in the thinking self, who tries to reconstruct the reality of the outside world, including the past, through the logical processes of the mind.⁹² However, this position cannot adequately explain events caused by forces other than thinking historical agents. The empiricist denies any metaphysical meaning to reality, as well as the ability of the perceiver to organize sense-perceptions into an approximation of the truth without violating it. The result is a radical relativism in which the truth is no more than what seems true to each individual. Thus, for historians like White: “Historical stories, like all others, [are] made rather than found.”⁹³

Kant arrived at a commonsense position in a manner that was anything but commonsense. First, he revised the idealist tradition by showing how the human

⁹⁰ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965)

⁹¹ See Leopold von Ranke, *Fursten und Volker*, ed. W. Andreas (Weisbaden: 1957) as quoted in Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval & Modern, Second Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 233 for what I consider a naïve realist understanding of the historical methodology.

⁹² See for example R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) 217 for an idealist perspective on historical methodology.

⁹³ Novick, *Noble Dream*, 600.

mind interacts with sense data and organizes his or her perception of nature. Rather than the usual idealist metaphysical offering, Kant limits the discussion of the knowing subject to what in modern psychology would be called the cognitive structures of the mind. Kant showed that humans do not arbitrarily organize perception, but, assuming one does not suffer from some sort of mental impairment, do so in strict and predictable patterns. If the brain is our computer hardware, Kant described its software. He closed off the relativism of a multiplicity of perspectives by describing the human perspective: the cognitive structures of time, space, causality, etc. By doing so, Kant introduced the foundation of regularity necessary for empiricism to be able to make knowledge claims beyond simply an elaboration of method.

Therefore, the conceptual framework I shall adopt for this study is architectonic in essence. Along Kantian lines, I assume knowledge is possible and facts ascertainable. There is a difference between fact and fiction in historical studies. It is possible for the scholar to rise above race, class, gender, ethnic or national origin, religious affiliation, etc., in order to discern and describe the facts of events long past, as well as to offer an objective interpretation as to their meaning. This can be achieved by strict adherence to sound methodology and the rules of sound argumentation. The researcher is also well advised to recognize his or her own fallibility and susceptibility to “discovering” what one wants to find. Recognition of the problem allows one to be on guard against it by recognizing that one’s research is part of a larger on-going effort in which scholars undertake a dialogue. This

dialectical process is yet another check against unwarranted assumptions and speculation.

No one scholar need attempt to ascertain all the truth about a problem in order to achieve some knowledge about the subject. Obviously, complete knowledge would be the most desirable, but it is a fallacy to hold that somehow partial knowledge is not valid. While waiting for new evidence to come to light, there is nothing wrong with the historian reaching a tentative position as long as it is recognized as such. In fact, much history is tentative in nature. That does not mean that it does not represent historical knowledge. It is just incomplete knowledge. Is this so terrible? Our knowledge of physics is still incomplete, yet several times a year scholars trust it enough to embark on airplane trips to conferences and symposia without resorting to the position that knowledge of aerodynamics, if it exists at all, is relative to perspectives of race, class and gender.

New Data. I have noted previously that the collapse of the Soviet Union, which led to partial and temporary opening of some of its archives, has changed our understanding of the history of international communism. In particular, we now have a clearer picture of the nature of the Soviet foreign policy goals, the Soviet espionage threat to the West, and how deeply the CPUSA was involved in the undertaking of both. These records include not only the archives of the Soviet government and its agencies, such as the KGB, but also those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU] and the Communist International [Comintern].

Most of these collections have remained closed to Westerners, but one archive has allowed varying degrees of access to Western scholars since 1992. This is the

Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History, known to historians by its Russian acronym RGASPI.⁹⁴ According to Klehr, Haynes and Anderson, this archive holds the bulk of the records of the Comintern and the central agencies of the CPSU from the early 1920's up to the death of Stalin in 1953. It also contains an extensive collection of records of the CPUSA.⁹⁵ These scholars report that over the last several years the Russian government has restored some of the power of its security agencies to block access to individual records and that in fact they have closed some files to researchers.⁹⁶

Apart from the fact that the Russian government has to a great extent again clamped down on access to this archive, I will not draw upon it as a primary source for this dissertation for two reasons. First, a number of scholars have mined the riches of the RGASPI and their prodigious research is readily available. The value of that research, and the reason I mention it here, is that it helps to more accurately establish the context in which the HUAC operated, i.e. the ongoing activities of the CPUSA, including espionage, and its relationship to the Soviet Union. The scholarship of the post-revisionist historians has greatly undermined the conclusions of the earlier revisionists, who worked without access to the evidence in the Soviet archives. Given the amount of work already drawn from documents in the RGASPI, it is not likely to yield much in terms of new, significant material.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ This archive was formerly known as the Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Recent History and referred to by the Russian acronym RTsKhIDNI.

⁹⁵ Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *Soviet World*, xiii-xvi.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, xiv-xv.

⁹⁷ I base this conclusion on a conversation I had with historian Harvey Klehr, who has copious citations in this dissertation, at the Raleigh Spy Conference in 2006.

Second, this dissertation centers on the HUAC, not the CPUSA. The Soviet archives hold only the records of the latter, not the former. Although these two institutions were locked with each other in a struggle to the political death and, therefore, linked together historically, their organizational records were obviously very separate entities. While the mandate of the HUAC in part was to investigate and collect information of the CPUSA, the reverse was not true. The post-revisionist historians working in the RGASPI have done an excellent job describing the nature of the HUAC's political foe. However, the most appropriate source of new information on the inner workings of the HUAC itself is the Committee's collection at the Center for Legislative Archives, part of the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC.

The newly available HUAC material, upon which this dissertation will draw, includes transcripts of testimony of witnesses taken in executive session, minutes of meetings of the full committee and various subcommittees held in executive session, the records of the Committee's files and reference section, and the documents related to investigations of individuals or organizations. I will describe each of these in detail later in this section. As noted in the review of the literature, the only authors to access these documents in a study addressing some aspect of the HUAC's interaction with the media are Ronald and Allis Radosh, and Ted Morgan. Because of the nature and aims of their research, all three made only selective use of the files. Before I commenced work in the archive, Dr. Ronald Radosh personally told me that the HUAC files "are a mess" and he and Allis Radosh only accessed them for specific

items they needed.⁹⁸ No scholar to my knowledge has undertaken any systematic study of the archive. I am certain of this because archivists unsealed a number of boxes for me in the summer of 2007.

Navasky, Vaugh, Goodman, and Ceplair and Englund, and the other scholars discussed earlier had to rely upon materials that the HUAC itself published for public consumption, which include transcripts of the testimony given in its public sessions. However, for years Congress never granted researchers access to its internal documents and in 1976 the House Judiciary Committee sealed the records of the now defunct HUAC for fifty years. Allen Weinstein, while researching for his study of the Hiss-Chambers controversy, waged an unsuccessful battle to gain access to those records. This forced him to rely instead on the papers of several committee members deposited in archives around the country.⁹⁹ It is important to note that the Nixon Library, which holds Richard Nixon's congressional papers, opened in March 1994. However, Nixon chose to avoid most of the HUAC hearings on Hollywood and instead concentrated his efforts on the Hiss-Chambers controversy. I have visited the library and found nothing of significance with respect to the Hollywood investigations.

The question might then arise: why did scholars not request any pertinent HUAC documents under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act [FOIA]? The answer is that Congress wrote the FOIA to apply only to the executive branch and its agencies. This legislation, first enacted in 1966 and substantially amended in

⁹⁸ Interview with Ronald Radosh by J. Duane Meeks during the Raleigh Spy Conference, August 2005.

⁹⁹ Allen Weinstein, *Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979) xxi.

1974 and 1986, has been a valuable tool for scholars. It replaced the “need to know” criteria with the “right to know” standard; the federal government has to justify the need to keep its documents secret. The FOIA also provides judicial remedies for citizens who feel they have been unjustly denied access to government documents. However, when Congress enacted this legislation, it did not feel obliged to apply the provisions to itself. The HUAC was a duly constituted committee of the United States House of Representatives and, therefore, it is not subject to the stipulations of the FIOA.

The FIOA does apply to any documents produced by the Department of Justice and the FBI, which seem to be the two agencies most likely to possess records that have been untapped by researchers. A number of such documents have recently come to light, including one file that indicated the FBI had investigated Groucho Marx’s communist sympathies.¹⁰⁰ There is no index for these files, which a historian might use to search for a particular item. The researcher does not know what exists when making a request. Rather, one must fish around, making blind requests in order to discover what might exist. Thus, it remains unclear how much unreleased information remains in FBI and Justice Department files.

In the summer of 2001, there was a significant development in the status of the HUAC archives. Since 1998, the National Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History, a coalition of historical and archival organizations, had sought

¹⁰⁰ The FBI responded to denunciations of Marx contained in several letters from the viewing public. One viewer of “You Bet Your Life” was offended when Marx asked a contestant, who had admitted to a background in bootlegging, if he was a “bootlegger for the FBI.” CNN Interactive, “FBI reported on Marxism – the Groucho kind,” October 12, 1998.

the opening of the HUAC files. The NCCPH, supported by the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, filed a request with Representative. F. James Sensenbrenner, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. In July 2001 the Clerk of the House informed the NCCPH that most of the requested files would be unsealed and opened to public scrutiny. These documents include the HUAC investigations of Hollywood and the other American media.¹⁰¹

The specific records I have accessed for this dissertation are from the archive of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which operated from 1945 to 1975. A separate but related set of records are the archives of the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, popularly known as the Dies Committee. This immediate predecessor to the HUAC functioned on a temporary basis from 1938 to 1945 and needed annual reauthorization. I did not access the records of the Dies Committee because they lay outside the timeframe of the major Hollywood investigations. Likewise, for the same reason, I did not delve into the records of another precursor to the HUAC, the McCormack-Dickstein Committee. This body functioned in 1934-1935 and its formal name was the Special Committee to Investigate Nazi Propaganda and Other Propaganda.

In 1969 the HUAC's name changed to the House Committee on Internal Security and in 1975 the House of Representatives decided to abolish the Committee. At that point, the House of Representatives transferred the HUAC's jurisdiction to the Judiciary Committee. Hence, the HUAC records are now part of a National

¹⁰¹ Bruce Craig, *NCC Washington Update*, Vol. 7, Number 33, August 8, 2001.

Archives' record group assigned to archive the documents of the House Judiciary Committee. In terms of a typical congressional committee, the HUAC files are indeed vast: 2,058 feet for the thirty years between 1945 and 1975. By contrast, the records of the House Judiciary Committee, which usually produced the most copious amounts of archival records of the various House committees, represent 2,025 feet of material for the years 1947 to 1968.¹⁰²

The HUAC archive consists of six major record sections, which apparently correspond to six staff sections. They are the Administrative Section, the Editorial Section, the Files and Reference Section, the Finance Section, the Investigative Section and the Research Section. Several sections hold little interest for the purposes of this study. These include Editorial Section, which oversaw the publication of HUAC reports and staff studies, and the Research Section, the bulk of whose work appears to reside as contributions to other sections.¹⁰³ As well, the Finance Section appears to offer very little archival material of significance for this dissertation.

On the other hand, the Administrative Section, the Files and Reference Section, and the Investigative Section each contain a great of documentary material germane to the HUAC investigations of Hollywood. The Administrative Section

¹⁰² "Guide to the Records of the U. S. House of Representatives at the National Archives, 1789 to 1989 (Record Group 233): Chapter 14. Record of the Judiciary Committee and Related Committees" found at <http://www.archives.gov/legislative/guide/house/chapter-14-judiciary.html>.

¹⁰³ Charles E. Schamel, "Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1969 (renamed the) House Internal Security Committee, 1969-1979." (Washington, DC: Center for Legislative Archives at the National Archives and Records Administration, 2001) 9 and 21. This is a finding aid for the HUAC records, but in actuality it is little help in finding specific records in specific boxes.

contains the file “Minutes of Full Committee and Subcommittee Meetings: 1/22/1947 – 8/21/1974.”¹⁰⁴ These are meeting minutes of executive sessions that were closed to public scrutiny. An inspection of these documents reveals that, although there was not a consistent format for the minutes, they were generally not word-for-word transcripts of those meetings, but rather were typically summary accounts that indicate motions for committee action, amendments to and discussion of those proposals, and resulting votes. HUAC subcommittees included those for legislation, national security, and communism in the government, as well as various ad hoc subcommittees with mandates to work on investigatory issues of a limited duration.

The Files and Reference Section functioned like a repository of information on subversive organizations and activities drawn mostly from public sources, such as newspapers. The staff for this section collected a massive amount of raw data and cross-indexed it, but did no investigatory or analytical work.¹⁰⁵ At one time, the Files and Reference Section maintained two major collections: one of periodicals of subversive organizations and another of subversive pamphlets. These were sent to the Library of Congress after the dissolution of the HUAC.¹⁰⁶

The investigatory and analytical functions fell under the purview of the Investigative Section, which offers an abundance of documents that are of key importance to reassessing the HUAC’s conduct in the Hollywood investigations. This section includes ten subsections, four of which are critical to this study. The

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 5. According to Schamel’s guide: “A 1971 transmittal memo... indicates that the executive minutes for 1945 and 1946 were borrowed and never returned to the committee, and that there were no minutes for the year 1950.”

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 16.

names of the subsections are Transcripts of Executive Session Testimony; Investigative Name Files; Investigative Organization Files; and Exhibits, Evidence and Other Records Related to Various Committee Investigations.¹⁰⁷

The HUAC or one of its subcommittees could take testimony in executive session if a majority of committee or subcommittee members believed that public testimony "...might 1) compromise classified information or endanger the national security; 2) defame, degrade, incriminate or unjustly injure the reputation of any person; or 3) adversely affect the National interest."¹⁰⁸ Through careful inspection of the transcripts, I have identified a minimum of fifty-nine instances of testimony taken in executive session that have at least some bearing on the HUAC's investigations of Hollywood. Individuals giving such testimony include Hollywood celebrities, industry executives, labor leaders and current and former CPUSA leaders with ties to the media. I believe that this newly available testimony will lead to a revised and more nuanced understanding of the HUAC's Hollywood investigations.

When the HUAC decided to initiate an investigation of an individual or an organization, the Investigative Section staff gathered information from a number of sources, including data on hand in the Files and Reference Section.¹⁰⁹ The Investigative Name Files and the Investigative Organization Files represent the staff's efforts in this respect. The content of files varies according to the degree to which the HUAC pursued an investigation of a particular individual or organization. Some investigations ended at the preliminary stage when the Committee or its staff

¹⁰⁷ The labels on the archival boxes give this last subsection the shortened designation: "Exhibits, Evidence, Etc."

¹⁰⁸ Schamel, "Records of the House," 17.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 17-18.

recognized a lack of evidence to proceed or that the information sparking the investigation was erroneous. Some files indicate that an investigation became full-fledged and committee staff used the information to prepare for a hearing. On the other hand, some files indicate ample evidence of communist activity and that a hearing was planned or warranted, but it never materialized for reasons that are now obscure. In those cases, the subject of the investigation escaped the scrutiny of the HUAC and the attendant public notoriety. When, for whatever reason, the Committee closed an investigation, the file was retired to either of these two sections.

The subsection with the cumbersome name “Exhibits, Evidence and Other Records Related to Various Committee Investigations” is a repository for documents supporting major investigations that resulted in public hearings. Three sets of records found in this series are of particular importance to this dissertation. They are the files named “Eisler, Hanns”; “Eisler, Gerhart”; and “Hollywood Black List” (sic). These files typically hold items of evidence used by committee members or staff investigators during the questioning of witnesses. For example, if the chief investigator asked a witness if he or she gave an interview for a communist periodical, he could produce a Photostatic copy of a clipping of the interview in question from the designated publication. Thus, such material was often used to establish a particular line of questioning and/or corroborate or contradict a witness’s answers. Because many of the witness called before the HUAC refused to answer questions citing Fifth Amendment privilege, much of this information never came to light during public hearings, though some of it did find its way into the published Committee reports. In any event, I argue that a thorough understanding of these and

other documents is critical to understanding the conduct of the HUAC in the Hollywood investigations.

In summary, despite the existence of a number of texts addressing the history of the HUAC's investigations of Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s, the availability of new data offers a compelling reason for pursuing further scholarly study in this area. The recent opening of access to the formerly sealed HUAC files holds the possibility that new information may lead a new, more complete understanding of the HUAC probes into this key sector of the American media.

Plan of Organization. The first three chapters constitute the rationale for this dissertation. Chapter One represents an introduction to the problem and offers a rationale for the central research question that this dissertation will address. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature on the subject. Chapter Three states the research methodology used in this study and offers a justification of the conceptual framework employed to guide the methodology. Additionally, in this chapter, I have specified in detail the new data that demonstrates the significance of the research question and outlined a plan of organization for this dissertation.

Chapter Four will offer a two-part historiographic essay designed to establish an understanding of the domestic political and international environment in which the HUAC investigations of Hollywood took place. While cause and effect relationships are maddeningly difficult for the historian to establish, I believe that good historical narratives lay out the overall context and milieu in which more narrowly defined

events of the past took place. This allows the reader a much richer understanding of the past and helps one make better sense of the decisions of historical agents.

In terms of establishing context, there can be little doubt that international developments had a significant impact on the political and philosophical environment in which the HUAC operated. These include the collapse of the Soviet-American military alliance immediately after World War II and the radical realignment of the international, post-war balance of power. Another contextual element for discussion is the fact that Communist gains in Europe and Asia made it appear that communism had replaced fascism as the political movement of the future. Finally, this section will address how the advent of the nuclear age raised the stakes of international espionage to a degree never experienced in the past.

Chapter Four will include a second section offering an account of the significant changes on the American domestic scene in the decade and a half before the HUAC investigations of Hollywood. Foremost amongst these would be the intense reaction by many to certain aspects of the New Deal that sought and achieved fundamental changes in property rights, the redistribution of wealth, and the proper role of the government in economic affairs. The other important developments under discussion in this section are the rise and demise of the Popular Front coalition in support of the New Deal and the eventual post-war splintering of the liberal-left coalition with the onset of the Cold War. An additional contextual factor is the resurgence of the Republican Party in the 1946 Congressional elections. Finally, as a result of experiences with Nazi Germany, it was an era in which American authorities were first coming to terms with the power of mass political propaganda and struggled

to find an appropriate response to it compatible with democracy. Thus, the goal of this chapter is to set the stage for what followed when the HUAC turned its attention to exposing communism in Hollywood.

The central focus of Chapter Five is a study of the investigatory methods employed by the HUAC and the evolution of the investigators' logic. I will draw primarily on documents from the newly opened HUAC archives for the evidentiary substance of this chapter. A prominent feature of those investigatory methods was the early and extensive use of the Communist press as the HUAC's primary pool of data to fuel its inquiries. I will argue in fact that the Communist press made the Committee's investigations possible. Evidence presented in this chapter will show that the Committee's methods were not those held in the popular imagination, i.e. the practice of spying into the lives of private citizens. Rather, much of what Committee investigators did was to parse out the public record. In summary, if the HUAC represented "Big Brother," then "Big Brother" spent a great deal of its time scanning communist newspapers rather than peeking in peoples' windows.

Chapter Six, entitled "The Brothers Eisler: From Manhattan to Malibu," will tell the story of how the HUAC discovered a link between the Comintern's one-time plenipotentiary to the CPUSA and Hollywood. Gerhart Eisler served as Stalin's loyal representative to the CPUSA for a time in the 1930's and returned to the United States during World War II to help shape the American party line as a covert agent working in the American communist press. Eisler entered the United States illegally and worked as a journalist under a number of pseudonyms. Once exposed, Eisler stonewalled the HUAC and tried to do battle with the American government in the

court of public opinion by using the press. Faced with imminent jail time, Eisler escaped to the Democratic Republic of (East) Germany, where he received a government appointment.

It was the case of Gerhart Eisler that led the HUAC to investigate another Eisler – this one named Hanns, who was the younger brother of Gerhart. Hanns was a composer of some international renown, who wrote the official anthem of the Comintern, not surprisingly entitled: “Comintern.” His name came to the attention of the Committee through its investigation of his brother. Like his brother, Hanns was also a member of the German Communist Party and later a Comintern official. At one point in the mid-1930s, he was the director of the Comintern’s International Music Bureau and hailed by the *Daily Worker* (March 1, 1935) as the “foremost revolutionary composer.” The lyrics to his operas called for the bloody overthrow of the capitalist ruling elite. Also, like his brother, Hanns committed perjury to obtain entry into the United States.

The younger Eisler was in and out of the United States several times during the 1930s, including several trips to Moscow. When he was in the country, he taught courses in musical composition at the New School for Social Research and wrote a text on scoring music for films under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Later he moved to Hollywood to work as a film composer. This chapter will recount what the Committee investigation revealed about Hanns Eisler and why it spurred the HUAC toward a full scale investigation of communist activity in the motion picture industry.

In Chapter Seven, I will argue that, based on evidence from HUAC archives, the Committee acted as if exposing the various American social and political organizations that came to be known as communist-led fronts was an important end unto itself. This view stands in contradistinction to that held by a number of civil society and revisionist historians. They have argued that the HUAC's interest in the fronts was to create guilt by association for front members, who apparently had no ties or at best very tenuous links with the communist movement. In this view, the Committee sought to make charges of communism or communist sympathies stick by associating such innocents with front organizations, which often held a large non-communist membership, who were unaware of the communist links of some of their leaders. On the contrary, I will maintain that the evidence shows that the HUAC acted to combat the fronts as a response to what committee members saw as a powerful set of organizational and propaganda tools at the disposal of the CPUSA. The manipulation of those tools, HUAC members believed, served the direct policy interests of international communism and the Soviet Union, and subverted the normal functioning American body politic.

Hollywood offered the CPUSA a ready pool of "joiners," who served as patrons and members of numerous communist fronts. This is one reason why the CPUSA went to great lengths to infiltrate the motion picture business and court sympathetic Hollywood insiders. The CPUSA's additional goals in Hollywood appeared to be the cultivation of celebrities, who would bring prestige to party causes and influence others to join those efforts, and to acquire money. The HUAC occupied itself investigating both, but had far more success in destroying the

CPUSA's ability to exploit the benefits of Hollywood celebrity than in exposing the motion picture money tree.

This stands in contradistinction to the general belief that the HUAC was most interested in forcing witnesses to name under oath the names of those individuals they thought were members of the CPUSA. This practice by the HUAC of compelling witnesses to name names is arguably the most controversial aspect of the Blacklist era. Many civil society and revisionist historians, along with the "unfriendly" witnesses, have reviled the HUAC for this practice. Even many anticommunists have found it distasteful. Often former communists were willing to testify about their own activities, but balked when forced to make statements under oath about others. Many vigorously resisted the possibility of becoming a "fink" or a "stool-pigeon." Those who succumbed to the pressure of naming names often felt great anguish and guilt for the rest of their lives. Yet, despite the negative publicity and public condemnation this practice engendered, the HUAC persisted in asking nearly every Hollywood communist or ex-communist to name names upon pain of a contempt of congress citation. I will argue in this chapter that this process was an exercise by the HUAC in the triangulation of its data and, contrary to the views offered in the current historiography on the subject, it was of less import to the Committee than the task of exposing communist fronts.

Chapter Eight, the final chapter, will offer a summary of the significant findings of this dissertation and draw appropriate conclusions as to how historians might reinterpret the conduct of the HUAC in light of the new data. It will also include suggestions for further research. The HUAC was a key institution in an era in

which the American body politic struggled to find a balance between preserving the American ideals of freedom, including the freedom for political minorities to believe in and espouse decidedly unpopular ideas, and the necessity to protect the institutions that extend those freedoms from clear and present dangers. Since more recent events have shown that this challenge has not been resolved, a more complete understanding of the historical record is a likely helpful contribution to the dialogue on this critical issue.

Chapter 4: Background and Context

1945 was a year of significant change. World War II came to an end with the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan. This victory resulted in a fundamental shift in the international geopolitical balance of power. The United States and the Soviet Union became the world's two superpowers, replacing the former European multi-polar balance of power. Furthermore, the recognized international borders on the European map saw significant change, primarily to the benefit of the Soviet Union and the detriment of Germany. This in turn led to several years of massive and disruptive population shifts with many refugees migrating west. The deleterious effect of the war on the economic and military strength of the imperial European powers began the process of the disintegration of their colonial empires, which would largely disappear within the next fifteen or so years. Often in a reaction to the consequences of imperialism, communism with its emphasis on liberation ideology came to influence heavily the politics of many of these newly independent nations. Also, the world entered the nuclear age with the explosion of the atom bomb over Nagasaki and Hiroshima. In the future, this would permanently change the stakes when nations armed with nuclear weapons became involved in wars or the threat of wars. The peril of mass human annihilation by atom and later hydrogen bombs transformed the balance of power into a balance of terror.

Likewise, in many ways the United States domestically was a very different country in 1945 than it had been a decade earlier. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who dominated American politics for over twelve years, died in office and a new president, Harry S. Truman, took the helm of the ship of state. The New Deal, while

successful politically, ultimately failed to bring the United States out of the Great Depression. It took the armaments build up for the war to do this. With the end of the Depression, significant support for experimentation with corporate statist or socialist economic models came to an end. The political consensus that brought about the New Deal frayed and then collapsed after FDR's passing. With the unemployment rate returned to normal by historical standards and economic expansion on the increase, in the late 1940s the mood of the country shifted to the center and then in the 1950s even more conservative. The resurgence of the Republican Party in American politics from near political irrelevance in the mid-1930s reflected this swing. Accompanying this transformation was a pronounced change in the attitudes of a considerable portion of the American body politic's opinions toward communism in general and the Soviet Union in particular. Typically, Americans no longer saw Josef Stalin as "Uncle Joe," which was his nickname in wartime propaganda. The necessity of having the Soviet Union as a wartime ally no longer existed. Hope for postwar cooperation revealed itself to be a chimera. Additionally, many of the international developments outlined above contributed to the hardening of American public opinion into a view that saw international communism as pernicious and a menace.

The events of this era had a profound impact in shaping the institutional behavior of both the CPUSA and the HUAC. This in turn led directly to their collision over the Party's activities in Hollywood. The adoption of beliefs, policy decisions based on those beliefs, and the actions to implement those decisions most often arise from a complex matrix of factors. The purpose of this chapter is to offer

an account of the multifaceted domestic and international milieu facing HUAC congressmen as they pursued the Hollywood investigations, as this no doubt influenced their decision-making process.

The New Deal. Some have criticized the HUAC with assertion that the Committee used investigations of communism as a cover for an attack on the accomplishments of the New Deal. They argued that reactionary committee members opposed to FDR's progressive reforms sought to sabotage them with smear tactics. Specifically, they alleged that these "reactionaries" attempted to create in the public mind an association between the New Deal and communism through unsubstantiated and spurious charges.¹¹⁰ Regardless of one's position on the accuracy of these charges, it is useful to place such claims within the context of the political and social changes of the era in order to understand the conduct of the HUAC.

The Great Depression was arguably the most serious peacetime crisis in the history of the United States. Economic adversity was serious, prolonged and widespread. A solution had defied the Hoover Administration and, when Franklin Roosevelt took over the presidency, the situation was as alarming as ever with bank failures reaching calamitous proportions in early 1933. Because Roosevelt and his advisors were convinced the Depression was the equivalent of a wartime emergency, they sought to solve the crisis through government bureaucratic control similar to that employed during World War I.¹¹¹ Thus, the new administration took an approach to

¹¹⁰ For example, see Goodman, *The Committee*, 42.

¹¹¹ Jim Powell, *FDR's Folly: How Roosevelt and His New Deal Prolonged the Great Depression* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2003) 113. I draw my account of FDR's economic policies from Powell's work, which brings together in summative form data from previous economic history and applies it to political history. Other

combat the Great Depression that resulted in a fundamental change of the degree and scope of federal intervention in the American peacetime economy.

Understanding the impact of the Great Depression and FDR's unprecedented use of federal power in response is important in establishing the context of this study for three reasons. First, to many Americans the severe economic dislocation appeared to portend the collapse of capitalism and its replacement by a different politico-economic system, such as syndicalism, socialism, communism, or fascism. Second, significant deprivation fueled interest in radical organizations, such as the CPUSA, that advocated for one of these new economic models. Third, the vigorous response to the Depression by the Roosevelt Administration employing economic interventionist methods alarmed many conservatives, including most of the HUAC congressmen, who believed the federal government was overstepping its authority with programs that smacked of communism.

The measures taken by FDR and his advisors during the New Deal included significant federal intervention into agricultural, industrial and labor markets. Roosevelt's agricultural legislation attempted to alleviate persistent rural poverty by maintaining high agricultural prices via limiting supply, imposing crop quotas, paying farmers a subsidy to keep land out of production, and promoting compulsory marketing agreements.¹¹² Later legislation formalized government price fixing on a number of agricultural products. The National Labor Relations Act (i.e. the Wagner Act), which had the goal of a closed shop and the creation of a monopoly of labor,

historians have offered different assessments of FDR's policies. However, Powell's analysis is very close to the conservative economic views of many of the HUAC congressmen.

¹¹² Ibid., 137.

strongly encouraged unionization. This legislation and attendant executive branch regulation through the National Labor Relations Board attempted to cure the Depression with a high wage policy.¹¹³ The National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 led to the establishment of cartels governed by industrial codes. The aim of these codes, which had the force of law through presidential executive order, was to promote industrial recovery through restricted production and higher industrial prices. Although the Supreme Court later found the NIRA unconstitutional, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 reinstated the wage provisions of the now defunct NIRA.

To pay for his New Deal programs, FDR promoted legislation requiring sharply higher taxes, especially on the wealthy and corporations, and repeatedly reduced deductions and restricted tax shelters. The Administration introduced or raised taxes on: corporate dividends and excess profits (1933); personal income taxes (1934, 1935, 1941 and 1942); estate taxes (1934); undistributed profits (1936); and social security (1937).¹¹⁴ Moreover, the Revenue Act of 1937 further reduced, restricted or eliminated numerous deductions and loopholes in the federal tax code. FDR criticized those who sought to make use of legal deductions and tax reduction strategies and the owners of big business who opposed his economic policies. In his acceptance speech for the 1936 Democratic presidential renomination, Roosevelt called his policy opponents “economic royalists [who had] carved new dynasties” and “privileged princes...thirsting for power” who had achieved an “industrial dictatorship.” Not only did their “despotism” cause the Depression, but he implied

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24, 79-83, 245-246.

the leaders of American big business were “cold-blooded” and specifically called them “the enemy within our gates,” questioning their patriotism.¹¹⁵

Historian Jim Powell characterized the New Deal as a time of experimentation with radical ideas in the hopes of finding a cure for the Depression. He asserted that “...practically everything was tried. Some New Dealers were outright socialists, and they had their day.” For example, FDR advisor Rexford Tugwell openly admired Soviet economic methods and advocated the adoption of central planning through the mechanism of the National Recovery Administration.¹¹⁶ Powell does not argue that the New Deal was a full scale imitation of Soviet planning. However, he does assert that the Soviet experience provided inspiration for some New Deal experiments.¹¹⁷

The idea that the New Deal was a shade of Soviet central planning and that Roosevelt demonstrated hostility to the business class was not the isolated belief of a few rightwing “crazies.” By the end of the decade and after seven years of the New Deal that had not cured the Depression, business leaders felt even more government economic intervention and control was at hand. These employers were convinced of Roosevelt’s hostility toward them. Powell quotes a poll of employers by *Fortune* magazine in 1941, in which 93 percent asserted “they expected their property rights undermined and also anticipated the possibility of a dictatorship.”¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database). Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=15349>.

¹¹⁶ Powell, *FDR’s Folly*, 15-16.

¹¹⁷ For example, the Tennessee Valley Authority bore a striking resemblance to a typical large scale Soviet infrastructure project.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

Whether or not FDR's contemporary opponents or antipathetic historians, such as Powell, were correct in their criticism of the New Deal is irrelevant. Additionally, the actual effectiveness and/or the appropriateness of FDR's policies are not the point either. What is relevant is the perception of those policies to a significant segment of the political and business establishment during the era in question. There is strong evidence to suggest that, rightly or wrongly, many felt that the New Deal smacked of communism. Furthermore, they believed that the Roosevelt Administration, which had normalized relations with the Soviet Union in 1933, was leading the country down a dangerous path. Although FDR has gone down in history as a master politician and one of the great American presidents, it is useful to remember that many of his political contemporaries, some of whom were in his own party, harbored grave and genuine doubts about the effectiveness, wisdom and propriety of his policies. In some cases, especially those of Southern Democrats, who wanted to uphold conservative business practices along with segregation, this partially explains why they became FDR's political opponents.¹¹⁹ Thus, the Committee's suspicion of the New Deal and its various agencies did not arise *ex nihilo*, but rather within a specific historical environment.

¹¹⁹ For example, notable Southern Democrats Harry F. Byrd, Carter Glass and Howard W. Smith of Virginia; Richard B. Russell, Jr. of Georgia; Ellison D. "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina; Josiah W. Bailey of North Carolina; and John Nance Garner, Roosevelt's first vice-president; Martin Dies Jr.; and W. Lee O'Daniel of Texas to name a few all eventually came to oppose significant aspects of the New Deal. Bailey was a co-author of the Conservative Manifesto of 1937, which was policy critique of the New Deal. Another powerful Southern Democratic, Senator Huey P. Long of Louisiana, also opposed the New Deal, but from the left. He believed it did not go far enough to be effective to provide effective relief from the Depression.

The Popular Front. Another contextual aspect of the domestic scene in the United States that later affected the HUAC hearings was the rise and demise of the Popular Front in support of the New Deal. This represents another case in which Roosevelt's critics were able to associate the New Deal with communism. To understand the Popular Front era, one must first understand the Third Period (1927-1934) that preceded it.

During the Third Period, through the mechanism of the Comintern, Stalin attempted to transform the national communist parties controlled by Moscow into the recognized and dominant party of the left in their respective countries. In other words, his goal was to eliminate the competition of the syndicalists, socialists and Trotskyites for the loyalty of those on the left, particularly amongst workers, artists and intellectuals. Communists refused all cooperation with other leftwing parties and gave social democrats the designation "social fascists." The communists tried to draw members away from the established trade unions dominated by the socialists into competing unions, which were either overtly or more likely covertly communist-controlled.¹²⁰

Although it benefited Stalin personally in his struggle for control of both the CPSU and the international communist movement, the Third Period policy was a disaster for those institutions.¹²¹ This was particularly the case in Germany, where

¹²⁰ For a discussion of the origins of the Third Period line as a product of the struggle for power between Stalin and Bukharin, see Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*.

¹²¹ In particular, the policy line shift in the Third Period represented an effort to discredit the policy position of Nikolai Bukharin and his supporters. The Third Period also saw the thorough "bolshevism" of the national parties within the

many credited it with unintentionally enabling the Nazis to come to power because it forced the powerful socialist movement to concentrate on fighting the communists rather than on opposing Hitler. Likewise the Soviet-controlled communists fighting on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War engaged in a similar policy. As they conducted bloody purges on the left, particularly aimed at the syndical-anarchists, they weakened Republican forces enough to insure victory by Franco's Nationalists. In other words, the Third Period line was particularly suicidal. Furthermore, the sharp turn to the left that the Third Period represented did not earn the communists any significant additional broad-based support, even amongst industrial workers. In fact, it pushed most of the local communist parties further toward the revolutionary fringe. Rather than developing into a credible movement on the left, the Third Period further marginalized international communism, which would have collapsed without the direct support of Soviet resources.

With the ascent of fascist-style regimes in Germany, Spain, and Portugal, as well as in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Comintern made another sharp turn, this time to the right. In mid-1934, Moscow instigated a new international line, known as the Popular Front, which lasted until the Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 1939. The aim of the Popular Front was exactly the opposite of the Third Period, namely a broad-based and unified response on the left against the reactionary forces of Nazism and fascism on the ultra-right. Stalin feared an economically revitalized and militarily reinvigorated Germany with an anticommunist ideology dominating Central Europe and threatening Soviet territory. Faced with this possibility, Soviet

Comintern, placing them under the direction of Moscow. Stalin preferred those parties to be under his effective control than for them to be effective parties.

foreign policy sought accommodation with the Western democracies in cooperation against Hitler and to achieve, if possible, an anti-German alliance. Thus, Soviet foreign interests again determined the party line of the national parties within the Comintern.

The CPUSA dutifully followed the Comintern directive and soon began promoting the Popular Front ideal in the United States. Well-known American communist hardliners, such as William Z. Foster, found themselves marginalized with assignments to powerless party posts, while others were expelled from the party outright. Almost overnight the CPUSA ceased its “struggle on the left” and began advocating cooperation with all “progressive” elements within American society. The CPUSA quickly became pro-Roosevelt, whom a year earlier it labeled a fascist, and worked diligently for his reelection in 1936 and 1944.¹²² It also became decidedly pro-New Deal. Revolutionary rhetoric became suddenly absent from the speeches of party politicians and from the pages of party publications, such as the *Daily Worker*. The new CPUSA leader, Earl Browder, sought to put an American and patriotic face on the party. He adopted a new party slogan: “Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism.” A bust of Lenin found itself alongside of those of Jefferson and Lincoln on party banners. The party dropped the policy of competing trade unions and its labor organizers began working inside existing unions. In fact, communist organizers became critical to the success of a number of unions, including

¹²² The CPUSA avoided supporting Roosevelt during the 1940 election, because this occurred during the time the Stalin-Hitler Pact was in effect and the American party followed the Comintern line advocating strict neutrality in any conflict between Germany on the one hand and the United Kingdom and France on the other. This conflicted with the Roosevelt Administration’s policy of giving maximum material and diplomatic support to the European democracies.

the United Auto Workers, as well as in John L. Lewis' Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO).¹²³ Finally, it was during the Popular Front period that the CPUSA concentrated significant resources on fighting for civil rights and bringing relief to the unemployed.

Party membership rose dramatically during the Popular Front and in fact it reached the highest point in the CPUSA's history during this period. However, the most significant result of the Popular Front is that its appearance of moderation and concern for economic and social justice led many artists and intellectuals to join or become sympathetic to the CPUSA and the causes it espoused. These included a number of novelists, playwrights, screenwriters and entertainers. If the party did not quite make it into the mainstream of American politics, party members became accepted collaborators with many progressives and liberals in their struggle to attain a more just and equitable society. One key historian of American communism labeled the Popular Front era the Party's "heyday."¹²⁴ It was during this time when the Hollywood branch of the CPUSA recruited most of its members in the motion picture industry. However, a core group of Stalinist "true believers," such as screenwriter John Howard Lawson, joined during the Third Period and stuck with the party long after it again returned to the political wilderness after the Popular Front ended.

¹²³ During the 1930s and 1940s, the CIO was in fierce competition with the strongly anti-communist American Federation of Labor. While the bulk of the CIO unions was led by either non-communists or anticommunists, open or secret communists led or were influential in the leadership of between one-fifth and one-quarter of its unions.

¹²⁴ For the pivotal study of this period, see Klehr's *The Heyday of American Communism*.

The Popular Front lasted approximately five years, collapsing suddenly in August 1939 with the conclusion of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. In support of the new line from the USSR, communist parties worldwide abruptly ceased cooperation with other forces on the left in the fight against fascism. In less than a week of the news from Moscow, the American party changed its line and began denouncing France and Britain as warmongering, imperialist nations. It suddenly adopted a policy of advocating strict American neutrality in the impending European conflict. Senior party propagandists and apologists began denouncing the horrors of war and celebrating the virtues of pacifism.¹²⁵ The abandonment by the CPUSA of the struggle against the fascist menace, its failure to denounce Stalin's cooperation with Hitler, and Soviet territorial acquisitions at the expense of its weak neighbors cost the American party dearly. Membership dropped significantly. Many liberals and progressives felt betrayed and never trusted the communist movement again. The fallout from the Pact again marginalized the CPUSA to the fringe of American politics. The change in line discredited the motives of the party as its loyalty to Moscow at all costs became obvious to those with an open mind. Its reputation across the political spectrum lay in tatters.

Although FDR never publically recognized communist contributions to his policy goals, they were valuable and the fallout from the Stalin-Hitler Pact meant he temporarily lost one component of his political coalition in support of the New Deal.

¹²⁵ An example of such articulation of pacifism is screenwriter Dalton Trumbo's novel *Johnny Got His Gun* (New York: Citadel Press, 2007), originally published in 1939 in book form and the serialized in 1940 in the pages of the CPUSA newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. When Hitler violated his pact with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union, Trumbo, a loyal Stalinist, quickly withdrew his book and began advocating immediate American intervention in the war against Germany.

The political wilderness that the CPUSA found itself in because of its loyalty to Moscow lasted twenty-two months until June 1941 when Germany launched Operation Barbarossa, attacking the Soviet Union. The Stalin-Hitler Pact became a dead letter and communists worldwide again had the luxury of being both pro-Soviet Union and anti-Nazi. For the duration of World War II, American communists could both be patriotic and support the USSR. Many party members fought heroically in both the European and Pacific theatres. Party membership recovered to a significant degree, though it did not reach pre-Pact levels. The party's reputation was restored somewhat, but resentment and mistrust lingered amongst many of its former allies on the left. However, this happy circumstance for American communists did not survive the war. In April 1945, Stalin signaled a sharp turn to the left and the CPUSA immediately complied, making any hope of a full restoration of the Popular Front impossible and Earl Browder's dream of peaceful co-existence between the communist and capitalist camps evaporated. Hardliners under the direction of Moscow deposed Browder as head of the CPUSA and later expelled him from the party. At Stalin's behest, the Party abandoned wartime cooperation and returned to a far left position under the leadership of William Z. Foster, the hard-line Stalinist who had earlier been pushed aside to make way for the Popular Front. This hard turn to the left, when the party once again advocated the total overthrow of American economic and political system, was the position of the CPUSA in 1947-1952 when the HUAC conducted its investigation of Hollywood.

Political Changes After FDR's Death. The departure of the communists from Roosevelt's liberal-left coalition was a harbinger of things to come. That coalition,

which had endured for almost a decade and a half, began to splinter with the onset of the Cold War and, even before FDR's death, began to fray around the edges as many conservative Southern Democrats rebelled against Roosevelt's progressive policies. This is significant because Southern Democrats consistently played an important role in the HUAC. The founding chairman of the Committee was Martin Dies of Texas. John Rankin of Mississippi was solely responsible for the parliamentary move that transformed the HUAC from a special ad hoc committee to a permanent standing committee of the House of Representatives. John Wood of Georgia was the chairman of the Committee during the second Hollywood investigations in 1951-1952.

After Truman took over the presidency, the fragmentation of the FDR coalition accelerated. By the time he ran for reelection in 1948, a sizeable portion of the leftwing of the Democratic Party had peeled off to support former Vice-President Henry A. Wallace, an admirer of the Soviet experiment. Wallace ran for the presidency on the Progressive Party ticket with the vigorous support of the American communists, amongst other groups. Anticommunist liberals and centrists within the Democratic Party remained faithful to Truman, but many Southern Democrats also bolted the party to vote for Strom Thurman, who ran as a Dixiecrat, i.e. on the ticket of the States' Rights Democratic Party. Thurmond received thirty-nine votes in the Electoral College, carrying Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and South Carolina, and winning more than 1.1 million popular votes. Wallace won approximately the same number of popular votes, but did not score any votes in the Electoral College. Nevertheless, Truman defeated Republican Thomas Dewey in a surprising upset

victory and the Democrats controlled the White House for four more years.

However, Franklin Roosevelt's political coalition was permanently shattered.

The resurgence of the Republican Party in general and its performance in the 1946 and 1952 congressional elections in particular is another important element in the political context that impacted the HUAC investigations of Hollywood. The GOP's political comeback was long delayed. The Republican Party had won control of the House of Representatives in the 1916 election and dominated that chamber until the 1932 election that brought Democrats to power in the Congress and Roosevelt to the White House. The 1936 elections for the 75th Congress saw the nadir of Republican electoral efforts with only 88 representatives elected out of a total of 435 in the House of Representatives and 16 senators out of a total of 96. After a slow climb from political oblivion, the GOP won back control of the Congress a decade later in the 1946 election. The Republicans believed FDR had been weak on national security and counter espionage and argued that Truman had been slow to correct his predecessor's deficiencies. Thus, in 1947 the GOP now controlled the congressional committees and Republican J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey became chairman of the HUAC. By the end of the year, the Committee would be investigating security lapses under FDR, as well as communist infiltration in a number of social institution and industries, including the motion picture business.

Propaganda. During the decade before the HUAC's Hollywood hearings, some government officials and scholars became aware of and concerned about the power of mass political propaganda. This began an on-going struggle to find an appropriate response to it compatible with democracy. Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi

Party's propaganda chief as of 1930 and the Reich Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda from 1933-1945, embodied the reason for the concern for the power of propaganda. Beginning in the late 1920's, Goebbels mastered the art of mass propaganda through the medium of newspapers. Later he developed effective if cynical uses for the media of radio and the cinema. His philosophy of mass media propaganda was cynical because it was entirely instrumental: mass persuasion was to serve political ends through the manipulation of the facts with no regard to truth. Goebbels asserted, "Propaganda does not have anything to do with the truth. We serve truth by serving a German victory."¹²⁶ Early on during the Nazi reign, Goebbels was able to convert one of Germany's foremost documentary filmmakers, Leni Riefenstahl, into the service of regime. She directed *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia* amongst other films that effectively combined superb cinematic technique with a celebration of Nazi ideology and *Weltanschauung*.

Whereas Hollywood benefited from the steady stream of German film artists who came to the United States as refugees from the Nazi regime, in general American filmmakers held the Soviet cinema in high regard for its aesthetic and technique, even if they disagreed with its politics. In particular, Sergei Eisenstein's *The Battleship Potemkin* won international admiration for its ability to move an audience emotionally and sway it toward a particular point of view. When Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford saw it screened in Berlin, the film moved Pickford to tears, while Fairbanks told reporters: "The *Battleship Potemkin* is the most powerful and profound

¹²⁶ Wilfried von Oven, *Mit Goebbels bis zum Ende: Volume 1* (Buenos Aires: Duerer Publisher, 1949) 32 quoted in David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001) 33.

experience of my life.”¹²⁷ Moreover, the effectiveness of this film also represented a strong influence on Goebbels, who aspired for Nazi propaganda to achieve similar ends. As one scholar said, “Like Lenin, he [Goebbels] realized the necessity of mixing entertainment with propaganda so that the propaganda content was disguised.”¹²⁸ Additionally, many Hollywood professionals held Eisenstein’s theoretical writings, which offered a Marxist perspective on filmic technique, in high regard. To this day, American film schools usually include a careful study of Eisenstein’s film theory in their curriculum. Critics understood that the Soviet filmmakers’ use of montage to manipulate the emotions of the audience and distort their perceptions of reality was a key element of their aesthetic.¹²⁹ Lenin’s oft quoted statement: “Cinema is the most important of all the arts for us...” reinforced the idea that subversive radicals might manipulate this entertainment medium toward revolutionary ends.¹³⁰

American awareness of the effective use of propaganda found expression during World War II when many Hollywood professionals and institutions actively sought ways to serve in support of the war effort. The line between the genre of the motion picture documentary and the propaganda film is often a fine one to determine. Certainly the war documentaries produced by Hollywood professionals for the

¹²⁷ Richard Taylor, *Battleship Potemkin: The Film Companion* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2000) 67.

¹²⁸ Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, 35.

¹²⁹ Frank Manchel, *Film Study: An Analytical Bibliography, Volume I* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990) 208-209.

¹³⁰ Randal Marlin, *Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion* (Buffalo: Broadview Press, 2002) 78. Also see Abbott Gleason, Richard Stites and Peter Kenez, *Bolshevik Culture: Experiment and Order in the Russian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989).

American government offered effectual propaganda value. Hollywood directors Frank Capra and Anatole Litvak, a German émigré, made the Oscar-winning “Why We Fight” series for the U.S. Army’s Special Service Division. The Bureau of Motion Pictures of the Office of War Information (OWI) distributed the series. Clark Gable, William Holden, Robert Preston, Walter Huston and Ronald Reagan were a few of the screen stars who narrated or appeared in propaganda films for the OWI. Also of note was John Ford’s direction for the U.S. Navy of *The Battle of Midway*, which also won an Oscar. During the filming, Ford sustained a wound from enemy fire.

Historian Allan Winkler tells the story of the OWI’s brief and controversial existence.¹³¹ Critics in Washington and in the media often asserted that the OWI sought to inject persuasive propaganda into its productions, rather than sticking to a purely informational role. The OWI also attracted charges that it some of its materials were partisan, aiming at a Roosevelt reelection victory in 1944, and that it employed communists at the taxpayers’ expense. Because of these allegations, several times Congress cut funding for the OWI and attempted to curtail its range of activities in order to restrict its mission to an informational role only. As we shall see later in this study, the HUAC eventually subpoenaed several of those now ex-communists in order to hear their testimony.

Given all of the above, one could argue that the worry over the possibility of subversive propaganda finding its way into the American media, which was a stated concern of the HUAC, was not unreasonable. Media critics, such as Walter

¹³¹ Allan Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

Lippmann, had warned for several decades of the negative impact of propaganda on democratic practices.¹³² Thus, congressmen in the late 1940s might have been naïve about the actual danger of this sort of subversion, but at the time the actual threat as opposed to possible risks was not clear. One can plausibly argue then that the belief by congressmen serving on the HUAC of the necessity to investigate charges of subversive content by and communist infiltration of Hollywood was not merely a product of anti-New Deal politics or the quest for media publicity, but was sincerely held.

Revelations of Domestic Spying. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, a number of spy scandals seriously called into question the Roosevelt Administration's domestic security and counterintelligence policy or lack thereof. These revelations of Soviet espionage were no doubt on the minds of the congressmen serving on the HUAC as they undertook their on-going investigation of Hollywood.

Historians Haynes and Klehr have convincingly argued that legal convictions for espionage in a court of law are not good indicators of the reality or the extent of Soviet spying. Nor do convictions provide a reliable indication of the guilt or innocence of those suspected and/or charged with spying. Not only does the very nature of the crime, for which the perpetrators aim to leave no trace, makes it very difficult to prove, government officials are often reluctant to admit into evidence in a court of law the nature and content of the documents purloined. This is because often public exposure in open court might do even more damage to national security. Also,

¹³² See Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Free Press, 1997). Lippmann originally published this work in 1922.

government counterespionage officials might opt not to arrest the spy in order to hide their knowledge of the spy ring. The purpose of such a choice would represent an attempt to identify even more important spies or their handlers, try to turn the spy into a counteragent, or feed the foreign government disinformation.¹³³ The historical record, as established through newly available archival evidence in the last decade, reveals that the extent and gravity of Soviet espionage in the 1940s and 1950s was much more serious than the record of court convictions would indicate. Haynes' and Klehr's argument offers a different perspective from those historians and critics who minimized the threat of domestic spying and concluded that in the absence of such a threat, the HUAC must have knowingly probed Hollywood for other, more sinister reasons. In fact, the HUAC investigators, who investigated such persons as Alger Hiss and Gerhart Eisler, were well aware of the gap between the sparse record of convictions of espionage in court and the reality of Soviet spying. A broad inspection of the HUAC files reveals that Committee investigators carefully read the court transcripts of the various spy trials.

The investigation by the FBI and the prosecution by the Justice Department of the *Amerasia* spy case was the first to reveal the possible significance and scope of Soviet espionage. The details of the case are too complicated to recount in detail here. However, the general outline of the event is worth noting because of the fallout from the investigation and resulting trial. In early 1945, an intelligence analyst for the wartime spy agency Office of Strategic Services, which was the precursor of the

¹³³ John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies: The Espionage Trials That Shaped American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 1-3, 6 and 11-17.

CIA, noticed that an article in the journal *Amerasia* contained major passages lifted word for word from a classified report he had written. When OSS agents broke into the journal's offices, they discovered a huge number of classified government documents, many of which came from the State Department. The FBI took the case over and the subsequent investigation revealed a case of clear espionage with the source being State Department employees. It also demonstrated strong pro-communist sympathies by some of the policy analysts in the State Department with responsibilities for advising on East Asia in general and China in particular. Using a wiretap, investigators overheard suspects name Harry Dexter White, an Assistant Secretary of Treasury, as a potential source of information. White's duties included supervision of the Treasury's international monetary policy.¹³⁴

When the Justice Department prosecuted the various people involved for espionage, the result was a debacle. White House aide Lauchlin Currie got involved and hired a former FDR aide, Tommy Corcoran, to bring high powered political pressure to bear on the prosecutors. Also involved in the cover up was Assistant Attorney General James McGranery, who later became Attorney General and who lied under oath during his confirmation hearings about his role in the case.¹³⁵

Furthermore, the less than aggressive prosecutor in the case later took a lucrative job at the law firm that represented one of the defendants. The result was that most of those charged had their cases dismissed before trial and the two persons who did go to trial obtained a plea bargain and only paid fines. At the time, the cover up limited

¹³⁴ For a discussion of White's duties and the high degree of trust placed in him by Secretary of Treasury Morgenthau, see Hayes and Klehr, *Venona*, 138-145.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

the immediate damage of the *Amerasia* case to the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. However, subsequent congressional inquiries revealed enough of the details to give credence to suspicions by anticommunists, including those on the HUAC, that executive departments of the federal government harbored and protected communist spies.¹³⁶

In early September of 1945, Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet legation in Ottawa, Canada defected with his pregnant wife and a young child. He encountered extreme difficulty in defecting due to a thoroughly initial inept response by the Canadian government, which at the time had no contingency plan for the defection of a Soviet spy. Canadian officials repeatedly advised Gouzenko to return to the legation. When the Canadian government finally understood the necessity of taking Gouzenko under its protection, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police began to analyze the documents that the young Russian brought with him from the secret cipher area of the Soviet legation. Numbering more than a hundred, the documents indicated significant efforts by the Soviets to obtain industrial and military secrets, including information about American, Canadian and British efforts to develop atomic weapons at a time when they were official allies with the USSR against Nazi Germany. In one startling aspect of the affair, Gouzenko claimed that a close advisor of American Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr., was a Soviet agent. Many historians have presumed that this was Alger Hiss. The case also revealed the extent to which officials of the Canadian Communist Party willingly and knowingly abetted

¹³⁶ For a comprehensive history of the *Amerasia* case, see Harvey Klehr and Ronald Radosh, *The Amerasia Spy Case: Prelude to McCarthyism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

Soviet espionage. Finally, due to the differences in legal systems, the Canadians were much more successful securing espionage convictions than the Americans were in the *Amerasia* case. Historian Amy Knight has argued that the Gouzenko spy case, by virtue of revealing the existence of an extensive Soviet spy ring operating in Canada and the United States, represented the beginning of the Cold War.¹³⁷

In 1939, spurred into action by the announcement of the German-Soviet alliance, a former communist named Whittaker Chambers identified State Department employees Alger Hiss, his brother Donald Hiss, and Laurence Duggan, as well as White House aide Lauchlin Curry, as secret communists who were part of a covert network in which espionage might be involved. This occurred in a meeting with Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle arranged by Isaac Don Levine, a journalist and a committed anticommunist. Levine had originally sought a meeting for Chambers with President Roosevelt, but was referred to Berle instead by the White House. Both Levine and Berle made contemporaneous notes of the meeting. In total, Chambers named thirty-five individuals that he claimed knowledge of as to their communist affiliation or espionage activities. Berle's notes did not cite Harry Dexter White's name as one of these spies. Levine's notes did, however, indicate that Chambers indeed named the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury.¹³⁸ There was little to no follow-up by the government on the information revealed at the meeting. Levine's autobiography states that when Berle reported Chambers' story to FDR, the

¹³⁷ See Amy Knight, *How the Cold War Began: The Igor Gouzenko Affair and the Hunt for Soviet Spies*. (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

¹³⁸ John Earl Haynes, *Adolf Berle's Notes on his Meeting with Whittaker Chambers with Annotation*. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.johnearlhaynes.org/page100.html>.

President summarily dismissed it. Levine's said of Berle's response: "To the best of my recollection, the President dismissed the matter rather brusquely with an expletive remark on this order: 'Oh, forget it, Adolf.'"¹³⁹ Later, when Chamber's charges of espionage came to the attention of the HUAC and the public, along with the lack of attention previously given them by FDR, it provided more fodder for critics to charge that the Roosevelt Administration was at best careless with national security and at worst covering up disloyalty by governmental officials. For the moment, however, Chambers' allegations were forgotten and he continued to develop his career as a journalist, joining the staff of *Time* in 1939 and becoming an editor.

In mid-1948, it came to public attention that Elizabeth Bentley, an ex-communist, had in October 1945 confessed to the FBI her role as a handler of Soviet spies for the KGB. Bentley revealed to the FBI that an American communist named Jacob Golos had used a travel agency, World Tourists, as a front from which he managed a spy network on behalf of the KGB. Bentley was Golos' assistant and, later, his lover. After his death, she took over managing the network, but soon the KGB turned it over to a professional spy. Feelings of professional rejection by the KGB and personal loneliness and grief brought on by Golos' death led her to make a confession to the FBI. At the time, many critics of anticommunism dismissed Bentley's story as the delusions of a mentally unstable alcoholic, partly because her charges did not result in any convictions for espionage. However, the Venona

¹³⁹ Isaac Don Levine, *Eyewitness to History: Memoirs and Reflections of a Foreign Correspondent for a Half Century*. (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1973) 198.

decryptions and the opening of select ex-Soviet archives in the 1990s later vindicated the truthfulness of her testimony.¹⁴⁰

What significant information did Elizabeth Bentley reveal to the FBI?

Through Bentley investigators discovered Golos conducted extensive espionage activities with the general awareness of and often collaboration by Earl Browder, the CPUSA party chief. First Golos and later Bentley managed two large spy networks, which became known as the Silvermaster Group and the Perlo Group. Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, an economist with the Board of Economic Welfare and later the War Production Board, coordinated the former apparatus, which included:

- Harry Dexter White, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury and later the American representative to the International Monetary Fund;
- Lauchlin Currie, assistant to Marriner Eccles, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and later a White House aide to President Roosevelt;
- George Silverman, a civilian economic analyst working for an assistant chief of staff at the Pentagon;
- V. Frank Coe, the director of the Treasury Department's Division of Monetary Research, technical secretary of the Bretton Woods Monetary Conference, and later a secretary of the International Monetary Fund;
- Solomon Adler, an official in the Treasury Department's General Counsel's office and later the representative of the U.S. Treasury in China;
- William Ludwig Ullmann, who worked at the Treasury Department and later served as an Army Air Forces major.

¹⁴⁰ Haynes and Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies*, 87-89.

Historians Haynes and Klehr characterized the participation of White and Currie in this spy ring as follows: “In addition to providing information about high-level U.S. policy making, both men also promoted and protected the careers of midlevel officials who spied for Stalin.”¹⁴¹ Additionally, Coe and Adler used their positions to lend support to Mao’s communists and oppose American support of Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang Party. Both men later emigrated to the People’s Republic of China and worked for the Communist Party of China.

The Perlo Group derived its name from Victor Perlo, who served in the National Recovery Administration and later as a senior economist on the War Production Board, the federal agency in charge of the industrial production of armaments for the American military. Other members of this spy ring included:

- Harold Glasser, the Vice-Chairman of the War Production Board and a Treasury Department official, who later advised Secretary of State George Marshall on some European issues;
- Charles Kramer, a congressional staffer on the Senate Subcommittee on War Mobilization;
- Donald Wheeler, a research analyst for the Office of Strategic Services;
- Lt. Col. Duncan Lee, an aide to General William Donovan, chief of the Office of Strategic Services;
- Julius Joseph, deputy head of the Far Eastern section of the Office of Strategic Service;
- Helen Tenney, an analyst in the Spanish section of the OSS;

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 66.

- Edward Fitzgerald, a staffer at the War Production Board and later an assistant to Senator Claude Pepper;

- Maurice Halperin, who served as the head of the OSS's research and analysis section in the Latin American division and later worked at the State Department;

Other individuals that Bentley identified included William Remington, an economist with the War Production Board, who like Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury in sworn testimony regarding his communist affiliations, and Michael Greenberg, who worked at the Board of Economic Welfare. The FBI had hoped to use Elizabeth Bentley as a double agent, but cooperation with the FBI's counterespionage program by the British intelligence service allowed the double agent Kim Philby to learn of Bentley's defection and inform the Soviets.¹⁴² However, in sum, the impact of Bentley's defection cannot be underestimated. Despite decades of assertions that she fabricated charges, Haynes and Klehr have concluded the following in light of the release of the Venona decrypts and the partial opening of the Soviet archives:

Elizabeth Bentley had told the truth and those she identified as Soviet sources were just what she said they were: spies who had assisted Soviet espionage against the United States. It also became clearer that Bentley's defection triggered events that brought about a catastrophic collapse of Soviet espionage in the United States just as the Cold War got under way and contributed to a permanent political isolation of the American Communist Party.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ibid., 69.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 89.

During the HUAC hearings that took testimony from Bentley, the Committee called Whittaker Chambers to corroborate aspects of her claims. This development was pivotal to the downfall of one of Washington's brightest stars: Alger Hiss. Chambers' testimony centered on the Ware Group, a covert Party group engaged in subversion and named after Harold Ware, a CPUSA member who worked in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Chambers' involvement with the group came at the behest of Josef Peters, the Comintern's representative in the United States and the head of the CPUSA's underground organization.¹⁴⁴ Those Chambers named as spies for the Soviet Union included:

- Nathan Witt, who after working at the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, served as a general counsel for and later first secretary of the National Labor Relations Board;¹⁴⁵
- John Abt, who worked at the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the Works Progress Administration before becoming chief counsel for the Civil Liberties Subcommittee, popularly known as the La Follette Committee, of the Education and Labor Committee of the Senate;
- Harry Dexter White, mentioned above;
- Alger Hiss, the one-time clerk to Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, who later headed the State Department's Office of Special Political Affairs, attended the

¹⁴⁴ Fearing that the CPUSA would one day find itself outlawed, for most of its existence it maintained a secret, underground, shadow organization, so that it could continue operation should a ban occur. All covert activities, such as espionage, were typically run through the underground rather than the legal organization.

¹⁴⁵ According to private communication with historian John Earl Haynes, there is no evidence that Witt engaged in espionage, whereas there is so for Abt, White, and Hiss.

Yalta Conference as part of the American delegation and served as secretary general of the United Nations' founding conference.

Historians have devoted many volumes to the Chambers-Hiss controversy and Hiss' later trial and conviction for perjury on January 21, 1950. The recent work by serious historians with comprehensive access to the archival record has concluded that Hiss was indeed guilty and Chambers told the truth.¹⁴⁶ The details of the story are far too complex and nuanced to recount here. It is, however, important to note that the Hiss saga played itself out during the time period that represented, depending upon one's perspective, the HUAC's highpoint or low point. This period, 1947-1949, included the investigation and exposure of the Eisler brothers, the first Hollywood inquiry, and the Hiss episode. Lauded by some and despised by others, these hearings by the HUAC played the central role in exposing to the general public the communist activity not hitherto widely known.

We shall see later in this dissertation that the Eisler case focused on the links of the CPUSA to the Comintern and the Roosevelt Administration's naïveté regarding that circumstance. While the Hiss case focused on communist infiltration into the federal government for the purpose of conducting espionage, the Hollywood hearings spotlighted communist efforts to use the motion picture industry for the purposes of propaganda, prestige and money. The success of the Hiss investigation arguably

¹⁴⁶ Besides the work of Haynes and Klehr, this was the same conclusion by Allen Weinstein in *Perjury*. The revised 1997 edition, which makes use of information gleaned from the newly opened Soviet archives, presents an even more damning case against Hiss. Sam Tanenhaus in *Whittaker Chambers: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1997) reaches the same conclusion as Weinstein in terms of Hiss' guilt and Chambers' truthfulness. Both books are scrupulous in their research and documentation.

represented the Committee's zenith in effectiveness terms of making a significant impact in the area of national security. It is important to understand that the Bentley testimony and especially the Hiss hearings were part of an on-going effort by anticommunists in the Congress to expose the extent to which dedicated communists had infiltrated key American institutions with nefarious intent and the extent to which the American government had failed to effectively defend the nation in this regard.

As a result of Gouzenko's defection in Canada and at approximately the same time that Bentley began cooperating with the government, the FBI, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and British counterintelligence began to uncover extensive efforts by the Soviets to steal American, British and Canadian nuclear secrets. As we shall see in the discussion below on the international environment in which the HUAC operated, the Soviet detonation of an atomic weapon sent a shock wave through the American political establishment and the public. The availability of previously classified materials or documents from formerly closed archives leaves little doubt that Soviet atomic espionage shaved years off of Moscow's atomic weapons research and development process. These cases, which came to public light in the years 1948-1951, i.e. sandwiched between the first and second Hollywood investigations, included the following individuals:

- Theodore Hall, a physicist at the Manhattan Project facility at Los Alamos, who was perhaps the Soviet's most productive nuclear spy;¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Haynes and Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies*, 142. For an exposé of Hall's career, see Joseph Albright and Marcia Kunstel, *Bombshell: The Secret Story of America's Unknown Atomic Spy Conspiracy*. (New York: Times Books, 1997).

- Klaus Fuchs, scientist in British nuclear weapons program, who confessed and was convicted of spying for the Soviets in 1950 and eventually emigrated to East Germany;¹⁴⁸

- Harry Gold, a Philadelphia chemist who served as a courier for the KGB and whose testimony was later instrumental in the conviction of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg;¹⁴⁹

- Alfred Dean Slack, who passed to the Soviets information about military ordinance, but apparently ceased espionage activities when he went to work on the Manhattan Project facility at Oak Ridge, Tennessee;¹⁵⁰

- Abraham Brothman, a chemist who supplied industrial secrets to the Soviets, including information about synthetic rubber;¹⁵¹

- David Greenglass, the brother of Ethel Rosenberg and an army machinist who worked at both Oak Ridge and Los Alamos and provided the KGB with data on implosion detonators for atomic weapons;¹⁵²

- Morris and Lona Cohen, who conducted industrial espionage for the Soviets and served as couriers for information supplied by Theodore Hall, Klaus Fuchs and David Greenglass;¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ Haynes and Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies*, 152-153. For a study of Fuchs' espionage career, see, Norman Moss, *Klaus Fuchs: The Man Who Stole the Atom Bomb* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁹ Haynes and Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies*, 154.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 144.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 145.

- Morton Sobell, who was recruited by Julius Rosenberg, worked at the Navy Ordnance Bureau in Washington, and supplied the Soviets with information about “sonar, infrared radiation devices and missile guidance systems”;¹⁵⁴
- Joel Barr, an employee of defense contractor who defected to the Soviet Union after his espionage activities became known to the FBI and headed a microelectronics research institute in the USSR;¹⁵⁵
- Alfred Sarant, an electrical engineer for the Army Signal Corps who with Barr provided the Soviets with secrets of American avionics and radar and also fled to the USSR to eventually run a research institute;¹⁵⁶
- William Perl, an engineer who provided the Soviet information on the jet propulsion and supersonic aviation projects he worked on for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics;¹⁵⁷
- Julius Rosenberg, a dedicated communist who oversaw “an extensive network of spies, most of them former CCNY classmates working in classified military technology research” and was convicted for spying on April 5, 1951;¹⁵⁸
- Ethel Rosenberg, the wife of Julius Rosenberg and sister of David Greenglass, who was a relatively minor participant in her husband’s spy ring, but nevertheless was executed with him on June 19, 1953.¹⁵⁹

To summarize, the lists articulated above – the Silvermaster Group, the Perlo Group, the Ware Group, the Rosenberg Group, along with other atomic spies –

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 159.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 160-161.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 161-164.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 143

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 176.

demonstrate the extensive scope of Soviet success in securing numerous Americans to spy for Moscow. These were not isolated cases and the stakes involved were not trivial. In almost all of these instances, Americans betrayed their country for ideological reasons, i.e. their belief in the communist cause, and not for greed as more recent spies, such as John Walker, did. Also, most of the individuals listed above had close links to the CPUSA if they were not in fact members.

The first Hollywood investigation of 1947 was part of the same investigative environment as that which brought the espionage of Alger Hiss and other high government officials to light. Within this larger context, the idea that communist activity in Hollywood with the implications for possible subversion through propaganda represented a potential threat was *prima facie* was not as farfetched as critics often portrayed it. The congressional contempt citations related to the initial Hollywood inquiry of 1947 wound their way through the appeals process in the court system until 1950. This apparently delayed the HUAC from further investigation of the motion picture industry until 1951-1952. It was during this period between the two sets of investigations that new revelations of significant and serious industrial, military and nuclear espionage by Fuchs, the Rosenbergs and others further alarmed anticommunists as to the dangers of domestic communism.

The International Scene. The end of World War II represented a seismic shift in the contours of the international geopolitical scene. Between the two world wars, the United States again withdrew into isolationism. It shunned membership in the League of Nations, the brainchild of Woodrow Wilson, and with few exceptions did not to involve itself foreign entanglements. Although the United States was an

economic superpower during the interwar years, Europe still represented the fulcrum of political and military power with Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, Italy, and, after 1934, Germany acting as the major players. With the exception of the United States, the sole power outside of Europe with significant economic and military power, as well as an aggressive foreign policy, was Imperial Japan. International conditions in the aftermath of World War II did not allow for history to repeat itself and the United States could not once again withdraw into isolationism. To a large extent, the USA became the post-World War II guarantor of international peace and the protector of Western democracies.

The Exhaustion of Western Europe. The end of World War II and its immediate aftermath saw much of the world's political map redrawn compared to the beginning of the war. Five and a half years of war left the European Allies militarily and economically exhausted. Britain and France, now greatly weakened compared to their pre-war status, began to rapidly dismantle their colonial empires. Within fifteen years of the end of the war, most of the British, French, Dutch and Belgian imperial possessions gained their independence. The European powers had little choice. World War II had left their economies in ruin and their military power depleted. The imperial powers could not simultaneously battle domestic communism, defend against Soviet encroachments in Central and Eastern Europe, and resist often Marxist-inspired national liberation movements in their colonies.

In February 1947, the same month that the HUAC took testimony from Gerhart Eisler, an action that I will argue ultimately led to the Hollywood hearings, the British government informed the Truman Administration that it "could no longer

afford to support the conservative Greek government in its struggle against Communist guerillas. Great Britain...was exhausted. The British also said they could no longer afford to supply financial aid to Turkey.”¹⁶⁰ The Greek Civil War had only started five months before in September 1946. That the British, partners in the recent Allied victory over the Axis, could not sustain a defense against communism for longer than five months was a startling admission. Clearly the United Kingdom, which was in actually in much better shape economically and militarily than the French, could not serve as the bulwark against communist expansion in Europe. In fact several months earlier in December 1946, communist guerillas under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh began fighting French colonial troops in a war that in 1954 would end in a humiliating defeat for France.

The Power Vacuum in Central Europe. With the defeat of Nazism and the death of Hitler, Germany lay shattered and divided in 1945. Austria was again detached from Germany. Poland regained the province of West Prussia, which Germany had ceded at the end of World War I. It was the desire to regain West Prussia that led Germany to attack Poland in 1939. However, the territorial cost of losing World War II was much higher than after World War I. Poland and the Soviet Union divided the German province of East Prussia between themselves. The Allies awarded Poland additional German lands to compensate her for the loss of the western half of its pre-war territory taken by the Soviet Union as part of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. Thus, German lost the mineral-rich and industrial provinces of Upper and Lower Silesia and the eastern portions of Pomerania and Brandenburg that lay

¹⁶⁰ Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to the Cold War*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) 26

east of the Oder-Neisse river line. Approximately ten million Germans migrated west of the Oder-Neisse, the product of both voluntary relocation to flee communism and forced expulsions to reorient national borders. This represented one of the largest population resettlements in modern history.

For several years after the surrender of Germany, a revised version of the Morgenthau Plan was the official policy of the Allied Occupational Authority. The plan originally developed by Henry Morgenthau, FDR's Secretary of the Treasury, aimed to break up a defeated Germany into a series of small, demilitarized states with de-industrialized, pastoral economies. Although the onset of the Cold War resulted first in the revision and later the abandonment of the plan, its economic provisions greatly heightened the misery brought on by the war's destruction of the German economy. The implementation of the Morgenthau Plan, even in its revised form, delayed German economic recovery for several years in the western zones. Thus, while the Red Army occupied most of Eastern Europe, the plan aimed to keep the only nation in Central Europe that might provide a counterbalance in a permanent state of economic dislocation, military impotence and political fragmentation. Thus, this policy, which Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Secretary of War Henry Stimson opposed along with Churchill and Anthony Eden, was heavy tilted to the national interest of the Soviet Union. It does not then come as much of a surprise that a key contributor to the Morgenthau Plan was Harry Dexter White, to whom Morgenthau had given "responsibility for all of the Treasury's foreign policy

activities.”¹⁶¹ As noted earlier, the Venona decryptations later confirmed accusations by Whittaker Chambers and Elizabeth Bentley, which White denied before the HUAC in 1948 just days before his premature death, that Morgenthau’s most trusted advisor was a Soviet agent.¹⁶²

Soviet Territorial Expansion and Domination of Eastern Europe. By stark contrast with Germany, despite enormous human casualties, huge losses in materiel and destruction of infrastructure, the Soviet Union emerged from the war greatly strengthened both militarily and territorially. As a member of the victorious allied coalition in World War II, the USSR was able to keep the territorial acquisitions it made in 1940 by virtue of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. Known also as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and signed in Moscow by the German and Soviet Foreign Ministers in Moscow on August 24, 1939, the agreement was a ten year non-aggression treaty between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It also contained a provision that if a third party were to attack one of the treaty parties, the other contracting party would remain neutral. Most importantly, the pact contained a secret protocol that divided Eastern Europe into spheres of influence between them and provided for territorial annexations of various third countries.

¹⁶¹ John Dietrich, *The Morgenthau Plan: Soviet Influence on American Postwar Policy* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2002) 17-18. A number of historians have written accounts of the implementation and impact of the Morgenthau Plan. Critical perspectives include Michael R. Beschloss, *The Conquerors: Roosevelt, Truman and the Destruction of Hitler’s Germany, 1941-1945* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003) and James Bacque, *Crimes and Mercies: The Fate of German Civilians under Allied Occupation, 1944-1950* (Chicago: Talon Books, 2007).

¹⁶² For revisionist account highly sympathetic to White, see R. Bruce Craig, *Treasonable Doubt: The Harry Dexter White Spy Case* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2004)

Under the terms of the Pact, while Hitler was busy conquering Poland, France, the Low Countries, Denmark and Norway in 1939-1940, the Soviets were able to occupy the formerly independent states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Thereupon followed coup d'états and sham requests for admission as union members into the USSR.¹⁶³ Also, in June 1940, Stalin demanded and got the Rumanian territories of Bessarabia, Bukovina and Hertza. Bessarabia became the basis of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, another constituent republic of the Soviet Union, while Bukovina and Hertza became provinces of the Ukrainian SSR.¹⁶⁴ Most importantly, the Pact allowed for the partition of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union roughly along the Curzon Line. Finally, the Hitler-Stalin Pact allowed Stalin to undertake the Winter War of 1939-1940 with Finland without fear of German intervention. As the result of this action, Finland lost most of Karelia to the Soviet Union, part of Salla and some islands in the Gulf of Finland and the Arctic Ocean, as well as being forced to lease the Hanko Peninsula for a Soviet naval base.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ The Soviet Red Army invaded each of these small Baltic nations in June 1940. Communist-dominated puppet governments came to power in the following month. In August, each Baltic state formally “requested” membership in the Soviet Union. Of course, the “requests” originated in Moscow and these Baltic peoples lived in sullen acquiescence until the USSR began to unravel in the late 1980’s. In the meantime, however, Stalin sent tens of thousands of Baltic nationalists and patriots into exile in Siberia. The United States never recognized the legality of this territorial acquisition. For a thorough discussion of the impact of the Stalin-Hitler Pact on the Baltic States, see Izidors Vizulis, *The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939: The Baltic Case* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990)

¹⁶⁴ Bessarabia had been part of the Russian Empire under the Tsars and was lost to Rumania at the end of World War I. Today it is an independent nation under the name of the Republic of Moldova.

¹⁶⁵ Finland had also been part of Tsarist Russia, gaining its independence in 1917. It is nearly certain that Stalin intended to conquer all of Finland and turn it into another constituent republic of the Soviet Union. Valiant resistance by the Finns and surreptitious aid from Western nations prevented this. In 1940 Stalin made the

The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 temporarily erased these acquisitions, but the ultimate allied victory restored them in 1945. In addition to these substantial territorial gains, the end of the war saw the transfer to the Soviet Union of Carpathian Ruthenia from Czechoslovakia and, as mentioned above, the northern half of East Prussia from Germany.¹⁶⁶ Thus, the Soviet Union emerged from World War II with more territorial acquisitions than any other nation. However, Stalin was not satisfied with these *de jure* gains; he extended his *de facto* control to the rest of Eastern Europe.

With the Red Army occupying much of Eastern Europe and communists loyal to Moscow installed as heads of the various national security services, opposition rights were gradually whittled away until a series of coup d'états resulted in giving communist dominated governments a monopoly on power throughout the region. Some of these communist regimes came to power in rigged elections, such as in Poland in 1947. When in December 1948, the Polish Workers Party, i.e. the communists, and the Polish Socialist Party merged in a forced union, the transformation of Poland into a Stalinist satellite was complete. Thus, the nation over

Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic a union republic within the USSR as the institutional basis for the absorption of all of Finland. From 1940-1951, a young Yuri Andropov was an up and coming party administrator in this republic. Andropov went to Moscow in 1951 and later became Chairman of the KGB and ultimately General Secretary of the CPSU. Stalin's successors made the *de facto* admission of the failure of his Finnish policy by reabsorbing this republic into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic.

¹⁶⁶ Ruthenia became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the northern half of East Prussia became an province or *oblast* of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, even though it lacked geographic contiguity with that republic or any significant Russian-speaking population.

which Britain and France went to war with Germany in 1939 in order to preserve its independence found itself subjugated to the USSR at the end of that war.

Brute Soviet force was also an instrument in the process of subjugation. When a non-communist party won the Hungarian elections in November 1945, the Soviet military commander, Marshal Kliment Voroshilov, simply refused it the right to form a government and forced a coalition government instead in which communists held the military and security portfolios.¹⁶⁷ Communist-dominated governments in Hungary dissolved most opposition political parties in late 1947 and the next year Stalin's stooge in Hungary, Matyas Rakoski, forcibly merged his Hungarian Workers Party with the Social Democratic Party, which eliminated the last vestiges of Hungarian democracy until 1989.¹⁶⁸

The case of Czechoslovakia is perhaps most instructive in terms of understanding the concern over the dangers of domestic infiltration by communists. In the immediate postwar era, Czechoslovakian President Edvard Benes worked under the duress of a Soviet military occupation and had a profound mistrust of the West as a result of the Munich betrayals. These factors came into play on a national basis when the Czechoslovak communists won a plurality of 38% in the 1946 elections. Thus, in May Benes found it necessary to name Klement Gottwald, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) chief, to the office of prime minister.

¹⁶⁷ Voroshilov was a political general, who later served under Nikita Khrushchev from 1953 to 1960 as the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, i.e. the Soviet Union's nominal head of state.

¹⁶⁸ Peter Kenez offers a complete and detailed account of Hungary's tragic fall to communism in *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets: The Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary, 1944-1948* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)

Gottwald then headed a coalition cabinet of nine communists out of twenty-six portfolios. At this point the communists began an aggressive campaign of administrative infiltration in part by bloating the civil service with appointments of party members. Most observers believed the communists would fare poorly in new elections scheduled for May 1948 and the communist minister in charge of the national police began an illegal purge of the remaining non-communists from the police force. On February 21, 1948, most of the non-communist cabinet ministers resigned in protest, but a communist coup prevent Benes from appointing a caretaker government ahead of elections. The CPC mobilized thousands of protesters, primarily from the trade unions it controlled. The threats of street violence and the intervention of the Red Army forced Benes to appoint a new cabinet dominated by CPC members with only a few token non-communists. The most important one, Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk, died under mysterious circumstances less than two weeks later. By the summer of that year, the communists sought to impose a new constitution and Benes, now little more than a figurehead, resigned rather than acquiesce. As the process of transforming Czechoslovakia into a Stalinist socialist republic neared completion, all political opposition soon met with severe persecution.¹⁶⁹

After six months of Soviet Red Army occupation and under duress, King Michael I of Romania named a new cabinet in March 1945 dominated by members of

¹⁶⁹ See Robert C. Grogan, *Natural Enemies: The United States and the Soviet Union in the Cold War, 1917-1991* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001) 131-135 for a concise account of the administrative subversion of the Czechoslovak communists in 1946-48.

the pro-Soviet Romanian Communist Party.¹⁷⁰ On December 30, 1947, the communist Prime Minister, Petru Groza, forced the King of the Romanians to abdicate under threat of his personal assassination and the execution of over a thousand young political prisoners.¹⁷¹

The final piece to fall into place in construction of the Soviet empire in Central Europe was the transformation of the Soviet controlled zone in the eastern third of Germany into the German Democratic Republic, which was proclaimed on October 7, 1949. However, the building of a socialist paradise based in East Berlin did not proceed as planned. Unhappy with their new Stalinist society, East German workers were the first in the Soviet bloc to instigate a series of revolts against their communist regime. On June 17, 1953, just as the HUAC was winding up its second investigation of Hollywood, a strike erupted in East Berlin and soon workers throughout the German Democratic Republic joined in. It took the intervention of Soviet troops to suppress the rioting and restore the authority of its satellite government.

Communism was also on the move in Asia. In November 1946, the Viet Minh under the leadership of a Leninist named Ho Chi Minh began a rebellion in colonial Vietnam that would result in the total defeat of French forces in 1954 and the

¹⁷⁰ The duress came in the form of a visit by Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs Andrei Vyshinskiy, who headed previously led Stalin's Great Purge of 1937-1938 as Procurator General of the USSR. Vyshinskiy also personally supervised the political coup d'état and legal farce that accompanying Latvia's incorporation into the Soviet Union.

¹⁷¹ Craig S. Smith, "Romania's King Without a Throne Outlives Foes and Setbacks," *New York Times*, January 27, 2007. Available from World Wide Web: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/27/world/europe/27michael.html>

establishment of communist North Vietnam. Likewise, the Chinese Civil War ended with a communist victory. On January 22, 1949 the Chinese Red Army occupied Beijing and then on October 1 Mao Zedong, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China. The fall of China to Mao's Red Army represented a huge blow to American policymakers and a huge geopolitical shift in Asia. The following February China concluded a treaty of alliance, friendship and mutual assistance with the Soviet Union. Thus, the most populous nation in the world became a member of the communist commonwealth and until Stalin's death, relations between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union remained very close.

Almost exactly seventeen months after the fall of Beijing to the Chinese communists and a little over four months after the formalization of the Sino-Soviet alliance, troops from communist North Korea crossed the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950, invading their southern neighbor. Within ten days and under a United Nations sanction, the first American forces were committed to the war, but early on the fighting was disastrous for U.S. and South Korean troops. By early September, the anticommunist forces held only the city of Pusan and its perimeter and the North Korean army threatened to push the overwhelmed South Korean and American troops into the sea. General Douglas MacArthur averted allied defeat when he scored a risky victory by landing the X Corps behind enemy lines at Incheon in mid-September. This tactic nearly cut off the North Korean Army, which began a retreat that turned into a rout and a month later UN forces crossed the 38th parallel into North Korean territory. This triggered intervention by Chinese "volunteers," which threw

the UN forces again into full retreat. Early in 1951 the newly appointed commander, General Matthew Ridgeway, stopped the communist assault and took the allies on the offensive. However, when UN forces again reached the 38th parallel in May, the decision was made not to cross again into North Korean territory and the war stabilized into a form of trench warfare. The result was essentially a stalemate and the war dragged on for two more years until a ceasefire took hold on July 27, 1953.

President Truman's controversial decisions, first to relieve General MacArthur of command in April 1951 and second not to move UN forces north of the 38th parallel the following July, seemed to many anticommunists to indicate a recipe for defeat or at least an example of fighting not to win. This in turn led to suspicions that somehow communists still exerted influence in the upper echelons of the American government and appeared to give credence to the spurious charges made by Senator Joseph McCarthy the year before that the State Department continued to employ communists. McCarthy was wrong; Truman's loyalty program and investigations by the FBI and the HUAC had already resulted in the removal of every significant communist or communist sympathizer in the State Department. Nevertheless, when the HUAC began its second investigation of Hollywood in 1951, not only was the United States at war with a powerful communist foe, the manner in which war was conducted reinforced the notion that to some degree in the United States there existed an enemy within or a "fifth column."

In summary, the end of World War II showed that Stalin's Soviet Union was unwilling to be satiated with the huge territorial gains it had won since 1939. The clear policy of the Soviet government was to dominate and then subjugate Eastern

Europe, and expand the communist writ to large portions of Asia. The advent of the independent-minded Eurocommunism movement and the Sino-Soviet split were still years off in the future. With the minor exception of the Tito's Yugoslav rebellion against Moscow, Soviet-dominated international communism appeared monolithic and on the rise. As the HUAC went about its work in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the headlines of American newspapers regularly reported stories each year of new countries falling into the communist orbit. When the HUAC renewed its inquiry into Hollywood in 1951-52, the Korean War was raging and American casualties mounted daily. The CPUSA followed Moscow's line and blamed the United States and her allies for starting the war as an act of imperialist aggression designed to extend capitalist hegemony. Many Hollywood communists embraced this perspective.

The Advent of the Nuclear Age. The defeat of Japan, which ended War World II, was the direct result of the advent of nuclear weapons. A new nuclear age dawned and this radically altered the geopolitical equation. Military superpower status was to a large degree predicated upon the possession of atomic armaments. Near the end of September 1949, President Truman shocked the American public when he announced that Moscow had exploded an atom bomb a month earlier. There is little doubt that the Soviets would have developed the bomb on their own, but their ability to penetrate the Manhattan Project probably shaved years off of that effort. After the detonation of the atom bomb, the Soviets immediately began work on a hydrogen bomb. Industrial espionage no longer meant just a better tractor or turbine without paying the corporate patent holder's license fee. In the nuclear age, it meant the ability to inflict large scale devastation on ones enemies. The understanding of

the scope of the battlefield appeared radically altered. World War II had seen urban devastation in Europe and massive civilian casualties as the result of carpet bombing. However, the specter of annihilation by nuclear weapons was ever so more dreadful. A Pearl Harbor style attack in the new age of nuclear weapons represented a frightening possibility and the previous war had demonstrated on occasion that there were individuals living in the United States – often citizens – willing to assist an external foe. Prudence, therefore, seemed to dictate for many Americans careful scrutiny of any possible fifth column.

Conclusion. The HUAC congressmen may have been naïve or even wrong about certain of their assessments of the nature of the threat of international communism and its domestic manifestation in the United States at the time of the Hollywood investigations. No doubt at times they allowed partisan politics to enter into their investigatory calculus. Nevertheless, partisanship is not a satisfactory explanation of their behavior. This survey clearly shows that there existed both internal and domestic circumstances that gave rise to logical and reasonable concerns about the threat of communism.

HUAC members knew that internationally communism was expanding aggressively. The USSR made large territorial acquisitions immediately before and after World War II. Almost all of Eastern Europe came under Soviet domination in the period leading up to and during the first Hollywood investigations. The fall of China occurred shortly before the HUAC returned for a second time to the motion picture industry, during which time the Korean War raged. Revelations of domestic espionage and traitors in high positions of the State Department, the Treasury, the

OSS, the Manhattan Project and a myriad of New Deal agencies gave credence to charges that aggressive Soviet expansionism and the fall of China were abetted by a fifth column.

Furthermore, the HUAC's concern about the possible use of the media in general and the motion picture industry in particular by communists for purposes of subversive propaganda was prudent considering the flowering of Soviet, Nazi and Italian propaganda in previous years. The fact that the OWI engaged in its own brand of political persuasion while it employed known communists only heightened that concern. Whereas during the Popular Front era and World War II a high degree of communist activity was tolerated, the CPUSA's behavior during the Third Period, the era of the Stalin-Hitler Pact, and the time of the new left turn after the downfall of Browder, was enough to give one pause. It raised serious questions as to whether the very existence of the CPUSA was compatible with a democratic society. The collapse of Roosevelt's liberal-left coalition only served to further marginalize American communists and empower those who were deeply suspicious of various aspects of New Deal experimentation that to them smacked of socialism, communism and even fascism.

While context is not everything as postmodernists would argue, it is important because it allows for an understanding of the matrix in which decisions come about. In the case of the HUAC, I would argue that the 1947-1952 investigations of Hollywood were not capricious or arbitrary. Rather, they came about because of the need to address national security concerns first in the time of an incipient Cold War and then during the very hot Korean War.

Chapter 5: Examination of HUAC Methods of Investigation

In 1946 political cartoonist Bill Mauldin, who won the Pulitzer Prize twice, published a cartoon entitled “Freedom’s Brave Sentinels.” In it, two shadowing figures labeled “Americanism Investigators” lurk outside of the home of an unsuspecting family. One investigator, wearing a trench coat and a fedora pulled low, peeks through the window, while the other sits before a Dictaphone machine that is tapping into the family’s telephone line. Mauldin seems to capture perfectly the sinister images most Americans find so distasteful when thinking of the congressional investigations of communism in the 1940s and 1950s: an intrusive government violating the sanctity of citizens’ personal privacy in order to detect personal political convictions.

Although the Committee always enjoyed support by a certain sector of the American public, the HUAC’s reputation was a checkered affair. Liberals, whether they were willing to work with communists on certain issues or held a strongly anticommunist position, typically opposed the mission and existence of the HUAC. Many moderates and some conservatives were ambivalent about the manner in which the Committee conducted business. Before 1945, when the HUAC operated as a “special committee,” Chairman Martin Dies had established a pattern of making careless charges of communist affiliations. This practice did not change after Dies’ departure, when behind the scenes Rep. John Rankin, a Democrat from Mississippi, called the shots on the Committee.

In 1948, Congressman F. Edward Hebert, a conservative Southern Democrat from Louisiana, maneuvered to get an appointment to the HUAC so that he could work to change what he saw as the Committee's on-going record of abuse:

I went on the Un-American Activities Committee because I did not like its flamboyancy. I thought it ruined itself through its own fault. It was a maligning committee. I could see its flamboyancy, this wildness, this throwing names around and charging things. I didn't believe in it. I thought they could make cases without all those monkeyshines. They'd throw names around, say so and so's a communist and then he couldn't come before the committee to defend himself unless he was invited; and even if he were invited, there apparently would be something going on, some reason that they never got around to giving him a hearing.¹⁷²

Thus, even at the height of what came to be known as the "Red Scare," the Committee had its detractors amongst all shades of the political spectrum.

In addition to Martin Dies' demagoguery before he stepped down from the chairmanship in 1945, the HUAC suffered from other unsavory associations. The Committee's enemies often noted that John Rankin was well-known as a racist and anti-Semite, unembarrassed to flaunt his noxious beliefs in speeches on the floor of the House and in speeches to his constituencies. Furthermore, although John Wood of Georgia, who would chair the HUAC for part of the 79th Congress and again during the 81st and 82nd Congresses, was far more judicious in his public rhetoric and conducted hearings in a fair and subdued manner without the demagoguery of his predecessor, he came with baggage too. Wood declined to investigate the Ku Klux

¹⁷² F. Edward Hebert with John McMillan, *Last of the Titans: The Life and Times of Congressman F. Edward Hebert of Louisiana*. (Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1976) 273-274.

Klan for any un-American activity, citing it as “an old American custom.”¹⁷³ If the HUAC conducted itself so carelessly in its open hearings, the American public could only imagine the shenanigans that might transpire during the behind-the-scenes investigations and images such as Mauldin’s cartoon, though exaggerated for effect, seemed plausible.

The archival record, however, seems to indicate a significantly different picture of how the HUAC investigated communist infiltration into various institutions in American society. It appears that the Committee’s methodology was much more akin to routine research of public documents. Generally speaking, HUAC staff collected documents available through normal means in public channels, conducted a type of content analysis of their substance, and digested the results in reports to Committee investigators and other governmental entities. The HUAC investigators then attempted to verify the data with corroborating evidence, often in the form of field interviews, which in turn determined who might receive a subpoena to testify before the HUAC. The central argument of this chapter is that the documents primarily in the HUAC’s research activity were the products of the communist mass media and its allied front organizations. In fact, the communist press was the *sine qua non* of the HUAC investigations.

An extensive analysis of the archives reveals that a typical HUAC investigation proceeded in an established practice that had distinct features in a five-step routine. There were some variations to the procedure, which appears to have been informal, but as a general rule, the Committee’s staff workflow appeared to

¹⁷³Michael Linfield, *Freedom Under Fire: U.S. Civil Liberties in Times of War*. (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1990) 87.

follow a pattern. The first step was the on-going research phase in which HUAC staff collected data, summarized information, and created files under the names of individuals and organizations. Depending upon the investigatory agenda of the Committee, an individual case might move to the second step. This was a corroboration phase, wherein investigators would look for additional evidence to substantiate the initial indications of the research phase. If investigators determined the evidence was sufficient to proceed, the contents of the investigative file might lead the Committee to the third step, which was to hear testimony under subpoena or voluntarily in executive session. If the data produced to that point might serve a public information function in the context of a broader investigation, i.e. a topical investigation of some aspect of American society such as atomic espionage, trade unions or the media, the HUAC usually moved to the fourth step, namely individual testimony taken in public session. Again, the HUAC might secure this testimony either voluntarily from a cooperative witness or under subpoena from a disobliging one. Often, the press reported the substance of this testimony to the wider public. The fifth and final step was the HUAC's periodic task of producing printed accounts of its findings to Congress and the public. These publications took the form of transcripts of public testimony, texts of speeches and statements by Committee members, and more formal analyses of committee findings in report form.

This chapter will offer a detailed account of the first three of these phases, showing how the newly available archival material significantly deepens our understanding of this process. The final two steps, however, are a matter of

longstanding public record to which this study could add little in terms of new insights.

Several caveats are in order to clarify the pattern described above. First, the archival records of the HUAC, as voluminous as they are, are not complete. Although the Committee's recordkeeping improved over time, there are significant gaps in the early years, especially in the 1940s. In particular, there is an absence of a significant amount of "intra-staff" written communication. While there is some correspondence from investigators in field offices to headquarters in Washington, the archival documentary record is not rich in terms of preserved communication amongst the Committee staff and between staff and the congressmen serving on the HUAC regarding individual investigations. Perhaps such written records never existed or staff might have destroyed or misfiled them. It is possible that some such communication was oral or, if written, became part of the congressmen's personal papers. Thus, one must characterize the investigatory pattern described above as likely, but not certain.

Second, the HUAC proceeded with an investigatory agenda that was topical in nature, e.g. communists in government, communists in Hollywood, atomic spy cases, communists in trade unions, etc. The Committee proceeded by topic in more or less linear fashion in order to inform and advise Congress on those issues. The HUAC typically did not return to a topic after it held public hearings on the matter, although it might seek supplementary information on a subject at the staff level or in executive session. The two sets of Hollywood investigations in 1947 and 1951-1952 represent

an exception to this linear pattern.¹⁷⁴ Thus, the HUAC hearings were not a series of inquiries into the activities of unrelated individual cases. Rather, they represented a sequence of topical investigations into national circumstances, all directly related to the possibility of communist infiltration into specific American institutions.

Committee investigators pursued individual cases of specific communists if they appeared relevant and shed light on the broader inquiries.

Third, the HUAC's mandate was not prosecutorial, even if those called before the Committee felt that a HUAC subpoena was akin to a summons before the Star Chamber or the Grand Inquisitor. In other words, the Committee's mandate and general procedure were not to investigate communists as such and attempt to exact punishment for political beliefs. That is not to say that on occasion, especially in the early years of the HUAC, individual committee members did not violate this general procedure, recklessly cite names in public, and, thus, bring disrepute upon the Committee. However, generally speaking, the key factor in determining whether one might receive a HUAC subpoena appeared to be the degree to which that individual's case might speak to one of the more general, topical investigations. The Committee simply did not thoroughly investigate individuals one at a time until all the names in the investigative files were exhausted. Thus, an individual might have an investigative file created and even have a substantial number of entries made in it,

¹⁷⁴ The initial Hollywood probe in 1947 was suspended when HUAC Chairman Thomas was taken ill. Litigation by the Hollywood Ten contesting their congressional contempt citations wound its way slowly through the appeals courts and further delayed resumption of the investigations. In the meantime, the movie studio heads, who were wary of government scrutiny, instituted the infamous, informal blacklist, denying employment to those who refused to cooperate with the HUAC. In 1951 with the appeals process complete, the Committee now under new leadership once again investigated Hollywood.

indicating significant possible communist activity, and yet never see a HUAC subpoena. If a newly created individual file related to a topic that the Committee had already investigated in depth, it was highly unlikely that the HUAC would reopen the corresponding topical hearings.

This makes sense if one keeps in mind that the HUAC had a three-part mandate from the full House of Representatives, which can be paraphrased as follows: (i) investigate the extent, character and objects of un-American activities in the United States; (ii) investigate the diffusion of subversive and un-American propaganda, whether of domestic or origin; and (iii) recommend to Congress remedial legislation to deal with either of the above. Suspected CPUSA conspiratorial activity in trade unions or involvement in atomic espionage would constitute the un-American activity in the first part of the mandate. The HUAC's careful scrutiny of the communist press and alleged communist infiltration into the motion picture industry would constitute the effort to fulfill the second part of the mandate. Thus, insofar as the Committee fulfilled this mandate, it had to focus on the big picture, e.g. extent and character of subversion, especially in its relation to propaganda. At the height of the popularity, the CPUSA boasted of 100,000 members.¹⁷⁵ However, contrary to popular belief in terms of the pervasiveness of HUAC investigations, the archival evidence suggests that only a fraction of the overall membership of the CPUSA ever became the subject of the Committee's active scrutiny. Those who did were most likely to have had some relation to the broader topical investigations designed to discharge the HUAC's mandate.

¹⁷⁵ Klehr, Haynes and Anderson place the actual number closer to 66,000; see *Soviet World*, xxxiv.

Another factor to consider is that as a congressional committee, the HUAC's investigative function centered entirely on that fact finding mandate. As part of the national legislature, it did not have a law enforcement role, which properly belongs to the executive branch of government. Thus, the HUAC was not a police force and in fundamental ways its investigators functioned differently from an organization like the FBI. Certainly in sheer scope there were great differences. The size of Committee staff varied over the years with the number of research staff and investigators fluctuating around two dozen. By comparison, the FBI had over 3,700 agents in 1946 and by 1952 this number exceeded 6,400.¹⁷⁶ Unlike the FBI or other law enforcement agencies, the aim of HUAC investigations was not to bring charges against anyone. The only potential punishment it could levy, other than a contempt of congress citation for refusal to testify, was the penalty of public exposure.¹⁷⁷ Therefore, its staff did not follow procedures crafted for preparation of cases for indictment. While over the decades the Committee amassed extensive files on the

¹⁷⁶ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI: A History*. (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 2007) 160.

¹⁷⁷ Through the late 1940s, Congress held that there were no grounds for refusing to testify before one of its duly constituted committees, including an appeal to the Fifth Amendment. The reasoning for this assertion was that because committee hearings were not courts of law and did not impose penalties or sanctions for crimes, witnesses did not need Fifth Amendment protection. Furthermore, in the case of the HUAC hearings, since membership in the CPUSA was not a crime, there was no incrimination in testifying to that effect. Therefore, when witnesses before a duly constituted committee of one of the chambers refused to testify, that chamber – the House or the Senate – typically voted for a contempt of congress citation. In a series of appeals in the period of 1950-1955, the courts ruled that congressional committees operated in a fashion similar to grand juries and witnesses enjoyed the protection of the Fifth Amendment. See Carl Beck, *Contempt of Congress*, 84-90.

subject of subversive activities and propaganda, the scope of their actual investigations covered a relatively narrow range of topics.

Given these stipulations, as articulated above, a careful study of the HUAC archives reveals that the initial research phase of the five step investigatory process was the most complicated and far-reaching in terms of impact on the most people. It also demonstrates the high degree to which the communist press was an essential resource to the Committee as it carried out its mandate. During the research phase, the HUAC staff derived a very large amount of raw data primarily from an extensive collection of radical periodicals and other publications. Material issued by the CPUSA and its numerous front organizations represented the largest portion of this in-house library.

Three of the most important publications in the HUAC's periodical collection were the *Daily Worker*, the *Peoples' Daily World*, the *New Masses*, *Communist* and *Political Affairs*. The *Daily Worker* was the official newspaper of the CPUSA and articulated the authorized party line in the same manner in which *Pravda* voiced that of the CPSU. Moreover, the line that the *Daily Worker* promoted invariably mirrored that of the Soviet party and reflected the policy goals of the Soviet Union. For example, at the time of the second Hollywood hearings, as the Korean War was raging, the pages of the *Daily Worker* advocated a pro-Soviet position, arguing the United States was the military aggressor. The paper was published in New York City, which was where the CPUSA had its national headquarters, and its executive

editor typically was a member of the National Committee of the CPUSA.¹⁷⁸

According to an internal end-of-year report for 1948, the Committee's collection of issues of the *Daily Worker* dated from 1924, the year of its inception.¹⁷⁹ Its Sunday supplement was simply entitled the *Worker*. The *Peoples' Daily World* was the west coast version of the *Daily Worker*, with which it later merged after subscriptions plunged during the Cold War.

The *New Masses* was a cultural and literary magazine, ostensibly the communist answer to the *New Leader*, which served a similar purpose for the Socialist Party of America. In reality, the inspiration for the *New Masses* was a Soviet publication entitled the *Literaturnaya Gazeta (Literary Gazette)*, which was the official organ of the Union of Soviet Writers. Like the latter, the pages of the *New Masses* contained short stories, poems, lyrics, critical reviews of books, plays and motion pictures, and other forms of cultural reporting. It also authoritatively expressed the official party line on cultural policy and sought to express the need for the adherence to party discipline by "cultural workers." For example, it was in the pages of the *New Masses* that a famous incident occurred in which novelist and screenwriter Albert Maltz, later a member of the Hollywood Ten, was forced to publish a humiliating retraction of an earlier article and resubmit himself to party

¹⁷⁸ The National Committee of the CPUSA performed the same functions in many ways as did the Central Committee of the CPSU. The latter was no doubt the essential model for the former. One of the executive editors, Louis Budenz, left the CPUSA in 1945 and eventually became a vocal anti-communist. Budenz testified before the HUAC several times in both public and executive session.

¹⁷⁹ "Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," (December 31, 1948), Box 1042, Committee Subjects, Records of the Files and Reference Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 6.

discipline.¹⁸⁰ The journal's longtime editor was Michael Gold, a member of the CPUSA's National Committee, who served as one of the party's liaisons with communist and fellow-traveling writers and assisted in the supervision of party efforts amongst the Hollywood elite.¹⁸¹ He was particularly close to John Howard Lawson, the ideological leader of the Hollywood Ten. The HUAC's collection of issues of the *New Masses* was nearly complete, dating from 1927, the second year of its publication.¹⁸²

Two other important journals collected in the HUAC library were the CPUSA's theoretical organs, *Communist*, and its successor publication, *Political Affairs*. The former transformed itself into the latter in 1944 after the CPUSA briefly turned itself into the Communist Political Association as part of Earl Browder's attempt to promote peaceful co-existence between the Soviet Union and the West and play up the spirit of cooperation after the Tehran Conference in 1943. These two periodicals represented American versions of *Kommunist*, which was the main

¹⁸⁰ In his original article, entitled "What Shall We Ask of Writers?", Maltz argued for more flexibility for communist writers, who were confined under the "art as a weapon" thesis that Maltz found "un-useful." Accounts of this incident have been widely reported and examples are Billingsley, *Hollywood Party*, 136-144; Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 234-237; Navasky, *Naming Names*, 288-302; and Radosh and Radosh, *Red Star over Hollywood*, 124-126.

¹⁸¹ Gold's name figured prominently in the transcripts of executive session testimony before the Committee. Cooperative witnesses mentioned him as an individual who made authoritative pronouncements regarding party cultural policy. Apparently, Lawson often sought guidance from him in terms of interpreting the party line with regard to artistic endeavors. Although subpoenaed, Gold refused to cooperate with the HUAC and remained a Stalinist until the end of his life. Gold's brother and sister-in-law, Max and Grace Granich, served as Comintern agents in China; see Klehr, Haynes and Anderson, *Soviet World*, 189.

¹⁸² "Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section, 6. Previous incarnations of *New Masses* were the *Liberator*, followed by the *Masses*. Michael Gold wrote for both.

theoretical journal published by the Central Committee of the CPSU. Its editor typically worked under the direct supervision of the party's chief ideologist, who was usually the number two person in the Secretariat of the Central Committee. For decades under both Khrushchev and Brezhnev, Mikhail Suslov, the éminence grise of the Soviet Politburo, filled this role.¹⁸³ During the early Gorbachev era, Yegor Ligachev acted in this capacity before he was ousted in favor of liberals on the Politburo. There is little reason not to believe that the American party mirrored the pattern of the ideology secretary ultimately having final say over media and propaganda matters. Suslov's counterpart in the CPUSA was Alexander Bittelman, an ardent Stalinist. The editor of *Communist* and then *Political Affairs* was Victor Jeremy Jerome, a member of the National Committee, who typically went under the name V. J. Jerome and who is often cited as having acted as a sort of a cultural commissar for the CPUSA.¹⁸⁴ Again, John Howard Lawson, "the most visible spokesman and leader of the Hollywood Party" had a special organizational and personal relationship with V. J. Jerome.¹⁸⁵ Lawson bypassed local CPUSA officials

¹⁸³ Suslov represents an example of a common occurrence in the Stalinist parties and regimes in which ideology chiefs had a background in newspaper editorship. He was the editor of *Pravda* for several years during the latter part of Stalin's reign. For more on Suslov, see Serge P. Petroff, *Red Eminence: A Biography of Mikhail Suslov* (Kingston Press, 1988).

¹⁸⁴ For example, see Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 58 or Navasky, *Naming Names*, 78. According to Billingsley, Jerome served on the party's National Agitation and Propaganda Commission; *Hollywood Party*, 45. There is some limited evidence that Jerome might have been tied up in the espionage ring run by CPUSA party chief Earl Browder. See Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 109-110.

¹⁸⁵ Gerald Horne, *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006) 117-118.

at the level of the county of Los Angeles and the state of California and reported directly to Jerome at party headquarters in New York City.

Although the above periodicals figured prominently in the HUAC's periodical library, it was in fact much larger, consisting in 1948 of "some 8,553 issues of 644 periodicals."¹⁸⁶ In addition to newspapers and magazines, this collection included more modest newsletters and bulletins. Most originated in the United States and perhaps the majority were radical leftist publications. However, the collection also included periodicals from the far right and supporters of the Axis powers before and during World War II, i.e. Japanese, fascist and Nazi organizations, including the German American Bund and the Silver Legion of America. Additionally, the HUAC obtained periodicals from labor unions, various religious groups and racially-based organizations. Often radical organizations, the CPUSA in particular, used such entities as fronts to covertly further their policy ends. Finally, the Committee acquired publications from practically any source that might furnish information about the activities of potentially subversive organizations and individuals. These included anti-fascist, anti-Nazi and anticommunist groups.¹⁸⁷

Committee staff also collected information from mainstream newspapers and magazines, including trade publications, such as *Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter*. If a publication reported on subversive activities or propaganda, the Committee wanted that report in its files. A perusal of the HUAC archive shows that the Committee supplemented its own efforts by employing at least one press clipping

¹⁸⁶ "Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section, 6.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*

service, named Consolidated Press Clippings Bureaus, and possibly others. It seems the Committee used the clippings service to identify reports and editorials in mainstream publications, such as the *Chicago Tribune*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *New York Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*. Clippings from columnists of varying political persuasions, including the conservative Westbrook Pegler and the liberal Drew Pearson, a critic of Senator Joseph McCarthy, found their way into HUAC files if they addressed some issue concerning radical politics or subversive activities.¹⁸⁸ It is important to note that the existence of these articles from mainstream periodicals does not appear to indicate that the HUAC was somehow keeping political score in order to target members of the press or otherwise monitoring the press for purposes of investigating newspapers, magazines or reporters. Rather in the absence of a large investigative staff, the Committee staff appeared to be essentially using reporters as surrogate researchers or investigators, supplying the HUAC with information for the price of a subscription or a clippings service.

In addition to periodicals, research staff collected a huge number of other documents. In 1948 a collection of pamphlets “written by leaders of subversive movements or issued by subversive organizations” reached a total of approximately five thousand.¹⁸⁹ Research staff also accumulated other printed materials that radical and front organizations used to communicate to the public, including leaflets, programs of public events, such as speeches, lectures, and workshops, and statements

¹⁸⁸ Pearson was mentor to Jack Anderson, who later took over Pearson’s column upon his death.

¹⁸⁹ “Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities,” Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section, 5.

to the public on their letterheads. In particular, the research staff was interested in those organizations cited by Attorney General Tom Clark as being subversive.¹⁹⁰

Committee researchers seemed to particularly prize letterhead from such organizations because often it had a list of board members or sponsors in a column to the left of the page. HUAC staff could cross-index these lists with those of other front organizations to reveal their complex interrelations.

The HUAC's research staff did not limit itself to collecting works published in the United States or even in English. For example, the archival files contain issues of rare periodicals from the Soviet Union and East Germany, as well as scripts for stage plays and sheet music for radical songs and revolutionary operas.¹⁹¹ The final component of this unique library was a collection of hundreds of books with subjects that in some way addressed radical ideologies or subversive activities. According to the archivist who initially catalogued the HUAC archives, when the House of Representative disbanded the HUAC in 1975, portions of this massive storehouse of printed material were transferred to the Library of Congress.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ For a history of the Attorney General's List, see Robert Justin Goldstein, *American Blacklist: The Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

¹⁹¹ For example, the investigative files for Bertolt Brecht and especially Hanns Eisler contain many such items labeled "exhibits." These exhibits chronicle Brecht and Eisler's activities before entering the United States as "refugees from fascism" and indicate the depth of their involvement in the creation of communist propaganda. Where possible, Committee staff clearly scoured the Soviet press for indications of Americans who might be undertaking work on behalf the CPUSA or the Communist International.

¹⁹² Charles E. Schamel, "Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1969, (renamed the) House Internal Security Committee, 1969-1975." (Washington: Center for Legislative Archives at the National Archives and Records Administration, 2001) 16.

Although much of the HUAC's library is no longer part of its archive, remnants survive in the form of clippings, Photostats and a number of complete sets of periodicals, pamphlets and programs that research staff had moved from the library and placed directly in files for various reasons. Once HUAC staff members created a name file, they would Photostat articles from the publications library and place them in the new file. Staff from the Files and Research Section would analyze the various source documents (periodicals, pamphlets, etc.) for names of individuals and organizations of interest. Once identified, they would create a 3x5 index card for each name, noting the significance of the source. For example, the card might indicate that an article announced screenwriter 'x' had joined the board of an organization that Committee staff recognized as a communist front. The card also contained a citation of the periodical and the page number from which the HUAC researchers drew the information.

The cross-indexing of new materials was an on-going activity of the HUAC research staff and the subversive materials collection became a sort of non-circulating reference library. In fact, if one thinks of the HUAC's large collections of periodicals, pamphlets and other printed materials as a library, then the two card indices – one for names of individuals and the other for names of organizations – created by staff in the Files and Reference Section functioned like an old fashioned library card catalogue. However, the card indices had an importance far beyond being an obscure feature of the manner in which the HUAC filed its records. Because of their very unique nature and scope, the HUAC library and its Files and Reference indices became a much used resource for members of the HUAC, members of

Congress in general, and employees of various agencies of the executive branch. HUAC internal reports show that they were used by agencies such as the State Department, the Treasury Department, the War Department (and later the Department of Defense), the Agriculture Department, the Commerce Department, the Labor Department, the National Labor Relations Board, the Federal Communications Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Civil Aeronautics Board, the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States Coast Guard, the Secret Service, and the Office of Naval Intelligence amongst others.¹⁹³

The biggest users of the HUAC's indices outside of the members of the U.S. Congress in fact were agents of the U.S. Civil Service Commission and the FBI with the former making the most inquiries. In a memo to Robert Stripling, chief HUAC investigator, complaining about lack of physical space for the Committee files, Anne Turner, the file chief of the F&R Section, wrote:

The Civil Service Commission and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have a total of seven men who are assigned to work here regularly all day, every day, including Saturdays. The Civil Service Commission has repeatedly requested that they be permitted to assign more full time checkers here in order to speed up their check of our files, but the request had to be refused.... [O]ccasionally the overflow must be accommodated at a table in the hall just outside our door. This makes for anything but ideal conditions for supervision of persons using confidential records.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ "Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section, 3.

¹⁹⁴ Anne Turner, "Concerning the Need for More Space for the Files of the Committee," (July 29, 1948), Box 1042, Committee Subjects, Records of the Files and Reference Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 1.

The demand for Committee files by representatives of executive branch departments and agencies was a direct result of the institution of Truman's loyalty program for federal employees as outlined in Presidential Executive Order 9835 of March 21, 1947. It listed the HUAC files as a potential source of information "in determining the loyalty of employees and applicants for employment."¹⁹⁵ Thus, ironically while President Truman publicly expressed disdain for the Committee, in reality his administration relied extensively on the files of the HUAC's F&R Section to operationalize his loyalty program.

The F&R Section's file access record of a single day – April 13, 1948 – illustrates this point. It shows that six agents of the Civil Service Commission checked 2,470 names. Three FBI agents checked 337 names. Four CIA agents checked 924 names, which represented a significant weekly spike for that agency. The Treasury Department sent a representative to check fifteen names, while someone from the State Department checked fifty-eight names. The Secret Service checked two names and the Naval Gun Factory of the Navy Department had one name checked. Thus, various government agencies in one day inquired about the names of more than ten times as many individuals as were affected by the entire decade of the Hollywood blacklist.¹⁹⁶

In this regard, it is important to on the one hand distinguish individual and organizational investigatory files on the one hand from files in the Files & Reference Section (known internally as F&R Files) or entries in the HUAC's indices of name

¹⁹⁵ "Files of the Committee on Un-American Activities," Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section, 2-3.

¹⁹⁶ "Record of Visitors in Room 227 Committee on Un-American Activities," Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section, 1.

files. HUAC staff created investigative name files during phase two of the five step process, usually in preparation for public or executive session testimony on a specific topical investigation. On the other hand, files in the F&R Section essentially served as a repository for the raw data collected during the first phase, which investigators might or might not use in later phases. F&R file folders usually consisted of a thick portfolios of Photostats of newspaper clippings, newsletters, programs, etc, although sometimes other material found its way into the file. F&R staff named each file folder for an individual or organization that the public record raised the suspicion of engaging in subversive activity, associating with subversive organizations or having knowledge of others engaging in subversive activity. Committee researchers underlined in red pencil on each document in the file every reference to a name belonging to the file folder. Each redlined citation then merited a card entry into the appropriate index. Finally, even if documents other than those drawn from periodicals or pamphlets libraries found their way into the F&R files, most appeared derived from publicly available sources.

There are some important implications that one can draw from these procedural practices outlined above. First, when members of Congress or agents of executive branch agencies accessed HUAC indices and F&R files, the information obtained represented, by and large, raw data, not analytical reports. Second, since Committee researchers derived the data contained in the F&R files from public sources, such as the communist press, it was only as accurate as those sources. This was questionable at best. (Chapter Seven will present evidence from executive session testimony in which a number of individuals cited in the communist press

disputed claims made about them, particularly in terms of memberships to communist fronts.) Third, the impact of the HUAC's accumulation of information had a double significance. On the one hand, it affected a large group of individuals whose names turned up in file checks of the F&R indices. This group essentially consisted of government employees, applicants for government employment, and those of interest to the intelligence agencies. On the other hand, a much smaller group of individuals became the subject of active, in-depth investigations often centering on activities outside of government, such as trade unions, education, the media, etc. Thus, one important distinguishing characteristic between the investigative name files and the F&R files and their indices is the sheer number of names each contained and the scope of impact they had. Another key difference was the raw nature of the F&R data as opposed to the more carefully investigated and corroborated evidence in the investigative name files.

What seems certain is that the more times one's name appeared on the leadership lists of subversive organizations or was cited in the communist press, the more likely one was to draw the attention of Committee researchers. Furthermore, a laudatory citation in one of the CPUSA's premiere periodicals, the *Daily Worker*, *New Masses* or *Communist*, was more likely to draw scrutiny as opposed to a mention in some other publication. Part of the job of Committee researchers was to differentiate between radicals who might be subversive from those who were benign. For example, members of the Socialist Party of America certainly had a radical vision for the future of the United States, but this party never drew the intense scrutiny that the CPUSA did. The belief was that the former was clearly not operating under the

direction of a foreign power, whereas the preponderance of evidence indicated the latter undoubtedly was. If that were the case, then the communist press was ultimately a propaganda instrument and an on-going cynical exercise in subversive polemics, serving the policy ends of a foreign power, namely the Soviet Union. The Committee believed an instrumental press, as opposed to one dedicated to objectivity and truth-telling in support of the public good, would only accept written contributions, assign praise and dispense criticism for crassly ideological reasons.

The case of Hollywood scenarist Millen Brand is instructive in understanding the Committee's logic regarding the importance of citations in the communist press.

A HUAC investigator noted in a narrative report:

Communist publications operate under strict supervision and censorship. No hostile material or matter not in accordance with the current Communist Party line is tolerated. Hence the fact that Millen Brand contributed to the *Daily Worker* of July 6, 1937, page 7, official Communist Party organ, and to the following issues of the *New Masses*, is highly significant....¹⁹⁷

The report goes on to list twenty-two citations of Millen Brand in the communist press before noting the acclaim given Brand by the *Daily Worker*: "Communist publications reserve their acclaim only for individuals who render some service to the Communist Party."¹⁹⁸

Thus, the HUAC congressmen and investigators understood that the CPUSA was a Stalinist institution and its press carefully and faithfully mirrored the party line.

¹⁹⁷ "Brand, Millen," Box 2, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.*

The few instances when the communist press allowed for any divergence from approved dogma, such as the Maltz affair, were short-lived. It was a matter of days at most before party leaders corrected the record with a reiteration of official doctrine, usually accompanied by a recantation of the part of the original author. Producing the money-losing *New Masses*, the *Daily Worker* and other titles in the communist press represented a considerable strain on party finances. The Committee's members and investigators clearly believed that the CPUSA reserved this precious commodity for written contributions from and laudatory mention of individuals who were either under party discipline or whose inclusion would somehow further the interests of the party.

Often the HUAC investigatory process ended at the research phase and never proceeded to the corroboration phase. This might be the case when the data seemed quantitatively insignificant or qualitatively suspect. Usually the explanation was that a name in the F&R database simply was not germane to a broader topical investigation. Thus, an individual or organizational name might appear in the indices of the F&R files, but never would have a corresponding investigative file created. Of course, an individual whose name appeared only in the files of the F&R Section could still under certain circumstances experience serious negative repercussions of coming under HUAC scrutiny. However, it seems clear that only a small minority of the names in the F&R files graduated into the second corroboratory phase of the investigative process.

Generally speaking, each HUAC chairman set the investigatory agenda for the Committee's work. House committees were subject to two-year administrative cycles

coinciding with congressional terms in the House of Representatives. When control of the House shifted from one party to another, the HUAC got a new chairman. For example, when the Republicans won control of the House of Representative in the 80th Congress, Democrat John Wood of Georgia gave way as chairman to Republican J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey. Sometimes when one party retained power, the Committee got a new chairman because of retirement, resignation or failure of a chairman to get re-elected. For example, during the first session of the 79th Congress, Democrat Edward J. Hart of New Jersey resigned from the HUAC and John Wood replaced him as chairman. Hart himself became chairman when Martin Dies did not seek re-election to the House in 1944 in order to run for the Senate. Dies lost that election and was out of Congress until he won an open seat in the House in 1952. However, despite efforts to do so, he was unable to obtain a seat again on the HUAC. In 1952, Wood did not seek re-election to the House for the 83rd Congress, so the Committee was due for a new chairman. When the Republicans regained control of the House in that election, Harold Velde, a Republican from Illinois, became the new chairman. Sometimes a powerful or aggressive committee member would influence the agenda to a degree: John Rankin, Republican Richard Nixon of California, Republican Karl Mundt of South Dakota, and Edward Hebert exercised significant influence on their chairmen. No doubt the senior staff member for the HUAC, whether it was Ernie Adamson, Robert Stripling or Frank Tavenner, at times swayed the chairman. Nevertheless, the opening of a new investigation required a vote of the full Committee and the chairman controlled the agenda of committee meetings.

Once the HUAC voted to open a formal investigation into a particular area, such as the motion picture industry, the process moved from the research stage to the corroboration phase. Committee investigators created investigative name files from pertinent F&R files and populated the former with information from the latter. The issue of pertinence might have constituted a gray area for Committee staff. Certainly, the significance of some individuals and organizations to an investigation was obvious and undeniable. It appears, however, that the investigators created many files for individuals that were unfruitful for the topic at hand. There are dozens of these files for the Hollywood investigation that hold little or no significant information. An example is the file for Henry Fonda, consisting only of one page, mostly taken up by a list of his screen credits, and ending with a notation indicating he was interviewed on January 13, 1948.¹⁹⁹ There is no indication in the HUAC archive whether Committee staff retired such investigative files early in their topical inquiries or kept them open until the Committee finished with them. It is certainly not the case that investigators continued to collect corroborative information after a topical investigation ended. It is clear that many names like Henry Fonda's represented a cul-de-sac and staff did not pursue further inquiry even during the topical investigation. This seems to indicate that the image of HUAC investigators relentlessly digging up evidence to pin on innocent citizens who dared hold unpopular political views is unsubstantiated by the archival evidence.

¹⁹⁹ "Fonda, Henry," Box 3, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

Most likely a decision by the Committee's senior staff person, who sometimes held the title of chief investigator and other times lead counsel, determined which files were most germane to a particular active investigation. That decision could mean the difference between a HUAC subpoena and unwelcomed national notoriety or historical obscurity. In 1947-1948, during the time of the first Hollywood hearings, Robert Stripling, a lawyer hailing originally from Texas and originally a protégé of Martin Dies, served as the HUAC's chief investigator. Stripling previously served as staff secretary (1938-1940) and chief investigator (1941-1944) for the Dies Committee. In 1949, Frank S. Tavenner, Jr. took over the senior staff position for the HUAC, but held the simple title of counsel. He previously served as the acting chief counsel on the prosecution team in the war crimes trial of Japanese Prime Minister Tojo.²⁰⁰ Tavenner held the HUAC position until his death in 1964. Thus, he directed the Committee's staff during the second Hollywood probe. Under Tavenner's leadership, longtime HUAC staffer and former FBI agent Louis J. Russell served as senior investigator through the end of 1953. Russell was very involved in the investigatory preparations for both Hollywood probes.

Given the pattern in which HUAC investigations proceeded, it is hard to imagine that the Committee's chief investigator and/or senior counsel would not decide to which individuals and organizations the staff would devote their relatively slim resources for purposes of evidentiary corroboration. However, this gives rise to

²⁰⁰ "F.S. Tavenner, Jr. House Panel Aide: Un-American Activities Unit General Counsel Dies," *New York Times*, October 22, 1964, 33. This obituary was found in Box 1042, Records of the Files and Reference Section. The HUAC kept a file of press clippings of articles in the mainstream press about the Committee, its members and employees.

an important reminder: the HUAC records are remarkably slight when it comes to internal communication. The further back one goes, the more meager the records appear. Thus, this assertion is one based on deduction rather than specific archival evidence. For important figures, such as the former Comintern representative to the CPUSA, Gerhart Eisler, the chairman, in consultation with other members of the Committee, made the decision to move forward with a full investigation.

The HUAC did receive correspondence from the public asking for and in some cases demanding that the Committee investigate Hollywood figures. An example of this from the archives is a telegram sent by a Mr. John Carter to the HUAC Chairman, Rep. John S. Wood in early 1951. The telegram read: “PLEASE INVESTIGATE KATHERINE HEPBURN WELL KNOWN HOLLYWOOD RED DISOWNED BY WALLACE AS RED LEADER IN PROGRESSIVE PARTY WHY HAS STATE DEPARTMENT ISSUED PASSPORT FOR HER.” There is no indication in her file that the HUAC staff took this seriously or that it sparked any sort of investigation.²⁰¹ There are other such letters and telegrams in the Committee’s records. However, within the Hollywood files in general, there is no evidence that any such denouncement led HUAC investigators to subject an individual to the investigatory process. Given the extent of the F&R Files, it would be clear to investigators that such denouncements most often arose from ignorance. Again, it appears certain that the investigations were the product of Committee votes and were topical in nature. It is also certainly the case that an individual’s inclusion in such an

²⁰¹ “Hepburn, Katherine,” Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

investigation was primarily a product of the extent and nature of that person's public record as gleaned from the communist press.

The exception to this rule was when a witness testified under oath in either executive or public session that someone was a member of the CPUSA, under party discipline, engaged in subversive activities, or somehow had aided the CPUSA or one of its fronts. At that point, Committee staff would in all likelihood create an investigative name file, pulling whatever information might be available from the F&R files. Thus, a sworn witness bringing an individual to the attention of the HUAC could lead the person to investigative scrutiny, whereas the documentary evidence suggests this was not the case as the result of letters or telegrams to the Committee from the general public. Nevertheless, a broad reading of the executive testimony reveals that there were a number of cases in which a witness brought forth a name of an actual or suspected party member and HUAC investigators were unable to verify the assertions. It seems that the HUAC congressmen and their investigators realized the unreliability of some testimony. Memories could be faulty and a witness might recollect a rumor as being fact. No doubt some sought to settle old scores through HUAC testimony. Whether consciously so or not, witnesses could deviate from the facts. Therefore, investigators sought to triangulate data so as to draw the correct, factual conclusions.

Once the corroboration phase began, the on-going work of the F&R Section researchers of collecting data from publicly available sources continued, but investigators began the process of trying to verify and analyze the information they already had, as well as to find new data sources that spoke to the accuracy of what

was already in the files. The aim of the corroboration phase and, therefore, of the efforts of investigators to validate and augment the public record, was to prepare the way for HUAC congressmen to hear sworn testimony.

To that end, the staff of the Investigative Section prepared a document for each investigative file that for lack of a better name one could call a three-column summary. These summaries could be as slight as a third to half of a page in length or as long as six or more pages. The length of a three-column summary typically indicated the perceived degree to which an individual contributed to or was cited in the communist press, was involved with communist front organizations, or engaged in other activities that might lead HUAC staff to suspect ties with the CPUSA. The formatting of the summaries was fairly consistent over the years. They were often, but not always, dated and, thus, one must sometimes deduce the approximate date of creation of the report by noting the last entry. Under the heading of a file subject's name, there appeared a numbered index, which listed the governmental bodies that had cited the organizations referred to as subversive. Most often those citations originated from one or more of three sources. The most common was a designation or finding by an Attorney General of the United States, either Tom Clark or Francis Biddle, and a notation of the document in which the designation or finding appeared. A second source of such a citation was a finding in a published report by the HUAC or its predecessor, the Dies Committee. The third source of such a designation was a finding by the California Legislature's Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, also known as the Tenney Committee. Of the three citations,

the one often viewed as most credible was the Attorney General's list about which historian Richard Fried writes:

Since 1942 the Attorney General had listed organizations adjudged to be subversive; membership in them might raise a question but not conclusively prove disloyalty. The list was first made public in 1948. One might have joined one of these groups because its expressed aim seemed laudable – civil rights, support for migrant workers, or opposition to Hitler. One thus risked unknowingly entering into subversive company. Communists might eventually take over a group, in which case the dates of one's membership became crucial (but not always conclusive) evidence of political views.²⁰²

Citing an organization in the three-column summaries with such a designation appeared to represent an attempt at a neutral and objective characterization that transcended politics.

The three columns from which the summary derived its name had the headings "Organization," "Affiliation" and "Source." Under the "Organization" heading, investigators might cite the CPUSA if the individual named was a known member. One of the CPUSA's known fronts or an organization suspected, but not proven, to be a front might appear under the heading. Likewise, a trade union, guild or other professional organization designated as being under communist control or subject to communist infiltration were frequent candidates for the list. Other citations could be of a much more transitory nature: a rally put on by a front or suspected front organization or even a published statement in the form of an advertisement in a periodical. An example of the latter is an open letter, signed by Hollywood Ten screenwriter Samuel Ornitz, appearing in the *Western Worker*, that criticized the

²⁰² Richard Fried, *Nightmare in Red*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) 70.

American Committee for the Defense of Trotsky and denounced demands for an investigation of the Russian “purge” trial as “political interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union with hostile intent.”²⁰³ One regular and controversial citation was the Progressive Citizens of American, the political organization that splintered a number of Democrats away to support Henry Wallace’s presidential candidacy in 1948. There was strong suspicion then and much evidence now that the upper echelons of the PCA included many communist political organizers.

“Affiliation” referred to the named individual’s relationship with that organization. The affiliation might seem specific and exact, such as “elected board member” in the case of a known or suspected front or “contributor” when the individual had submitted an article for publication by the communist press or one its fronts. Sometimes the designation given was “sponsor” for an affiliation with a communist front or the equivalent of what today one might call a communist-led political action committee. As Chapter Seven will explore, this label was problematic at best, because many individuals found themselves sponsors of organizations or events without their consent. The affiliation could be as slight as “performer,” “entertainer,” or “singer” at an event put on by the party or a front organization. Although the three-column reports reveal a consistent pattern of “affiliation” with the CPUSA and/or its front organizations for some Hollywood personalities, for others

²⁰³ “Ornitz, Samuel,” Box 6, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives. In 1957, Ornitz was the first member of the Hollywood Ten to pass away. All the evidence suggests that he died a loyal Stalinist.

the evidence is much more tenuous and unclear.²⁰⁴ In some cases, the three-column summary is only a third of a page long and demonstrates no pattern of affiliation with communist organizations or causes, and such interaction that did occur seems incidental and casual. Chapter Seven will return to this issue in greater detail and discuss the problem of front “affiliation” in more depth.

The source column served to list citations. An often cited source was a publication and the most common publication cited was the *Daily Worker*. The other periodical that commonly served as a citation in the source column was the *New Masses*. It appears that, if there was any citation from the sources that the F&R files drew upon, it would show up in the three-column summary if an individual became associated with a HUAC investigation. A citation from the periodical press always included the date of publication and the page number on which the information appeared. However, as in the case of the F&R files, the three-column summaries drew upon many printed sources beyond citations in radical newspapers and magazines. Newsletters, pamphlets, leaflets, letterheads, press releases, event programs, minutes of union or guild meetings, printed texts of speeches, legal briefs, and previously published HUAC reports all served as citations in the source column. Occasionally, the source column cited the anticommunist publication *Counterattack*

²⁰⁴ An example of an individual with an extensive pattern of affiliation with CPUSA activities and fronts was screenwriter Donald Odgen Stewart, whose three-column report ran six legal pages long. In addition, his file included a seventeen page report that details very extensive front activities and affiliations, as well as citations in the communist press. It is one of the longest, if not the longest, such report in the Hollywood section of the HUAC archives. “Stewart, Donald Odgen,” Box 8, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

as the basis of the information.²⁰⁵ However, this was as rare as a source citation from the *Daily Worker* was common. It is clear that the HUAC's information originated predominately in the communist press rather than from private, anticommunist sources. Although the form of the report varied slightly over time and became more detailed and thorough by the 1950s, its essential format stayed the same.

The three-column summaries appeared designed to reveal the scope and extent of an individual's involvement in CPUSA fronts and causes, but they reveal little in biographical terms of whom the person was and the degree to which she or he was important, influential or significant. To fill this need for the congressmen sitting on the Committee, investigators or research staff created narrative reports for inclusion in an individual's investigative name file. A typical narrative report included the subject's birth name if different than his or her current name, which was and is common in show business. The report also usually included date and place of birth, as well as the person's educational background, the name of any current or former spouse, the date(s) of any marriages, military service records, and, if applicable, naturalization information. The length of the narrative reports varied depending upon the prominence or obscurity of the subject of the investigation: some were barely one-quarter of a page long, whereas others might run five to ten pages in length.

Efforts by investigators to corroborate and supplement the information forwarded from the F&R files into narrative reports took many forms. The Hollywood investigative name files show that HUAC investigators used *Who's Who in America* and the *International Motion Picture Almanac* to glean information about

²⁰⁵ It does not appear that any citations of *Red Channels*, a similar anticommunist newsletter, found their way into the Hollywood files.

the subjects of their investigations.²⁰⁶ Since the bulk of the party members or suspected communists in Hollywood were active in some aspect of motion picture production, the narrative reports included a list of screen credits and which studio or studios employed them. If a person's name had come up in previous testimony or a witness named her or him as a communist, suspected communist or as someone involved in subversive activity, that testimony was often summarized in the narrative report. A chronicle of any significant trade union or professional guild activity usually found its way into the narrative report, particularly if the union or guild had a connection in some way with the CPUSA or its leadership included known or suspected members of the party.

Most often the above represented the extent of the information in the narrative reports, i.e. material available from public sources. There were some exceptions to this pattern as investigators sought corroboration of data derived from the communist press. An example comes from the narrative report in the file of Jeff Kibre, a studio technician who was almost certainly a CPUSA member and involved intimately in efforts to infiltrate one of Hollywood's key technical unions, the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees. Kibre's file includes a statement of his probable income, as well as a record of arrests and convictions from the records of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office, the Los Angeles City Police Department and the Federal District Court of Los Angeles. In fact, Kibre, who had at least three

²⁰⁶ For an example of when investigators noted they could not find information in *Who's Who in America* or the *International Motion Picture Almanac*, see "Gough, Lloyd," Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

aliases, had joined the CPUSA under the name Barry Wood and in 1938 had been elected to the party's executive committee for the Los Angeles branch.²⁰⁷

In terms of documenting arrest records, Kibre represents a significant exception in the HUAC's Hollywood files. While the Committee did draw on police reports, they did so rarely. Just as rare is the information collected in the file of J. Edward Bromberg, a veteran character actor, whose death from a heart attack at the age of forty-eight critics often cite as the result of the stress from being blacklisted. Bromberg's file is truly exceptional in that it contains personal information not part of the public record: his social security number; salary; home ownership information, including his home's then current value; the value of his government bonds; the amount of his life insurance policy; and the balance of funds in his bank account.²⁰⁸

Bromberg was in all likelihood a member of the party and his activities in and with various communist front organizations, as documented by the HUAC, were extensive. It is difficult to conceive of how intrusively collecting this type of personal information could assist Congress in fulfilling its mandate to investigate the extent of subversive or un-American activities in the United States and the diffusion of subversive or un-American propaganda, or to recommend remedial legislation to address either. Nevertheless, if the Hollywood investigations are indicative of how the Committee conducted its other probes, then such invasive collection of personal

²⁰⁷ "Kibre, Jeff (AKA Kibre, Jacob Plane and Wood, Barry)," Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

²⁰⁸ "Bromberg, J. Edward," Box 2, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

information was a rare exception.²⁰⁹ No other investigative name file contains nearly the same degree of personal and financial information. Suffice it to say, Bromberg's file was atypical. Although in one other known case, that of Donald Odgen Stewart, the Committee obtained income tax records to determine the extent of financial contributions to communist fronts, the HUAC files do not indicate why investigators singled out Bromberg for such an extensive and invasive personal, financial inquiry.²¹⁰

An example of one of the more exotic attempts at corroboration was the purchase in 1955 of a set of files from the estate of William Hynes by William Wheeler, an investigator from the HUAC's Los Angeles field office. The purchase price remains unknown. Hynes' files contained a list of names of individuals who were members of the Culver City Studio Unit of the CPUSA. The files also contained information on members of a front group called the American Peace Mobilization, which sought to keep the United States neutral in World War II during the time of the Hitler-Stalin Pact. In this case, however, the information obtained was not useful; a handwritten notation on the cover page of the report indicated the names "need not be carded...too old."²¹¹ Thus, although Committee investigators apparently

²⁰⁹ Since the HUAC archives are exceedingly vast and the other investigations are beyond the scope of this study, it is unwise to claim this assertion as a certainty. However, an extensive review of the thick file on Gerhart Eisler, who was not directly a Hollywood figure, and a preliminary study of some of the other investigations, such as that of the National Lawyers Guild, seems to bear out the correctness of this claim.

²¹⁰ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of James K. McGuinness" (May 12, 1947), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 83.

²¹¹ William Wheeler to Thomas Beale, memorandum, September 28, 1955, in Box 5, Organizations Name Files, Records of the Files and Research Section,

resorted to creative methods to obtain information on the CPUSA, there was no mandate to accumulate membership data from fifteen years previous and add it to the F&R card index.²¹² This seems to belie the assertion that the HUAC sought to pin the label of “communist” on individuals for passing associations made many years in the past.

Of course the ideal piece of corroborating evidence would be a CPUSA registration card or membership book. The HUAC archives do reveal that for some individuals the Committee obtained just such substantiation. The Committee possessed in its files Photostats of such documents; how investigators obtained them is not clear. Although the form and content of CPUSA registration cards and membership books changed over the years, the information contained on the Photostats gives one pause to consider why government officials might find such a membership alarming. CPUSA membership books until the end of 1930s clearly indicate that the American party is a “Section of the Communist International.” Thus, claims by revisionist historians that the CPUSA operated independently of Moscow find counterevidence from party documents. The membership books essentially declare that the CPUSA was not simply affiliated with the Comintern, but rather it was organizationally a subcomponent of it. In addition, the books have a space to record the date that the holder of the book “Entered Revolutionary Movement.” Except for the extraordinarily naïve, those signing up must have realized that they

Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

²¹² The handwritten notation on the report indicates the decision not to card the names was made by Donald T. Appell, one of the HUAC’s most experienced investigators in the mid-1950s.

were not joining a typical political party like the Republicans, the Democrats, or the Socialists. The CPUSA overtly associated its mission with that of revolution. Thus, by definition, it was subversive in the classic sense of the word. Finally, the registration cards ask the registrant for both his or her “real name,” as well as his or her “party name.”²¹³ This, of course, begs the question: if one is not signing up for a subversive organization, why does one need the political equivalent of a *nom de guerre*?

In an era before the internet, video recordings or even television reruns, attempting to determine the ideological content of movies that had played in movie theatres years before could be a real challenge. However, the HUAC’s mandate focused on assessing the diffusion of subversive propaganda. Thus, Committee congressmen believed the charge that communist writers in Hollywood had attempted to insert propaganda into motion pictures warranted investigation. This raised the practical problem as to how to make an assessment of the ideological content of movies. The result was that Committee investigators had an additional task during the corroboration phase of the investigatory process: to verify often subtle content of specific motion pictures. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, there was only one way to view a Hollywood motion picture – one had to watch it projected onto a movie screen in the 35mm film format. If a film was no longer playing at the local cinema, which was the case with the vast majority of the motion pictures that were germane to the Hollywood investigations, then typically the Los Angeles field investigator had to

²¹³ See Box 6, Organizations Name Files, Records of the Files and Research Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

arrange a special screening. This meant securing film prints, renting a screening room, and paying a projectionist, all of which represented a significant expense.

An alternative was for investigators to obtain copies of scripts. This was problematic for several reasons. They did not exist in libraries, but rather investigators had to acquire them from the movie studios that owned them. Even if the studios extended full cooperation, often their record-keeping was poor. The HUAC was sometimes interested in films that were a decade or more old at a time when studios typically produced more than a hundred movies a year. Simply locating an accurate copy of a script that might have gone through multiple drafts by a number of writers could be logistically difficult. In addition, directors often changed the content of movies during the process of shooting, adding or deleting lines or even scenes. After production was finished, editors might trim or rearrange film scenes to obtain the best dramatic effect. Thus, the writer's final product and what audiences saw in the movie house could be quite different.

Because of the difficulties of arranging special screenings or obtaining copies of scripts, the HUAC also relied on other methods to assess the ideological content and possible subversive qualities of Hollywood's creations. The testimony of those involved in the creation of the films in question often spoke to the issues of ideology and propaganda, but this often led to contradictory statements. A HUAC subcommittee discovered this in May, 1947 when it traveled to Los Angeles to take preliminary executive session testimony in order to determine whether the facts warranted a full-scale investigation of the motion picture industry. Several anticommunist screenwriters and film critics asserted that subtle communist

propaganda had found its way into the movies, whereas most of the producers and studio executives denied this did or even could take place.

Another method investigators seized upon was to rely on movie reviews written contemporaneously with the public release of the motion pictures in question. Although the HUAC files show that investigators relied on the mainstream press for such information, once again they used the communist press in a form of self-reporting. It was a difficult proposition to deny that a motion picture like *North Star*, *Mission to Moscow* or *Song of Russia* did not contain pro-Soviet propaganda if the communist press praised it for its content.²¹⁴ For example, the *Daily Worker* regularly featured a column called “Film Front” written by David Platt, who clearly saw motion pictures as a weapon in the class struggle and evaluated motion pictures in ideological terms. Clippings and Photostats of Platt’s reviews are well-represented in the Hollywood investigative name files. Certainly, a laudatory mention by Platt of a film, its director and/or its writer or a commendation that a character or a scene exhibited appropriate “class consciousness” invited HUAC scrutiny.²¹⁵ HUAC investigators apparently cross-referenced the movies he acclaimed against what the files revealed about the film’s writer or director. Thus, as Committee staff undertook the logistically difficult task of analyzing the content of the American films for the possible insertion of communist propaganda, it was the communist press that offered

²¹⁴ For example, an editorial from *The Worker*, April 11, 1943, asserts that *North Star* “promises to be a major pro-Soviet film.” The HUAC was aware that communist labor agitators screened this movie for free to industrial workers in Chicago. See “General (1945-1947) Films Deadline for Action,” Box 1105, Records of the Files and Research Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

²¹⁵ For example, Platt’s acclaim of John Wexley and Robert Rossen drew the attention of HUAC investigators. *Ibid.*

the simplest avenue of investigation and most direct method of analysis. In many cases, the *Daily Worker* offered the analysis for the HUAC.

One of the key duties of HUAC investigators during the tenures of Stripling and Tavenner was to interview, if possible, potential witnesses prior to their appearance before the Committee. Investigators from the main office in Washington, DC and those in the field offices participated in this exercise. The HUAC maintained field offices in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. During the Hollywood probe, only the Los Angeles office made significant investigatory contributions.²¹⁶ During the first Hollywood hearings in the late 1940s, the “Los Angeles office” was in fact the law office of attorney H. A. Smith, a former FBI agent, who conducted investigations for the HUAC throughout the state of California. In the early 1950s during the second Hollywood probe, William Wheeler served in the same capacity, replacing Smith as the HUAC’s key investigator in Los Angeles.

When potential witnesses were antagonistic toward the HUAC, such a preparatory interview was usually impossible. The investigator’s role was then to insure the potential witness was served with a subpoena. The purpose of the preparatory interview was to evaluate the degree to which the potential witness had reliable and accurate information germane to the probe; to determine the nature of what that testimony might entail, which was often helpful in the preparation of questions to ask during testimony; and to assess the degree to which a potential witness might make a favorable presentation to the public. In terms of the latter, the

²¹⁶ HUAC files show that the Los Angeles field office also worked a great deal on the investigation of the National Lawyers Guild, which had its headquarters in Los Angeles. In fact, the files of the Hollywood investigation and that of the National Lawyers Guild are to a large degree intermingled.

Committee no doubt sought to avoid the past mistake the Dies Committee made of calling witnesses, only to have them appear to or actually be crackpots.

The then-liberal Ronald Reagan represents a fascinating case in point. The Los Angeles investigator, H. A. Smith, provided the following assessment of Reagan's suitability as a witness to HUAC headquarters in Washington:

This individual is presently President of the Screen Actors Guild. He has no fear of any one [sic], is a nice talker, well informed on the subject, and will make a splendid witness. He is of course reticent to testify, because he states that he is a New Deal liberal, and does not agree with a number of individuals of the Motion Picture Alliance. I believe we straightened out a number of his differences, in that he felt [conservative actor Adolphe] Menjou and some of the others referred to him, Reagan, as a man who had been a Leftist and then reformed. Reagan resents this very much, as he states he never was a Leftist, that actually he got tangled up in a few committees he thought were all right, but it took him some time to learn they were not.²¹⁷

The field agent happened to be from the same hometown as Reagan and struck up an easy rapport with him. The investigator cautioned that he had to disabuse Reagan of the belief that one of the other potential witnesses, James K. McGuinness, an executive at M-G-M Studios and a former screenwriter, was a professional red-baiter. In other words, Smith warned the HUAC that Reagan was wary of participating in anything that smacked of red-baiting.

The actor Robert Taylor also represented another extremely reluctant "friendly witness" with whom Smith worked carefully to try to win over. Taylor had

²¹⁷ "Reagan, Ronald," Box 6, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

testified voluntarily in executive session before a HUAC sub-committee visiting Hollywood on a fact-finding trip in May 1947 with the understanding that his testimony would remain confidential. The popular leading man was well-known in Hollywood as a conservative and had very reluctantly agreed to star in *Song of Russia*, a 1944 film made by M-G-M when the United States and the Soviet Union were wartime allies, but which later came under criticism as pro-communist propaganda by Ayn Rand amongst others. Louis B. Mayer had personally asked Taylor to star in the picture, which the former considered pro-Allied propaganda rather than being pro-Soviet.

When Smith informed Taylor he would receive a subpoena to testify in public session, Taylor was already angry that he admittedly had looked “silly” in his previous testimony and that HUAC had made public the substance of his testimony given in executive session with the expectation it would remain confidential. Taylor felt double-crossed and that, since he was not an expert on communism, his testimony would offer the Committee nothing of value. He believed the HUAC was using his celebrity to gain publicity. Although he expressed genuine appreciation to Investigator Smith for the work he had done fighting communism, Taylor, an anticommunist and supposed “friendly witness” made his feelings about the HUAC crystal clear:

I've never cared a whole helluva lot for politicians, whether they be Republican or Democrat. And I've certainly never believed it inherent in my job as a motion picture actor to aid in feathering any of their nests for them via publicity from my name....

These investigations, the way they're being run in Washington at the moment, remind me more of a 3-

Ring Circus than of a sincere effort to rid the country of a real threat...

If I am subpoenaed – and I sincerely hope that something can be done to pigeon-hole that subpoena – I shall, naturally, go to Washington for the investigation. I will feel utterly ridiculous and shall resent every minute of the whole thing...Moreover, as a “friendly” witness, I shall be friendly to the cause; as far as being friendly to the Committee itself [sic] is concerned that possibility went out the window the last time I was “crossed up”.²¹⁸

Taylor ended his scathing letter with a statement of hope that he could duck the U.S. marshal, who would serve the subpoena. He was not successful at this and found himself testifying in public session approximately a month later.

Legendary producer Samuel Goldwyn was also reluctant to testify before the HUAC. Interviewed by Investigator Smith during the preliminary work leading to the first Hollywood hearings, Goldwyn denied communists were able to sneak any propaganda into American movies, which were in no way dangerous. Smith wrote to Washington: “Although tending to be cooperative, Mr. GOLDWYN’s sole desire was to see that he did not testify in Washington, to convince us that he does not know anything, and if he did know anything he was not going to tell anyway, even as he does not desire to put the finger on anybody.... Mr. GOLDWYN polished us off in pretty good shape without telling us very much.”²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Robert Taylor to H. A. Smith, September 23, 1947,” in “Taylor, Robert,” Box 8, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

²¹⁹ “Goldwyn, Samuel,” Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

A final example of a reluctant witness was that of Walt Disney, a man often excoriated by critics on the left as being a reactionary. Smith wrote that, “Mr. DISNEY is a gentleman, presents a nice appearance, talks well, and certainly will be an asset as a witness on our behalf. Some difficulty was experienced in convincing him that his testimony would be of value. He has no fear of testifying, however, he states that his story is an old one and that he is doubtful whether it would be of any value in connection with the instant hearing.”²²⁰ Disney, too, ended up receiving a HUAC subpoena.

The cases of Reagan, Taylor, Goldwyn, and Disney are instructive of several features of the HUAC investigations into Hollywood. First, they reveal that a key duty of Committee investigators was to interview and determine the suitability of certain witnesses before they gave testimony. Second, the instances of Reagan and Taylor in particular demonstrate that a talented investigator like Smith could strike a valuable rapport with a witness despite the latter’s antipathy toward the Committee or testifying in general. Third, Committee staff created investigative files even for so-called friendly witnesses. Fourth, reports in the investigative name files reveal that interviews by field investigators conveyed the substance of the probable testimony friendly witnesses were likely to make. They do not, however, indicate in any way that the field operatives coached the witnesses as to what their testimony ought to be. Finally, the HUAC Hollywood files show that in fact some of the key friendly witnesses were not all that friendly to the HUAC and strongly preferred not to testify.

²²⁰ “Disney, Walt,” Box 3, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

On occasion, Committee investigators supplemented the corroboration process by gathering information from grand jury investigations and police reports on possible subversive activities, such as communist led strikes. Some information sparingly came from the FBI, but the latter rarely cooperated well with the HUAC. J. Edgar Hoover was usually very loyal to whichever president happened to be in office at the time, which during most of the Hollywood investigations was Harry Truman. Hoover was loath to assist the HUAC, which was often critical of both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Additionally, Hoover felt the HUAC was out of its depth trying to run an investigation and that his agency was more properly suited to such work. He feared that sharing information with publicity hungry congressmen would compromise his sources. Thus, Hoover extended his cooperation sparingly, with great care and when he could benefit from it politically. In some cases, the investigative name files contain reports from the FBI or information requested from other federal agencies, such as the State Department, the Labor Department, the National Labor Relations Board, and various other executive departments. However, in the case of the Hollywood hearings, these are exceptions rather than the norm.

Another exception from the HUAC's general investigative pattern is the evidence of some cooperation with the so-called Tenney Committee in California. Republican State Senator Jack B. Tenney was the chairman of the California Legislature's Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, sometimes known as the CUAC, from 1941-1949. His committee was probably the most powerful and well-known of the dozen or so un-American committees that sprung up

at the state level during the period out of fear of subversive activities by domestic fascist and communist movements.²²¹

Tenney was a former musician, whose composition “Mexicali Rose” garnered some fame, and later he headed a musicians’ union local in Los Angeles. He eventually lost his leadership position in the local in a power struggle with what he believed was a communist controlled faction. Thus, originally a progressive himself, Tenney moved increasingly to the right and ultimately became a dogmatic and demagogic anticommunist. In 1936, Tenney began his tenure as a representative of a Los Angeles district in the California Assembly from 1936-1942 and then served in the California Senate from 1942-1954. His background provided him with a natural interest in trade union affairs along with a personal antipathy towards anyone who cooperated in any manner with the communist movement. Because California was the home of the bulk of the motion picture production in the United States, communist infiltration into the movie business was an issue of local concern, as much as of national security.

Tenney testified before the HUAC in March 1947 during the preliminary phase leading up to the Hollywood hearings. In addition, he sent a rambling eleven page letter to J. Parnell Thomas, who had become the HUAC chairman in January 1947 when a Republican majority took control with the incoming 80th Congress. The letter summarized the California Committee’s findings of its investigation of the Hollywood Writers Mobilization (HWM), which Tenney believed was a front under communist control and that its mission was “to build sympathy for Soviet Russia and

²²¹ Fried, *Nightmare in Red* 108-109.

Communism in general.”²²² To supplement the letter, Tenney included thirty-five documents designated as exhibits. Some of these documents showed that the CUAC made use of an informant, who apparently supplied the minutes of various meetings of the HWM at which its leadership discussed policy issues and sought to craft a plan to sell the services of the HWM to various government agencies.²²³

Although Tenney’s testimony and the documentary evidence he forwarded to the HUAC was no doubt helpful to Chairman Thomas, there does not appear to be any record of extensive cooperation between Tenney and his federal counterparts at least in terms of the Hollywood hearings. While in a number of investigative files HUAC investigators quote the findings of various CUAC investigations, it does not appear that the California committee or any other state level body served as an investigative arm of the HUAC. This stands in contradistinction to the slogan: “the plot to control America’s thinking,” a catchphrase the HWM adopted to oppose the “Hearst-Tenney-Rankin threat.”²²⁴ Though the communists leading the Mobilization clearly wanted to paint a conspiracy of reaction, the documentary evidence in the HUAC archive does not support this view.

What is not in the records left behind by the HUAC is perhaps as important as what is present in the National Archives. An analysis of the files relating to the

²²² Jack B. Tenney to J. Parnell Thomas, October 25, 1947, Box 198, “Eisler, Hanns Tenny [sic] Report,” Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 10.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²²⁴ From a flyer advertising a series of rallies entitled “Counter-Attack.” The program notes assert: “The glint of censorship in Hearst’s eyes has kindled a threat of nation-wide book-burnings. The Tenney fear-smear campaign has struck at the roots of our school system. The Wood-Rankin Committee is poised for an all-out attack against the radio and motion picture industries.”

Hollywood investigations reveals that there were almost no instances of Committee investigators conducting direct surveillance of suspects. The exception was a report by a field agent who attended some speeches by Gerhart Eisler in Chicago in front of sympathetic audiences and reported back to Washington what he witnessed of the public event. On the other hand, there are no reports of investigators tailing suspects in order to dig up incriminating evidence. The only events even remotely close to this are instances of unfriendly witnesses evading HUAC subpoenas and investigators' hapless attempts at tracking them down. Furthermore, there is no record of HUAC making use of informants in the manner in which the CUAC did as mentioned above. Committee investigators simply did not have the time or resources to track the movements of those it investigated.

There is no record of wiretaps or the opening of private mail, no documents obtained without a subpoena, no network of domestic spies and no rifling through suspects' garbage or psychiatric records. There were no break-ins to rifle through private files or Watergate-style dirty tricks. There was one instance where the Committee obtained a record of telephones calls, i.e. a list of telephone numbers called from a particular phone, in an attempt to establish that Gerhart and Hanns Eisler had been in touch with each other. However, there is no record of the Committee tapping the telephone calls of either man. There are no surreptitious recordings of private conversations nor are there transcripts of the same in the HUAC files. There are no records of agents "overhearing" private conversations.

In 1945, a representative of the Speak-O-Phone Recording and Equipment Company wrote to the HUAC chairman, seeking to sell the Committee recording

equipment that could bug a room or a telephone. The company supposedly supplied its product to various agencies of the federal government. The Committee chairman replied in writing:

I do not know whether the use of such a device as referred to by you would be permissible under Federal law and by a Committee of Congress. But aside from that, the Committee on Un-American Activities is now in the process of organizing and has not yet selected an investigative staff. Assuming that the use of the Speak-O-Phone would be lawful, the Committee would make no decision respecting its use, until after consultation with its Chief Investigator.²²⁵

With that temporizing communication, the matter died. The HUAC never availed itself of the Speak-O-Phone.

Ironically, the HUAC, though tasked with the mandate to investigate subversive propaganda, found itself restricted by copyright law. One can find an example of this in the investigative file of Lester Koenig, who was a writer and producer in Hollywood. Koenig became the subject of HUAC interest because of his ties to three communist front organizations: the League of American Writers, the Theatre Arts Committee, and the Committee for the First Amendment. Koenig's file indicated he was an editorial board member of a publication called the *Clipper*, published by an organization called the Black and White Press, Inc. under the auspices of the Hollywood Chapter of the League of American Writers.

Unfortunately, the *Clipper* was not available for inclusion into the investigative file.

An unknown investigator wrote: "The *Clipper* is a copyrighted [sic] publication and therefore cannot be photostated [sic] for use as an exhibit. A bound volume of the

²²⁵ Edward J. Hart to Maxwell B. Meyers, March 5, 1945, Box 1042, Committee Subjects, Records of the Files and Reference Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

magazine is available in the Library of Congress.”²²⁶ This is one example of a number of similar cases. The HUAC staff would not break the law and create a Photostatic copy of a copyrighted publication. Thus, whether the case was the surreptitious recording of conversations or the replication of copyrighted documents, HUAC investigators took care to abide by the law.

Once investigators believed they had obtained sufficient corroboration of material forwarded from the F&R files or determined that the potential testimony of a prospective witness was suitably useful for a topical investigation, the chief investigator or lead counsel to the Committee prepared a set of questions to ask during the executive session testimony. Great care went into the preparation questions and there is evidence in the files that often the questions would go through several iterations before the HUAC’s chief counsel was ready to interrogate the witness. If the witness was of minor importance or was called simply to verify a point of someone else’s testimony, the list of questions might be very brief. On the other hand, for witnesses considered important, such the Eisler brothers or members of the Hollywood Ten, the list could be quite long. There were sixty-eight questions prepared for the executive session testimony of John Garfield.

The lists of questions were intended specifically for the chief investigator or senior counsel, Robert Stripling and Frank Tavenner, respectively, to ask. Committee members often asked questions during testimony, some more than others depending

²²⁶ “Koenig, Lester,” Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

upon the investigation.²²⁷ Of the congressmen, the various chairmen were usually the most active interrogators, probably because they worked most closely with senior staff to whom they gave direction. Whereas the committee members' questions were often desultory or attempts at clarification, the prepared questions were logical and intended to produce one of two results. One goal was to use the prepared questions to build an argument for a state of affairs the chief investigator or senior counsel believed to be the case, i.e. that the witness was currently or in the past involved in possible subversive activity. This was the process when questioning an "unfriendly" witness. The second goal was to draw from the witness specific information that the Committee wanted in order to either expand its understanding of communist activity or gain confirmation of information gained from the testimony of others.

The final step before executive session testimony could occur was to create exhibits for the chief investigator or senior counsel to use when questioning witnesses the Committee suspected of subversive activity. These exhibits were evidentiary in nature. HUAC members and staff investigators expected such witnesses to dissemble if not outright lie. Poor or selective memories were common. The senior interrogator used exhibits to confront witnesses with the evidence of their involvement with communist activities. Because witnesses often tried to hide that involvement, the chief investigator or lead counsel sought to build the case that the witness's prevarication was confirmation of subversive activity. On the other hand, since membership in the CPUSA or one of its front organizations was not against the law,

²²⁷ For example, freshman congressman Richard Nixon was a particularly active questioner during the Hiss investigation and other atomic spy inquiries, but rarely even attended the Hollywood sessions.

critics argued that such tactics amounted to tarring the witnesses by innuendo and implication. In any event, the irony was that once again it was the communist press that provided the bulk of the material used to create the exhibits. The evidence that most witnesses had to account for was the public record published by the CPUSA or its fronts.

Misidentifying individuals, confusion of persons with the same or similar names, and the failure to adequately confirm identities, therefore, ruining reputations and careers, has been a common criticism of HUAC investigatory methods. This type of error might have occurred with the use of the bulky F&R files, which consisted of the compilation of unanalyzed raw data. Mistaken identities had occurred during the freewheeling days of the Dies Committee. However, a thorough review of the Hollywood investigative name files shows that from 1947 onwards, under the leadership of Stripling and then Tavenner, by the time the Committee was ready to subpoena a witness, investigators knew well with whom they were dealing. There is no evidence of mistaken identity once investigators completed the corroboration phase.

Once the HUAC staff completed the tasks of compiling of corroboratory information, preparing lists of questions and creating exhibits, the executive session phase could begin. Testimony taken in executive session could take place in a number of ways. It could occur in front of a session of the full Committee with most or all of its members present. Just as often, executive testimony could transpire before an ad hoc subcommittee, as was the case during a sub-committee's visit to Los Angeles in May, 1947. It required a vote of the full HUAC to authorize a

subcommittee to undertake testimony on its own, but executive session minutes seem to indicate that such votes were routine. The HUAC often used a subcommittee to obtain testimony outside of Washington or when the House was not in session. A subcommittee could be as small as one congressman and a staff investigator.²²⁸ In fact, there are rare instances in the record where investigators, such as William Wheeler and Louis Russell, alone questioned friendly witnesses in executive session in Los Angeles.²²⁹ A court reporter always was always present to transcribe the testimony and staff archived bound copies in a file series separate from either the F&R files or the investigative name files.

Legal counsel rarely accompanied the so-called friendly witnesses who had no previous record of communist activity. However, counsel often accompanied those friendly witnesses who had left the CPUSA and sought to cooperate with the HUAC. In the case of former Hollywood communists that counsel was usually Martin Gang, an attorney noted for helping ex-communists cooperate with the HUAC as a means of getting off the blacklist. Gang was also a regular feature of the public sessions held in the early 1950s. Non-cooperative witnesses who refused to testify under the provisions of Fifth Amendment privilege were always accompanied by their lawyers

²²⁸ For example, Chairman John S. Wood and Chief Counsel Ernie Adamson operated as a subcommittee to take the executive session testimony of Howard Fast in New York City. See “Transcript of Executive Session Testimony of Howard Fast,” (October 23, 1946), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

²²⁹ For example, William Wheeler alone took a sworn testimony Harold Hecht. See “Transcript of Executive Session Testimony of Harold Hecht,” (April 29, 1952), Box 19, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

and usually received a contempt of Congress citation. After the higher courts ruled against this in the 1950s, the practice of issuing such citations ended.

A broad reading of the transcripts of testimony given in executive session indicates that different interrogators had very different styles of questioning. Ernie Adamson, who served as chief counsel after the government drafted the middle-aged Robert Stripling in 1944, was aggressive to the point of sarcasm and ridicule with unfriendly witnesses. When Stripling took over as chief investigator in 1947, he exhibited the aggressiveness of a prosecutor, but with in a professional manner. Transcripts show that he attempted to maintain decorum and avoid the theatrics characteristic of the Dies Committee, even if at times Chairman J. Parnell Thomas allowed himself at times to become angry at recalcitrant witnesses and depart from Stripling's script. Frank Tavenner was the consummate, but low key professional. While his questioning was logical, methodical, and pointed, he never stooped to badgering his witness. His contemporaries noted that Tavenner's questioning as general counsel to the HUAC was vigorous, yet dispassionate and fair.²³⁰ The chairmanship of John S. Wood, a former judge, aided Tavenner in this respect. Although he had significant failings, such as the unwillingness to investigate the Ku Klux Klan, Wood took testimony in a calm and judicious manner. This stood in contrast to predecessors Chairman Thomas, a former stock and insurance executive, who had no legal experience and Martin Dies in particular.

²³⁰ "F.S. Tavenner, Jr. House Panel Aide: Un-American Activities Unit General Counsel Dies," *New York Times*, October 22, 1964, 33 and "Frank Tavenner, U. S. Prosecutor," *Washington Post*, October 22, 1964, B-7, found in Box 1042, Committee Subjects, Records of the Files and Reference Section.

Not all those who testified in executive session were recalled to testify again in public session, though many were. Executive session testimony could vary from that given in public session, especially when the chief investigator or lead counsel chose to hold back new information given in executive session to allow investigators time to do some additional detective work.

As succeeding chapters will make clear, there were several themes to which interrogators returned to repeatedly during executive session testimony. The HUAC congressmen, chief investigators and lead counsel wanted to understand the inner workings of the CPUSA at the local level, to comprehend its use of front organizations and infiltration of trade unions, to grasp communist efforts in the area of propaganda, and to obtain confirmation from witnesses as to the correctness of the information in Committee files. The last task was an exercise in triangulation to insure accuracy. The same is true of new information obtained in sworn testimony. The transcript record shows in a number of places that, when a witness named someone as a CPUSA member, the Committee sought confirmation of the fact from other witnesses.²³¹

In summary, the newly available documentary evidence in the HUAC archives reveals a far more nuanced understanding of the Committee's investigatory methods than previously supposed. The HUAC investigatory staff did not act as a

²³¹ For example, Rep. Jackson asked witness Max Silver to confirm Louis Budenz' testimony that screenwriter Michael Blankfort was a party member. See "Transcript of Executive Session Testimony of Max Silver," (January 24, 1952), Box 19, Records of the Investigative Files Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 65. Louis Budenz was the editor of the *Daily Worker* from 1935-1945. He resigned his membership in the CPUSA in 1945 and converted to Catholicism, after having been a Marxist for most of his adult life.

police force and in fact was at the mercy of the executive agencies, such as the FBI for information. The information that the Committee collected and catalogued in its vast files originated primarily from the public record and in particular from the press. In fact, the HUAC used the communist press and the public relations mechanisms of its front organizations to engage in a form of self-reporting that Committee researchers collected and analyzed. With very rare exceptions, investigators avoided probing into sensitive areas of privacy, such as personal finances, not related to the activities of suspected communists on behalf of the CPUSA and its fronts. Investigators did not act like private detectives in the movies, tailing suspects, eavesdropping on their conversations, and surreptitiously opening their mail. Field investigators spent most of their time interviewing prospective witnesses and trying to obtain old copies of film scripts. HUAC congressmen and staff specifically avoided methods of investigation they either knew were not legal or of which they were unsure. Finally, the theatrics and demagoguery of the Dies Committee gradually receded as the HUAC gained new leadership in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Chapter 6: The Brothers Eisler – From Manhattan to Malibu

Historians and critics have offered varying theses as to why the HUAC undertook its investigations of Hollywood, but none have appropriately emphasized the crucial role that Gerhart and Hanns Eisler played in this drama. Newly available documents in the HUAC archives reveal that during the first half of 1947 the Committee's investigative agenda led it in a logical progression from Gerhart Eisler to his brother, Hanns, and, finally, to communist activity in Hollywood. The argument this chapter puts forth is that, although a number of factors brought communist activity in Hollywood to the attention of the Committee, it was the investigation of the Eisler brothers that moved the issue of communist infiltration in Hollywood to the forefront of the HUAC's attention and made a probe of the motion picture industry all but inevitable and sooner, rather than later. Before delving into what the HUAC files reveal about the Eislers, it is best to offer a brief introductory account of how various historians have dealt with the Eislers and their relationship to the HUAC probe of Hollywood.

In explaining the motivation behind the HUAC foray into Hollywood, Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund focused on the efforts by "progressives" to establish the Screen Writers Guild (SWG) as the sole collective bargaining entity to represent Hollywood writers to the movie studios. They depict the SWG as being truly representing the interests of the screenwriters, as opposed to either the Writers Section of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences or the Screen

Playwrights, both considered management sponsored entities.²³² The SWG acted vigorously on behalf of Hollywood writers and became involved in other progressive causes, such as the Hollywood Writers Mobilization. Moreover, the participation in the guild's leadership by some very active progressives led to their opponents labeling them as communists. Ultimately, this led to the formation of the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals by Hollywood's conservative anticommunists to fight the influence of the Left, especially in the SWG.²³³ According to Ceplair and Englund, who considered this group "reactionary," the Motion Picture Alliance invited the HUAC to Hollywood "...aiming to purge the studios of everyone with a strong left-wing viewpoint and history of activism on behalf of that viewpoint.... the job a progressive held was now, for the first time, at stake."²³⁴ From this perspective, it was the Motion Picture Alliance that brought the HUAC to town as an ally in a war against progressive activism and unionization.

The problem with this analysis is that it does not adequately account for the fact that, by the time of the 1947 Hollywood probe, the SWG battles were almost a decade and a half old. Certainly, the Committee was concerned about communist infiltration into the leadership of the SWG and the HUAC files show that investigators researched this issue carefully. However, what accounted for the HUAC's decision to hold public hearings on Hollywood in late 1947 and not earlier?

²³² Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 34-46.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 209-211.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

Other historians have given various other reasons as to why the HUAC undertook a full scale investigation of the American motion picture industry. Some explanations were better than others, but none paid adequate attention to the Eisler connection. Billingsley wrote of the union jurisdictional disputes between the AFL affiliated International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (commonly known in the movie business as IATSE or the IA) and the CIO affiliated Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), which communists had infiltrated to a degree.²³⁵ Both unions sought to represent the behind-the-scenes crew members at the studios: the carpenters, set painters, grips, and electricians. In particular, Billingsley emphasized the role of IA leader Roy Brewer in bringing to the attention of the HUAC the communist issue in Hollywood. Certainly, the CSU-IA jurisdictional battles were an important factor, one which the HUAC knew about and studied carefully. Brewer, a New Deal liberal, was a key member of the Motion Picture Alliance and defeating the communist controlled CSU became his professional and personal crusade. Although transcripts were not available to Billingsley at the time he wrote, it is worth noting that the Committee took testimony from Brewer in December 1946, ten months before its public Hollywood hearings.²³⁶

²³⁵ Although he adamantly denied it, Herb Sorrell, the head of the CSU was in fact a secret member of the CPUSA. HUAC investigators knew he had joined under the party name Herbert Stewart in 1936. A copy of his party registration form, his party membership card, and a receipt for his membership book was in Sorrell's investigative file. Committee staff had blown up pictures of his signature as "Herbert Stewart" apparently for comparison purposes with that of "Herbert Sorrell."

²³⁶ See "Transcript of Executive Session Testimony of Roy Brewer," (December 3, 1946), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

The weakness of Billingsley's argument also turns in part on the issue of chronology. Why did the HUAC not initiate hearings earlier when allegations of communist infiltration of the CSU began airing in the press during the bitter studio strikes of 1945? Again, the HUAC was already well aware of the antics of Herb Sorrell, a secret member of the CPUSA who headed the CSU, and was building a file on him. Furthermore, if the CSU issue was the primary trigger of the 1947 hearings, why did the Committee call so few of the witnesses capable of addressing it? Also, why did Chief Investigator Robert Stripling prepare and ask so few questions focused on the CSU? Thus, while Billingsley is correct to identify communist infiltration of the CSU as an important concern of the HUAC, this cannot adequately explain why the Committee launched its inquiry into communist activity in Hollywood in 1947.

Other critics and historians have offered other explanations. One often cited reason was the fruitless search for propaganda in American movies as the key motivation for triggering the HUAC's foray into Hollywood. This explanation again raises the issue of timing. Those films most noted as candidates for labeling as pro-Soviet propaganda – *Mission to Moscow*, *North Star* and *Song of Russia* – were released during World War II: 1943 in the case of the first two and 1944 in latter instance. Why should they become the object of scrutiny at the end of 1947? Robert Vaughn treated the Hollywood probe as a phenomenon of social paranoia in which both the extreme Right and Left engaged during the early Cold War era. Unfortunately, this is an unverifiable hypothesis and the “witch hunt” thesis is the subject in part of Chapter Seven of this study.

Thus, the question remains: to what extent have the various historians of the era recognized the importance of the Eislers in instigating the Hollywood hearings? The answer this chapter offers is “not enough!” Comparatively, the HUAC investigators engaged in research of much greater depth and sought to understand what the Eislers were up to far more than the historians addressing this question. Certainly, none have realized the pivotal nature of their connection to the HUAC’s interest in the American movie business. Robert Vaughn mentions Hanns Eisler, whom he calls a “suspected communist,” only in passing and certainly does not make any connection between him and why the HUAC launched its probe of the American motion picture industry.²³⁷ He ignores Hanns’ elder brother entirely, one assumes because Vaughn did not consider Gerhart’s story germane to his narrative of blacklisting. If he had paid attention to both of the Eisler brothers, the extensive history of Gerhart’s subversive and illegal activities would have undercut his paranoia thesis.

Ceplair and Englund depicted Hanns Eisler as the member of a non-communist salon composed of European émigrés living and working in Hollywood and a part of “a small group of non-Party left-wingers.”²³⁸ Gerhart Eisler, mentioned in passing, received the label of “alleged Comintern delegate to the CPUSA.”²³⁹ Victor Navasky confined Hanns to a footnote and simply described Gerhart as “...the

²³⁷ Vaughn, *Only Victims*, 106-107.

²³⁸ Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 95-96 and 379. The authors chose to ignore a vast amount of evidence to the contrary offered publicly by the HUAC in 1947 in the form of reports and published testimony.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 347. The authors offer this designation despite a rich amount of publicly available information on Gerhart Eisler at the time publication.

man accused, probably wrongly, of being the top Communist in the country.”²⁴⁰ To Hollywood Ten screenwriter Lester Cole, Hanns Eisler was simply an anti-Nazi refugee and artistic collaborator of the great Bertolt Brecht.²⁴¹ Gerald Horne notes he had lent his name and talent to help with the launch of the Hollywood Writers Mobilization and was a signer of a joint telegram to Jack Warner backing the CSU picketers, who were striking Warner Brothers Studios.²⁴² Goodman dealt with the Eislers at greater length, but was dismissive as to any importance of the case of Hanns, seeing it merely as a ploy to embarrass the previous Roosevelt Administration. He certainly failed to perceive any significant link to the Hollywood inquiry.²⁴³

Richard Fried implied an incorrect chronology and, thus, either misunderstood or ignored the importance of the Eislers’ case in triggering the Hollywood probe. Fried dealt with Hollywood and the Eislers in reverse order as compared to the evidence in the archives. Although his dates were correct, he discussed Hollywood first, then the Eislers. He stated: “For all of HUAC’s efforts against Hollywood and the entertainment business, the Committee’s main hunt was for still bigger game. On February 6, 1947, it summoned Gerhard Eisler, reputedly the chief Comintern agent in the United States.”²⁴⁴ Thus, Fried made it appear that the Hollywood investigations preceded that of Gerhart Eisler, rather than the latter leading into the

²⁴⁰ Navasky, *Naming Names*, 36 and 93.

²⁴¹ Cole, *Hollywood Red*, 303.

²⁴² Gerald Horne, *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006) 169 and 192.

²⁴³ Goodman, *The Committee*, 190-207.

²⁴⁴ Fried, *Nightmare in Red*, 80.

former. In actuality, the HUAC took preliminary, executive session testimony in Hollywood in May 12-15, 1947 and held its public hearings on Hollywood on October 20-30, 1947, well after the “big game,” Gerhart Eisler, had been the subject of Committee hearings during the previous February. Additionally, although Fried related that the Committee next investigated Gerhart’s brother, Hanns, whom he calls “a composer and a radical,” Fried failed to mention Hanns’ close ties with the Comintern. He also neglected to relate that the younger Eisler composed musical scores for motion pictures, lived in Malibu and socialized with both Hollywood big shots and officials from the Soviet consulate. In other words, Fried did not realize the HUAC’s logical path to Hollywood was through the Eislers.

The post-revisionist historians Ron and Allis Radosh got the chronology more correct and understood that the HUAC started their investigation with Gerhart Eisler and then moved onto Hanns before focusing on Hollywood. However, they place the emphasis on the Committee’s confrontation with Hanns during his testimony on September 24, 1947 in Washington. After Eisler’s evasive testimony at that hearing, according to the Radoshes, “...the HUAC members decided that he was only the tip of the iceberg. They informed Eric Johnston, the studio lobbyist that they had decided to look at Communism throughout the film industry...”²⁴⁵

In fact, this chapter will offer evidence that the crucial event was the aforementioned executive session testimony on May 12, 1947 in Los Angeles, the transcripts of which were sealed in the HUAC archives for over forty years. For the Radoshes, the importance of Hanns Eisler seemed to lie more in the close friendship

²⁴⁵ Radosh and Radosh, *Red Star over Hollywood*, 139.

between him, his wife, Louisa, and the film star John Garfield, whose wife, Robbe, was also a party member. This friendship made Garfield vulnerable to investigation and, therefore, central to his downfall.²⁴⁶ They did not seem to realize that it was Hanns Eisler's relationship with Hollywood as a whole that made it ripe fruit for the HUAC to pick. They then moved on to also tell the story of the Motion Picture Alliance, albeit from an anticommunist perspective absent in Ceplair and Englund or the other revisionist historians. Their narrative pattern follows fairly closely to that of Billingsley, who wrote several years earlier. The principal difference between the two accounts is that Billingsley offers greater detail in terms of what the HUAC knew about the Eisler brothers through the public reports it had released at the time of the investigations.²⁴⁷ However, Billingsley also, as noted earlier, underestimated the impact of the investigation of Hanns Eisler on the Hollywood probe as a whole.

To understand the story fully, one needs to remember the themes of the previous two chapters. The HUAC focused much of its attention on the issue of subversive propaganda. As such, Committee staff scrutinized the press – both mainstream and communist – for information of possible subversion. The Hollywood inquiry occurred during the time immediately following an era of highly successful Nazi, Fascist and early Soviet propaganda, when early communication theorists touted the hypodermic needle theory of persuasion. A key activity that the Committee concerned itself over the years was the possible subversive use of the various mass media – newspapers, films, radio and later television – by groups seeking revolutionary political change in the United States, particularly if they had

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 196.

²⁴⁷ Billingsley, *Hollywood Party*, 171-175.

ties to foreign governments. Thus, on October 13, 1946 when the former managing editor of the *Daily Worker*, Louis Budenz, charged in a radio address that a German communist was operating in the United States as the real head of the CPUSA, the HUAC took immediate notice.²⁴⁸ In 1945, deeply unhappy with the party's hard turn to the left and Browder's expulsion as party chief, Budenz had resigned from the CPUSA and renounced communism in order to reconvert to Roman Catholicism. He now asserted that this German communist, working under the pseudonym Hans Berger, was the Comintern's representative in the United States. Budenz alleged Berger had given him specific written guidance as to the ideological position various articles should take when published in the *Daily Worker*.²⁴⁹ Further, Budenz charged that the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 was a sham and that, not only did the national communist parties around the world continue to take direction from the Soviet Union, veteran CPUSA party bosses joked about it at the national headquarters in New York.

Within days of Budenz' speech, Frederick Woltman, a journalist for the *New York World-Telegram*, published Hans Berger's real identity: Gerhart Eisler.²⁵⁰ Woltman would go on to win the 1947 Pulitzer Prize for his reporting "during 1946

²⁴⁸ See Louis Francis Budenz, *This is My Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947) 241. Budenz was also president of the company that formally owned and printed the *Daily Worker* and a member of the National Committee of the CPUSA.

²⁴⁹ "Testimony of Louis Budenz," *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States* (Committee on Un-American Activities, November 22, 1946) 15-16.

²⁵⁰ Frederick Woltman, "Eisler, No Ghost, Wrote as Berger, Budenz Says," *New York World-Telegram*, October 22, 1946, 6 found in Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Box 199 and *Testimony of Louis Budenz*, November 22, 1946, 241.

on communist infiltration in the U.S.”²⁵¹ Once Eisler’s picture appeared in the press, many former communists recognized him as having previously functioned in the early to mid-1930s as the Comintern’s representative with full plenipotentiary powers, under the name “Edwards.” Budenz assumed that, when Eisler returned in the early 1940s, he had the same mandate. This appears to be in doubt with various historians having argued that Eisler’s earlier service was probably the last time a Comintern representative had such authority. Nevertheless, during Eisler’s second stay in the United States, he spoke with authority, especially in areas of ideology and propaganda policy. According to Budenz, as Hans Berger, Eisler was also a regular contributor to the *Daily Worker* and the *Communist*, often offering subtle clues as to how veteran communists ought to interpret the current party line.²⁵² This was necessary because the party line at any given time was tactical in nature, not a set of principles. As conditions changed, so did the tactics and the party line. A veteran party member who confused an articulation of tactics with a statement of principle would find herself in a woeful predicament with a sudden and radical change in the party line. Through a careful inspection of the HUAC’s periodicals library and information supplied by the FBI, investigators later determined that Eisler-Berger had

²⁵¹ Heinz-Dietrich Fischer, *The Pulitzer Prize Archive: A History and Anthology of Award-winning Materials in Journalism, Letters, and Arts, Volume 17* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2003) 49. In 1954, *Time* magazine designated Woltman, a Scripps-Howard reporter, as “the No. 1 newspaper specialist on Reds,” and reviewed his five-part highly critical series on Senator Joseph McCarthy, in which Woltman argued that “McCarthy is ‘a major liability to the cause of anti-communism.’ By making it harder for real Communist-fighters to operate effectively...McCarthy has actually become an asset to Communism.” from “About McCarthy,” *Time*, July 19, 1954, found at <http://aolsvc.timeforkids.kol.aol.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,857509-1,00.html> (retrieved on February 14, 2009).

²⁵² *Testimony of Louis Budenz* (November 22, 1946) 23.

also written articles that appeared in the *New Masses*; *Political Affairs*, which was the successor to the *Communist*; a party magazine, entitled *Readers Scope*; the CPUSA's New York City paper for German immigrants, entitled the *German American*; and the party's New York City paper for a Jewish readership, the *Morning Freiheit*.²⁵³

Given that Budenz had been a CPUSA insider of high position and part of the party's propaganda machine, and because of Frederick Woltman's investigative reporting that established Hans Berger's real identity, a full-fledged investigation by the HUAC was inevitable. Committee staff immediately began investigating Budenz' charges and soon had compiled a rather large file on Eisler. In fact, the investigative files on Gerhart and Hanns Eisler are substantially larger in size than the files of any of the individuals investigated as part of the Hollywood hearings. Budenz testified at length before the HUAC on November 22, 1946. Even though he had no face-to-face interaction with Gerhart Eisler, he asserted both Jack Starobin, the *Daily Worker's* foreign editor, and Jack Stachel, the representative of the Political Committee to the paper, passed draft articles to him from "Hans Berger."²⁵⁴ Although in later years his credibility as a witness would be called into question, Budenz' account in 1946 was detailed and credible. He painted a picture of the CPUSA as an organization captive to and taking direction from Moscow, both in terms of the articulation of current policy and in the selection of senior leadership personnel. In spite of their years of careful scrutiny of the communist press, Committee researchers had not figured out

²⁵³ This is indicated by several questions in an untitled document of forty-seven questions prepared by Robert Stripling to ask Gerhart Eisler under oath found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

²⁵⁴ *Testimony of Louis Budenz* (November 22, 1946), 26.

that Gerhart Eisler, Hanns Berger, and “Edwards” were the same person. Ironically, it was a former communist journalist and a working anticommunist reporter from the mainstream newspaper business who made the connection and broke the Gerhart Eisler story to the American public and not the HUAC or the FBI.

Within a few short months, HUAC investigators developed an extensive portfolio of information on Eisler. However, most of what they learned came from other federal agencies, particularly the FBI and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. For example, a copy of a long letter dated October 14, 1946, from J. Edgar Hoover to the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, found its way into the Committee’s hands. After outlining a long list of suspected illegal activities by Eisler, Hoover asked that the INS deny the issuance of any exit visa for him pending the outcome of the FBI’s investigation and possible prosecution.²⁵⁵ A Committee investigator underlined in red pencil the following assertion by Hoover, alleging Eisler’s illegal entry into the United States in 1941:

At a hearing before the board of special inquiry of the Immigration and Naturalization Service at Ellis Island, New York, on June 14, 1941, Eisler denied that he was or had been in the past a member of the Communist Party, denied membership in any Communist organization, and stated that he had never been sympathetic to the Communist cause, all of which statements were obviously false in view of Eisler’s long term activity as an important international Communist and responsible representative of the Communist International.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ J. Edgar Hoover to Ugo Carusi, October 16, 1946 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Thus, the FBI believed and later confirmed that Eisler perjured himself to gain entry into the United States and in doing so entered the United States illegally.

Although there are claims that the FBI had been tracking Gerhart Eisler since he arrived in the United States in 1941, it appears much of what the FBI knew about him at that point was of relatively recent origin with agents attempting to flesh out leads offered by Budenz and Eisler's sister, Ruth Fischer.²⁵⁷ The latter had come forward with information about Eisler, once the story appeared in the national press. Fischer was once a senior member of the leadership of the German Communist Party and a member of the Presidium of the Executive Council of the Comintern. Purged from leadership in 1926, Fischer developed a strongly antagonistic reaction to the Stalinization of the German party and became an anti-Stalinist, before evolving into a leftwing opponent of Soviet-style communism as a whole. She was sentenced to death *in absentia* during the Moscow show trials of the 1930s. Her break with Stalin and the Comintern also ruptured her relationship with both Hanns and especially Gerhart. Like her brothers, Fischer eventually found her way to the United States and settled in New York City. Writing with great intensity and fervor, she became the editor of an anticommunist and anti-Soviet newsletter, *The Russian State Party: Newsletter on Contemporary Communism*, copies of which found their way into the HUAC files.

With the Budenz, Fischer and the FBI as their sources, the HUAC now had a fairly complete biographical outline of Eisler's career. To supplement this, they

²⁵⁷ For assertions about what the FBI knew about Eisler and when, see Robert J. Lamphere and Tom Shachtman, *The FBI-KGB War: A Special Agent's Story* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1995) 42.

subpoenaed Eisler's INS records. The Committee now knew he was Austrian by birth, but during the 1920s became very active in the German Communist Party and was instrumental in the downfall of his sister as a party leader. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Eisler became a Comintern agent with international assignments, which included work in China, where he allegedly conducted bloody purges on behalf of the Soviet Union. His success doing Moscow's bidding in the Far East led to a plum assignment in 1933 with an appointment as the Comintern's plenipotentiary to the American party.²⁵⁸

The American assignment lasted until after the CPUSA's congress in 1936. During this time he worked under the name "Edwards," but traveled to Moscow several times under a forged passport with the name Samuel Liptzen. According to Treasury Department handwriting experts, the handwriting on the passport application belonged to a party member by the name of Leon Josephson. Even though the name on the application was Samuel Liptzen, the photograph was of Eisler. The witness signature, again in Josephson's handwriting, was of a fictitious person, named Bernard A. Hirschfield. Josephson and the real Samuel Liptzen tried to avoid subpoenas by the HUAC and were uncooperative once they finally appeared.²⁵⁹ Josephson turned out to be a key player in the CPUSA's fake passport

²⁵⁸ That Eisler went to China is indisputable. Ruth Fischer made the allegations that he led a bloody purge there. See reproduction of Ruth Fischer, "The Chinese School of Terrorism," which was part of a six-part series, entitled "The Comintern's Agent in America," published in the *New York Journal American* and found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁵⁹ See untitled document consisting of prepared questions for Gerhart Eisler, Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

mill, whose work allowed the party's leadership to regularly travel undetected to the Soviet Union.

The Committee had little doubt that Gerhart Eisler was indeed the Comintern representative to the CPUSA in the mid-1930s. Investigators knew he had attended the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International in July and August, 1935 and served as a member of the Comintern's Anglo-American Commission, which established policy and supervised directives for the American, British and Canadian communist parties. The HUAC assumed Eisler exercised similar powers upon his return to the United States in 1941 and believed that Eisler had sided with party leader Earl Browder in his internal political battle against hardliner and rival William Z. Foster in 1944-45. The Committee presumed that Eisler's ability to suppress Foster's ideological aspirations for the party pointed to his ability as the Comintern's representative to direct major Party policy decisions. The Committee specifically believed that Eisler conveyed instructions to the CPUSA through Jack Stachel, a party functionary and the labor editor of the *Daily Worker*, and Eugene Dennis, who later became the General Secretary of the CPUSA after the purge of Earl Browder.²⁶⁰

The FBI was more circumspect about whether Eisler was still directing party affairs after his return in 1941. The HUAC had a letter from Hoover that stated:

Eisler's primary contacts since his arrival in the United States have been important Communist functionaries, many of whom are strongly suspected of involvement

²⁶⁰ The Venona decrypts later revealed that Dennis was engaged in espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. See John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona*, 126-127, 196-197 and 221. Dennis, like Earl Browder and Gerhart Eisler, served a stint for the Comintern in China.

in Soviet espionage operations. Although Eisler, under his pen name, is comparatively unknown to the rank and file of the Communist Party, the investigation of him reflects without doubt that he is and has been in recent years a figure of paramount importance in the determination of Party policy. Whether he is still engaged in activity as an actual operating Soviet agent, as he is known to have been in the past, is not completely clear. However, his known contacts, his clandestine activities, and the care with which he has concealed and protected his identity, raise the very definite possibility that in addition to his other activity, Eisler may be involved with intelligence work as such.²⁶¹

Whether or not Hoover or the HUAC was correct about Eisler's Comintern authority after 1941, it is certain that he was quite active as a propagandist and his opinion was highly influential on the interpretation of policy line.

According to Fischer, as a former protégé of Nikolai Bukharin, in the mid-1930s Eisler fell out of favor with Stalin, who likely marked him for extermination. In order to save himself during the Great Purges, Fischer alleged that Eisler gave false testimony alleging treasonous activity by Bukharin, his former mentor and protector, as well as others with whom Eisler had interaction.²⁶² After serving as a propagandist for communist forces during the Spanish Civil War, he ended up in a prison camp.²⁶³

Eisler insisted he was placed in a concentration camp about the time of the fall of

²⁶¹ J. Edgar Hoover to Ugo Carusi, October 16, 1946, Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁶² Ruth Fischer, "The Career of a Stalinist," *The Russian State Party: Newsletter on Contemporary Communism*, Vol. II, No. 2, February 1947, 5 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁶³ Fischer claims Eisler's role in the Spanish Civil War also included acting as a political officer to direct purges of non-Stalinists from the ranks of the Loyalist forces. See reproduction of Ruth Fischer, "You Can't Retire from the N.K.V.D.," which was part of a six-part series, entitled "The Comintern's Agent in America," published in the *New York Journal American* and found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

France because of his anti-Nazi activities. Fischer argued that Eisler ended up in a camp because of his pro-communist agitation in France, not his resistance efforts against fascism, because after all, his internment occurred during the time the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was in force.²⁶⁴ Eisler returned to America in June, 1941, posing as a political refugee from Nazism. It was during this second tenure in the United States that Eisler worked as a “journalist” and commentator for various CPUSA publications.

Gerhart Eisler appeared to be the perfect stereotypical secret agent who operated under a bewildering array of cover names and fake identities in a manner so effectively parodied by Peter Sellers in the role of Inspector Clouseau. In the 1930s, he sat in secret CPUSA meetings as “Edwards” at a time when his passport read “Samuel Liptzen.” At other times, he traveled under the name “Brown.” In the 1940s Eisler wrote propaganda under the name “Hans Berger,” while he drew a salary under the name “Julius Eisman” from a communist front called the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. He did not pay income tax on those funds. For good measure, he also wrote articles for the *Morning Freiheit* under the pen name C. Kelner.²⁶⁵

The case of Gerhart Eisler became nationwide, front page news. With the public exposure, Eisler’s usefulness to the CPUSA had come to an end. In fact, the Committee now knew that since 1945 he had sought to leave the United States and

²⁶⁴ See reproduction of Ruth Fischer, “Departure and Arrival,” which was part of a six-part series, entitled “The Comintern’s Agent in America,” published in the *New York Journal American* and found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁶⁵ See untitled document consisting of prepared questions for Gerhart Eisler and J. Edgar Hoover to Ugo Carusi, October 16, 1946, both found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

return to Germany in order to, in Eisler's words, "...participate in the building of a new German democracy."²⁶⁶ Clearly, Eisler intended to make his way to the Soviet occupied zone in eastern Germany to serve in the nascent communist regime that Stalin would impose on the Soviet zone of occupation. The HUAC and the Department of Justice each had other plans for Gerhart. The Committee wanted to put Eisler under oath in order to learn about internal party and Comintern operations, the CPUSA's phony passport ring, and particularly Eisler's role as a propagandist. At first Hoover sought to have Eisler deported, but Ugo Carusi, the INS commissioner, replied that there was no legal basis for deportation due to a lack of admissible evidence.²⁶⁷ The Justice Department then reversed course and decided to prosecute Eisler for passport fraud, lying to the INS board of inquiry and income tax evasion. Thus, after initially wanting to rid him from American soil, the United States government did an about face and repeatedly blocked Eisler's requests for an exit visa.

Though Eisler wanted to leave the United States, while he remained, he nevertheless began a counterattack as he awaited the inevitable subpoena from the HUAC. True to his training in agitation and propaganda, Eisler activated his offensive primarily through the news media, both print and broadcast. Whether or not he realized it, Committee researchers kept close tabs on this maneuver. Gerhart wrote and released a fifteen page pamphlet, entitled *Eisler Strikes Back*, the tone of

²⁶⁶ Untitled document consisting of prepared questions for Gerhart Eisler found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁶⁷ Ugo Carusi to J. Edgar Hoover, December 11, 1946, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

which indicates that it clearly aimed at building support within the leftwing community. The Committee obtained and analyzed a copy. In his biting polemic, Eisler portrayed himself as entirely innocent and facing persecution because of his pro-American, pro-Allied, and anti-fascist writings.²⁶⁸ He set Congressman Rankin up as a symbol of the HUAC, calling him ignorant, intolerant and motivated by Nazi philosophy.²⁶⁹ In an attempt to make Rankin the issue, rather than his own past activities, Eisler wrote: “I never liked Prussian reactionaries, even if they come from your South and speak English.”²⁷⁰ Claiming that reaction, warmongering and fascism are on the rise in the United States, Eisler averred that the HUAC congressmen “...dream about the ‘century of the investigated man.’ For everyone an investigator in the garage and a subpoena in the pot!”²⁷¹

Eisler followed the pamphlet up with a trip to Chicago in mid-January 1947, where he spoke at three rallies. The venues were all minor communist fronts and organizers raised hundreds of dollars for Eisler. Attendance ranged from 110 to 400 people and was modest at best, but it included the HUAC Chicago field investigator, who reported the proceedings and the substance of Eisler’s speech back to Washington. Gerhart asserted in the speeches that he was a “...genuine political refugee.” He asserted that he was in no way the head of the CPUSA: “The only orders I have given to anyone in the United States since my arrival which were

²⁶⁸ Gerhart Eisler, *Eisler Strikes Back*, 8 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 & 8.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 3 & 5.

obeyed, were those orders given to my butcher, baker and grocer.”²⁷² Although Eisler stayed on message, the result of this sojourn to Chicago must have been disappointing to Eisler because it did not motivate any major public protest in his support.

Although Eisler and his comrades in the party did not realize it, with the Great Depression over, the Popular Front long dead and the Cold War taking shape, the American public no longer had an appetite for the radical rhetoric in which the communists seemed to have trapped themselves.

Eisler must have had higher hopes three weeks earlier when he proclaimed his innocence on the *Meet the Press* radio show on December 27, 1946. A confident Eisler made his case to the American people as five prominent journalists grilled him about his past and present connections with the communist movement. The journalists were Albert Warner, host of *Meet the Press*; Bert Andrews of the *New York Herald-Tribune*; Cecil Dickson of Gannett Newspapers; Kenneth Crawford of *Newsweek*; and Lawrence Spivak of the *American Mercury*. Right at the beginning of the show, Eisler admitted to Andrews that he was a communist and had lied when he denied being one in order to get a transit visa. Andrews asked: “Then that rightly came under the heading of perjuring yourself to get a transit visa?” Eisler replied: “You can call it what you want, but I told the FBI this, and then asked them, ‘What would you have done in the situation where the question of getting out of France was

²⁷² Unsigned, undated investigators’ report of a speech by Gerhart Eisler to the organization Progressive German Americans of Chicago on January 17, 1947 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

a question of your life?’ Then the FBI man told me, ‘Well, I may have done the same as you.’”²⁷³

Lawrence Spivak wanted an explanation as to why Budenz and Fischer would make accusations against him if he were innocent. Eisler offered no answer about Budenz’ allegation, except to claim he had never previously spoken, written or otherwise communicated with Budenz. On the other hand, the personal animosity between Eisler and his sister was raw and bitter as this exchange illustrates:

Spivak: “Why did your sister, Ruth Fischer, whom I have known for a long time, tell me last year you were an agent of the Russian Government?”

Eisler: “Because this lady has turned into a very well-known lady informer. No decent man or woman would talk to her in Europe.”

Spivak: “Why would she inform against her own brother?”

Eisler: “Because she became a vile enemy of the Communist movement, and that is why she talks also untruth about her brother.”

Andrews: “Did you mean she is a vile enemy of the Communist movement or a vile enemy of the Soviet movement?”

Eisler: “Mr. Andrews, she is a violent enemy of the Communist movement. She was expelled from the German Communist Party. In her expulsion I played a very important role.”²⁷⁴

Eisler overreacted at that point, because he let it slip that he had a significant role in her purge from the German party, which gave credence to charges of his role as Stalin’s hatchet man in other countries. Andrews pressed him on the point and Eisler tried to retreat.

²⁷³ *Transcript of Proceedings: Meet the Press, Broadcast over Radio Station WOL – Washington, DC* (Federal Reporting Company: December 27, 1946) 4 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

Under vigorous questioning Eisler denied any role in the American party, arguing that Joseph Starobin was the one who had used the Hans Berger pseudonym and that he, Eisler, only offered a few ideas for articles. When Spivak questioned Eisler's credentials as an anti-Nazi fighter by noting that he had not lived in Germany since 1928, five years before the Nazis came to power, Eisler lied and insisted he remained in Germany right up to 1933.²⁷⁵ Eisler also contradicted one of Budenz' claims, namely that even though the Comintern was formally dissolved *de jure*, it was *de facto* still in existence and directing the affairs of communist parties all over the world. Albert Warner then wanted to know: "...how is it that the Communist Parties in all these different countries always have the same views on every question, if there is no directing authority to help coordinate them?" Eisler's retort was that they had all reached the same conclusion because they had all taken the scientific approach to politics and, therefore, science had led them all to the same correct conclusion.²⁷⁶

Throughout the interview, Eisler tried to cast his pro-communist sympathies and activities in light of his active opposition to fascism. For example, if he believed in overthrowing governments, it was the overthrow of fascist governments. If he engaged in polemics in the press, it was to carry an anti-fascist message. Was Lenin's dictum to use trickery, deceit and law-breaking in pursuit of political goals acceptable? Yes, Eisler answered, it is in the battle against fascism. Overall, his interviewers displayed a high degree of skepticism in the veracity of Eisler's story and his depiction of himself as a noble fighter for freedom against the tyranny of the Nazis. Eisler apparently wanted the American public to see him as a misunderstood

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 9.

²⁷⁶ Ibid. 14.

victim of the HUAC, who only wanted to go home. At one point the narrative strains credulity to the point where Bert Andrews becomes sarcastic about the Hans Berger story.²⁷⁷

Eisler no doubt guessed that Committee investigators followed the interview carefully. If so, he was correct. HUAC staff obtained the transcript of the radio show and carefully underlined in red pencil numerous places where they suspected Eisler being untruthful or where they might have opportunity to check his facts. Eisler had given the HUAC his best defense in advance. He had telegraphed his best arguments more than a month before his scheduled testimony and now the Committee had plenty of time to prepare its case even more carefully, finding witnesses and verifying facts. In addition to coverage in the CPUSA press, the archival evidence shows that Stripling's investigators also clipped and studied articles about Eisler in mainstream newspapers, such as the *New York Daily News*, the *New York Daily Mirror* and the *New York Herald Tribune*. Therein Eisler gave statements in which he re-emphasized the same themes: his only "crime" was to fight Hitlerism, American communists were not so meek to take orders from a lowly refugee, and he just wanted to go back home to Germany.²⁷⁸

One aspect of the preparation by the HUAC investigators was to compare the ascertainable facts against what Eisler said versus what his critics charged. In terms of Eisler's role as the Comintern's representative in the United States, Committee researchers encountered some difficulty in substantiating the charges made by

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 16.

²⁷⁸ Clippings found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

Budenz and Fischer. An investigator approached a former party member named George Hewitt from New York, who asserted that it was “pretty generally known in the party that Eisler, alias Edwards, was a representative of the Communist International in the United States.” However, Hewitt, whose party name was Tim Holmes, was reluctant to testify “...because he fears for the safety of his wife and child. He said the Communists have made his life miserable since he left the party and have even gone so far as to destroy his personal property and a short time ago attempted to have him evicted from his home.”²⁷⁹ Another party member brought in from Chicago to testify of what he knew about Eisler as “Edwards” had to stay in the home of a Washington DC police officer for his safety due to death threats from communists.

Chairman Thomas wrote Attorney General Tom C. Clark, stating that the HUAC had subpoenaed Gerhart Eisler to obtain his testimony because he had been “...identified by witnesses before the Committee on Un-American Activities as being a representative of the Communist International.” Believing Eisler was trying to leave the country, Thomas asked Clark to “...direct agents of the FBI to put Eisler under an immediate twenty-four hour surveillance in order to insure his appearance before our Committee.”²⁸⁰ The Director of the FBI accommodated Thomas’ request without revealing that Eisler had already been under constant surveillance for months.

²⁷⁹ Untitled, undated report found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁸⁰ J. Parnell Thomas to Tom C. Clark, January 31, 1947, in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

On February 6, 1947, Gerhart Eisler appeared before the HUAC. It was a short hearing. In a fairly rare circumstance, all the members of the Committee were present, as was Robert Stripling and one of his key investigators, Louis J. Russell. Eisler was not worried that he had given his defense away a month earlier on *Meet the Press*. Eisler wanted desperately to return to Germany. Barring that, he appeared to want to make himself a martyr. He certainly wanted to appear as a persecuted victim as much as he did not want to testify. Eisler refused to be sworn in unless he could first read a prepared statement, which he said would only take three minutes. Chairman Thomas replied that after he was sworn in and answered the Committee's questions, he could then read his statement into the record. Eisler refused to do so and called himself a "political prisoner." After some shouting, the congressmen moved to cite him for contempt of Congress and two officers from the Immigration and Naturalization Service escorted him to the District of Columbia jail.

Stripling had prepared forty-seven questions for Eisler, which went unasked in that short, stormy session. Amongst other issues, the questions centered on the passport fraud in which Eisler participated in the mid-1930s, the perjury he committed before the INS board of inquiry in 1941, his extensive work in the service of the Comintern both in the United States and abroad, his involvement in communist front organizations in the United States and activities in the United States as a propagandist.²⁸¹ Several other witnesses testified instead, including Ruth Fischer. Stripling then swore in one of the HUAC investigators so that he could ask what

²⁸¹ See untitled document consisting of prepared questions for Gerhart Eisler, Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

investigators had discovered about Eisler. This allowed the documentary evidence collected by the Committee staff to be read into the official record.

The work of the post-revisionist historians has shown that the information that the HUAC collected and publicized was essentially correct. The Venona decrypts have revealed that during the mid-1930s, Gerhart Eisler indeed carried an American passport obtained fraudulently under the name Samuel Liptzen with the assistance of Leon Josephson, who was a key player in a “CPUSA-Soviet fraudulent passport ring.”²⁸² Also, when Eisler came to the United States in the mid-1930s as the Comintern’s representative with plenipotentiary powers, he put his political weight behind Earl Browder in order to end a political leadership deadlock. Browder became the undisputed party leader thanks to Gerhart Eisler.²⁸³ A cable exchange between New York and Moscow confirmed that Eisler was the Comintern representative in the CPUSA and that the latter was subservient to the Comintern. When the CPUSA asked for greater freedom to decide the size of its Politburo, Moscow declined to do so in a decision addressed to both Browder and Eisler.²⁸⁴ Soviet archives have revealed that in September, 1935 Earl Browder communicated with Georgi Dimitrov, the General Secretary of the Comintern, and asked that Eisler be allowed to return to the United States in order to help the American party prepare for its party congress in early 1936.²⁸⁵ This confirms the allegations, such as that of former party member and

²⁸² Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 80-81.

²⁸³ Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson, *Soviet World*, 178-180.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁸⁵ Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, *Secret World*, 59 & 63.

journalist Howard Rushmore, who testified before the HUAC that high party officials followed instructions issued by Eisler.²⁸⁶

It is crucial to understand how the HUAC congressmen and investigators understood the importance of Gerhart Eisler and his activities. Based on the archival evidence, it is clear that this case had multifaceted significance for the key players of the HUAC. Gerhart Eisler's ability to repeatedly enter the United States illegally and carry out communist activities was symbolic for what they perceived as an on-going laxity in national security matters by the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Also, in their eyes this affair offered concrete evidence that a foreign power, namely the USSR, in general directed the policy line, if not particular activities, of the CPUSA. However, the big spy probes for which the HUAC became famous, including that of Alger Hiss, were at this point still off in the future. The primary focus of the Committee had been investigating the infiltration of unions and both fascist and communist propaganda. The significance of Gerhart Eisler also resided in the latter. His work as a communist propagandist in the service of a foreign power appeared to be of distinct importance to the Committee.

Gerhart Eisler's biography after his encounter with HUAC serves to illustrate the appropriateness of the Committee's concern with his career in propaganda. In the summer of 1947 as the HUAC began to prepare in earnest for the Hollywood hearings, the Justice Department prosecuted Eisler for making "false statements on

²⁸⁶ "Testimony of Howard Rushmore," *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry* (Committee on Un-American Activities, 1947) 177.

his exit visa application.”²⁸⁷ While awaiting an appeal, Gerhart jumped bail and escaped as a stowaway on a ship bound for Europe. After the United Kingdom refused to extradite him to the United States, he made his way to the German Democratic Republic, where “...he became the chief of the Information Office in East Germany, and in 1962 was named chairman of the East German State Radio Committee.”²⁸⁸

In terms of its investigations into communist activities, subversion and propaganda, Gerhart Eisler represented the most important person that the HUAC interrogated up to that time. Later the Hiss-Chambers episode would overshadow the Gerhart Eisler case, but at this time, after years of criticism that the Committee had engaged in witch-hunting and red-baiting, it played an important role in highlighting the dangers it perceived from the activities of the CPUSA. Thus, from the point of view of the HUAC congressmen and investigators, the dénouement of the Eisler affair was an unqualified success. It also propelled them directly into an investigation of his brother, Hanns. Not to do so would have been unthinkable in light of the charges made by Ruth Fischer and the preliminary evidence they already had in their files regarding communist infiltration into the motion picture industry.

Information that the Committee collected and archived shows that Ruth Fischer did not just have a bone to pick with her brother Gerhart. She also wrote stinging about Hanns as well. She asserted that, for Gerhart, Hanns “...was a valuable link to the world of swarming literati, professors, actors, and other American

²⁸⁷ Lamphere and Shachtman, *The FBI-KGB War*, 57.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

intelligentsia who have found in Stalin's Russia their spiritual fatherland."²⁸⁹ Fischer alleged that Gerhart "conditioned" Hanns "...for Party assignments on the cultural front." The younger Eisler then made regular pilgrimages to Moscow, because "[a] Party member active in the propagation of Soviet culture is required to demonstrate his continued loyalty by regular visits to Moscow."²⁹⁰ If one believes her account, the composer by this time had become thoroughly subservient to the Soviet secret police.²⁹¹ Fischer argued that Hanns worked under Gerhart's direction to raise funds for the party from sources in Hollywood, which supported the testimony of Howard Rushmore.²⁹²

The sixth part of Fischer's series published in Hearst's *New York Journal American*, a newspaper known for a strong anticommunist stand, was entitled "The Comintern in Hollywood" and was devoted to Hanns instead of Gerhart. She emphasized Hanns' Comintern ties and his admiration for and closeness with Gerhart. Once in Hollywood, Fischer averred that Hanns regularly socialized with the Russian Consul in Los Angeles. Investigators read her assertions that: "The people who stood around the piano in his Santa Monica home and drank whiskey were curious

²⁸⁹ See reproduction of Ruth Fischer, "Gerhart Eisler: the Career Terrorist," which was part of a six-part series, entitled "The Comintern's Agent in America," published in the *New York Journal American* and found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁹⁰ Ruth Fischer, "You Can't Retire from the N.K.V.D." found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁹¹ Ruth Fischer, "Departure and Arrival," found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁹² See reproduction of Ruth Fischer, "Eisler's Activity in the U.S., 1933-46" which was part of a six-part series, entitled "The Comintern's Agent in America," published in the *New York Journal American* and found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

companions for NKVD terrorists. [German émigrés] Bertold Brecht and Lion Feuchtwanger also attended these parties.” Hanns’ role, according to Fischer, was the same as all cultural workers: “Outside as well as in the Soviet Union, a crust of literature and a cloud of music surround the NKVD kernel of Soviet life. In a totalitarian state, the function of the artist is to soften the sharp angles of ugly reality.” Finally, she declared that Hanns Eisler and Bertold Brecht were instrumental in Gerhart’s propaganda efforts, which at times appeared to take the form of Gerhart acting like an American version of Willi Munzenberg, building a propaganda empire, which included a German-language publishing house in New York.²⁹³

One cannot underestimate the effect of allegations or testimony about the Comintern on the members of the HUAC or its investigators. The Comintern as an instrument of foreign control of a domestic fifth column was a fundamental concern of the HUAC. An articulation of that concern came when a sub-committee of the HUAC went to Hollywood for a preliminary investigation, Rep. John McDowell of Pennsylvania asserted during the executive session testimony of actor Richard Arlen: “It is not the purpose of Congress to send a committee out here to attempt to dig into the private affairs of the industry, but we are concerned with everyone in the movie industry who might be used as agents of a foreign power in an effort to destroy our country. That is why we are here.”²⁹⁴ Ruth Fischer’s writings, which investigators scrutinized carefully, and her executive session testimony on February 6, 1947 played

²⁹³ See reproduction of Ruth Fischer, “The Comintern in Hollywood” which was part of a six-part series, entitled “The Comintern’s Agent in America,” published in the *New York Journal American* and found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

²⁹⁴ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Richard Arlen” (May 12, 1947), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, 235.

directly to those fears. The testimony of Budenz, Rushmore and others, as well as Woltman's original reporting corroborated the case against Gerhart Eisler as an agent of a foreign power. Now with Fischer's help, the evidence seemed to point to Hanns Eisler as having some role in his elder brother's operation. Federal authorities had barely locked up Gerhart on Ellis Island to await trial when HUAC investigators began pulling data from its F&R Section and digging into Hann's past for fresh information.

Three months later Hanns Eisler gave testimony in executive session before that same subcommittee as Richard Arlen on May 12, 1947 at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. Until 2001, the transcript of this testimony was part of the HUAC files at the National Archives sealed to historians. Ben Margolis, known to the HUAC as a CPUSA member and a key player in the National Lawyers Guild, a communist front, accompanied Eisler as his legal counsel. Later, Margolis would lead the legal team that represented the Hollywood Ten in a disastrous legal strategy that would send them all to jail for contempt of Congress.

At the beginning of the hearing, Chief Investigator Robert Stripling stated that Public Law 601, Section 121, Sub-Section Q 2 authorized the HUAC "to conduct investigations and hearings into the subject of un-American propaganda activities in the United States." The HUAC "considers the activities of the Communist Party of the United States to be an organization or conspiracy which comes within the purview of the Committee's investigation..."²⁹⁵ Chairman Thomas permitted Eisler to read an opening statement in which he denied participation in American politics, asserted

²⁹⁵ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Hanns Eisler" (May 12, 1947), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, 31.

he was guilty only of being Gerhart Eisler's brother, and spoke extensively about his artistic career.²⁹⁶ Apparently recognizing that the link between himself and the Hollywood communists would endanger the party's efforts in Tinsel Town, Eisler tried instead to focus the issue on the supposed unjust assault on his reputation and the inappropriate nature of the hearings. Thus, implying that the HUAC's aim was to target him in order to attack Hollywood, Eisler argued that "...what is most unfair in the announced investigation of my 'Hollywood activities,' is the attempt to intimidate my friends and the artists with whom I have had professional contacts."²⁹⁷

Knowing that his entry visa into the United States was predicated on his denial of any communist affiliations, Eisler denied being a "real" member of the communist party and averred he had made application to the party in Germany twenty or so years before as a protest against military spending, but went to Paris instead of becoming actively involved in the party.²⁹⁸ The composer avoided answering clearly whether he was a "theoretical communist" and dissembled as to whether he had gone to any communist party meetings, stating only that it was possible.²⁹⁹ Finally, he evaded answering whether he attended more than one meeting and where those meetings might have taken place, before getting upset or pretending to be upset that Stripling had supposedly called him a liar.³⁰⁰

One should keep in mind that Hanns Eisler's testimony did not occur in isolation, but rather within the context of an exploratory expedition of a HUAC

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 33-37.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 34.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 56-58.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 58-62.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 66-69.

subcommittee to America's film capital to determine as to whether there was sufficient evidence to warrant a full investigation. The subcommittee consisted of Chairman Thomas, John McDowell, Chief Investigator Robert Stripling and Investigator Louis Russell. Rep. John Wood, who would succeed Thomas as chairman of the HUAC, was a member of the subcommittee, but did not attend the hearing the day Eisler testified. On that same day, the subcommittee also heard testimony from union boss Roy Brewer of IATSE; James K. McGuinness, an executive at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios; and movie critic and former screenwriter John Charles Moffitt. Eisler appeared immediately after Brewer. The next day, after Moffitt completed his testimony, Henry Ginsberg, General Manager of Paramount Pictures; Lela Rogers, manager of her daughter, Ginger Rogers; actor Richard Arlen; and leading man Robert Taylor all appeared. On Wednesday, the subcommittee's research trip concluded with the questioning of the dapper character actor Aldophe Menjou; screenwriter Howard Emmett Rogers; studio boss Jack Warner; film director Leo McCarey; and screenwriter and film director Rupert Hughes. Thus, contextually the HUAC obtained Hanns Eisler's executive session testimony as part of its preliminary research to determine whether conditions warranted a full scale probe of the motion picture industry. In that respect, it represents a bridge between the Committee's concern about the propagandizing efforts of Gerhart Eisler, its suspicions that Hanns might be part of those actions, and its misgivings about other known communist activity in Hollywood.

Although the sub-committee members and Chief Investigator Stripling certainly concerned themselves with the conditions under which Eisler obtained entry

into the United States and his possible connections with his brother's work, the executive session came to an abrupt end when Eisler's testimony became so evasive that he could not clearly answer the simplest questions regarding his communist party affiliations.³⁰¹ Nevertheless, before the unceremonious end to the session, Eisler's work in Hollywood was the subject of inquiry.³⁰² The Committee wanted to know on which motion pictures had Eisler worked and for what movie studios. Because this testimony was hitherto not available to historians, who had only the public testimony taken months later before the full HUAC, it appeared the Committee was more interested in how Eisler got into the United States than what activities he undertook after he arrived.

A study of HUAC files reveals that Committee investigators were aware of the affiliations of many of Hanns Eisler's friends and professional collaborators in Hollywood either directly with the CPUSA or with its front organizations. The circumstance to which the HUAC's data appeared to point seemed to confirm the picture painted by Fischer and others, namely Hanns was at the center of a clique of communists and communist sympathizers engaging in propaganda and fund-raising for the CPUSA while giving it an aura of cultural respectability with elites and a certain prestige with the wider public.

One such person in this group was Hanns' friend, Vladimir A. Pozner, an émigré, whose family left Russia during the Revolution of 1917. Pozner, whose name was sometimes spelled Posner, became an engineer and worked for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in Paris in the 1930s. Around that time, he also became a

³⁰¹ Ibid., 67.

³⁰² Ibid., 53-55.

communist. With the collapse of France in 1940, Pozner fled to the United States and worked for a film unit in the War Department. He later moved his family to Hollywood where he became friends with Hanns and Louisa Eisler. Another set of Pozner's close friends were the screenwriters Ben and Norma Barzman, who were also communists and later blacklisted.³⁰³ Years later, historians learned, thanks to the revelations of the Venona decrypts, that Pozner allowed the KGB to recruit him as a spy, operating under the code name "Platon." This occurred during the period while he worked at the War Department in Washington.³⁰⁴ Of course the Venona project was unknown to the HUAC congressmen, but the Committee's archives reveal that investigators knew of Pozner's communist front affiliations and his friendship with Hanns Eisler.

Paul Henreid was the handsome actor who played, Victor Laszlo, a resistance fighter and the long-suffering husband of Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman), who was torn between her duty to Laszlo and her love for Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) in the film *Casablanca*. Like Hanns Eisler, Henreid was Austrian by birth and no doubt shared a sense of common experience with many of the other European émigrés in

³⁰³ For the friendship of the Barzmans with Pozner, see Michael Freeland with Barbra Paskin, *Hollywood on Trial: McCarthyism's War against the Movies* (London: Robson Books, 2007) 234. Pozner's son, Vladimir V. Posner, who grew up in the United States, became a journalist and a suave spokesman for the Soviet government during the Andropov regime. He continued in that role through the early years of the Gorbachev era. In this capacity, American audiences saw him regularly during the early to mid-1980s as guest analyst on a number of U.S. news programs. His autobiography is *Parting with Illusions: The Extraordinary Life and Ordinary Controversial Views* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990). For the Barzmans' communist affiliations, see Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist. Box 1, Folder: "Barzman, Ben." For Norma Barzman's view of the Hollywood probe and the resulting blacklist, see Barzman, *The Red and the Blacklist*.

³⁰⁴ Haynes and Klehr, *Venona*, 233.

Hollywood. Eisler was well-known in these circles, which during World War II was broadly anti-fascist from Popular Front liberals to communist sympathizers to actual communists and included such luminaries as writers Thomas Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger, actor Peter Lorre, filmmakers Berthold and Salka Viertel, actor Oskar Homolka, and playwright Bertolt Brecht.³⁰⁵

It is in such society that Henreid probably first met Eisler. One report in Henreid's investigative name file in the HUAC archives notes Henreid's connections to both Hanns Eisler and Vladimir Posner. It also highlighted the investment by Henreid and his wife, Lisl, in the Hollywood Community Radio Group, considered a communist front project.³⁰⁶ The same report comments: "PAUL HENREID was reported as being a close associate of Communist Party members and has been a member of the Council of American Soviet Friendship."³⁰⁷ It is doubtful that Henreid was a communist party member or engaged in any subversive activity. Unless new documentary evidence comes to light, the truth may never be known. However, it was this very sort of issue that the HUAC saw itself as mandated to investigate, i.e. determining whether individuals were involved in subversive

³⁰⁵ Anthony Heilbut, *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 182.

³⁰⁶ The HUAC relied on a citation by the California Joint Un-American Activities Committee that the Hollywood Community Radio Group was "...communist inspired and directed," from California Legislature Joint Fact-Finding Committee on Un-American Activities, *Third Report: Un-American Activities in California*, (1947) 370. Also see "Kraft, H.S. (AKA Kraft, "Hi")," Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

³⁰⁷ Undated, untitled report found in "Henreid, Paul," Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section.

activities. Thus, Henreid's association with Hanns Eisler made it more likely that he would fall under the Committee's scrutiny. Moreover, as the documentation of many of such associations between Eisler and Hollywood figures existed in its files, it was also likely that this gave the HUAC additional and significant impetus to launch a full-scale probe.

The HUAC was also aware of Hanns Eisler's association with another prominent Hollywood figure, that of film director and sometime actor William Dieterle. His friendship with Eisler was close enough that when Eisler became the target of an active HUAC investigation, Dieterle was one of four persons who organized a meeting at the home of screenwriter and director John Huston to rally support for the composer.³⁰⁸ Whether Dieterle was an official member of the CPUSA remains unknown, but he certainly was very active in known communist fronts and an effective advocate for the Soviet Union. Born in Germany, Dieterle began his professional career in the German film industry when Expressionism was the predominant aesthetic style. He immigrated to the United States in 1930, finding regular employment in Hollywood almost immediately, and became an American citizen in 1937. Soon Dieterle was in demand and in the years 1936-39 directed Paul Muni in such classics as *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, *The Life of Emile Zola* and *Juarez*. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* starring Charles Laughton further added to his reputation in 1939.

³⁰⁸“What did Hanns Eisler Really Do?” signed by Mrs. John Brown, Mrs. Clifford Odets, Larry Adler and William Dieterle, undated, found in “Dieterle, William,” Box 3, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

In the spring and summer of 1947, as investigators began to assemble materials for the forthcoming Hollywood hearings, Hanns Eisler's connections became apparent, again perhaps making a full-scale probe more likely. HUAC investigators knew that in 1940 Dieterle had written to the American Consul in support of Eisler's application for permanent residency in the United States.³⁰⁹ Another of the links between the two friends that appears in Dieterle's investigative file is the appearance of both men together at an event sponsored by the *Daily Worker*.³¹⁰ That Dieterle was very sympathetic to the Soviet Union is hard to dispute. Investigators noted that he visited the USSR in 1937 and compiled selected quotes from an article in *Soviet Russia Today* called "Reflections on Soviet Pictures" in which he praises Soviet cinema. In that article Dieterle naively asserted that "...the actor in the Soviet pictures is freed from exploitation...."³¹¹

The American communist press apparently returned the favor because Dieterle received positive film reviews in *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses* reported for *The Life of Emile Zola*, *Juarez* and *Blockade*. The last film, written by senior Hollywood communist John Howard Lawson for which he received an Oscar nomination, in particular invited the scrutiny of the Committee. Produced in 1938 and set in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, *Blockade* told the story of a farmer, played by Henry Fonda, who falls in love with a Russian, played by Madeleine

³⁰⁹ William Dieterle to 'the American Consul,' January 23, 1940, Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³¹⁰ See untitled report in "Dieterle, Willaim," Box 4, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section.

³¹¹ Ibid.

Carroll, while fighting to save his property from marauding soldiers. The HUAC was also interested in *Juarez*, compiling quotes from the script regarding land reform that sounded somewhat anti-American and communistic in nature.³¹² The Committee reached no conclusions about whether Dieterle was a member of the CPUSA and inexplicably never called him to testify. However, his known connections with Eisler, his record of support for the Soviet Union and CPUSA fronts, and his collaboration with John Howard Lawson on the production of *Blockade*, in all likelihood weighed to a degree on the HUAC's decision to launch its Hollywood hearings. The HUAC appeared to look for patterns in its investigations and Dieterle fit in the pattern of Eisler's possible influence in Hollywood.

Yet another friend of Hanns Eisler's whom the HUAC scrutinized was the playwright, screenwriter, and film director Clifford Odets, whose thick file abounded with numerous citations from the *Daily Worker* and the *New Masses* that accrued in the years 1935-37. His relatively long biographic narrative and three-column summary reports revealed an extensive list of activities and affiliations with front organizations. Because Odets had been so prominent in leftwing theatre, having written and directed the influential play *Waiting for Lefty* in 1935, the HUAC investigators created a separate report on reviews of his plays published in the communist press and developed an extensive file of newspaper clippings as documentation.

Although not called to testify in the truncated 1947 probe of Hollywood, as the Committee organized for the second round of hearings in 1951-1952, HUAC

³¹² Ibid.

Counsel Frank Tavenner prepared one of the most extensive sets of questions intended for Odets of any witness during either of the Hollywood inquiries. The document contained some 170 questions and ran twenty-eight pages in length.³¹³ In executive session testimony given in 1952, but sealed until 2001, Odets admitted that he joined the CPUSA in the mid-1930s as a response to the recruiting activity of actor J. Edward Bromberg when they were part of the famous Theatre Group in New York City, which had several communists as members, including at the time Elia Kazan.³¹⁴ Odets viewed communism favorably as a possible antidote to the Great Depression and his own on-going unemployment.³¹⁵ However, because he rebelled against any sort of discipline imposed by the party, found Marxist theory boring to study, and could not endure having writing themes dictated to him, Odets claimed he resigned from the CPUSA in less than a year. Before he left New York for Hollywood, he had already alienated party loyalists by denouncing crass party aesthetics in terms of writing, especially as articulated by John Howard Lawson. Thus, when Odets arrived in Hollywood, he claimed he stayed away from the local communists and leftist themes in the films he made.³¹⁶ In fact, Odets argued that it was impossible to influence the content of Hollywood movies with radical ideas.³¹⁷ In 1947, the HUAC did not know this. What they did know was that in the early 1940s Odets had written

³¹³ See “Odets, Clifford,” Box 6, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

³¹⁴ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Clifford Odets” (April 24, 1952), Box 19, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 7.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

the State Department on the same day as William Dieterle to urge the granting to Hanns Eisler permission to stay in the United States permanently.³¹⁸ Investigators also knew that Odets later remained on friendly terms with Eisler, whom he considered “not political,” when both worked for Hollywood and employed him to write the musical score for his film *None But the Lonely Heart* in 1944.³¹⁹ The Eisler-Odets relationship represented yet another important red flag for the Committee as it considered in mid-1947 whether to move forward with public hearings on the motion picture issue.

The well-known relationship of Hanns Eisler and Charlie Chaplin admittedly represents a challenge to the premise that Eisler’s role in Hollywood was a key factor in triggering the Hollywood probe. The reason is that there is an unexpected documentary weakness when it comes to what the HUAC knew or presumed to know about Chaplin. Astoundingly, there is no investigative name file for Charlie Chaplin in boxes devoted to the Hollywood hearings. In fact, Chaplin’s file is nowhere to be found in any of the related file series. Given that even minor Hollywood figures earned an investigative file, it is difficult to believe that the HUAC researchers overlooked Chaplin. Chaplin’s associations with communists and sympathies for communist fronts were well-known in Hollywood. During the 1947 public hearings,

³¹⁸ Clifford Odets to ‘the American Consul,’ January 23, 1940, Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., “Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler,” Records of the Investigative Section.

³¹⁹ Odets later reported this to the Committee investigators, which by this time they already knew based on the information in the HUAC’s investigative files. See “Testimony of Clifford Odets, Accompanied by His Counsel, Eugene Gressman” *Communist Infiltration of the Hollywood Motion-Picture Industry, Part 8*, (Washington: Committee on Un-American Activities, May 20, 1952) 3503.

Robert Stripling asked several witnesses questions about Chaplin.³²⁰ Gossip columnist Hedda Hopper made no secret of the fact that she regarded Chaplin as “...either a card-carrying Red or the next thing to it.”³²¹ In his 1951 public session testimony, actor John Garfield spoke of a party in the mid-1940s that he attended on board a Soviet ship at which Chaplin and his wife were present. Furthermore, the FBI had been investigating Chaplin since the early 1940s as a result of his romantic involvement with Joan Barry, a young actress who filed a paternity suit against him. Through that investigation, the Bureau became aware of Chaplin’s close associations with communists and communist fronts. During the sub-committee hearings in Los Angeles in May, 1947, several witnesses pointed to Chaplin as an individual who likely had communist affiliations.³²² The point here is not that any of this proves that Chaplin was a party member. Rather, given that there was such a general awareness in the industry about Chaplin’s political sympathies and witnesses raised suspicions about him in executive session on the one hand, and the pattern of routine Committee practices on the other, it is implausible that investigators would have not studied Chaplin’s activities and created an investigative file on him.

The obvious and reasonable presumption must be that a file on Chaplin in fact did exist and some curious congressman or staff member either misplaced or

³²⁰ “Testimony of Howard Rushmore,” *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry*, (Washington: Committee on Un-American Activities, 1947) 179 and “Testimony of Paul V. McNutt,” *ibid.*, 361.

³²¹ Kenneth S. Lynn, *Charlie Chaplin and His Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997) 433.

³²² “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Adolphe Menjou” (May 17, 1947), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, 313 and “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Rupert Hughes” (May 15, 1947), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, 406-408.

purloined it. The former circumstance is very possible, as evidenced by the fact that in the HUAC archives there are some file folders located in boxes for the wrong investigation and sometimes a decade or so out of chronology. If the Chaplin file is still in existence and misfiled, some historian or archivist will no doubt discover it someday hidden in the massive HUAC collection. In the meantime, it is reasonable to presume that the HUAC knew of the fond friendship between Hanns Eisler and Charlie Chaplin. That friendship was not a secret in Hollywood and, when after Hanns' testimony before the HUAC the United States government sought to deport Eisler and his wife, Chaplin attempted to influence the situation. Failing to get the INS to stop deportation proceedings, Chaplin worked out an arrangement whereby he would support the Eislers financially, if the "...government would allow them to leave the United States voluntarily, rather than under the stigma of a warrant."³²³ Given the pattern of relative thoroughness exhibited in other HUAC files and the high level of public knowledge, it seems inconceivable that investigators were not aware of Chaplin's radical sympathies in general and his friendship with Eisler in particular. Although there is no known documentary evidence in the HUAC files to support this suggestion, a reasonable but provisional assumption would be that Hann's relationship with Chaplin was yet another factor that influenced the Committee to investigate Hollywood more thoroughly.

In assessing whether Hanns Eisler represented a subversive threat, the archival evidence shows that HUAC investigators looked most closely at his relationship with the famed German playwright Bertolt Brecht, who had also ended up working for the

³²³ Ibid., 461. Also see Anthony Heibut, *Exiled in Paradise*, 374.

Hollywood studios, in this case writing several screenplays. His extensive investigative name file reveals that Committee investigators knew well of his contacts and professional collaboration with Hanns Eisler. An undated and unsigned report to the Committee summarizes Brecht's film credits and activities within the motion picture industry, as well as noting the favorable reviews of Brecht and his work by the Soviet press. Further, the report details how his various works reflect a pro-Soviet stance. Finally, the report offers the particulars of Brecht's affiliations with Wilhelm Pieck, a leader of the German Communist Party and later the first head of state of the German Democratic Republic, i.e. East Germany. A second and much longer report, some nineteen pages in length, cites the writer's activities for and affiliations with a number of known communist front organizations, as well as what investigators considered revolutionary and/or subversive material in a number of works by Brecht. As usual, Committee staff also prepared a comprehensive list of citations of Brecht in the American communist press and, as they had with the Eisler brothers, inspected his INS file. Finally, investigators took a look at the production credits of the film *Hangmen Also Die*, for which Brecht provided the story scenario. Party stalwart John Wexley wrote the screenplay and Hanns Eisler created the music score. The cast included CPUSA member Lionel Stander.³²⁴

Of particular interest to the Committee, as reflected in its prominence in both reports, was Brecht's collaboration with Eisler on a play known in English as *Disciplinary Measures* or more recently as *The Decision*. Titled in German as *Die*

³²⁴ See the four-page and the nineteen-page reports, both unsigned and undated, found in "Brecht, Bert," Box 2, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section.

Massnahme, it was one of Brecht's "teaching plays" for which he was known in the 1930s. Heavily didactic, it told the story of a secret, illegal communist mission from Moscow to China during which one of the team members accidentally and unintentionally betrays the mission. His crime is the inability to maintain the discipline necessary to keep his identity as a communist agitator concealed. His other comrades conclude that for the good of the mission, they must execute him. The doomed communist realizes his error and agrees to his own death for the good of the party. This concept seems to illustrate the logic during Stalin's Great Purge that communists accused of imaginary crimes were rendering the party one final service by confessing to crimes that they did not commit. In a plot vaguely reminiscent of Gerhart Eisler's Comintern activity in China, Brecht's verse justified murder in the cause of revolution and the necessity of individual sacrifice, as well as the sacrifice of individuals, for the greater good of the revolutionary movement.

When Hanns Eisler returned for additional testimony before the Committee in September 1947, this time in public session, Stripling quizzed him repeatedly about *Disciplinary Measures* and other works by Eisler that had lyrics, usually written by Brecht. The HUAC archives reveal that investigators had obtained a translation of *Disciplinary Measures* and focused on passages that advocated revolution or violence, such as:

The Young Comrade:
In the interest of Communism
In accord with the march of the proletarian masses
Of all countries
Saying "Yes" to the revolutionizing of the world.

and:

The Three Agitators:

The we shot him and
Threw him into the quicklime pit
And when the quicklime had eaten him
We returned to our work.³²⁵

During the testimony of Eisler and a month later Brecht, Stripling pointed to librettos like this to demonstrate that the two were not telling the truth when they claimed at varying times either that their work was not political or that its politics was simply anti-fascist. The libretto of *Disciplinary Measures* in particular would figure prominently later in questioning during both Hanns Eisler's and Bertolt Brecht's appearances before the HUAC. However, many other examples of "revolutionary lyrics," in addition to what Stripling introduced into evidence, reside in the Committee's archives, many of which advocate violent action in pursuit of a workers' revolution.³²⁶

Through the use of the dramatic device of characters wearing masks, *Disciplinary Measures* explicitly endorsed clandestine conspiracy by communists to prepare for a revolution. Investigators noted in Brecht's file that "reference is made in a laudatory fashion to the teachings of Lenin, the 'A B C of Communism', and the activities of the Chinese Communist Party in general."³²⁷ Furthermore, the text translated in the Committee's files clearly advocated in the importance of agitation through the means of propaganda. The protagonists are overtly communists working

³²⁵ Translation of the libretto of *Disciplinary Measures* (also known as *The Decision, The Rule, or Doctrine*) found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³²⁶ See Box 198, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives.

³²⁷ See unsigned, undated nineteen page report found in "Brecht, Bert," Box 2, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc. Re: Committee Investigations: Hollywood Blacklist, Records of the Investigative Section.

on behalf of the party on a mission under the orders of the Central Committee in Moscow. Ironically, both men appeared to have mimicked in their professional lives the example advocated in their play: undertake propagandistic activities in the service of the communist party while hiding ones formal affiliations with the party and, if challenged, deny, minimize or trivialize those ties.

There is a final potential, but important thread in the web of links between Hanns Eisler and Hollywood. When Eisler and his wife, Louisa, entered the United States at the beginning of 1938, they did so with an affidavit of support from a Mrs. Ida C. Guggenheimer, the wife of a prominent Manhattan lawyer.³²⁸ On July 21, 1947, Walter S. Steele, representing a coalition of rightwing organizations named the American Coalition of Patriotic, Civic and Fraternal Societies, testified before the HUAC. This organization tracked communist activities and the Committee allowed Mr. Steele to testify to present the views of his organization on anticommunist legislation then pending in Congress. During that hearing, Steele noted the incorporation of an organization called the People's Radio Foundation, which in fact was an effort to create an FM radio station that could broadcast a pro-Soviet, pro-CPUSA message in the New York City area.³²⁹ According to Steele, a charter member of the foundation was Mrs. Guggenheimer, who had a fairly extensive list of associations with communist front organizations. Also serving along with her as charter members were a long list of well-known communists and fellow-travelers,

³²⁸ Photostat of an attachment to a letter, Eleanor Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, January 11, 1939, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³²⁹ David Everitt, *A Shadow of Red: Communism and the Blacklist in Radio and Television* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007) 62-63.

such as Howard Fast, a board member of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, which paid a salary to Gerhart Eisler in the 1940s when it was illegal for him to work in the United States; Frederick V. Field, an editor of *New Masses*; Langston Hughes; CIO union leader Joseph Curran; and others. Included in that list of founding members, asserted Steele, was Charlie Chaplin.³³⁰ Allegations of this sort of testimony of course required the verification and corroboration of further investigation, which was part of the mandate of the Committee. Given past HUAC practices, it would be difficult to imagine that in the summer of 1947 Committee investigators would not further scrutinize these connections between communist front activity in terms of attempts at radio broadcasting in New York and the friendship of Hanns Eisler with Charlie Chaplin.

Given the archival evidence presented above it is reasonable to conclude that the HUAC investigators did understand that Hanns Eisler represented an important communist presence in Hollywood. He had strong professional ties in the motion picture community to the point where non-communist filmmakers sought him out to create the musical scores for their films. Hanns was very active in the German émigré community in Tinsel Town, as well as in the robust cluster of communists that had congregated in the movie colony. On the other hand, he had familial relations to a senior Comintern official, Gerhart Eisler, who at one point gave direction to the CPUSA. As we shall see below, Hanns himself had strong organizational ties to various aspects of the Comintern apparatus. Thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize

³³⁰ *The Testimony of Walter S. Steele Regarding Communist Activities in the United States*, (Washington: Committee on Un-American Activities, July 21, 1947) 108-109.

that, if the investigation of Gerhart Eisler led HUAC investigators to scrutinize his brother, Hanns, then the latter in turn was key to the full-scale launch of the Hollywood probe.

The question then arises: why did Hanns Eisler not figure more prominently in the public Hollywood hearings held October 20-30, 1947? Based on what transpired at those hearings, it would prima facie appear that the only connection between Hanns Eisler and the Hollywood hearings was the HUAC's decision to subpoena Bertolt Brecht. Because Brecht did not refuse to testify under a First Amendment defense similar to the Hollywood Ten and permanently left the country immediately after his testimony before the HUAC, historians have treated him almost as an afterthought by the Committee and a historical quirk. The fact that Hanns had no other significant role or apparent connection with the October hearings seems to support the historians outlined at the beginning of his chapter, who minimized the importance of Hanns Eisler to the Hollywood investigation. However, the case of Hanns Eisler was exceedingly complex, involving four aspects and their possible interrelations: his extensive known activities on behalf of the Comintern in the cultural field; his possible associations with his brother's propaganda apparatus in the United States; the highly unusual circumstances of his immigration to the United States; and his activities in Hollywood as a composer for the motion picture industry. To understand the importance of Hanns Eisler to the HUAC is to understand all four of these areas. As the discussion below will demonstrate, the circumstances surrounding his immigration into the United States became highly controversial and politically charged. The Committee would need to take testimony from State Department

officials, including former Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. The HUAC leadership, i.e. Chairman J. Parnell Thomas and Chief Investigator Robert Stripling, no doubt decided that it would be cleaner and less confusing to separate the Hollywood aspect of Eisler's case from the immigration portion, which they addressed in Eisler's appearance before the full Committee in that fall.

On September 24, 1947, Hanns Eisler presented himself in Washington to testify once again, this time in public session, before the HUAC. Chairman Thomas refused to allow him to read an opening statement, but took it "under advisement." The Committee did not publish Eisler's statement as part of the hearing proceedings. One can find a copy of the statement in the HUAC's archives. In the statement, Eisler again took the committee to task, as the portions below indicate:

The only thing of any public importance about me is my standing as a composer.... On the contrary, the Committee has called me only in order to continue its smear of me in the press, hoping that it will thereby intimidate artists throughout the country to conform to the political ideas of this Committee.... The answers to all these questions are very simple. I am accused of being the brother of Gerhart Eisler, whom I love and admire and whom I defend and will continue to defend. Does the Committee believe that brotherly love is un-American? More important, the Committee hopes that by persecuting me it will intimidate many other artists in America whom it may dislike for any of various unworthy reasons. The Committee hopes to create a drive against every liberal, progressive, and socially-conscious artist in this country, and to subject their works to an un-Constitutional and hysterical political censorship. It is horrible to think what will become of American art if this Committee is to judge what art is American and what is un-American. This is the sort of thing that Hitler and Mussolini tried. They were not so

successful, and neither will be the House Committee on Un-American Activities.³³¹

Leaving the disingenuous aspects of his rhetoric aside, this statement reveals that Eisler himself realized that he represented a significant link between Gerhard Eisler and the Comintern's aims in the American cultural scene on the one hand and individual artists on the other. Those artists with whom Eisler had the closest associations were active in the motion picture industry. Eisler appeared to understand that by attracting the attention of the HUAC, he had brought the Committee's scrutiny to all of Hollywood. To obscure those associations, Eisler sought to redirect attention to the HUAC itself by impugning its motives and making invidious comparisons of Committee methods with fascism. This practice of trying to divert attention from the investigation's substance and redirecting it to an indictment against the legitimacy of the investigators is the same technique unsuccessfully employed previously by Gerhart Eisler and later by the Hollywood Ten.

With the HUAC's intention to focus the September testimony on circumstances of Hanns Eisler's immigration to the United States and his efforts to obtain permanent residency, Stripling ignored attempts by Eisler to redirect attention to Hollywood. When Eisler asked that the Committee adjourn and hear his testimony at the same date as the other witnesses from Hollywood, Chairman Thomas denied his request. During his testimony there was an exchange regarding Eisler's employment by RKO Studios. In response, Stripling made a statement that historians have apparently overlooked: "Mr. Chairman, Mr. Eisler will be subpoenaed, as you

³³¹ Hanns Eisler, statement to the House Committee on Un-American Activities, September 24, 1947, found in Box 198, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

know, in connection with the investigation of Communist infiltration in the motion picture industry. However, I suggest that these questions [regarding Eisler's Hollywood employment] be deferred until the hearing at that time."³³² Chairman Thomas agreed to do so.

Documents in the HUAC archives reveal that Committee investigators knew that, before Eisler went to Hollywood to compose musical scores for motion pictures, he already had experience in the area of filmmaking. The library of subversive publications maintained by the HUAC yielded information that Eisler had some experience in writing music for movies in the Soviet Union. For example, the *Daily Worker* ran accounts of Eisler's 1932 collaboration with the Dutch communist Joris Ivens on the film *Komsomol* and plans for a new film in 1935 depicting Dimitrov's "heroic conduct at the Reichstag fire trial in Leipzig."³³³ During Eisler's testimony, Stripling failed to develop this during his questioning, even though he had carefully documented material note in his prepared questions. At one point, Stripling said: "We will get to Mr. Ivens later," but thorough reading of the hearing's transcript shows that he never did.³³⁴

Often Stripling stuck to his script, but sometimes he did not. There was sometimes an overabundance of information in the Committee files, which was the case both with Gerhart and Hanns Eisler, and it would have been repetitious and

³³² "Testimony of Hanns Eisler," *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States* (Washington: Committee on Un-American Activities, September 24, 1947) 12.

³³³ See questions 29, 33 and 34 in "Questions to be Asked Hanns Eisler" found in Box 198, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³³⁴ "Testimony of Hanns Eisler," (September 24, 1947), 21.

tedious to cover it all during testimony. When one compares Stripling's prepared questions, as found in the HUAC archives, with the transcripts of testimony, there are occasional deviations. In this instance, Stripling departed from his prepared script. In any event, Stripling clearly meant for this line of questioning to function only as a prelude for latter testimony during the Hollywood hearings. Stripling's primary aim was to document Eisler's propagandizing activities before he entered the United States, which would have made his sworn statements to the State Department and the INS perjures. These activities included writing the music for the anthem of the Comintern, not surprisingly entitled "Comintern," the lyrics of which were composed by V. J. Jerome, the CPUSA cultural commissar. Thus, the emphasis in the October Eisler hearings was on the composer's activities during his pre-Hollywood career. Stripling clearly wanted to preserve testimony regarding Eisler's activities in Hollywood for the subsequent hearings.

The story of Eisler's immigration to the United States is exceedingly complex, but a summary is as follows. As early as the spring of 1936, the State Department knew of Eisler's communist associations because he had undertaken two visits to the United States in 1935-1936 on temporary visas that generated a degree of notoriety amongst anticommunist groups.³³⁵ Eisler returned to the United States with his new wife on January 21, 1938, again on a visa valid for six months, which was extended twice for a total of six additional months. During this time, he taught music courses at the New School for Social Research in New York City and wrote music for Broadway shows. When he reentered the United States in 1938, State Department

³³⁵ Edward J. Shaughnessy to Secretary of State, April 6 1936, found in Box 198, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

officials somehow overlooked INS information pointing to Eisler's communist activities. Moreover, at that time, he represented himself to the INS at Ellis Island as a non-political person with no ties to communism. The Eislers left the United States briefly in 1939 for Mexico and returned a short time later on yet another visitor visa.

When this temporary visa expired, the Department of Labor sought to deport the Eislers, while they in turn began the process of applying for permanent residency. The law required the Eislers to leave the United States and make such an application from an American consul at an embassy. This they were reluctant to do. The Eislers sought permanent residency as non-quota immigrants, which would essentially bring them to the front of the line of those seeking to enter the United States. However, the law had very strict criteria on how one might obtain non-quota status and it was not entirely clear the Eislers could meet them. Fearing they could not obtain non-quota status or perhaps that the discovery of Hanns Eisler's past communist affiliations would disqualify his application for permanent residency, the Eislers procrastinated until authorities ordered them to leave the United States. Eventually, they gained reentry into the country, again through Mexico.

During the Eislers' application for permanent residency, numerous important individuals exerted significant pressure on the State Department to admit Hanns Eisler to the United States in 1940 as a non-quota immigrant. These included the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt; Robert LaFollette, Jr., the Progressive Party Senator from Wisconsin; Hollywood film directors Joseph Losey and William Dieterle; theatre director Harold Clurman; theatre and film luminary Clifford Odets; Oscar Wagner, dean of the graduate school of the Julliard School of Music; Dr. Alvin

Johnson, president of the New School for Social Research; journalist Dorothy Thompson; Freda Kirchwey, editor of *The Nation*; Russell Davenport, managing editor of *Fortune* magazine; and Malcolm Cowley, the assistant editor of *The New Republic*. Film director George Cukor sent letters to FDR, Secretary of State Cordell Hull and A. M. Warren, chief of the State Department's Visa Division. Raymond Gram Swing, a journalist with the Mutual Broadcasting System, wrote to the State Department: "I believe there is some prejudice against him in your department because he has composed music for workers' choruses."³³⁶

Such pressure on State Department officials was enormous. Evidence presented by the HUAC in public session, as well as additional information residing in the Committee's archives, shows that officials at the State Department were reluctant to grant the Eislers' application for two reasons. First, it was now obvious the Hanns had extensive communist affiliations and, second, it did not appear they were eligible under the law. When the Eislers changed their application from the American consul in Havana to the one in Mexico City, a State Department official observed: "The interested persons may believe they can bring greater pressure to bear on the Consul General at Mexico City – possibly through Ambassador Daniels – than they have been able to bring on the Consul General at Habana...."³³⁷ The First Lady wrote Sumner Welles, the Undersecretary of State, three times advocating for the Eislers' admittance. While Mrs. Roosevelt may or may not have been naïve about

³³⁶ Raymond Gram Swing to George Messersmith, March 28, 1939, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³³⁷ Avra M. Warren to George S. Messersmith, memorandum, April 29, 1939 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

Eisler's communist past, she was well-known for her concern for Jewish refugees fleeing persecution from the brutal Nazi regime in Germany. Her initial letter to Welles came less than two months after the launch of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, making assistance to such refugees even more pressing. It was no doubt this humanitarian motive that led her to intervene on behalf of the Eislers.

Despite Mrs. Roosevelt's intervention with Welles, who had been a member of her wedding party years before, the Undersecretary politely declined to make special accommodations for them as suggested by "well-meaning" friends of the Eislers, "...[who] seem to think that there is some special consideration or treatment which can be given him which is not provided for in our law or that perhaps certain liberties could be taken with the law." Welles reminded his old friend, Mrs. Roosevelt, that the law strictly limited the actions of the Department of State. Welles wrote: "There is nothing that we can do or suggest that Mr. Eisler should do that does not fall within these statutory prescriptions."³³⁸

A passage in a letter between two State Department officials illustrates the degree to which the Eisler immigration case became a political hot potato within the American government:

I think you are wise in leaving the political phase of the case for future consideration. However, when the time comes, I hope you will go into this matter with your usual care and skill. If this alien obtains an immigration visa and enters the United States we are likely to hear from anti-communist organizations in this country. Of course, if he is refused an immigration visa there will also be some repercussion among the so-

³³⁸ Sumner Welles to Eleanor Roosevelt, February 10, 1939, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

called liberal elements in this country. We have a Congressional investigation hanging over our heads, however, and I am sure we will be called to render an explanation concerning the issuance of visas to so many of the reds and pinks who have been filtering into the country in recent years. If I were handling the case I would reach a conclusion I could defend before all the world and let the future take care of itself.³³⁹

The Eisler immigration saga was even more complex than can be recounted here in detail in its entirety. In the end, the Eislers received permanent residency status and ultimately began the process of becoming American citizens. However, they obtained this result only after an INS special board of inquiry first denied them a non-quota immigration visa because of Hanns Eisler's lack of qualifications as a university professor prior to his initial admittance into the United States. The Eislers immediately appealed that decision and ultimately the Board of Immigration Appeals in Washington, DC overturned the decision of the board of inquiry, issuing what the HUAC believed was a highly dubious finding that Eisler was qualified as a university professor under the law, and ordered that the Eislers be admitted to the United States.³⁴⁰ When the HUAC obtained documents pertaining to the Eislers' immigration case, investigators were suspicious that the Board of Immigration Appeals had reached its conclusion based on political pressure, rather than a proper application of the law.

In the wake of the HUAC hearings, however, the American government revoked the Eislers' residency status after it became clear that Hanns lied about his communist affiliations and activities before he entered the United States. Had it not

³³⁹ Robert C. Alexander to Paul C. Hutton, August 9, 1939, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³⁴⁰ "Testimony of Hanns Eisler," (September 24, 1947) 10-11.

been for the Gerhart Eisler investigation, Hanns Eisler's immigration case and the unusual circumstances surrounding it might have been forgotten. Ultimately, the enormous pressure brought to bear on State Department officials made Hanns' case memorable. Thus, when Robert Stripling began to request documents in order to scrutinize Gerhart Eislers' passport irregularities and the circumstances surrounding his entry to the United States in 1941, State Department employees in the Visa Division suggested that he look into Hanns Eisler's records as well.³⁴¹

It appeared to the leadership of the HUAC that the Hanns Eisler immigration saga illustrated two important points. First, the Roosevelt Administration had been lax in securing the nation's borders from the infiltration of avowed communists, who were loyal to and sought to undertake the policy directives of a foreign power. This would explain how Hanns Eisler was able to repeatedly obtain temporary visas to visit the United States. Second, when officials of the government of the United States recognized such an individual and attempted to stop him from obtaining permanent residency status, they appeared to be overruled due to political consideration and enormous pressure brought to bear from a number of individuals, some of whom had extensive connections with communist front organizations. In any event, the Hanns Eisler hearings caused quite a stir in Washington in part because of the association of the beloved former First Lady with the possibility that Hanns and Louisa Eisler gained immigrant status in the United States.

The following month during the Hollywood hearings, the HUAC aborted its original intention to further investigate Hanns Eisler's suspected communist

³⁴¹ Robert Stripling, *Red Plot*, 63.

associations in Hollywood. That testimony never occurred because Chairman Thomas suddenly adjourned the Hollywood hearings on October 30, 1947. Robert Stripling has asserted that this transpired for three reasons. First, he said the hearing had become repetitive, the implication being that the Committee was not making progress in its investigation with suspected communists refusing to answer questions and the Chairman unceremoniously removing them from the witness chair. Second, he averred, "I had every reason to believe that New York communist circles were about to mass-picket the House Office Building and pack the caucus rooms." Thus, he feared an even further circus-like atmosphere surrounding the hearings, though he does not say why the House could not take measures to counteract those plans. Third, Stripling asserted that Chairman Thomas became ill and was reluctant to allow another congressman to fill in as temporary chairman.³⁴²

Although the Hollywood hearings ended early, a line of questioning that Stripling began to develop during the testimony of Bertolt Brecht demonstrates that he planned to return to the activities of Hanns Eisler. However, right in the middle of Stripling's questioning of the playwright about his contacts with Gerhart and Hanns Eisler and his activities in Hollywood, Chairman Thomas interjected: "Mr. Stripling, can we hurry this along? We have a very heavy schedule this afternoon."³⁴³ Thus, scheduling exigencies prevented Stripling from delving deeper into the Eisler-Brecht relationship in Hollywood.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 75

³⁴³ "Testimony of Bertold Brecht," *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry*, (Washington: Committee on Un-American Activities, 1947) 501.

Thus, the HUAC was well aware that Brecht was a friend and professional collaborator with Hanns Eisler. Investigators knew that together they were in the forefront of the revolutionary theatre movement in Germany before the Nazis took power.

However, Stripling's prepared questions revealed an interest in whether Brecht also knew Gerhart Eisler. The Committee wanted to know whether Brecht had any contact with the older Eisler brother. This was apparently an effort to follow up on Ruth Fischer's charge that Gerhart was in the process of developing a propaganda apparatus in the United States and that his composer brother and Bertolt Brecht were his assistants in that undertaking. Brecht admitted he had met Gerhart in the presence of Hanns and three or four times when Hanns was not present. He asserted that they merely played chess and discussed German politics.³⁴⁴

This was one of a number of occasions during the Hollywood hearings in which Stripling was able to establish direct links to Gerhart Eisler and individuals involved in the motion picture industry. Historians seem to have overlooked much of this additional testimony apparently because it consisted of an effort to summarize a great deal of information in the Committee's files without having to call any more celebrity witness and continue to feed the circus-like atmosphere that surrounded such testimony. Instead, Stripling called HUAC investigator Louis J. Russell to offer testimony under oath about what HUAC investigators had discovered in the course of the probe. Russell testified that in 1940 Gerhart Eisler contacted Hanns for assistance in raising a large sum of money for the purpose of "...buying [his] way out of

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 499-500.

concentration camp in France.”³⁴⁵ Several of Hanns’ contacts in Hollywood, Charles A. Page, a freelance writer and former employee of the State Department, and Louise Bransten, an heiress and former wife of the owner of *New Masses*, led the campaign to raise the money.

Hanns Eisler knew Page well and at one point resided at Page’s home, which was just off of Mulholland Drive in the Hollywood Hills. Bransten made numerous investments in communist front companies and toured the Soviet Union in 1933. In addition to the Eisler brothers, Page and Bransten were both known associates of Hollywood Ten members John Howard Lawson and Herbert Biberman, Comintern agent Otto Katz, and various officials with the Soviet consulate in San Francisco, including the Consul himself, Gregori Kheifets. Bransten also had numerous contacts with officials from the Soviet consulate in Los Angeles. According to Russell, on May 19, 1945 Bransten entertained Dmitri Manuilsky, a high official in the Comintern and later the Ukrainian representative to the United Nations, as the guest of honor at a dinner in her home. Furthermore, in 1942 J. Peters, the former head of the CPUSA’s underground apparatus and the one-time assistant and close associate of Gerhart Eisler, visited Hollywood to raise money for the party. During the visit, he met with such people as Herbert Biberman, Hollywood Ten screenwriter and director; Waldo Salt, screenwriter and former consultant to the Office of War Information; screenwriter Paul Jarrico; screenwriter and director Robert Rossen; screenwriters Morton Grant and Hyman Kraft; and Hollywood Ten screenwriters John Howard

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 513.

Lawson and Lester Cole.³⁴⁶ That the Eisler brothers figured importantly in the Hollywood hearings is indicated by the fact that together they are mentioned 104 times in the proceeding's transcripts.

The adjournment of the Hollywood hearings was supposed to be temporary. In a final statement on October 30 at the end of the Hollywood hearings, Thomas made clear his intentions to continue the inquiry later:

The hearings today conclude the first phase of the committee's investigation of communism in the motion-picture industry. While we have heard 39 witnesses, there are many more to be heard. The Chair stated earlier in the hearing he would present the records of 79 prominent people associated with the motion-picture industry who were members of the Communist Party or who had records of Communist affiliations. We have had before us 11 of these individuals. There are 68 to go. This hearing has concerned itself principally with spotlighting Communist personnel in the industry. There is, however, an equally dangerous phase of this inquiry which deals with Communist propaganda in various motion pictures and the techniques employed. At the present time the committee has a special staff making an extensive study of this phase of the committee's inquiry. Either the full committee or a subcommittee will resume hearings on this matter in the near future, either in Washington or in Los Angeles, at which time those persons whose Communist records the committee has will be given an opportunity to appear before the committee to confirm or deny those affiliations. We will also have a number of witnesses who will deal with propaganda in the films and the techniques employed. I want to emphasize that the committee is not adjourning *sine die*, but will resume hearings as soon as possible.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 514-519.

³⁴⁷ "Louis J. Russell," *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry*, (Washington: Committee on Un-American Activities, 1947) 522.

Given the statement by Stripling during Eisler's testimony the previous month and the abundance of information in the HUAC archives regarding Hanns' connections with other notables in the motion picture industry, it seems probable that had the Hollywood investigation resumed shortly after the October hearings, Eisler would have found himself testifying yet again and his importance to the HUAC's interest in Hollywood would have been clearer.

In any event, the Hollywood hearings did not resume until 1951. During 1948, most of the HUAC's agenda was absorbed with the Hiss-Chambers affair, which relegated Hollywood to the back burner. When the Committee finally did return to the subject of communism in the motion picture industry, circumstances were significantly different. Scandalized by charges of corruption, J. Parnell Thomas was no longer serving in Congress and in fact had gone to prison. By then, Frank Tavenner had replaced Stripling as head of the Committee's staff, bringing a new tone to that role. Hanns Eisler had moved on too, joining his brother Gerhart and his old friend Bertolt Brecht in the German Democratic Republic, where he wrote the music to the national anthem of East Germany. It was no longer necessary or even possible to call Hanns Eisler before the HUAC for additional testimony. Thus, this quirk of history has also obscured the strong connection the HUAC saw between Hanns Eisler and the communist movement in Hollywood.

In summary, when one adds the newly available archival evidence of what HUAC investigators knew about the activities of both Gerhart and Hanns Eisler on behalf of the Comintern to several overlooked portions of the existing public record, it becomes clear that Hanns Eisler represented a clear logical link for HUAC

investigators between the propagandizing activities of Gerhart Eisler through the CPUSA's newspapers headquartered in Manhattan and Hanns Eisler's "cultural work" in the motion picture industry from his home in Malibu. Those links represented an irresistible target for investigation. For years the Committee had information about communist infiltration into the American movie industry.

When Gerhart Eisler became the focus of the HUAC's scrutiny in late 1946, it only became a matter of time until his brother, Hanns, shared that spotlight. With Ruth Fischer publishing stories in the Hearst press that Hanns was the Comintern's boss in Hollywood, it became inevitable that the Committee would launch a full-scale investigation of Tinsel Town in 1947. As other historians have pointed out, the HUAC already had additional reasons for studying communist activity in Hollywood: the IA-CSU labor battles, allegations that communists had infiltrated the Screen Writers Guild, and charges by the Motion Picture Alliance that subversive content was making its way into the movies. However, the investigation of the Eislers, predicated on claims of Comintern involvement and propagandizing activities, made the Hollywood probe far more urgent in the estimation of the Committee.

Thus, the Gerhart Eisler-Hanns Eisler-Hollywood connection answers the historical question of timing. The HUAC archives reveal the substantial pool of information pertaining to Hanns Eisler with which Committee investigators worked. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that Hanns Eisler was not a marginal figure in the story of the HUAC's investigation of Hollywood, but an important individual and perhaps the central figure.

Chapter 7: Naming Names vs. Investigating Fronts

The central argument of this chapter is that, in terms of the Hollywood probe, over time it became apparent to Committee investigators that identifying whether individual media professionals were CPUSA members was an increasingly fruitless exercise given the very nature of Party membership itself. Even though investigators continued to try to understand the CPUSA's organizational structure and the conduct of Party business at the local level, the HUAC became more concerned with exposing the activities of communist front organizations and their interplay with communist propaganda efforts. The Committee pursued this agenda of exposure within the context of a continued suspicion that communist fronts were effective instruments of advocating the policy goals of the principal enemy of the United States, i.e. the Soviet Union. Whereas previous historians have emphasized the HUAC's efforts to have witnesses "name names" as the defining characteristic of the Hollywood investigations, the documentary record indicates that the Committee focused its attention as much or more on the issue of communist fronts.

Furthermore, the newly opened HUAC archive reveals that executive session witnesses offered evidence of a pattern of mendacious behavior by the communist leaders of front organizations, who made fraudulent statements in the communist press, claiming that Hollywood professionals endorsed and/or participated in the activities of those fronts. Many witnesses, whose testimony was unavailable to historian until now, denied endorsing such activities and even membership in these groups. In some cases, witnesses even claimed ignorance of the existence of the organizations or their professed goals. If these witnesses told the truth under oath,

then communist fronts systematically used them as pawns in a wide propaganda effort. Apparently, a celebrity, who joined one organization or offered a one-time endorsement of an event or charitable cause by that front, could find him or herself, without his or her knowledge or consent, automatically a member of all successor organizations and an endorser of other events or charitable causes. This pattern of behavior was clearly an effort to exploit the celebrity status of well-known cultural leaders.

The complex story of Gerhart Eisler is in many ways illustrative of this chapter's central argument. When Gerhart Eisler bought his way out of a French concentration camp with money raised through Hanns' Hollywood connections, he initially intended to go to Mexico. At least that is what he claimed to both immigration authorities in New York in 1941 and to the press in 1947 after his identity became public. The American consulate in Marseilles issued him only a transit visa in order to get to Mexico via the United States and this fact appears to support Eisler's assertion. Furthermore, a HUAC investigator noted in Eisler's file: "Since June 13, 1941 he has been unable to depart from the United States because the State Dept did not wish to and refused to grant him an exit permit."³⁴⁸ Thus, the reason he was in the United States from 1941 to 1949 appeared to be beyond his control. Why the State Department did not allow Eisler to continue on to his stated destination in Mexico remains unclear, although there have been claims that at a certain point during the war Mexico began refusing entry to German and Austrian citizens. Eisler told the FBI and the American public that he was simply a fighter

³⁴⁸ Unsigned memorandum, February 4, 1947, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

against Nazism, who became marooned in the United States. All he wanted to do, he asserted, was to return to his homeland and help rebuild post-war Germany. Eisler had been, he admitted, a member of the Communist Party of Germany, but that had only to do with his native country. In the United States, Eisler argued, he maintained a strictly apolitical stance with the exception of promoting anti-Nazi ideas amongst German émigrés.³⁴⁹

A number of knowledgeable people disputed Eisler's story and, under scrutiny, it began to fall apart. The self-appointed task before the HUAC in winter of 1946-47 appeared to be to determine where the truth lay by answering these questions: Was Gerhart Eisler a member of the CPUSA? Was Eisler engaged in propaganda activities on behalf of the CPUSA? How did this relate to activities within communist front organizations? Did he exercise authority over the American Party in the name of the Comintern? In reality, one could boil Robert Stripling's set of forty-seven prepared questions down to the above four. The Committee was never able to address any questions directly to Eisler. His refusal to take the oath and his loud claims that he was a political prisoner short-circuited his hearing. The HUAC did its best to salvage the proceedings through the testimony of others, such as Committee investigators, who read into the record the information they had obtained from various sources.

The same four basic questions were also at the heart of the investigation of Hanns Eisler with the exception of the Comintern query. Gerhart was unique in his

³⁴⁹ See J. Edgar Hoover to Ugo Carusi, October 16, 1946, and *Transcript of Proceedings: Meet the Press, Broadcast over Radio Station WOL – Washington, DC* (Federal Reporting Company: December 27, 1946) 7-13 found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

role as a Comintern plenipotentiary. Thus, the appropriate question to ask of Hanns was: To what degree was he acting as a representative of the Comintern? In fact, a broad reading of the recently unsealed transcripts of testimony taken in executive session by the HUAC reveals that, generally speaking, this pattern held true for the Hollywood investigation. The Committee consistently wanted information in four areas: public or secret Party membership, propaganda activities, participation in fronts, and the degree to which the first three reflected the policy agenda of a foreign power through the mechanism of the Comintern and/or its successor.

Gerhart Eisler's sister, Ruth Fischer, ridiculed his story of being a lone anti-Nazi stranded in a foreign country against his will, saying, "His refugee story is a fake." She asserted he probably planned all along to come to the United States for an extended stay, gambling that immigration authorities would hold him up at Ellis Island and make it impossible for him to get to Mexico.³⁵⁰ Implying that Gerhart had to have the help of very special connections to get a transit visa, she noted how suspicious it was to have the capacity to apply for and get a visa from a concentration camp. It is important to remember that at that time, the Soviet Union and Germany were allies, while the latter occupied a defeated France. Fischer's implication was that the Nazis did the Soviets a favor by allowing a key Comintern's propagandists to escape France. Furthermore, Fischer argued, Eisler could have easily booked direct passage from France to Vera Cruz; there was no need to go through New York. She alleged that it was the help of Hanns Eisler, who raised pressure on government

³⁵⁰ Ruth Fischer, "Gerhart Eisler: The Career Terrorist" found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

officials through influential friends, that secured Gerhart's release from Ellis Island after three months confinement.³⁵¹ The HUAC in fact knew via statements made by Howard Fast that it was the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, a communist front, which arranged for Eisler's admission to the United States.³⁵²

The Committee knew Eisler's claim that, as an anti-Nazi crusader, he was only concerned about German politics and not involved in American domestic politics, did not bear scrutiny. The HUAC had evidence that Eisler had been involved with and/or advised numerous communist front organizations, including the American Slav Congress; the Win-the-Peace Congress; the Civil Rights Congress; the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy; the Council of African Affairs; the Council for Pan American Democracy; the Political Action Committee; the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions; the Federation of Atomic Scientists; and the Southern Conference for Human Welfare. Furthermore, Eisler's wife was apparently active in the American Yugoslav Relief Committee.³⁵³ In addition, as noted in Chapter 6, the FBI had evidence that the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee had him on its payroll under a pseudonym. Thus, Eisler's connections with communist front organizations appeared to be on-going and extensive.

Louis Budenz argued that the authority Eisler carried was not of a refugee from Nazism headed for Mexico, who was unexpectedly delayed in the United States.

³⁵¹ Ruth Fischer, "Departure and Arrival," found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³⁵² See untitled document of forty-seven questions prepared by Robert Stripling to ask Gerhart Eisler under oath found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

³⁵³ Ibid.

As evidence, Budenz pointed to a dispute during the war between Party chief Earl Browder and his long-time rival for power, William Z. Foster. During 1944-45, Foster argued forcefully against Browder's position on the likelihood of a post-war spirit of cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Inspired by the outcome of the Tehran Conference between Churchill, FDR, and Stalin, Browder foresaw an extended era of cooperation, whereas Foster envisioned a return to class struggle. Eisler sided with Browder in an article published in *Communist* under his pseudonym, Hans Berger, and effectively ended the policy debate. Budenz asserted: "It was not written by a Communist on his way to Mexico, stopping off here; it was a responsible and dominant person writing the article." According to Budenz, Eisler was in America by choice because it "was where he wanted to land" and once there, he spoke/wrote with authority.³⁵⁴

Upon entry in the United States in 1941, besides denying before the INS board of inquiry that he had ever been a communist, he also stated that he had no relatives in the United States. The HUAC believed he did this despite the fact that he knew both his sister Ruth Fischer and his brother Hanns had preceded him to America.³⁵⁵ This, of course, raised the question as to why Gerhart would lie to authorities unless his initial plan was to escape the government's attention and engage in anonymous or covert Party work. This appears to be in fact what he did.

If Gerhart Eisler had proceeded onto Mexico as his transit visa required, his paperwork stated that his destination was Mexico City to meet Otto Katz, who

³⁵⁴ "Testimony of Louis Budenz," (November 22, 1946) 21-22.

³⁵⁵ Untitled document of forty-seven questions prepared by Robert Stripling to ask Gerhart Eisler found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section.

apparently sponsored Eisler's entry into that country. According to J. Edgar Hoover, Katz was "frequently reported as a Comintern agent and is known to be an important European Communist."³⁵⁶ Because the HUAC had access to Hoover's written communication with the INS commissioner, investigators were aware of this. It further confirmed the allegations by Fischer, Budenz and others that Eisler was a Comintern agent. The Committee apparently did not know that in actuality Otto Katz was a protégé of Willi Munzenberg, an important Comintern operative and master propagandist.³⁵⁷ Both were members of the Communist Party of Germany and both were friends with Bertolt Brecht and the Eisler brothers during the 1920s when they were all active in the Communist Party of Germany.³⁵⁸ Had the HUAC known this without a doubt the questioning of Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht under oath would have proceeded differently.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Munzenberg was successful at creating a bewildering array of communist front organizations and media outlets in Western Europe that promoted the Comintern's point of view. This propaganda machine, known within communist circles as the "Munzenberg Trust," included all aspects of the media: newspapers, magazines, book publishing houses, motion picture studios, radio and even press agencies. For example, it was the motion picture company that he founded, Mezhrpohmfilm, which brought the works of the great early Soviet

³⁵⁶ J. Edgar Hoover to Ugo Carusi, October 16, 1946, found in Box 199, Exhibits, Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section..

³⁵⁷ For the seminal biography of Munzenberg written by his widow, see Babette Gross, *Willi Munzenberg: A Political Biography*, trans. Marian Jackson (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1974)

³⁵⁸ Koch, *Double Lives*, 89 & 90.

filmmakers, such as Eisenstein, Vertov and Dovzhenko, to Western audiences. Together Munzenberg's media organizations and fronts formed "a network for molding and (not least), for secret political action. Munzenberg had assembled what amounted to a huge, secretly co-ordinated media consortium."³⁵⁹ He was himself a protégé of Karl Radek, one of the great Soviet propagandists, a leader in the Comintern, and for a time the editor of *Izvestia*, which was the official daily newspaper of the Soviet government. Munzenberg's genius was the innovation of two propaganda practices: the use of clandestinely controlled front organizations and the covertly manipulated cultural luminary, who, as a non-communist, functioned as a public face for a communist policy position.³⁶⁰

In Germany in the 1920s, Otto Katz carefully studied his mentor's propaganda model and methods of operation. Katz, who boasted that in his early years he had been friends with Franz Kafka and had Marlene Dietrich as a lover, started his career with Munzenberg by managing the business affairs of another member of the Munzenberg Trust, the theatre director Erwin Piscadore.³⁶¹ After additional training in Moscow, during which time the NKVD probably initiated him as an agent, Katz returned to Germany to collaborate with Munzenberg on the communist propaganda response to the Reichstag fire and the defense of Georgi Dimitrov, whom the Nazis put on trial for starting the fire.³⁶² In the mid-1930s, the Comintern sent Katz to the United States, where he worked to emulate Munzenberg's methods there in active

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 38.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 86 & 98.

³⁶² Ibid., 122-127.

collaboration with Gerhart Eisler.³⁶³ Katz' bases of operations were New York and Hollywood and he traveled back and forth unfettered by the American government for over five years. This ended 1940 when the journalist Dorothy Thompson denounced him as an NKVD agent to the FBI after she became disillusioned by the communists' behavior during the Stalin-Hitler Pact.³⁶⁴ How she obtained the information about Katz remains unclear. Shortly thereafter, the State Department revoked his visa and Katz retreated to Mexico City, where he ran a front called the Free German Committee of Mexico, which published the *Neues Deutschland* newspaper as its official organ.³⁶⁵

In the nearly six year period between January, 1935 and November, 1940, when he was expelled from the United States, Otto Katz achieved perhaps his greatest accomplishments for the communist cause and he did this independent of the direct supervision of Munzenberg. In March 1935, he arrived in Hollywood, using the pseudonym Rudolph Breda and posing as a freedom fighter for the Spanish Republican cause. Projecting a dashing image of a mysterious leader of the resistance against Hitler, the armchair revolutionaries in his Hollywood coterie came to idealize Katz. Some have alleged that he was the model for the noble Victor Lazlo in *Casablanca* and writer-director Frank Tuttle named his hero Breda in his 1943 film

³⁶³ Ibid., 23 & 103.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., 240-241.

³⁶⁵ Committee on Un-American Activities, *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry* (Washington: U. S. House of Representatives, 1947) 374.

Hostages.³⁶⁶ Likewise, rumors abounded that Communist writers Bertolt Brecht and John Wexler based the character of Svoboda on Katz in *Hangmen Also Die*, as did Lillian Hellman for the role of Kurt Muller in *Watch on the Rhine*.³⁶⁷ Whether or not this was the case, there is little doubt that Katz certainly captured the imagination of a number of filmmakers during the war years.

In fairly short order, Katz achieved his mission to establish an anti-Nazi front organization. Under the nominal direction of Prince Hubertus zu und von Lowenstein, a classic Munzenberg follow-traveler, Katz/Breda engineered the creation of the Hollywood League Against Nazism, later known as the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League. As one of the earliest examples of a communist front in the United States, there was then little awareness of communist manipulation of such organizations. Thus, the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League initially attracted broad support across the political spectrum and raised huge sums of money for Katz.³⁶⁸ The League functioned as a classic front in which fellow-travelers or secret communists, such as Donald Ogden Stewart and Dorothy Parker, played the most visible role. Known communists kept a fairly low profile and avoided any overt communist propaganda in favor of the anti-Nazi, collective security policy that the Soviet Union pursued at the time, and fund raising relief efforts for victims of Nazism. (It is with no little irony that many of those victims were exiled German communists whom

³⁶⁶ *Casablanca* co-writer Howard Koch was later blacklisted for refusing to cooperate with the HUAC and Hollywood Ten screenwriter Lester Cole was the co-writer of *Hostages*.

³⁶⁷ See for example, Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 106 and Diana McLellan, *The Girls: Sappho Goes to Hollywood* (New York: Macmillan, 2001) 208.

³⁶⁸ McLellan, *The Girls*, 206-208.

Stalin forced into a suicidal policy of opposing German socialists instead of the Nazis on the eve of Hitler's seizure of power.) The League became perhaps the most well-known and effective communist front organization in the United States during the Popular Front era and the first of many emanating from Hollywood.³⁶⁹ This success would lead Katz to brag: "Columbus discovered America, but I discovered Hollywood."³⁷⁰

Because J. Edgar Hoover, who was not a fan of the HUAC, doled out FBI information sparingly, in all probably Committee investigators had only the faintest idea of the strong connection between the Eisler brothers and the Katz-Munzenberg organization in the United States. The HUAC archives show that the FBI did not share its file on Otto Katz, which ran some 780 pages long. Katz' name appeared only five times in printed hearing transcripts and reports by the HUAC. His name came up four times in 1947 in testimony and once in 1950 when his former literary agent claimed Fifth Amendment privilege before the Committee.³⁷¹ Committee files show that HUAC investigators had information that Katz and Gerhart Eisler knew each other and collaborated. They knew Katz was a Comintern agent and that he had been active in Hollywood, but they had only the sketchiest of details.³⁷² Thus, the Committee appears to have remained unaware of the very extensive connections

³⁶⁹ For an extended discussion of the activities of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League from a revisionist perspective, see Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 104-112.

³⁷⁰ Koch, *Double Lives*, 250.

³⁷¹ Committee on Un-American Activities, *Cumulative Index to Publications of the Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1954* (Washington: U. S. House of Representatives, 1962) 431.

³⁷² *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry*, 514.

between the Eisler brothers, Bertolt Brecht, Otto Katz, and the Munzenberg Trust going back to the 1920s. Nevertheless, during its investigations of Gerhart and Hanns Eisler, the Committee opted to focus much of its attention on their activities within or on behalf of front organizations and the Comintern. The ultimate center of the HUAC's attention was their propagandizing activities.

As it investigated Gerhart Eisler, Hanns Eisler, and Bertolt Brecht, the HUAC faced the reality that it did not have any direct physical evidence to prove that these men were members of the CPUSA or working under Party directives during their residency in the United States. There was significant circumstantial proof that it would have been foolish to ignore and there was plenty of testimony from former Party members, such as Ruth Fischer, Louis Budenz, and Gerhart Eisler's first wife, Hede Massing, who was a self-confessed former espionage agent for the NKVD. However, investigators could not produce a Party registration card or a registration roll upon which their names appeared. Thus, an individual like Hanns Eisler would attempt (unconvincingly) to explain away the circumstantial evidence, i.e. the public record of his pro-communist activities as found in the Party press, as being simply documentation of his anti-Nazi efforts. When confronted with the testimony of former communists, those brought unwillingly before the HUAC would invariably respond with *ad hominem* attacks, labeling the ex-Party members as stool-pigeons, Judases, turncoats, etc., rather than answering the charges factually.³⁷³

³⁷³ Gerhart Eisler used language like this to describe Ruth Fischer in *Transcript of Proceedings: Meet the Press, Broadcast over Radio Station WOL – Washington, DC* (Federal Reporting Company: December 27, 1946) 6 and Louis Budenz in *Eisler Strikes Back*, 4, wherein he says Budenz took “Judas money for selling lies” to the Hearst press and *Life* magazine, both found in Box 199, Exhibits,

The same difficulty in proving Party membership held true of many of those that Committee investigators believed to be under Party discipline. There was a lack of documentary evidence of *de jure* membership in the CPUSA. This presented a real problem for the Committee. It had circumstantial evidence, as well as the testimony of non-communists and former communists, that pointed to the likelihood of significant communist infiltration into the motion picture industry. The HUAC could not overlook the obvious link between Gerhart and Hanns Eisler with a number of Hollywood luminaries. Serious allegations of Comintern connections and propagandizing of the movies made the issue impossible to ignore. Yet if there was a subversive conspiracy, then there must be some criteria for membership in that plot. During the 1947 investigation, simple membership in the CPUSA proved itself a less than useful criterion.

A better label for the Hollywood Ten might have been the Unlucky Ten. It appears the reason the HUAC chose these ten men for testimony in October of 1947 was that the Committee had documentary evidence of their Party membership in the form of their communist Party registration cards.³⁷⁴ (Unfortunately, the HUAC archives do not indicate how the Committee obtained copies of those cards.) Given the professional and political record of the Hollywood Ten, one could not say with consistency that the criteria for selection were their importance in the CPUSA, their significant success in the motion picture industry, or their high degree of activity in

Evidence, Etc., "Hanns Eisler Gerhart Eisler," Records of the Investigative Section. When they decided to cooperate with the HUAC, Edward Dmytryk, Elia Kazan, Leo Townsend and others were recipients of similar attacks from other communists.

³⁷⁴ *Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry*, 539-549, 462 & 468.

front organizations. Certainly screenwriters John Howard Lawson, Dalton Trumbo and Albert Maltz were not only successful screenwriters, but also relatively important Party figures. Lester Cole and Ring Lardner, Jr., also screenwriters, had gained a high degree of success in the industry, but they appeared to have focused much of their political activities in front organizations rather than Party organizing. Director Edward Dmytryk and producer Adrian Scott were young up-and-comers and, though successful, did not have nearly the professional track record of the aforementioned. Moreover, their participation in the Party was marginal and by the time of the Hollywood probe Dmytryk had dropped out. Screenwriters Hebert Biberman, Samuel Ornitz and Alvah Bessie were loyal CPUSA members, but not Party heavyweights. Professionally, they enjoyed minor careers, although at the time of the 1947 Hollywood probe, Bessie showed promise of greater accomplishments in the future.

The point is that the one thing these ten held in common was that the HUAC had documentary evidence of their Party membership. There were many other very prolific Hollywood communists, who were at least as important to the communist movement and perhaps more so, than at least half of the Hollywood Ten. Such individuals would include Donald Ogden Stewart, Dorothy Parker, John Wexler, Lillian Hellman, Robert Rossen, Lewis Milestone and Joseph Losey. Of course, the difficulty the Committee faced was the lack of written or printed evidence attesting to official Party membership. The only alternative was the process of questioning witnesses under oath about their Party membership and that of others. The HUAC found that this circumstance was the result of the very nature of CPUSA membership,

which was very different than membership in other political parties. To understand the extent of the Committee's predicament, one must understand the characteristics and function of Party membership.

During the 1940s and the 1950s, there were two opposing views about what it meant to be a member of the Communist Party. One held that communists were radical, but benign. They may have foolishly and idealistically believed in the Soviet experiment, but they were loyal Americans at heart and they were most concerned with issues such as civil rights and economic justice. The other view held that, while individual communists might be naïve about the nature of the Party, as a whole the CPUSA sought the revolutionary overthrow of the American government or at a minimum served the policy interests of a foreign enemy. Proponents of this perspective argued that, although communists had toned down their rhetoric of the Popular Front era, this was simply a short-term tactic of expediency. Thus, this view held that the CPUSA was a subversive and conspiratorial organization and its cadre and senior leadership were likely to be disloyal to their country.

These two perspectives have found resonance in two competing allegories about the nature of individual participation in the communist movement offered by two of the great artists of the Twentieth Century. Playwright Arthur Miller and filmmaker Elia Kazan were both friends and one-time communists. Their divergent artistic visions of the truth reflected the disputed perspectives of the nature of American communism.

Arthur Miller argued there was no subversive communist threat. His allegorical play, *The Crucible*, debuted in 1953 at the height of the McCarthy era.

Miller only thinly veiled his metaphors. There were no real witches in Salem, just mere mortals engaged in very human pursuits – illicit sex, revenge, and self-preservation. The denunciations of witchcraft were motivated for personal reasons, paranoia and religious (read ideological) fanaticism and combined with a rigid worldview to produce a societal hysteria leading to the prosecution and persecution of innocents. The outcome was temporary social insanity, destroyed relationships, ruined lives and death.³⁷⁵ The Salem witch was a metaphor for the American communist and the Seventeenth Century witch-hunts for the efforts of “McCarthyists” to root out this imagined devious evil-doer called a communist from all important sectors of American society.

Certainly Miller admitted that there were Communists in America in the 1940s and 1950s. However, they were not witches deserving of “a veritable holy terror,” first by the Truman Administration, then by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and finally by McCarthy and his sympathizers. Why then the witch-hunt? Miller argued that the justification for this fanatical pogrom was “the politics of alien conspiracy.” This was the real charge of witchcraft, implied Miller, not that there were communists, but that these radicals were in fact treasonous agents of a Soviet plot, whose first success had been to infiltrate the State Department and allow the United States to “lose China.” Such logic, Miller asserted, was similar to that at Salem centuries before. It was “so magical, so paranoid” that it crushed “all nuance, all the shadings that a realistic judgment of reality requires.” Furthermore, the personal and ideological desires of conservatives to take back the political ground

³⁷⁵ See Arthur Miller, *The Crucible: Text and Criticism*, ed. Gerald Weales (New York: Penguin Books, 1977).

lost during Roosevelt's New Deal were what ultimately motivated the witch-hunt.³⁷⁶ Miller's belief was that those who testified before the HUAC and "named names" of others as being communists were guilty of the dishonor of participating in the immoral witch-hunt merely to preserve their careers.

An alternate and competing allegory came from Elia Kazan in the film *On the Waterfront*. According to Mr. Kazan's film, there really were witches or in the case of his narrative, agents of organized crime, who had infiltrated and corrupted a longshoreman's union. Racketeers, like witches, and by implication communists, can only engage in conspiracy through the power of secrecy. The criminal conspiracy of the unionists in *On the Waterfront* included bribery, fraud, extortion, and murder. The self-defensive practice of rank and file union members was to remain "d & d" – deaf and dumb – out of fear of retribution from the union bosses. This silence constituted the essential element that maintained the status quo and kept the corrupt union leaders in power. Anyone who spoke up for the truth met an untimely "accidental" death.

The parallel that the audience was supposed to read into the film is that the CPUSA was a criminal organization bent on subverting the law of the land. It received a great deal of its power through its ability to maintain secrecy around a number of its activities. In Kazan's movie, the character of Terry Malloy, played by Marlon Brando, was a minor member of the criminal conspiracy, who allowed his conscience to prod him into cooperating with a government task force investigating union corruption. He did this even though he knew this was not in his own personal

³⁷⁶ Arthur Miller, "Why I Wrote *The Crucible*: An Artist's Answer to Politics," *New Yorker*, October, 21 1996, 158.

best interest, but rather the right thing to do. The character of Malloy was a metaphor for those former communists who had a change of conscience caused by a new awareness of the true nature of the conspiracy in which they had hitherto participated. They, therefore, willingly cooperated with the United States government as a matter of conscience in order to reveal the details of that conspiracy, including identifying the individuals involved, i.e. “naming names.”

As a central cinematic metaphor in his film, Kazan used carrier pigeons, which are owned by a character who was murdered at the very beginning of the story for informing on the mob. In recognizing his partial responsibility for this murder, however unintentional on his part, Terry Malloy opted to take care of the dead man’s coop full of pigeons. Toward the end of the film, an unknown mobster killed the entire flock of pigeons in an effort to punish Malloy for becoming a “stool-pigeon.” Kazan seemed to say those who named names did not do so simply to save their own necks, but in fact encountered their own form of suffering for doing what they felt was right and honorable.

Thus, in contrast to Miller’s *The Crucible*, Kazan offered a very different interpretational allegory of the events of the era and a moral justification for the actions of those who named names. Interestingly enough, an ex-communist HUAC informer named Budd Schulberg wrote the screenplay for *On the Waterfront*. Elia Kazan, who had named names as well, directed the film. In addition, a HUAC informer, Lee J. Cobb, played the film’s arch villain, the character of the union boss Johnny Friendly. Furthermore, it was Kazan’s testimony before the HUAC that temporarily ruptured the fruitful professional relationship and personal friendship

between himself and Arthur Miller. Thus, the conduct, relationships and artistic achievements of Miller and Kazan throw into sharp relief both the conflicting worldviews and personal tragedies of the times.

The problem with both of these allegories is that neither accurately reflected the complex organizational nature of the CPUSA. In one sense, both Miller and Kazan were correct in their descriptions of the Party, but each was accurate only insofar as it portrayed a unique and discrete aspect of the CPUSA, which was in reality a very complex organization. In newly available testimony, screenwriter Richard Collins noted in 1951, “The Communist Party operates on so many levels. There is a sweet level for the sweet folk and a harsher level for the harsher folk.”³⁷⁷ When describing the organization as a whole, both Miller’s and Kazan’s depictions are insufficient and misleading. Writing long before the declassification of the Venona decrypts and the opening of the archives in the former Soviet Union, Miller was simply wrong about the “alien conspiracy.” There really was an element of the CPUSA that engaged itself in espionage and was profoundly disloyal to the United States. Likewise, Kazan’s allegory failed to distinguish accurately between what the rank and file members of the CPUSA were likely to have known and what the cadre and senior leadership knew. In Kazan’s movie, the rank and file union members clearly know their leadership is corrupt, but keep silent out of fear. There is no credible evidence that this was the case in the CPUSA. The overwhelming majority of rank and file CPUSA members joined, served, and left the Party with no

³⁷⁷ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Richard Collins” (April 4, 1947), Box 2, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 87.

awareness of the organization as a criminal conspiracy. Nevertheless, these two perspectives have dominated the political and historical discussion of the era, generating no small amount of invective and mistrust.

A broad reading of recent scholarship, drawing upon the Venona decryption and archives in the former Soviet Union, as well as this research on the HUAC, indicates that there were at least five ways in which an individual might have had affiliation with the Party. They were public rank and file membership, public cadre and leadership, secret formal members, secret informal members, and members secretly operating in the service of the Comintern or a Soviet security agency. Because of the last three categories, the HUAC found that probing alleged communist subversion with the relatively meager resources of a congressional investigative committee was a difficult challenge indeed. This was because members in these last three categories were the ones most likely to engage in subversive activities. It is appropriate to consider a more detailed explanation of these membership categories.

One could simply sign up and become an open, rank and file, dues-paying, public member of the CPUSA with both the Party and the member retaining a copy of a registration card and a membership book. There were tens of thousands of such people on the Party rolls during the 1930s and 1940s during the Popular Front when membership was most popular. In essence, this is the group that Miller had in mind in *The Crucible*. Most joined out of noble aspirations in order to make a better world and/or out of despair that the Great Depression spelled the end of the capitalist system. Richard Collins put it this way:

When I came into the Party the anti-discrimination part of the Party's life, you know the fact that they were for

the rights of Negroes, Jews and other minorities, the trade union policy of the Party and its willingness to organize the unorganized, the struggles, in other words, for living conditions, unemployed and so forth, social security, all of these were reasonable in terms of the United States. And especially in that period, in the thirties, because there were still many people who were ill-housed, ill-fed and ill-clothed and there was a great deal of discrimination as far as Negroes were concerned, particularly.³⁷⁸

Thus, rank and file members raised money for famine relief, marched for civil rights, sought better health care for marginalized parts of the citizenry, etc. They never spied for Moscow nor did they encounter any espionage activity within the Party. They never engaged in any subversive or revolutionary activity.

The tenure of rank and file members in the Party was relatively short and the CPUSA had a high turnover rate in its membership.³⁷⁹ This was often the result of the unwillingness to endure endless, boring Party meetings or read mind-numbing tomes on Marxist-Leninist theory. Clifford Odets testified in executive session that, although the Party expected its members to familiarize themselves with Marxist literature, he “found it pretty rough going” and in the end he did not do any significant degree of studying it.³⁸⁰ The Party’s undemocratic internal nature also drove some members away. Moreover, the rank and file abandoned the CPUSA *en masse* each time it made one of its abrupt shifts in Party line, such as after the Stalin-Hitler Pact in 1939, when the Duclos letter led to overthrow Browder in 1945, the

³⁷⁸ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Richard Collins” (April 2, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 60.

³⁷⁹ According to Harvey Klehr, most members stayed in the Party for only a few years and the turnover rate in membership was 50 to 70 percent. See Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 4.

³⁸⁰ “Odets Executive Session Testimony,” Box 19, Records of the Investigative Section, 32.

Party's support of Wallace in 1948, etc.³⁸¹ International events involving communism also tended to have a strongly negative impact on Party membership. Examples of these include the 1950's outbreak of the Korean War, and in 1956 both the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Khrushchev's secret speech to the Twentieth Party Congress in which he outlined Stalin's crimes against the CPSU. One must remember that the HUAC's Hollywood files indicate that the Committee had little to no interest in investigating rank and file members.

If one had a high level of commitment to the Party's goals and was willing to make personal sacrifices for the good of the movement, one might find oneself promoted from the rank and file into the Party's cadre and eventually to a possible public leadership position. Generally speaking, these people tended to be "true believers" in communism as a solution to mankind's problems as a whole and not simply individuals concerned about specific issues. The twists and turns of Party line tended not to shake their faith in the cause.³⁸² However, many Hollywood professionals testified that events such as the Stalin-Hitler Pact or the Duclos letter began a process that eventually led them to leave the Party.

Most of the officers of the CPUSA – Earl Browder, William Z. Foster, Eugene Dennis, etc. – operated out of necessity in the open as the public leadership of the legal Party. The legal and public side of the CPUSA was necessary for numerous reasons, not the least of which was to help obscure and service its covert,

³⁸¹ For the impact of the Stalin-Hitler Pact on the CPUSA's membership and that of front organizations, see Harvey Klehr, *Heyday of American Communism*, 400-404.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 400.

underground operations.³⁸³ This legal, public sector of the CPUSA also served as a means of transmitting instructions to front organizations and for articulating the official policy positions of the movement, which were ultimately a reflection of or compatible with the views of the Soviet Union.

Yet, there was also a clandestine element of the Party of which many former communist cadres attested in executive session hearings before the HUAC, although rank and file members of the CPUSA would rarely, if ever, gain a glimpse of this aspect of the Party. At the time Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* one could deny the existence of a conspiracy amongst American communists with intellectual credibility. However, recent scholarship by post-revisionist historians has shown that the fact there was such an underground sector of the CPUSA is indisputable.³⁸⁴ The newly unsealed executive session transcripts seem to indicate that secret CPUSA membership fell into two categories: those with formal membership and those with an informal affiliation.

Secret formal members typically joined the Party under a false, “Party name.” They might have a registration card and membership book, they might pay Party dues and read the *Daily Worker*, but there was sometimes no written record of this affiliation with their real, legal name. This allowed for a high degree of anonymity. Actor Sterling Hayden testified that the participants of CPUSA cell meetings he

³⁸³ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Louis Budenz” (July 20, 1948), Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 45.

³⁸⁴ For an extended discussion of the CPUSA’s underground apparatus, see John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Venona*, 57-92.

attended referred to each other only by their first names or simply as ‘comrade.’³⁸⁵

Discretion was more important than accurate record-keeping. Screenwriter Richard Collins told HUAC investigators that when he collected Party dues at cell meetings, he did not keep any records of who gave and how much they gave.³⁸⁶

If one believes the testimony of numerous ex-communists, there existed also secret, but informal members, who did not register with the Party under their own name or a false name. They apparently never filled out any paperwork at all to join the Party. Thus, there was no documentary record of their membership. Affiliation was informal and verbal. Secret informal membership was allegedly the preferred status of well-known persons in American society who were reluctant to be identified as a communist or whose usefulness to the Party would be diminished by such public awareness. In fact, the CPUSA might refuse initial membership to such a high profile individual, who one might call in today’s terminology an opinion leader. This was because under the guise of a non-communist that an individual could pose to the broader public as a reasonable person, whose views demonstrated the compatibility of independent non-communists and communists.

If Party leaders refused to allow such an individual to join the Party in the first place, there existed no official record of that person as a communist. He or she could then, in addition, serve as a “non-communist” in a leadership position of a communist front organization, union or guild. This made such organizations appear as if they

³⁸⁵ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Sterling Hayden” (April 4, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 41.

³⁸⁶ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 65.

were independent and not dominated by communists. Thus, cultural luminaries and celebrities could protect their public persona and trade union leaders could hide their Party affiliations and yet help discretely guide the organizations in which they operated toward policies that reflected the goals of the CPUSA.

Because of their desire to appear independent and unaffiliated, secret communists rarely spoke openly, even to other communists, about their real views. Willi Munzenberg's widow, Babette Gross, and herself a one-time dedicated Stalinist, offered the following "litany" that the secret Party member would typically espouse in the 1930s and 1940s in order to function effectively in a front organization:

You do *not* endorse Stalin. You do *not* call yourself a communist. You do *not* declare your love for the regime. You do *not* call on people to support the Soviets. Ever. Under any circumstances. You claim to be an independent-minded idealist. You don't really understand politics, but you think the little guy is getting a lousy break. You believe in open-mindedness. You are shocked, frightened by what is going on right here in our own country. You are frightened by racism, by the oppression of the workingman. You think the Russians are trying a great human experiment, and you hope it works. You believe in peace. You yearn for international understanding. You hate fascism. You think the capitalist system is corrupt. You say it over and over and over again. You say nothing, *nothing* more.³⁸⁷

The question then arises: if one is a secret informal communist who never advocates the Party line, then what qualified them for the label of "communist?" The defining characteristic here is control: was the individual willing to submit to the authority of the Party? Budenz asserted: "There are many people today...who accept Communist discipline or are members of the Communist movement, but have no

³⁸⁷ Koch, *Double Lives*, 249-250.

vestiges of membership because that is the policy of the Communist Party.”³⁸⁸ Time and again during executive session testimony, when asked whether such-and-such a person was a member of the Party, the answer would come back something to the effect: ‘I understood him (or her) to be subject to Party discipline.’ Yet Party discipline is an abstraction, difficult to prove and based entirely on the perception that one’s actions consistently served CPUSA.

One could have a leadership position within the Party and yet be a secret member with no public Party affiliations. Budenz testified he was for six years publicly a member of the CPUSA’s National Committee, the equivalent of the CPSU’s Central Committee, but held secret membership in it for an additional three years.³⁸⁹ Also, one might hold a Party post under a “Party name,” rather than a legal name, even if one’s registration was under a real name. There were members of the CPUSA’s National Committee who did not know the real, legal names of some of their comrades also serving on that body.³⁹⁰

Communist practice got even more confusing, and intentionally so, in order to throw off investigators. An individual could have once been a formal member, but then dropped out of the Party in order to go undercover. In the case of many communist émigrés, such as the Eislers brothers, Bertolt Brecht, Salka Viertel, Vladimir Pozner, and others, once they came to the United States, they kept their previous communist affiliations quiet and did not publicly join the American

³⁸⁸ “Budenz Executive Session Testimony,” Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 34.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.

³⁹⁰ For example, Budenz testified that Harry Bridges, a secret communist and union boss of the California longshoremen, served on the CPUSA’s National Committee under the names Comrade Dargen and Comrade Rossi. Ibid., 10-11.

communist movement. In any event, it was the established practice that Party members who engaged in underground work, such as espionage, should operate as secret members, maintain a distance from the legal Party apparatus, avoid Party meetings, and limit interaction with ordinary members. Ideally, it should be exceedingly difficult for the casual observer to deduct the political loyalties of a secret member.

It is at this point that great confusion resulted during the HUAC's Hollywood investigations. Often former Party officials, such as Louis Budenz, Paul Crouch, or Max Silver, testified about individuals they firmly believed were communists. However, since most celebrities sympathetic to the communist cause sought to keep their association with the Party discrete, the Committee found it exceedingly difficult to obtain confirmation for that testimony. Apparently, the CPUSA too was exceptionally eager to protect high profile motion picture professionals from any exposure of overt association with the communist movement. Based on the pattern of questioning of numerous witnesses in executive session, the HUAC apparently established a criterion for witnesses to designate someone else as a communist. That criterion was that the witness had to have been present with the person being named as a communist in a meeting that was recognized as a closed Party meeting.

An example of the necessity of such a criterion arose from the testimony of Paul Crouch, a former communist organizer in Alabama and editor of a communist magazine entitled *The New South*. Crouch testified that in 1939 during a fund raising effort, the CPUSA's cultural commissar, V. J. Jerome, gave him a list of Hollywood notables from whom to solicit funds. The list of some 300 individuals included street

addresses and private, unlisted telephone numbers. Crouch testified that the names included John Howard Lawson, Sylvia Sidney, Clifford Odets, Humphrey Bogart and James Cagney. Jerome indicated that Crouch should in particular approach Edward G. Robinson and Charlie Chaplin with special care and quote Jerome's name when making the call. Crouch asserted that in most cases, celebrities such as these made contributions directly to the national Party and did not go through local or state Party organizations. The national leadership rarely allowed local Party officials to approach such luminaries directly and, in order to do so, one had to get permission from the very top of the national organization.³⁹¹ Although Jerome did not explicitly tell Crouch the individuals on the list were CPUSA members, Jerome did supposedly tell Crouch that they were financial contributors to the Party.³⁹² When the HUAC called Jerome to testify in order to verify Crouch's story, he alternatively alleged that he could not remember or claimed Fifth Amendment privilege. Although Jerome said he wanted to be helpful to the Committee, he disclosed no useful information.³⁹³

Leaving aside the case of John Howard Lawson, for whom the HUAC had independent documentary corroboration of his Party membership, the Committee investigators knew that Crouch's testimony did not mean that any of those on Crouch's list were Party members or had even contributed directly to the Party's national office. Crouch never witnessed those contributions or saw physical evidence

³⁹¹ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Paul Crouch" (January 8, 1951), Box 14, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 3-5 & 9-10.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁹³ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Victor Jeremy Jerome" (March 8, 1951), Box 14, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, 51-63.

of them, such as a canceled check or a receipt. All Crouch had was the word of V. J. Jerome, who might have been bragging about access to celebrities, and this constituted hearsay of a conversation that occurred twelve years previously. Cagney and Robinson had already admitted to giving donations to several fronts before they realized the organizations had communist connections. In the absence of any documentary evidence, there was no way of proving otherwise.³⁹⁴ Robinson adamantly denied Party membership “or anything that smacked of communism.”³⁹⁵ He offered to submit his financial records for the previous ten years for the Committee’s inspection. Ultimately, this line of investigation came to nothing. The HUAC never called Chaplin, Cagney, or Bogart. Contrary to popular belief, Robinson appeared at his own request in order to clear the record, because his “good name has been besmirched and dragged through the mire by a lot of wicked, irresponsible people, by hearsay, gossip, innuendo, and unsubstantiated charges.” He did not say who those people were, but he specifically indicated he did not mean the Committee members, whom he called “wonderful.”³⁹⁶

The probable main reason that the HUAC never subpoenaed these stars was this on-going phenomenon of conflicting testimony. Besides Crouch, other witnesses had brought up Charlie Chaplin’s name. For example, Hede Massing, Gerhart Eisler’s first wife, told the Committee that Hanns and Louisa Eisler “were very

³⁹⁴ “Crouch Executive Session Testimony,” Box 14, Records of the Investigative Section, 23.

³⁹⁵ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Edward G. Robinson” (December 21, 1950), Box 14, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 5.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 & 10.

friendly with the Chaplins.”³⁹⁷ Certainly testimony of any direct connection with one of the Eislers would raise an alarm with investigators. Yet, it was a dead end.

Screenwriter Richard Collins, a Party member for over a decade and very active in the Hollywood section, told the Committee that with regard to Charlie Chaplin: “[I]n my experience he was not in [the Party as a member], and not only was he not in but they were always a little unhappy with him....Because he was always such an individualistic fellow and they never could quite know what he was going to do next. You know, I know he is supposed to be the big Red and all that, but in my experience this was not true.”³⁹⁸

Thus, the HUAC learned nothing of certainty about either secret Party membership or clandestine contributions. It represented one of the many investigative cul-de-sacs when it came to accurately naming names. This was symptomatic of the problem in general of obtaining names of secret Party members. Investigators had to rely on the perceptions of witnesses, who did not necessarily see documentation of membership. Witnesses had to recollect conversations and events occurring years and even decades earlier. Numerous times witnesses had difficulty recollecting if they had seen a certain individual at an actual Party meeting or in some other context where Party members might have been present with non-communists. Finally, the Committee had to deal with the on-going problem of hearsay.

³⁹⁷ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Hede Massing” (March 31, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 16.

³⁹⁸ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 96.

Thus, the HUAC faced the dilemma of ascertaining the Party membership of celebrities and motion picture professionals. Unless investigators could, through the testimony of witnesses, accurately place such an individual at a formal Party meeting, certitude of Party membership was impossible. However, secret Party members were unlikely to attend open meetings. Thus, it appears that the HUAC investigators discovered over time that placing emphasis on formal membership in the CPUSA was actually in many ways, if one will pardon the expression, a red-herring.

Secret Party membership was just one example of how the CPUSA simply did not function in the same manner as conventional political parties in the United States. The Party did seek to operate within the mainstream of American politics from the Popular Front era through to the Wallace candidacy for president under the Progressive Party banner. To that end, as a tactical step, the CPUSA deemphasized its revolutionary rhetoric and stressed those parts of its program likely to resonate with the American public. By and large, with the exception of 1939-1941 during the Stalin-Hitler Pact, this reflected the strategy of the Soviets to form a broad coalition of alliance with the West against Nazi Germany. After the defeat of the latter in World War II, that coalition quickly broke down and the foundational aspiration of the CPUSA reemerged into the forefront, namely the revolutionary overthrow of both the American economic and political systems.

Because of this, even during the Popular Front years, the CPUSA did not deviate from its practice of organizing itself into cells. Furthermore, Party members in the Hollywood branch maintained a high degree of discretion in terms of where cell meetings took place. Communist groups never met at the local Party

headquarters or at a meeting room rented from the local Elks Lodge or VFW post. Many ex-communists testified that cells would consistently hold meetings in private homes. For example, character actor Marc Lawrence testified that the meetings he attended were at the homes of fellow actors J. Edward Bromberg, Karen Morley and Morris Carnovsky.³⁹⁹ Sterling Hayden told the HUAC that his CPUSA cell held its meetings in a different house just about every week. He would get a call the same day as the meeting telling him where the meeting would take place.⁴⁰⁰ This practice apparently existed outside of Hollywood. Budenz asserted that beginning in 1939 it became standard practice for Party leaders to hold meetings with union leaders who were secret communists in apartment houses rather than at Party headquarters.⁴⁰¹ This made it even harder for ex-communists to testify about broader Party membership, because they likely only knew the dozen or so individuals in their cell. Moreover, they might only know them by their Party names and, unless they knew them in other professional or social capacity, they could remain ignorant of their true identities.

Screenwriter Richard Collins testified as to how segmented and separated the various cells in the Hollywood Party really were. One would know those in one's own Party group as being members of the CPUSA, but would likely remain ignorant of those outside one's own cell. Moreover, members of the same cell tended to work

³⁹⁹ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Marc Lawrence" (April 21, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 5-7.

⁴⁰⁰ "Hayden Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 16.

⁴⁰¹ "Budenz Executive Session Testimony," Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 23.

together as a group within fronts.⁴⁰² Thus, Collins knew Albert Maltz, Samuel Orniz, Abe Polonsky, Gordon Kahn, Robert Rossen, J. Edward Bromberg, Arnold Manoff, Waldo Salt, Paul Jarrico, Frank Tuttle, and John Howard Lawson were members of the CPUSA. Yet he was unaware of the Party affiliation of many other prominent communists, such as Lillian Hellman, John Garfield, Howard DaSilva, Francis Faragoh, John Wexler, Sidney Bruchman, Gale Sondergaard, Jules Dassen, Jack Berry, Michael Blankfort, Edward Dmytryk, Adrian Scott, and Dalton Trumbo. The last three men were notable enough to be members of the Hollywood Ten.

At one point, when responding to a list of names cited by Wheeler, Collins asserts: “You’ve got guys in here who are way, way off....By off I mean not only that they weren’t in the Party, but that they were really kind of conservative men.” The HUAC’s West coast investigator, William Wheeler, responded: “I am just reading names of people who are in front organizations. Their names are not going to be mentioned when you are in Washington. I’m just getting a negative answer.”

Collins’ attorney, Martin Gang, chimed in:

Understand that a lot of these questions that are asked, they have informants, people who write letters and stuff like that, and all they are doing is checking off, because part of the process is not only to find people who should be known but people who shouldn’t be called. For example, if an informer puts Dr. Harlow Shapely in, for example, they check with a lot of people and they get ten, twenty or thirty people who didn’t know him to be a member of the Communist Party, they wouldn’t call him.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰² “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 61.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 93.

Wheeler remained silent about Gang's assertion. However, if the HUAC's archival files are complete enough to give a true picture of how the Committee operated, then Gang was wrong about informants and people writing letters. Investigators appear to have been operating from lists of names culled from data about front organizations. As the information presented in Chapter Five indicated, this data came primarily from the communist press and material published by the front organizations themselves. Nevertheless, this exchange does show that the Committee sought multiple confirmations of an individual's communist affiliations before issuing that person a subpoena.

Although the HUAC never stated this as a reason for its policy of asking witnesses to name names, the process did have the advantage (from the anti-communist perspective) of preventing the person named from conducting subversive activity in the future or working for a front activity under the guise of a non-communist. That person could no longer work anonymously in pursuit of Party policy goals. Furthermore, the person doing the naming was never again suitable for conspiratorial activity, should he or she eventually rejoin the CPUSA. In other words, the process of having witnesses name the names of other individuals he or she knew to be communists represented an effective tool to blunt the Party's ability to make effective use of secret members and engage in alleged conspiratorial activity. However, this appears to be a byproduct of the HUAC's procedural policy.

At a minimum, the HUAC did not believe that asking witnesses to name the names of those individuals whom they knew to be members of the CPUSA was inappropriate. When actor Larry Parks attempted to refuse answering, he said, "I do

not believe it befits this committee or its purposes to force me to do this....I don't think it is in the spirit of real Americanism....These are not people that are a danger to this country, gentlemen, the people that I knew. These are people like myself." He asserted his belief that the American people did not consider it "honest, just, and in the spirit of fair play."⁴⁰⁴ Chairman Wood replied simply, "Nobody on this Committee has any desire to smear the name of anybody. That isn't of benefit to this committee in the discharge of its duties....I think all of the American people who have viewed the work of the Committee dispassionately and impartially will agree with that."⁴⁰⁵ In any event, with its only other significant source of information being its on-going survey of the communist press, it appears that the HUAC had little choice but to seek such information from witnesses if it were to fulfill what it interpreted its mandate to be.

What the evidence appears to indicate is that the Committee insisted on the process of naming of names for several reasons. First, it gave the HUAC an idea of the scope of Party membership in the motion picture industry. Second, it supported the Committee's mandate of exposure of subversion; naming names was a form of exposure. Third, naming names by multiple witnesses over time was an exercise in triangulation in an effort to improve accuracy, which the HUAC found necessary because of the unreliable nature of individual testimony. This is a contrarian hypothesis that offers an alternative explanation to those who assert that the Committee's practice was a deliberate ritual in humiliation that was totally

⁴⁰⁴ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Larry Parks" (March 21, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 7-8.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 10.

unnecessary since the HUAC already knew who was and was not a communist.

Fourth, as Wheeler indicated in response to Collins, investigators used the exercise of naming names as a process of elimination, removing unnecessary names from its lists as opposed to adding names through ritual denunciations. Fifth and perhaps most importantly, by drawing from lists of front organizations, the Committee used the process of naming names to determine the degree to which communists had infiltrated those organizations.

In fact, as HUAC efforts to obtain names from witnesses showed evidence on increasingly diminishing returns, attempts to investigate the activities of communist fronts appeared much more promising. A broad reading of testimony offered in both executive session and public session reveals several significant features of the Hollywood investigations that historians, absorbed by the HUAC's controversial practice of having witnesses name names, have overlooked to this point. This circumstance might be because of the fact that until recently executive session testimony was unavailable for scholarly research. First, the Committee's investigatory focus changed from the 1947 probe to the 1951-1952 inquiry. In 1947, with the Eisler investigations still fresh, the HUAC essentially worried about three things: Comintern connections, Party membership, and possible propaganda in specific films.

By 1951-1952, however, the Committee's concerns had changed significantly. Executive session transcripts from these years show that the HUAC wanted to understand the conduct of Party business at the local level, as well as how communists organized and structured individual cells. Investigators wanted to know

the degree to which the Hollywood branch interacted with county and state Party leaders, as opposed to dealing directly with the national office. Interest in propaganda attempt of individual films had nearly evaporated and investigators had refocused their attention to how front organizations furthered the CPUSA's propaganda efforts more generally. Certainly, the Committee still desired to obtain information about which Hollywood professionals were members of the Party. However, not only was this not the only focus of the executive sessions, it was arguably not the main focus.

Simply put, the HUAC wanted to know about communist fronts: why did the witnesses join? Who was in charge of the front? What were the objectives of the front? Why did the witness participate in a particular front activity? Often questions about CPUSA membership were related to fronts: was such-and-such a member of a front's board also a member of the Party? Contrary to the emphasis historians have placed on the significance of the HUAC practice of naming names, a comprehensive reading of the executive session testimony of 1951-1952 indicates that the Committee was at least as interested in communist fronts as it was in verifying names as members.

Hollywood offered the CPUSA a ready pool of "joiners," who served as patrons of numerous communist fronts, lending them the prestige of their names. This is perhaps a key reason why the CPUSA went to great lengths to infiltrate the motion picture business and court sympathetic Hollywood insiders. As Richard Collins said after enumerating a long list of fronts he had affiliated with: "I am sure

that if there was anything to join I probably joined it.”⁴⁰⁶ In fact, Collins had joined so many fronts over the years that he could not remember the objectives of all the organizations. Besides the typical reasons cited for joining such organizations, such as the desire to contribute to advance civil rights or give assistance to the poor, there was another interesting motivation for becoming a joiner: the idea of Hollywood guilt. One could define this as a sense of shame for making large amounts of money in a profession often considered trivial, while others during the Great Depression and World War II experienced great suffering. As actor Sterling Hayden told the Committee, “...I was becoming extremely interested in...doing something constructive in addition to simply hauling down a good pay check as an actor. It occurred to me that by working as an actor, and at the same time taking an interest in what I considered to be the underdog, I could justify in my own mind the very lucrative contract that I had in Hollywood.”⁴⁰⁷

However, Michael Blankfort appeared to articulate the more mainstream view when he argued that the communists were superb at identifying a worthy cause worth the support of the American people, such as advocating for civil rights and unemployment insurance or resisting Nazism. Communists would then form an organization in support of such a cause, then they would move in and surreptitiously take over the group in an effort to use the organization to further communist Party goals. People joined because they supported the stated goals of the organization, not realizing the Party members dominating the group’s leadership would exploit the

⁴⁰⁶ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 13.

⁴⁰⁷ “Hayden Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 14.

front and pervert it to achieve their own ends.⁴⁰⁸ When they do this, Blankfort believed, the organization eventually but inevitably died or split up. Ultimately, “the people they would influence leave” and the organization withers into insignificance.⁴⁰⁹

Irrespective of why individuals joined, the HUAC wanted to know about the leadership, organizational goals and internal operations of fronts. Contrary to the belief of some, it appeared that the Committee was not after liberal or left-leaning organizations in general. As William Wheeler told Abe Burrows during the latter’s executive session testimony, “I might say that all this material here, we have it also, but we have eliminated some of it because they were organizations we did not consider important. We are mostly interested in organizations that are cited fronts.” In fact, the only organizations Wheeler questioned Burrows about were the ones previously cited as fronts on the Attorney General’s list of subversive organizations.⁴¹⁰

Wheeler gave a clue as to why the HUAC was so keen to investigate fronts. He appeared to indicate that the act of exposing an organization was key to its demise:

Over the course of years there has been [sic] consistent fellow travelers or dupes or Party line followers who have belonged to these fronts. It is true that the fronts cease to exist after a period of time but if you check the

⁴⁰⁸ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Michael Blankfort” (April 4, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 38-39.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁴¹⁰ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Abe Burrows” (March 20, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 55.

membership and the officers of these fronts you will see a consistent pattern, and the reason that these fronts change their name is that they get exposed and neutralized, and when they are exposed and neutralized they are of no further use. But there have been a lot of important men in the United States who have followed this pattern for a period of a great many years.⁴¹¹

Critics have charged that the HUAC used membership in a front organization as a method of smearing an innocent individual with a charge of Party membership. The documentary evidence, at least as far as the Hollywood files indicate, does not support this assertion. Certainly investigators were aware that in general terms that the more front organizations an individual had joined, the more likely it was that person held Party membership. Nevertheless, during testimony of Richard Collins it was clear that investigators sought the screenwriter's help in deciphering which members of leadership of the Writer's Congress were in the Party and which were not. With a court reporter present transcribing the testimony, HUAC investigator William Wheeler did not even want Collins to read aloud the list of names of the front's leadership, but instead only say a name if Collins recognized that person as a Party member. As Wheeler put it, "There are a lot of people there whose names shouldn't be in the record."⁴¹²

In a democratic society in which economic and especially political change was highly unlikely through revolution, the HUAC believed front organizations provided a means for the CPUSA to exercise more influence than it otherwise would operating solely as a political party. Committee investigator William Wheeler

⁴¹¹ "Blankfort Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 37-38.

⁴¹² "Collins Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 74.

appeared to indicate that the HUAC believed “the Communist Party gains its power through its fronts rather than the main hard core of the Communist Party itself...In other words, as opposed to the power or influence of the Communist Party as such, the power or influence exerted through non-Communist Party organizations has been much greater....”⁴¹³

In essence, front organizations amplified the voice of the Party, giving it an audience greater than it otherwise would have. Known within the communist movement as “transmission belts,” fronts had the advantage of an ability to “advance the Party’s program far more effectively than the Party itself since they do not carry an open communist stigma.”⁴¹⁴ This ability to influence policy debates and influence public opinion toward a particular goal came to the HUAC’s attention during the 80th Congress. Robert Stripling noted an incident that occurred when the Senate Judiciary Committee announced about 4:00 p.m. one afternoon that it would hold hearings on the Nixon-Mundt bill. By the next morning, 10,000 telegrams from various individuals and front organizations protesting the holding of such proceedings had already swamped the office of the committee’s chairman. The effectiveness and speed of such a campaign amazed the HUAC staff.⁴¹⁵ It appeared obvious to the

⁴¹³ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 37-38.

⁴¹⁴ Harvey Klehr, *Far Left of Center: The American Radical Left Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1990) 18. Additionally, in executive session testimony, Budenz described the legal Party and its various publications as transmission belts between the underground element of the CPUSA that received its orders from Moscow and front organizations. See “Budenz Executive Session Testimony,” Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 46.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

Committee that fronts exercised significant power on behalf of the CPUSA to sway public opinion and, therefore, should come under investigative scrutiny.

The HUAC heard testimony in executive session that front organizations served to obscure the fact that the CPUSA was at work on an issue or in an area. It provided camouflage for efforts to promote that party line. The HUAC had reason to believe that one method Moscow used to convey the details of the line it wanted the CPUSA to take was through publications originating in the Soviet Union. Louis Budenz told the Committee in 1948 that the publication called *New Times*, which came as a supplement of the Soviet trade union magazine *Trud*, served as the disguised Comintern magazine. He alleged that the Party's leadership carefully read *New Times*, as the leadership and cadre around the country read *Political Affairs* and the *Daily Worker*, for clues as how to interpret and enact the current line. In the case of the *Daily Worker*, editors and writers designed articles to attract a wide readership and yet offer subtly disguised directives in the form of editorials for a targeted few around the country, such as CPUSA district organizers. These fulltime Party workers would then mobilize action on particular issues as indicated by the editorials and try to generate public support around the Party's position through the use of communist-controlled unions and front organizations.⁴¹⁶

The manner of control by the CPUSA of front organizations was similar to how the CPUSA worked to control unions.⁴¹⁷ Membership might consist of a

⁴¹⁶ "Budenz Executive Session Testimony," Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 39-41.

⁴¹⁷ For example, Louis Budenz testified that although probably 95% of the membership of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers Union was non-communist, its leadership was, generally speaking, communist-controlled.

minority of CPUSA members or, as in the case of the National Lawyers Guild, communists and non-communists might appear to work side by side within the organization.⁴¹⁸ In fact, the communist membership might be a very small minority. In many cases, the less obvious the connection was between the CPUSA and the front, the better from the Party's point of view. Because the Party had a well-trained and disciplined fulltime cadre with experience in organizing, it had a good chance of controlling organizations where most of the officers and staff were unpaid. The first object was to get Party members elected to the organization's board in higher numbers than the proportion of Party members overall. A communist majority on the board was not necessary, especially if there were also reliable fellow-travelers serving too. This was possible by using the same techniques at board meetings as in general membership meetings.

One such technique was to schedule meetings at inconvenient days/or times and then rely on Party members to turn out in mass while non-communists would have a high absentee rate. Party members tended to be highly disciplined in terms of attending every meeting expected of them. Richard Collins testified that he attended an average of two Party meetings a week for eight years and three other meetings a week on behalf of the Party. With no small irony, he said: "It takes a lot of time and energy to be a Communist."⁴¹⁹ Communists were also legendary for their willingness to stay to the bitter end of very long meetings. Thus, the communist leadership would

Ultimately, they had to remove James Carey as union president and install Albert Fitzgerald, a trusted fellow-traveler in order to achieve full control. Fitzgerald later became co-chairman of the Henry Wallace presidential campaign. *Ibid.*, 3-13.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴¹⁹ "Collins Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 8.

work to insure that important measures appeared at the end of the agenda with voting taking place late in the evening, when many non-communists had left and gone home. Thus, by the end of the meeting, the minority had become the majority.⁴²⁰

This process could be enhanced by getting a secret Party member elected or appointed to the senior staff position of the organization. In other words, capture the highest position of that organization that ran its day-to-day affairs and, thus, control important factors, such as the flow of information, the creation of meeting agendas, etc. For example, Margaret Maltz, who was a CPUSA member and the wife of Hollywood Ten screenwriter Albert Maltz, served as the administrator for the School for Writers, an entity run by the Hollywood branch of the American League of Writers.⁴²¹ One of Hollywood's most effective fronts during World War II was the Hollywood Writers' Mobilization. Richard Collins told the HUAC that the Party managed to have a communist functionary named Pauline Lauber appointed as executive secretary to the Mobilization. She, therefore, essentially ran the day-to-day affairs of the organization.⁴²² Screenwriter Leo Townsend confirmed that Lauber was a communist.⁴²³ In addition, the CPUSA sought to have a reliable communist, often a secret one, appointed as the editor of the front's official newsletter or magazine. This

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 5-6.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 88.

⁴²² Ibid., 19-20.

⁴²³ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Leo Townsend" (May 10, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 27.

technique was also used for the official publications of trade unions secretly dominated by the CPUSA.⁴²⁴

Clifford Odets testified about his disgust with an event in which secret communists within a front manipulated him for publicity purposes. His story is highly illustrative of communist techniques within fronts, which entailed the manipulation of figurehead leaders by secret communists to achieve Party goals. Odets told the HUAC that someone, he could no longer remember who, from a front known as the League of American Writers, of which Odets was the non-communist chairman, in mid-1935 asked him to head a delegation to Cuba to report on conditions there, because the government was in the middle of a political crisis caused by a popular revolt. The purpose of the trip, as expressed to Odets, was to bring publicity upon efforts to repress intellectuals and students in the hope of easing their condition. Unknown to Odets, there were secret communists assigned to the delegation, which was supposedly broad-based. Odets first became angered because, as head of the delegation, he had no input in its composition nor was he apprised as to what the criteria for selection were. Nevertheless, out of a sense of obligation he continued his participation.⁴²⁵

Odets' executive session testimony, unavailable until the unsealing of the HUAC archives, indicates the level of his disenchantment with this communist front episode:

⁴²⁴ Budenz testified that, as managing editor of the *Daily Worker*, he served as chairman of many meetings of communist editors of trade union publications. "Budenz Executive Session Testimony," Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 19.

⁴²⁵ "Odets Executive Session Testimony," Box 19, Records of the Investigative Section, 40-53.

It angered me because I was apparently the head of this delegation and all the decisions were made without me. No one asked me anything. The whole matter seemed to be a routine, cut and dried matter, and I was always presented with the fait accompli....[A]ll they wanted to do was get the story on the front page.⁴²⁶

In fact, the episode did appear in the *Daily Worker* and it left Odets bitter that some unknown “steering committee” used him as a “dummy.”⁴²⁷ To a HUAC investigator, Odets spoke acidly of “the real humiliation I felt of being used as a front. I was supposed to be the chairman of this delegation. All decisions were made behind my back and I was always presented with the fait accompli.”⁴²⁸ No one asked Odets to write a report of the trip and “there was no practical result except that in a slack summer season in the press it certainly hit all the front pages, in the New York papers, at least” with publicity for the Party.⁴²⁹

One of the concerns the HUAC had with front activity was its direct affect on individuals. The Committee received testimony that a key function of communist front organizations was to serve as a pool for the recruitment of members into the Party. Joining a front was, thus, often the first step in the process of joining the Party. As noted earlier, an unsuspecting individual might join a front because of its laudable stated goals, such as opposition to fascism, aid to the poor, or support for civil rights. The Committee heard testimony that the Party used a “soft sell” approach with front organizations to recruit new members by getting them to join in degrees. The method entailed extending an invitation for involvement in a front of which there was little to indicate that the organization had ties with the CPUSA. When the prospective

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 52.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Ibid., 48.

member had become comfortable with the work of that organization, he or she received an invitation to become involved in a second organization, cause or event and so on. The potential recruit often formed friendships and created social ties that were then exploited with an invitation to join the Party.

Another communist front, Peoples' Educational Center, which offered courses to the general public, was a very helpful venue for recruitment. The PEC carefully hid its CPUSA affiliation and in general stayed away from politics. Radio entertainer Abe Burrows reported that he taught a course for the PEC on the process of writing for radio. The course had no political content and he did not encounter any overt politicking at that school.⁴³⁰ Many other Hollywood communists served as teachers there, including Richard Collins.⁴³¹ Edward Dmytryk was asked to teach courses on film production and editing at the PEC, which he found genuinely exciting because the nature of instruction in filmmaking at the time was rudimentary with little in the way of college-level courses.⁴³² This followed on his participation in the Writers' Congress in 1943, after which he was asked to join the Hollywood Writers Mobilization. The HWM was organizing the work of a number of writers in the radio and film industries in support of the war effort, such creating plays and skits for performance at the USO, and sponsoring educational seminars on the methods of the enemy. Dmytryk believed that the HWM did good work in support of the war effort

⁴³⁰ "Burrows Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 51.

⁴³¹ "Collins Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 3.

⁴³² "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Edward Dmytryk" (March 9, 1951), Box 14, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 2-3.

and its membership was broad-based across the political spectrum. Thus, after joining a series of fronts for what he consider worthwhile, even noble reasons, Dmytryk finally joined the Party during the era, mid-1943 through the spring of 1945 in which it had transformed itself into the Communist Political Association. Dmytryk said he was convinced that “any idea of revolution against the government was completely dismissed” by the Party’s leadership and “I never heard any such talk [of revolution] in any of my associations with the organization.”⁴³³ Dmytryk appears to represent a classic example of someone who was eased into the Party through the work of the fronts.

Otto Katz’ front, the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League was perhaps the earliest venue for such recruitment. Hollywood agent Meta Reis Rosenberg told the HUAC that after she became a member of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, she was, through its activities, led into membership of the CPUSA itself.⁴³⁴ Character actor Marc Lawrence (1910-2005) was featured in some very notable motion pictures before his HUAC testimony, including *The Asphalt Jungle*, *The Oxbow Incident*, and *Dillinger*. Lawrence was a onetime member of the Actors Lab and also joined during the several years when the Party operated as the Communist Political Association. Lawrence testified that it was his participation in the Actors Lab, a communist front,

⁴³³ Ibid., 6

⁴³⁴ “Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Meta Reis Rosenberg” (April 3, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 2.

and his interest in economic issues centering on the concerns of actors that led him to join the Party.⁴³⁵

Michael Blankfort joined the League of American Writers in the mid-1930s, because it was the only organization “that was concerned in the fight against Hitler and Fascism.” He also asserted that he did not realize its ties to communism, although he certainly knew there were communists in the organization. Blankfort assumed that the League of American Writers was a genuine coalition of communists, socialists and people who were neither in neither camp joining together to oppose fascism.⁴³⁶ He swore he was never a member of the Communist Party, but he did admit, however, that to a degree he was under the influence of the Party in the mid-1930s, although he was critical of much of it.⁴³⁷ If one is to take his testimony at face value, in the case of Michael Blankfort recruitment through a front organization was only partly successful. It did not lead to formal Party membership but it did affect his political thought and action.

The HUAC questioned the Hollywood witnesses about many communist fronts, because as a group they had been involved with a bewildering number of them. However, some fronts were more important than others and, thus, demanded more attention by investigators. In any event, the formulation of the questions typically made it clear that the genesis of the query came from information found in

⁴³⁵ “Lawrence Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 9.

⁴³⁶ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 3-4.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-14.

the communist press and most often from the *Daily Worker*. There were exceptions, but this was the general rule.

First and foremost was the American League for Peace and Democracy, which has been aptly called “the mother of all front groups.”⁴³⁸ It was the national umbrella with which Otto Katz’ Hollywood Anti-Nazi League had affiliated. In other words, it served as the national Popular Front organization dedicated to opposing Nazism and fascism. It stood for a policy of collective security to oppose territorial expansion by Germany and Italy, which threatened their neighbors. Like the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, communist organizers suppressed their revolutionary rhetoric and stressed themes acceptable to a broad political spectrum, especially the center-left portion. The result was broad political support and active participation by many liberals and even some non-isolationist conservatives. Then came the Stalin-Hitler Pact late in the summer of 1939, which created the necessity for the American communists to radically shift their party line to one on non-cooperation with the Western European democracies and a policy of strict neutrality. The CPUSA’s shift in its line, as well as its attempt to have both the American League for Peace and Democracy and the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League adopt a corresponding shift in policy, led to a rift between the communists and most of their coalition partners and to a collapse of both organizations.

Abe Burrows, like many others, left the League because of the Stalin-Hitler Pact.⁴³⁹ When questioning Richard Collins, William Wheeler stated that the

⁴³⁸ Ted Morgan, *Reds*, 206.

⁴³⁹ “Burrows Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 10.

Committee was “interested” in how the CPUSA managed the changes of the Party line in 1939 with the Pact and then again in 1941 after the German attack on the Soviet Union. The HUAC specifically wanted to know how CPUSA managed such a complete and abrupt about face in Party line and who enunciated and justified it. Collins asserted that he stuck it out with the Party after a lecture by Hollywood Ten screenwriter Samuel Ornitz, whom he called Ornitz “the great explainer,” because the latter rationalized the Stalin-Hitler Pact. Ornitz claimed the Pact was an arrangement of expediency for the Soviet Union, which was no less anti-Nazi than it had ever been. Although he accepted Ornitz’ argument, for the first time, Collins asserted, he felt “out of step with the rest of the country and I also found this very uncomfortable, didn’t like it.”⁴⁴⁰

With the *raison d’etre* of the American League for Peace and Democracy shattered, the CPUSA needed to create a new national front with policy aims congruent to those of the Party and of the Soviet Union. Thus, during the approximately twenty-two months of the life of the Stalin-Hitler Pact, the shell of the League was quickly transformed into a successor organization named the American Peace Mobilization. It advocated the argument that World War II represented an imperialist war between the West and Germany, and the United States should remain strictly neutral. The group opposed American rearmament efforts, as well as military aid to Great Britain. Of course, this line perfectly fit with the Soviet position now that the USSR was a non-belligerent ally of Nazi Germany. The day before Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union, which occurred on June 22, 1941, the American Peace

⁴⁴⁰ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 35-37.

Mobilization was finishing up a peace vigil outside of the White House with plans to return the next month. Eight days after Germany's attack, the group officially dropped its opposition to the war, now arguing that peace could only come with Germany's defeat. Thirty-one days after Germany's assault on the USSR, the organization removed the word "Peace" from its name and became the American People's Mobilization.⁴⁴¹

Abe Burrows averred that the purpose of the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions was the reelection of Roosevelt in 1944.⁴⁴² Of course, the CPUSA supported Roosevelt for president that year, so the HICCASP's position was in line with that of the Party's. However, HICCASP started as a classic communist front with the hand of the Party carefully hidden and Party rhetoric suppressed in the effort to attain broad support. Michael Blankfort, who described himself as a lifelong Democrat, was a member and saw the organization as "a kind of branch of the Democratic Party out here."⁴⁴³ It is important to remember that the HICCASP arrived on the scene at the time when the CPUSA had transformed itself into the Communist Political Association in the hopes of working within the Democratic Party. Although Blankfort knew there were communists who were members, he never suspected that they were in leadership or that the organization functioned as a Communist Party front.⁴⁴⁴ Sterling Hayden joined the HICCASP, as well as the American Veterans Committee, as a step toward his entry into the

⁴⁴¹ Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?*, 110.

⁴⁴² "Burrows Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 19.

⁴⁴³ "Blankfort Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 18.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

Communist Party.⁴⁴⁵ Ronald Reagan was a member of HICCASP before resigning in 1946 along with his friend Olivia de Havilland and many others when the similarities between HICCASP's agenda and the CPUSA Party line became increasingly obvious and undeniable.⁴⁴⁶

There was a national organization from whence the HICCASP derived. It was the Independent Citizens Committee for the Arts, Sciences and Professions and Jose Ferrer, then at the height of careers both on Broadway and in Hollywood, was the chairman of its Theatre Division.⁴⁴⁷ Budenz asserted that this front "...was first conceived in my office in the *Daily Worker*, that it was created completely by the Communists and was controlled by them throughout its entire existence, although a number of non-Communists were involved – at least, their names were lent to it."⁴⁴⁸ In fact, it was ultimately the Political Committee, i.e. Politburo, of the CPUSA that undertook the decision to create the ICCASP.⁴⁴⁹ Budenz averred that Alexander Trachtenberg, a cultural figure in the CPUSA and head of the Party's book publishing company, International Publishers, was a key figure in the conception of the ICCASP. He also claimed that the Party intentionally kept Trachtenberg's role in the ICCASP secret to downplay in significant influence on direction of the organization. Budenz told the HUAC: "Sometimes they demote people because they think they haven't

⁴⁴⁵ "Hayden Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 15.

⁴⁴⁶ William E. Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997) 29-30.

⁴⁴⁷ "Transcript of the Executive Session Testimony of Jose Ferrer" (April 17, 1951), Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee, 1945-1975, RG 233, National Archives, 11-12.

⁴⁴⁸ "Budenz Executive Session Testimony," Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 24.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

served, and sometimes they demote them for their own protection. That is done quite frequently in order to deceive governmental agencies and the general public.”⁴⁵⁰ If Budenz is correct about its creation, then Arthur Schlesinger is wrong when he wrote that the CPUSA took over the ICCASP as a pre-existing organization.⁴⁵¹ This in turn shows how deeply clandestine communist methods of creating fronts actually were.

A key person present at the formation of the ICCASP was Lionel Berman, a CPUSA organizer and a member of the Party’s Cultural Committee.⁴⁵² The Committee had information derived from the court transcripts of the Judith Coplon espionage trial that an informant advised the FBI that Lionel Berman, “had been successful in using well-known Hollywood personalities to further the Communist Party aims....”⁴⁵³ Berman was the husband of Louise Bransten. This was the same Louise Bransten mentioned earlier as the friend of Otto Katz and was the millionaire socialite who raised the funds necessary to spring Gerhart Eisler from the French concentration camp in 1941. Thus, Ms. Bransten was very active in front organizations in both New York and Hollywood.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁵¹ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishing, 1998) 121

⁴⁵² “Robinson Executive Session Testimony,” Box 14, Records of the Investigative Section, 4.

⁴⁵³ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 13. The informant also claimed that Frederic March, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Robeson, Dorothy Parker, Donald Ogden Stewart, Albert Maltz, Alvah Bessie, Dalton Trumbo, Millen Brand and Michael Blankfort were not only under the influence of the Party, but in fact members. In the case of March, Robinson, and Blankfort, the informant was wrong.

⁴⁵⁴ “Budenz Executive Session Testimony,” Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 27.

When it came to choosing the leadership of the ICCASP, the Party leadership very carefully chose Hannah Dorner as the front's executive director. Chosen because senior Party officials were convinced of her secret loyalty to the communist cause, Ms. Dorner was a former reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*. She was also a close friend of playwright Lillian Hellman, an apologist for Stalin and herself extremely active in a number of communist fronts.⁴⁵⁵ From 1952-1962, Dorner worked in the United Kingdom under her married name, Weinstein, successfully producing a series of swashbuckling television shows, starting with *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. In that capacity, she was able to employ such blacklisted Hollywood writers as Robert Lees, Ian McLellan Hunter, and Howard Koch, as well as Hollywood Ten members Adrian Scott and Ring Lardner, Jr. During her time in the United Kingdom, Dorner/Weinstein was also a close friend of the blacklisted director, Joseph Losey, himself a friend of Bertolt Brecht.⁴⁵⁶ Returning to the United States in 1962, she became a successful motion picture producer of such films as *Claudine*, which was directed by Jack Berry, who was blacklisted in the 1950s. Finally, the Party chose prominent sculptor Jo Davidson, who was not formally a Party member, but according to Budenz, "under Communist discipline for many years," as the figurehead chairman of the ICCASP.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 28 and "Hannah Weinstein, Producer and Political Activist, is Dead," *New York Times*, March 11, 1984, A36. Budenz also believed, but was not certain, that Dorner/Weinstein was active in the Soviet-American Friendship Council, another CPUSA front.

⁴⁵⁶ Rebecca Prime, "'The Old Bogy': The Hollywood Blacklist in Europe," *Film History: An International Journal*, Volume 20, Number 4, 2008, 481. Koch was the screenwriter of *Sergeant York*, *Casablanca*, and *Mission to Moscow*.

⁴⁵⁷ "Budenz Executive Session Testimony," Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 27-28.

The successor organization to the ICCASP was the Progressive Citizens of America, probably the last great communist front of any broad significance. The extent to which the CPUSA controlled the PCA and the unknowing impotence of its figurehead non-communist leaders was illustrated by ignorance of Dr. Frank Kingdon, the front's co-chairman, that the PCA planned to endorse Henry Wallace for president and would transform itself in the Progressive Party. Kingdon wrote in the *New York Post* that it was the CPUSA that asked Wallace to run and his "saddest lesson" of 1947 was that his belief that "American liberals [could] cooperate with Communists for social ends immediately desirable" was impossible.⁴⁵⁸

According to Budenz, the Party worked hard and successfully to replace Wallace's chief political advisor and obvious choice as a campaign manager, Harold Young, with C. B. Baldwin, who the CPUSA leadership believed would be more compliant with Party directives.⁴⁵⁹ Baldwin in turn suggested to Wallace that John Abt be given the job of chief legal counsel to the Progressive Party. Recall that Chapter Four of this study noted that historians now know Abt was as a source of espionage for the Soviets as part of the Ware Group. Abt represents an example of someone who denied his communism while working actively in the service of the CPUSA as a secret communist. Although serving as the CPUSA's chief legal counsel for years, it was not until his 80th birthday that Abt admitted he had been a life-long communist.⁴⁶⁰ Henry Wallace's biographers reveal that Abt's wife, Jessica Smith,

⁴⁵⁸ Schlesinger, *Vital Center*, 116.

⁴⁵⁹ "Budenz Executive Session Testimony," Box 5, Records of the Investigative Section, 56.

⁴⁶⁰ Joan Cook, "John J. Abt, Lawyer Dies at 87, Communist Party Counsel in U.S.," *New York Times*, August 13, 1991, B5

was the editor of the magazine *New World Review* from 1936-1977. She was also the widow of Harold Ware, who was in turn the son of Ella Reeve Ware, also known as Mother Bloor, the “godmother” of American communism and a longtime member of the CPUSA’s National Committee.⁴⁶¹ Harold Ware was also the titular head of the spy cell that included Nathan Witt, Alger Hiss, and Harry Dexter White. For years, Smith was also active in the leadership of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, an organization cited by Attorney General Tom Clark as subversive and communist in both 1947 and 1948.⁴⁶²

Hollywood Writers’ Mobilization was one of the Party’s most successful fronts. It functioned at one of those rare moments when the American national interest coincided with that of the CPUSA. The United States was at war with Germany and sought its unconditional surrender. The Soviet Union was at war with Germany and the CPUSA followed a policy line supported the national security interests of Moscow. As long as the interests of the USA and the USSR coincided during the war, Party members were free to be ultra-patriotic.

Non-communist writer Emmett Lavery was the HWM’s president, while Robert Rossen, who was a communist, served as its chairman. Radio writer Abe Burrows served as the front’s treasurer, but he said that he “never did any

⁴⁶¹ John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001) c.f. 450. Also see “Jessica Smith 1895-1983,” *Contemporary Authors Online*, Gale, 2002 (Entry Updated: 07/03/2001) found at <http://galenet.galegroup.com.proxy.pba.edu/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&locID=west87348&ste=47&docNum=H1000092516>.

⁴⁶² *Citations by Official Government Agencies of Organizations and Publications Found to Be Communist or Communist Fronts* (Committee on Un-American Activities, December 18, 1948) 70.

treasuring.”⁴⁶³ Hollywood Party boss and screenwriter John Howard Lawson “was extremely active in the Mobilization. He was its center, in a way.”⁴⁶⁴ Burrows denied that his work with the HWM had anything to do with politics; it was all about supporting the war effort.⁴⁶⁵ Or, as Collins put it, “The purpose of the Mobilization was to write stuff to help win the war.”⁴⁶⁶ Although the HWM had more non-communists in it than communists, “the Communists were the most eager for this kind of work and since they had some control over the [Screen Writers] Guild...they were the most active in the Mobilization.”⁴⁶⁷ Like most front organizations, the HWM published its own official organ entitled *Communiqué*.⁴⁶⁸

The HUAC a specific interest in the Mobilization because it had at least a passing concern about possible espionage. Investigators had some sort of suspicion that Robert Rossen and Archie Gottler, both associated with the HWM, turned “over a package to the American-Russian Institute containing scientific information regarding the Manhattan Engineering Project.”⁴⁶⁹ Richard Collins, who was on the board of the HWM, testified that he knew nothing about the incident. Likewise, he found surprising HUAC information that in 1944 the journalist Anna Louise Strong, who had worked on *Song of Russia*, took a package to the Soviet Union given to her

⁴⁶³ “Burrows Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 8.

⁴⁶⁴ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 20.

⁴⁶⁵ “Burrows Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 8.

⁴⁶⁶ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 19.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 & 75.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

by the Executive Council of the HWM.⁴⁷⁰ Collins speculated that the “scientific materials” in the package was information about medicines or perhaps “cultural materials” like scripts.⁴⁷¹ Investigator Wheeler replied that the “material was gathered by the Los Angeles branch of the Federation of Artists, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians,” which was a union.⁴⁷²

The Atomic Energy Committee represented a little known front in which the Committee expressed a great deal of interest. The organization started as a course taught in the Hollywood Writers Mobilization “on the uses and control of atomic energy. This course was conducted under the auspices of the Pasadena branch of the Federation of Atomic Scientists at California Tech.” According to Collins, the organization functioned to organize American physicists in opposition to the United States as a nuclear weapons power and to work for the abolition of the atom bomb as a weapon. He said this occurred during the mid-1940s era when the United States was the sole nuclear power, which many genuinely believed was “the most dangerous country in existence.” Screenwriter Abraham Polonsky, who was a Party member, headed this organization and Collins asserted that he did not believe that Polansky seriously thought he could elicit information from these scientists. Rather, it was an exercise raising awareness, but frightening and disturbing the public.

Wheeler noted the attendance of Drs. Robert Cornog, Charles Lewis and Robert Emerson at a seminar sponsored by the HWM, and that Dr. Cornog received the distinction of being made a member at large of the HMW. Wheeler also made

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 84.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

mention of a June 14, 1946 meeting of the Executive Council of the HWM “at which Abraham Polonsky reported that Professor David Hawkins, historian of the Los Alamos project, had sent him more factual information on the A bomb.”⁴⁷³ Collins had no recollection of this meeting. Wheeler asserted that the importance of the questioning lay in the fact that Hawkins turned out to be a member of the Communist Party.⁴⁷⁴

Another alleged front organization that the HUAC appeared very interested in exposing was the Civil Rights Congress. President Truman’s Attorney General, Tom Clark, had cited the Congress as communist and subversive on December 4, 1947 and again on September 27, 1948. Created in April, 1946 from the merger of two other communist front organizations, the International Labor Defense and the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties, the Civil Rights Congress was a competitor to the American Civil Liberties Union. Unlike the ACLU, the CRC was either “a communist organization or manipulated by the communists.”⁴⁷⁵ Michael Blankfort was briefly a member, but left the organization because it seemed only interested in defending the rights of communists and those on the extreme left. He opted instead to join the American Civil Liberties Union because he believed the ACLU “had a record of defending anybody, right, left or center, whom they felt was a victim of civil injustice.”⁴⁷⁶ The Committee appeared concerned that citizens might confuse the

⁴⁷³ Ibid. 86.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 86-87.

⁴⁷⁵ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 20 and “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 24.

⁴⁷⁶ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 19.

ACLU with the CRC, which Blankfort thought was the Party's purpose when choosing the name.

The executive session testimony of numerous Hollywood professionals, if taken at face value, indicates several things. First, when New York entertainers with radical connections moved to Hollywood, the CPUSA attempted to contact them and move them closer to the movement once they arrived on the West coast. For example, Michael Blankfort testified that communists contacted him after he moved to Hollywood and tried to get him more deeply involved in radical activities.

Second, communists used the names of celebrities without their knowledge or permission to promote front organizations through fictitious sponsorships and office holders. In the wide circles in which celebrities socialized, both prominent and secret communists were not uncommon. The phenomenon of the Popular Front in which liberals and progressives had made common cause with radicals and communists in support of Roosevelt and the New Deal heightened these trends. In this on-going context, it appears that celebrities and cultural luminaries were often invited to join a front or endorse a cause or event for purposes of social action or charity. Clifford Odets told the HUAC that in a typical week he would receive fifty requests for such endorsements.⁴⁷⁷ Often having accepted such requests, a famous or influential individual would find his or her name used repeatedly without permission.

Richard Collins testified to an experience that appears to confirm the communist tactic of hijacking celebrities' names. In February 1950, there was a program in Los Angeles called "a Conference to Strengthen American-Soviet

⁴⁷⁷ "Odets Executive Session Testimony," Box 19, Records of the Investigative Section, 93.

Relations.” John Howard Lawson asked Collins to make a speech for it on Soviet film. Collins refused, but his name remained on the program advertisements anyways.⁴⁷⁸ Michael Blankfort had a similar experience. He told the HUAC that the organizers for the Conference for World Peace contacted him and asked to use his name as a sponsor for the event. He did not reply to their request and yet they used his name anyway.⁴⁷⁹

During his testimony, Academy Award winning actor Jose Ferrer repeatedly averred that various front organizations used his name without his permission, particularly naming him as a sponsor for events of which he did not participate. Ferrer’s credibility is somewhat undermined by the fact that on many occasions he did participate in such events. Thus, three eventualities are possible. First, Ferrer lied in order to minimize his apparent connections with Communist Party fronts. Second, communist front organizers used his name without his explicit permission, perhaps by agreement and knowing that his sympathies were for communist causes. This allowed him to deny he gave his permission and still allow for the intended consequence. The third eventuality is that the actor testified truthfully and, once he allowed the use of his name for selected front events, communist organizers then took the liberty to use it as they needed without his permission. Given that many other celebrities testified to a similar experience and the existence of any documentary evidence to the contrary, it appears that this third possibility is likely the truth.

⁴⁷⁸ “Collins Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 31-32.

⁴⁷⁹ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 21

In any event, the HUAC came to believe in the testimony of many media and entertainment personalities who claimed their names had been hijacked. Investigator Appell told Jose Ferrer: “The Committee has found that in some front organizations, the communists have taken names of people who never sponsored the organization and used them in a letter as a sponsor and later their names have never been shown on the official letterhead.” To this Ferrer replied: “I am convinced my name has been used without my authority, because I cannot forget quite as many things as I seem to have forgotten.”⁴⁸⁰

Collins reported that John Howard Lawson and Jay Leyda had approached him in 1950 about making a speech on Soviet films at an event called “A Conference to Strengthen American-Soviet Relations.” Collins said he had second thoughts about doing the speech, told Lawson and Leyda he was backing out, and asked that his name be taken off the program. However, the organizers never removed his name. In response to HUAC questions about a number of endorsements of communist inspired events or causes, such as the Stockholm Peace Petition, the Communist May Day Parade, and a petition to the United Nations on behalf of the Hollywood Ten, Clifford Odets indicated that the communist organizers had used his name without his permission. Moreover, Odets asserted that in the past the Party had twisted his endorsements and used them for propaganda purposes by the Party. Therefore, he had to exercise much greater care about how he lent his name.⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸⁰ “Ferrer Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 15

⁴⁸¹ “Odets Executive Session Testimony,” Box 19, Records of the Investigative Section, 98-108.

Apparently, membership rolls of front organizations were freely padded with names of individuals, who had joined a predecessor organization, but not the successor group. There are enough examples in the executive session testimony to indicate this was a pattern of behavior. One example comes from the testimony of Abe Burrows, who claimed his nomination for election as an officer of the Progressive Citizens of America, the communist front that was a successor organization to ICCASP, was without his knowledge or permission. Burrows did say he had been a member of the HISCCASP, the Hollywood group affiliated with the ICCASP. He in fact never recalled joining the PCA and he and his counsel, Martin Gang, speculated that the membership rolls of the HISCCASP, which Burrows had joined much earlier, were “taken over bodily” by the PCA. Despite his name on a PCA ballot, Burrows asserted that he never joined because “[t]hat was the group for Wallace, and I was not for Wallace.”⁴⁸² Jose Ferrer did not remember joining the PCA and found it puzzling that his name should appear on their membership rolls. Ferrer seems to be another person whose connection with the ICCASP carried over to the PCA.⁴⁸³

These are but a few examples of many detailing how communist front organizations abused the trust of cultural luminaries and manipulated their sentiments for worthy causes in order to score propaganda points for the Party. It appears that communist operatives in front organizations lied about the endorsements of motion picture professionals and their participation in causes espoused by those fronts. Time

⁴⁸² “Burrows Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 46-47.

⁴⁸³ “Ferrer Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 16-17.

and again, the HUAC heard testimony that indicated when a front organization went out of existence, its membership rolls seem to have been transferred to a successor organization and a celebrity found him or herself a member of an organization he or she never joined. The implication of this practice is that communist organizers, especially of successor organizations, must have greatly inflated membership tallies and those groups in reality represented far fewer members than they claimed. A careful reading of the executive session transcripts found in the HUAC archives provides ample evidence that this was a consistent practice.

The HUAC wanted to know about many other communist fronts for which space does not allow an extended discussion. Committee investigators and congressmen queried witnesses about well-known fronts, as well as very obscure ones. Some of the fronts lasted for decades; others were based on specific short-term causes and disappeared after a numbers of months. The most notable of such organizations that the HUAC consistently inquired about included the Committee for the First Amendment, the Actors Lab, Friends of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, American Committee for the Protection of Foreign Born, and the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.

When reading the testimony of so many ex-communists, one cannot help but be moved by the moral and intellectual plight of these Americans. They joined the CPUSA either during the Popular Front period or else during World War II when the USA and the USSR were allies. Most found the Party's humanitarian agenda to be very attractive during the most traumatic economic era in the history of peacetime America. However, with the sudden shifts of the official line, Party members

abruptly found themselves at intellectual and moral odds with the organization in which they had placed their hope for the betterment of humanity. Ultimately, many articulated a sense of betrayal – they felt like they had signed up for one thing and found out the reality was very different.

Some, like screenwriter Leo Townsend, believed the circumstance of a changing Party line was the direct result of changing dictates from Moscow.⁴⁸⁴ The change in line after the Duclos letter and the ouster of Browder is what finally led Townsend to leave the Party, although it took him three years to make the final break. He argued that it was hard for a Party member to make the break for two reasons. The first is because members were subject to a constant barrage of propaganda. Second, members tended to socialize only with other members and leaving the Party meant losing all of one's friends. "You have to face the fact," he asserted, "that these people are going to be your enemies; that you are cutting yourself off from them."⁴⁸⁵

Richard Collins echoed the negative impact of the Duclos letter, Browder's removal from office and the Party's reaction to these events, which he called "absurd."⁴⁸⁶ It was the beginning of the end for Collins, who did not relish the idea of the Party returning to "its old-time revolutionary position."⁴⁸⁷ "The people who had loved Browder on Monday were now cursing him on Wednesday."⁴⁸⁸ When, as a response to Browder's ouster, the Party line shifted hard to the left, mass confessions

⁴⁸⁴ "Townsend Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 34.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁸⁶ "Collins Executive Session Testimony," Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 57.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

of ideological error by Party leaders struck Collins as “absolutely ridiculous” and “useless.”⁴⁸⁹

Another event that caused Richard Collins to begin reevaluating his Party membership was Albert Maltz’ famous article in *New Masses* arguing that the Party needed to give more intellectual freedom to communist writers. When his fellow communist writers gathered at the home of screenwriter Abe Polonsky and denounced Maltz’ position, Collins was outraged. They said Maltz’ desire for such intellectual freedom was a middle-class desire and, thus, he did not understand the necessities of class struggle. Collins testified that he was angered at how Maltz, a man of significant talent, was treated by men with little talent or integrity for their work. “I felt [Maltz] was absolutely right and that anyone with a brain in their head could tell he was right.”⁴⁹⁰

Finally, Collins realized that internal Party democracy was a sham. He testified that after the Duclos letter and the ouster of Browder, the Hollywood Section Committee, of which he was a member, removed Lawson as the head of the Hollywood Party, because of his support of and associations with Browder. Nevertheless, the Country Committee appointed Lawson to a new post that was only nominally different from the last and this in effect subverted the local section’s decision. The rejection of Browderism was obviously only a ritual to bring the Party in line with Soviet policy and Party leaders wanted Lawson to stay put in his role.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 40-42.

This episode disabused Collins of the belief that there was any real democracy in the Party.⁴⁹¹

Almost two years after Hayden left the Party, Karen Morley visited him in an attempt to get him to rejoin, but he refused. Morley “then suggested that if I didn’t want to participate actively, I could assume a passive position and contribute money, which was done to a certain degree in Los Angeles.”⁴⁹² Hayden declined that offer as well. In a statement submitted to the HUAC, Hayden asserted why he left the CPUSA:

The disgust arose from my dissatisfaction with the narrowness of the people I met in that short period of time. They differed from the men and women I had met in the Yugoslav underground. Their fight for social justice was and is a sham, a mere façade to attract people like myself who had an honest and sincere desire to do something worthwhile. Their boundless bigotry and their intolerance of opinions which differed from their own was revolting to me. Their absolute conviction and fanatic belief that Russia could do no wrong and their constant criticism of everything American – whether truly faulty or not – convinced me of their insincerity. Their mouthings about freedom, which at first impressed me, turned out to be hollow mockery when I saw their willing submission to Party discipline.⁴⁹³

Michael Blankfort offered a more charitable view that seems to sum up the thoughts of many of the other HUAC witnesses. He said, “Yes, I feel that the

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 58.

⁴⁹² “Hayden Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 22.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 43.

Communist Party as an organization is a subversive organization. I do not feel that individual communists are invariably subversives.”⁴⁹⁴

In summary, the documentary evidence from the HUAC archives reveals a much more nuanced picture of the Hollywood probes than historians understood before now. Scholars’ emphasis on the Committee’s requirement that witnesses name the names of individuals known to them as communists, while grounded factually, overstates the case. The HUAC investigators did indeed consistently ask witnesses to name names as part of a process apparently designed to insure accuracy through triangulation, eliminate individuals innocently connected to fronts, and generate leads for future witness. However, the Committee increasingly focused more on the activities of front organizations. This was particularly true in the second investigation of 1951-1952, as opposed to the 1947 probe. The HUAC acted as if exposing various communist-led fronts was an important end unto itself. This view stands in contradistinction to that held by a number of civil society and revisionist historians. They have argued that HUAC’s interest in the fronts was to create guilt by association for front members. In this view, the Committee sought to make charges of communism or communist sympathies stick by associating such innocents with front organizations. The archival evidence does not bear this position out. On the contrary, the new archival evidence, especially the unsealed executive session transcripts, shows that the HUAC acted to combat the fronts as a response to what committee members saw as a powerful set of organizational tools or transmission belts that amplified Party policy positions to an audience unaware of their origin. The

⁴⁹⁴ “Blankfort Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 24.

Committee seemed to believe that exposing fronts as being communist controlled served the American body politic by thwarting the interests of the CPUSA and by extension the Soviet Union, both of which arguably sought revolutionary change in the American political system.

Chapter 8: Summary and Significance of Findings

This study has principally and extensively drawn upon primary source documents from the records of the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities, which are newly available to scholars at the Center for Legislative Archives of the National Archives. These documents first came available in 2001 and, as of the date of this writing, archivists are still in the process of declassifying many of the documents. The review of the relevant literature in Chapter Two demonstrates that there has yet been no comprehensive history of the HUAC since the opening of its archives. Furthermore, there has been no history of the Committee's investigations of Hollywood based on a thorough and comprehensive study of the HUAC's investigative files. By offering a careful analysis of the Committee's F&R and investigative files, as well as the transcripts of testimony taken in executive session, all of which were previously unavailable, this dissertation seeks to partially remedy this circumstance and fill in several key gaps in the historical record.

This dissertation has presented some significant findings that are new to the historical record and key to a more complete understanding of the HUAC and its probes of communist infiltration of the motion picture industry. This chapter will offer a detailed analysis of the meaning of each of these significant findings, their subsidiary findings, how they add to or change the historical record, and how they will assumedly assist historians in undertaking further research in this area. The main findings are as follows:

First, the HUAC's primary method of investigation entailed an on-going analysis of the communist press. Newly available archival information appears to show that the popular perception of shadowy cloak and dagger investigative techniques by the Committee is a myth. In fact during the heyday of its existence, the HUAC operated in a symbiotic relationship with the communist press.

Second, the investigations of Gerhart and Hanns Eisler were the catalyst for the Committee moving forward with the full scale probe of Hollywood in 1947. While the HUAC would probably have eventually investigated the motion picture business anyway, the cases of the Eisler brothers made a probe of Hollywood inescapable that year.

Third, especially with the second Hollywood inquiry of 1951-1952, historians and critics of the HUAC have overemphasized the Committee's practice of asking witnesses to name the names of individuals they knew to be communists. A broad reading of the executive session transcripts shows that this was not simply a ritual designed to humiliate witnesses, that it was in reality an exercise in triangulation in order to protect those with only casual connections with the Party or its fronts, and that ultimately the process was an investigatory dead end.

Fourth, the HUAC considered exposing communist controlled front organizations as important as and perhaps even more so than the process of naming names or even investigating the CPUSA itself. The newly available archival documents appear to indicate that the Committee did not, as has been alleged by some critics, use associations with fronts to smear innocent citizens with the label of communist. Rather, investigators sought to identify Party members so as to expose

the alleged nature of front organizations, i.e. that they were controlled by communists and aimed to propagate the Party line.

Fifth, the four findings above taken together indicate a fifth significant conclusion, namely that the archival evidence demonstrates that the HUAC's concern with American communist propaganda in the service of a foreign power was a central motivation for the Committee's interest in the communist infiltration of Hollywood. It was not a side issue or a pretext for scrutinizing Hollywood in order to squelch the reforming efforts of radicals, as some have alleged. Furthermore, the HUAC's understanding of the nature and conduct of communist propaganda changed over time, growing more sophisticated and focusing more on the work of front organizations.

Before proceeding with a discussion of each of these findings, a brief review of the previous historical and critical thought regarding the HUAC's foray into Hollywood will help clarify how the conclusions of this study represent a new departure from the previous historiography of the subject. Also, a brief summary of the context in which the HUAC investigations took place is also in order.

The opening of the vast HUAC files to researchers represents an opportunity to understand better a key governmental body of American government in the 20th century. For better or worse, the HUAC helped shape the American response to domestic communism during the decades of the 1940s and 1950s. Although not plumbing the depths of disrepute that McCarthy did, the Committee was nevertheless highly controversial in its day and its reputation has not prospered over time. Many Americans believed the HUAC, which is often associated with the contemptible

antics of Senator Joseph McCarthy, unnecessarily infringed upon civil liberties and its investigations illegitimately intruded into the private political thought of ordinary citizens.

The view of civil society and revisionist historians is that American communism was a relatively benign phenomenon dedicated mainly to such worthy endeavors as the extension of civil rights to minorities, food and housing assistance to poor, the expansion of New Deal programs, and efforts to promote international understanding in the cause of peace. This perspective holds that out of naïve idealism, American communists esteemed the Soviet experiment, but nevertheless American communism was a domestic movement and charges that Moscow controlled the CPUSA were spurious. Finally, it argues that any potential security threat posed by the CPUSA was marginal and the response of the Committee to any perceived threats was all out of appropriate proportion. Most of the studies of the HUAC's probe of Hollywood have their basis in this perspective.

The notoriety of the HUAC was in many respects well deserved. It originated during the tenure of the HUAC's predecessor, the Dies Committee, when its chairman, Martin Dies, turned his attention from domestic fascist and Nazi groups to the issue of American communism. Chairman Dies' public statements and his conduct of hearings often appeared aimed at garnering headlines and scoring points against the administration of Franklin Roosevelt. Dies also built a reputation as one who would often lay indiscriminate charges of communism of those on the left without adequate documentary evidence to support his assertions. Thus, critics began to charge Dies was a demagogue and a red-baiter.

In 1945, Rep. John Rankin of Mississippi maneuvered a vote in the House of Representatives that resulted in the conversion of the old Dies Committee into a regular, standing committee of the House. Now known simply as the HUAC, the Committee became inexorably connected with Rankin's name, especially in the eyes of its critics. Even though Rankin only served on the HUAC for two congresses, the 79th (1945-1946) and the 80th (1947-1948), and was never its chairman, the Committee's reputation suffered further due to its association with this rabid racist and anti-Semite. It has not helped the standing of the HUAC in the eyes of history that its members, during the 80th Congress, i.e. the congress during which the first Hollywood probe took place, were a rather dubious lot. Four of the nine members on the Committee, i.e. all of the Democrats, were Southern segregationists. A federal jury found the HUAC chairman during the 80th Congress, J. Parnell Thomas, guilty of corruption and he served time at a federal penitentiary in the early 1950s. The Committee's youngest member, freshman Representative Richard M. Nixon, had a checkered career (no pun intended), which ultimately ended in disgrace.

On the other hand, it is important to point out a fact which is a matter of public record, but essentially overlooked in the historiography of the Hollywood probe, namely the HUAC of 82nd Congress (1951-1952) was a very different committee than that in 1947. The only holdover was John S. Wood of Georgia, who served as chairman during the second Hollywood investigation. All of the other members of the Committee were new. Furthermore, only two of the nine members during the 82nd Congress were Southern Democrats. Nevertheless, with the exception

of McCarthy's Senate sub-committee, no other congressional body in American history has been as controversial and as unpopular as the HUAC.

This study is unique in that it offers a discussion of the HUAC's two investigations of Hollywood (1947 and 1951-1952) firmly anchored by an articulation of the specific domestic and international context in which these events took place. On the domestic side, there was a profound dissatisfaction of the economics of the New Deal by many members of the Committee, which reflected similar sentiments amongst the American business community.

Another element of this context included a new and rapidly developing understanding of the power of mass propaganda as a result of experience with Soviet and particularly German propaganda efforts during World War II. Furthermore, the primitive communication theory of the day indicated that the media delivered messages to their audience much like a hypodermic needle delivers a drug. It is possible that this led academics and governmental officials at the time to overestimate the efficacy of the propagandizing efforts of domestic communists. Charges that the Office of War Information had employed a number of communists likely increased these concerns. No other study of the HUAC's investigations of Hollywood mentions the new awareness of mass propaganda as part of the milieu in which the events occurred.

Probably the key domestic contextual factor was the revelations of domestic espionage cases linked to American communists. These began with the *Amerasia* spy case in early 1945 and continued with the defection of Igor Gouzenko in Ottawa, Canada during the autumn of that year. Not only did charges by Louis Budenz in late

1946 that Gerhart Eisler was an agent of the Soviet Union directing the affairs of the CPUSA eventually lead to a probe of Hollywood in 1947, the revelations the following year of Elizabeth Bentley ultimately led to the exposure of numerous American communists who had spied for Moscow. The public disclosure of the existence of the Silvermaster Group, the Perlo Group, the Ware Group and the Rosenberg Group – all domestic espionage rings populated by American communists – shook the national security establishment. Yet, because so few trials ended with convictions for spying, many on the political left believed such charges were overblown and possibly fabricated by anticommunists given to conspiracy theories. Anticommunists, on the other hand, attributed the rapid development of a Soviet atom bomb to the treachery of domestic communists and their ability to compromise the Manhattan project. Certainly, the HUAC congressmen and investigators, who were pivotal in the exposure of Alger Hiss, believed domestic communist espionage was a real and serious threat to national security. Significant work by post-revisionist historians drawing upon the newly opened archives of the Comintern and the declassification of the Venona decryptions has demonstrated that a significant element of the CPUSA was indeed engaged in Soviet espionage or else indirectly supported such spy activity. Thus, regardless of whether the HUAC acted appropriately in its investigations of communist activity, concerns about American communists engaging in espionage for Moscow were grounded in reality and not a case of irrational hysteria or conspiracy paranoia. This stated contextual element distinguishes this study of the HUAC from previous ones.

International events also played a key role in establishing the cultural milieu in which the HUAC investigations of Hollywood took place. Saying the investigations of Hollywood by the HUAC occurred during the Cold War is not saying much of significance. Not all years of the Cold War were equally as tense. It just so happened that both of the Committee's forays into communism in Tinsel Town fell during particularly anxious points during the Cold War. The Iron Curtain began to close tightly in Eastern Europe in the late 1940s just as the first Hollywood investigation got underway. Seemingly each week brought new newspaper headlines of the Soviets clamping down on the independence of Eastern Europeans, installing one satellite government after another. Even more momentous was the fact that during the second Hollywood probe of 1951-1952, the United States was a nation at war with eventually two communist countries, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China, both armed with Soviet tanks and fighter jets. Yet previous studies of the HUAC's investigation of Hollywood barely mention the Korean War if at all and it does not even merit a complete sentence in the seminal history of the Hollywood blacklist, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, in terms of establishing the context of the second Hollywood probe.⁴⁹⁵ On the other hand, newly available executive session transcripts reveal that the Committee rarely dismissed a witness during the 1951-1952 hearings without a congressman or investigator asking whether that individual would be willing to bear arms in defense of the United States against a Soviet attack.

⁴⁹⁵ Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 362.

In summary, the HUAC did not undertake its investigations of Hollywood within a vacuum. Rather they took place within a specific historical context that no doubt influenced to a significant degree how those events would transpire. Previous histories of the era have done a poor or very limited job establishing logical and likely possibilities for such a broader context. This dissertation has offered a remedy to that problem.

The discussion of the investigative methods set forth in Chapter Five of this study offers the first detailed examination of how the HUAC conducted its probes of Hollywood since historians have gained access to Committee's archives in 2001. The newly available archival material provides a significant amount of information that has allowed for a reconstruction of the investigatory methods and process employed by the HUAC. The archival data indicates that the Committee undertook its inquiries in distinct stages as part of a five-step routine. Before the findings of this dissertation, the details of the first three steps of that process remained unknown.

The first step was the research phase in which HUAC staff collected raw data, summarized information, and created files under the names of individuals and organizations. The new and fascinating aspect of this step is that the overwhelming majority of the raw data the staff researcher collected for the Committee came through a careful process of analyzing publications by the CPUSA and its front organizations. Of those publications, the communist periodical press, including *Communist*, *Political Affairs*, *New Masses*, the *People's World* and in particular the *Daily Worker*, were the most common sources of information. In support of this process, the HUAC collected a huge number of periodicals, pamphlets, flyers, and

other documents in order to create a very significant library of materials published by subversive organizations. Staff researchers supplemented this library with articles from mainstream newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* through the employment of a press clippings service. Committee staff clipped articles from local Washington DC newspapers with additional information collected from trade publications, such as the *Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*. The key new fact here is that, without the communist press the Committee would have had to rely entirely on information collected by testimony of subpoenaed witnesses in order to conduct its investigations. In fact, one of the significant new findings of this dissertation is that the communist press was the *sine qua non* of HUAC's Hollywood investigations.

Committee researchers distilled the data derived from the periodical press, and in particular the communist press, onto a series of cards stored in card filing systems. There was one filing system for organizations and another for individuals. The Files and Research Section of the HUAC's staff supervised the on-going renewal of these two large card files, which were essentially repositories of raw, uncorroborated, unanalyzed data. Together the HUAC referred internally to these files as the F&R files and they were the source of data that other agencies of the federal government drew upon when using the HUAC files as a research tool. The archival evidence shows that numerous executive branch agencies of the Truman Administration accessed these files to query for potential information against several thousands of names on a typical day in the late 1940s and early 1950s. This is a surprising finding given Truman's on-going opposition to the HUAC as evidenced by numerous critical

statements with regard to the Committee. Nevertheless, apparently the Truman Administration's Civil Service Commission needed the resources of the HUAC to operationalize its loyalty program. Additionally, the newly available files reveal that, at least with regard to the Hollywood probes, the FBI shared precious little of its information with the Committee, even though it would have been very helpful to HUAC investigations. Ironically, however, FBI agents made copious use of Committee files on a regular basis.

The above finding of this dissertation is highly significant. Previous historians of the Hollywood probe, such as Victor Navasky, have assumed a high degree of cooperation between various governmental bodies investigating communism.⁴⁹⁶ Such suppositions are incorrect. In fact, it appears that there was exceedingly little and the trade of information was in fact almost entirely a one-way flow toward the FBI. The HUAC and the FBI had very different agendas. The HUAC sought to expose subversive activities and propaganda. The FBI sought to prosecute such activities and building a case for prosecution often meant allowing such activities to continue under covert surveillance. The above finding confirms other research that suggests that investigations of domestic subversion and espionage were poorly coordinated across the federal government.

Another important fact revealed by the research offered in this dissertation is that since Committee researchers derived the data contained in the F&R files from public sources, such as the communist press, it was only as accurate as those sources. This accuracy is highly questionable. Chapter Seven of this study outlined evidence

⁴⁹⁶ Navasky, *Naming Names*, 317.

from executive session testimony that indicated a strong likelihood that communist operatives in front organizations lied about the participation of celebrities and cultural luminaries in front activities. Such individuals found themselves the sponsors and endorsers of events, causes and activities that they never authorized. They found themselves members of organizations that they never joined. They found themselves elected to organizational offices for groups in which they had never applied for membership.

The F&R files were a distinct entity from the Committee's investigative files. The latter represents the work of HUAC investigators in analyzing the information contained in the F&R files and substantiating it with corroboratory information as discussed below in the second phase of the Committee's investigatory process. This distinction is extremely important because another key finding of this dissertation is that the newly available archival evidence indicates that executive branch use of the F&R files impacted far more people than those who were the subjects of active HUAC investigations. Furthermore, since the data that constituted the F&R files was raw, uncorroborated and unanalyzed, it would appear that those accessing it, i.e. agents of the executive branch, were far more likely to draw erroneous conclusions than HUAC investigators working from investigative files.

The newly available archival information indicates that the second step in the Committee's investigatory routine was the corroboration phase, wherein investigators would look for additional evidence to substantiate the initial indications of the research phase. During this phase, investigative staff created three-column summaries that measured the scope of the individual's alleged association with or

participation in communist fronts and narrative reports that were more biographical in nature. Again, the most common citation in these reports was from the *Daily Worker*. There were two common sources of corroboratory information. First, there were publicly available documents, such as police and military service records, immigration and naturalizations records, transcripts of testimony from trials, in some cases income tax records, and where possible Party documents, such as CPUSA registration cards. The last type of evidence was rare indeed. Investigators even drew upon such publications as *Who's Who* to flesh out the record. Again, only rarely was the HUAC able to access documents originating from the FBI. The second source consisted of field interviews by investigators of individuals who might be able to speak to an issue at hand. However, since, unlike the FBI, the HUAC only had a handful of investigators, such interviews were limited.

One of the key duties of HUAC investigators was to interview, if possible, potential witnesses prior to their appearance before the Committee. Investigators sought to gauge an individual's potential testimony ahead of time in order to insure that it was worth the HUAC's time. The newly available archival evidence surprisingly reveals that many so-called "friendly" witnesses from Hollywood were extremely reluctant to testify. Samuel Goldwyn refused any significant cooperation. Even though he had battled efforts by communists to unionize his small (at the time) studio, Walt Disney did not want to testify before the HUAC. The HUAC's Los Angeles field agent had to work hard to persuade the president of the Screen Actors Guild, a liberal named Ronald Reagan, to testify. Conservative anticommunist Robert Taylor was furious with the Committee for forcing him to testify. This

evidence stands in contradiction to much of the previous historiography of the era that held to the thesis that Hollywood anticommunists invited the Committee to rid Tinsel Town of the Reds. Thus, future historians of the HUAC and the Blacklist era in Hollywood will need to reconsider the political dynamics at work in the motion picture industry at the time.

If investigators determined there was sufficient evidence to proceed, the contents of the investigative file might lead the Committee to the third step, which was to hear testimony under subpoena or voluntarily in executive session. Although historians have known all along that the HUAC heard testimony in executive session, until the House of Representatives authorized the unsealing of the Committee's files, the contents of the transcripts of those sessions remained a matter of conjecture. Those transcripts provide a great deal of documentary evidence supporting the arguments offered in Chapter Six and particularly Chapter Seven of this dissertation.

The final two steps of the HUAC's investigatory process, namely testimony obtained in open session and the publication of reports by the Committee, have been part of the public record and, therefore, not addressed in any significant degree by this study.

Careful scrutiny of the Hollywood files in the archives also reveals some surprises that contradict the popular conception of HUAC investigations. There is no evidence of the use of wiretaps in the course of investigation. Committee investigators did not record any conversations, private or otherwise, and when a manufacturer of recording equipment tried to approach the HUAC chairman to sell his device, the latter politely rebuffed him, noting a concern about legality. The

HUAC archives seem to indicate that the only method of recording statements employed by the Committee was the use of legal transcriptionists to make a permanent record of testimony taken during public and executive session hearings. Also, it does not appear that investigators sought at any time to open personal mail.

There are no cases of HUAC investigators tailing suspects or interviewing neighbors about the activities of the subjects of investigations. In the thousands of pages of documents accessed for this dissertation, there is only one instance in which the subject of a Committee investigation was placed under surveillance. That individual was Gerhart Eisler and, even then, the HUAC did not surveil him directly. Chairman Thomas feared Eisler would slip out of the country before his scheduled testimony could take place. Therefore, he asked the FBI to place Eisler under surveillance to insure he honored his subpoena. Hoover obliged Thomas. Furthermore, there is no record of the use of informants by the Committee or the existence of any network of domestic spies. Finally, newly opened archives surprisingly reveal that HUAC investigators were so concerned with following the law that they were careful not to violate the copyrights of publications by making Photostats of borrowed copies. This included periodicals printed by suspected communist front organizations.

Furthermore, there is no evidence in the Hollywood files that HUAC investigators pursued investigations based on anonymous denunciations or accusations from members of the public and submitted to the Committee via mail or telegram. Only very rarely did HUAC investigators draw upon anticommunist publications, such as *Counterattack* or *Red Channels*, for information and there is no

record of any cooperation between the Committee and the organizations that published those newsletters. Likewise, there appeared to be minimal interaction between the HUAC and its state level counterpart in California, known as the CUAC. The HUAC did draw upon the CUAC's published reports. The CUAC's chairman, Sam Tenney, did testify before the HUAC once in March 1947 and wrote the chairman of the HUAC at least once the same year. However, surprisingly, it appears that on the whole there was not any significant coordination between the two bodies.

The above findings, based on newly available documentary evidence from the National Archives that summarizes the investigative practices that the HUAC employed, as well as those in which the Committee did not engage, are highly significant. This is so because these findings offer a new and unexpected picture of how the HUAC undertook its investigations. That picture stands in contradistinction to the popular and prevailing view of how the Committee went about its work. The documentary record of the HUAC's Hollywood probes simply does not support the image of the Committee operating as a specter-like McCarthyist Star Chamber surreptitiously surveilling Americans, conducting smear campaigns on innocent victims simply because they held unpopular political beliefs, and in the process flagrantly violating the law. Until now, scholars had little idea of how the HUAC actually collected information and conducted its investigations before they reached that stage of hearings open to the public. This dissertation offers specific findings that fill that gap in the historical record.

With the opening of the HUAC archives, correcting the historical record will be an on-going effort of which this dissertation is the first step. Correcting the record will mean demonstrating the specious nature of such claims as the one below:

As lengthy as the list of subversives in Hollywood was, it contained but a small portion of the names (60,000) compiled by HUAC. HUAC was lavish, both in its compilation of dossiers (over 1 million) and its distribution of information they contained to employers – some 60,000 individuals became “known” to their bosses via this channel.⁴⁹⁷

This claim in a key scholarly work on the HUAC’s probe of Hollywood is based on a secondary source, which in turn had no access to the newly opened Committee archives.⁴⁹⁸

The above statement is simply erroneous and it is so for several reasons. First, the number of names is highly inflated, because it does not take into account pseudonyms, which American communists were highly prone to using. The total number of names in the HUAC’s files does not equal the total number of individuals. Besides his legal name, Gerhart Eisler had seven known pseudonyms, all of which appear in the HUAC’s F&R files. Union leader Steve Nelson, who was a secret communist, had a different birth name, Stephen Mesarosh, and four different aliases, so he is one individual who corresponds to six names in the HUAC files. Thus, two discrete individuals represent a total of fourteen names in the Committee’s files. Second, the “dossiers” referred to were simple reports, usually one paragraph in length, which summarized the information in the F&R files under a given name.

⁴⁹⁷ Ceplair and Englund, *Inquisition in Hollywood*, 387.

⁴⁹⁸ Ceplair and Englund’s source was Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974) 91-92.

Third, it is unclear what the basis is of the figure of one million such reports. No such documentation was readily available and the figure appears highly inflated. During the thirty month period between the middle of 1946 and the end of 1948, the HUAC issued approximately 17,000 of such reports. If one uses this as an average and extrapolates over the life of the Committee, the total would have been slightly over 200,000. Moreover, as a matter of policy, HUAC staff only issued these “dossiers” to members of Congress or agencies of the Executive branch. When in 1953 it was demonstrated that there had been instances in which staff had not followed this policy and issued reports directly to private citizens, the HUAC adopted a formal resolution forbidding it.⁴⁹⁹ Thus, although in some rare instances such reports could have gotten in the hands of employers, newly available evidence from the National Archives indicates that the assertion that this occurred in a pervasive and systematic manner is simply false.

Committee critics and revisionist historians often characterize the period of American history in which the HUAC’s investigations of Hollywood took place as one of a national anticommunist hysteria, during which irrational fears of foreign subversion led to the persecution of innocent citizens. This is essentially the perspective that undergirded Arthur Miller’s allegory as articulated in *The Crucible*. Given the work of the post-revisionist historians, which drew heavily on the opening of the Comintern archives in Moscow in the 1990s, as well as the release of the Venona decrypts, the validity of this thesis is highly suspect. Documentary evidence from the newly opened HUAC archives appears to confirm the general

⁴⁹⁹ Schamel, “Records of the House Un-American Activities Committee,” 10.

substance of the work of revisionist historians. The Committee appeared to proceed logically and methodically in its investigations. The evidence appears to show, that although there were times that HUAC congressmen and investigators made mistakes, these were the result of error in the interpretation of evidence, not from pursuing imaginary subversives. Certainly, the congressmen serving on the Committee, as well as the staff investigators working for them, may have been naïve about the strength of the communist threat, i.e. they may have overestimated the likelihood of any action by the Soviet Union or domestic communists against United States. Nevertheless, unlike the deplorable antics of McCarthy, the HUAC based its investigations on real evidence and overwhelmingly Committee investigators drew that evidence directly from the communist press in the United States.

One such case is that of Gerhart Eisler. The HUAC obtained information that Eisler was a trained agent of communist propaganda, having obtained entry into the United States illegally, and was once and possibly currently the Comintern's representative to the CPUSA. The Committee had strong evidence that Gerhart had traveled repeatedly between the United States and the Soviet Union under false passports. The HUAC discovered that while living in the United States during the period of 1941-1946, Eisler was very active as a propagandist for various communist newspapers and magazines, writing under a variety of pseudonyms, most famously as Hans Berger. When exposed by newspaper journalist Frederick Woltman and ex-communist Louis Budenz, Gerhart Eisler attempted to use American mainstream newspapers and the radio program *Meet the Press* to sway support for his cause. Eisler was able to finance his activities by drawing a salary under a false name from a

communist front. Furthermore, Gerhart was an associate of Otto Katz, a German communist and reputed Comintern agent known for involvement in communist front activities in New York and Hollywood.

Eisler's brother, Hanns, with whom he was close, lived and worked in Hollywood as a composer for motion pictures. There was strong evidence that Hanns Eisler also obtained entry into the United States through perjurious statements under oath to the INS. Furthermore, the HUAC believed that Hanns had gained permanent residency status through political pressure placed on officials in the State Department initiated by important cultural figures in front organizations who won the sympathy of Eleanor Roosevelt for the composer. Hanns Eisler had a reputation as "the world's foremost revolutionary composer" and the Committee had some evidence that he had strong Comintern connections. Hanns was well connected in Hollywood and had close relationships with a number of Hollywood luminaries and professionals, including Charlie Chaplin, John Garfield, Clifford Odets, Paul Henreid, William Dieterle, Salka Viertel, and Vladimir Pozner. In addition, Hanns had more casual friendships with Peter Lorre, Thomas Mann, and Lion Feuchtwanger. Finally, the composer was very close to Bertolt Brecht, the author of a number of revolutionary plays and operas, for which Hanns had written the musical scores.

Committee documents newly available at the National Archives indicate that the motion picture industry did not come under scrutiny of the Committee in 1947, as critics have charged, simply because Hollywood communists were high profile supporters of the political reforming impulse of the Popular Front. Nor does the documentary pattern support the proposition that the HUAC sought to make an

example of Hollywood Reds in an effort to discredit the communist cause more broadly. Previous historians have offered competing theses to explain why the Committee launched its inquiry into Hollywood. Some have argued that a foolish idea by the HUAC that Hollywood communists were guilty of inserting propaganda into movies was the reason. Others have explained the probe by arguing that it was a response to the success of communists in gaining influence in the Screen Writers Guild. Some historians have pointed to the union jurisdictional battles between the supposedly conservative IATSE and the so-called progressive CSU as an explanation. Several scholars have combined one of the above theses with the assertion that the HUAC was responding to an invitation by the conservative Motion Picture Alliance to investigate their political enemies. While each of the hypotheses has a basis in the facts and has some merit as a partial explanation, none adequately explains the issue of timing, i.e. why the Committee launched the 1947 probe when it did.

This study, based on the extensive use of newly available archival documents that were unavailable to previous historians, offers a more complete and satisfactory explanation as to why the HUAC launched its first investigation of Hollywood when it did. The evidence indicates that the Committee's investigation of Gerhart Eisler led directly to his brother Hanns. Because of Hanns' strong ties to the Gerhart and the Comintern on the one hand and the motion picture business in Hollywood on the other, a probe of Hollywood sooner rather than later became inevitable. Thus, the 1947 investigation of Hollywood did not happen in isolation from the investigations of the Eisler brothers nor was the link a casual or tenuous one. The case of Gerhart Eisler preceded that of Alger Hiss by over a year. Thus, up until that time, Gerhart

Eisler was the most significant communist agent to become the subject of a HUAC investigation. The Committee simply could not ignore any leads that arose from their investigation of him.

The above argument is new and unique to this dissertation. If it is correct, and the archival evidence appears to indicate that this is the case, then it means that the HUAC launched its probe of the motion picture industry because of perceived links between the latter and known agents of the Comintern. Subsequent evidence, of which the Committee was ignorant, links the Eisler brothers, Bertolt Brecht and Otto Katz to the famous Comintern propagandist and front organizer named Willi Munzenberg. This in turn offers the possibility that the highly successful communist fronts that operated in Hollywood found their genesis from someplace other than local radical organizers. Future historians of the era should consider book length studies of these Hollywood fronts. More scholarly research of organizations such as the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League would help fill gaps in this important area of the historical record.

Furthermore, Gerhart Eisler was not an inconsequential figure in the landscape of American politics of the 1930s and 1940s. The HUAC was aware that during the 1930s he served as the Comintern's representative to the CPUSA with plenipotentiary powers. As such, he was arguably the final authority on Party policy and the appointment of senior Party personnel. The Committee also knew that in the 1940s, Eisler was at a minimum a senior figure in the CPUSA's propaganda machine and likely instrumental in the Party's radical shift of line and the toppling of Party leader Earl Browder after the Duclos letter. To the degree that the American

Communist Party, the Popular Front, the Party's myriad of front organizations, and the CPUSA's propaganda machine were an important aspect of American history, the role of Gerhart Eisler is significant. The newly available documents show that HUAC investigators were concerned that Eisler had strong connections to numerous communist fronts.

Despite his importance as a historical figure, Gerhart Eisler remains a little known figure to most scholars of American history, except those engaged in the study of CPUSA history. As Chapter Six of this dissertation has demonstrated, scholars of the HUAC and the Hollywood Blacklist era have not understood his significance to the event of the period. Unfortunately, no biography of Gerhart exists, scholarly or otherwise. The new research offered by this dissertation suggests that such a biography would be warranted. Additionally, the one serious biography of Hanns Eisler is over thirty years old and, thus, could not draw upon documents from either the Comintern or the HUAC archives. It paints a picture of Hanns as a non-political figure during his stay in the United States and does not explore in depth his Comintern ties or allegations that he was compromised by service to the NKVD.⁵⁰⁰ A new biography, focusing more on Hanns Eisler's Hollywood career and his Comintern ties and drawing upon newly available archival documents, would make a useful addition to the scholarly literature.

Historians have focused a great deal of attention on the Committee's persistent request that witnesses name the names of those they knew to be communists. The procedure was even more prominent in the 1951-1952 inquiry than

⁵⁰⁰ See Albrecht Betz, *Hanns Eisler: A Political Musician*, trans. Bill Hopkins (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 194.

in the first investigation. This is because, while the public phase of 1947 investigation was over in a matter of a couple of weeks, HUAC congressmen and investigators took testimony on and off for several years during the second Hollywood probe. A reading of the previous historiography of the subject leads one to believe that all the Committee really cared about was securing a list of names from witnesses, forcing them to become informers.

Victor Navasky focused almost exclusively on this practice by the HUAC and his book is entitled, not surprisingly, *Naming Names*. Therein he argues in essence that the Committee's insistence that witnesses name names constituted a ritual of humiliation, a "degradation ceremony." The willingness to inform served as a test of whether the witness was friend or foe.⁵⁰¹ He bases this assertion on the claim that the HUAC already had a list of names of all the communists in Los Angeles. Thus, the Committee ritually forced witnesses to name names it did not need. He states:

The testimony of Kimple, Silver, and Erwin, combined with intelligence from the FBI and countless other government sources in the business of trading information (with such as the good-natured investigator Bill Wheeler and his colleagues on the HUAC), meant that the last thing the Committee needed to do its job was to accumulate more names.⁵⁰²

The newly available documentary information from the HUAC archives appears to indicate that Navasky is in error. His claim that Max Silver, a former Los Angeles Party functionary, had in essence given the Committee 4,000 names of Los

⁵⁰¹ Navasky, *Naming Names*, 314.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 317.

Angeles communists is not true.⁵⁰³ Silver's executive session testimony is now available for inspection and he makes no such offering of names. Navasky claimed that another ex-communist functionary, William Ward Kimple, gave the HUAC almost 1000 names.⁵⁰⁴ However, the date of that public testimony was June 30, 1955, just over three years after the second Hollywood probe came to an end. Navasky's assertion that the FBI and the HUAC shared intelligence is based on one instance he found in a Freedom of Information document request. Navasky obtained an FBI report on actor Larry Park requested by Chairman Thomas. From that one instance, which Navasky calls "irrefutable evidence of such cooperation, he extrapolates into the assertion that such cooperation was on-going."⁵⁰⁵

Contrary to Navasky's claims, what the newly available documentary record does suggest is that there was little cooperation between the HUAC and the FBI. Unless in the unlikely event that they were somehow withdrawn or destroyed, the absence of FBI reports in the Committee's files, with the exception of a rare few, indicates just the opposite of what Navasky argued. A broad reading of the executive session transcripts now available to historians in the HUAC archives also indicates that, contrary to what Navasky and others believed, the Committee did not already have a complete list of names of Hollywood communists. In fact, what documentary

⁵⁰³ Navasky apparently confuses Silver's estimate that there were 4000 Party members in Los Angeles with the idea that Silver provided the HUAC with 4000 names. There is no documentary evidence that he ever did so.

⁵⁰⁴ As of the date of this writing, Kimple's list has not been located in the HUAC files.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. 317n. Other evidence Navasky offers is a quote from an oral conversation with William Wheeler without appropriate context. Even quoted correctly and in context, the quote does not indicate that Wheeler explicitly said that the FBI provided the HUAC intelligence on any sort of regular basis.

evidence now clearly reveals is that HUAC investigators had conflicting information. The process may have indeed been humiliating for witnesses and the legitimacy of the act of asking such questions has been vigorously argued for the last sixty years. The findings of this dissertation will not end that debate. However, what this study can report as new information gained by a broad reading of executive session transcripts is that the Committee's insistence on witnesses naming names was by all appearances an exercise in triangulation designed to resolve conflicting claims and eliminate errors in its lists, by removing non-communists whose names were accidentally or erroneously associated with the CPUSA. Furthermore, as noted earlier, the HUAC was well aware that the communist press and communist organizers in fronts had a record of claiming participation in or endorsement of Party and front activities and events for famous individuals who made no such commitment.

The newly available executive session transcripts also indicate that the process of naming names was not as important as historians previously believed. At least as important were investigators' questions about the structure and conduct of local Party cells and their queries about participation in communist controlled fronts. One of the patterns that HUAC congressmen and investigators believed they saw emerging from executive session testimony was that CPUSA organized its Hollywood branch along the same cell structure as the rest of the Party. The HUAC clearly believed this confirmed the conspiratorial nature of the CPUSA: Meetings conducted in secret in private homes, alternating locations, and often with the use of only first names. Notification of meetings often came the same day by an anonymous telephone call.

As screenwriter and ex-communist Leo Townsend told the Committee in executive session about his time in the CPUSA: “The thing that worried me was that if this was an American party, which I was told by everyone in the Communist Party, then why does it meet secretly?”⁵⁰⁶

Finally, the newly available executive session transcripts seem to indicate yet another new finding. It appears the HUAC was interested in understanding how communist fronts operated, how they attracted support, how they marshaled their human resources, how they promoted communist policy goals through the effective use of propaganda, and how they successfully made use of celebrities and cultural luminaries as opinion leaders. By 1951, Committee investigators explicitly believed that communist fronts were the most significant weapon in the CPUSA’s propaganda arsenal. Thus, in contrast to the process of the naming of names by witnesses, on which historians have hitherto focused most of their attention, the documentary record appears to indicate, and this study offers as a significant finding, that by the early 1950s the most paramount concern of the HUAC was exposing the nature and practices of communist controlled fronts.

Thus, in a twist of historical irony, the story of the HUAC’s investigations of Hollywood comes full circle. It was the work of a communist controlled front that financed Gerhart Eisler’s release from a French concentration camp and his journey to the United States in 1941. For the next six years, the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee, a front that the HUAC had just investigated in April of 1946, paid Eisler a salary under the name Julius Eisman. The Committee’s investigation of Gerhart

⁵⁰⁶ “Townsend Executive Session Testimony,” Box 15, Records of the Investigative Section, 25.

Eisler led them to Otto Katz and Hanns Eisler. Once the HUAC turned its scrutiny to Hanns Eisler, it became clear that a full scale investigation of Hollywood was unavoidable. Then by the time of the second Hollywood probe in the early 1950s, the Committee believed that the key “front” in its war on domestic communism was in fact the fronts themselves.

In conclusion, it is only appropriate to recognize the provisional nature of these findings. This acknowledgement makes them no less significant, however, because they offer a more accurate understanding of the HUAC and its Hollywood investigations. Although tens of thousands of HUAC documents are now available for inspection by scholars, there are problems, including lost or misplaced files. Additionally, archivists have not released some documents for reasons of national security, while others have been redacted. At the time of this writing, there exists no good finding aid for the HUAC files. Eventually, archivists at the Center for Legislative Archive will remedy this circumstance, but in the meantime trying to find a specific document is like trying to find the proverbial needle in a haystack. In the future, new documents may come to light that warrant a revision of some of these findings. This dissertation has extrapolated the conduct of Committee congressmen and investigators as evidenced by the Hollywood files and assumed this is how the HUAC went about its business in other investigations. Although this seems a reasonable procedure to predict the likely conduct by the Committee in other investigative contexts, future historians studying other HUAC investigations will need to validate these conclusions against their findings. Nevertheless, as science teaches, partial knowledge is not equivalent to no knowledge and the findings of this

study stand as both reasonable and based on the best available documentary evidence, which has been inaccessible to historians until recently.

Repeatedly during the history of the United States, the perceived needs of national security have come into conflict with highly prized American values of political freedom and a limited government to protect those freedoms. From the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 through to the Patriot Act of 2001, American civil society and the political institutions of the Republic have struggled to find an appropriate balance between liberty and national security. It seems reasonable in that search for balance to study the attempts of previous generations to strike that balance. Therein lays the significance of closing gaps in the historical record regarding the investigations of the motion picture industry by the United States House of Representatives' Committee on Un-American Activities.

Glossary

Blacklisting and the **Blacklist**. No credible scholar would assert that there was an actual written down list of names, copies of which were circulated amongst studio executives. Rather the blacklist was a metaphor for being unemployable for political reasons and blacklisting was a practice of not employing anyone who had a known affiliation with the CPUSA or who refused to deny an accusation of such an affiliation. Considering the small number of those in Hollywood who regularly and consistently work in the business in any position of importance – i.e. writers, actors, producers, directors, etc. – this industry was and is a relatively small community. Studio executives could easily keep track by memory of those whose political links to the CPUSA were suspect. This was so first because before the onset of the Cold War, many did not strive to keep those particularly secret and second because a HUAC subpoena usually clarified any ambiguity. What critics of this practice have argued was so immoral was that blacklisting involved collusion by a very few potential employers who drove individuals out of their profession and it often affected those whose reputations and careers were destroyed by mere innuendo. Finally, it is argued that driving communists out of the entertainment and/or communications businesses in order to remove their possible negative influence was a stated goal of the HUAC. Thus, by removing those with certain viewpoints from the industry, the practice of blacklisting was *de facto* a type of censorship of the movies.

Comintern. This was an abbreviation for the Communist International, also known as the Third International. Founded in 1919 by Lenin, it served as the

organizational instrument for maintaining control over national communist parties by the CPSU and coordinating their policies and political line with that of the Soviet Union. The Comintern had its headquarters in Moscow and the Soviet state provided generously funding, office space and equipment. Stalin disbanded the Comintern in 1943 as a political gesture to his Western allies during World War II. In fact, Stalin merely transferred its functions and most of its bureaucracy to the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU.

Communist. This term can mean a lot of things to different people. By labeling someone a communist, one can mean that person is a believer in communist ideology or is a member of one of the many communist-inspired organizations that base their main beliefs on the writings of Karl Marx. For example, in the United States, besides the CPUSA, there have been a number of radical parties that have considered themselves communist, such as the Lovestonites and the various Trotskyites. However, for the purposes of precision in this study, I will use the word communist exclusively to mean an open or secret member of the CPUSA or any other Comintern sanctioned national communist party.

CPSU. This was the acronym for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It was originally known as the RKP(b) or the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).

CPUSA. The acronym for the Communist Party of the United States of America is the designation used for this organization from 1929 on, although its name changed repeatedly before that time. The CPUSA was the Moscow sanctioned party that was a member of the Comintern or Communist International. It was formed through the forced merger of two competing Marxist parties. The force was applied

from Moscow. For an account of the Byzantine early history of the American communist movement, see Theodore Draper's The Roots of American Communism. Over the years, the party changed its name a number of times. For the sake of simplicity, I will use the acronym CPUSA to refer to the party no matter what its current name or status was at the time covered in the text.

Fellow Traveler. This was an individual who was not a party member, but who bought entirely into the program of the CPUSA and Communist International. Such a person usually followed each shift and change in the line of the Comintern. Often such people were apologists for Stalin and the Soviet Union; some persisted in this even after such an activity was an intellectual embarrassment. David Caute has written at length on these individuals.⁵⁰⁷

Front. This refers to an organization that prima facie appeared to be an independent entity, often with a non-communist as a figurehead leader. Sometimes communists were in a minority on its board. However, in reality a front was either controlled outright by the CPUSA or the party had enough organizational leverage to get the body to do its bidding, endorse its agenda, elicit publicity for party causes or all of the above.⁵⁰⁸

HUAC. This is the acronym for the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which undertook investigations of the CPUSA, the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi movement, and other subversive organizations. It operated as a

⁵⁰⁷ See David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: Intellectual Friends of Communism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988)

⁵⁰⁸ See Martin Ebon, *The Soviet Propaganda Machine* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987) for one study of Soviet fronts and Harvey Klehr, *op. cit.*, for a discussion of some CPUSA fronts.

“temporary select” committee, known as the Dies Committee from 1938 to 1945, at which point it became a regular congressional committee. It changed its name to the Committee on Internal Security in 1969 and was abolished in 1975 with its jurisdiction transferred to the Judiciary Committee. For the sake of simplicity, I have opted to use the acronym HUAC, which seems to be the one most commonly used in the scholarly literature. For a comprehensive, critical history of the HUAC, see Walter Goodman, *The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1968). For a liberal, critical and somewhat dated perspective of the anticommunist campaign under the Truman administration, see David Caute, *The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower* (Simon & Schuster, 1979).

McCarthyism. The term has two dictionary definitions. The first is the act or practice of publicly accusing individuals or groups of political disloyalty and subversion, usually without sufficient evidence. The second definition is confined to an historical era: the public investigation of communist activities in the United States in the early 1950s, conducted in sensational public hearings.⁵⁰⁹

Radical. I will attach a specialized meaning to this term in this study. I shall define radical as any political activist, who is to the left of the leftwing of the Democratic Party. This would include CPUSA members and those friendly to the CPUSA, such as fellow travelers, as well as rivals to the CPUSA, such as the Trotskyites, the Bukharinists and the various flavors of Socialists. It also includes non-Marxist radicals, such as anarchists and Wobblies. A key characteristic of

⁵⁰⁹ “McCarthyism,” *ibid.*, 1275

radicals is their advocacy for the replacement, either peacefully or through the use of force, of the very structure of the political and economic order.

Red-baiting. The dictionary definition of redbait is "...to accuse or harass (a person or persons) with being Communist, usually without sufficient evidence."⁵¹⁰ The original implication of the term was that a person who engaged in red-baiting did so to drive the accused from their employment and make them social outcasts. This of course was modeled on Senator McCarthy's well-documented outrageous behavior. Note, however, the dictionary definition has an open ambiguity – it leaves room for someone who makes such an accusation with sufficient evidence. In fact, in recent years the pejorative nature of the term in public discourse, especially as used by those sympathetic to the fate of the communists in the 1940's and 1950's, has seemed to expand on this ambiguity. Now this term is often applied to anyone who makes the assertion that an individual is or was a member of the CPUSA, no matter how well founded that assertion might be. The term "red-baiter" has come to imply that anyone who makes such an assertion is a rightwing ideological fanatic bent on ruining innocent lives because of a blind hysteria against communism or more rarely because that person has become intoxicated by the power of demagoguery, as in the case of Senator McCarthy. Such a person is often suspected of making such a charge in order to score political or ideological advantages, as Richard Nixon did in his first congressional election. Thus, as the ideological tenor of the nation has changed since the late-1960s, the word has taken on more and more of a pejorative sense, whilst its application has admitted fewer distinctions. This imprecision of language, however,

⁵¹⁰ "Red-bait," *The World Book Dictionary* (Chicago: Field Enterprises Educational Corporation, 1970) 1732

is an unsatisfactory position for the historian to take. When “red-baiting” is used in this study, it should be construed as meaning a public verbal or written attack against an individual or individuals without sufficient evidence and with the intent to harass or demean.

Witch-hunt. An informal term defined as persecuting or defaming (a person) to gain political advantage.⁵¹¹ The implication of the term is since in reality there are no witches to hunt, the process is a sham and the witch-hunter(s) have another hidden agenda.

⁵¹¹ “Witch-hunt,” *ibid.*, 2385

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