

Unit 5 > Text 3: A patriotic American (pp. 96-97)

The cold war and McCarthyism

This is an extract from a Memorandum by President Eisenhower to Attorney General Herbert Brownell, November 4, 1953. Read it and explain what he thinks about Communists: say whether the following statements are true or false.

1. He holds Communists in low esteem. True False

→ _____

2. He thinks that supporting Communists used to be perfectly normal. True False

→ _____

2. He thinks that post-1949 Communist supporters are potentially dangerous. True False

→ _____

Conclusion: Do you think he supported Senator McCarty? Yes. No.

The Communists are a class set apart by themselves. Indeed, I think they are such liars and cheats that even when they apparently recant and later testify against someone else for his Communist convictions, my first reaction is to believe that the accused person must be a patriot or he wouldn't have incurred the enmity of such people. So even when these "reformed" Communists have proved useful in helping us track down some of their old associates, I certainly look for corroborating evidence before I feel too easy in my mind about it.

The object of my concern is not a Communist -- he is another individual entirely. He -- or she -- is the younger person who in the late thirties and early forties was inclined toward leftish thinking, and particularly toward giving expression to his sympathy for the Soviets. This individual may have done this through joining organizations that later came to be classified as subversive, or in any number of other ways.

Let us remember this. Many prominent officials of the Allied Governments were at that time talking in terms of support of the Soviets; witness Winston Churchill's comment when the Soviets came into the war on the allied side. In Washington there was much of the same. In fact, starting in December 1941, it was a policy of our government

to foster friendship with the Soviets. So the individual of whom I am speaking (who must have depended on people high in government for information and judgment) could very easily and very honestly have said many things that today would indicate or imply an unjustified support of Communism.

I assume, then, that any American could have been excused for statements or actions favorable to the Soviets during the war and even as late as 1948.