

Richard M. Fried. *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

McCarthyism remains a controversial issue in postwar American history, first of all because the basic political and cultural conflicts which were highlighted in the McCarthy era by no means vaporized overnight with the fall of the notorious Wisconsin senator. McCarthyism continued to be a straitjacket on intellectual life in America for years after, and repercussions can still be sensed in American politics to this day. With *Nightmare in Red*, Professor Richard M. Fried, who is Associate Professor of History at the University of

Illinois at Chicago and author of *Men Against McCarthy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), has written one of the most valuable and comprehensive books yet on the McCarthy era.

The author adheres to what might best be described as a "political" interpretation of McCarthyism. Arguing along the same lines as historians such as Robert Griffith (*The Politics of Fear* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1970), Fried traces McCarthyism back to the 1930s and presents it as a delayed reaction to New Deal liberalism, reinforced by the development of the Cold War, the growing frustrations of the American Right and the bitter partisan struggle in the late 1940s.

In contrast, early works on "McCarthyism," such as Richard H. Rovere's, *Senator Joe McCarthy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), tended to emphasize Joe McCarthy's demagogic personality and his skillful use of the media as major contributing factors to his political influence. Another group of historians and social scientists, among them Richard Hofstadter, Seymour Martin Lipset, and Daniel Bell, were inspired by theories of mass psychology, and searched for an explanation of the profound impact of McCarthyism in various forms of social strains affecting the senator's supporters. While many of these works provided valuable insights into the cultural basis of the Red Scare, they have generally not been able to withstand empirical testing, which is probably best demonstrated by Michael Paul Rogin in his *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1967).

In accordance with Professor Fried's adherence to the "political" tradition, it is the loyalty issue as a focal point for the cultural and political struggle at mid-century, rather than McCarthy's personality and reckless schemes that has his interest. Thus, the book is not intended as a rival to the two major biographies of Joe McCarthy, David M. Oshinsky's *A Conspiracy So Immense* (New York: The Free Press, 1983), and Thomas Reeves' *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy* (New York: Stein and Day, 1982). Indeed, the political career of the Wisconsin senator is only touched upon briefly. As the author notes with regard to civil liberties, "the anxieties of the Cold War, culminating in the Korean crisis, and the pressures building at all levels of politics and in the life of the nation's political major institutions would guarantee that this period—with or without McCarthy—would be a grim one."

Professor Fried covers the well-known cases against Alger Hiss, Owen Lattimore, the Hollywood Ten, etc., but he also draws upon a vast number of episodes at the state and local levels in order to show the multiple layers of McCarthyism and the extent to which anti-communism affected most branches of public life in America. In addition to the more direct results of the Red Scare, the author accounts for the influence that redbaiting had on the labor movement and on the struggle for racial equality, as well as the indirect consequences that it had for feminism, sexual tolerance, artistic expression, etc.

*Nightmare in Red* does not offer any bold new interpretations, and most of the material used by Fried can be found in a number of more narrowly focused studies, such as Ellen W. Schrecker's *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York, 1986). However, for anyone interested in a general introduction to "McCarthyism" and its political origins, Richard M. Fried's book is an excellent choice.

Niels Bjerre-Poulsen

Copenhagen Business School