

## Primary Source Analysis: HUAC v Hollywood- Jack Warner

Your group has been assigned to play the part of Jack Warner, one of the individuals involved in the 1947 HUAC investigation of the motion picture industry. Read the following testimony, and answer the questions posed at the end of this document.

Be prepared to discuss your opinion on whether or not HUAC was right to investigate subversive influences in the entertainment industry.

Background Info: "The World Was at Stake": Three "Friendly" HUAC Hollywood Witnesses Assess Pro-Soviet Wartime Films

The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) held hearings in 1947 on Communist activity in Hollywood. Under J. Parnell Thomas, who became chairman after the Republican Party gained control of Congress in 1947, HUAC not only sought to identify so-called "subversives" in the industry, but also to investigate whether the Roosevelt administration had encouraged the production of pro-Soviet films during World War II. In the following testimony, three "friendly" witnesses—studio heads Jack L. Warner of Warner Bros. and Louis B. Mayer of M-G-M, and Russian-born novelist, screenwriter, and ideologue Ayn Rand—commented on specific wartime films. *Mission to Moscow* (1943), based on a memoir by Joseph E. Davies, U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1936–1938, had been widely criticized for glorifying Stalin and for offering rationalizations for the Moscow purge trials and the non-aggression pact with Hitler. *Song of Russia* (1944), with a screenplay by "unfriendly" witnesses Paul Jarrico and Richard Collins, had undergone significant revisions due to complaints that it was too pro-Stalinist. Following the 1947 hearings, ten screenwriters and directors, who refused to cooperate with the Committee, were cited for contempt of Congress. After studio heads blacklisted the ten—who later served prison terms following the Supreme Court's refusal to hear their appeal—HUAC agreed to stop investigating studios and the content of films, and limited their inquiries to personnel. The subject matter of films, however, continued to be affected by the chilled Cold War climate to which HUAC contributed.

PRIMARY SOURCE: TESTIMONY OF JACK L. WARNER . . .

Ideological termites have burrowed into many American industries, organizations, and societies. Wherever they may be, I say let us dig them out and get rid of them. My brothers and I will be happy to subscribe generously to a pest-removal fund. We are willing to establish such a fund to ship to Russia the people who don't like our American system of government and prefer the communistic system to ours.

That's how strongly we feel about the subversives who want to overthrow our free American system.

If there are Communists in our industry, or any other industry, organization, or society who seek to undermine our free institutions, let's find out about it and know who they are. Let the record be spread clear, for all to read and judge. The public is entitled to know the facts. And the motion-picture industry is entitled to have the public know the facts.

Our company is keenly aware of its responsibilities to keep its product free from subversive poisons. With all the vision at my command, I scrutinize the planning and production of our motion pictures. It is