

## The Fake 1950s

### Events and Policies

- HARRY S. TRUMAN (1884-1972, in office 1945-1953, 33<sup>rd</sup> President)
- DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER (1890-1969, in office 1953-1961, 34<sup>th</sup> President)

#### **Cold War (1947-1991)**

- a clash between the two world powers, the US and the USSR, all the operations were covert, not openly declared
- the war was fought by the CIA and KGB information agencies and on the level of technological development
- the USSR was supported by the Warsaw Pact (1955-1991) countries in Europe, by South Asia, and Latin America
- the US tried to free the countries from communism, while the USSR tried to spread the communist ideology
- **Space Race**: the USSR launched Sputnik I (1957) as the first Earth-orbiting artificial satellite and sent Laika in Sputnik 2 (1957) as the first animal to the space, later the US launched their own first satellite Explorer I (1958)
- **Nuclear Arms Race**: the US developed and used the first nuclear weapon during the WWII (1945), later the USSR tested their own first atomic bomb (1949), the result was propaganda for anti-nuclear shelter building

#### **Korean War (1950-1953)**

- Korea was divided along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel into the North supervised by the USSR and the South supervised by US
- the North attacked the South in an attempt to reunite the region and gained much of the southern area
- President Truman intervened into the Korean civil war, not as a US representative, but as a member of the UNO
- General **DOUGLAS MACARTHUR** gained most of the northern area, planning to make it 'the showcase of democracy'
- MAO TSE-TUNG, the leader of the People's Republic of China (1947), intervened and pushed the US back to South
- the fighting lasted but several months, the negotiations took several years

#### **Cuban Revolution (1959)**

- Cuba was under the influence of the US since the Spanish-American War (1898), was being exploited by the US
- the revolution led by FIDEL CASTRO and the Argentinian CHE GUEVARA overthrew the US supported puppet dictator General FULGENCIO BATISTA, established a communist government, nationalized industry, started social reforms, etc.

### Society

#### **McCarthyism, or, the Second Red Scare**

- named for the Republican Senator JOSEPH MCCARTHY who fuelled the fears of widespread Communist subversion
- the nation was scared that communists were spying on everybody and planning to overthrow the US government
- the then very powerful CIA was looking for and overthrowing governments too friendly to the USSR (Guatemala)
- **House Un-American Activities Committee (1938-1975)**: originally for detecting Nazi propaganda, now focused on the central issue of national security, ordered to spy on high politicians suspected from communist sympathies
- many artists and former communists accused of supporting communism: RICHARD WRIGHT, ARTHUR MILLER, etc.
- many Jewish intellectuals, formerly communists disillusioned after the WWII, were accused: e.g. LILLIAN HELLMAN
- the Jewish American communist couple **ETHEL** and **JULIUS ROSENBERG** were accused of conspiracy to commit espionage on the atomic bomb for the interest of the USSR, found guilty by the jury, and both electrocuted in 1953

#### **Civil Rights Movement**

- was not established in the 1950s, but only now became more successful in achieving its aims and more public
- Jim Crow Laws (1876-1965): introduced the segregation of whites and blacks who were to be 'separate but equal'
- NAACP (1909): National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, promoted education of the blacks and black culture, was not politically very successful
- THURGOOD MARSHALL (1908-1993): a lawyer who legally challenged the segregation laws, fought in the area of schools, later became the first African-American to be appointed as a Supreme Court judge
- **Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954)**: abolished the segregation in schools but left the responsibility to correct the situation on the individual schools, many of them adopted the label of private academies to avoid it
- Little Rock Nine (1957): Little Rock, Arkansas, was the first high school to enrol nine black students, the city governor disapproved and sent troops to prevent the students from entry, then US army was sent to guard the nine
- **ROSA PARKS (1913-2005)**: the first black woman who refused to give up her seat in a Montgomery (Alabama) bus to a white man (1955), was arrested for it, but it started a wave of non-violent protests, especially the Bus Boycott

## Culture

- the consumer era: the nation was scared by the threats of communism and nuclear war, but it was very prosperous
- the family: propagated as a powerful unit, women were not yet emancipated and still remained housewives
- teen movement: the young were growing up in prosperity but under threats, they started to rebel for the first time
- the **Beat** Generation: propagated drugs, sex, and Eastern religions, rebelled against the Western society
- the men's magazine *Playboy* was founded by HUGH HEFNER (1953)
- the first fashion doll Barbie was created by RUTH HANDLER and manufactured by Mattel (1959)

## Music

- the birth of **rock'n'roll** music, first played by jazz musicians, many of them black
- CHARLIE PARKER: a black jazz saxophonist and composer
- THELONIOUS MONK: a black jazz pianist and composer
- MILES DAVIS: a black jazz trumpeter and composer
- CHUCK BERRY: a black guitarist, singer, and songwriter, considered the father of R'n'R
- FATS DOMINO: a black R'n'R pianist, singer, and songwriter
- LITTLE RICHARD: a black R'n'R singer, songwriter, and pianist
- JERRY LEE LEWIS: a white R'n'R and country singer, songwriter, and pianist
- JOHNNY CASH: a white R'n'R and country singer, songwriter, and actor
- BOBBY DARIN: a white R'n'R and big band singer and songwriter
- ELVIS PRESLEY: singer and actor, called the King of Rock'n'Roll

## Film

- big Hollywood productions era, especially historical films
- *Cinderella* (1950): an animated Walt Disney film
- *Sunset Boulevard* (1950): a film noir starring GLORIA SWANSON
- *All About Eve* (1950): a drama film starring BETTE DAVIS
- *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951): a film based on Tennessee William's play, starring MARLON BRANDO
- *High Noon* (1952): a western film starring GARY COOPER and GRACE KELLY
- *A Summer Place* (1959): a drama film starring SANDRA DEE and TROY DONAHUE
- *Some Like It Hot* (1959): a comedy film starring MARILYN MONROE
- *MASH*: originally a novel by Richard Hooker (1968), then a film (1970), and a then a long-running TV series (1972-1983) concerned with a fictional Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in the Korean War
- **MARLON BRANDO**: the star of *The Wild One* (1953), popularized motorcycles and leather jackets as a rebel image
- **JAMES DEAN**: the star of *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), popularized white T-shirts and jeans as a part of the image

## Television

- the best era for TV, still black and white
- for the first time the US and Europe began to cooperate in broadcasting
- newly introduced sitcoms (*I Love Lucy*), musical programmes written for TV, children's programmes (the child actress SHIRLEY TEMPLE), quiz shows, talk shows (*Tonight*), broadcast journalism (the journalist WALTER CRONKITE)

## Pictorial Arts

- abstract expressionism: JACKSON POLLOCK, WILLEM DE KOONING
- colour field painting: MARK ROTHKO
- **pop art**: ANDY WARHOL, author of the painting 'Campbell's Soup' (1968), the founder of the pop art movement, concerned with consumer culture and its products from the point of view of art

## Literature

- ARTHUR MILLER's play *The Crucible* (1953): uses the historical Salem Witch Trials as a metaphor for McCarthyism
- LILLIAN HELLMAN's *Scoundrel Time* (1976): on the communist hunt that the author experienced herself
- the Beats: ALLEN GINSBERG's poem *Howl* (1956), JACK KEROUAC's novel *On the Road* (1957), WILLIAM BURROUGHS's novel *Naked Lunch* (1959)

- JEROME DAVID SALINGER'S *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), RALPH ELLISON'S *Invisible Man* (1952), TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), VLADIMIR NABOKOV'S *Lolita* (1955), SAUL BELLOW'S *Seize the Day* (1956)