

# It Didn't Start With Joe McCarthy

by Edward Spannaus

Lyndon LaRouche has often characterized the Truman Presidency as a turning-point in U.S. history, a right-wing shift following the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in which the synarchist bankers set out to dismantle Roosevelt's achievements and his vision. The witch-hunt launched by Wisconsin Rep. Joe McCarthy in 1950, with his "I have a list" speech, actually began under Truman.

In his Nov. 16, 2005 webcast, LaRouche described it this way, in answer to a question from a Congressman: "I was one of the guys who was angered by Truman and McCarthy, Joe McCarthy. And I stuck my neck out, in a bunch of cases where McCarthy was running a raid, because in 1948 I knew that this thing was *gone*. Already, when I came back from military service to the United States, I saw it was a different country. It had been destroyed by Truman and what Truman represented. This was no longer my country, this was a piece of filth. . . . In 1948, it reached a point, we were *morally destroyed*, 80% of our people were morally destroyed. They had submitted to Trumanism. McCarthy was not even then a problem. The problem was *Truman!* And the magic word to say, is 'Truman!'"

Today, we hear Vice President Dick Cheney branding Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.), a veteran of 37 years of military service, as a coward, because of his call for a U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq. This calls to mind the tyranny of Trumanism and McCarthyism—and also recalls the role of U.S. military institutions in crushing this hideous phenomeon, during the mid-1950s.

In that context, we present here a brief history of the Truman-McCarthy assault on the Constitution.

## Truman and Churchill

The purpose of the witch-hunt was not to root out "Communism"—which was never a credible threat to the nation in the post-war period. The intent was to eradicate the Roosevelt legacy, by terrifying the population, and cynically conflating the New Deal with Soviet Communism. Crucial to this project was Winston Churchill's March 1946 Fulton, Missouri speech, which turned on its head FDR's vision of an anti-imperial and anti-colonial post-war world, by proclaiming "a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States," against their wartime ally, the Soviet Union.

In the Summer and Fall of 1946, in the campaigns for the 1946 midterm elections, many Republican candidates

campaigning on opposition to the New Deal, combined with anti-Communism, with some of the more unscrupulous among them claiming that New Deal liberalism was nothing but a form of Communism. Harry Truman was already so unpopular by this time, that he didn't even campaign, and wasn't asked to—sort of like George W. Bush today. Truman's response to the attacks on his Administration, was, cynically, to out-do the Republicans with his zealous displays of opposition to Communism.

After the elections, Truman sought to seize the reins of the anti-Communism campaign, with his establishment of the Federal Loyalty Board program, covering Federal employees, in March 1947. More than anything else in this period, Truman's Loyalty Campaign was responsible for the reign of terror—and the general retreat from politics—which held sway in the United States in the late '40s and early '50s, and which was only alleviated when President Dwight D. Eisenhower took decisive steps to do so in 1954.

The Federal Loyalty Boards became the model for state and local governments, and even private institutions, which created their own loyalty programs—with equal disregard for due process. There were no rules of evidence. Gossip or innuendo, or association with someone who was associated with someone who was suspected of sympathies to a Communist-front organization, was enough to cause someone to lose their job and be blacklisted from getting another one. Many of those who were fired from their jobs were never told what the accusations against them were, much less who or what was the source of the adverse information.

Truman's Justice Department initiated the breaking-up and driving underground of the Communist Party and its sympathizers, with the Smith Act prosecutions of top CPUSA leaders that began in 1948. Top CP leaders, and then the second-string and others, were sent to prison or went underground. Industrial unions deemed to be under CP control or influence were driven out of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1949.

And Truman appointees to the U.S. Supreme Court ensured that the highest court upheld the Smith Act convictions in June 1951, in a climate of hysteria which was fed by the outbreak of the Korean War.

## Enter Joe McCarthy

All of this, except for some of the Supreme Court's ratification of the Truman witch-hunt, took place *before* Sen.



Library of Congress

*Sen. Joseph McCarthy's (R-Wisc.) anti-Communist rampage was intended to eradicate the legacy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, by terrifying the American population and conflating the New Deal with Soviet Communism.*

Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin lent his name to the phenomenon of "Trumanism."

On Feb. 9, 1950, McCarthy gave a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, in which he claimed to have a list of 205 State Department employees who were known to be members of the Communist Party, "who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department." Two days later, in Reno, Nevada, McCarthy claimed to know of 57 CPUSA members or loyalists; by that evening, the number was down to four.

The lists that McCarthy claimed to be using, all came from Truman Administration security and loyalty investigations. Immediately after the war, the State Department had opened 225 loyalty cases, all involving employees of wartime agencies which were absorbed into the State Department after the war, including the Office of Strategic Services—the predecessor of the CIA. In August 1946, there were 205 employees from other agencies in the State Department, who had been screened, but for whom there was insufficient grounds for termination, according to information provided to Congressional committees. In March 1948, fifty-seven of those listed were still on the job. The numbers "205" and "57" which McCarthy bandied about, were the product of 1945-48 Truman Administration investigations, carried out years before McCarthy was advised to develop an interest in the subject.

Father Edmund Walsh, the right-wing Dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, proposed to McCarthy, at a dinner meeting in January 1950, that he take up the issue of Communists in government, as a means of reinvigorating his political career, which was heading downhill fast. This was in the wake of the announcement of the Soviet Union's explosion of an atomic bomb, and of the perjury conviction of former State Department official, and president

of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Alger Hiss. McCarthy was assured that he would get the backing, and a stream of leaked information, from the FBI and the Justice Department's internal security apparatus.

Prior to this, McCarthy was known as the "Pepsi-Cola Kid," for taking large payments from the soft-drink company on whose behalf he had waged a vigorous fight against the Federal sugar-rationing program. Not the least of the ironies of his subsequent career, is that McCarthy was first elected to the U.S. Senate in 1946 with the support of Communist-influenced unions in Wisconsin, angry at the incumbent Robert LaFollette's criticisms of the Soviet Union.

For the next couple of years, the clownish and often drunk McCarthy travelled around the country, naming "Communists" in the State Department and in other agencies of the government, and ruining lives, families, and careers. His targets even included Gen. George C. Marshall, whom McCarthy charged with "implementing the will of Stalin."

In the 1952 elections, McCarthy came in at the bottom of the Republican ticket, getting the fewest votes of any of the six statewide Republican candidates. With the reorganization of the Senate in January 1953, McCarthy was given the chairmanship of the Committee on Government Operations, and he took the chair of its Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, which had broad authority to probe government agencies. At the recommendation of the hard-core right-wing crowd in New York, he named as the subcommittee's chief counsel Roy Cohn, the 25-year-old son of a New York State judge well-connected into the mob and the Democratic Party. Cohn had made a name for himself as an assistant Federal prosecutor in the Smith Act prosecutions of leading Communist Party figures, and after that, in the Rosenberg atomic-espionage trial. At Cohn's insistence, McCarthy created a new position, that of "chief consultant," for Cohn's intimate friend, the wealthy playboy G. David Schine.

Before long, Cohn was actually controlling the subcommittee's activities, often overriding McCarthy's decisions. Its first investigation was of the Voice of America; after that one flopped, the committee went after the State Department's Overseas Library Program. This provided the pretext for Cohn and Schine to go romping through Europe, seeking out "Communist books" in U.S.-sponsored libraries, resulting in bouts of book-burning by frightened librarians, followed by circus-like hearings in Washington.

The McCarthy-Cohn team tried briefly to take on the CIA in the Summer of 1953, but they were forced to back off, because of President Eisenhower's support of the agency in refusing McCarthy's demands. Finally, they settled on the U.S. Army—which was to be their undoing.

## **Eisenhower and the Army**

The downfall of McCarthy was pretty much only a matter of time, after Eisenhower was elected President in November 1952. Ike hated McCarthy, not the least for what McCarthy

had done to George Marshall. But Ike's policy, rightly or wrongly, was never to take McCarthy on publicly; as he often said, "I will not get in the gutter with that guy."

But as McCarthy and Cohn rampaged, Eisenhower came under increasing pressure to do something, from friends and relatives, and also from business and industrial circles, who believed that McCarthy was damaging the United States abroad, and was distracting the country from urgent domestic problems. Philip Reed, chairman of General Electric, told Eisenhower that McCarthy was seen as "a potential Hitler," and he urged that the impression abroad of "abject appeasement" must be corrected. Paul Hoffman, head of Studebaker, said that Ike had to show that he was in charge, and pointed out that "McCarthyism has passed far beyond being merely a nuisance and has now become a deadly menace."

Nevertheless, Eisenhower still equivocated, despite his railing in private against McCarthy, whom he considered, among other things, to be a tool of Texas oil interests.

The beginning of the end commenced in mid-January 1954, when a group of Ike's closest advisors heard from Army Counsel John Adams, that McCarthy was threatening to subpoena and interrogate members of the Army's Loyalty and Security Appeals Board. But that wasn't all. The subpoena threats were accompanied by demands from Roy Cohn for preferential treatment for Cohn's plaything David Schine, who had been inducted into the Army a few months earlier. Adams was urged to compile a detailed account of the demands coming from Cohn and McCarthy.

For the Army, the last straw was McCarthy's browbeating and humiliation of a decorated World War II hero, Gen. Ralph Zwicker, at a hearing held on Feb. 18 in New York City—typically, a one-man hearing, with McCarthy the only Senator in attendance. (The ostensible issue was the promotion of a suspected Communist, Irving Peress, a dentist in the Army Reserves who had been called to active duty in 1952.) McCarthy accused General Zwicker of protecting Communists, as being "of the same character as the man he is protecting," and called him "not fit to wear the uniform."

McCarthy had now antagonized the Army, veterans, and many of his allies in the news media. More importantly, this got Eisenhower moving; the President began working to strip McCarthy of his power to run a one-man committee investigation, to get Roy Cohn fired, and, on Feb. 24, he directed Army Secretary Stevens to get his documentation on Cohn and Schine ready for publication.

On March 3, Ike held a press conference, in which he praised General Zwicker, demanded that members of the Executive branch be accorded respect and courtesy in appearances before Congress, and put the onus for ensuring such fairness of treatment upon the Republicans in the Congress. McCarthy, anticipating a direct attack by Ike, had prepared a bitter rebuttal, ridiculing and insulting the President, which he issued almost intact.

On March 9, acting on behalf of Eisenhower, Sen. Charles



Harry S. Truman Library

*Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) with President Harry Truman in Brussels, on July 15, 1945, while the President was en route to the Potsdam Conference. When Eisenhower became President, he moved—slowly at first—to dismantle Truman's witch-hunt apparatus, and to strip Joe McCarthy of his power.*

Potter of Michigan made an official request to Defense Secretary Charles Wilson for the Schine report. "That ought to get the ball rolling to get rid of Cohn," White House press secretary James Hagerty wrote in his diary.

Potter, a Republican who had previously given support to McCarthy, had lost both legs in World War II, and was offended by McCarthy's treatment of General Zwicker. Later that same day, the Schine report in hand, Potter went to McCarthy and demanded that Cohn be fired; McCarthy belligerently refused.

That wasn't all that happened that day. Sen. Ralph Flanders (R-Vt.) took to the Senate floor and delivered a devastating attack on McCarthy. Flanders, 73 years old, and an engineer by profession, poked at McCarthy with incisive humor, and concluded by describing McCarthy's role in the global battle against Communism. "He dons his war paint. He goes into his war dance. He emits war whoops. He goes forth to battle, and proudly returns with the scalp of a pink dentist."

Later that day, Flanders received a letter of congratulations from the President. "I think America needs to hear more Republican voices like yours," Ike wrote.

Third, CBS Television's weekly news documentary "See It Now," anchored by Edward R. Murrow, was devoted to McCarthy. Six months earlier, Murrow had presented a program called "The Case Against Lt. Milo Radulovich," concerning an Air Force Reserve officer, a victim of the loyalty program, who had been dismissed from the service based on hearsay reports about his relatives engaging in such activities as attending a civil rights rally for the great singer Paul Robeson.

After that broadcast, one of Murrow's reporters was approached by Don Surine, a former FBI agent on McCarthy's staff, who intimated that Murrow had been on the Soviet payroll two decades earlier. At that point, Murrow began to prepare his direct attack on McCarthy. The program, as broadcast on March 9, was composed almost entirely of McCarthy's own words, captured on film clips from hearings and speeches.

Murrow concluded, by noting that "the line between investigating and persecuting is a very fine one, and the junior Senator from Wisconsin has stepped over it repeatedly." He continued: "We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. We must remember always that accusation is not proof and that conviction depends upon evidence and due process of law. We will not walk in fear, one of another. We will not be driven by fear into an age of unreason, if we dig deep in our history and our doctrine, and remember that we are not descended from fearful men—not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate, and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.

"This is no time for men who oppose Senator McCarthy's methods to keep silent, or for those who approve. We can deny our heritage and our history, but we cannot escape responsibility for the result. There is no way for a citizen of a republic to abdicate his responsibilities. As a nation, we have come into our full inheritance at a tender age. We proclaim ourselves, as indeed we are, the defenders of freedom, wherever it continues to exist in the world, but we cannot defend freedom abroad by deserting it at home.

"The actions of the junior Senator from Wisconsin have caused alarm and dismay amongst our allies abroad, and given considerable comfort to our enemies. And whose fault is that? Not really his. He didn't create this situation of fear; he merely exploited it—and rather successfully. Cassius was right, 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves.' "

## The Tide Turns

The reaction was instantaneous, and overwhelmingly positive toward Murrow's presentation—in telegrams and letters to CBS, and in editorial commentary.

Two days later, on orders from the White House, the Adams Chronology, as the Schine report was known, was released to all members of McCarthy's Senate subcommittee, whence it quickly made its way into the press.

The Adams Chronology, even toned down, cited 48 instances of pressure being put on Army officials by McCarthy and Cohn, to attempt to secure preferential treatment for Schine, including regarding Schine's postings, and demands for frequent passes for Schine, not only weekends but weeknights, even during basic training. It also showed Cohn threatening to "wreck the Army," if his petulant demands for Schine's company were not granted.

The next week, on March 16, McCarthy was forced to step down from the Investigations Subcommittee, and the

subcommittee decided to investigate the charges in the Adams Chronology. The famous "Army-McCarthy hearings" commenced in late April, with Boston lawyer Joseph Welch as counsel for the Army.

The hearings were televised, as Ike wanted them to be, anticipating that McCarthy would prove himself to be his own worst enemy. The incident which is riveted in the nation's memory, came as a result of McCarthy's attacks on a young lawyer in Welch's Boston law firm, who had once belonged to the National Lawyers Guild, labelled "subversive" by the House Un-American Activities Committee. When McCarthy accused Welch of bringing a Communist lawyer to Washington, Welch told McCarthy, "Until this moment, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness." When McCarthy persisted, Welch delivered the words for which he will be long remembered: "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

With this, the dam broke. Republicans all over the country now viewed McCarthy as a liability for the party and for their electoral chances. GOP officials told the White House that the party would go down in defeat in the next elections, unless Republicans repudiated McCarthy.

On June 10, the same day that McCarthy himself took the stand in the hearings, Senator Flanders introduced a resolution charging McCarthy with being "in contempt" of the Senate, and seeking to remove McCarthy permanently from the chairmanship of the Government Operations Committee and any subcommittee.

The hearings dragged on until June 17, by which time McCarthy, increasingly paranoid, and drinking even more heavily, was thoroughly discredited and isolated.

Before returning to Boston, Welch was invited to the White House, to receive Ike's personal compliments for a job well done.

## Supreme Court Rulings

As to the broader climate of fear and hysteria to which McCarthy had lent his name, this also was coming to an end. Just as the Truman-shaped Supreme Court had propped up the unconstitutional legal edifice of Trumanism/McCarthyism, it was the Eisenhower court, after Ike's appointment of Earl Warren in 1953, and William Brennan in 1956, that dismantled that structure.

In a series of rulings during 1956 and 1957, the high court threw out state sedition laws that were on the books in 33 states; it affirmed the right to assert the Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination, and that an assertion of the privilege could not be used as a confession of guilt; it cut back the Federal loyalty program; it threw out a number of Smith Act convictions, and, finally, it threw out a contempt-of-Congress conviction, thereby curtailing the powers of Congressional committees to conduct investigations that strayed far beyond legitimate oversight or law-making.