

the presidency in 1956." Slapping his knee, Ike thundered, "The only reason I would consider running again would be to run against him." Shanley "let out a whoop," whereupon the taciturn Adams glared at his aide as if he were "completely out of order"—"which," Shanley conceded, "I was."<sup>51</sup>

## CHAPTER 2

### "DON'T JOIN THE BOOK BURNERS!"

By April 1953, the pattern of Joe McCarthy's relationship with the Eisenhower White House had been set. Still fixated on the State Department, he would test Eisenhower's will with small skirmishes, preparatory to opening up a bigger, headline-grabbing investigative target.

On March 28, the day following Charles Bohlen's confirmation by the Senate, McCarthy announced he had negotiated an agreement with the Greek owners of 242 New York-based merchant ships to end all trade with Communist China, North Korea, and eastern portions of the Soviet Union. The agreement, he boasted, would have "some of the effect of a naval blockade." Moreover, his representatives were "negotiating" with additional Greek shipowners in London.<sup>1</sup>

Alarm bells sounded in the White House and the State Department. The senator's bold interference with executive-branch authority over foreign affairs confirmed columnist William S. White's conclusion that although McCarthy had lost the battle over Bohlen, "his war goes on." White concluded, "Mr. McCarthy's essential power may in no sense be lessened, and may even be increased." At the height of the Bohlen debate, McCarthy had said to one reporter, "You wait, we're gonna get Dulles' head."<sup>2</sup>

The administration dispatched Harold E. Stassen, the director of the Mutual Security Administration (the successor agency to the Marshall Plan), to testify at McCarthy's closed-door subcommittee hearing on the Greek shippers. Stassen reported to Secretary Dulles that McCarthy had declared that "anyone who does not agree with him is trying to kill more boys in Korea." Stassen had shot back that McCarthy was "undermining" the administration's efforts to make peace.<sup>3</sup>

The White House moved quickly to rein in the situation. On April 1, Vice President Richard Nixon arranged a luncheon for Secretary Dulles and Senator McCarthy. Nixon had apparently warned the senator that he was wading into deep constitutional waters. The day before the luncheon, McCarthy had backpedaled in a letter to the president, carefully avoiding the word "negotiate" that he had so freely employed at his news conference. "No agreement as such was made with the Committee, nor did the Committee assume any obligation," he wrote. He asserted that the agreement had been reached among the shippers "and presented to us."<sup>4</sup>

McCarthy emerged from his luncheon meeting with Dulles, uncharacteristically quiet. Beseiged by reporters, the secretary, he said, would issue a statement and they would have "nothing to say" otherwise. Dulles's statement called what had happened with the Greek shippers an "informal understanding"; the shippers "had voluntarily agreed among themselves" to cease trading with communist nations. He thanked McCarthy for pledging to communicate future developments "to the proper authorities." Arthur Krock, the *New York Times* pundit, noted McCarthy's abandonment of his original assertion that he had negotiated an agreement with the shippers: "How many times can't you mean what you said?" he asked. Columnists Stewart and Joseph Alsop read higher ambitions into McCarthy's shipping gambit. "It is almost universally agreed," they wrote, "that McCarthy's objective is the Presidency and nothing less."<sup>5</sup>

When asked at his news conference the following day if Senator McCarthy's agreement with Greek ship owners had "undermined"—Stassen's word—administration policy, President Eisenhower suggested that "infringed" might be a more appropriate term.

"The exclusive power of negotiating such arrangements, anything that is legal, belongs to the Executive," he said. A "misguided" action by anyone else could not alter that. Reminded of McCarthy's use of the term "negotiate," at his Saturday news conference, he tersely replied; "How do you negotiate when there is nothing that you can commit?" Obtaining "promises" or "some kind of expression of opinion or intention" might take place. "But that," he said, "in my mind, is not negotiation."

When asked whether he was "unhappy" with what had happened, Eisenhower snapped, "I am not in the slightest bit unhappy. . . . The mere fact that some little incident arises is not going to disturb me. I have been scared by experts, in war and in peace, and I am not frightened about this." His subtle message to Joe McCarthy: "I am not scared of you; you, in fact, don't matter very much."<sup>6</sup>

### THE EISENHOWER WAY

Eisenhower still refused to take on McCarthy in public. When supporters pressed him to abandon that approach, his response was unrelenting. "The President of the United States cannot afford to name names," he wrote Harry Bullis, a General Mills executive. "Nothing would probably please [McCarthy] more than to get the publicity that would be generated by public repudiation by the President." To the diplomat William Phillips, he wrote, "I deplore and deprecate the table-pounding, name-calling methods columnists so much love." Though he might relish "a good fight," he had learned that "such methods are normally futile."<sup>7</sup>

Eisenhower never repudiated his McCarthy strategy, even after leaving the White House. William Ewald, who assisted the former president in writing his memoirs, recalled an anecdote that Ike eventually deleted from the manuscript. His brother Milton had urged him "to announce to the world that I strongly disapproved of all that McCarthy was doing and all that he stood for." Eisenhower had responded that attacking McCarthy would only "greatly enhance his publicity value without achieving any constructive purpose." He

reaffirmed his intention to publicly ignore McCarthy: "I would not demean myself or the Presidency by getting in the gutter with him." On another occasion, Milton urged Ike to make an anti-McCarthy speech that would "tear him apart." The president countered that such a strategy would "only backfire" and "probably draw down upon me the fury of the entire United States Senate because, let me tell you, it's a club. No president goes around attacking one member of the Senate without having the rest of them coalesce behind him."<sup>8</sup>

Eisenhower's approach to dealing with McCarthy was not nearly as passive as it appeared. He instinctively understood that treating him as inconsequential would drive the senator into self-destructive behaviors; he sensed that repeated presidential snubs over time would have a cumulative effect. There was another, pragmatic aspect to the Eisenhower strategy. Given the senator's demagogic skills, the president knew he must avoid saying or doing anything that would make himself, not McCarthy, the issue.

In spite of his dismissive public demeanor, the president was privately annoyed at McCarthy's antics. On April 3, the day after his news conference, Ike wrote his brother Edgar that "for the past couple of days I have been completely fed up and it is high time I was getting away from here for three or four days. Sometimes I think only a miracle will make it possible."<sup>9</sup>

### THE TROUBLED VOICE

Eisenhower and Dulles had handled McCarthy's foray into negotiating shipping agreements with minimal fuss. That would not be the case with McCarthy's assault on the Voice of America (VOA). President Truman had placed most foreign information activities, including the Voice, under the umbrella of the International Information Administration (IIA), an agency of the State Department. When Eisenhower took office, that agency had a staff of about ten thousand—around 40 percent of the State Department's personnel—and a budget exceeding \$100 million per year.<sup>10</sup>

Early on, Eisenhower and Dulles agreed that the propaganda

operation should probably have its own independent agency, outside the State Department. They had not had time to act on that perception when, on February 13—while the fight over Bohlen's confirmation was still under way—McCarthy announced that his subcommittee would hold televised hearings into "management and subversion" in Voice of America operations. At least fifty employees had been subpoenaed, and a personnel shake-up was rumored. Following his subcommittee's executive session, McCarthy told reporters that "there are people in the Voice of America who are doing a rather effective job of sabotaging Dulles' and Eisenhower's foreign policy program."<sup>11</sup>

McCarthy had zoned in on a particularly vulnerable agency in the State Department. On February 16, Secretary Dulles called Sherman Adams, "bothered" about the VOA, which was "not in very good condition and is now being investigated by Sen. McCarthy." Speechwriter Emmet Hughes described the agency as a "soggy, fog-bound information program." Adams ordered his deputy, Bernard Shanley, to brief Eisenhower about "the barrel of rotten apples we have in the Voice."<sup>12</sup>

Dulles let McCarthy's agitation pressure him into a hasty decision on new VOA leadership. He recruited Dr. Robert L. Johnson, the president of Temple University, to take over the VOA and "help clean it up." Johnson turned out to be a troublesome choice. He insisted on the need to "study" the VOA for sixty to ninety days, and he wanted an ironclad pledge that the agency would be separated from the State Department. Eisenhower and Dulles urgently wanted a new boss for the agency and had intended to postpone those matters until later. Somehow, Johnson misread his conversations with both men. When Eisenhower authorized the announcement of his appointment "to head and to study the entire operation of the Foreign Information Service," Johnson threatened to back out. He did not want to "head" the agency without the preliminary study he deemed essential. The appointment was already public; if Johnson withdrew, McCarthy might subpoena the educator to testify about his misgivings.

Eisenhower bluntly wrote Johnson that their "misunderstanding" had to be cleared up. First, no firm decision had yet been made to convert the IIA into "a separate agency of government." Second, it was not acceptable for Johnson to "stay on some indefinite, indeterminate status for a matter of months." The VOA needed "firm and quick direction." Therefore, the "study function" should last "a matter of days only—not of months." Johnson finally capitulated to Eisenhower's wishes, but this rocky start indicated his tenure would be short and stormy.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, in reaction to McCarthy's investigation, panic had set in among VOA's bureaucrats and librarians in the overseas libraries. On January 30, VOA officials instructed the libraries to avoid using "materials produced by controversial persons." On February 18, VOA headquarters sent out the first of two directives forbidding the use of any books or materials written by communists. On February 25, the VOA libraries were ordered "to destroy the July 1946 issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*." Two months later, the order went out to remove works by authors who had refused to testify about their communist affiliations, resulting in the removal of books by almost two dozen writers, including the mystery writer Dashiell Hammett.<sup>14</sup>

As if the VOA had not suffered enough adverse publicity, on March 4—two days after Robert Johnson began his new job—Raymond Kaplan, a forty-two-year-old radio engineer, threw himself in front of a truck near Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Kaplan's suicide note, leaked to the press, attributed his action to persecution by McCarthy's subcommittee. "Once the dogs are set upon you," Kaplan wrote his wife, "everything you have done since the beginning of time is suspect." Kaplan believed that suicide was the only way he could protect his wife and son from being "continuously hounded for the rest of your lives."<sup>15</sup>

On March 18, under Robert Johnson's new leadership, the VOA issued instructions moderating the previous Draconian rules about books in the libraries, permitting the use of "Communist material" solely to "expose Communist propaganda or refute Communist lies."

That action brought a loud protest from Senator McCarthy, resulting in a new directive from the State Department prohibiting outright the use of writings by "Communists, fellow travelers, et cetera."<sup>16</sup>

At that point, the White House gambled that leaking the word that the old organization's days were numbered would take some steam out of McCarthy's investigation. By March 20, "authoritative sources" disclosed that the IIA would be shut down after June 30 and replaced by an independent agency outside the State Department.<sup>17</sup>

### "SCUMMY SNOOPERS" IN EUROPE

Once the Bohlen fight was settled, McCarthy dispatched his chief lieutenants to Europe to dig for dirt on the VOA. On April 2, Dulles informed European embassies and consulates that "Roy Cohn, Chief Counsel; David Schine, Chief Consultant, U.S. Permanent Sub-Committee on Investigations" would be visiting Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin, Bonn, Munich, and Vienna to investigate IIA programs. The two men, the secretary's missive said, were to be extended "all possible courtesies" by US diplomats.

On April 3, in an "eyes only" telegram, Dulles warned the chief US diplomats in Britain, France, Austria, and Germany that they had "no authority" to provide information to Cohn and Schine "re security matters or policy directives." In particular, no information "contained in personnel security files will be divulged to investigators." Later that day, he was infuriated to discover that Scott McLeod's secretary had been spotted at the airport showing his "eyes only" telegram to Cohn and Schine as they prepared to depart.<sup>18</sup>

After a brief stay in Paris, the two McCarthy aides took off for Bonn, Germany. On arrival, Cohn stated that they had already uncovered "millions of dollars' worth of waste and mismanagement" in the IIA. The spectacle of Cohn and Schine rummaging for scandals in Germany surely concerned Eisenhower's friends, who worried constantly about McCarthy exploiting Eisenhower's postwar communist associations while in command there.

Cohn and Schine's antics in Europe also generated gossip about the men's relationship, some of it salacious.<sup>19</sup> One day in Bonn, the two men rushed back to their hotel to retrieve a notebook Schine had left behind. In the lobby, Schine batted Cohn over the head with a rolled-up magazine and they chased each other into Schine's room. The hotel maid later found the room in a shambles. When asked about the incident, Cohn called the story "just one of many lies in this fantastic newspaper article." Cohn introduced Schine as "a management expert," saying he had "written a book about the definition of Communism," a gross exaggeration about a six-page pamphlet. The European junket underlined a new reality: the Roy Cohn-David Schine relationship would become central to the conflict between Joe McCarthy and Dwight Eisenhower.<sup>20</sup>

### WAGING PEACE

Dwight Eisenhower, focused on his Cold War priorities, appeared to pay little attention to the escapades of what one newspaper called the "Gold Dust Twins."<sup>21</sup> On April 15, when they arrived in Belgrade, Ike was working on the most important speech of his new presidency. Following the death of Stalin on March 5, Eisenhower had wrestled with options for reaching out to the new Soviet leadership. He decided to use his address, scheduled for April 16 before the annual meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington, DC.

That was a dangerous decision. Eisenhower knew his "Chance for Peace" speech would be delivered against the backdrop of McCarthy's demagoguery on communist subversion, punctuated by headlines generated by Cohn and Schine on their European junket. On April 12, a feature-length article in *The New York Times* called Senator McCarthy "the most talked about man in the capital today," next to the president. His strong opposition to Bohlen, his alleged agreement with Greek shipowners, and the hearings of his investigative subcommittee had raised his prestige to a new level. "All in Washington agree it is risky to quarrel with him," the article

concluded. In that climate, Eisenhower's April 16 address clearly risked the charge from McCarthy that he was "soft on communism."<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, Ike stuck to his peacemaking priorities. He ruminated about themes for that speech with speechwriter Emmet Hughes. "The average citizen," he told Hughes, "can't—in a whole lifetime of work—earn as much money as it takes to make the jet plane that flies above his head." He wanted to "convert all this armament spending into the things that raise living standards." "I don't feel like making any more speeches condemning the Russians," the president concluded, "until I can offer some peace plan."<sup>23</sup>

The address took at least twelve drafts, not counting the president's penciled edits, and was reviewed by the CIA, the Defense and State Departments, and key allies, including Winston Churchill. After meeting with Eisenhower on April 12, Hughes complained to his assistant, Robert Kieve, that he had "come to the point where I just think the President's hopeless" regarding speech preparation. Ike himself complained to Sherman Adams that "this speech preparation is too big a strain."<sup>24</sup>

The stress was such that Ike decided to get out of town. On April 13, he flew to Augusta, Georgia, to play golf, taking the speech with him. However, on the night of April 15, he suffered a painful abdominal attack. The morning of the speech, National Security Advisor Robert Cutler found the president "depleted and in general misery." That night, Eisenhower moved slowly along the side of the crowded auditorium toward the podium; Cutler saw "sweat glistening on the President's brow and cheeks." Ike's delivery was labored, Cutler recalled. "There was slackness in his robust voice; its hearty earnestness seemed mute. His big hands so tightly gripped the sides of the speaking lectern that I could see the whiteness of his knuckles." During the speech, he thought the president seemed "a little dizzy and tremulous."<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Eisenhower delivered a stirring address. "A nation's hope of lasting peace," he stated, "cannot be firmly based upon any race in armaments but rather upon just relations and honest

understanding with all other nations." He deplored "the way of life forged by eight years of fear and force. What can the world, or any nation in it, hope for if no turning is found on this dread road?"

Eisenhower eloquently recounted the human costs of the Cold War:

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.<sup>26</sup>

When he finished, the president walked slowly into a small, private parlor. Cutler found him there, "pale, covered with clammy perspiration." Eisenhower said he felt "chilly" but was no longer in "misery"; the pain in his gut had subsided. The papers the next day reported that the president had been ill from "food poisoning," had had "a slight fever," and had returned immediately to Augusta, where his physician had put him to bed. The speech drew immediate praise from members of both parties and allied leaders abroad. In the wake of such effusive praise, McCarthy was silent.<sup>27</sup>

On the day of speech, Roy Cohn and David Schine left Belgrade for Athens. They concluded their trip on April 20 with five hours in London, where the *Financial Times* labeled them "scummy

snoopers," and arrived the next morning back in Washington, DC. In an appearance on NBC's *Meet the Press*, Cohn charged that the State Department had put "a tail" on them during their trip, the purpose of which "was to feed all of sorts information and stories to the hostile press so they could smear us up a little bit." In fact, the State Department had carefully monitored their travels, with frequent reports to Secretary Dulles.<sup>28</sup>

### INTERNAL SECURITY

Throughout 1953, Eisenhower shadowboxed with McCarthy on the issue of who could best protect the country against communist subversion. The president understood that McCarthy's obsession with subversion was aimed, however irresponsibly, at a genuine problem. In the midst of the Cold War, the government was legitimately concerned about Soviet spies, moles, and assets. Dramatizing that concern, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg had been convicted of espionage in March 1951 and condemned to death. On Eisenhower's first day in office, appeals for clemency for the couple were waiting on his desk, but he did not grant clemency.<sup>29</sup>

In his first meeting with Republican congressional leaders on January 26, Eisenhower had announced that he would employ government personnel on a "security rather than loyalty" basis, implementing the philosophy that "working for the Government is a privilege rather than a right." He intended to move "vigorously to establish an adequate security program," overseen by Attorney General Brownell.<sup>30</sup>

Ostensibly, the Eisenhower program sought to protect the legitimate rights of employees, creating hearing advisory boards whose members came from outside the agency under investigation. The columnist Walter Lippmann, a frequent Eisenhower critic, deemed the new policy an improvement over President Truman's approach; the former president's program had been so focused on loyalty that a negative decision in a hearing could label the employee in question, justified or not, as "a spy and a traitor." Eisenhower's program,

treating employment as "a privilege" without explicit loyalty implications, seemed more even-handed.<sup>31</sup>

However, the program had its dark side: if an employee were deemed a security risk "by reason of personal habits or actions," as Brownell put it, that opened the door to wholesale dismissal of persons who were not necessarily spies. The frequently cited categories included alcoholics, philanderers, "blabbermouths," especially homosexuals, who were perceived as vulnerable to blackmail by communist agents. Eisenhower's program proposal was not simply a reaction to McCarthy. But Brownell recalled that, as time passed, the president would "point to his program as the best way to destroy McCarthy and McCarthyism by taking the issue of internal security away from him and dealing with it in a responsible manner."<sup>32</sup>

Attorney General Brownell presented the final draft of the employee security program to the cabinet on April 27. Following the meeting, the White House issued Executive Order 10450, entitled "Security Requirements for Government Employment." The opening lines of that document were vintage Eisenhower. The national security required that all persons "privileged"—the key word—"to be employed in the departments and agencies of the Government, shall be reliable, trustworthy, of good conduct and character"—i.e., not a "security risk"—"and of complete and unswerving loyalty to the United States." The order pledged "equitable treatment" for those seeking "the privilege"—that word again—of government employment.<sup>33</sup>

### THE TAFT PROBLEM

When he began his first year in office, Eisenhower had necessarily relied on Republican Senate Majority Leader Robert Taft to manage relations with McCarthy. He had uncomfortably witnessed Taft's capitulation to McCarthy's demands for investigative powers, but he had been heartened by Taft's steadfast defense of the Bohlen nomination.

However, in his diary, Eisenhower called April 30 "one of the worst days I have experienced since January 20th." When he had

taken office, he had ordered departments and agencies to comb through Truman's budget for savings. That morning, he presented Republican legislative leaders with recommended cuts of approximately \$4.4 billion, an accomplishment in which he took great pride.

What blindsided the president was that suddenly—in Ike's words—"Senator Taft broke out in a violent objection to everything that had been done." The majority leader angrily called the cuts insufficient and contended that they would "insure the decisive defeat of the Republican party in 1954." He threatened "to go on public record" against the revised budget. In reaction to "the demagogic nature" of his tirade, the president's temper quickly reached the boiling point. However, before he could explode, others seized control of the argument, giving Eisenhower time to contain himself and prevent a "completely unbridgeable" rupture in his relationship with Senator Taft.<sup>34</sup>

Eisenhower did not know that Taft was a very sick man. Three weeks later, the senator entered Walter Reed Army Hospital for treatment for hip pain that had first erupted after a round of golf with the president in Augusta. He was diagnosed with cancer and never returned to full-time service in the Senate.<sup>35</sup>

The April 30 incident encouraged Eisenhower to depend increasingly on Vice President Nixon for legislative and political counsel, including coping with McCarthy. By June 1, that transition was complete. Ike observed in his diary that Taft's "irascible" personality made him "far from being a Dick Nixon, who is not only bright, quick and energetic—but loyal and cooperative." On June 11, California Senator William Knowland, a McCarthy ally whom Eisenhower distrusted, assumed the leadership of the Senate Republicans. As a result, the president would need Nixon more than ever.<sup>36</sup>

### BURNING BOOKS

Eisenhower complained about June 1953 being one of the most demanding times in his young presidency. At a cabinet meeting on June 5, Eisenhower said he needed "help to keep his disposition."

He felt particularly misused by the months-long controversy over banning books in the VOA's overseas libraries. He was no fan of censorship, and he was thoroughly irritated at how the VOA and the State Department had handled McCarthy's effort to ban books from the shelves at the overseas libraries. On June 14, the Alsop brothers called "book-burning" in those libraries "cowardly." That day, the president, out of patience on the book censorship issue, traveled to New Hampshire to speak at Dartmouth College's commencement.<sup>37</sup>

Eisenhower's remarks at Dartmouth have been characterized as "off the cuff" because no speechwriter was involved. Still, he had consistently argued that a president cannot indulge in loose talk; indeed, that had been his message to friends urging him to take on McCarthy. Bernard Shanley confirmed that Ike's "off-the-cuff" speeches are pretty well considered before he makes them." That day, Eisenhower's revulsion at McCarthy's call for censorship boiled over.<sup>38</sup>

To the students, Eisenhower quoted the maxim "The coward dies a thousand deaths, but the brave man dies but once." "It is not enough merely to say I love America," he declared, "and to salute the flag and take off your hat as it goes by, and to help sing the Star Spangled Banner." Then he delivered the provocative declaration that would be quoted the next day around the globe:

Don't join the book burners. Don't think you are going to conceal faults by concealing evidence that they ever existed. Don't be afraid to go in your library and read every book, as long as that document does not offend our own ideas of decency. That should be the only censorship. How will we defeat communism unless we know what it is, and what it teaches, and why does it have such an appeal for men, why are so many people swearing allegiance to it?

The statement was transparently anti-McCarthy. Eisenhower defended dissenters; even if their ideas "are contrary to ours, their right to say them, their right to record them, and their right to have them

at places where they are accessible to others is unquestioned, or it "isn't America." White House sources characterized the president's comments at Dartmouth as "pure, premeditated and unadulterated Eisenhower." McCarthy delivered a witty retort. "He couldn't very well have been referring to me," the senator said. "I have burned no books."<sup>39</sup>

At the president's news conference on June 17, UPI reporter Merriman Smith asked if Eisenhower's remarks at Dartmouth had been "critical of a school of thought represented by Senator McCarthy?" "Now, Merriman," the president responded, "you have been around me long enough to know I never talk personalities." He clarified that he did not support books designed "to persuade or propagandize America into communism" and he would not "propagate Communist beliefs by using governmental money to do it." Excluding such propaganda, he stated, "I am against 'book burning' of course—which is, as you well know, an expression to mean suppression of ideas. I just do not believe in suppressing ideas. I believe in dragging them out in the open and taking a look at them. That is what I meant, and I do not intend to be talking personally and in personalities with respect to anyone."

Robert Donovan, a *New York Herald Tribune* correspondent, asked whether "a controversial book" available on American bookshelves could also "be on the bookshelf of one of our libraries abroad?" "I should think so, speaking generally," Eisenhower responded. He reminded reporters how widely it was believed that World War II had occurred "because we had failed to read *Mein Kampf* seriously." He asked, "Why shouldn't we, today, know what is going on? How many of you have read Stalin's *Problems of Leninism*? How many of you have really studied Karl Marx and looked at the evolution of the Marxian theory down to the present application?" He repeated the maxim "Know your enemy." In a veiled reprimand to McCarthy, the president concluded, "It does no good for me just to get up and shout, 'I am against communism.' What is it?"<sup>40</sup>

Ike's news conference comments were widely interpreted as Eisenhower reneging on his Dartmouth comments, but that analysis

is too simplistic. He had repeated, "I am against book burning." The Alsop brothers characterized the president at Dartmouth as "the real Eisenhower" and the man handling the same issue at the news conference as "the public Eisenhower." The public and private Eisenhower were both on record saying, in effect, "I hate censorship."<sup>41</sup>

### THE ROSENBERG PROBLEM

The president's other major problem that month was the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, scheduled for June 19. The couple had been convicted and sentenced to death for providing classified information to the Soviets while Julius had been employed at the Army Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. From his first day in office, Eisenhower had been besieged with pleas to spare the Rosenbergs, partly because they had two children, ages six and ten. The president had assigned White House Deputy Assistant Bernard Shanley and the Attorney General's Office to review "the whole record of the conviction and appeals all the way through the courts."<sup>42</sup>

Given McCarthy's anticommunist crusade, any leniency toward the Rosenbergs could be political dynamite. Ike later explained to his cabinet that he had rigorously reviewed the evidence based on four criteria: whether the verdict had been unanimous, whether the country might benefit if the Rosenbergs provided evidence against other spies, whether there was "sufficient substance to the crime to warrant the death penalty," and "the psychological effect in the world at large if the Executive were to reverse the decision of the Judiciary in this case."<sup>43</sup>

On February 11, Eisenhower had issued a statement he had drafted himself. The Rosenbergs, he said, had been "tried and convicted" for "conspiring to share secret atomic information relating to the national defense of the United States." Their crime "could very well result in the death of many, many thousands of innocent citizens." Having uncovered no "new evidence" or "mitigating

circumstances," he concluded, "I have determined that it is my duty, in the interest of the people of the United States, not to set aside the verdict of their representatives."<sup>44</sup>

However, Eisenhower's statement did not close the door on the possibility of clemency; he had indicated to the cabinet his willingness to reopen the case if, at any time prior to execution, new evidence or new considerations warranted. As the execution date drew near, Eisenhower was hounded by advocates for mercy. He met with four clergymen on June 15—the day after his Dartmouth speech—and responded to their plea: "If I were in the place you men are in, I would be doing the same thing you are doing, asking for clemency for these people; but I am not in your position and I can't get up and walk away as you are going to."<sup>45</sup>

Once again, Eisenhower's aides found no new evidence to vindicate the Rosenbergs. Ike wrote a long letter to his son John, sharing his discomfort amid "a very considerable amount of furor." Eisenhower had been intensely lobbied with pleas for mercy because one of the condemned was a woman and "because of the two children of the couple." However much he brooded as the day of execution drew near, Eisenhower embraced "the hope that it would deter others." Then, on June 17, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas granted a temporary stay of execution. Allen Dulles told his brother, Foster, that the justice's action put the matter "in a hell of a mess."<sup>46</sup>

The day of the executions—Friday, June 19, 1953—Eisenhower held a 10 a.m. cabinet meeting. Though McCarthy was not mentioned, the specter of what he might do about delay of the executions or clemency hovered over the meeting. The president said he could not "remember ever a 48-hours where he felt more in need of help from someone—more intelligent than I." Central to the discussion was the fact that other spies—including Klaus Fuchs, whom the British had sentenced to fourteen years in prison—had not been executed. Then there was David Greenglass, Ethel Rosenberg's brother, who had testified against the couple and whose life had been spared. Henry Cabot Lodge stated that he believed that

the difference "can be easily explained." Eisenhower responded, "Not easily for me."<sup>47</sup>

After the meeting, Foster Dulles called Herbert Brownell. They had planned to attend a baseball game that night, but Dulles concluded that they "had better not go," both for their own safety and because of how it would look if they were photographed "enjoying themselves together while the execution was taking place."<sup>48</sup>

Later that day, the full Supreme Court declined to support Justice William O. Douglas's stay of execution. That afternoon, Bernard Shanley took the final draft of the president's statement into the Oval Office for his signature. While Eisenhower was on the phone on another matter, Sherman Adams whispered to Shanley that Ethel Rosenberg's mother was seeking to speak to the president. Without informing the president, they had her escorted to the attorney general's office.<sup>49</sup>

Eisenhower's statement repeated his previous conclusion that "the Rosenbergs have received the benefit of every safeguard which American justice can provide." He asserted, "By immeasurably increasing the chances of atomic war the Rosenbergs may have condemned to death tens of millions of innocent people all over the world. The execution of two human beings is a grave matter. But even graver is the thought of the millions of dead whose deaths may be directly attributable to what these spies have done." He concluded, "I will not intervene in this matter."<sup>50</sup>

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were pronounced dead at 8:16 p.m. Eastern Time.<sup>51</sup>

## CHAPTER 3

### "YOU'RE IN THE ARMY NOW!"

*It had been a "week of trouble,"* Eisenhower told his cabinet a few days after the Rosenberg executions in June. South Korean president Syngman Rhee was resisting the negotiation of an armistice in Korea; Winston Churchill had suffered a stroke; and Robert Taft was gravely ill. The president—perhaps arguing with himself—reminded the cabinet members that "long faces do not win battles." Eisenhower did not know that by the end of summer, Senator Joseph McCarthy would be hounding the US Army for communists.<sup>1</sup>

By mid-1953, McCarthy had honed a formidable arsenal of techniques for turning fear into headlines. Employing his subpoena power, he could compel testimony, under oath, from nearly anyone with short notice and without a vote by his subcommittee members. He repeatedly conducted one-senator hearings, ignoring the Senate's tradition of requiring a quorum of the committee's membership before holding hearings. The senator made shrewd use of senatorial privilege, which immunized him against libel when he made outrageous statements on the Senate floor, during a committee hearing, or to the press.

Finally, McCarthy stood the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution, which guarantees protection against self-incrimination, on its head. In McCarthy's world, anyone who "took the Fifth" to avoid