**Chapter 37 - The Eisenhower Era**

**I. Affluence and Its Anxieties**

1. The economy really sprouted during the 50s, and the invention of  
   the transistor exploded the electronics field, especially in computers,  
   helping such companies as International Business Machines (IBM) expand  
   and prosper.
2. Aerospace industries progressed, as the Boeing company made the  
   first passenger-jet airplane (adapted from the superbombers of the  
   Strategic Air Command), the 707.
3. In 1956, “white-collar” workers outnumbered “blue  
   collar” workers for the first time, meaning that the industrial  
   era was passing on.
   * As this occurred, labor unions peaked in 1954 then started a steady decline.
   * Women appeared more and more in the workplace, despite the  
     stereotypical role of women as housewives that was being portrayed on  
     TV shows such as “Ozzie and Harriet” and “Leave It to  
     Beaver.”
     + More than 40 million new jobs were created.
4. Women’s expansion into the workplace shocked some, but really  
   wasn’t surprising if one observed the trends in history, and now,  
   they were both housewives and workers.
   * Betty Friedan’s 1963 book The Feminine Mystique was a  
     best-seller and a classic of modern feminine protest literature.  
     She’s the godmother of the feminist movement.

**II. Consumer Culture in the Fifties**

1. The fifties saw the first Diner’s Club cards, the opening of  
   McDonald’s, the debut of Disneyland, and an explosion in the  
   number of television stations in the country.
2. Advertisers used television to sell products while  
   “televangelists” like Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, and  
   Fulton J. Sheen used TV to preach the gospel and encourage religion.
3. Sports shifted west, as the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants moved to Los Angeles and San Francisco, respectively, in 1958.
4. Elvis Presley, a white singer of the new “rock and  
   roll” who made girls swoon with his fleshy face, pointing lips,  
   and antic, sexually suggestive gyrations, that redefined popular music.
   * Elvis died from drugs in 1977, at age 42.
5. Traditionalists were shocked by Elvis’s shockingly open  
   sexuality, and Marilyn Monroe (in her Playboy magazine spread)  
   continued in the redefinition of the new sensuous sexuality.
   * Critics, such as David Riesman in The Lonely Crowd, William H.  
     Whyte, Jr. in The Organization Man, and Sloan Wilson in The Man in the  
     Gray Flannel Suit, lamented this new consumerist style.
   * Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith questioned the relation between private wealth and public good in The Affluent Society.
6. Daniel Bell found further such paradoxes, as did C. Wright Mills.

**III. The Advent of Eisenhower**

1. In 1952, the Democrats chose Adlai E. Stevenson, the witty governor  
   of Illinois, while Republicans rejected isolationist Robert A. Taft and  
   instead chose World War II hero Dwight D. Eisenhower to run for  
   president and anticommunist Richard M. Nixon to be his running mate.
2. Grandfatherly Eisenhower was a war hero and liked by everyone, so  
   he left the rough part of campaigning to Nixon, who attacked Stevenson  
   as soft against communists, corrupt, and weak in the Korean situation.
   * Nixon then almost got caught with a secretly financed “slush  
     fund,” but to save his political career, he delivered his famous  
     and touching “Checkers Speech.” In it, he denied wrongdoing  
     and spoke of his family and specifically, his daughter’s cute  
     little cocker spaniel, Checkers. He was forgiven in the public arena  
     and stayed on as V.P.
3. The “Checkers speech” showed the awesome power of  
   television, since Nixon had pleaded on national TV, and even later,  
   “Ike,” as Eisenhower was called, agreed to go into studio  
   and answer some brief “questions,” which were later spliced  
   in and edited to make it look like Eisenhower had answered questions  
   from a live audience, when in fact he hadn’t.
   * This showed the power that TV would have in the upcoming decades,  
     allowing lone wolves to appeal directly to the American people instead  
     of being influenced by party machines or leaders.
4. Ike won easily (442 to 89), and true to his campaign promise, he  
   flew to Korea to help move along peace negotiations, yet failed. But  
   seven months later, after Ike threatened to use nuclear weapons, an  
   armistice was finally signed (but was later violated often).
5. In Korea, 54,000 Americans had died, and tens of billions of  
   dollars had been wasted in the effort, but Americans took a little  
   comfort in knowing that communism had been “contained.”
6. Eisenhower had been an excellent commander and leader who was able  
   to make cooperation possible between anyone, so he seemed to be a  
   perfect leader for Americans weary of two decades of depression, war,  
   and nuclear standoff.
   * He served that aspect of his job well, but he could have used his popularity to champion civil rights more than he actually did.

**IV. The Rise and Fall of Joseph McCarthy**

1. In February 1950, Joseph R. McCarthy burst upon the scene, charging  
   that there were scores of unknown communists in the State Department.
2. He couldn’t prove it, and many American began to fear that  
   this red chase was going too far; after all, how could there be freedom  
   of speech if saying communist ideas got one arrested?
3. The success of brutal anticommunist “crusader” Joseph  
   R. McCarthy was quite alarming, for after he had sprung onto the  
   national scene by charging that Secretary of State Dean Acheson was  
   knowingly employing 205 Communist Party members (a claim he never  
   proved, not even for one person), he ruthlessly sought to prosecute and  
   persecute suspected communists, often targeting innocent people and  
   destroying families and lives.
   * Eisenhower privately loathed McCarthy, but the president did little  
     to stop the anti-red, since it appeared that most Americans supported  
     his actions. But Ike’s zeal led him to purge important Asian  
     experts in the State Department, men who could have advised a better  
     course of action in Vietnam.
4. He even denounced General George Marshall, former army chief of staff during World War II.
5. Finally, in 1954, when he attacked the army, he’d gone too  
   far and was exposed for the liar and drunk that he was; three years  
   later, he died unwept and unsung.

**V. Desegregating American Society**

1. Blacks in the South were bound by the severe Jim Crow laws that  
   segregated every aspect of society, from schools to restrooms to  
   restaurants and beyond.
   * Only about 20% of the eligible blacks could vote, due to  
     intimidation, discrimination, poll taxes, and other schemes meant to  
     keep black suffrage down.
2. Where the law proved sufficient to enforce such oppression,  
   vigilante justice in the form of lynchings did the job, and the white  
   murderers were rarely caught and convicted.
3. In his 1944 book, An American Dilemma, Swedish scholar Gunnar  
   Myrdal exposed the hypocrisy of American life, noting how while  
   “every man [was] created equal,” blacks were certainly  
   treated worse than Whites. He pointed out how the U.S. had failed to  
   achieve its “Double-V” goal during the war—victory  
   overseas against dictatorships (and their racism) and victory at home  
   against racism.
   * Even though Jackie Robinson had cracked the racial barrier by  
     signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, the nation’s  
     conscience still paid little attention to the suffering of blacks, thus  
     prolonging their pain.
4. However, with organizations such as the National Association for  
   the Advancement of Colored People, and their rulings such as the 1950  
   case of Sweatt v. Painter, where the Supreme Court ruled that separate  
   professional schools for blacks failed to meet the test of equality,  
   such protestors as Rosa Parks, who in December 1955, refused to give up  
   a bus seat in the “whites only” section, and pacifist  
   leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., who believed in peaceful methods  
   of civil rights protests, blacks were making their suffering and  
   discrimination known to the public.

**VI. Seeds of the Civil Rights Revolution**

1. After he heard about the 1946 lynchings of black soldiers seeking  
   rights for which they fought overseas, Truman immediately sought to  
   improve black rights by desegregating the armed forces, but Eisenhower  
   failed to continue this trend by failing to support laws.
   * Only the judicial branch was left to improve black civil rights.
2. Earl Warren, appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, shocked  
   his conservative backers by actively assailing black injustice and  
   ruling in favor of African-Americans.
3. The 1954 landmark case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, reversed the previous 1896 ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson*  
   when the Brown case said that “separate but equal”  
   facilities were inherently unequal. Under the Brown case, schools were  
   ordered integrated.
   * However, while the Border States usually obeyed this new ruling,  
     states in the Deep South did everything they could to delay it and  
     disobey it, diverting funds to private schools, signing a  
     “Declaration of Constitutional Principles” that promised  
     not to desegregate, and physically preventing blacks to integrate.
   * Ten years after the ruling, fewer than 2% of eligible black students sat in the same classrooms as whites.
   * Real integration of schools in the Deep South occurred around 1970.

**VII. Eisenhower Republicanism at Home**

1. Eisenhower came into the White House pledging a policy of  
   “dynamic conservatism,” which stated that he would be  
   liberal with people, but conservative with their money.
2. Ike decreased government spending by decreasing military spending,  
   trying to transfer control of offshore oil fields to the states, and  
   trying to curb the TVA by setting up a private company to take its  
   place.
   * His secretary of health, education, and welfare condemned free distribution of the Salk anti-polio vaccine as being socialist.
   * Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson tackled agriculture  
     issues, but despite the government’s purchase of surplus grain  
     which it stored in giant silos costing Americans $2 million a day,  
     farmers didn’t see prosperity.
3. Eisenhower also cracked down on illegal Mexican immigration that  
   cut down on the success of the bracero program, by rounding up 1  
   million Mexicans and returning them to their native country in 1954.
   * With Indians, though, Ike proposed ending the lenient FDR-style  
     treatment toward Indians and reverting to a Dawes Severalty Act-style  
     policy toward Native Americans. But due to protest and resistance, this  
     was disbanded.
4. However, Eisenhower kept many of the New Deal programs, since some,  
   like Social Security and unemployment insurance, simply had to stay in  
   the public’s mind.
   * However, he did do some of the New Deal programs better, such as  
     his backing of the Interstate Highway Act, which built 42,000 miles of  
     interstate freeways.
5. Still, Eisenhower only balanced the budget three times in his eight  
   years of office, and in 1959, he incurred the biggest peacetime deficit  
   in U.S. history up to that point.
   * Still, critics said that he was economically timid, blaming the president for the sharp economic downturn of 1957-58.
6. Also, the AF of L merged with the CIO to end 20 years of bitter division in labor unions.
7. When it came to civil rights, Eisenhower had a lukewarm record at best, and was slow to move.
   * Eisenhower refused to issue a statement acknowledging the Supreme  
     Court’s ruling on integration, and he even privately complained  
     about this new end to segregation, but in September 1957, when Orval  
     Faubus, the governor of Arkansas, mobilized the National Guard to  
     prevent nine black students from enrolling in Little Rock’s  
     Central High School, Ike sent federal troops to escort the children to  
     their classes.
     + That year, Congress passed the first Civil Rights Act since the  
       Reconstruction days, an act that set up a permanent Civil Rights  
       Commission to investigate violations of civil rights and authorized  
       federal injunctions to protect voting rights.
   * Meanwhile, Martin Luther King, Jr. formed the Southern Christian  
     Leadership Conference, which aimed to mobilize the vast power of black  
     churches on behalf of black rights—a shrewd strategy, since  
     churches were a huge source of leadership in the black community.
   * On February 1, 1960, four black college freshmen launched a  
     “sit-in” movement in Greensboro, North Carolina, demanding  
     service at a whites-only Woolworth’s lunch counter, thus sparking  
     the sit-in movement.
   * In April 1960, southern black students formed the Student  
     Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, or SNCC, to give more focus and  
     force to their civil rights efforts.

**VIII. A New Look in Foreign Policy**

1. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles stated that the policy of  
   containment was not enough and that the U.S. was going to push back  
   communism and liberate the peoples under it. This became known as  
   “rollback.” All-the-while he advocated toning down defense  
   spending by building a fleet of superbombers called Strategic Air  
   Command, which could drop massive nuclear bombs in any retaliation.
   * Eisenhower had a "new look" on a policy of Massive Relatiation.  
     Massive Reltaliation was the building up of our forces in the sky to  
     scare the enemys. We created the Strategic Air Command (SAC). This was  
     an airfleet of superbombers equipped with city-flattening nuclear  
     bombs. These fearsome weapons would inflict "Massive Retaliation" on  
     the enemy, and were also a great bang for the buck.
2. Ike tried to thaw the Cold War by appealing for peace to new Soviet  
   Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the 1955 Geneva Conference, but the Soviet  
   leader rejected such proposals, along with one for “open  
   skies.”
3. However, hypocritically, when the Hungarians revolted against the  
   U.S.S.R. and appealed to the U.S. for help, America did nothing,  
   earning the scorn of bitter freedom fighters.

**IX. The Vietnam Nightmare**

1. In Vietnam, revolutionary Ho Chi Minh had tried to encourage  
   Woodrow Wilson to help the Vietnamese against the French and gained  
   some support from Wilson, but as Ho became increasingly communist, the  
   U.S. began to oppose him.
2. In March 1954, when the French became trapped at Dienbienphu,  
   Eisenhower’s aides wanted to bomb the Viet Minh guerilla forces,  
   but Ike held back, fearing plunging the U.S. into another Asian war so  
   soon after Korea. After the Vietnamese won at Dienbienphu, Vietnam was  
   split at the 17th parallel, supposedly temporarily.
   * Ho Chi Minh was supposed to allow free elections, but soon, Vietnam  
     became clearly split between a communist north and a pro-Western south.
   * Dienbienphu marks the start of American interest in Vietnam.
   * Secretary Dulles created the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) to emulate NATO, but this provided little help.

**X. Cold War Crises in Europe and the Middle East**

1. In 1955, the USSR formed the Warsaw Pact to counteract NATO, but  
   the Cold War did seem to be thawing a bit, as Eisenhower pressed for  
   reduction of arms, and the Soviets were surprisingly cooperative, and  
   Khrushchev publicly denounced Stalin’s brutality.
   * However, in 1956, when the Hungarians revolted against the USSR, the Soviets crushed them with brutality and massive bloodshed.
   * The U.S. did change some of its immigration laws to let 30,000 Hungarians into America as immigrants.
2. In 1953, to protect oil supplies in the Middle East, the CIA  
   engineered a coup in Iran that installed the youthful shah Mohammed  
   Reza Pahlevi, as ruler of the nation, protecting the oil for the time  
   being, but earning the wrath of Arabs that would be repaid in the 70s.
3. The Suez crisis was far messier: President Gamal Abdel Nasser, of  
   Egypt, needed money to build a dam in the upper Nile and flirted openly  
   with the Soviet side as well as the U.S. and Britain, and upon seeing  
   this blatant communist association, Secretary of State Dulles  
   dramatically withdrew his offer, thus forcing Nasser to nationalize the  
   dam.
   * Late in October 1956, Britain, France, and Israel suddenly attacked  
     Egypt, thinking that the U.S. would supply them with needed oil, as had  
     been the case in WWII, but Eisenhower did not, and the attackers had to  
     withdraw.
   * The Suez crisis marked the last time the U.S. could brandish its “oil weapon.”
4. In 1960, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, and Venezuela joined to  
   form the cartel Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC.

**XI. Round Two for “Ike”**

1. In 1956, Eisenhower again ran against Stevenson and won easily by a landslide.
2. The GOP called itself the “party of peace” while the  
   Democrats assaulted Ike’s health, since he had had a heart attack  
   in 1955 and a major abdominal operation in ’56.
   * However, the Democrats did win the House and Senate.
3. After Secretary of State Dulles died of cancer in 1959 and  
   presidential assistant Sherman Adams was forced to leave under a cloud  
   of scandal due to bribery charges, Eisenhower, without his two most  
   trusted and most helpful aides, was forced to govern more and golf less.
4. A drastic labor-reform bill in 1959 grew from recurrent strikes in critical industries.
5. Teamster chief “Dave” Beck was sent to prison for  
   embezzlement, and his successor, James R. Hoffa’s appointment got  
   the Teamsters expelled out of the AF of L-CIO.
   * Hoffa was later jailed for jury tampering and then disappeared in  
     prison, allegedly murdered by some gangsters that he had crossed.
6. The 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act was designed to bring labor leaders to book for financial shenanigans and prevent bullying tactics.
   * Anti-laborites forced into the bill bans against “secondary boycotts” and certain types of picketing.
7. A “space-race” began in 1957.
   * On October 4, 1957, the Russians launched Sputnik I into space, and  
     a month later, they sent Sputnik II into orbit as well, thus totally  
     demoralizing Americans, because this seemed to prove communist  
     superiority in the sciences at least.
     + Plus, the Soviets might fire missiles at the U.S. from space.
   * Critics charged that Truman had not spent enough money on missile  
     programs while America had used its science for other things, like  
     television.
   * Four months after Sputnik I, the U.S. sent its own satellite  
     (weighing only 2.5 lbs) into space, but the apparent U.S. lack of  
     technology sent concerns over U.S. education, since American children  
     seemed to be learning less advanced information than Soviet kids.

\*The 1958 National Defense and Education Act (NDEA) gave $887  
million in loads to needy college students and grants for the  
improvement of schools.

**XII. The Continuing Cold War**

1. Humanity-minded scientists called for an end to atmospheric nuclear testing, lest future generations be deformed and mutated.
   * Beginning October 1958, Washington did halt “dirty”  
     testing, as did the U.S.S.R., but attempts to regularize such  
     suspensions were unsuccessful.
2. However, in 1959, Khrushchev was invited by Ike to America for  
   talks, and when he arrived in New York, he immediately spoke of  
   disarmament, but gave no means of how to do it.
   * Later, at Camp David, talks did show upward signs, as the Soviet  
     premier said that his ultimatum for the evacuation of Berlin would be  
     extended indefinitely.
3. However, at the Paris conference, Khrushchev came in angry that the  
   U.S. had flown a U-2 spy plane over Soviet territory (in this U-2  
   incident, the plane had been shot down and Eisenhower embarrassingly  
   took personal responsibility), and tensions immediately tightened again.

**XIII. Cuba’s Castroism Spells Communism**

1. Latin American nations resented the United States’ giving  
   billions of dollars to Europe compared to millions to Latin America, as  
   well as the U.S.’s constant intervention (Guatemala, 1954), as  
   well as its support of cold dictators who claimed to be fighting  
   communism.
2. In 1959, in Cuba, Fidel Castro overthrew U.S.-supported Fulgencio  
   Batista, promptly denounced the Yankee imperialists, and began to take  
   U.S. properties for a land-distribution program. When the U.S. cut off  
   heavy U.S. imports of Cuban sugar, Castro confiscated more American  
   property.
   * In 1961, America broke diplomatic relations with Cuba.
3. Khrushchev threatened to launch missiles at the U.S. if it attacked  
   Cuba; meanwhile, America induced the Organization of American States to  
   condemn communism in the Americas.
   * Finally, Eisenhower proposed a “Marshall Plan” for  
     Latin America, which gave $500 million to the area, but many Latin  
     Americans felt that it was too little, too late.

**XIV. Kennedy Challenges Nixon for the Presidency**

1. The Republicans chose Richard Nixon, gifted party leader to some,  
   ruthless opportunist to others, in 1960 with Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. as  
   his running mate; while John F. Kennedy surprisingly won for the  
   Democrats and had Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate.
2. Kennedy was attacked because he was a Catholic presidential  
   candidate, but defended himself and encouraged Catholics to vote for  
   him. As it turned out, if he lost votes from the South due to his  
   religion, he got them back from the North due to the staunch Catholics  
   there.
   * In four nationally televised debates, JFK held his own and looked  
     more charismatic, perhaps helping him to win the election by a  
     comfortable margin, becoming the youngest president elected (TR was  
     younger after McKinley was assassinated).

**XV. An Old General Fades Away**

1. Eisenhower had his critics, but he was appreciated more and more for ending one war and keeping the U.S. out of others.
2. Even though the 1951-passed 22nd Amendment had limited him to two  
   terms as president, Ike displayed more vigor and controlled Congress  
   during his second term than his first.
3. In 1959, Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states to join the Union.
4. Perhaps Eisenhower’s greatest weakness was his ignorance of  
   social problems of the time, preferring to smile them away rather than  
   deal with them, even though he was no bigot.

**XVI. The Life of the Mind in Postwar America**

1. Ernest Hemingway’s The Old Man and the Sea and John  
   Steinbeck’s East of Eden and Travels with Charlie showed that  
   prewar writers could still be successful, but new writers, who, except  
   for Norman Mailer’s The Naked and the Dead and James  
   Jones’s From Here to Eternity, spurned realism, were successful  
   as well.
2. Joseph Heller’s Catch-22 and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.’s  
   Slaughter-House Five crackled with fantastic and psychedelic prose,  
   satirizing the suffering of the war.
3. Authors and books that explored problems created by the new  
   mobility and affluence of American life: John Updike’s Rabbit,  
   Run and Couples; John Cheever’s The Wapshot Chronicle and The  
   Wapshot Scandal; Louis Auchincloss’s books, and Gore  
   Vidal’s Myra Breckinridge.
4. The poetry of Ezra Pound, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams,  
   Theodore Roethke, Robert Lowell (For the Union Dead), Sylvia Plath  
   (Ariel and The Bell-Jar), Anne Sexton, and John Berryman reflected the  
   twisted emotions of the war, but some poets were troubled in their own  
   minds as well, often committing suicide or living miserable lives.
5. Tennessee Williams’s A Streetcar Named Desire and Cat on a  
   Hot Tin Roof were two plays that searched for American values, as were  
   Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman and The Crucible.
6. Lorraine Hansberry’s A Raisin in the Sun portrayed  
   African-American life while Edward Albee’s Who’s Afraid of  
   Virginia Woolf? revealed the underside of middle class life.
7. Books by black authors such as Richard Wright (Black Boy), Ralph  
   Ellison (Invisible Man), and James Baldwin made best-seller’s  
   lists; Black playwrights like LeRoi Jones made powerful plays (The  
   Dutchman).
8. The South had literary artists like William Faulkner (The Sound and the Fury, Light in August), Walker Percy, and Eudora Welty.
9. Jewish authors also had famous books, such as J.D. Salinger’s Catcher in the Rye.