**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.