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COVERING THE RED SCARE:
THE OMAHA WORLD-HERALD AND ISSUES
RELATED TO DOMESTIC COMMUNISM
1945-1953

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by
Steve Bullock
April 1996

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Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College,
University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts,
University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

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ABSTRACT

The fear of communism in America, known popularly as the "Red Scare," has historically been a driving force in the initiation of legislation and policies designed to limit the influence of the Communist Party in America. During the apex of the Red Scare, the years 1945 to 1953, a climate of fear descended on the nation as communists, suspected communists, New Deal liberals and other members of the political left were chastised, blacklisted and prosecuted for alleged disloyalty to the American people.

Throughout the last forty years, dozens of theories have been advanced to explain the political phenomenon known popularly as "McCarthyism." Current theories seem to agree the post-war Red Scare was a product of politics and that political elites played a critical role in both creating and exploiting public fears. In such an interpretation, the role of the press is vital. Only through the press, could the charges of infiltration and subversion be carried to the larger public. Because much of the press reported such charges uncritically, Americans grew even more fearful of domestic communists. Historians have long-recognized this vital role, but historians have not yet provided a systematic analysis of the stories carried in the nation's press or how these stories were presented to the public. This thesis will attempt such an analysis by focusing on one

newspaper, the Omaha World-Herald. Utilizing primarily newspaper stories, wire service reports, syndicated columns and editorials, this study will identify and analyze stories in the World-Herald related to domestic communism.

The investigation of this material has led to the conclusion that a distinct shift in World-Herald opinions regarding domestic communism transpired following the release of the infamous "Pumpkin Papers" in December, 1948. Whereas before that date the World-Herald had often expressed caution against violating civil liberties in efforts to uncover communists, following the "Pumpkin Papers" the editors of the paper seemed to set aside concerns for individual rights lest they impede efforts to extinguish communist influence in America. This study traces this evolution of the World-Herald and attempts to provide some insight into the phenomena of the media's role in the escalation of the Red Scare.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the year 1945 will forever be linked in history to the celebrated end of World War II, the origins of a new and brutal form of peace-time warfare emerged during 1945. The United States and the Soviet Union, allies for nearly five years in the struggle against the Axis powers, suddenly found themselves on opposing ideological grounds in the post-war world. The ensuing race for global superiority, since dubbed the "Cold War," endured for nearly forty-five years. The Cold War was characterized by massive military mobilization, diplomatic jousting and the occasional "hot spot" flare-ups in Korea and Vietnam which served to heighten Americans' perception of the dangers of communism.

It was during the immediate post-war period that the unstable political situation abroad precipitated the emergence of an anti-communist phenomenon known as the "Red Scare." Although there had been a previous Red Scare in the United States following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917, the second Red Scare after World War II induced many to view the American Communist Party (CPUSA) "as the domestic ally of America's most dangerous enemy."¹ While leaders at home preached the evils of communism in the Soviet Union and warned of its imminent spread to Eastern Europe and Asia, others predicted that this global communist

conspiracy would soon ensare even the United States in its web of atheistic, socialist slavery.² A climate of fear descended on the nation as communists, suspected communists, New Deal liberals and other members of the political left were chastised, blacklisted and prosecuted for alleged disloyalty to the American people.

While it is apparent that some Communist Party leaders and functionaries collaborated with Soviet intelligence agencies and may have shown greater loyalty to the Soviet union than the United States, it is equally clear that the domestic communist menace was exaggerated.³ Throughout the last forty years, dozens of theories have been advanced to explain the political phenomenon known popularly as "McCarthyism." During the 1950s, analyses by political scientists and historians such as Daniel Bell and Richard Hofstadter identified the origins of this phenomenon in the larger maladjustments of American society.⁴ The irrational fears and heightened rhetoric of this era were a product of social strains and status anxieties deep within the American social fabric. The fear of communism was just one more expression of America's "countersubversive tradition" that extended back to the nation's origins.⁵ It was, in other words, a mass-based phenomenon characteristic of American democracy.

During the 1960s, the focus of scholarly inquiry shifted from society at large to the political arena. The

works of Michael Rogin, Earl Latham and others suggested that McCarthyism was largely a political phenomenon, a product of political elites who exaggerated the domestic communist menace so as to heighten public fears for their own partisan purposes.⁶ Several scholars, including Rogin, Latham, Robert Griffith and Richard Fried, placed the primary blame for McCarthyism on conservative Republicans who sought to use the issue of communism to regain power.⁷ Others, like Athan Theoharis and Richard Freeland, blamed the Truman Administration for using anti-communist rhetoric in its effort to gain support for its foreign policy.⁸ Still others, like Kenneth O'Reilly, found the origins of McCarthyism in the manipulative actions of Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover.⁹ Whatever the source, current theories seem to agree the post-war Red Scare was a product of politics and that political elites played a critical role in both creating and exploiting public fears.¹⁰

In such an interpretation, the role of the press is vital. Only through the press, could the charges of infiltration and subversion be carried to the larger public. Because much of the press reported such charges uncritically, Americans grew even more fearful of domestic communists. Historians have long-recognized this vital role. As early as 1970, James Aronson described how the press featured Cold War fears and anti-communist emotions in

America.¹¹ Others have suggested that the media underwent a "Cold War conversion" and "joined the government's church voluntarily" in such a way as to promote the anti-communist hysteria.¹²

Despite this recognition, historians have not yet provided a systematic analysis of the stories carried in the nation's press or how these stories were presented to the public. This thesis will attempt such an analysis by focusing on one newspaper, the Omaha World-Herald. With a circulation of over 300,000, the World-Herald was the dominant print news source for most of eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. Its position was largely "unchallenged by any but scattered, local publications."¹³ Since 1934, when Henry Doorly assumed control of the paper, the World-Herald had generally supported conservative candidates and causes. It backed Republican candidates for the presidency in 1944, 1948 and 1952, and conservative Republicans for most local, state and federal offices.¹⁴ Like most of the nation's press, its editors focused increasing attention on the issue of domestic communism in the late 1940s with only an occasional, sporadic warning of the dangers of unsubstantiated accusations and infringements on civil liberties.¹⁵

The aim of this study is to identify and assess stories regarding domestic anti-communism carried by the Omaha World-Herald from the conclusion of World War II in

August, 1945 to the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg in June, 1953. Local news articles, wires service dispatches, syndicated columns and especially editorials will be examined in the hope of providing a clearer picture of the role of the press, specifically the World-Herald, in the evolution of the Red Scare.

The chronological divisions of this paper are based both on the volume of the material obtained and the notable events occurring during the particular time periods outlined. The end of World War II was chosen as the starting point simply because at that time relations between the United States and the Soviet Union began to erode and suspicion directed at domestic communists began to intensify. The execution of the Rosenbergs was selected as the end of this study because it represents the apex of the anti-communist reaction. Between the two events, an interesting array of loyalty investigations, blacklists and name-calling dominated the news scene and many in the nation came to believe a domestic communist crisis existed.

NOTES

¹Harvey Klehr, et. al., The Secret World of American Communism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 12.

²James Selcraig, The Red Scare in the Midwest: 1945-1955 (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1982), vii.

³Klehr, 16.

⁴Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and other Essays (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966); Daniel Bell, ed., The New American Right (New York: Criterion Books, 1955).

⁵Ellen Schrecker, The Age of McCarthyism (Boston: Bedford Books, 1994), 9.

⁶Michael Paul Rogin, The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967); Earl Latham, The Communist Controversy in Washington, From the New Deal to McCarthy, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

⁷Robert Griffith, The Politics of Fear: Joseph McCarthy and the Origins of McCarthyism (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1970); Richard Fried, Men Against McCarthy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

⁸Athan Theoharis, Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971); Richard Freeland, The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism (New York: Knopf, 1972).

⁹Kenneth O'Reilly, Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC and the Red Menace (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983).

¹⁰For more insight on historians and the origins of "McCarthyism," consult the bibliographic essay in Schrecker, 255-7.

¹¹James Aronson, The Press and the Cold War (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 37.

¹²James Baughman, The Republic of Mass Culture

(Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970), 33. On the press and public opinion, see Michael Real, Super Media: A Cultural Studies Approach (Newbury Park, California: Sage Press, 1989).

¹³Phebe Eaton, "Editorially Speaking: The Omaha World-Herald on International Issues, September 1, 1939 to December 7, 1941" (Master's Thesis, Omaha University, 1959), 111.

¹⁴Paul Peterson, "The Omaha Daily World and World-Herald: 1885-1964" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1966), 372-374.

¹⁵The World-Herald's staff included H.E. Newbranch as Editor-in -Chief until May 1949, W.E. Christenson as Editor and Frederick Ware as Managing Editor for the duration of this study.

CHAPTER ONE

EMERGING ISSUES: COMMUNISTS IN GOVERNMENT AND LABOR, AUGUST 1945 TO APRIL 1947

In August of 1945 the much-anticipated end of World War II finally arrived to the delight of millions around the world. For a short time the United States and the Soviet Union officially maintained cordial relations despite their obvious ideological differences. The era of McCarthy had not yet arrived and the threat of communist domination of the world, much less of the United States, was of little concern to the American people. However, from the final shot of the war until the highly publicized investigation of communist infiltration of the motion picture industry beginning in May, 1947, the media subjected Americans to an increasing volume of anti-communist news material which contributed to a heightened public fear of domestic communism.

While historians continue to debate the precise origins of the Red Scare, the central role of the media in this phenomenon seems indisputable. Historian Peter Steinberg locates the origin in the actions of "a group of nonelected government officials joined together to encourage an anti-communist program of vast proportions" in the United

States, particularly by utilizing the media.¹ Among the most noteworthy of these "nonelected government officials" who attempted to intensify the persecution of American communists was Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director J. Edgar Hoover and other prominent members of the FBI. Historian Kenneth O'Reilly has shown that very soon after the war, FBI Assistant Director of Crime Records, Louis Nichols, outlined a "program to shape public opinion" about the seriousness of the communist threat. This formula for influencing public opinion by the FBI consisted of leaking confidential information to those in the media "discreet enough to receive" such allowances. Some of the privileged included heads of certain press services and a number of syndicated columnists featured by the Omaha World-Herald, including Westbrook Pegler, George Sokolsky and Victor Riesel.²

The overall effect of the FBI's anti-communist publicity campaign cannot be measured with precision. Yet its impact is clearly illustrated in the public reaction to Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech on March 5, 1946. Immediately after the oration--approximately the period of the initial FBI anti-communist leaks to the media--only 18% of Americans polled approved of the rhetoric used by Churchill. One month later, after the anti-communist material had been absorbed by a majority of citizens, 85% expressed their approval of the former Prime Minister's

speech.³ With that in mind, it can be argued that the American press was a significant factor in the emergence of anti-communism after World War II.

Shortly after the war and following the FBI's initial efforts to influence public opinion, the Omaha World-Herald acknowledged the presence of an American communist problem, and periodically printed syndicated columns and editorials warning of the imminent danger of "reds" in this country. A typical editorial printed in early 1946, headed "The Game is a Swindle," denounced communist ideology and wondered how "any American working man can shout for communism and spit on democracy is beyond understanding."⁴ In the early post-war months, however, statements that harsh were rare. The World-Herald normally portrayed American communists as more nuisance than threat.

In the months after the surrender of Japan, the World-Herald was certainly aware of allegations of communist infiltration of government, particularly in the State Department. An editorial in November described Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson, a man who would later take a vicious beating in the Omaha press, as the "idol of reds and fellow travelers" throughout the nation.⁵ Syndicated columnist Westbrook Pegler expanded on the communist-in-government issue in December in a piece entitled "Suggests Truman Bounce Commies." Pegler declared that there existed a "dirty condition in the State

Department and elsewhere in the government bequeathed to the American people by Mr. Roosevelt and his wife." He continued by suggesting that President Truman would be wise to establish as a prerequisite for federal employment an "impeccable record, free of all past collaborations with the enemies of the Republic."⁶

By March 1946, harsh words were being exchanged on several fronts. At the beginning of the month, Senator Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska charged that Russian agents were infiltrating "our seats of government [and continuing] in their attempt to divide and destroy America."⁷ Eight days later, a high ranking official of the Roman Catholic church estimated the number of communists in the Federal Government at two thousand. In the same article, Representative John Rankin of Mississippi declared "it is time for Congress to wake up" and remedy the situation.⁸ Shortly thereafter, the House Un-American Activities Committee's (HUAC) chief counsel, Ernie Adamson, claimed "high government officials" knew of past Soviet spying and failed to report the incidents.⁹

In an apparent attempt to provide some balance on the issue, the World-Herald included a syndicated column by Peter Edson attacking the "witch hunt" hysteria in Washington. Edson referred to 243 State Department employees who had been dismissed for security reasons and denounced those who encouraged the persecution of

individuals based on unproven accusations.¹⁰ Edson's column was one of the few included in the paper encouraging restraint in exposing communists.

Senator Wherry once again garnered headlines in May 1946, as nine separate organizations demanded that he reveal the names of the communists he so often claimed were operating unchecked in the federal government.¹¹ On May 7, the World-Herald gave front page coverage to a speech by Wherry in which he accused Acheson of being a fellow-traveller because of his support of business regulations similar to those employed in the Soviet Union.¹² Yet the paper also carried Acheson's attempt to defend his reputation in an article entitled "Communism Unwelcome." In it, Acheson stated that communism was unacceptable and incompatible with the American way of life.¹³ Several weeks later, the World-Herald reported that Acheson supported the discharge of State Department employees proven to be communists. However, when asked if being an avowed New Dealer was grounds for dismissal, he coolly replied: "I have not considered that to be a crime."¹⁴

Most historians agree that Republican leaders attempted to discredit not only the Truman Administration, but also the entire Democratic Party by exploiting the communist issue "to attain political power."¹⁵ Evidence of this type of conservative rhetoric was evident in the World-Herald, but the editors of the paper were careful to

also include Democratic denials. The June 24 issue carried a press dispatch in which Attorney General Tom Clark rejected Republican charges that the Democrats were "playing ball" with the communists. Clark assured the American people that the Democratic Party was "definitely against communism."¹⁶ The following month the Attorney General released another statement intended to convey the impression that the Truman Administration was dealing with the problem of communist infiltration. Clark remarked that "the Justice Department is not undertaking any witch hunt," but emphasized that his staff was on the "alert."¹⁷

As 1946 was an election year, the late summer and fall witnessed several heated exchanges between local political rivals in Nebraska based almost entirely on the communist question. The World-Herald included a front page article by local reporter, James Keogh, headlined "Buffett Asks: Stop Reds," which quoted Congressman Howard Buffett of Omaha as accusing New Deal Democrats of "marching steadily toward communism." Quite predictably, Buffett informed the voting public that the most intelligent way to combat the infestation of communists within the government was to return the GOP to power.¹⁸ Republican candidate for governor, Val Peterson, reacting to accusations by his Democratic opponent that he was utilizing scare tactics by associating the Democrats with the Communist Party, replied with an "if the shoe fits" statement. Peterson responded

simply: "I have never heard of a communist who belonged to the Republican Party," and continued by explaining that "all of those avowed communists and their fellow travelers are over in the New Deal Party."¹⁹

The question of communist influence in the federal government remained a prominent topic in the World-Herald through the summer and fall of 1946. In August, Senator William Stanfill of Kentucky claimed that "top secrets" vital to the national defense were available to Russia through traitors who had infiltrated government positions. Stanfill demanded future employees of the State Department be screened by the FBI in an effort to unveil communist sympathizers.²⁰ Similarly, Representative Clarence Brown of Ohio asserted shortly before election day that the main objective of American communists was to disrupt and discredit the government through various means, including infiltration.²¹

Evidently, the "red-baiting" tactics were successful as the national Democratic vote fell 40% from the 1944 elections. In the House, Democratic representation dropped dramatically from 242 to 188; in the Senate it dipped from 51 to 45. Historian David Cate labeled the 1946 campaign a "disaster for the Democrats, [and] only reinforced the efficacy of red-baiting."²² By December, according to the National Chairman of the Communist Party, William Z. Foster, the negative publicity surrounding the Party had taken a

toll on its effectiveness. On December 7, the World-Herald reported Foster as lamenting the loss of support from liberals due to the hostile environment fostered by conservatives.²³

An article early in 1947 summarized a HUAC report addressing the problem of "subversive elements" in government and other areas of public life. The committee suggested more aggressive policies by the State and Justice Departments were needed to eliminate communists on the Federal payroll.²⁴ The editors of the World-Herald, reacting to the arrest of the State Department's Carl Marzani, agreed with HUAC's conclusions and added that investigations of government employees should be mandatory. Signed affidavits, they insisted, were not enough because, for a communist, "lying is not only justified, but a pleasant duty to be performed in the advancement of his peculiar creed."²⁵ This statement was typical of the arguments advanced by the editors of the World-Herald regarding non-communist oaths. The paper consistently questioned the effectiveness of loyalty oaths but, without exception, remained steadfastly in favor of loyalty investigations to unveil hidden communists in government.

Later in January, the assault continued when the World-Herald repeated charges by the highly-respected Wisconsin Senator, Robert M. LaFollette. In a press dispatch, "5 Committees Contain Reds," LaFollette stated

that no less than five Congressional committees had been infiltrated by the Communist Party and its sympathizers. In the same article, Senator Wherry reinforced his colleague's allegation by declaring: "I have already been busy sweeping out the Moscow tinge and will get rid of every follower of the party line."²⁶ Less than two weeks later, World-Herald Washington Bureau Chief John Jarrell wrote a piece labeled "Federal Jobs Cloaking Reds," in which he praised the accomplishments of HUAC and argued that the government "provides a fertile field for communist infiltration."²⁷

On March 23, the World-Herald used a three-column headline to proclaim Truman's establishment of loyalty boards to investigate government employees. A White House official assured the public that the investigations would "not be a witch hunt," but rather would be utilized only when there was reasonable doubt as to an individual's loyalty.²⁸ Two weeks later, Representative Karl Mundt of South Dakota was in full accord with Truman's installation of loyalty boards but insisted that Communist Party members should be "summarily dismissed" from local, state, and federal positions.²⁹ Curiously, the World-Herald remained editorially silent on the loyalty program, suggesting that either the editors did not view the order as worthy of comment or preferred not to give the president credit.

Several historians have suggested that Truman's loyalty order, while an attempt to dispel public suspicions

of communist infiltration, actually heightened the nation's fears because it officially acknowledged the communist problem and led to extensive and disruptive "witch hunting."³⁰ The size of the World-Herald's headline and prominence of the loyalty program story supports this assertion. While the paper carried numerous warnings of communist infiltration before March 23, its readers might have dismissed them as partisan attacks on the Democratic administration. By so prominently featuring the institution of the loyalty program, however, the paper may have lent credence to those charges.

While communist infiltration of the Federal Government attracted sporadic attention in the World-Herald, the issue of communists in the labor movement emerged as a preoccupation. Since its conservative transformation after the arrival of Henry Doorly in 1934, the editors had never been sympathetic to the goals or actions of organized labor. The wave of strikes which crippled the economy during the months following V-J Day, however, may well have conditioned them to see a dangerous link between organized labor and communism. As early as October, 1945 the editors expressed concern over unions that exhibited signs of red influence and announced that the rampant work stoppages then sweeping the nation were both "foolish and dangerous."³¹ Similarly, a syndicated column by Westbrook Pegler, also in October, cautioned Americans to beware of communists in the labor

movement. Pegler asserted that the task of uncovering communists would be difficult because "not all communists hold cards in the Communist Party." But, he added snidely, "God gave us the sense of smell."³²

In January, 1946, with union-led strikes disrupting many of the nation's most important industries, President Truman proposed legislation to halt all work stoppages. To protect workers' rights, Truman's plan included "fact-finding boards" to investigate worker complaints and wage and price fixing as an instrument to resist inflation. The proposal quickly attracted the condemnations of conservatives featured in the World-Herald. Many Republicans viewed Truman's legislation as a ploy to increase government regulation of the business sector. Robert Taft of Ohio, a principal spokesman of the Senate Republicans, labelled the President's scheme "communist" and "ill-considered." Continuing, Taft stated brashly that "no one has found a way to prevent strikes, except for Mr. Stalin."³³ The World-Herald also featured labor opposition to the legislation. In a United Press (UP) dispatch, "Reds Behind Wage Policy," the American Federation of Labor (AFL) argued that Truman was "indirectly forced" by "communist agents," specifically those in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), to implement wage-price controls.³⁴ Neither the story nor the paper's editors alerted readers to the ongoing war between the AFL and CIO which might have

prompted the exaggerated assertions.

As the year progressed, World-Herald subscribers were bombarded with information and opinions not only detailing the AFL's efforts to stamp out communist influence within its ranks, but also the CIO's failure to do so adequately. The CIO, unlike the rival AFL, did not officially adopt an anti-communist platform until November of 1946 and was therefore subjected to negative publicity for its alleged communist-coddling practices.³⁵ The discrepancy between the patriotic AFL and the communist-dominated CIO widened in April as the paper suggested that attempts by the Communist Party to infiltrate the AFL had been "stymied." In contrast, the story claimed that the CIO had shown less vigilance in resisting communist agents, particularly in the South, where the organization was in the midst of a massive campaign drive. The CIO directed most of its recruiting efforts at southern African-Americans, many of whom, the World-Herald's AP story suggested, already were leaning toward communism.³⁶ The rival AFL directed harsh criticism toward the CIO regarding its aggressive and controversial southern venture in a wire service story entitled, "AFL to Fight CIO in South." In it, AFL President William Green specifically stated that the CIO was "foreign controlled" and its policy undoubtedly shaped by "a group of communists."³⁷

By May of 1946, the emphasis on the alleged communist

infiltration of the CIO in the Omaha paper was redirected from the union's national leadership to specific CIO-affiliated organizations. On May 15, the World-Herald featured a public statement by the United Steel Workers acknowledging past communist influence on the group, but insisting that future attempts at communist infiltration would not be tolerated.³⁸ The paper also reported that the president of Philadelphia's branch of the Union of Furniture Workers was considering resigning his post because of communist domination of the organization. He claimed that during a previous convention, communists controlled all aspects of the gathering, leading to the president's decision to resign.³⁹

In July, the World-Herald ran an article headlined "Communists Return to Militant Policy." It featured an official statement by the National Board of the Communist Party directing its members to take an active role in pursuing Marxist-Leninist objectives in the nation's labor organizations.⁴⁰ Less than a week following the party's directive, the Omaha paper reprinted a hostile editorial from the Grand-Island Independent which stated that the new Communist Party line translated into "raising as much hell as possible in order to create strife and discontent in the United States."⁴¹ A month later, however, an editorial in the World-Herald expressed a more conciliatory tone toward the CIO. The editors commended the CIO for resisting the

most recent attempts by the Communist Party to influence the union's policies. The editors also predicted that the CIO's valiant effort in exposing communists in its midst might reverse the opinions of many anti-labor spokespersons when it became evident that the union was not taking orders from Moscow.⁴²

The paper's attempt at even-handedness proved short lived, however. A column by Constantine Brown in the September 8th issue, entitled "Reds Seen Planning to Use Unions as 5th Column Here," revealed that some American officials feared another disaster similar to Pearl Harbor--but this time at Russian hands. Those same officials had concluded that the Soviet Union had intricate designs to capture the labor movement and "paralyze the American war effort," if hostilities erupted between the two nations.⁴³ Less than a week later, a similar piece by Lou Schneider of Consolidated News Features declared that "communist fifth column activities controls [sic] the economic life of these United States." Schneider also repeated the popular "CIO communist dominated" statement, and warned that the AFL was headed in a similar direction. The author then attributed the apparent delay in America's war recovery to strikes and work slow-downs which in turn were products of communist influence in the labor movement.⁴⁴

The World-Herald also featured stories alleging

espionage by communists in labor unions. A September 28 article reported that red unions had been highly active at the University of California Radiation Laboratory--one of the research facilities devoted to the development of the atomic bomb.⁴⁵ If that were not enough to arouse the fears of World-Herald readers, a few days later, in a story labeled "CIO Data Leak to Russ Charged," the President of the AFL's Metal Trades union, John Frey, accused the CIO of leaking vital defense information to the Soviets. He remarked that the CIO was "Moscow's greatest source of information as to what was being done in this country."⁴⁶ Twenty-four hours later, the World-Herald included excerpts of a speech by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover declaring domestic communism "a growing menace," particularly in labor unions, which were being "manipulated" and "browbeaten" by "communist pincers."⁴⁷

Shortly after Hoover's speech, the CIO announced a series of reforms aimed at ousting communists from their organization. The Omaha paper carried a story in October centering on a CIO official statement acknowledging "that there are communists in the CIO" but pledging to combat communism's advance in any form.⁴⁸ Later, an column by syndicated writer Peter Edson attempted to analyze the "reds in labor" situation. Edson estimated the number of Communist Party members in the CIO at one million. Furthermore, they were not only numerous, he insisted, but

also "aggressive" and "smart." He suggested that CIO officials "wise [their] members up to what goes on ...and lead [the] organization away from the Commie line."⁴⁹

Edson's column contained the kind of exaggerations that were becoming all too common in the post-war press. Since FBI estimates at the time placed Communist Party membership at no more than eighty thousand, there could hardly have been a million Party members in the CIO. Yet the World-Herald printed Edson's charge without comment or correction.

With anti-communist sentiment growing both in the press and the CIO, Walter Reuther of the CIO's United Auto Workers "exploited the communist issue" to gain support for his bid to become national union president.⁵⁰ His effort promptly attracted the World-Herald's attention. In a November article, Reuther revealed that he was seeking to wrest the presidency of the CIO from Philip Murray on the promise of ousting all "reds" from the organization.⁵¹ Four days later, Philip Murray responded by "backing proposals" that would prohibit CIO members from utilizing union meetings for communist propaganda.⁵² A World-Herald editorial shortly thereafter supported Murray's action and added that he "could do the CIO--and the American labor movement a great deal of good" by mandating that communist union members be immediately identified and dismissed.⁵³ Four days later and seemingly on cue, a CIO national convention passed a resolution designed to identify and

limit the communist element in the organization with only two dissenting votes.⁵⁴

The resolutions, however, did not deter the staunchest CIO critics whose denunciations continued to appear in the World-Herald. AFL President Green barely concealed his bitter sentiment toward the CIO by remarking that "the labor movement and the Government of the United States cannot ignore communist activity directed from Moscow..."⁵⁵ Similarly, a front page story in January entitled "Red Chips Will Fall in New Probe," highlighted the impending HUAC investigation of labor. The story highlighted the plans of newly-appointed HUAC Chairman J. Parnell Thomas to "spotlight the sorry spectacle of having outright communists controlling and dominating some of the most vital unions in American labor."⁵⁶ The World-Herald's John Jarrell added to the chorus of condemnation. He estimated that, of the more than 1,500 communist front organizations then active throughout the nation, the CIO was the most important and was a key contributor to the Communist Party.⁵⁷

National figures were not the only proponents of purging communists from labor unions. Notable Nebraskans also received significant coverage. State representative Karl Stefan of Norfolk proclaimed that the Communist Party in the United States was diligently working "toward the day when communist revolutionary plans can be put into action." Stefan expressly noted the fact that communist infiltration

into labor organizations was gaining momentum and should be uncovered as soon as possible.⁵⁸ Several weeks later, the head of the Omaha AFL, Alfred Witzling, reinforced Stefan's remarks with a statement to the World-Herald claiming that the union had recently been deluged with communist literature--literature Witzling and the Omaha AFL wanted "no part of."⁵⁹

In March 1947, the U.S Chamber of Commerce joined in the growing assault on alleged leftist labor organizations. In a press dispatch headlined "Red-Inspired Strife Feared," the Chamber warned that in the near future communist-led strikes would become numerous and proposed "cleansing the labor movement of communism."⁶⁰ Also in March, an article entitled "Kremlin Rules Reds in U.S.," described the operations of the UAW union in Detroit. The Governor of Michigan, Kim Sigler, denounced the union in an animated fashion, labeling its members "captives of the Communist Party."⁶¹ A week later, the Omaha paper reported that the UAW had indeed fallen prey to the communist element within its ranks by electing the avowed leftist Thomas Thompson as president of the Detroit branch of the CIO union.⁶²

The World-Herald ran an article in its April 1 issue detailing the strategy of the Communist Party in combating the anti-communist trend in the country. The Party was said to be organizing a nationwide twenty-four hour strike to protest the harsh treatment the organization had received.

Apparently, the Party hoped to convince public figures sympathetic to its cause but reluctant to express their true ideologies. This in turn, the party leadership predicted, would vault the Party into the mainstream.⁶³

Although HUAC was to begin its highly publicized investigations into the motion picture industry in May 1947, Hollywood, with its glamorous image and sophisticated lifestyle, attracted national and World-Herald interest well before that date.⁶⁴ As early as June 1946, the paper began running stories on the alleged communist influence in Hollywood. In an article on May 1, Russian journalist Konstantin Simonov reported that such prominent screen stars as Charlie Chaplin and Bette Davis supported the aims of the Soviet Union and despised the American press which had become so critical of the communist nation.⁶⁵

A syndicated column in September noted the allegations of communist propaganda in the film Forever Amber, though the column revealed no specific examples of the offensive material.⁶⁶ The writer then wondered, "How Hollywood, with its bloated salaries, got so red is completely beyond me anyway."⁶⁷ The AFL joined those levelling accusations at the film capital in an October press compilation entitled "Hollywood Stars Red Supporters." In the article, the labor union charged that several well-known stars maintained communist affiliations, including Myrna Loy, Edward G. Robinson, Orson Welles, Burgess Meredith, James Cagney,

Lionel Stander and J. Edward Bromberg.⁶⁸ The next day, the World-Herald quoted the Vice-President of the AFL, Matthew Woll, as stating that "Hollywood today is the third largest communist center in the United States."⁶⁹ In a story proudly detailing the anti-communist exploits of Hollywood union leader and Omaha native, Roy Brewer, the paper reported that the former President of the Nebraska Federation of Labor had become one of the primary enemies of Hollywood communists. Brewer had previously relocated to California where he launched a crusade to destroy the communist influence in the area, particularly within the unions in the movie capital.⁷⁰ Brewer's often aggressive actions had caused him to be "much hated" by many in the film industry.⁷¹

Late in 1946, HUAC announced that it was soon to begin an investigation of communism in Hollywood and the World-Herald followed HUAC's impending probe with great interest. According to the paper, HUAC's goal was to "ferret out the communists and communist sympathizers" shaping public opinion in the United States.⁷² Frank Hughes, a wire service writer, reported in December that the impending HUAC investigations were well justified. He claimed that Hollywood communists had developed a scheme to control copyrights in an attempt to monitor every screen-play and script.⁷³

Still in December, an article in the World-Herald

examined the plight of world-renowned actor Charlie Chaplin. It revealed that Chaplin had recently been called before HUAC during a preliminary investigation and asked about his attempts to establish a third political party with allegedly communist ties.⁷⁴ Shortly thereafter, a news bulletin again suggested Chaplin's guilt by noting that he might soon be summoned before the committee, along with Franklin Roosevelt's son, James, and former Congressman Will Rogers, Jr.⁷⁵

In February 1947, a scandal erupted involving Hollywood producer Hans Eisler and his brother, Gerhardt, regarding their apparent communist ties. On February 5, a front page story testified that former Communist Party member Louis Budenz identified Gerhardt as the top Communist Party member in the United States.⁷⁶ Forty-eight hours later, a larger headline linked Gerhardt with the recently indicted Canadian atomic spies. The story also included excerpts from the HUAC testimony of the sister of Gerhardt and Hans proclaiming both to be devoted communists and most likely receiving orders from Moscow.⁷⁷

An early March story, headlined "Hollywood Can't Deal With Reds," featured statements by the President of the Motion Pictures Association, Eric Johnston. Johnston acknowledged that communists had most likely infiltrated the industry, but added that: "We are pretty powerless to deal with them." He did assure the public that communists had

not actually influenced the content of films, but rather had been relegated to the periphery of the business.⁷⁸ By the end of the month, however, Johnston was claiming victory. He proclaimed before HUAC that the communists in the film capital had "suffered overwhelming defeat" in their attempts to establish themselves in positions of power. In the same story, however, Representative Richard Vail of Illinois refuted Johnston's assertion and argued that "March, Robinson, Sinatra [and] Cagney" were all suspected of aiding communist causes.⁷⁹ A week later, the editors of the World-Herald at least partially agreed with Johnston on the point that communists had not influenced film content. In spite of earlier comments about the movie Forever Amber, they reasoned that Hollywood's films were known to be strictly prohibited by the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and hence must be reasonably free of communist propaganda.⁸⁰

Quite predictably, in the months after World War II, the opinions and contents of the World-Herald gradually progressed to a point where domestic communism was conveyed no longer as a trivial political irritant, but rather as a threatening subversive movement. Nowhere was this more evident than in John Jarrell's four-part series on communism in February, 1947. The series in itself is noteworthy for it reveals that the paper viewed the communist threat to be serious enough to warrant an in-depth examination. Jarrell's

columns included dire warnings of communist infiltration throughout society, particularly in labor. His views seemed to coincide with the opinions of the editors of the paper. The Cold War had not yet reached its peak, however, and the World-Herald's coverage of the domestic communist menace was about to intensify.

NOTES

¹Peter Steinberg, The Great "Red Menace": United States Prosecution of American Communists, 1947-1952 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), XIII.

²Kenneth O'Reilly, Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC and the Red Menace (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 78-80.

³James Aronson, The Press and the Cold War (New York: Monthly Review, 1990), 33. Although the material provided by the FBI and Churchill's speech were certainly not the only factors in the increased public fear of communism, they have been considered prominent determinants.

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⁵"A Futile Foreign Service," editorial, OWH, 29 Nov. 1945, 8.

⁶Westbrook Pegler, "Suggests Truman Bounce Commies," syndicated column, OWH, 16 Dec. 1945, 22A.

⁷"Wherry Accuses Russians," OWH, 4 March 1946, 1.

⁸"Communist Purge Asked," OWH, 12 March 1946, 18.

⁹"Officials Knew of A-Bomb Spies," OWH, 24 March 1946, 9A.

¹⁰Peter Edson, "Unsuitable for Employment, 243 Are Discharged," syndicated column, OWH, 3 April 1946, 10.

¹¹"Wherry is Asked to Name Plotters," OWH, 4 May 1946, 3.

¹²"Wherry Says Smear Is On," OWH, 7 May 1946, 1.

¹³"Communism Unwelcome," OWH, 18 May 1946, 7.

¹⁴"Acheson Says Reds to Go," OWH, 3 July 1946, 6.

¹⁵James Selcraig, The Red Scare in the Midwest. 1945-1955: A State and Local Study (Ann Arbor, MI:

Michigan University Press, 1982), XV.

¹⁶"Democrats Spurn Reds, Says Clark," OWH, 24 June 1946, 4.

¹⁷"Clark Warns of Red Peril," OWH, 15 July 1946, 3.

¹⁸James Keogh, "Buffet Asks: Stop Reds; Democrats Plan Rebuilding," OWH, 12 July 1946, 1.

¹⁹"Reds Issue Tossed Back," OWH, 25 Oct. 1946, 12.

²⁰"Reds Can Get U.S. Secrets, Stanfill Says," OWH, 20 Aug. 1946, 6.

²¹"Red Strategy Scarcity Root," OWH, 5 Oct. 1946, 4.

²²David Cate, The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 27. "Red-baiting," however effective, was obviously not the only factor in the Republican victories. Issues such as strikes, shortages and voter dissatisfaction with the rising cost of living obviously affected the election results.

²³"Reds Lose Influence on U.S. Government," OWH, 7 Dec. 1946, 14.

²⁴"Group Urges People Purge Un-Americans," OWH, 3 Jan. 1947, 1.

²⁵"The Marzani Case," editorial, OWH, 20 Jan. 1947, 10.

²⁶"5 Committees Contain Reds," OWH, 31 Jan. 1947, 5.

²⁷John Jarrell, "Federal Jobs Cloaking Reds," OWH, 11 Feb. 1947, 8.

²⁸"President Orders Inquiry on Disloyal Jobholders; Communists First Target," OWH, 23 March 1947, 1A.

²⁹"Public Urged to Curb Reds," OWH, 9 April 1947, 25.

³⁰Curtis MacDougall, Understanding Public Opinion (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown, 1966), 291.

³¹"Camel in the Tent," editorial, OWH, 19 Oct. 1945, 24.

³²Westbrook Pegler, "Sense of Smell Reveals Commies," syndicated column, OWH, 28 Oct. 1945, 16A.

- ³³"Taft Asserts Truman Plan is CIO-PAC's," OWH, 5 Jan. 1946, 1.
- ³⁴"Reds Behind Wage Policy," OWH, 23 Feb 1946, 5.
- ³⁵O'Reilly, 174-5.
- ³⁶"Reds Balked in AFL Unions," OWH, 16 April 1946, 7.
- ³⁷"AFL to Fight CIO in South," OWH, 30 April 1946, 8.
- ³⁸"Steel Union Assails Reds," OWH, 15 May 1946, 23.
- ³⁹"Leftists Control Furniture Union," OWH, 25 June 1946, 3.
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- ⁴²"Purge of Communists," editorial, OWH, 29 Aug. 1946, 6.
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- ⁴⁴Lou Schneider, "Fifth Column Said Active," OWH, 14 Sept. 1946, 18.
- ⁴⁵"Atom Center Draws Reds," OWH, 28 Sept. 1946, 9.
- ⁴⁶"CIO Data Leak to Russ Charged," OWH, 1 Oct. 1946, 4.
- ⁴⁷"Red Pincers in U.S. Seen," OWH, 2 Oct. 1946, 2.
- ⁴⁸"Union Officials to Fight Reds," OWH, 3 Oct. 1946, 11.
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- ⁵⁰O'Reilly, 173.
- ⁵¹"Anti-Red Reuther Eyeing CIO Lead," OWH, 9 Nov. 1946, 4.
- ⁵²"Showdown in CIO on Reds is Near," OWH, 13 Nov. 1946, 16.
- ⁵³"Murray and the Communists," editorial, OWH, 15 Nov.

1946, 24.

⁵⁴"CIO Assails Communist Interference," OWH, 19 Nov. 1946, 1.

⁵⁵William Green, "AFL Chief Warns of Communism," OWH, 19 Dec. 1946, 16.

⁵⁶"Red Chips Will Fall in New Probe," OWH, 23 Jan. 1947, 1.

⁵⁷John Jarrell, "U.S. Reds Use Many Fronts," OWH, 11 Feb. 1947, 5.

⁵⁸"Stefan Warns of Communism," OWH, 2 March 1947, 4A.

⁵⁹"Red Writings Deluge AFL," OWH, 30 March 1947, 7A.

⁶⁰"Reds-Inspired Strife Feared," OWH, 13 March 1947, 9.

⁶¹"Kremlin Rules Reds in U.S.," OWH, 29 March 1947, 5.

⁶²Walter W. Ruch, "Leftists Win Biggest Local," OWH, 5 April, 1947, 2.

⁶³"Harried Reds Map Strategy," OWH, 1 April 1947, 10.

⁶⁴Nancy Lynn Schwartz, The Hollywood Writers' Wars (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 240.

⁶⁵"Red Writer Finds Hollywood Favor," OWH, 1 June 1946, 5.

⁶⁶The World-Herald's objections to "Forever Amber" may have stemmed from the fact that the film was temporarily banned by the Legion of Decency, a Catholic censorship group, because of its suggestive tone and revealing costumes.

⁶⁷George Dixon, "On Writers and Hollywood," syndicated editorial, OWH, 11 Sept. 1946, 10.

⁶⁸"Hollywood Stars Red Supporters," OWH, 1 Oct. 1946, 6.

⁶⁹"Unions May Picket Red-Tainted Films," OWH, 2 Oct 1946, 3.

⁷⁰Both Cate, 488-9, and Schwartz, 244, discuss Roy Brewer's often violent, union-busting tactics along with his personal feud with the alleged communist head of the AFL's Conference of Studio workers, Herb Sorrell.

⁷¹"Coast Reds Hate Brewer," OWH, 24 Nov 1946, 10A.

⁷²"Red Check Set For Hollywood," OWH, 27 Nov. 1946, 9.

⁷³Frank Hughes, "Reds Seek Authority Over Writers--Like Hitler Had," OWH, 1 Dec. 1946, 12A.

⁷⁴"Chaplin Faces Query About People's Front," OWH, 6 Dec. 1946, 9.

⁷⁵"Charlie Chaplin Faces Un-American Charge," OWH, 13 Dec. 1946, 7.

⁷⁶"Eisler Arrested; Testimony Sought," OWH, 5 Feb. 1947, 1.

⁷⁷"Eisler Linked With Canadian Atomic Spies," OWH, 7 Feb 1947, 1.

⁷⁸"Hollywood Can't Deal With Reds," OWH, 5 March 1947, 1.

⁷⁹"Red Secretary in U.S. Called Draft Dodger," OWH, 28 March 1947, 1.

⁸⁰"Johnston on Communism," editorial, OWH, 3 April 1947, 18.

CHAPTER TWO:

HUAC, HOLLYWOOD AND CHARGES OF SUBVERSION: MAY 1947 TO JULY 1948

As Soviet influence spread and communist parties in Europe and Asia grew increasingly active, American attention began to focus even more on the "communist threat." Between the beginning of 1947 and early 1948, the number of U.S. citizens who believed that a third World War was inevitable dramatically increased from 41 percent to 73 percent.¹ This sense of peril was reflected in an increased suspicion of American communists. In mid-1947, Representative Karl Mundt of South Dakota expressed an increasingly common opinion: "The repulsion of communism at home and abroad is the most important single task which now confronts this free republic."² Mundt's statement contained an assumption shared by many Americans, that domestic communists and foreign communists were ideologically identical--dedicated to the overthrow of the American way of life and therefore a serious threat to the American people.

From May 1947, to July 1948, the Omaha World-Herald, like most American newspapers, continued to devote considerable attention to domestic communism. As in earlier months, communist infiltration of the Federal Government and

labor unions remained central themes, but the high profile investigations of red influence in Hollywood garnered by far the most spectacular headlines. Conversely, in editorials the Omaha paper expressed a hint of moderation when approaching the issue of domestic communism, occasionally insisting that unfounded accusations and character assassinations should be discouraged.

To the members of the House Un-American Activities Committee, the investigation of Hollywood beginning in March 1947, was long overdue. As HUAC's chief investigator, Robert Stripling, put it: "If the Communist Party could seize the motion picture industry as completely as it has seized a number of supposedly impregnable U.S. unions and other organizations, it could hasten by years its long range plan to communize the country."³ Thus, the investigation into Hollywood was to concentrate on the "Communist penetration of the motion picture industry," and conservatives across the nation joined in the fight.⁴

In early May 1947, the World-Herald carried a succession of items on the impending exposure of communists in Hollywood. Syndicated columnist George Dixon commented that HUAC "ought to find plenty [of un-Americanism] there."⁵ A day later, HUAC Chairman J. Parnell Thomas stated that the initial stages of the "red probe" were intended to uncover the suspicious actions and associations of German composer and Hollywood resident Hanns Eisler, whose brother had

earlier been accused of being the leading communist in the United States.⁶ In a front page story on May 16, actor and fervent anti-communist Adolphe Menjou asserted that he believed that Hollywood was "the main center of communist activity in America. One of the greatest mediums for propaganda is located here." Menjou believed that it was the "desire and wish of the masters in Moscow" to utilize films in aiding the "overthrow of the American Government."⁷ Twenty-four hours later, the president of the Screen Writer's Guild, Emmet Lavery, bristled at the inference by those such as Menjou who unfairly labeled movieland employees communists. Lavery welcomed the imminent HUAC investigation as an opportunity for those in the film industry to demonstrate their loyalty.⁸

On June 1, Eric Johnston, President of the Motion Picture Association of America, joined the anti-communist fracas in Hollywood by expressing his concern over the red influence in the film capital. Johnston said he believed all communists were dupes of the Kremlin and stated that he wanted "to see it become a joke to be a communist in America."⁹ A month later, syndicated columnist Bob Considine noted that J. Parnell Thomas, intent on exposing communist infiltration in the Hollywood film industry, was not yielding to the pressure from the left to cancel the hearings. Considine, however, seemed concerned as to the advisability of such hearings, predicting they might become

"wild" and uncontrolled.¹⁰

In September, Hanns Eisler, labeled the "Karl Marx of the musical field" by Stripling, emerged as a popular target in part because of the alleged support he received from New Dealers.¹¹ A news report described the intervention of former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt on behalf of the "enemy alien" Eisler during his attempt to enter the United States in the 1930's. The paper stressed that, despite his admission that he had once been affiliated with the Communist Party in his native Germany, Eisler was permitted entry.¹² Forty-eight hours later, the Omaha paper revealed that HUAC was seeking the indictment and deportation of Eisler, branding him an "international communist agent."¹³ The House Committee insisted the composer had committed perjury and passport fraud because he lied about having left the Party prior to his entry.¹⁴

The Omaha daily consistently supported HUAC's actions against Eisler. In an editorial entitled "Little Hans," the paper criticized Mrs. Roosevelt for aiding an alleged communist and implied that her actions reflected the thinking of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. The editors wondered what other New Dealers might have conspired to allow Eisler and other communists to gain admission into the United States.¹⁵ Another damning editorial in early October refuted Eisler's testimony that he had resigned from the Communist Party in the 1920's. As proof, the editors

cited Eisler's visit to Moscow in 1933 during which he was "treated as an honored guest--a treatment not customary for obscure musicians who are backsliding communists."¹⁶

Perhaps in an effort to balance its coverage, the paper did carry Eisler's answer to the charges. He remarked that in 1933 Hitler had put a price on his head and he "never dreamed that a similar situation could arise in the United States, a country that I love."¹⁷

By the end of October, HUAC commenced its long-awaited Hollywood hearings with a list of star witnesses which resembled the cast of a movie extravaganza. The hearings dominated the headlines in the World-Herald for over a week as film personalities summoned before the Committee attracted the attention of millions of Americans. On October 20, the day before reports of testimony began, the Omaha paper ran an article expressing the displeasure of nineteen witnesses hostile to the Committee's investigation and noted that they were to request cancellation of their subpoenas--which HUAC promptly denied. In the same story, the National Lawyers Guild released a statement accusing HUAC of creating a "condition of hysteria and intimidation in which freedom of speech is stifled and liberty of all Americans is imperiled."¹⁸

On October 21, the allegations of communist infiltration within the film industry began with a flurry as the World-Herald pasted a two-column headline, "Film

Capital's Reds Contribute to Party," on page one. Producer Sam Wood was quoted as testifying that "a tight disciplined group of Communist Party members and party liners" were attempting to influence and control prominent labor unions in Hollywood. Wood added that the danger of communist infiltration of the industry was not just that subversive elements could be inserted into films, but also that patriotic material could be excluded.¹⁹ The following day Menjou repeated his accusations and remarked that "I'm a witch hunter if the witches are communists."²⁰

The World-Herald paid particular attention to the testimony of Robert Taylor, a native Nebraskan, who took the stand to denounce communism. Taylor said he certainly recognized a "pink side" in the film industry, but was not "forced" to appear in the pro-communist movie Song of Russia as had been rumored.²¹ Twenty-four hours later, a World-Herald editorial heaped praise on the young actor in an offering entitled "Robert Taylor, American." The editors expressed appreciation for "a young American, uncontaminated by the graceless isms of the day," who was willing to "speak as an American, to Americans, for America."²²

In the midst of the Hollywood hearings, the editors surprisingly injected a cautionary note in their coverage of the proceedings. In a late October editorial, they warned World-Herald readers that HUAC "should use caution. It should try to see to it that innocent people are not

smeared....The committee should demand facts, not opinions."²³ It is interesting to note that the editors raised no objections to purging the communist influence from the motion picture industry, but were simply concerned that innocent people could be implicated in the process.

Another front-page story covered the appearance of stars such as Ronald Reagan, George Murphy, Gary Cooper and Robert Montgomery before the Committee and described the scene as straight "from one of Hollywood's super-epics."²⁴ Reagan reportedly offered the Committee "a most intelligent and discerning account of the communist threat in Hollywood as he saw it," but urged that this nation not abandon its democratic ideals in an effort to extinguish the red menace.²⁵

After those who supported the Committee's point of view, HUAC called a string of hostile witnesses. Script writer John Howard Lawson, described earlier as "one of the most active communists in Hollywood," earned a contempt of Congress citation when he declined to answer the Committee's questions. Four times Lawson refused to reveal whether or not he was a communist and was predictably chastised by the Committee.²⁶ The next day, three other screenwriters, Dalton T. Trumbo, Albert Maltz and Alvah Bessie, were also cited for contempt as a result of their refusal to answer the same question. World-Herald coverage of this confrontation included no indication that the witnesses

might have been trying to challenge the Committee's authority to compel testimony about private political beliefs and associations. Neither the wire services nor the paper's editors raised the issue of constitutional rights. Coverage focused on the Committee's point of view, including a stern statement by Chairman Thomas indicating that there was "more evidence of communist activities" in Hollywood "than any other place we have ever investigated."²⁷ True to form, HUAC issued four more contempt citations the following day despite testimony from the President of the Screen Writers Guild, Emmet Lavery, that the communist influence in the film industry was "overestimated" by the Committee.²⁸

In spite of its earlier warning against unsupported allegations, the World-Herald seemed to support the Committee's actions. On Halloween, World-Herald writer John Jarrell denounced those who criticized Thomas in his treatment of hostile witnesses, calling the Chairman's actions warranted and stating that Thomas justifiably disliked communists and those, presumably communists, who refused to answer questions directly.²⁹ Shortly thereafter, the paper ran a column by George Dixon which defended HUAC: "If the investigation produces no other result than to render the moviemakers wary of letting subversive stuff into their pictures, it will have been well worth while."³⁰

Following the conclusion of HUAC's public hearings, many prominent conservatives initiated a campaign for

federal censorship of motion pictures to purge films of their allegedly pro-communist content. The editors of the Omaha paper, however, adamantly disapproved of any form of censorship and argued that the Hollywood investigation, though mainly symbolic, was sufficient to deter communists in the film industry. The editors continued by claiming that "exposures of individual Hollywood communists is strong enough medicine. Anything stronger might kill the patient."³¹ Clearly, the World-Herald saw no threat to civil liberties in the Committee's use of exposure as a means of punishing individual communists. Nor did it view this exposure as an attempt at censorship as did many in the film community. In an editorial the following week, the paper criticized those who claimed HUAC was trying to censor movie content and concluded that the American people "are quite capable of distinguishing between" serious threats to civil rights and the "breast beating" of a few communists.³²

At the end of November, 1947, the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to uphold the contempt citations of the ten film industry figures who refused to testify before HUAC. The editors of the World-Herald held no sympathies for the individuals dubbed the "Hollywood Ten." Reacting to charges by the American Civil Liberties Union that HUAC had violated the rights of the ten, the editors claimed that it had become "increasingly clear that the 10 motion picture people...are not defenders, but

abusers of American civil rights." The editorial also stated that the consensus of opinion throughout the country "seems to be on the side of Congress."³³

Although not as glamorous or as captivating as the Hollywood hearings, stories reporting subversion within the Federal Government also occupied the Omaha press. On May 23, 1947, the World-Herald printed a front page article stating that former State Department employee Carl Marzani had been convicted by a jury for concealing his close relationship with the Communist Party.³⁴ A month later, the Omaha daily headlined a front page story "State Department in Anti-Red Drive," in which it noted that ten individuals had recently been classified as "bad risks" and terminated.³⁵ On July 18, the Associated Press (AP) reported that, in the nine months ending in March, there had been "at least 241 and probably 811 federal employees" fired for suspicion of disloyalty, most as a result of associations with communism.³⁶

On August 19, Truman's vaunted loyalty program began official operation after much debate. The World-Herald celebrated that event with: "Loyalty Check for 1,900,000 Opens Quietly." The article explained that the investigations would not be centered on an individual's political beliefs, but rather on membership in organizations deemed communist "fronts."³⁷ To some, the loyalty reviews were "a terrible moment" in American history which resulted

in the firing of "thousands of loyal citizens."³⁸ The World-Herald, however, found little fault with the proceedings. In late August, it ran a column by Douglas Larsen which claimed that federal employees were sincerely relieved by the controversial loyalty checks. Larsen quoted a clerk in the Department of Labor as hoping that after the probes, "the people and Congress will be convinced that there is no more communism in the government and get off our back."³⁹ In an apparent attempt to provide some objectivity to the President's loyalty program, the editors ran a syndicated column by Kenneth Dixon that offered a contrasting view of the loyalty directive. Dixon discussed the cases of three fired federal workers who had been totally exonerated of any improprieties, yet were still not reinstated to their former positions.⁴⁰

In an October article headlined "U.S. to Crack Red Spy Ring," the World-Herald linked previously mentioned allegations of government infiltration to atomic espionage. The press dispatch asserted that no less than fifty individuals in six government agencies had been involved in efforts to leak atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. One federal security officer remarked that the communist spies "were clever, resourceful and as well disciplined as any the government has ever encountered."⁴¹ Shortly thereafter, the World-Herald ran an article suggesting that communist agents had approached renowned atomic scientist J. Robert

Oppenheimer for the purpose of obtaining vital atomic secrets.⁴² In December, a syndicated column by George Dixon denounced the actions of "ideological lawyers" attempting to stifle the various attempts to expose the communist influence within the government. Dixon stated flatly that the American people should "cease flirting with the enemy" and let the FBI Director do his job.⁴³

In early 1948, the World-Herald continued its coverage of subversive elements in the government with an AP dispatch headlined "Red Beachheads Laid to New Deal." The story repeated statements by Carroll Reece, Chairman of the GOP, who attempted to correlate the communist issue with the Democratic New Deal. Reece asserted that in the last fifteen years, communist strongholds "were established" in the Federal Government.⁴⁴ Less than a month later, a front page story detailed the work of FBI agents in uncovering evidence against those communist elements in an effort to crack a massive Soviet spy network.⁴⁵

For two weeks in March, a series of inflammatory articles by James Sweinhart of the North American News Alliance appeared, warning of an imminent communist takeover. The first, entitled "Red Menace Infiltrates U.S. As Loyal Citizens Slumber," insisted that communists were working toward the destruction of the U.S. Government and attempting to "force the American people under the political and economic rule of Soviet Russia." Sweinhart continued

ominously: "Never before have the United States Government and the American people been in danger of so great a threat."⁴⁶ In the fourth of the series, appropriately headlined "Slavery for America Major Purpose of Communist Party," Sweinhart expressed similar views on the conspiratorial and destructive aims of American communists against the Federal Government.⁴⁷

Shortly after Sweinhart's frightful predictions, the World-Herald reported that Republican presidential hopeful from Minnesota, Harold Stassen, had addressed a gathering at Omaha's Central High School and disclosed that he favored legislation outlawing the Communist Party. Stassen soundly defeated Thomas Dewey in the Nebraska primary shortly thereafter, but his stand on domestic communism was not endorsed by the World-Herald.⁴⁸ Instead, the paper favored a new measure that was about to emerge from the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee.⁴⁹

Three weeks later, the paper ran a front page story headlined, "2,700 Spies Enter U.S. in '47." The article included a claim by HUAC member, Karl Mundt, that no less than 2,700 Soviet spies had gained entry into the United States in 1947. As a result, Mundt, along with California's Richard Nixon, had introduced a bill which would force the Communist Party and "front" organizations to register with the government as agents of a foreign power.⁵⁰ The next day, an editorial by the Omaha paper commended the proposed

Mundt-Nixon bill on the grounds that "there is nothing a communist dreads more than being smoked out, excepting of course, disapproval of Moscow."⁵¹

Preceding the House vote on the bill in late May, the World-Herald continued in its support of the legislation, noting that a number of communists and sympathizers had written letters to congressmen expressing disapproval of the bill and had forged the names of prominent citizens to the letters in an all-out effort to influence opinion. Liberal Democrats were arguing that the Mundt-Nixon bill would drive communists further underground and complicate the Truman Administration's anti-communist efforts. To answer the Democrats, the editors labeled the forgeries a sign of desperation and argued that "if the communists didn't think [the Mundt-Nixon bill] would work, they probably wouldn't be so frantic in their opposition."⁵²

Despite the fraudulent letter writing campaign, the Mundt-Nixon bill overwhelmingly passed the House, 314 to 58. But, after the Mundt-Nixon bill had been delayed in the Senate for over two months and hope for passage dimmed, the World-Herald editors, in an editorial entitled "Communist Conspirators," expressed hope that if the measure did not pass, the growing communist menace could be checked under violations of the Smith Act which made it unlawful to advocate the overthrow of the government by forcible means.⁵³

Although the Hollywood hearings and threats of government infiltration garnered most of the media's ink in 1947, labor organizations remained a popular target in the World-Herald. Until 1947, communists and anti-communists in organized labor "continued to observe an uneasy truce" which quickly dissipated in the controversy over the Taft-Hartley Act.⁵⁴ The Taft-Hartley legislation stipulated that all leaders of labor organizations were required to sign non-communist loyalty statements in order to qualify for arbitration with the National Labor Relations Board. Although Republicans and other conservatives supported the Taft-Hartley Act as a justifiable response to a crisis situation, a great number of labor supporters were particularly offended at the loyalty requirement "because it implied that unionists were uniquely suspect" in their patriotism.⁵⁵

The World-Herald clearly favored the Taft-Hartley Act and initially seemed to support its loyalty provisions. In the midst of the national debate in May, the World-Herald ran a story reporting that the executive board of the CIO had voted to discipline all chapters affiliated with the Communist Party. But what the paper featured was the Board's conclusion that it was powerless to enforce its measure because of the difficulties in identifying communists.⁵⁶ Three days before final passage of the Taft-Hartley Act on June 23, the World-Herald ran a column

by Bob Considine that heaped praise upon a North Carolina journalist. Leon Dure Jr. had taken the matter of exposing communists into his own hands by publishing the names of all communists who were members of a local R.J. Reynolds union.⁵⁷

On July 10, 1947, the World-Herald revealed that HUAC investigations into the alleged communist infiltration of the local mentioned by Considine as well as the United Electrical Workers (UEW) were slated to begin at the end of the month.⁵⁸ Two weeks later, the paper noted that three leaders of the North Carolina union had pleaded the Fifth Amendment before HUAC in response to questions regarding their communist affiliations.⁵⁹ A later story reported that two ex-communists testified that a very small group of devoted communists had found positions in the leadership of the UEW.⁶⁰

In late August, following the Congressional vote overriding President Truman's veto of the Taft-Hartley Act, the World-Herald's editors clarified their position on the controversial legislation. While still concerned with the influence of communists in the labor movement, the editors denounced the provision of the act stipulating oaths of loyalty by union leaders. The editors exhibited little concern over whether such oaths might violate the civil liberties of labor leaders. Instead they argued that the oath requirement would simply cloak rather than eliminate

communists from unions: "As Americans should know by this time, communists do not hesitate to lie. They are schooled to do so." The editors also maintained that the loyalty oath was actually inconveniencing honest and patriotic Americans rather than exposing the intended targets--communists.⁶¹

In a September story entitled "U.S. Compiles Commie Lists," the World-Herald disclosed that Attorney General Tom Clark was in the process of completing a "master list" of communist and communist-front organizations. The list was reportedly to be used as a reference for those labor leaders signing non-communist oaths because they were required to pledge they had no associations with organizations deemed communist fronts.⁶² The Attorney General's list ultimately became a central element in the loyalty oaths signed by countless teachers, government employees and other workers. The organizations listed were identified and labeled communist without hearings or formal recourse--a common theme in Cold War America. Despite this, the World-Herald displayed no objections to Clark's list and, except for questioning the effectiveness of the loyalty oaths, supported the Taft-Hartley Act.

The issue of communists in the labor movement continued to preoccupy the editors of the World-Herald through the fall of 1947. An editorial in October admitted that "communists are a convenient whipping boy these days" but

added that labor leaders ought to leave their communist colleagues "to carry on alone."⁶³ As if in response, the leadership of the CIO began to do just that. In spite of their earlier admitted difficulties in identifying communists, the CIO began to oust the tainted unions. Not surprisingly, an October editorial in the Omaha paper commended the direction the CIO was pursuing. The editors affirmed that "the CIO still has its communists, of course, but the important news is that the communists do not have the upper hand."⁶⁴

By early 1948, the World-Herald seemed to portray the CIO's anti-communist leaders almost sympathetically. Their efforts to rid the union of communists and the third party supporters of Henry Wallace were conveyed in an amusing cartoon in the editorial section which portrayed a haggard man dubbed "CIO," with two dogs, "The Reds" and "Third Partyites," attacking his ankles. The caption read: "I'm fed up with you! Scram! Gosh! Don't yuh understand plain English? Beat it! Scat! Vamoose!"--which concluded: "That's the trouble with making pets of 'em."⁶⁵

In an extended series on the communist menace in America, World Herald writer Harold Andersen commented that one need look no further than Omaha to locate an "example of the way a handful of communists takes over a labor union." Andersen claimed that the Omaha local of the CIO United Packinghouse Workers was overrun by communists "sent in from

outside." The President of the union, Patrick Ratigan, remarked in the column that the communist members of the organization had used "tricks" to assert control. Such "tricks" included dragging union meetings out for hours upon hours and thus causing them to be as boring as possible. After most members left, the communists who remained would outnumber the non-communists. Then, the communists could speak openly and pass resolutions which mirrored the Communist Party line.⁶⁶

In the sixth article in the same series entitled "Red Aim Told by Batterson," Andersen reaffirmed communist attempts to dominate local labor unions through an interview with the head of the Iowa-Nebraska-Kansas chapter of the Communist Party, Warren Batterson. In the story, Batterson admitted that one of the primary goals of the Party was "to build the unions" in an effort to gain control of American industry.⁶⁷

During the summer of 1948, attempts by communists to infiltrate labor once again emerged as a prominent topic in the Omaha press. On July 3, in a press dispatch headlined "Reds Blanket Key Industries," the paper disclosed that communists controlled "the key sections" of industry in New York City, including such light industry as department stores which had previously been largely ignored by communist infiltrators.⁶⁸ Twenty-four hours later, an AP story noted that Senator Fred Hartley was to ferret out the

"poison tentacles of communism" in unions in the upcoming months. In the story, Hartley warned that "loyal and patriotic Americans are either indifferent" or simply not convinced of the grave threat that communism had cast upon the nation "until they wake up and find the communists have seized control, but by then it is too late."⁶⁹

From May 1947 to July 1948, the World-Herald expressed increasingly serious concerns about domestic communism. While the HUAC investigation of Hollywood led the parade of headlines, the paper retained and even intensified its coverage of allegations of infiltration of the government and the labor movement. In this sense, its stories mirrored those of the rest of the nation's press. The World-Herald's editors did express modest concerns about the dangers of unfounded accusations, particularly during the Hollywood hearings, and saw little point to the loyalty statements required of labor leaders by the Taft-Hartley Act. Yet they never fully addressed the dangers to free expression and association inherent in the new anti-communism. The paper supported HUAC, the loyalty program, the Attorney General's list, the Mundt-Nixon Bill and other activities designed to expose, and through exposure, to punish domestic communists. To the editors the threat to the nation seemed to warrant such drastic measures.

NOTES

¹James Aronson, The Press and the Cold War (New York: Monthly Review, 1970), 37.

²"Repulsion of Reds Top Job for U.S.," OWH, 2 July 1947, 1.

³Robert Stripling, The Red Plot Against America (NY: Arno Press, 1949, reprinted 1977), 70.

⁴Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, Final Report, S. Rept. 755, Book III, Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans, 94th Cong., 2d sess., 1976.

⁵George Dixon, OWH, "Platypusist Finds Mr. Stefan Bit Reactionary," OWH, 8 May 1947, 10.

⁶"Hollywood's Red Probe Underway," OWH, 9 May 1947, 12.

⁷"Little People Fearing Reds," OWH, 16 May 1947, 1.

⁸"Movie Writer Urges Red Inquiry," OWH, 17 May 1947, 22.

⁹"Eric Johnston Terms Red Kremlin Dupes," OWH, 5 June 1947, 1.

¹⁰Bob Considine, "Hughes Show Submerges Gerhardt Eisler's Trial," syndicated column, OWH, 9 Aug. 1947, 8.

¹¹David Cate, The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 496.

¹²"Mrs. Roosevelt Intervened," OWH, 25 Sept. 1947, 1.

¹³Walter Goodman, The Committee (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 207.

¹⁴"Action Against Eisler Urged," OWH, 27 Sept. 1947, 1.

¹⁵"Little Hans," editorial, OWH, 29 Sept. 1947, 4.

¹⁶"The Eisler Case," editorial, OWH, 4 Oct. 1947, 4.

¹⁷"Eisler, Wife Surrender," OWH, 7 Oct. 1947, 1. In February, 1948, Hanns Eisler was convicted of concealing his association with the Communist Party in his native Germany from U.S. immigration authorities and was scheduled for deportation. Following his conviction, Eisler returned to his homeland.

¹⁸"Film People Slate Battle on Subpoenas," OWH, 20 Oct. 1947, 1.

¹⁹"Film Capital's Reds Contribute to Party," OWH, 21 Oct. 1947, 1.

²⁰"Thrown Out of Hollywood Probe," OWH, 22 Oct. 1947, 1+.

²¹"Taylor Tells of Pink Influence in Movies," OWH, 23 Oct. 1947, 1.

²²"Robert Taylor, American," editorial, OWH, 24 Oct. 1947, 26.

²³"Time for Caution," editorial, OWH, 23 Oct. 1947, 8.

²⁴"House Inquiry Smears Films, Garfield Says," OWH, 24 Oct. 1947, 1.

²⁵Robert K. Carr, The House Committee on Un-American Activities: 1945-1950 (Ithaca: Cornell U. Press, 1952), 375.

²⁶"Lawson Called Most Active Red," OWH, 28 Oct. 1947, 1.

²⁷"Squirm Out Words Flung at Red Probe," OWH, 29 Oct. 1947, 1.

²⁸"4 More Cited for Contempt," OWH, 30 Oct. 1947, 3.

²⁹John Jarrell, "Thomas has Difficult Job in Exposing Hollywood Reds," OWH, 31 Oct. 1947, 3.

³⁰George Dixon, "Hollywood Curtains Drawn Aside by Hollywood Probe," syndicated column, OWH, 4 Nov. 1947, 6.

³¹"Not Censorship," editorial, OWH, 12 Nov. 1947, 8.

³²"Thomas on Censorship," editorial, OWH, 17 Nov. 1947, 6.

³³"Four Little Words," editorial, OWH, 11 Dec. 1947, 10. The editors' assessment of public opinion may have been flawed. David Cate has noted that a Gallup poll taken immediately after the hearings revealed that the contempt citations were very unpopular as only 14% of respondents approved and 39% disagreed with the resolutions. Cate, 496.

³⁴"Jury Convicts Carl Marzani," OWH, 23 May 1947, 1.

³⁵"State Department in Anti-Red Drive," OWH, 28 June 1947, 1+.

³⁶"241 Dismissed for Disloyalty," OWH, 18 July 1947, 1.

³⁷"Loyalty Check for 1,900,000 Opens Quietly," OWH, 19 Aug. 1947, 1.

³⁸David Halberstam, The Powers That Be (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 622.

³⁹Douglas Larsen, "Loyalty Tests Seen as Relief," OWH, 27 Aug. 1947, 14.

⁴⁰Kenneth Dixon, "Loyalty Checks by U.S. Creates Doubts," syndicated column, OWH, 7 Oct. 1947, 14.

⁴¹"U.S to Crack Red Spy Ring," OWH, 17 Oct. 1947, 1.

⁴²"Russia Asked Atom Secrets," OWH, 31 Oct. 1947, 1.

⁴³George Dixon, "Disloyalty Probers Face Wrecking Crew," syndicated column, OWH, 3 Dec. 1947, 20.

⁴⁴"Red Beachheads Laid to New Deal," OWH, 10 Jan. 1948, 5.

⁴⁵"G-Men Working Long Hours on Spy Case," OWH, 5 Feb. 1948, 1.

⁴⁶James Sweinhart, "Red Menace Infiltrates U.S. as Loyal Citizens Slumber," OWH, 7 March 1948, 25A.

⁴⁷_____, "Slavery for America Major Purpose of Communist Party," OWH, 10 March 1948, 2.

⁴⁸"Stassen Says Outlaw Reds," OWH, 13 April 1948, 3.

⁴⁹"Bill to Check Reds Favored," OWH, 15 April 1948, 20.

⁵⁰"2,700 Spies Enter in '47," OWH, 7 May 1948, 1.

⁵¹"The Reds Don't Like It," editorial, OWH, 8 May 1948,

14.

⁵²"Campaign of Forgery," editorial, OWH, 18 May 1948, 18.

⁵³"Communist Conspirators," editorial, OWH, 22 July 1948, 6. The Mundt-Nixon bill failed to pass before adjournment of the Congressional session and was reintroduced in 1949. Its provisions were later incorporated into the Internal Security Act of 1950. The Smith Act, passed in 1940, was the first peacetime act aimed at seditious speech and actions and was later used to prosecute high level officials of the United States Communist Party.

⁵⁴Robert H. Zieger, The CIO: 1935-1955 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 253.

⁵⁵Ibid., 247.

⁵⁶"CIO Cannot Punish Union," OWH, 17 May 1947, 19.

⁵⁷Bob Considine, "Editor Makes History, Lists Communist Agitators," syndicated column, OWH, 20 June 1947, 12.

⁵⁸"Probe Into Red Infiltrations Set," OWH, 10 July 1947, 3.

⁵⁹"CIO Officers Mum in Quiz on Red Links," OWH, 24 July 1947, 1.

⁶⁰"Reds Control Entire UEW," OWH, 26 July 1947, 3.

⁶¹"A Test That Fails," editorial, OWH, 26 Aug. 1947, 6.

⁶²"U.S. Compiles Commie Lists," OWH, 12 Sept. 1947, 7.

⁶³"A Few Communists," editorial, OWH, 1 Oct. 1947, 20.

⁶⁴"CIO Joins the Union," editorial, OWH, 17 Oct. 1947, 16.

⁶⁵Dorman Smith, "That's the Trouble With Making Pets of 'Em," cartoon, OWH, 17 Feb. 1948, 12.

⁶⁶Harold Andersen, staff reporter, "Red Minority Won Rule of Omaha Union," OWH, 15 March 1948, 1.

⁶⁷Harold Andersen, "Red Aim Told by Batterson," OWH, 19 May 1948, 9.

⁶⁸"Reds Blanket Key Industry," OWH, 3 July 1948, 5.

⁶⁹"Reds in Labor Probe Widens," OWH, 4 July 1948, 5A.

CHAPTER THREE

HISS AND CHAMBERS: AUGUST 1948 TO DECEMBER 1948

The final five months of 1948, labeled the "most celebrated" period in the history of the controversial House Un-American Activities Committee, was an extraordinary time in American history.¹ During those months, the fascinating case of Alger Hiss preoccupied the nation's press and dominated the headlines of the Omaha World-Herald, forcing other communist-related issues, such as the indictment of the eleven top leaders of the U.S. Communist Party and communist infiltration of labor, to the inside pages of the paper.² Thus, from August to December 1948, Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers captivated the American audience with an intricate tale of diplomatic intrigue, treason and espionage, and the World-Herald relayed the story in great detail.

In early August, the House Un-American Activities Committee opened hearings focusing on Soviet espionage in the United States. Ex-communist and confessed spy Elizabeth Bentley initiated what would become HUAC's shining and defining moment--the exposure of Alger Hiss as a former communist agent. On August 1, the World-Herald ran a prominent front page article, "Spy Says Reds Told of D-Day,"

featuring Bentley's initial testimony. She claimed that government employees supplied Soviet agents with information concerning the American invasion of France in 1944. Bentley named former Roosevelt aide, Lauchlin Currie, and former Assistant Secretary of Treasury, Harry Dexter White, as culprits in the scandal along with several employees of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).³ The following day, the World-Herald carried HUAC's assertion that it had enough evidence in its possession to substantiate approximately half of the thirty charges Bentley had levelled during the previous day's testimony.⁴

In spite of the sensational headlines, when reporting Bentley's initial revelations, the World-Herald assumed a moderate tone. The pattern of the paper seemed to be to dismiss widespread charges of espionage but instead to concentrate on individual cases. The editors acknowledged that "there has long been a suspicion that communist infiltration of the Federal Government is serious," but remained skeptical that "high government officials...gave secret information to the Russians." The editorials also warned that the individuals accused by Bentley should not be presumed guilty until evidence could be produced.⁵ However, a week later the World-Herald ran a story emphasizing the communist threat in the United States and warning that there were currently more communists in the country than in 1917 Russia.⁶

Another front page article on August 4 lent credence to the World-Herald's call for discretion in accepting Bentley's charges. In it, William Remington denied the accusations by the former spy that he had been involved in the Soviet espionage ring.⁷ In the same story, however, Whittaker Chambers emerged on the scene to corroborate Bentley's story. He testified that he had been a member of the underground spy ring that Bentley had identified. Chambers claimed that after his voluntary departure from the group in the late 1930's, he had discussed the matter with then Assistant Secretary of State Adolph Berle but that his warnings had been ignored.⁸ Twenty-four hours later, the paper revealed that former government employee, Nathan Silvermaster, had been improperly aided by Lachlin Currie in retaining his federal position despite the fact that Silvermaster, according to FBI records, was a Communist Party member.⁹

By mid-August, with the HUAC investigations garnering headlines around the nation, President Truman denounced the proceedings "with new vehemence" and proclaimed that the hearings were "a red herring with the worst kind of smell."¹⁰ The following morning, the World Herald ran a syndicated column by George Dixon entitled "Commies Should Like Red Herring Charge." Dixon argued that the President had actually "given more aid and comfort to the enemy in our midst than it could ever get from the Kremlin."¹¹

On August 15, the Omaha paper printed the first mention of Alger Hiss as a possible communist agent. Chambers' testimony labeling Hiss a willing Soviet spy was recounted along with a careful "point-by-point denial" of the accusations by Hiss and his assertion that "he did not know his accuser."¹² Shortly thereafter, HUAC scheduled a session to allow the two individuals to meet in person in order to clear discrepancies in their testimonies.¹³

The two men who would dominate news stories around the nation for months finally faced one another unexpectedly on August 17.¹⁴ On the 18th, the World-Herald reported, "Hiss Says He Knew Chambers, Ex-Red." The story revealed that Hiss had recanted his earlier statement about not knowing Chambers but now admitted that he did recognize him as a man he knew under the name George Crosley. Hiss, however, adamantly asserted that he had never maintained connections with the Communist Party through Chambers or through any other individual. The report also included a reaffirmation by Chambers of his earlier charges against Hiss, adding that Chambers pleaded with the former State Department employee to distance himself from the Party, but "Hiss wept as he refused."¹⁵

After the arranged meeting of the two star witnesses, HUAC attempted to sift the truth from the conflicting testimony and announced that the Committee was in contact with an alleged acquaintance of both men who "may be able to

prove who perjured himself."¹⁶ An August 20 press dispatch included the damning revelation that Hiss refused to submit to a polygraph test to support his assertion that he had "never belonged to a pre-war communist network."¹⁷

At the end of August, Hiss and Chambers once again appeared in front of HUAC together with each attempting to discredit the other. The World-Herald devoted front-page coverage to the story and headlined it: "Hiss Terms Chambers Traitor, Spy, Liar; Questions Sanity of Accuser." At the outset of testimony, Chambers refused to provide his address for the record claiming he feared for his safety from radical communists. He added bluntly that notifying Hiss of his place of residence was "tantamount to telling the Communist Party." Chambers continued by noting that "80 per cent of Hiss'" testimony before the House Committee had been fabricated. Hiss countered by attesting to his own character, honor and years of loyal service to the Federal Government while questioning the sanity of Chambers.¹⁸ In yet another front page article the following day, another ex-communist turned fervent anti-communist, Louis Budenz, put additional chinks in Hiss' armor. The World-Herald highlighted Budenz's statement before HUAC that Alger Hiss was considered a "communist by party leaders in 1940 and 1941."¹⁹ Budenz later asserted that Hiss was "held in high esteem by the Communist conspiracy" in the United States, not only because of the secret information he pilfered, "but

also because he could persuade" the leaders of the country to "give away great sections of the earth to Stalin."²⁰

On August 28, the World-Herald ran a press dispatch once again challenging Hiss' testimony that he knew Chambers only as George Crosley and not after 1935. The report discussed an alleged incident in 1936 in which Hiss had supplied the down payment on a farm house and had allowed Chambers to assume the payments. If true, observed Representative Karl Mundt of South Dakota, the legal documents involved in such a transfer would establish "the fact that Chambers was known as Chambers [to Hiss] and not as George Crosley."²¹ In the same edition of the World-Herald, an editorial questioned Hiss' denial of membership in the Communist Party by stating that if the young lawyer "was-and-is a communist, then communism has had a man in some frighteningly important places in the American Government." The "frighteningly important places" specified by the editorial included the Tehran Conference in 1943 where Hiss played an integral role in shaping international policy.²² A day later, HUAC released an official statement insisting that the burden of proof in the Hiss-Chambers case had "definitely shifted from Mr. Chambers to Mr. Hiss."²³

The World-Herald seemed to agree with that conclusion. An editorial in early September asserted that HUAC should be less concerned with petty details and more concerned with uncovering hard evidence of Hiss' supposed communist

involvement. The editors argued that the former State Department employee's record should be investigated, for "it would be well worth finding out, if possible, whether Mr. Hiss consistently followed the Communist Party line." If he did, the paper concluded, Hiss was guilty of being a fellow traveller at the very least.²⁴

While not yet fully ready to condemn Hiss, the World-Herald's editors were convinced that HUAC was performing a valuable function. When the Committee suggested "that conspiratorial communists still hold Federal posts," the paper dutifully ran the story of the President's denial. But the editors added an editorial dismissing Truman's charge that HUAC's actions were politically motivated.²⁵ They went on to applaud the Committee for "doing very well" in its efforts to ferret out those communists still holding positions in the Federal Government.²⁶ Yet the element of political motivation clearly bothered the editors. Only two weeks later, with the presidential election less than two months away, the growing chorus of Republican charges that the Democrats had coddled communists prompted a moderate and candid editorial. In it the editors maintained that the rampant charges of communists-in- government were little more than speculation. None of the charges had been verified and no complicity by prominent Democrats had been proven. Given the timing of the accusations, the World-Herald dismissed most as

"politics as usual."²⁷

Despite these reservations, however, the paper continued to cover the accusations, often on the front page. Toward the end of September, the World-Herald reported an incendiary claim by HUAC that Truman had personal knowledge of atomic spies within the Federal Government but had done nothing to prevent their operation.²⁸ Similarly, an October 1 article quoted Senator Wherry as condemning Truman's reluctance to aid in the "fight against communists in our government."²⁹

Possibly due to the fact that the paper viewed many of the allegations as politically motivated, very little material was present in the World-Herald regarding communist infiltration of the government in the weeks immediately preceding and following the 1948 election. Although the World-Herald endorsed the Republican presidential candidate, Thomas Dewey, the editors never suggested that the Democrats or Truman had been soft on communists or raised the communists-in-government issue which had been so prevalent in the paper earlier in the year.

In December, the Hiss-Chambers case emerged from the shadows once again as Chambers provided evidence refuting Hiss' earlier denials of being a communist agent. On December 3, a press dispatch disclosed that "sensational new evidence involving Alger Hiss...has been uncovered" which rendered the previous testimony "mild by comparison."³⁰

Twenty-four hours later, the headline of the morning edition of the World-Herald read: "Spy Films of U.S. Secrets Found In Hollow Pumpkin." The famous "Pumpkin Papers," microfilmed copies of State Department documents allegedly given by Hiss to Chambers, indicated both had engaged in espionage activities dating from 1934 to 1938. They provided "proof of one of the most extensive espionage rings in the history of the United states."³¹ The next day, bedlam ensued as many, including the World-Herald, decried the lack of security exhibited by the federal government. Karl Mundt of South Dakota stated dejectedly that the secrets handed over by Chambers certainly were now the property of the Soviet Union. HUAC also asserted ominously that in the United States, there were "high officers of a secret army now being drilled to overthrow our government."³²

On December 6, the case against Hiss mounted as the Omaha daily reported rumors that the newly-discovered microfilm included devastating evidence against the former State Department employee and that Truman had "brought tremendous pressure" on the Committee to suppress the information.³³ The following day, the World-Herald featured another round of Chambers' testimony in a page one article entitled, "Hiss Relayed Data, Chambers Swears." The story maintained that the material acquired by Hiss for Chambers aided the Soviet Union in negotiating the 1939 Nazi-Stalin

Pact--an alliance which defied logic and shocked many throughout the world. Hiss' statement of innocence "without qualification" was also included.³⁴

HUAC decided to shield the contents of the infamous "Pumpkin Papers" from the public. The editors of the World-Herald were clearly upset by the decision and inquired why "the Russians can know [the contents of the Pumpkin Papers] but the American people cannot know."³⁵ The following day, an editorial praised Whittaker Chambers, and insisted the former spy did his country a great service by choosing to come forward with his testimony. The offering, in effect, threw the support of the World-Herald firmly behind Chambers in his battle against Hiss.³⁶

In mid-December, when the first of the "Pumpkin Papers" were released to the public, the World-Herald predictably ran a front page story on the event. In the account, Alger Hiss' credibility was once again assailed. An AP dispatch described the contents of the first twelve documents and included a picture of a manuscript, supposedly in the handwriting of Alger Hiss, which described the mobilization of British military forces eighteen months before the war. The material was dubbed "international dynamite" due to its sensitive nature.³⁷ Shortly thereafter, Representative Richard Nixon of California demanded that the "tightening of the espionage law should have the highest priority in the new Congress." Nixon also

supported a proposed measure which would have prevented accused communists from refusing to answer questions based on self-incrimination.³⁸

On December 16, another page one article entitled "Hiss Indicted on 2 Counts of Perjury," reported that HUAC members had received a "vindication of their activities" by a New York grand jury. The indictment stated that Hiss "did unlawfully, knowingly, and willfully" commit perjury while under oath.³⁹ Only the statute of limitations prevented Hiss from being indicted on a more serious and "substantive espionage charge" which some throughout the nation demanded.⁴⁰ A story the next day reported that Hiss had officially pleaded innocent to the perjury charges and that Truman still maintained the Hiss probe was politically motivated.⁴¹ Two days later, a column by World-herald staffer Victor Hass condemned the President's assertion and concluded that the evidence "seemed to prove beyond a doubt" that Hiss had aided Russia "before, and possibly, during World War II." A confident Mundt was quoted by Hass: "May I express hope that nobody will ever again refer to this case as red herring."⁴²

As with many Americans, the "Pumpkin Papers" appeared to convince the World-Herald that many of the Republican charges of 1948 had been true. While still cautious, by late December the editors seemed willing to accept the guilt of Alger Hiss and suggestions that others in high offices

might be guilty as well. An editorial entitled "Still a Hazard," on December 21 took aim at the State Department:

Judging by Mr. Chambers' charges--still not legally proved of course--one is justified in wondering whether there may not be even now employees in the State Department
...who are really the servants of Joe Stalin rather than the people of the United States.⁴³

Although communist influence in labor unions had received heavy coverage in the World-Herald in earlier months, the ordeal of Alger Hiss overshadowed the labor issue during the final five months of 1948. With no dramatic revelations regarding infiltration in labor, stories involving communists in unions were relegated to the inside pages of the paper. In the second week of August, the World-Herald reported on page four that organized labor's battle to remove communists from its organizations was "gaining results," but that communists were "scrapping every inch of the way to keep posts in American unions."⁴⁴ Two weeks later, a page seven article entitled "U.S. Ultimate Red Objective," suggested that the Soviet Union was attempting to initiate an "economic crisis" in America to enable communists "to control the labor unions."⁴⁵

In a rare front page story regarding communism in labor on September 1, the World-Herald revealed that CIO Secretary James Carey refused to testify at a Congressional hearing investigating infiltration of the CIO. Carey asserted that "such inquiries are not within the competence

of Congress," but the story seemed to suggest that he was simply trying to conceal incriminating evidence.⁴⁶ Several days later, the paper continued its portrayal of the CIO as an organization infested with communists by disclosing that members of the Transport Workers local in New York pleaded with union leaders to dismiss two officers, Douglas MacMahon and John Santo, who apparently were "more interested in serving the Communist Party" than members of their own organization.⁴⁷ A mid-September press compilation headlined "Mass Pickets Red Weapon," highlighted the communists-in-labor theme by reporting charges that union picketing had become "an instrument of insurrection" for the Communist Party.⁴⁸

Still in September, AFL President William Green released a statement to the press in which he accused the CIO of supporting "a powerful fifth column of Moscow," primarily through financial means. The story in the World-Herald, entitled "CIO Helping Reds--Green," reaffirmed the paper's position that the CIO had indeed been infiltrated by communists.⁴⁹ In the first week of October, the World-Herald featured a local labor controversy. The Omaha branch of the CIO agreed on a resolution requesting members of the Communist Party to resign from the national union. However, the local president of the labor group admitted that the proclamation was basically symbolic as union reds "wouldn't admit it" if they were communists.⁵⁰

Late in October, in a press dispatch relegated to the back pages of the paper, the controversial Taft-Hartley Act received overall praise. Although in the past the paper had questioned the effectiveness of the loyalty provision of the act, the story affirmed the World-Herald's previous support of the legislation and asserted: "The man who has been hurt worst by the Taft-Hartley law is the communist union leader." Also noted was the fact that the new legislation provided the opportunity for anti-communists such as Walter Reuther of the United Auto Workers to gain control of previously communist-dominated labor groups.⁵¹

During the middle of December, the CIO shifted to an aggressive policy in removing communists from the organization, and this change received prominent coverage in the World-Herald. A story reported that the Transport Workers had yielded to the mounting pressure from its parent group, the CIO, and passed a resolution barring Communist Party members and their "consistent supporters" from union offices.⁵² In a related incident, Omahan John Cassidy announced his resignation as international representative for the Transport Workers because of the anti-communist sentiments union leaders had exhibited.⁵³ In spite of these CIO efforts, the World-Herald continued to inform its readers that communists maintained important positions in organized labor.

In the final five months of 1948, the World-Herald devoted an enormous amount of space to the revelations of Elizabeth Bentley and Whittaker Chambers concerning Alger Hiss. As the case unfolded before HUAC, the paper revealed an obvious skepticism regarding Hiss' assertions of his innocence and repeatedly lauded Chambers for performing his duty in forwarding the incriminating evidence. The critical point seems to have come with the revelation concerning the "Pumpkin Papers" in early December. At least through November, the editors of the World-Herald remained skeptical of the mounting Republican charges of "communist-coddling" by government officials. Perhaps out of fear that Republican leaders were exaggerating the claim for partisan purposes, the editors not only warned its readers through editorials but also avoided the issue in the weeks before and after the elections. The December revelations, however, seemed to remove all doubts as to both Hiss' guilt and the existence of a substantial and continuing threat to national security.

NOTES

¹Walter Goodman, The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 226.

²Although the World-Herald did include a smattering of coverage of the indictment of the eleven top Communist Party leaders in July, the editorial offerings were insignificant until later.

³"Spy Says Reds Told of D-Day," OWH, 1 Aug. 1948, 1+.

⁴"Spy Charges Backed Up by Evidence," OWH, 2 Aug. 1948, 1.

⁵"Miss Bentley's Testimony," editorial, OWH, 3 Aug. 1948, 14.

⁶"Reds Number 80,000 in U.S.," OWH, 10 Aug. 1948, 5.

⁷For an excellent account of the loyalty investigations of William Remington, consult Gary May, Un-American Activities (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁸ "Denial Made on Atom Data," OWH, 4 Aug. 1948, 1. Berle later maintained that he refused to accept the idea that communists "were going to take over the Government" at the time of Chambers' warning. Whittaker Chambers, Witness (New York: Random House, 1952), 466.

⁹"Cabinet Man Aided Suspect Retain Job," OWH, 5 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹⁰"Russian Teacher Critically Injured in Plunge, Fears Soviet Officials," OWH, 13 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹¹George Dixon, "Commies Should Like Red Herring Charge," syndicated column, OWH, 14 Aug. 1948, 4.

¹²"Lie Detectors May be Used in Spy Case," OWH, 15 Aug 1948, 1.

¹³"Lie Detectors Will be Used in Spy Charge," OWH, 17 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹⁴Allen Weinstein, Perjury: The Hiss-Chambers Case

(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 34. Weinstein labelled the hasty meeting a "deception" designed to entice Hiss into making a mistake and implicating himself as a perjurer. For a complete account of Hiss' hearings before HUAC, refer to: U.S. Congress, House Committee on Un-American Activities. Hearings Regarding Communist Espionage in the United States Government, Part 1 July-September 1948 and Part 2 December 1948. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949.

¹⁵"Hiss Says He Knew Chambers, Ex-Red," OWH, 18 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹⁶"House to Ask Three Others If Hiss Lied," OWH, 19 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹⁷"U.S. Rejects Red Protest on Teacher," OWH, 20 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹⁸"Hiss Terms Chambers Traitor, Spy, Liar; Questions Sanity of Accuser," OWH, 26 Aug. 1948, 1.

¹⁹"Hiss was Considered Red in 1940-41," OWH, 27 Aug. 1948, 1.

²⁰Louis Budenz, The Cry Is Peace (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), 20.

²¹"Ex-Red Bought Isolated Farm as Hideaway," OWH, 28 Aug. 1948, 1.

²²"In High Places," editorial, OWH, 28 Aug. 1948, 14.

²³"House Group Asks Laws to Guard Secrets," OWH, 29 Aug. 1948, 1.

²⁴"What Alger Hiss Did," editorial, OWH, 2 Sept. 1948, 20.

²⁵"Red Cabinet Contact Hinted," OWH, 2 Sept. 1948, 26. "Charge by Prober Plain Lie--Truman," OWH, 3 Sept. 1948, 1.

²⁶"The Committee's Job," editorial, OWH, 3 Sept. 1948, 32.

²⁷"The Communist Aim," editorial, OWH, 16 Sept. 1948, 10.

²⁸"A-Bomb Scientists Accused of Spying," OWH, 28 Sept. 1948, 1.

²⁹"Fear Campaign Hit by Wherry," OWH, 1 Oct. 1948, 14.

- ³⁰"Added Hiss Data Hinted," OWH, 3 Dec. 1948, 2.
- ³¹"Spy Films of U.S. Secrets Found in Hollow Pumpkin," OWH, 4 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ³²"Probers Know Who Stole Secrets," OWH, 5 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ³³"Spy Expose Biggest Story in 50 Years," OWH, 6 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ³⁴"Hiss Relayed Data, Chambers Swears," OWH, 7 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ³⁵"The Fruit of Secrecy," editorial, OWH, 9 Dec. 1948, 24.
- ³⁶"Some Confusion Routine but House Probe Has That, More Too," editorial, OWH, 10 Dec. 1948, 28.
- ³⁷"Stolen Papers Contained International Dynamite," OWH, 12 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ³⁸"Spying Law Needs Repair, Probers Told," OWH, 13 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ³⁹"Hiss Indicted on Two Counts of Perjury," OWH, 16 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ⁴⁰David Cate, The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 60.
- ⁴¹"Truman Still Thinks Probe Red Herring," OWH, 17 Dec. 1948, 1.
- ⁴²Victor Hass, "Red Herring," OWH, 19 Dec. 1948, 1F.
- ⁴³"Still a Hazard," editorial, OWH, 21 Dec. 1948, 10.
- ⁴⁴"Unions Gain in Red Fight," OWH, 9 Aug. 1948, 5.
- ⁴⁵"U.S. Ultimate Red Objective," OWH, 20 Aug. 1948, 7.
- ⁴⁶"CIO Leader Joins Won't Talk Faction," OWH, 1 Sept. 1948, 1.
- ⁴⁷"Workers Ask Red Removal," OWH, 5 Sept. 1948, 2.
- ⁴⁸"Mass Pickets Red Weapon," OWH, 11 Sept. 1948, 20.
- ⁴⁹"CIO Helping Reds--Green," OWH, 16 Sept. 1948, 2.

⁵⁰"Union Urges Reds to Quit," OWH, 2 Oct. 1948, 3.

⁵¹"Acts Hits Union Reds Hardest," OWH, 29 Oct. 1948,
24.

⁵²"Transport Union Bars Red Officers," OWH, 10 Dec.
1948, 11.

⁵³"Unionist Resigns," OWH, 15 Dec. 1948, 22.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISS TRIAL, JOE MCCARTHY AND NEW SPIES: JANUARY 1949 TO APRIL 1951

From January 1949 to April 1951, a number of startling events throughout the world helped push concerned Americans toward the "fear and insecurity" symbolized by the term "Red Scare."¹ Confirmation that the Soviet Union had detonated its first atomic device, the complete fall of mainland China to communism and, most importantly, the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, each heightened Americans' sensitivity to the communist issue. During those same two years, Alger Hiss was tried twice and subsequently convicted of perjury, Senator Joseph McCarthy made his debut on the national scene and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were sentenced to death for espionage. Thus, with a variety of frightening events garnering headlines, America entered a critical period in the evolution of the "Red Scare."

The World-Herald expressed a bitter resentment towards Alger Hiss and those New Dealers and Democrats who supported him. The editors remained very critical of the former State Department employee throughout his perjury trials, often expressing a cynical view of his defense. These months also witnessed the first significant mention of communist

infiltration of and propaganda in schools and universities across the nation. When teachers were labeled communist and universities were accused of harboring leftists, the World-Herald printed the charges without question. As in the past, communist involvement in organized labor remained a frequent topic in the Omaha paper, but the travails of Alger Hiss, even following his conviction, clearly overshadowed all other domestic communist issues.

Early in January 1949, the World-Herald quoted a statement by the House Un-American Activities Committee asserting ominously that the nation's government was "under attack" by communist agents.² The statement presaged the reintroduction of the Mundt-Nixon bill in Congress and was accompanied by the claim that 800,000 Soviet "agents" were operating in the U.S. In addition to its registration provisions, the 1949 version of the bill would have made it illegal for a federal employee to join the Communist Party or a front organization and would have outlawed attempts to persuade any federal employee to assist the Communist Party.³ Although the World-Herald did not comment on the pending legislation, the paper did support similar measures to protect American security in the coming months and dutifully reported the exaggerated accusations of domestic communist activity which accompanied the Congressional debates.

In the late spring of 1949, the World-Herald began its

comprehensive coverage of the Hiss trial and the Omaha daily kept its readers abreast of all of the significant events of the proceedings. Essentially, the New Deal stood trial alongside the former State Department employee, who many viewed as the embodiment of the liberal, New Deal culture. During the trial, conservatives throughout the nation attempted to portray Hiss' actions as a "representative" breach of security, characteristic of New Deal liberals and their socialistic inclinations, rather than an aberration.⁴ Senator Hugh Butler of Nebraska echoed the thoughts of many when he stated that Hiss, Dean Acheson and the New Deal stood "for everything that has been wrong with the United States for years."⁵ Wire service articles in the World-Herald continually challenged the validity of claims that Hiss had never been involved in a pre-war communist spy ring. A May 31 story reported that "spectacular new evidence" had been uncovered for the upcoming trial, and that the former State Department employee "helped shape the State Department's policy before, during and after the war."⁶ Specifically, conservatives pointed to the Yalta conference of February, 1945, at which Hiss was an assistant to Roosevelt. For many, Yalta had become a symbol of the "betrayal of the national interest by pro-Communist New Dealers" who handed Eastern Europe over to the Russians without protest.⁷ Hiss' presence at the conference now provided convincing evidence of that "sell-out."

In mid-June, the Omaha paper printed a startling revelation from the Associated Press offering which lent credence to Chambers' charges. Former State Department employee, Henry Julian Wadleigh, admitted at the Hiss trial that he was one of several individuals to provide Chambers with government secrets, but stressed that he (Wadleigh) was not the supplier of the infamous "Pumpkin Papers."⁸ Two days later, an article appeared announcing that Hiss' "honor [was] at stake and his future in doubt" due to the several weeks of damning testimony.⁹

Hiss' fortunes took a sharp turn for the better later in June when Supreme Court Justices Felix Frankfurter and Stanley Reed attested to the "integrity, loyalty and veracity" of Hiss.¹⁰ The appearance of the Justices, who were accorded "an extraordinary welcome" by Judge Samuel Kaufman, later provided opponents of Hiss with arguments that the Judge had been biased in favor of the defendant.¹¹ Immediately following Frankfurter's and Reed's testimony, Hiss took the stand and denied each charge levelled against him.¹² After Hiss endured a grueling cross-examination, defense lawyers in the case accused the prosecution of staging the trial for political purposes and complained about the unfairness of the proceedings.¹³

Throughout the first Hiss trial, the World-Herald remained editorially silent. Its coverage of the trial appeared to be relatively balanced and included detailed

accounts of both the damning testimony against Hiss and the arguments of his lawyers. When that trial resulted in a hung jury, however, the editors broke their silence. In a July 11 editorial, the paper joined those conservatives claiming that Judge Kaufman had biased the proceedings in Hiss' favor. "The court seemed to lean over backward in being fair to Mr. Hiss," the editors observed. "Moreover, the tone of the judge's charge to the jury was, to say the least, not unfavorable to the defendant."¹⁴ On the same day, the paper reported that Representative Harold Velde of Illinois accused the presiding judge of showing "bias bordering on judicial misconduct." Velde, along with fellow HUAC member Richard Nixon, requested a probe of Judge Kaufman for alleged improprieties, including shaking hands with Justices Frankfurter and Reed in the presence of the jury.¹⁵ Less than a week later, Representative Kenneth Keating of New York cited the same instance of bias and urged legislation prohibiting Frankfurter and Reed from appearing at the second Hiss trial.¹⁶

The editors of the World-Herald seemed to agree with Velde, Nixon and Keating. Moreover, they rejected the political explanation which was central to Hiss' defense. They argued that the prosecution showed no evidence of ulterior political motives and that Hiss had received a fair trial.

The trial of Alger Hiss, however, was not the only

high-profile legal action against communists during this period. In July 1948, eleven top leaders of the Communist Party were indicted for violations of the Smith Act by conspiring to advocate the violent overthrow of the government. When the communists were arraigned, the editors of the World-Herald spoke out strongly against the "Communist Conspirators."¹⁷ The Omaha daily had stated previously that American communists should and could be legally prosecuted for Smith Act violations and so endorsed the government's actions.

During the trial, which ran from February to October 1949, the World-Herald, as in the Hiss affair, covered the proceedings objectively through a variety of press dispatches and compilations and provided no significant editorial comment. In October 1949, however, the Omaha daily happily reported that the eleven leaders of the Communist Party had been convicted after a grueling nine month legal battle.¹⁸ The editors of the paper seemed extremely satisfied with the verdict and "echoed the sentiments of most Americans" and other newspapers by heaping praise on Federal Judge Harold Medina for his patience and character.¹⁹ Medina's actions in the courtroom, however, have led some to conclude that there was substantial "reason to believe he was biased against the defendants," although the editors of the World-Herald never acknowledged the charge.²⁰ On October 15, an editorial

noted the "unruliness and disrespect for the court" exhibited by the defendants and their attorneys and concluded that the trial had come to a "fruitful end." The editors claimed that the judicial system had proven itself "strong enough to punish those Americans who conspire against their country."²¹ A second editorial the following day praised Judge Medina and predicted the proceedings would mark the beginning of an "important step" toward outlawing the Communist Party, a position the paper had previously opposed.²²

After the Justice Department announced its decision to try Hiss a second time for perjury, the World-Herald continued its criticism of the accused communist spy. In a September editorial, the editors remarked: "Gone is the lustrous charm that has set Alger Hiss apart from other men for years."²³ In November, the paper described Chambers' second round of testimony against Hiss in which he termed the eloquent Ivy-leaguer a "liar" and a spy--an opinion endorsed shortly thereafter by the Omaha daily.²⁴ Less than two weeks later, a press dispatch appeared in the World-Herald which essentially summarized the paper's earlier September editorial on Alger Hiss. The story disclosed that Hiss had lost "the smiling cockiness of last spring" in the face of "frightening evidence" not included in the first trial, such as allegations of an automobile allegedly given to communist William Rosen by Hiss.²⁵

Other destructive testimony levelled at Hiss came from Gerhardt Eisler's ex-wife. She testified that she had once argued with Hiss over who should be the one to persuade a State Department employee to engage in espionage.²⁶ A United Press (UP) dispatch affirmed Hiss's close relationship with the employee and highlighted the fact that the man had disappeared behind the "Iron Curtain."²⁷

By January 1950, the second trial of Alger Hiss was nearing a close and conservatives and liberals alike expressed anticipation in the verdict. On the twenty-second, the World-Herald headlined the conviction of Hiss in a front page story entitled "Hiss to Hear His Fate on Wednesday." In the wire service story the same day, Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire wondered whether Hiss was "still rendering...service [for the Soviets] when he stood at Roosevelt's elbow at Yalta?" Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin also speculated that there were "lots of borers from within left behind in the State Department." Karl Mundt of South Dakota took this occasion to express his pride in the work of HUAC:

The Hiss conviction demonstrates how an alert and energetic House Committee on Un-American Activities, supported by the FBI and the prosecution personnel of the Department of Justice, can cooperate in bringing to an end the method by which communists have been able to influence government policies.²⁸

Editorially, the World-Herald appeared very satisfied

with the verdict, if not disheartened about the possibility of communist spies still operating within the government. Several days after Hiss' conviction, an editorial lashed out against the "man, who had so many more advantages than most of us, [and] betrayed us to an enemy." The editorial continued: "No man in the history of our courts was ever convicted in face of more militant opposition." The editors identified this "militant opposition" as none other than four of the most important men in the nation at the time--President Harry Truman, Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Supreme Court Justices Frankfurter and Reed.²⁹

The World-Herald, however, did not stop at simply denouncing Alger Hiss. Reacting to a statement by Acheson in which he declared he would not sever his friendship with Hiss despite the conviction, the editors concluded that by his "sympathetic defense of Hiss, Mr. Acheson has given Congress reason to inquire whether [he] is in actuality...still strongly influenced by the fellow-traveler mentality of the Hiss era." The editors questioned whether Acheson, "in his heart condone[s] the actions of which Alger Hiss has been found guilty." They also attributed to Hiss the conversion of "nine European nations into the Communist fold" which, they suggested, increased the likelihood of an international "Marxist Revolution."³⁰

February 1950, began with yet another prominent chapter in American anti-communist history--Senator

McCarthy's infamous Wheeling, West Virginia, speech in which he claimed to have in his possession the names of 205 card-carrying communists employed by the government. Although now seen as a major milestone in the emergence of the "Red Scare," the event attracted very little attention in the World-Herald. On the day after the speech, the Omaha daily carried a story of only seven lines which was relegated to the back pages of the paper.³¹ On February 13, McCarthy garnered his first World-Herald front page story headlined "4 Pinks Named by McCarthy." The Senator charged four individuals "with communist connections," including prominent diplomat John Stewart Service.³² A week later, McCarthy again earned front page status with a blatant attack on the Truman administration. The Wisconsin lawmaker accused a presidential speech writer of being a communist and stated that he currently possessed the names of the "big three" communists employed in the State Department.³³

In a syndicated column carried in mid-March, James Marlow criticized the anti-communist "hysteria" initiated by conservatives such as McCarthy and claimed that many of the people being blamed for treason were truly loyal American citizens. Marlow argued that most of the allegations stemmed from the fact that liberal intellectuals had been acquainted with communists and their ideologies years earlier, when such behavior was fashionable, but most had disassociated themselves from the movement before it had

been deemed subversive.³⁴ Four days later, the World-Herald carried a similar column by Jay Hayden who spoke out against the tactics of McCarthy and implied that his allegations were politically motivated. Hayden lamented the fact that the accused had no means of defending themselves because McCarthy spoke with congressional immunity and was legally untouchable.³⁵

To its credit, during the early phases of McCarthy's crusade, the World-Herald provided only limited exposure for the junior Senator from Wisconsin and occasionally cautioned against his primitive tactics. In 1981, journalist Edwyn Bayley studied a number of American newspapers during the McCarthy era and concluded that the World-Herald was significantly below average in the number of articles and editorials appearing in the initial stage of McCarthy's emergence on the national scene.³⁶ The initial World-Herald position on McCarthy seemed to coincide with the opinion of City Editor Hugh Fogarty who stated that McCarthy "spoke a lot of the truth" but eventually became too "brutish" and reckless.³⁷

On March 20, the Wisconsin Senator renewed his allegations of communist infiltration within the government by claiming that "We still have most of the Hiss ring in the State Department." McCarthy also claimed that he did not believe that Alger Hiss was the "top man in the espionage ring" and that "several extremely dangerous men" remained.³⁸

Less than two weeks later, the Senator attacked the State Department's Asia consultant, Owen Lattimore. Lattimore replied that McCarthy was a "madman" engaging in an "obviously political attack upon the State Department."³⁹ Significantly, the World-Herald carried both the charges and counter-charges made by McCarthy and Lattimore.

A Senate committee headed by Millard Tydings of Maryland then cleared Lattimore of any improprieties. That ruling prompted the editors of the World-Herald to express reservations about the Wisconsin lawmaker: "Unfortunately, Senator McCarthy has pursued his investigation with more enthusiasm than evidence."⁴⁰ Soon after its editorial warning, however, the Omaha paper ran another editorial complaining that President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson were not zealous enough in their efforts to expose communists. The editors proclaimed that the two had "been asleep" and asserted that "now the people want action" in eliminating the red influence in Washington.⁴¹ Apparently, McCarthy's actions were simply too extreme and uncorroborated for the paper to support at that time.

In June, the invasion of South Korea intensified public fears. As American soldiers were dispatched to meet the communist threat, anti-communists at home exploited the opportunity. McCarthy capitalized on the war in Korea and labeled the situation a "disaster" caused by the "murderous incompetence of communists, fellow travellers, dupes and

traitors" in the State Department.⁴²

In mid-July, the World-Herald carried an Associated Press story informing readers that Julius Rosenberg had been arrested and "accused by the FBI of cloak-and-dagger recruiting for a Russian financed atom bomb spy ring." It added that the key witness against Rosenberg, David Greenglass, had been coerced unwittingly into espionage activities by Rosenberg and was prepared to reveal all.⁴³ Two weeks later, the Omaha paper reprinted an editorial from the Chicago Daily News lamenting the lack of security and claiming that the "arrest of another atomic spy will avail nothing....There is nothing important left to steal."⁴⁴

Early in September, Whittaker Chambers re-emerged as a pivotal figure in the Omaha daily. On the fifth, Chambers was quoted as stating that Alger Hiss was only a very small part of a "big conspiracy" in the government. He claimed that "40 or 50 men and women were engaged in the activities which I exposed."⁴⁵ An editorial the next day fully supported Chambers' accusations and denounced Secretary of State Acheson as the primary culprit. The editors associated the growing success of communists throughout the world with the "friendly collaboration of the government in Washington."⁴⁶

In January 1951, Attorney General J. Howard McGrath attempted to dispel the fears of Americans by assuring them that domestic communists were "well under control" and

pledged that every effort had been undertaken to remove communists from the government.⁴⁷ The editors of the World-Herald approved of such actions and bristled at suggestions by liberals that removing communists from government posts was unconstitutional. When liberals questioned anti-communist programs closer to home, the editors became more assertive. In February 1951, an article by syndicated columnist Marquis Childs poked fun at Nebraska Governor Val Peterson for instructing the State Patrol to identify communists within the state. An editorial acknowledged that although the FBI had concluded that only fifty-seven members of the Communist Party resided in Nebraska, if war with Russia commenced: "How many men would it take to blow up the bridges across the Missouri....How many to wreck the power plant....How many to poison Omaha's water supply?" The editors added that an effort to identify communists "does not seem an unreasonable program."⁴⁸

In the early spring of 1951, the World-Herald followed the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg through wire service stories but remained editorially silent. On March 8, the paper included excerpts of the opening statements by prosecuting attorney Robert Saypol, who described the Rosenbergs as traitors who gave the Soviet Union the "key to survival of this nation and the peace of this world."⁴⁹ Two days later David Greenglass labeled his own brother-in-law, Julius Rosenberg, a traitor and insisted that the couple had

contacted his wife in order to convince her to pilfer atomic secrets from him.⁵⁰

Late in March, the Rosenbergs were convicted of espionage, and a week later they were sentenced to death for their crimes.⁵¹ The World-Herald included the comments of Judge Irving Kaufman charging the couple with the deaths of thousands of American soldiers in Korea and the potential murder of millions in an atomic conflict.⁵² Interestingly, the Omaha paper relegated the death sentences to page eight, which mirrored the World-Herald's relative indifference to the proceedings. The paper seemed to presume the guilt of the accused, commented sparingly on the Rosenberg's plight and offered no reservations concerning the death sentences.

Shortly after the sentencing of the Rosenbergs, the Omaha daily ran a United Press story listing the four "deadliest" spies in modern American history. Klaus Fuchs, Harry Gold and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were blamed for undermining America's security and the potential death of millions.⁵³ The next day, syndicated columnist Bob Considine criticized the sentences handed down to Klaus Fuchs (fourteen years) and Harry Gold (thirty years) in comparison to the extremely harsh punishment accorded the Rosenbergs. The Rosenbergs, he reasoned, were relatively minor, though deadly participants in the espionage ring.⁵⁴ A few days later, the editors of the paper refuted Considine's conclusion and stated unequivocally that "we

think his honor [Judge Kaufman] did the right thing toward the... war-time passers of atomic secrets to Soviet Russia." The World-Herald editors hoped that the leniency displayed against those who came forward willingly, such as Greenglass, would influence others to do the same.⁵⁵

The late 1940's and early 1950's witnessed harassment not only of Alger Hiss and New Deal Democrats, but also of communists, suspected communists and outspoken liberals in schools and universities throughout the nation. Hundreds of professors and teachers were dismissed from institutions in an effort to purge education of subversive ideologies. Chief Investigator for HUAC, Robert Stripling, claimed that the goal of communists in education was to guide the child from "kindergarten straight through to college so he will have anything except a mind of his own."⁵⁶ Early in 1949, the World-Herald evidenced its interest in this problem when it ran an AP story on page one headlined "3 Professors Fired as Red." The item dealt with three University of Washington instructors who were accused of Communist Party ties and subsequently discharged.⁵⁷ A month later, the World-Herald described a similar situation at Oregon State University involving two professors who chose to "follow the Communist Party line" and were promptly dismissed.⁵⁸ The editors offered no comment on the dismissals or on the question of academic freedom they raised.

In the spring of 1949, a local controversy regarding

communist influence in education arose. The Nebraska legislature introduced two controversial bills designed to make it illegal for members of the Communist Party to teach at state-supported public schools. Warren Batterson, President of the local chapter of the Communist Party, spoke out vehemently against the proposed law, but his opposition may have helped the measure. As one state Senator noted, Batterson knew appearing in opposition would "probably encourage passage of these bills."⁵⁹ Shortly thereafter, debate on the bills continued in the Unicameral and the Omaha paper reported that several lawmakers were supporting a proposal to purge "un-American influences in Nebraska's public schools."⁶⁰ Although the editors would later speak out against communist infiltration in education, at this time they remained silent on the issue. The Nebraska legislature eventually buried the proposal and for a short time the coverage of communist influence in the state's schools subsided.

In another story on the local communist threat, the paper disclosed that Midland College in Fremont had been deluged with literature demanding world peace and American-Soviet friendship. The World-Herald speculated that the literature had been sent by communist organizations disguising their true ideologies. The Director of Public Relations at the school, J.G. Van Riper, stated that communists had been "stepping up their propaganda to

infiltrate colleges in the Midwest," including Midland.⁶¹

During the first week in April, the World-Herald included an inflammatory HUAC charge levelled at several of the nation's most revered universities. Harvard, Columbia and the University of Chicago were named by HUAC as having the "most significant record of supporting" communist front organizations. The AP story revealed further that a survey of faculty in over six hundred colleges had shown that "three thousand professors gave support to communist activities."⁶² At least one of the three institutions named by HUAC--the University of Chicago--publicly challenged the Committee's findings. Chancellor Robert Maynard Hutchins asserted that although the University may have enrolled and employed some Communist Party members, there was absolutely no evidence of "subversive activities on campus."⁶³ Soon thereafter, the World-Herald reported that the Seditious Activities Commission in Chicago had cleared the university professors of any communist dealings.⁶⁴ According to Hutchins, however, the damage had already been done, as the "entire teaching profession" had been "intimidated" by such allegations.⁶⁵ Hutchins later criticized fervent anti-communists in the United States for "adopting the most stupid and unjust" ideas in attempting to quell domestic communism.⁶⁶

During the summer of 1949, the issue of communism in local education once again garnered headlines in a front

page article entitled "Nebraska U. Fights Any Red Tinge." A University statement released in the World-Herald claimed that the faculty opposed hiring or retaining any individual affiliated with subversive activities. The faculty, however, claimed that there were "no individuals [then] identified...whose loyalty to the government of the United States is questionable."⁶⁷

In early March 1950, the Omaha paper reported an incident which would become an ongoing story in the Omaha paper--the controversy over a proposed loyalty oath for the faculty of the University of California. University professors there apparently voted nine-hundred to zero against the implementation of a non-communist oath.⁶⁸ Later that spring, a press compilation cast suspicion on the University of California by disclosing that a federal grand jury was investigating allegations of World War II communist espionage there.⁶⁹

In August, the University of California dismissed thirty-two faculty who refused to comply with the prescribed loyalty affidavits.⁷⁰ Less than a month later, the World-Herald disclosed that seventy-six percent of the faculty at Princeton University were protesting the treatment of the thirty-two California professors. A statement released by Princeton assailed the threat to "academic freedom" evident in the rising acceptance of loyalty oaths.⁷¹

In the fall of 1950, Joe McCarthy joined those claiming that schools and universities had been infiltrated by communists and sympathizers. McCarthy specifically named as communists several prominent professors, presidents and chancellors of notable institutions. The list included Robert Hutchins, and prominent chemist, Linus Pauling, of the California Institute of Technology.⁷² Three weeks later, Pauling had the opportunity to answer the charges before a Senate investigating committee. Instead of flatly denying that he maintained ties with the Communist Party, however, the scientist replied to questions about his political beliefs by announcing that he was not required answer such inquisitions in a democracy. Pauling also declared that "a good teacher should [not] be barred from the teaching profession" for being a communist.⁷³

While the nation debated the advisability of teacher loyalty oaths, Nebraska was harboring a similar controversy within its state legislature. In the second week of December, state Senator W.J. Williams proposed a bill requiring teacher loyalty affidavits. The World-Herald story noted that University of Nebraska Chancellor, R.G. Gustavson, and the Dean of the Law College, Frederick Beutel, were the most outspoken critics of the measure.⁷⁴ By February of the new year, the bill was embroiled in debate, but by mid-month the legislation had proven too controversial to gain passage and had been shelved because

of a shortage of votes.⁷⁵ Surprisingly, the World-Herald offered no comment on the divisive legislation.

As in previous months, stories regarding communist infiltration of labor unions remained prominent in the World-Herald. The Omaha paper seemed to treat the communist infection of organized labor as something of an incurable disease--sometimes in remission but always threatening. On January 1, 1949, the Omaha daily reported a statement released by a gathering of labor leaders who claimed that their organizations were intent on fighting communism within their ranks during the coming year. Congress of Industrial Organizations President, Philip Murray, remarked that his group would work to stem the "spread of communism."⁷⁶

Although many Americans supported the removal of communists from labor unions, the World-Herald noted that prominent conservatives and liberals alike advocated that organized labor reform from within rather than through government intervention. The Omaha paper apparently accepted this solution. In late February 1949, Democratic Senator Claude Pepper of Florida responded angrily to the President of the Mining Congress who had requested aid from the Senate in ousting communist labor leaders. Pepper declared that unions "don't need the government to help them get rid of communists."⁷⁷ A month later, the paper ran a story defining the fear of those who opposed government

intervention in the communists-in-labor issue. Father Benjamin L. Masse, a Jesuit priest, asserted that communists in unions were eagerly awaiting the day when the government adopted control of union activities.⁷⁸

In the spring of 1949, ex-communist Louis Budenz made headlines with a statement that communists were responsible for a controversial strike in 1941 at the Allis-Chalmers plant in Wisconsin which interrupted munition shipments to Great Britain.⁷⁹ Several weeks later, in an article entitled "Reds Behind All Strikes," a similar allegation by an FBI agent laid the blame for "all strikes, auto, steel, electric and meat," on the Communist Party.⁸⁰ Reacting to such allegations, Murray publicly demanded that communists resign their posts in the CIO or be forcibly "kicked out."⁸¹ In mid-July, the World-Herald revealed that the United Auto Workers had demanded its parent organization, the CIO, expel affiliates associated with the Communist Party. The story then noted that there were no less than eleven unions that openly supported communist policies.⁸²

At the end of August, the Omaha daily covered an interesting local story involving a communist attempt to influence labor in the city. Warren Batterson reportedly "met rough handling" when he ventured into a labor office to distribute communist literature. The President of the Nebraska Federation of Labor, Gordon Preble, evidently ordered Batterson "to get the hell out of here....We don't

want him and his kind around."⁸³ Forty-eight hours later, Batterson responded to his "rough handling" by charging that the negative attitude displayed by the union was "a result of Cold War propoganda."⁸⁴ Despite his "rough handling," however, the World-Herald expressed no sympathy for the communist activist.

In the fall of 1949, the leadership of the CIO attempted to combat the anti-labor trend in America by ordering allegedly "red" unions to remove communist officers. A rare editorial in the Omaha paper revealed a sense of despair over the communist menace in organized labor. Although the reds-in-labor argument had appeared frequently in previous months in the Omaha paper, it was almost as though the daily had become weary of expressing its frustrations with labor. The offering noted "how appallingly difficult it is to break the communist stranglehold of any union."⁸⁵

A World-Herald editorial in late May 1950, lamented the fact that the recently dismissed CIO Union of Electrical Workers (UEW) continued to exist as an independent entity. The editors were extremely upset that the union had not been "obliterated." They argued quite passionately: "The security of the country should take precedence over the right of any citizen to join a disloyal union."⁸⁶ At the end of 1950, the paper revealed CIO plans to remove communist influence from all sectors of the organization.

The expulsion of the UEW reportedly marked the "beginning of the end of communist influence in the entire labor movement."⁸⁷ By the new year, the CIO had stepped up its efforts to remove communists and sympathizers from its midst. The Vice-President of the CIO, Allan Haywood, asserted confidently that the "first order of business of organized labor" was removing communists from the defense industries of the nation.⁸⁸ Apparently, the vigorous anti-communism of the CIO leadership convinced the editors of the paper that the issue of communists in labor was no longer newsworthy. After the spring of 1951, the issue ceased to be a prominent topic in the World-Herald.

From January 1949, to April 1951, the World-Herald included a variety of information regarding domestic communism and became increasingly anti-communist in its positions. The Hiss case dominated the pages of the Omaha paper in 1949 and the editors of the paper expressed no reservations about his treatment or his guilt.⁸⁹ The same could also be said of the World-Herald's more limited coverage of the Smith Act defendants. Similarly, whereas previously the editors had expressed reservations about efforts to outlaw the Communist Party, they apparently began to support the action. The Omaha paper did hint at concerns over the "brutish" tactics of McCarthy, but never complained about his results and often joined in attacking McCarthy's targets. The paper also expressed no regrets over the death

sentences imposed upon the Rosenbergs. Stories concerning communist infiltration in schools and organized labor appeared frequently in the World-Herald, although the communists-in-labor issue was waning in significance. Clearly the editors of the World-Herald were reacting to the seemingly endless threats from communist forces at home and abroad and transferred that concern to the pages of the paper.

NOTES

¹Peter Steinberg, The Great "Red Menace": United States Prosecution of American Communists, 1947-1952 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), X.

²"Reds Active In Atom Field," OWH, 2 Jan. 1949, 4A.

³"Stern Anti-Red Bill Planned," OWH, 28 March 1949, 4.

⁴Athan Theoharis, Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 23.

⁵David Caute, The Great Fear: The Anti-Communist Purge Under Truman and Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), 42-3. Although Senator Butler was referring specifically to Dean Acheson in the quotation, within the same statement he denounced the "New Dealism" that had infested the ideologies of this country.

⁶"Trial of Hiss Starts Today," OWH, 31 May 1949, 7.

⁷Caute, 43.

⁸"Witness Says Secrets Given to Chambers," OWH, 17 June 1949, 1.

⁹"Hiss to Take Stand Soon," OWH, 19 June 1949, 10A.

¹⁰"Justices Say Hiss's Loyalty Beyond Doubt," OWH, 23 June 1949, 1.

¹¹Morton and Michael Levitt, A Tissue of Lies: Nixon vs. Hiss (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 128.

¹²"Hiss Denies He Sold Out," OWH, 24 June 1949, 8.

¹³"Defense of Hiss Shouts Politics," OWH, 7 July 1949, 6.

¹⁴"The Hiss Case," editorial, OWH, 11 July 1949, 4.

¹⁵"Hiss Judge Bias Plain is Charge," OWH, 11 July 1949, 1.

¹⁶"Hiss Trial Testimony of 2 Justices Stirs Ban

Attempt," OWH, 17 July 1949, 1.

¹⁷"Communist Conspirators," editorial, OWH, 22 July 1948, 6.

¹⁸"Trial Leaves Red Party's Fate in Doubt," OWH, 15 Oct. 1949, 1.

¹⁹Michael Belknap, ed., American Political Trials (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 250.

²⁰Ibid., 240.

²¹"Week-End Report," editorial, OWH, 15 Oct. 1949, 10.

²²"The Communist Verdict," editorial, OWH, 17 Oct. 1949, 8. Cate has noted that Judge Medina was extremely biased against the defendants by displaying the "most cynical manipulations of a jury that any judge could undertake." 193.

²³"Another Show Revised in New York, Hiss Goes to Trial Again," editorial, OWH, 22 Sept. 1949, 30.

²⁴"Hiss Termed Liar, Stooge," OWH, 22 Nov. 1949, 13.

²⁵"Alger Hiss Loses Cockiness; Document Hits His Veracity," OWH, 4 Dec. 1949, 20A.

²⁶"New Figure in Hiss Trial," OWH, 10 Dec. 1949, 13.

²⁷"Hiss to Field Letter is Read," OWH, 28 Dec. 1949 2.

²⁸"Hiss to Hear His Fate on Wednesday," OWH, 22 Jan. 1950, 1A+.

²⁹"The Case of Alger Hiss; It Reads Like Dramatic Fiction," editorial, OWH, 25 Jan. 1950, 10.

³⁰"Dean Acheson's Back," editorial, OWH, 27 Jan. 1950, 12.

³¹"Red Charges Denied," OWH, 11 Feb. 1950, 13.

³²"4 Pinks Named by McCarthy," OWH, 13 Feb. 1950, 1.

³³"Truman Talk Writer is Red," OWH, 21 Feb. 1950, 1.

³⁴James Marlow, "In Listening to Charges of Communism, an Open Mind Needed," syndicated column, OWH, 16 March 1950, 14.

³⁵Jay G. Hayden, "Attacks are Made in Election Year," syndicated column, OWH, 20 March 1950, 2.

³⁶Edwin Bayley, Joe McCarthy and the Press (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1981), 224-226. Bayley shows that the Omaha World-Herald displayed an indifference to McCarthy, particularly during the months of his initial charges. In comparing the World-Herald to the Des Moines Register and the Kansas City Star during the first thirty days following McCarthy's Wheeling, West Virginia, speech, Bayley reveals that only nine stories, no editorials and 102 inches of print appeared in the Omaha paper regarding McCarthy's communist charges, compared to fourteen, five and 316 respectively in the Register and sixteen, five and 245 in the Star.

³⁷Interview with Hugh Fogarty, Omaha, June 25, 1995. Unfortunately, Mr. Fogarty passed away shortly after this interview was completed.

³⁸"Most of Alger Hiss Ring in State Department," OWH, 20 March 1950, 2.

³⁹"Madman is Word of Foe for McCarthy," OWH, 2 April 1950, 1A.

⁴⁰"The Doubts Remain," editorial, OWH, 8 April 1950, 14. It is interesting to note that the World-Herald opposed the censure of McCarthy in 1954, calling it a "great victory" for American communists and subversives. "Week-End Report," editorial, OWH, 4 Dec. 1954, 6.

⁴¹"They Want Action," editorial, OWH, 26 April 1950, 16.

⁴²"McCarthy Hits Korean Error," OWH, 7 July 1950, 3.

⁴³"Fourth Held in Spy Ring," OWH, 18 July 1950, 1. Ethel Rosenberg was arrested shortly thereafter in August.

⁴⁴"Another Spy Bagged, Loquacity Lingers On," Chicago Daily News editorial reprinted in OWH, 1 Aug. 1950, 18.

⁴⁵"Exposé Struck Beyond Hiss," OWH, 5 Sept. 1950, 2.

⁴⁶"Still the Secretary," editorial, OWH, 6 Sept. 1950, 22.

⁴⁷"U.S. Commies Under Control," OWH, 14 Jan. 1951, 4A.

⁴⁸"Rock-Ribbed Nebraska," editorial, OWH, 18 Feb. 1951, 2F.

⁴⁹"A-Sketches Went to Russ," OWH, 8 March 1951, 2.

⁵⁰"Confessed Spy Denounces Kin," OWH, 10 March 1951, 2. Cate has noted that Greenglass' sentencing in his own espionage case had strategically been postponed until after his testimony against his sister and brother-in-law. Cate, 64.

⁵¹"3 Spies Plan Further Fight," OWH, 30 March 1951, 10.

⁵²"Appeal Offers Hope for Two," OWH, 6 April 1951, 8.

⁵³"4 Deadliest Spies Named," OWH, 9 April 1951, 3.

⁵⁴Bob Considine, "Punishment Given to Spies in Betrayal of Atomic Secrets," syndicated editorial, OWH, 10 April 1951, 22.

⁵⁵"A Welcome Mat for Deserters," editorial, OWH, 13 April 1951, 46.

⁵⁶Robert Stripling, The Red Plot Against America (New York: Arno Press, 1949, reprinted 1977), 191.

⁵⁷"3 Professors Fired as Red," OWH, 23 Jan. 1949, 1A.

⁵⁸"Fired Professor Follows Red Line," OWH, 25 Feb. 1949, 18.

⁵⁹"Non-Red Oath Bills Delayed," OWH, 24 March 1949, 4.

⁶⁰"Public School Probe Sought," OWH, 3 April 1949, 18A.

⁶¹"Reds Step up Propaganda," OWH, 5 April 1949, 3.

⁶²"Harvard Named as Red Harbor," OWH, 7 April 1949, 1.

⁶³"Few Red Links at Chicago U.," OWH, 22 April 1949, 12.

⁶⁴"Red Probers Find School in Clear," OWH, 21 May 1949, 8.

⁶⁵Cate, 429.

⁶⁶"Robert Hutchins Hits Hounding on Commies," OWH, 23 June 1949, 2.

⁶⁷"Nebraska U. Fights Any Red Tinge," OWH, 9 June 1949, 1.

⁶⁸"Profs Spurn Non-Red Oath," OWH, 8 March 1950, 1.

10. ⁶⁹"Jury Opens Probe of California U." OWH, 4 May 1950,
- ⁷⁰"California U. Votes Ouster," OWH, 26 Aug. 1950, 2.
- ⁷¹"Oath Rapped by Princeton," OWH, 23 Sept. 1950, 6.
- ⁷²"Scientist-Red Link Charged," OWH, 24 Oct. 1950, 2.
- ⁷³"Prof Silent Before Probe," OWH, 14 Nov. 1950, 12.
- ⁷⁴"Teacher Oath Bills Planned," OWH, 9 Dec. 1950, 5.
- ⁷⁵Harold Andersen, "Church Group in Nebraska Opposes Red Control Bills," OWH, 10 Feb. 1951, 4.
- ⁷⁶"Unions Pledge Capitalism Aid," OWH, 1 Jan. 1949, 6.
- ⁷⁷"Labor Can Ditch Reds," OWH, 20 Feb. 1949, 27A.
- ⁷⁸"Collective Wage Foes Help Reds," OWH, 24 March 1949, 16.
- ⁷⁹"Budenz Says Commies Called Strike in 1941," OWH, 31 March 1949, 1.
- ⁸⁰"Reds Behind All Strikes," OWH, 14 April, 1949, 20.
- ⁸¹CIO Leftists Asked to Quit," OWH, 20 May 1949, 28.
- ⁸²"UAW Favors Reds' Ouster," OWH, 12 July 1949, 3.
- ⁸³"Unionists Rout Reds and Aid Passing Leaflets at Temple," OWH, 20 Aug. 1949, 1.
- ⁸⁴"Red in Request for Protection," OWH, 22 Aug. 1949, 2.
- ⁸⁵"The Communists Win," editorial, OWH, 25 Sept. 1949, 6F.
- ⁸⁶"Commies Keep Foothold," editorial, OWH, 30 May 1950, 16.
- ⁸⁷"UE Ouster Ends Red Labor Base," OWH, 5 Dec. 1950, 8.
- ⁸⁸"CIO Union Ousts 3 Leftist Officials," OWH, 13 Jan. 1949, 16. The effort by the CIO to purge communists from its midst eventually cost the organization more than a million members, Robert Zieger, The CIO: 1935-1955 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 227.
- ⁸⁹It should be noted that Editor-in-Chief Harold

Newbranch retired in May 1949 and his functions were assumed by Frederick Ware and W.E. Christenson. The change in personnel, however, did not seem to have a great effect on editorial policy.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RISE OF JOSEPH MCCARTHY TO THE EXECUTION OF THE ROSENBERGS: MAY 1951 TO JUNE 1953

By May of 1951, the Red Scare in the United States had reached its apex. The crisis in Korea still dominated public consciousness, relations with the Soviet Union grew increasingly hostile and efforts to uncover domestic communists burgeoned with chilling efficiency. Those such as Senator Joe McCarthy, who manipulated the press for "his own advantage," flourished politically with charges that communists had infiltrated nearly every sector of American society.¹

It was during the height of the Red Scare in America that the Omaha World-Herald revealed its anti-communist inclinations. Although in past months the editors of the paper had occasionally included moderate warnings against unfounded accusations and extremist measures, by the middle of 1953, the warnings had disappeared. The Omaha daily made known its support of McCarthy and the anti-communist measures he and his followers endorsed. It also voiced concern over the communist influence in schools and universities and, most notably, joined in the condemnation of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg for crimes against the

American people.

On May 2, 1951, the editors of the World-Herald praised members of the House Un-American Activities Committee for moderating their conduct. The editorial seemed convinced that a kindler, gentler HUAC would lead to increased cooperation with the executive branch of the government and therefore solidify the Committee's "right to inquire into the activities of the Communist Party"²

In July, McCarthy began a series of attacks on a number of State Department employees, particularly high ranking diplomats, John Davies Jr. and Phillip Jessup. A subsequent loyalty investigation by the State Department, however, cleared Davies of any malfeasance, which sparked an outcry by McCarthy. The Wisconsin Senator claimed that Secretary of State Dean Acheson was involved in a "deliberate attempt" to mislead the American people into accepting the decision.³ Less than two weeks later, a wire service story carried still more charges against the State Department, Jessup in particular, and listed the names of twenty-five other employees of the State Department the Senator had judged as loyalty risks. McCarthy was quoted as claiming that Jessup was a member of "not one, not two but five" communist front groups.⁴

Also during August, the fact that the World-Herald supported McCarthy and his charges became clearly evident. Earlier the paper had warned that McCarthy should use

caution in directing his allegations. Now the editors showed no such restraint. On August 17, the editors questioned why neither President Truman nor Acheson had mentioned McCarthy by name in their denunciations of anti-communist extremists. The editorial suggested that the two possibly ignored him in hopes that "he might go away. But he didn't."⁵ Less than a week later, the editors exhibited their approval of McCarthy by noting that accusations leveled by the Senator against State Department official Edmund Clubb justified at the very least "some housecleaning" in the Federal Government.⁶ The World-Herald applauded the fact that Clubb was subsequently called before HUAC and interrogated thoroughly on his Chinese communist ties.⁷

At the end of August, McCarthy garnered a prominent front page headline in a World-Herald wire service compilation entitled "McCarthy Would Put Red-Coddling Charge Before Court Jury." The story reported that McCarthy was willing to risk his Senate seat in order to get Phillip Jessup into court on the question of disloyalty.⁸ Shortly thereafter, an editorial echoing a similar theme and reinforcing McCarthy's charges, pronounced that the diplomatic appointment of Jessup was a "bad" decision and asserted that he was an "influential member of the left-wing axis" in the State Department.⁹

Toward the end of 1951, diplomat John Service became a

primary target for those intent on exposing communists within the government. In mid-December, an Associated Press (AP) article appeared on the front page of the Omaha paper noting the dismissal of Service from the State Department. The story made special note that Service had been the subject of numerous attacks by McCarthy.¹⁰ Immediately following the New Year, the World-Herald reprinted an editorial from the Detroit News supporting McCarthy's efforts to remove Service from the State Department and argued that the loyalty board which investigated Service should make its findings public to quell public discontent with governmental inadequacy in removing communist agents and sympathizers.¹¹

Still in January 1952, the World-Herald again displayed its conservative inclinations by bashing the liberal element in American society and linking two important and powerful Americans to convicted perjurer Alger Hiss. The editorial claimed that men such as "Felix Frankfurter and Dean Acheson and Alger Hiss" had promoted expansive forms of government which openly contrasted with the views of the Founding Fathers of this nation.¹² Similarly, a wire service story in February published the concerns of Senator McCarthy about increased federal control over the American people and his belief that the State Department intended for the United States to become a communist nation.¹³

A series of World-Herald editorials in February and early March continued to endorse McCarthy and his unending charges of communist infiltration in the State Department. The February resignation of Edmund Clubb, assailed earlier by Senator McCarthy, was praised by the editors. The editorial criticized Clubb's record and noted that he maintained the company of known communists and traitors despite his sensitive position as Chinese envoy.¹⁴

In March, Owen Lattimore, another State Department employee attacked by McCarthy, was "accused of leading the State Dept. along communist lines" during his tenure as chief adviser on Chinese affairs.¹⁵ On the eighth, an editorial skeptical of Lattimore's innocence suggested that despite his claims that he was not a communist, "many people are going to chalk up Lattimore's performance as strong circumstantial evidence against him."¹⁶ The following day, the World-Herald explained exactly what circumstantial evidence it referred to--the fact that Lattimore retained close ties with those such as "Hiss, [Lauchlin] Currie, [John Carter] Vincent, [Noel] Field and the Russian ambassador." These links, its editors observed, should give the reader an "idea of the kind of people Owen Lattimore calls his friends."¹⁷

During the first part of June 1952, the editors ran another four part series on communism by World-Herald Washington correspondent John Jarrell. In the first

offering, Jarrell insisted that despite decreasing numbers in the American Communist Party, the threat posed by domestic communists was "even more dangerous than [it] used to be." Citing J. Edgar Hoover, Jarrell argued that the size of Party membership was largely irrelevant because so many Party leaders and members had "gone underground" which therefore made them more deceptive.¹⁸ The last of the series, entitled "U.S. Reds Aim at Overthrow," expressed a similar, yet even more foreboding tone regarding the underground activities of the American Communist Party and its methods of subverting American ideals. Jarrell stated: "There is little doubt in official minds but that, on the Kremlin's order, the reds would speedily try to sabotage as many plants and other United States installments as possible."¹⁹

Also in June, Owen Lattimore once again made headlines due to an "unconfirmed report he planned a trip to Russia or its satellites" during an impending trip to Europe.²⁰ Several days later, the World-Herald editors, already skeptical of his denial of communist connections, attacked Lattimore, who they called the "chief architect of [the State Department's] communist-coddling policies." The editorial also denounced those "fake liberals" who had supported Lattimore during earlier testimony before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS), headed by Senator Pat McCarran, and stressed that the situation should

be monitored closely.²¹

Less than two weeks later, another scathing editorial again criticized Lattimore and removed any doubt as to the opinions of the editors toward the former State Department employee. The editorial heaped praise upon the McCarran Committee for investigating Lattimore as a "conscious articulate instrument of the Soviet conspiracy." Although Lattimore was not yet convicted of any crime, the editors did not hesitate in comparing him to Alger Hiss.²²

During the middle of the summer, the World-Herald included an interesting press release by the McCarran Committee printed "with permission of J.Edgar Hoover." The article ominously reported that American communists were intent on the "forcible destruction" of the Federal Government.²³ Seemingly in response to such threats against American security, the World-Herald lavished compliments on the pre-war head of HUAC, Martin Dies, who had returned to the Committee after an eight-year absence. The editors revealed that although Dies had been chastised by liberals in his previous stint as Committee chairman, now "he will find a different climate....His Un-American Activities Committee has been vindicated. He was a wronged man."²⁴

By September 1952, the editorial tone of the paper had been transformed from merely concerned to hard-line critics of communism. And, like McCarthy and his followers, the editors often linked Democrats and the Truman Administration

to the communist menace. On September 4, an explosive editorial attacked communist-aligned defense workers, linked domestic communism with the Korean crisis and declared that the Democratic Administration "coddles communists at home" while expending less than an optimum amount of resources to control communist encroachment in Asia.²⁵ A week later, another editorial echoed a similar theme by lauding Senator McCarthy's efforts to rid the United States of communism and New Deal influences "with the fury of an outraged patriot."²⁶

With the November election approaching, the editors of the World-Herald seemed to place a new emphasis on the communist question. Although in past elections the paper had openly supported Republican candidates for public office, the 1952 campaign marked the first time that the World-Herald justified its positions with outspoken anti-communist rhetoric. On September 12, Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson stated in an AP article that although "the fear of communism is a real fear," communists in the U.S had been removed from "any places of responsibility they may have gained in our society."²⁷ Shortly thereafter, the editors of the World-Herald exhibited their disagreement with that assertion by repeating McCarthy's charges that Stevenson was supported by "leftovers of the old Alger Hiss crowd."²⁸ Less than a month later, a strikingly blunt editorial

instructed its readers: "Come election day...communists, their aids, their dupes, will be supporting only one ticket. It will not be the Republican ticket."²⁹

Continued attacks on Stevenson appeared with increasing frequency in the World-Herald as the November election approached, and the paper reported evidence aimed at destroying his credibility as a loyal American. On October 11, the Omaha daily reported that the McCarran Committee had concluded that Alger Hiss and Stevenson had indeed maintained close ties in the months before Hiss' conviction.³⁰ Seventy-two hours later, an AP story repeated the charges of Republican Vice-Presidential candidate Richard Nixon who concluded that Stevenson's views on communism "disqualified him from leading" the country--an opinion upheld by the World-Herald.³¹

Following the victory by Dwight Eisenhower and Nixon in the 1952 election, the World-Herald expressed satisfaction with the ascendancy of two men they felt would do everything within their power to remove the communist influence in Washington. On November 8, an editorial predicted that Eisenhower's election would ensure that communists in the government would "quietly resign their jobs or cease their espionage."³² Several days later, the World-Herald quoted Newsweek editor Ralph DeToledano as stating that the "pinko's day in Washington" had ended with the election of Eisenhower.³³

In mid-November, the Omaha paper once again commended the efforts of the much-maligned McCarran Committee and argued that its actions were "discomforting for the communists" and their sympathizers. The editorial claimed that the Committee had "uncovered many instances of disloyalty" and was therefore a valuable asset to the nation.³⁴ Several weeks later, one of the "instances" appeared in the editorial pages of the World-Herald in an offering attacking Owen Lattimore for being a "conscious, articulate instrument" of the Soviet Union. The editors asserted that since McCarran's Committee had exposed Lattimore as a communist dupe, Senator McCarthy had been vindicated for his earlier denunciations of Lattimore. The editorial even professed that McCarthy may have been "guilty of understatement" in assessing the extent of Lattimore's communist involvement.³⁵

During the first week of the new year, the editors again revealed an extremely conservative, anti-communist stance in denouncing the New Deal liberals who criticized "McCarthy, McCarran, J. Edgar Hoover, or whoever had anything to do with revealing the truth." The editorial specifically identified President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson as prime examples of the obstacles in the search for this truth.³⁶ The following day, another editorial appeared in the World-Herald which asserted that the "reds will do all they" can to prove that a "reign of

terror" had descended upon the nation through the efforts of McCarthy and McCarran. The editors agreed completely with investigations into the loyalty of American citizens and stated that the concern shown by patriotic individuals in cleaning up the communist "mess" was indeed warranted.³⁷

Shortly before President Eisenhower was to take the oath of office in 1953, the editors of the World-Herald seemingly could not resist taking one more swipe at outgoing President Truman regarding his "Communist Coddling." The editors asserted confidently that Truman's greatest shortcoming during his stint in office was his failure to dispose of the communist "mess of subversion."³⁸

Later in the spring, the Omaha paper reasserted its position with an editorial aptly entitled "Tactics Vary, but the Aim is Still to Destroy America." The editors revealed that the Communist Party in the United States should be treated as a "treasonable conspiracy," a conspiracy so vast that "only a fraction" of it had been uncovered.³⁹

In May, a visit to the United States by British writer Rebecca West sparked interest and controversy throughout the nation. An AP dispatch reported on May 19 that West had observed that America was confronted with a "venality...created by the Communist Party and the civil servants who became communists." She also stated that the often-criticized McCarthy, though reckless, was an ambitious and talented public servant.⁴⁰ During the aftermath of

West's speculations, the World-Herald threw its full support behind her claims. An editorial repeated West's conclusion that American communists were a "matter of the gravest import." The paper also echoed her support of McCarthy by suggesting that it was not McCarthy "who inspired the terror," but rather the subversive actions of communists themselves.⁴¹

Although not as prominent as reports of communist infiltration of the Federal Government, allegations of communist influence within schools and universities around the nation began to appear once again in the pages of the World-Herald. Teachers and educational institutions were "especially vulnerable" to the hysterical attacks and investigations which characterized the Red-Scare era.⁴² Many viewed academia as a realm "choked with the weeds of subversion" and the result was a stifling attempt to uncover disloyalty in education.⁴³ The World-Herald unflinchingly supported measures to identify and remove communists from schools and universities and never questioned the validity, legality or wisdom of such actions.

During the first part of July 1951, the Omaha paper ran an AP article describing testimony of an undercover Communist Party member who attested to the fact that the "most serious step forward taken" by American communists was the "movement among the youth" at public and private schools.⁴⁴ On the local level, area schools were reacting

to such inferences by requiring employees to take non-communist oaths. In July, a front page story described a decision by the Superintendent of the Omaha Public Schools (OPS), Harry Burke, to require loyalty oaths of school workers.⁴⁵ Five days later, another World-Herald article revealed that a similar resolution had been approved for employees of the University of Nebraska and that a member of the Board of Regents, Robert Devoe, had become the first to sign the loyalty proclamation. Despite his readiness to sign the affidavit, Devoe added that he was "sure we don't have a single communist on our faculty staff and that we don't have a disloyal employee."⁴⁶

The World-Herald did not challenge Devoe's bold assertion. Nonetheless, its editors questioned the loyalty of faculty at other schools across the nation. Reacting to Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Dirk Struik's refusal to testify before HUAC at the end of July, the Omaha paper printed an editorial condemning the esteemed mathematician. The editors denounced his silence before the Committee and suggested the university dismiss Struik immediately. The offering also cited a New York statute that specified that any public employees who pleaded the Fifth Amendment would forfeit their public position and urged Massachusetts to adopt a similar policy to deter disloyal Americans such as Struik from hiding behind the Constitution.⁴⁷ Four days later, the President of

Pennsylvania University, Harold Stassen, though not mentioning Struik by name, opined that "no one supporting or coddling communism belongs on the public payrolls in America."⁴⁸

By September, the loyalty oaths imposed on teachers in the Omaha schools had begun to cause friction. Those who saw no reason for special loyalty qualifications for teachers objected. A World-Herald story reported that one teacher had described the oath as "ridiculous" while yet another remarked that Nebraska schools had as "many communists" in them as any other business--"none."⁴⁹ Two months later, however, another story disclosed that every OPS teacher had willingly signed the non-communist oath and "not a complaint was received" from any individual.⁵⁰

In a January 1952 editorial reprinted from the Detroit Free Press, the ongoing dilemma at the University of California regarding anti-communist oaths was revived. The editorial stated that the crisis at the West Coast school was caused not by the supporters of the measure, but rather those who "refused to declare their adherence to the Constitution."⁵¹ Less than a month later, a syndicated column by Fulton Lewis, Jr. also attacked the communist influence at the University of California and stated that the communist front organization, the Labor Youth League, was extremely active on the University's campus.⁵²

Late in February, retired Omaha native, Lieutenant

General Albert C. Wedemeyer, attributed the decline in morality among the nation's youth to the propagation of communist ideals by teachers.⁵³ In obvious agreement with the General, the editors of the World-Herald attacked the "intellectual circles" at liberal schools where "disloyalty is regarded...as a badge of honor."⁵⁴

During the summer of 1952, the World-Herald reported in a wire service compilation that the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) had uncovered mass communist infiltration in colleges and universities throughout the nation. Antioch College in Ohio was named specifically as the story revealed that forty per cent of the student body openly "support[ed]...the Communist Party."⁵⁵ Similarly, several months later HUAC announced a plan to initiate its own investigation of the nation's schools. Chairman Harold Velde stated that the "infiltration of communists into education is one of the most important weapons Stalin has for overthrowing" the United States Government.⁵⁶ Similarly, J. Edgar Hoover stated that some university faculty members were, at that time, "tearing down respect" for American ideals and our democratic form of government.⁵⁷

Finally, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who some decried as the "victims of a government sponsored conspiracy," came to epitomize the harsh and often violent reaction to the Red Scare.⁵⁸ Following the sentence of death imposed upon the

Rosenbergs in 1951, the World-Herald accorded relatively little attention to their case.

In March 1952, however, as calls for a reprieve from the death penalty gained publicity, the World-Herald reprinted an editorial from the Los Angeles Times justifying the decision to execute the pair. The offering argued that Ethel and Julius did not enjoy a simple "amorous dalliance with communism," but rather endangered the lives of millions of Americans with their indiscretions. The two were still "receiving every benefit of the due process of law guaranteed to all citizens, however soiled their hands." The editorial continued in warning that the "real communists in the Kremlin are not playing" and would utilize any opportunity, such as the one offered by the atomic information forwarded to them by the Rosenbergs, to gain advantage in the struggle against the United States.⁵⁹

By October, the debate over clemency had reached heated proportions, but the answer to the difficult question remained clear for the World-Herald. On the sixteenth, the paper ran a syndicated column by Bob Considine praising the decision to execute the Rosenbergs and noting the couple's conceit in believing "they could never be convicted" of espionage.⁶⁰ In January, an editorial in the Omaha paper echoed a similar, yet even more extreme tone. The editors, critical of Nobel Prize winner Harold Urey for supporting the Rosenbergs, praised the guilty verdict and the

punishment handed down by Judge Irving Kaufman. The editorial claimed that a key witness in the trial, David Greenglass, had no motive for lying and was essentially a "dupe...drawn into the spy ring by the Roenbergs." The editorial continued with a sharp denunciation of the treasonable acts committed by the pair and concluded that their indiscretions were "far, far worse" than murder because they were responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans in Korea and potentially millions more in a nuclear war.⁶¹

Also in January, a surprisingly biased AP story appeared in the World-Herald describing a sympathy gathering at the White House for the Rosenbergs. The story, lacking the expected journalistic objectivity, noted that picketers protested to the "constant drumbeat of communist propaganda."⁶² Two days later, a World-Herald offering notified its readers that the paper was beginning a special six-part series by Bob Considine detailing the lives of the "darlings of the communist world"--Ethel and Julius Rosenberg.⁶³ The series, beginning January 11, discussed how and why the Rosenbergs became communist agents and noted the martyr status enjoyed by the two within the Communist Party since their death sentences.⁶⁴

As arguments for and against the execution of the couple raged, a three column headline in February revealed that "Ike Rejects Clemency Appeal of Rosenbergs."⁶⁵

Apparently, Eisenhower was "not impressed by any of [the] arguments," on behalf of the two convicted spies and "could not justify commutation."⁶⁶ Two weeks later, an AP article acknowledged that the Rosenbergs had "no more than a ghost of a chance of beating the electric chair."⁶⁷ A February 19 editorial in the World-Herald dismissed as untrue reports that the Pope had requested leniency for the two, and argued that Julius and Ethel "should pay the maximum penalty required by law."⁶⁸

While silent on the Rosenberg case in the weeks before the scheduled execution in June, the World-Herald included a flood of material in the immediate aftermath of the execution. On June 20, 1953, Bob Considine reported that the Rosenbergs had been electrocuted the previous evening and noted sarcastically that Ethel was the more stubborn traitor of the two--she required five jolts as opposed to the three given to her husband.⁶⁹ That same day, a World-Herald editorial professed not the "slightest legal doubt" concerning their guilt. The editors claimed the only mistake throughout the case was the slow-moving justice system which eventually convicted the two. The editorial reasoned: "They were spies and traitors" and it was decided correctly that they "must pay with their lives."⁷⁰

Two days after the execution, a story by the World-Herald's Washington Bureau apparently ignored journalistic objectivity in describing a "zombie-like

performance" given by communists and dupes in support of the Rosenbergs outside the White House on the day of the execution.⁷¹ Twenty-four hours later, an editorial alleged that communists "took charge" in orchestrating the public outcry in support of the Rosenbergs. The editors claimed that ordinary, sensitive Americans were "hypnotized into the belief" that these "little, helpless people were being persecuted by a vindictive government." The editors praised Eisenhower for upholding the death sentences amid a great deal of public pressure initiated by "hypocritical communist propaganda."⁷²

In the last relevant mention of the Rosenbergs in the weeks following their death, the World-Herald ran a syndicated column by Considine entitled "Character Witness for Alger Hiss Dissents in Rosenberg Case." With an obvious attempt to connect the convicted perjurer Hiss with the convicted traitors Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, Considine assaulted the integrity of dissenting Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter and asserted that the Rosenbergs were "put to death because a massive weight of evidence showed they betrayed this country in time of war" and for no other reason.⁷³

Thus, from May 1951 to June 1953, the World-Herald exhibited traits one might expect from a Midwestern, conservative publication. The paper endorsed most of McCarthy's reckless accusations, the purging of schools and

universities of suspected communist educators and the execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. It was during this period that the World-Herald exhibited the full effects of the Red Scare. No longer offering the occasional cautions against unsubstantiated accusations, the editors of the paper rejected any defense of the accused State Department employees, radical teachers or the Rosenbergs. The World-Herald had evolved into an active and unwavering participant in the struggle against the political left.

NOTES

¹Robert Griffith, The Politics of Fear: Joseph McCarthy and the Senate (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 140.

²"Un-American Probers Make Prestige Progress," editorial, OWH, 2 May 1951, 22.

³"Loyalty Board Clears Davies; Back at Work," OWH, 31 July 1951, 1.

⁴"McCarthy's Charges Touches Off Bitter Row on Senate Floor," OWH, 10 Aug. 1951, 1.

⁵"Administration's Silent Treatment Hasn't Worked on McCarthy," editorial, OWH, 17 Aug. 1951, 40.

⁶"Mr. Clubb's Memory," editorial, OWH, 22 Aug. 1951, 24.

⁷Walter Goodman, The Committee: The Extraordinary Career of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 310. Goodman reveals that Clubb was grilled specifically regarding his sympathy for the Chinese agrarian reform movement sponsored by the Communist Party.

⁸"McCarthy Would Put Red-Coddling Charge Before Court Jury," OWH, 31 Aug. 1951, 1.

⁹"A Bad Appointment," editorial, OWH, 1 Oct. 1951, 24.

¹⁰"Service Fired; Board Finds Loyalty Doubt," OWH, 14 Dec. 1951, 1.

¹¹"The Public's Concern in Loyalty Review Cases," editorial reprinted from Detroit News, OWH, 3 Jan. 1952, 16.

¹²"This is the Pivotal Year," editorial reprinted from American Mercury, OWH, 23 Jan. 1952, 5.

¹³"If Blind, U.S. Red in Decade--McCarthy: Loyalty Board Head Charges Smear Moves," OWH, 12 Feb. 1952, 1.

¹⁴"Mr. Clubb Bows Out," editorial, OWH, 13 Feb. 1952, 18.

¹⁵Eric Bentley, Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts From

hearings Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938-1968 (New York: Viking Press, 1971), 296.

¹⁶"Improvement is Slow in Lattimore's Defense," editorial, OWH, 8 March 1952, 12.

¹⁷"Mr. Lattimore's Company," editorial, OWH, 9 March 1952, 4F.

¹⁸John Jarrell, "Reds in U.S. Still Threat," OWH, 1 June 1952, 1.

¹⁹John Jarrell, "U.S. Reds Aim at Overthrow," OWH, 4 June 1952, 7.

²⁰"Lattimore Had Soviet Trip Plan," OWH, 21 June 1952, 1.

²¹"Earthquake in State," editorial, OWH, 24 June 1952, 16. Jim Tuck, McCarthyism and New York's Hearst Press: A Study of roles in the Witch Hunt (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1985) describes liberal supporters of Lattimore as, most notably, Dean Acheson and Harry Truman, 104.

²²"At Last, Action on Lattimore," editorial, OWH, 30 July 1952, 1.

²³"Reds Need Force in U.S.," OWH, 30 July 1952, 1.

²⁴"Return of Martin Dies," editorial, OWH, 1 Aug. 1952, 34.

²⁵"A Strange Drama in Chicago," editorial, OWH, 4 Sept. 1952, 20.

²⁶"The Jury Says Not Guilty," editorial, OWH, 11 Sept. 1952, 12.

²⁷"Adlai Asserts Reds Ousted," OWH 12 Sept. 1952, 36.

²⁸"For Dwight Eisenhower," editorial, OWH, 18 Sept. 1952, 12.

²⁹"Time to Cast it Away," editorial, OWH, 3 Oct. 1952, 42.

³⁰"Hiss Wanted Adlai Invited," OWH, 11 Oct. 1952, 1.

³¹"Soft View of Reds Debar Stevenson, Nixon Tells Nation," OWH, 14 Oct 1952, 1.

- ³²"Week-End Report," editorial, OWH, 8 Nov. 1952, 14.
- ³³"Capital Pinks on Way Out," OWH, 11 Nov. 1952, 3.
- ³⁴"Week-End Report: The Disturbing Investigators," editorial, OWH, 15 Nov. 1952, 12.
- ³⁵"The Heritage," editorial, OWH, 4 Dec. 1952, 36.
- ³⁶"The Omniscient Lefties," editorial, OWH, 7 Jan. 1953, 16.
- ³⁷"One Mess After Another," editorial, OWH, 8 Jan. 1953, 16.
- ³⁸"Communist Coddling," editorial, OWH, 17 Jan. 1953, 12.
- ³⁹"Tactics Vary, But the Aim is Still to Destroy America," editorial, OWH, 3 April 1953, 18.
- ⁴⁰"Briton Blasts Probe Critics," OWH, 19 May 1953, 1.
- ⁴¹"Behind McCarthyism," editorial, OWH, 24 May 1953, 2F.
- ⁴²Kenneth O'Reilly, Hoover and the Un-Americans: The FBI, HUAC and the Red Menace (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983), 208.
- ⁴³Goodman, 325-6.
- ⁴⁴"Woman Kept Tab on Reds in Capital 7 Years for FBI," OWH, 7 July 1951, 1.
- ⁴⁵"Loyalty Action Set in Schools," OWH, 3 July 1951, 1.
- ⁴⁶"Regent Signs Loyalty Oath," OWH, 8 July 1951, 1B.
- ⁴⁷"The Silent Dr. Struik," editorial, OWH, 29 July 1951, 2F.
- ⁴⁸"Reds Have No Place on Public Payroll," OWH, 2 Aug. 1951, 3.
- ⁴⁹"Teachers Not Sold on Oath," OWH, 2 Sept. 1952, 2B.
- ⁵⁰"All Public School Teachers Vow Loyalty," OWH, 2 Nov. 1951, 12.
- ⁵¹"The Pride that Comes With Oath of Loyalty," reprinted editorial from Detroit Free Press, OWH, 21 Jan.

1952, 12.

⁵²Fulton Lewis, Jr. "Red Youth League A Campus Weapon," syndicated editorial, OWH, 10 Feb. 1952, 2F.

⁵³"Colleges Have Part of Guilt," OWH, 29 Feb. 1952, 12.

⁵⁴"The Case of the Bogus Red," editorial, OWH, 30 March 1952, 2F.

⁵⁵"College Target of Red Probe," OWH, 14 Aug. 1952, 2.

⁵⁶"House Begins School Probe," OWH, 6 Jan 1953, 3.

⁵⁷Goodman, 326.

⁵⁸Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, The Rosenberg File: A Search for the Truth (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), x. For an undercover look at the case of the Rosenbergs, see Harvey Klehr, et al., The Secret World of American Communism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 223-226.

⁵⁹"Rosenberg Data Penalties Offer Important Lessons," reprinted editorial from Los Angeles Times, OWH, 5 March 1952, 20.

⁶⁰Bob Considine, "The Rosenbergs Came Close to Beating Espionage Rap," syndicated column, OWH, 16 Oct. 1952, 24.

⁶¹"Dr. Urey and the Rosenbergs", editorial, OWH, 2 Jan. 1953, 20.

⁶²"Spy Case Put to President," OWH, 6 Jan. 1953, 2.

⁶³"Sunday World-Herald Starts Series on Rosenbergs," OWH, 8 Jan. 1953, 1.

⁶⁴Bob Considine, Six-Part Series On Life and Trial of Rosenbergs, OWH, 11-16 Jan. 1953.

⁶⁵"Ike Rejects Clemency Appeal of Rosenbergs," OWH, 12 Feb. 1953, 1.

⁶⁶Radosh and Milton, 378.

⁶⁷"Little Chance for Spy Pair," OWH, 17 Feb. 1953, 4.

⁶⁸"The Pope and the Rosenbergs," editorial, OWH, 19 Feb. 1953, 22. Radosh and Milton contradict the conclusion of the editors and state that the Pope did in fact request clemency for the Rosenbergs, 376-7.

⁶⁹Bob Considine, "Rosenbergs Executed Just Before Sunset," OWH, 20 June 1953, 1.

⁷⁰"Week-End Report," editorial, OWH, 20 June 1953, 8.

⁷¹"Rosenberg Picketers Automatic," OWH, 21 June 1953, 1.

⁷²"The Reds and the Innocents," editorial, OWH, 22 June 1953, 8.

⁷³Bob Considine, "Character Witness for Alger Hiss Dissents in Rosenberg Case," syndicated editorial, OWH, 24 June 1953, 20.

CONCLUSION

This study represents an attempt to assess the way in which one newspaper, the Omaha World-Herald, covered a number of issues relating to domestic communism during the postwar decade. Like much of the nation's press, the World-herald dutifully reported charges of communist infiltration directed at organized labor, Hollywood, the State Department and other agencies that appeared with increasing frequency over the decade. Yet its handling of those charges varied from issue to issue and from year to year.

Clearly, from the end of World War II through the election of 1948, World-Herald positions on the emerging communist issue were relatively restrained. While the editors acknowledged a domestic communist threat, they rarely endorsed the remedies proposed by extreme anti-communists. They exhibited little interest in proposals to outlaw the Communist Party and seemed to doubt the propriety and effectiveness of loyalty oaths. They exercised a healthy skepticism with regard to the high-profile Hollywood investigations of 1947 and opposed suggestions aimed at movie censorship. They proved equally skeptical concerning the torrent of charges leveled at Democratic leaders during the 1948 elections. While the World-Herald carried many of the exaggerated claims voiced

by Republicans in the months before the election, its editors clearly sensed that GOP leaders were exaggerating the threat and exploiting the issue for partisan purposes. The editorial of September 16, 1948, that warned readers to ignore unsubstantiated accusations and describing the Republican assault as "politics-as-usual" provided a healthy corrective.

On the labor issue, however, the World-herald seemed less capable of exercising skepticism. Perhaps because of the widespread accusations of communists' infiltration that were levelled against the CIO in the late 1930s, perhaps because of the disruptive influence of the CIO-led strikes of 1945 and 1946, or perhaps because of the World-Herald's anti-labor bias, the paper failed to exercise the same kind of restraint on the labor issue. Its headlines and editorials endorsed the proposition that the direction of organized labor was materially influenced by communists and that a radical purge was necessary to restore the integrity of the CIO.

The turning point in the World-Herald's depiction of the Red Scare and anti-communism was the revelation of the "Pumpkin Papers" in December 1948. To that point, except on the labor issue, the paper had urged caution in regards to the accusations of widespread communist influence in government and other sectors of American life. Following the release of the "Papers," a noticeable shift in tone was

apparent in the World-Herald. Afterwards, the paper not only dismissed the credibility of Alger Hiss, but also adopted the perspective that communist infiltration at the highest level was both a serious problem and a product of the actions of liberal Democrats. Increasingly, the paper found reason to criticize those like Dean Acheson who defended Hiss and those like President Truman who downplayed the domestic menace.

Clearly, other events were important in shaping the editorial perspective. The success of the communist revolution in China tended to give credence to charges of State Department complicity. The Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb earlier than predicted supported the notion of widespread communist espionage and ineffective security procedures. A succession of spy arrests and the outbreak of hostilities in Korea seemed to confirm the dire predictions of the early anti-communists. These mounting concerns left the editors of the World-Herald much less cautious in their anti-communist rhetoric. While they expressed a mild skepticism concerning the initial, and wildly speculative, charges of Joseph McCarthy, by 1951, that skepticism had all but disappeared. By that point, the editors seemed fully convinced that domestic communists threatened the future of the nation, that Democrats had allowed that threat to materialize, and that only the election of Republican candidates could alleviate the threat.

After 1951, the paper's position was set. The World-Herald consistently trumpeted the accomplishments of HUAC, SISS and Joe McCarthy in exposing communists and their supporters. Its editors expressed few reservations concerning blacklists, loyalty oaths or other anti-communist measures. Their reaction to the sentencing and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg simply confirmed their anti-communist credentials.

It could be argued that the content of the Omaha World-Herald from August 1945 to June 1953, was simply a reflection of the concerns shared by most Americans in that era. Anti-communism was the order of the day and most of the press and nearly every citizen felt its impact. One might have wished that the healthy skepticism and critical journalism that characterized the World-Herald's content from 1945 through 1948 could have been extended into the 1950s. But such was not the case. Its editors, like most of their media counterparts across the nation, became active and vital participants in the phenomenon of McCarthyism.

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