

# Vindication Comes 50 Years Later for 'Tailgunner Joe'

An Accuracy in Academia Address by Daniel J. Flynn

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When we look at our history books, one pretty obvious trend is that the winners write history. "To the victor belong the spoils," the old axiom goes. Usually part of the spoils include having a say in how history is written. Not so with the Cold War, which is one glaring example of the losers writing history.

About an hour's drive from Accuracy in Academia's offices is Maryland's Washington College. Every year the school holds an "Alger Hiss Day," celebrating the convicted perjurer and confirmed Soviet spy. At Bard College in New York there is an Alger Hiss Chair of Social Studies. Penn State and Rutgers house a Paul Robeson Cultural Center, named in honor of the 1952 Stalin Peace Prize recipient. A branch of the City University of New York even awarded a dozen \$500 Ho Chi Minh scholarships for a time. If all you knew about the U.S.'s role in the 20th Century world came from the leading college textbooks on American history, you would know nothing of Communism's murder of slightly more than 100 million people during the past 80 years or so. You would not know what a gulag is, nor would you have any familiarity with the term laogai. Mao Zedong, the greatest mass murderer of all time, is mentioned dozens of times in the most used American college history texts—*A People and a Nation*, *The National Experience*, and *The Enduring Vision*—yet nowhere do they even reference his slaughter of 60 million of his fellow countrymen. With the exception of one vague reference to Stalin's "brutality" against his own people, you would have no idea of the 35 million deaths he was responsible for. A great deal of the context for America's opposition to Communism in these books is erased like Trotsky airbrushed out of an official Soviet photograph. Our history text's presentation of Lenin, Stalin, Mao and their minor league impersonators is a bit like learning about the character of Adolph Hitler with the omission of that part about the Holocaust.

The real villain of the Cold War, we are told, is not Joe Stalin. It's that other Joe—Joe McCarthy.

Joe McCarthy, like A. Mitchell Palmer, J. Parnell Thomas, and Martin Dies before him, hated Communists. If McCarthy had never been born, it is likely that one of these men would have had an "ism" attached to their name and would have been on the receiving end of all of the venom that



Dan Flynn gave the opening lecture at AIA's 'Rethinking McCarthy' conference

has been thrown at McCarthy today.

Joe McCarthy never killed anyone. He never even sent anyone to jail. He didn't go after people in unions or in Hollywood, and despite what some college professors might say, the *Senator* didn't lead the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Senator McCarthy's aims were simple: they were to remove Communists from jobs in the government.

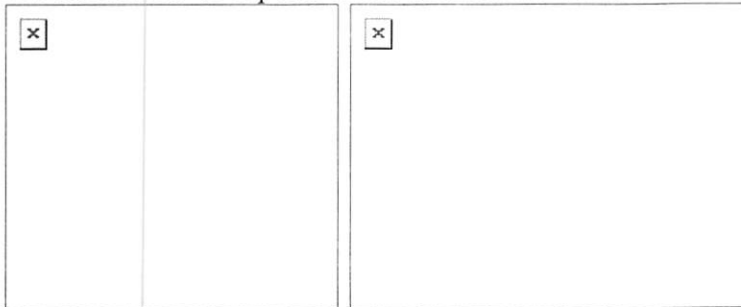
From talking to the folks in the audience, I was surprised to see how many people that here that actually knew Joe McCarthy. But we also have a few people, like myself, who weren't born until many years after McCarthy's death. So I think as the first speaker it's perhaps my obligation to give a brief history of Joe McCarthy before I get into the red meat of some of his charges:

McCarthy was born in 1908, the first of his siblings not born in log cabin. He initially was a Democrat. He becomes a judge and then serves in the Marine Corps during World War II. In his second run for the Senate in 1946, he is elected. For the first three years of his term he leads a relatively obscure existence in the Senate. In addition to anti-Communism, he champions such issues as ending sugar rationing and privatizing the construction of homes. On February 9, 1950 he charges the State Department with harboring communists. From that time until his condemnation by his fellow Senators at the end of 1954, McCarthy's crusade against Communism dominates the national debate. In May of 1957, McCarthy dies.

Although there were many figures that spoke out against domestic subversion prior to McCarthy, none of these folks wielded the power of "tailgunner Joe." None of them were as effective in weeding Communists out of government. And none of them were able to have as great of an effect on the electoral outcomes for Senators and Representatives who made light of the very real problem of domestic subversion.

What I'm specifically referring to is his agreement with 242 Greek Merchant ships that they wouldn't engage in business with several Communist nations. This hurt the Communists and was something that Joe McCarthy—not Eisenhower or the Secretary of State—was able to accomplish.

His successful expulsion of Edward Rothschild from government is another example of this. The FBI submitted 40 reports about Rothschild but still couldn't get him out of government. McCarthy



charged Rothschild with being a loyalty risk, provides evidence of Rothschild's Communism, and the next day Rothschild is out of a job. McCarthy did in one day what the FBI couldn't do with 40 reports over several years.

CSPAN's cameras covered all 7 lectures at the conference, including ... John Earl Haynes and Senate Majority Leader Earnest McFarland.

He played key roles in the defeat of Senators Millard Tydings, Scott Lucas,

It is for these reasons—his power and ability to play hardball with his adversaries—that McCarthy was hated.

In the short time that I have I want to make two basic points. The first point is that nearly every

charge that's made against McCarthy is more true of his critics than of him. The charges that I'm talking about are that he didn't know the difference between a Communist and a liberal, that he made unsubstantiated accusations, that he used underhanded methods, etc. The second point is that the idea popular in supposedly scholarly circles that McCarthy never uncovered a single Communist is completely false.

**Myth #1** *McCarthy's Methods Were Foreign to America*

When McCarthy was accused of using underhanded tactics to achieve his goals it was more often than not the case that it was his accusers who were projecting their own methods upon McCarthy.

At least two wiretaps were discovered on the phones of McCarthy's staffers. McCarthy's incoming correspondence, as well as that of his fiancée Jean Kerr and another top aide, was intercepted by a government authorized "mail cover." McCarthy's tax-returns were illegally made public by members of the press (which resulted in a refund). Drew Pearson, one of America's most widely read columnists, placed a paid spy in the Senator's office and a large daily newspaper in Las Vegas predicted and welcomed his assassination. Several of his colleagues in the Senate, led by William Benton of Connecticut, even attempted to suspend democracy and invalidate his election for the sole reason that the voters of his state had made a choice with which they disagreed.

The amusing story of Paul Hughes is one that has been somehow forgotten by most McCarthy biographers. Hughes, a confidence man, convinced members of the Democratic National Committee, famous labor lawyer Joseph Rauh, and the *Washington Post* that he was a spy in McCarthy's office and that he had evidence of major violations of the law by the Senator. Rauh and a DNC leader paid more than \$10,000 for the information from Hughes and the *Post* prepared a twelve-part series on the allegations, which included a bizarre tale about McCarthy stockpiling weapons in the basement of the Senate, with an obvious implication of a coup. After nine-months of feeding absurd stories about McCarthy to liberals hungry for anything that would defame their enemy, Hughes was revealed as a fraud. The massive *Post* series was killed at the last minute.

In his wonderful new book on McCarthy, Arthur Herman writes: "McCarthy opponents liked to claim that what made McCarthy reek in the nostrils of American democracy was not what McCarthy was doing but how he did it: the public airing of unsubstantiated charges, the use of smear and innuendo, and, as Joseph Rauh himself had written, 'confidential informants, dossiers, political spies'.... The Hughes case proves that some of them were willing to do at least the same to him."

Curiously, less than a handful of scholarly works mention the Hughes affair. Even a book called *McCarthy and the Press* omits the story.

**Myth #2** *McCarthy created a climate in which governmental institutions could go after individuals because of their political beliefs.*

The major institutions and procedures employed to weed out Communist subversion—all labeled McCarthyite—were nearly all the product of New Deal Democrats. The Smith Act, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and the federal loyalty program were all the creation of liberal Democrats and were cheered by Communists when they were used against their enemies, e.g, German Bundists, Trotskyites, etc. It was only when such laws and policies were used against the Communists that the Left began to whine about civil liberties.

**Myth #3** *McCarthy smeared liberals by mixing Communists with liberals.*

The reverse is true. Liberals were unable to distinguish between their fellow liberals and Communists. It wasn't Joe McCarthy, after all, but Franklin Roosevelt who brought Alger Hiss to Yalta. It was Harry Truman who promoted Harry Dexter White to be the U.S. Representative to the International Monetary Fund. Both Truman and Roosevelt entrusted these Soviet agents with top positions long after they had been told that Hiss and White were involved in espionage.

**Myth #4** *McCarthy was guilty of publicly defaming individuals by linking them to Communism before they had a chance to defend themselves.*

If this was true of McCarthy, it was certainly true of his liberal opponents as well.

\* McCarthy made his charges against Owen Lattimore in executive session. It was Drew Pearson, a columnist who often lambasted McCarthy for "naming names," who threw Lattimore's name to the public as an accused Communist.

\* McCarthy referred to Edward Posniak as Mr. X. Soon every newspaper in America knew that Mr. X was Edward Posniak because Oregon Senator Wayne Morse told them.

\* In the wake of the Wheeling controversy, Senate Democrats demanded, and voted, that McCarthy make his charges against individuals in the open and not in executive session as he asked. When McCarthy did just that, these same Senate Democrats pounced upon him for smearing someone before they've had a chance to defend himself.

**Myth # 5** *McCarthy never exposed any Communists.*

In truth McCarthy exposed many Communists and was responsible for many desirable dismissals from government. Here's what the leading scholarly works say:

McCarthy's "critics were right," Rutgers Professor David Oshinsky remarks in *A Conspiracy So Immense*, "he never uncovered a Communist." Thomas Reeves of the University of Wisconsin opines in *The Life and Times of Joe McCarthy* that McCarthy "did not discover a single Communist anywhere." Robert Griffith maintains in *The Politics of Fear*, "Each of McCarthy's charges was fraudulent." "It happened to be a fact," boasted Richard Rovere in *Senator Joe McCarthy*, "that not one certifiable Communist had been disclosed as working for the government" as a result of the junior senator from Wisconsin's efforts.

These statements by these esteemed historians are ridiculous, reckless, and false. Owen Lattimore, Edward Posniak, Mary Jane Keeney, Irving Peress, Edward Rothschild, Gustavo Duran, Haldore Hanson, Annie Lee Moss, and William Remington were among the many people that McCarthy accused who definitely were Communists. I want to discuss in detail the cases against a few of these folks.

**Mary Jane Keeney**

Among one of the first names McCarthy named was that of Mary Jane Keeney. Mrs. Keeney worked in various sensitive overseas State Department jobs during the 1940s before settling in at the United Nations. Intercepted Venona cables, as well as her own diaries, prove that Keeney and her husband were Soviet agents. In February of 1950 McCarthy understated matters by labeling this agent merely a Communist. By the end of that year she was forced out of her post at the United Nations.

McCarthy was right about Keeney. There is no debate about this anymore. The historians that I've mentioned, along with Millard Tydings and the administrations of FDR and Truman, were wrong, recklessly wrong.

### Edward Rothschild

Edward Rothschild was a Government Printing Office worker who was accused of pilfering documents by the FBI, which submitted 40 reports on him and asked his superiors repeatedly that he be dismissed. Rothschild was named as a Communist by several people, including two FBI agents. He repeatedly took the Fifth Amendment when asked if he were a Communist by McCarthy. Within a day of McCarthy's rumblings about Rothschild, the GPO let him go.

### Gustavo Duran

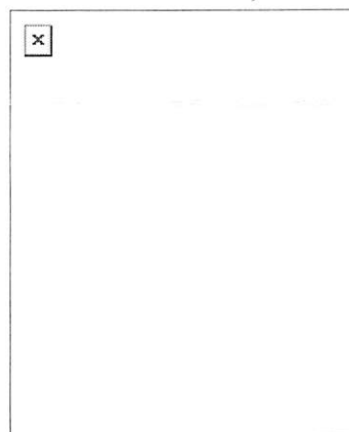
Gustavo Duran was among the first names McCarthy gave after Wheeling. Michael Straight, Duran's brother-in-law and editor of *The New Republic*, would use the pages of his magazine to promote Duran's supposed innocence and McCarthy's assumed carelessness. Statements by many attesting to Duran's Stalinism and work for the Spanish Communist secret police—even a picture of him in a Communist uniform—was dismissed as Francoist propaganda. One would think that Straight's later admission to being a Soviet agent should have at least sparked a second look into this McCarthy allegation by historians. Besides Arthur Herman, there haven't been any takers. Herman asserts that Duran was "not only a Communist but a central figure in Stalin's cold-blooded purge of his Trotskyite and anarchist allies during the Spanish Civil War." Later, Duran's supporters would lamely point out that Duran, like Mrs. Keeney, was technically no longer a State Department employee since he worked at the United Nations. The fact that he, like Keeney, was paid by the State Department and was definitely a Communist didn't factor into their passage of judgement on McCarthy's charges against Duran.

Two things that were hotly contested during the Cold War are now beyond dispute.

The first is that from Phnom Penh to Havana to Tirane, Communism took the lives of more than 100 million people. Although the killing varied by degrees in certain countries, the common denominator is that everywhere Communism went, death followed. Murderers like Stalin and Pol Pot deviated from real Marxism, left-wing apologists say, so their crimes have nothing to do with "real" Communism. Wrong. It wasn't just Stalin and Pol Pot. It was, as *The Black Book of Communism* so thoroughly documents, every Communist leader who engaged in terror as a state policy: it's the ideology, stupid.

The second thing that we know is that hundreds of people working in the United States government, were actually serving another government. The decoded Venona spy cables, the Soviet archives, and declassified FBI files all prove beyond any debate the guilt of the Rosenbergs, Harry Dexter White, Alger Hiss, Lauchlin Currie, and scores of other employees of the federal government.

In a sense, the academic world has been right all along. The "McCarthy era" was a time when it was dangerous to shun conformity. Yet the views that were being stamped out were those that



Senator Joseph McCarthy  
-- vindicated by history

correctly saw Communism as a murderous ideology which had infiltrated high levels of the United States government. One can still hear the sneers and snickers over McCarthy's denouncement of "twenty years of treason." Yet, in light of declassified documents from both major participants in the Cold War, McCarthy's charges, unlike those of his academic detractors, seem to be anything but overstated.

*(Daniel J. Flynn is executive director of Accuracy in Academia and editor of Campus Report)*