

Traitors!

As you read in our play (pp. 16-19), Benedict Arnold committed an act of betrayal that would make his name forever synonymous with the word *traitor*. A traitor is a person who commits treason, or betrays his or her country.

Although Arnold may be America's most famous traitor, other U.S. citizens have also turned their backs on the nation. Some individuals were convicted for committing acts that jeopardized U.S. security during the Cold War

(1947-1991). During this period after World War II, tensions between the U.S. and Communist Soviet Union led to a war of words and the potentially catastrophic stockpiling of nuclear weapons on both sides.

Below are three high-profile Cold War cases that gripped the public's imagination at the time. After reading about them, write a brief essay explaining why you think disloyalty to one's country is considered one of the worst crimes imaginable.

A Gallery of Rogues?

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were American citizens who, like many people in their day, were members of the Communist Party of the United States of America, a group that supported increased rights for workers and an end to capitalism. In 1950, this husband and wife from New York City were arrested. Officials accused them of giving the Soviet Union secrets about the making of the atomic bomb, which the U.S. used on Japan to help end World War II.

In 1951, the Rosenbergs were convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage and sentenced to death. Two years later, they were executed in the electric chair.

At the time, their sons, Robert and Michael, were only 6 and 10 respectively. They would later spend years trying to clear their parents' names. Subsequent documents and testimony confirmed that Julius was a spy for the Soviet Union, but questions remain about the extent of Ethel's involvement.

Alger Hiss

A lawyer and U.S. State Department official, Alger Hiss was also

involved in the founding of the United Nations. In 1948, former Communist Party member Whittaker Chambers accused him of being a Soviet spy while working for the federal government.

Hiss appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activi-



Alger Hiss testifies before a Grand Jury in New York City in 1948. He was later accused of lying under oath.

ties, an investigative group in the U.S. House of Representatives. After Hiss denied the charges, Chambers provided congressional officials with evidence that he and Hiss had worked as Soviet spies. A federal grand jury indicted Hiss on two counts of perjury, or lying under oath. Hiss could not be tried for espionage because the statute of limitations (time limit on taking legal action) had run out.

The first trial ended in a hung jury. The second trial ended on January 21, 1950, with Hiss's conviction. He served 44 months in prison. Until his death at age 92 in 1996, Hiss maintained his innocence.

John Anthony Walker Jr.

John Anthony Walker Jr. was a Chief Warrant Officer with the U.S. Navy. Walker began to spy for the Soviets to settle his debts. On December 18, 1967, he walked into the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C., and sold a top-secret document for \$1,000. For the next 17 years, Walker continued to sell secrets to the Soviets, earning more than \$1 million. By 1984, he had organized a spy operation that included his son, Michael, and his older brother, Arthur. Many considered it to be "the most damaging Soviet spy ring in history."

In all, Walker helped the Soviets decode more than 1 million secret naval messages. When Walker refused to pay his former wife \$10,000 for her silence, she called the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and turned him in. In 1985, he pleaded guilty to espionage and was sentenced to life in prison.