

Eisenhower and the 1950s

I. Election of 1952

- A. Truman did not seek reelection in the face of military deadlock in Korea, war-induced inflation, and White House scandal. -- Democrats nominated Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois
- B. Republicans nominated **Dwight D. Eisenhower** ("Ike")
 - 1. Eisenhower extremely popular hero of World War II (grandfatherly image)
 - 2. **Richard Nixon** nominated for Vice President
- C. Eisenhower won by a landslide: 442-89 -- First time since 1928 the Republicans won some Southern states.

II. Eisenhower Republicanism at Home -- "dynamic conservatism"

- A. In effect, Ike maintained New Deal programs
 - 1. Ike stated dynamic conservatism meant "being conservative when it comes to money and liberal when it comes to human beings."
 - 2. Social Security benefits extended and minimum wage raised to \$1.00/hr
 - 3. Sought middle-of-the-road approach to gov't policy in the face of the New Deal, WWII & Fair Deal.
 - 4. **Interstate Highway system (1954)** created modern interstate freeway system
 - a. \$27 billion plan -- Countless jobs on construction speeded suburbanization
 - b. Federal gov't paid 90% of cost and states 10%
 - c. Underlying purpose: evacuation in case of nuclear war or need to move troops and equipment quickly throughout the country.
 - d. The railroad industry suffered significantly in the face of increased competition from automobiles and better transportation by airplane.
 - 5. **St. Lawrence Seaway**: Massive project of locks and dredging opened the Great Lakes as seaports as they were now connected to the Atlantic Ocean
 - 6. **Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare** created in 1953 to oversee some of FDR's New Deal programs.
- B. Sought a balanced federal budget; succeeded only 3 times in 8 years → Ike aimed to guard against "creeping socialism"
- C. Labor Unions grow in power
 - 1. **AFL and CIO merged in 1955** in the wake of unemployment jitters due to several business recessions in the 1950s: **AFL-CIO**
 - 2. AFL-CIO expelled Teamster union in late 1950s when high Teamster officials resorted to gangsterism to achieve their political ends.
 - a. **Jimmy Hoffa**, head of the Teamsters, became one of the most powerful union bosses in U.S. history; influenced politicians with hard-ball tactics.
 - b. Hoffa's ascension triggered the split of the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO
 - c. **Landrum-Griffin Act** of 1959 (buttressed the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947): Bill designed to clamp down on illegal financial activities by unions and to prevent union strong-arm tactics by imposing penalties.
- D. Republicans lost both houses in 1954 due to economic troubles at home.
- E. Alaska admitted as 49th state in 1958; Hawaii became 50th state in 1959

III. Civil Rights during the 1950s -- NAACP achieves desegregation

- A. Eisenhower did not intend to be a "civil rights" president → Yet, oversaw some of most significant civil rights gains in U.S. history.
- B. 1940s, NAACP began to attack "separate but equal" by suing segregated colleges & universities; blacks gained entrance into many Southern universities. -- Elementary and secondary schools remained segregated.

- C. **Earl Warren** appointed by Eisenhower as Chief Justice of Supreme Court in 1953
 - Although viewed as a conservative, Warren would become the most significant Chief Justice of the 20th century and lead the most liberal court of the 20th century.
- D. ***Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka***, 1954
 1. NAACP filed suit on behalf of Linda Brown, a black elementary school student.
 - a. Topeka school board had denied Brown admission to an all-white school.
 - b. Case reached Supreme Court in 1954
 2. **Thurgood Marshall** represented Linda Brown
 - a. Charged that public school segregation violated the "equal protection" clause of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.
 - b. Segregation deprived blacks an equal educational opportunity.
 - c. Separate could not be equal because segregation in itself lowered the morale and motivation of black students.
 3. **Chief Justice Warren** persuaded the Court to overturn ***Plessy v. Ferguson***.
 - a. "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. It has no place in public education."
 - b. One year later, Court ordered school integration "with all deliberate speed."
 4. Response to *Brown v. Board of Education*
 - a. Southern officials considered ruling a threat to state and local authority.
 - i. Eisenhower felt gov't should not try to force segregation. -- Called appointment of Warren "my biggest damn fool mistake I ever made."
 - ii. 80% of southern whites opposed Brown decision.
 - iii. Some white students, encouraged by parents, refused to attend integrated schools.
 - iv. KKK reemerged in a much more violent incarnation than in 1920s.
 - b. Southern state legislatures passed more than 450 laws and resolutions aimed at preventing enforcement of *Brown* decision.
 - i. **"Massive Resistance"**, 1956: Virginia state legislature passed a massive resistance law cutting off state aid to desegregated schools.
 - ii. By 1962, only one-half of one percent of non-white school children in the South were in integrated schools.
 - c. End of **"Massive Resistance"** -- 1959, federal and state courts nullified Virginia laws
- E. **Montgomery Bus Boycott** (1955-56)
 1. December 1955, Rosa Parks arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, after refusing to give her bus seat to a white man; she was ordered to sit at the back of the bus.
 - Found guilty and fined \$14; over 150 others arrested and charged as well for boycotting buses during the following months.
 2. African Americans leaders called for a boycott; nearly 80% of bus users were black.
 - Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. became a leader of the boycott; emerged as leader of civil rights movement.
 3. Montgomery bus boycott lasted nearly 400 days.
 - a. King's house was bombed.
 - b. 88 other black leaders were arrested and fined for conspiring to boycott.
 4. 1956, Supreme Court ruled segregation on Montgomery buses was unconstitutional.
 - On December 20, 1956, segregationists gave up.
- F. **Crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas**, 1957
 1. Gov. Orval Faubus ordered National Guard to surround Central High School to prevent 9 black students ("Little Rock Nine") from entering the school.
 2. Federal court ordered removal of National Guard and allowed students to enter.
 - Riots erupted and forced Eisenhower to act.
 3. Eisenhower reluctantly ordered 1000 federal troops into Little Rock and nationalized the Arkansas National Guard, this time protecting students.
 4. Next year, Little Rock public schools closed entirely.

- a. White attended private schools or outside city schools.
- b. Most blacks had no school to attend.
- 5. August 1959, Little Rock school board gave in to integration after another Supreme Court ruling.
- G. **Martin Luther King, Jr.** and the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference**
 - 1. Jan. 1957, King president of Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
 - 2. **Nonviolent resistance**
 - a. King urged followers not to fight with authorities even if provoked.
 - b. King's nonviolent tactics similar to Mohandas Gandhi
 - i. Use of moral arguments to changed minds of oppressors.
 - ii. King linked nonviolence to Christianity: "Love one's enemy."
 - c. **Sit-ins** became effective new strategy of nonviolence.
 - i. Students in universities and colleges all over U.S. vowed to integrate lunch counters, hotels, and entertainment facilities.
 - ii. **Greensboro sit-in** (Feb. 1960): First sit-in by 4 North Carolina college freshman at Woolworth lunch counter for student being refused service.
 - After thousands participated in the sit-in merchants in Greensboro gave in six months later
 - iii. A wave of sit-ins occurred throughout the country. -- Targets were southern stores of national chains.
 - 3. Student movement
 - a. Nonviolence of students provoked increasingly hostile actions from those who opposed them. -- Some blacks were beaten, and harassed by white teen-agers.
 - b. **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee created by SCLC** to better organize the movement. (SNCC pronounced "snick")
 - i. "Jail not Bail" became the popular slogan.
 - ii. Students adopted civil disobedience when confronted with jail.

IV. Other minority groups

- A. Mexican-Americans
 - 1. Irrigation of new lands in the Southwest resulted in demand for low-wage agricultural labor.
 - 2. Similar to WWII, Congress created a temporary worker program to bring in seasonal agricultural workers ("*braceros*")
 - 3. Many braceros remained in the U.S. illegally joining thousands of other illegal undocumented immigrants.
 - 4. **"Operation Wetback"**: Eisenhower instituted and deported more than 3 million allegedly undocumented immigrants, many without due process of law.
 - Hundreds of thousands continued to spill across the border from Mexico
- B. Native Americans
 - 1. Unemployment on Amerindian reservations was staggering
 - 2. After World War II, Congress reversed the Indian Reorganization Bill (New Deal) with attempts to assimilate Native Americans (like the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887)
 - 3. Between 1954 and 1962, Congress withdrew financial support from 61 reservations
 - 4. Over 500,000 acres of Amerindian lands transferred to non-Amerindians
 - 5. Congress sought to lure Amerindians off reservations into urban areas through relocation programs.
 - a. By 1960, 60,000 Amerindians had left their reservations for the city; most lived in poverty; 1/3 returned eventually to the reservations

V. Cold War in Europe: 1953-1961

- A. Sec. of State **John Foster Dulles** initiated new policy of **massive retaliation**
- Two major principles:
 - Encourage liberation of the captive peoples in Eastern Europe by widespread use of political pressure and propaganda. -- Radio broadcasts beamed to countries behind the Iron Curtain by the **Voice of America** and **Radio Free Europe** that urged people to overthrow their communist governments
 - Massive retaliation**
 - Soviet or Chinese aggression would be countered with nuclear weapons directly on USSR and China.
 - Brinkmanship** -- the art of never backing down from a crisis, even if it meant pushing the nation to the brink of war.
 - Rejects containment policy as it tolerated Soviet power where it already existed
-- US foreign policy should destroy communism; communism was "immoral"
 - US & USSR begin arms race to accumulate sophisticated nuclear arsenals.
-- **Preemptive strike** capabilities emphasized: destroy the other side before they can destroy you.
 - Eisenhower was able to appear as a moderate ("good cop") when compared to Dulles ("bad cop.")
 - Americans began preparing for the contingencies in case of nuclear war.
 - Emergence of **Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD)**
 - Soviet development of the hydrogen bomb in 1953 meant Dulles' policy of Massive Retaliation was less practical.
 - Both sides would lose in a thermonuclear war.
 - MAD became an important deterrent for nuclear war during the next four decades.
- B. **Eisenhower's "Farewell Address"** (1961) : warned Americans of the dangerous growth of the **military-industrial-complex**.
- Vast, interwoven military establishment and arms industry.
 - Power was enormous (largely in National Security Council) and had potential to effect democracy itself.
 - His own policies had nurtured its growth
- C. **Warsaw Pact**
- West Germany welcomed into NATO in 1955 with half million troops
 - 1955, Soviets sign Warsaw Pact in response new NATO strength in west.
-- Countries include all the E. European satellite countries controlled by Moscow.
- D. Easing of the Cold War tensions occurred after Stalin's death in 1953.
- After 2-year power struggle, Stalin succeeded by **Nikita Khrushchev** in 1955.
 - New leadership offered opportunity to reduce tension.
 - Set out to improve living conditions in USSR
 - "Peaceful coexistence" with the western democracies.
 - Khrushchev hoped to impress nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America with superiority of communism as an economic system.
-- To the West: "We will bury you" (economically)
 - War between USSR & West now seen as unnecessary.
-- Peaceful competition will demonstrate superiority of Soviet system
 - Eisenhower moved to relax tensions
 - Geneva Summit -- 1955** (July)
 - US meets with USSR, Britain, & France to begin discussions on European security and disarmament. -- No agreements made
 - USSR resists idea of reunited Germany, especially West's ally.
 - Both sides agreed to necessity of nuclear disarmament. -- US & USSR voluntarily suspend atmospheric testing in October, 1958

E. **Hungarian Uprising, 1956**

1. Eastern Europeans, inspired by Khrushchev's words, began to seek more freedom in 1956. -- Polish workers riot against Soviets & gain greater control over own gov't.
2. Hungarian Uprising -- 1956
 - a. Hungarian nationalists staged huge demonstrations demanding democracy and independence.
 - b. Hungarians inspired by U.S. position to free people from communist control.
 - c. Soviet tanks & soldiers quickly moved in to crush uprising.
-- Americans never showed up; Ike didn't want a world war
 - d. World watched as Budapest became a slaughterhouse
 - e. US unable to help -- nuclear force too much "overkill" -- US-Soviet relations sour again.
 - f. Many see Dulles' "liberation" of E. Europe as impractical.
 - i. Eisenhower unwilling to use "massive retaliation" over Hungary.
 - ii. Proved Eisenhower was more moderate vis-à-vis the Cold War.

F. **Sputnik, 1957** – beginning of the "**Space Race**"

1. 1957, Soviets launch first ever unmanned artificial satellite in orbit.
2. Americans horrified at the thought of Soviet technology being capable of transporting nuclear weapons.
 - a. US technological superiority over the Russians seemed over
 - b. Public demanded "missile gap" be eliminated
3. 1958, US successfully launched its satellite into orbit, *Explorer I*.
4. 1958, NASA (National Aeronautics Space Agency) launched
5. US conducted massive arms buildup: more B-52's, nuclear subs, short-range missiles in Europe.

G. Khrushchev issues **ultimatum on Berlin** in November 1958.

1. Gave Western powers 6 months to vacate West Berlin.
2. Eisenhower and Dulles refused to yield; world held its breath
3. Visitations ease the conflict
 - a. Vice president Nixon visited USSR in 1959; "**Kitchen Debates**" with Khrushchev over which economic system was better.
 - b. Sept. of 1959, Khrushchev made a two-week trip to US. -- Left U.S. shaken at America's affluence
4. Khrushchev stated Berlin ultimatum extended indefinitely.

H. **U-2 Incident results in worst U.S.-Soviet relations since Stalin**

1. May 1, 1960 -- U-2 spy plane shot down deep in Soviet territory
-- Pilot Francis Gary Powers captured by Soviets
2. Incident occurred 10 days before planned Paris Summit.
3. Eisenhower admitted he authorized U-2 flights for national security.
4. Ike suspended further flights but Khrushchev demanded an apology at Paris.
-- Ironically, Soviets had conducted massive spying activities in the U.S. since WW II
5. Ike refused and Khrushchev angrily called off Paris summit conference.

VI. Cold War in the Middle East

A. **Iran**

1. CIA engineered coup in Iran in 1953 that installed the **Shah** as dictator
 - a. Nationalist leader Moussadegh wanted to nationalize British oil holdings in Iran; U.S. & Britain saw this as communist → Moussadegh was dangerous to its interests
2. In 1979, the Iranian Revolution overthrew the Shah and exacted revenge against the U.S. by holding 50 Americans hostage for 444 days.

B. **Suez Crisis**

1. Egypt: **Gamal Abdel Nasser** becomes president (Arab nationalist)
 - a. Opposed existence of Israel

- b. Sought funding for Aswan Dam on upper Nile for irrigation & power.
- c. U.S. agreed to lend money to Egypt but refused to give arms.
- 2. US withdrew its financial aid offer when Nasser seemed to court Russia and established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.
- 3. Nasser seized & nationalized the Suez Canal that was owned mostly by British and French stockholders.
- 4. October 1956, France, Britain & Israel attacked Egypt in an attempt to internationalize the canal. -- World seemed on brink of WW III
- 5. Eisenhower honored the UN charter's nonaggression commitment and reluctantly denounced the attack on Egypt -- Siding with the US, the Soviets threatened to send troops to Egypt
- 6. Britain, France and Israel withdrew troops and UN force sent to keep order.
- 7. Nasser gained control of Suez -- Britain & France angry at US for siding against a NATO ally.

C. Eisenhower Doctrine

- 1. Empowered the president to extend economic and military aid to nations of the Middle East if threatened by a Communist controlled country.
- 2. 1958, Marines entered Lebanon to promote political stability during a change of governments

VII. Cold War in Asia

A. Vietnam

- 1. **Ho Chi Minh**, a Communist, began fighting for the liberation of Indochina from French colonial rule days after the end of World War II.
- 2. Communists defeated French at **Dien Bien Phu** in March 1954; last major outpost
 - a. U.S. had given much aid to France to prevent communist expansion.
 - b. Dulles wanted US bombers to aid French (use of nuclear weapons)
 - c. Eisenhower refused fearing British non-support
- 3. Multinational conference at Geneva split Vietnam in half at the 17th parallel.
 - a. Ho Chi Minh accepted based on assurance that Vietnam-wide elections would occur within two years.
 - b. In the south, pro-western gov't under **Ngo Dinh Diem** took control in Saigon.
- 4. Diem's failure to hold elections seriously divided the country.
 - a. Communist guerrillas in the south (Vietcong) increased campaign against Diem.
 - b. China continued to support North Vietnam
- 5. Dulles created the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in order to prop up Diem's regime; Britain & France included.
 - a. Supposed to be a "NATO" in Southeast Asia. -- Only Philippine Republic, Thailand, and Pakistan signed in Sept. 1954
 - b. US pledged to prevent communist expansion in Asia (Vietnam and China)
 - c. Sent in military advisors to train South Vietnamese forces
- 6. **Domino Theory:** If one country falls to communism, neighboring countries will also fall like dominoes (included Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, maybe India) -- This idea got U.S. involved in Vietnam War in 1960s

B. Quemoy & Matsu

- 1. 1955, Chinese Communists began to shell tiny Nationalist island where Chiang Jieshi had committed 1/3 of his Taiwanese army. -- People's Republic of China claimed the two tiny islands.
- 2. Eisenhower gained Congress' approval and sent Seventh Fleet to aid Jiang.
- 3. Dulles convinced Jiang to renounce force in regaining Chinese mainland and thus, quieted Communist fears.

VIII. Cold War in Latin America

A. Cuba

1. Prior to 1959, U.S. companies active in Cuba.
 - a. Owned 90% of Cuban mines and 40% of Cuban sugar operations.
 - b. Cuba: 2nd highest standard of living in Latin America; among highest literacy
2. **Fidel Castro** took control of Cuba, New Years Day, 1959
 - a. **Fulgencio Batista**, an oppressive leader since 1951, fled.
 - b. Castro visited U.S. but Ike refused to see him (unsure if Castro was a communist)
-- Nixon met with him instead
 - c. Castro eventually confiscated American-owned property.
 - d. September 1959, Khrushchev decided to aid Cuba.
-- Deteriorating Cuban relations with U.S. led Castro to seek Soviet ally
 - e. U.S. began plotting against Castro
 - f. July 1960, Khrushchev publicly extended Soviet nuclear umbrella to Cuba.
-- Khrushchev stated Monroe Doctrine was dead and he would shower missiles on the U.S. if it attacked Cuba.
 - g. Sept 1960, CIA opened talks with Mafia to arrange a "hit" on Castro.
 - i. U.S. broke diplomatic relations in January, 1961
 - ii. Castro encouraged revolution in other parts of Latin America.
-- US now saw Castro as a serious threat to national security.
3. U.S. persuaded the **Organization of American States (OAS)** to condemn Communist infiltration into the Americas.
-- In turn, Congress responded to Eisenhower's recommendation for \$500 million in aid for Latin America → Latin American "Marshall Plan"

B. Overthrow of **Guatemala**

1. Guzman had nationalized 500,000 acres belonging to the United Fruit Co. of Boston; showed strong communist sympathies
 2. CIA helped overthrow President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in 1954 after he began accepting arms from the U.S.S.R.
- C. Vice President Nixon had to call off an eight nation good-will tour of Latin America after meeting hostile mobs in Venezuela and Peru in 1958. -- U.S. still seen as the "Colossus of the North"

Eisenhower evaluated

- A. Furthered the cause of the New Deal and Fair Deal in numerous ways and further embedded them in American life. -- America grew in prosperity during Eisenhower years.
- B. As opposed to most "lame duck" presidents, Eisenhower showed more skilled leadership during his last two years than at any time before.
 1. For six years, Democrats controlled Congress.
 2. Ike used the veto power 169 times and was overridden only twice
- C. Public works projects revitalized certain areas of the country.
 1. **St. Lawrence waterway** project turned cities in Great Lakes region into bustling seaports.
 2. **Federal Highway Project** created modern interstate freeway system.
- D. Worked with Khrushchev to tone down Cold War hostilities during much of the 1950s.
- E. A major criticism has been the seeming recklessness of "massive retaliation"
 1. Also the use of nuclear diplomacy in ending the Korean War.
 2. Yet, Ike exercised restraint in military affairs despite being a general
- F. Eisenhower's greatest failing (perhaps) was his anemic stance on civil rights and the plight of other minorities.
 1. Until 1957, blacks struggled to get federal assistance for civil rights.
 2. Operation Wetback
 3. Loss of funding and lands in Amerindian reservations