CHAPTER 29

The Affluent Society

In later decades, Americans have tended to look back on the 1950s and early 1960s as something of a golden age: an era of boundless prosperity, of social stability, of national optimism and confidence. To some extent, that image has simply been the result of the nostalgia with which most generations view earlier, apparently happier times. But to a remarkable degree, it was also the image that many Americans of the 1950s held of their own society. Seldom before had the United States experienced an era of such pride and self-satisfaction.

Two major phenomena in particular shaped the mood of the decade. One was a booming national prosperity, which profoundly altered the social, economic, and even physical landscape of the United States as well as the way many Americans thought about their lives and their world. The other was the continuing struggle against communism, a struggle that created an undercurrent of anxiety but that also encouraged Americans to look even more approvingly at their own society.

These two compelling realities blinded many Americans to other aspects of their society—to serious problems that continued to plague large groups of the population. Prosperity, real as it was, did not extend to everyone. More than 30 million Americans, according to some estimates, continued to live in poverty in the 1950s. And despite the smug belief in the essential virtuousness of American life, large minorities within the population—most prominently the 10 percent of the American people who were black—continued to suffer from a vicious system of social, political, and economic discrimination. Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish sociologist well acquainted with life in the United States, wrote at the time: "American affluence is heavily mortgaged. America carries a tremendous burden of debt to its poor people." The efforts to pay that debt would ultimately help move the nation out of the complacency of the 1950s and into a far more turbulent era in the 1960s.

For a time, however, such problems seemed far away to most members of the rapidly growing American middle class, who were enjoying an era of rising living standards without precedent in history. And to some degree, they seemed far away to America's political leaders as well, who attempted in the 1950s to limit the role of the federal government in American life and even, in some respects, to limit the role of the United States in the world.

The Economic "Miracle"

Perhaps the most striking feature of American society in the 1950s and early 1960s, one that virtually no observer could ignore, was prosperity—a booming, almost miraculous economic growth that made even the heady 1920s seem pale by comparison. It was a prosperity far better balanced and far more widely distributed than that of thirty years earlier. It was not, however, as universal as some Americans liked to believe.

Economic Growth

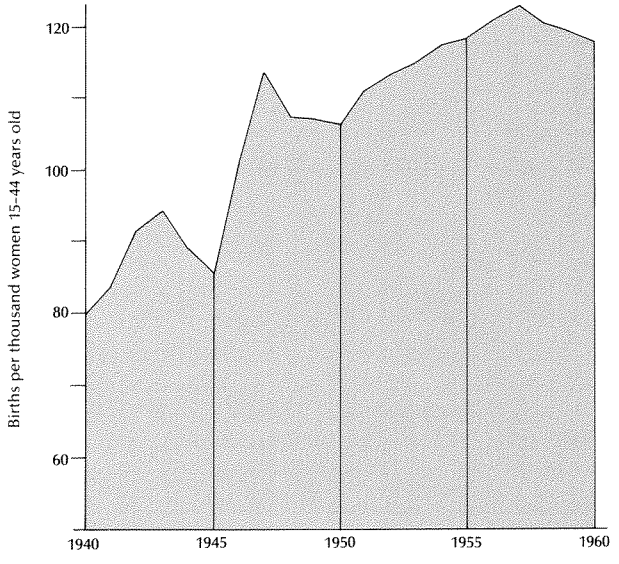
By 1949, despite the continuing problems of postwar reconversion, what some called the "miracle" of American economic expansion had begun. It would continue with only minor interruptions for almost twenty years. The gross national product, the most basic indicator of economic growth, alone provides ample evidence of the prosperity of the era. The GNP had doubled in the five years of World War II. Between 1945 and 1960, it grew by 250 percent, from $200 billion to over $500 billion. That growth appears even more remarkable in view of widespread public expectations in 1945 that the GNP would soon decline once the extraordinary demands of war production subsided. Unemployment, which during the Depression had averaged between 15 and 25 percent, remained throughout the 1950s and early 1960s at above 5 percent or lower. Inflation, in the meantime, hovered at about 3 percent a year or less.

There was no single cause. Government spending, which had ended the Depression in the 1940s, continued to stimulate growth. There was increasing public funding of schools, housing, veterans' benefits, welfare, and interstate highways (for which the government spent over $100 billion in the two decades following passage of the Interstate Highway Act of 1956)—all helping to sustain prosperity. Above all, there was military spending. The Korean War, in particular, helped to spark the economic boom. During the first half of the 1950s, when military spending was at its peak, the annual growth rate was 4.7 percent. For the second half of the decade, with the Korean War concluded and spending on armaments in decline, the rate of growth was only 2.25 percent.

Technological progress also contributed to the boom. Because of advances in production techniques and mechanical efficiency, worker productivity increased more than 35 percent in the first decade after the war, a rate far higher than that of any previous era. The development of electronic computers, which first became commercially available in the mid-1950s, began to improve the performance of some American corporations. And technological research and development itself became an increasingly important sector of the economy, expanding the demand for scientists, engineers, and other highly trained experts.

The national birth rate reversed a long pattern of decline. The so-called baby boom, which had begun during the war, peaked in 1957. The nation's population rose almost 20 percent in the decade, from 150 million in 1950 to 179 million in 1960. This growth mirrored a worldwide demographic explosion that would ultimately place great strains on the resources of the planet. In the United States of the 1950s, however, the baby boom meant increased consumer demand and expanding economic growth.

The American Birth Rate, 1940–1960



The rapid expansion of suburbs—whose population grew 47 percent in the 1950s, more than twice as fast as the population of the nation as a whole—helped stimulate growth in several important sectors of the economy. The automobile industry experienced the greatest boom in its history, as the number of privately owned cars more than doubled in a decade. The demand for new homes helped sustain a vigorous housing industry. The construction of roads, which was both a cause and a result of the growth of suburbs, stimulated the economy even further.

Perhaps the most striking result of this long period of sustained economic growth was the rising standard of living for the majority of the population. In the thirty years after the war, the economy grew nearly ten times as fast as the population. And while that growth was far from equally distributed, it was great enough to affect most of society. The average American in 1960 had over 20 percent more purchasing power than in 1945, and more than twice as much

as during the prosperous 1920s. By 1960, per capita income (the average income for every individual man, woman, and child) was over $1,800—$500 more than it had been fifteen years before. Family incomes had risen even more. The American people had achieved the highest standard of living of any society in the history of the world.

The New Economics

The exciting (and to some surprising) discovery of the power of the American economic system was a central element in the confident tone of American political life in the 1950s. During the Depression, some had questioned the viability of capitalism. In the 1950s, such doubts all but disappeared. Two features in particular made the postwar economy a source of national confidence.

First was the belief that Keynesian economics made it possible for government to regulate and stabilize the economy without intruding directly into the private sector. The British economist John Maynard Keynes had argued as early as the 1920s that by varying the flow of government spending and managing the supply of currency, the state could stimulate the economy to cure recession, and dampen growth to prevent inflation. The experience of the last years of the Depression and the first years of the war had seemed to confirm this argument. And by the mid-1950s. Keynesian theory was rapidly becoming a fundamental article of faith—not only among professional economists but among much of the public at large. The most popular economics textbook of the 1950s and 1960s, Paul Samuelson's *Economics,* imbued generations of college students with Keynesian ideas. Armed with these fiscal and monetary tools, economists now believed, it was possible for the government to maintain a permanent prosperity. The dispiriting boom-and-bust cycle that many had long believed to be a permanent feature of industrial capitalism could now be banished forever. Never again would it be necessary for the nation to experience another Depression.

If any doubters remained, they found ample evidence to dispel their misgivings during the brief recessions the economy experienced during the era. When the economy slackened in late 1953, Secretary of the Treasury George M. Humphrey and the Federal Reserve Board worked to ease credit and make money more readily available. The economy quickly recovered, seeming to confirm the value of Keynesian tactics. A far more serious recession began late in 1957 and continued for more than a year. This time, the Eisenhower administration ignored the Keynesians and adopted such deflationary tactics as cutting the budget. The slow, halting nature of the recovery, in contrast with the rapid revival in 1954, seemed further to support the Keynesian philosophy. The new economics finally won official acceptance in 1963, when John Kennedy proposed a tax cut to stimulate economic growth, Although it took Kennedy's death and the political skills of Lyndon Johnson to win passage of the measure in 1964, the result seemed to be all that the Keynesians had predicted: an increase in private demand, which stimulated economic growth and reduced unemployment.

In addition to the belief in the possibility of permanent economic stability was the equally exhilarating belief in permanent economic growth. As the economy continued to expand far beyond what any observer had predicted was possible only a few years before, more and more Americans assumed that such growth was now without bounds—that there were few effective limits on the abundance available to the nation. This was not only a comforting thought in itself; it also provided a new outlook on social and economic problems. In the 1930s, many Americans had argued that the elimination of poverty and injustice would require a redistribution of wealth—a limitation on the fortunes of the rich and a distribution of this wealth to the poor. By the mid-1950s, reformers concerned about economic deprivation were arguing that the solution lay in increased production. The affluent would not have to sacrifice in order to eliminate poverty. The nation would simply have to produce more abundance, thus raising the quality of life of even the poorest citizens to a level of comfort and decency.

Capital and Labor

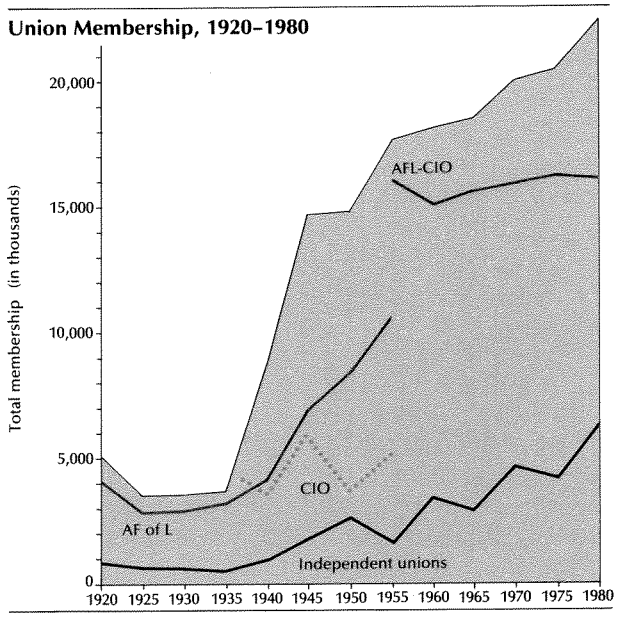
The prosperity of the 1920s had been accompanied by a rapid increase in economic centralization and concentration. The prosperity of the 1950s brought with it a similar consolidation. There were more than 4,000 corporate mergers in the course of the 1950s; and more than ever, a few large corporations controlled an enormous proportion of the nation's economic activity. This was particularly true in industries benefiting from government defense spending. As during World War II, the federal government tended to award military contracts to large

corporations. In 1959, for example, half of all defense contracts went to only twenty firms. But the same pattern repeated itself in many other areas of the economy, as corporations moved from being single-industry firms to becoming diversified conglomerates. By the end of the decade, half of the net corporate income in the nation was going to only slightly more than 500 firms, or one-tenth of 1 percent of the total number of corporations.

A similar consolidation was in process in the agricultural economy. Increasing mechanization reduced the need for farm labor, and the agricultural work force declined by more than half in the two decades after the war. Mechanization rewarded economies of scale, as did the higher productivity that new fertilizers and improved irrigation techniques made possible. As a result, many farms began to come under the control of corporations or very large landowners. The rise of what became known as "agribusiness" challenged the survival of one of the most cherished American institutions: the family farm. By the 1960s, relatively few individuals could any longer afford to buy and equip a modern farm; and much of the nation's most productive land had been purchased by financial institutions and corporations.

Unlike the 1920s, the increase in corporate consolidation was accompanied by a rise in the power of labor organizations. Corporations enjoying such remarkable growth were reluctant to allow strikes to interfere with their operations; and since the most important unions were now so large and entrenched that they could not easily be suppressed or intimidated, business leaders made important concessions to them. As early as 1948, Walter Reuther, president of the United Automobile Workers, obtained from General Motors, a contract that included a built-in "escalator clause"—an automatic cost-of-living increase pegged to the consumer price index. The provision set a crucial precedent—not only for the rest of the automobile industry but for the economy as a whole. In 1955, Reuther received a guarantee from Ford Motor Company of continuing wages to auto workers even during layoffs (although not the guaranteed annual wage he had demanded). A few months later, steelworkers in several corporations did receive guarantees of an annual salary. By the mid-1950s, factory wages in all industries had risen substantially, to an average of $80 per week.

Not all laborers shared in such gains. The labor movement enjoyed great success in winning new benefits for workers already organized in strong



unions. For the majority of laborers who were as yet unorganized, there were fewer advances. Total union membership remained relatively stable, at about 16 million, throughout the 1950s; and while this was in part a result of a shift in the work force from blue-collar to white-collar jobs, it was at least as much a result of new obstacles to organization. The Taft-Hartley Act and the state right-to-work laws that it spawned made more difficult the creation of new unions powerful enough to demand recognition from employers.

The economic successes of the entrenched unions in the 1950s helped pave the way for the reunification of the labor movement. In December 1955, the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations ended their twenty-year rivalry and merged to create a giant new federation, the AFL-CIO, under the leadership of George Meany. But the climate of the era produced other, less welcome changes in the nature of the labor movement. Some large unions, no longer required to engage in the militant crusades against corporate resistance that had dominated the 1930s, were themselves becoming wealthy, powerful bureaucracies. Most continued to operate responsibly and effectively; but some of the most important unions began to face accusations of corruption and indifference.

The powerful Teamsters Union became in 1957

the focal point of a congressional investigation in which its president, David Beck, was charged with the misappropriation of over $320,000 in union funds. Beck ultimately stepped down from his office to be replaced by Jimmy Hoffa, who was widely believed to have close ties to organized crime. Government investigators pursued Hoffa for nearly a decade before finally winning a conviction against him (for tax evasion) in 1967. After his release from prison in 1971 (on a pardon from President Richard Nixon), he attempted to regain his position in the union. But before he could succeed, he disappeared and was generally presumed to have been murdered. The United Mine Workers, the union that had spearheaded the industrial movement in the 1930s, similarly became tainted by suspicions of corruption and by violence. John L. Lewis's last years as head of the union were plagued with scandals and dissent within the organization. His successor, Tony Boyle, was ultimately convicted of complicity in the 1969 murder of Joseph Yablonski, the leader of a dissident faction within the union.

Even more troubling, perhaps, was the growing belief among union members that the leaders of these and other labor organizations had lost touch with the rank and file, that they had become more concerned with the internal bureaucratic and political struggles of the union organization itself than with the welfare of the members.

A People of Plenty

The most striking social development of the immediate postwar era was the rapid extension of a middle-class life style and outlook to large groups of the population previously insulated from it. The new prosperity of social groups that had previously lived on the margins; the growing availability of consumer products at affordable prices and the rising public fascination with such products; and perhaps above all, the massive population movement from the cities to the suburbs: All helped make the American middle class a much larger, more powerful, more homogeneous, and more dominant force than it had ever been before.

The new prosperity, in fact, inspired some Americans to see abundance as the key to understanding the American past and the American character. Leading intellectuals argued that American history had been characterized by a broad "consensus" of agreement about the value and necessity of competitive, capitalist growth. "However much at odds on specific issues," the historian Richard Hofstadter wrote in *The American Political Tradition* (1948), Americans have "shared a belief in the rights of property, the philosophy of economic individualism, the value of competition; they have accepted the economic virtues of capitalist culture as necessary qualities of man." David Potter, another leading American historian of the era, published an influential examination of "economic abundance and American character" in 1954. He called it *People of Plenty*. For the American middle class in the 1950s, at least, it seemed an appropriate label.

The Consumer Culture

At the center of middle-class culture in the 1950s was a growing absorption with consumer goods. It was a result not just of the new prosperity and the increasing variety and availability of products but also of the adeptness of advertisers in creating a demand for those products. It was also a result of the growth of consumer credit, which increased by 800 percent between 1945 and 1957. Easily available credit cards, revolving charge accounts, and easy-payment plans made immediate gratification of consumer yearnings not only desirable but possible. Affluent Americans in the 1950s and 1960s showed renewed interest in such longtime consumer crazes as the automobile, and Detroit responded to the boom with ever-flashier styling and accessories. Consumers also responded eagerly to the development of such new products as dishwashers, garbage disposals, television, and "hi-fis" and stereos. To a striking degree, the prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s was consumer-driven (as opposed to investment-driven).

Because consumer goods were so often marketed (and advertised) nationally, the 1950s were notable for the rapid spread of great national consumer crazes. Children, adolescents, and even some adults became entranced in the late 1950s with the "hula-hoop"—a large plastic ring kept spinning around the waist. The popularity of the Walt Disney-produced children's television show, *The Mickey Mouse Club,* created a national demand for related products such as Mickey Mouse watches and hats. (It also helped produce the stunning success of Disneyland, an amusement park near Los Angeles that re-created many of the characters and events of Disney enter-

The Suburban Consumer
This early 1950s advertisement for a Whirlpool washing machine shows one of the many consumer appliances that were then moving within reach of the average American consumer. Women were a particularly important target of advertisers, as this picture suggests; and manufacturers tried to associate their products with the comfortable, middle-class suburban life style to which women in the 1950s were encouraged to aspire. (Whirlpool Corporation)

tainment programs.) The Disney technique of turning an entertainment success into an effective tool for marketing consumer goods was not an isolated event. Many other entertainers and producers did the same.

The Suburban Nation

A third of the nation's population lived in suburbs by 1960. The growth of suburbs was a result not only of increased affluence, but of important innovations in homebuilding, which made single-family houses affordable to millions of new people. The most famous of the suburban developers, Arthur Levitt, began what became a national trend with his use of mass-production techniques to construct a large housing development on Long Island, near New York City. This first "Levittown" (there would later be others in New Jersey and Pennsylvania) consisted of several thousand two-bedroom Cape Cod style houses, with identical interiors and only slightly varied facades, each perched on its own concrete slab (to eliminate excavation costs), facing curving, treeless streets.

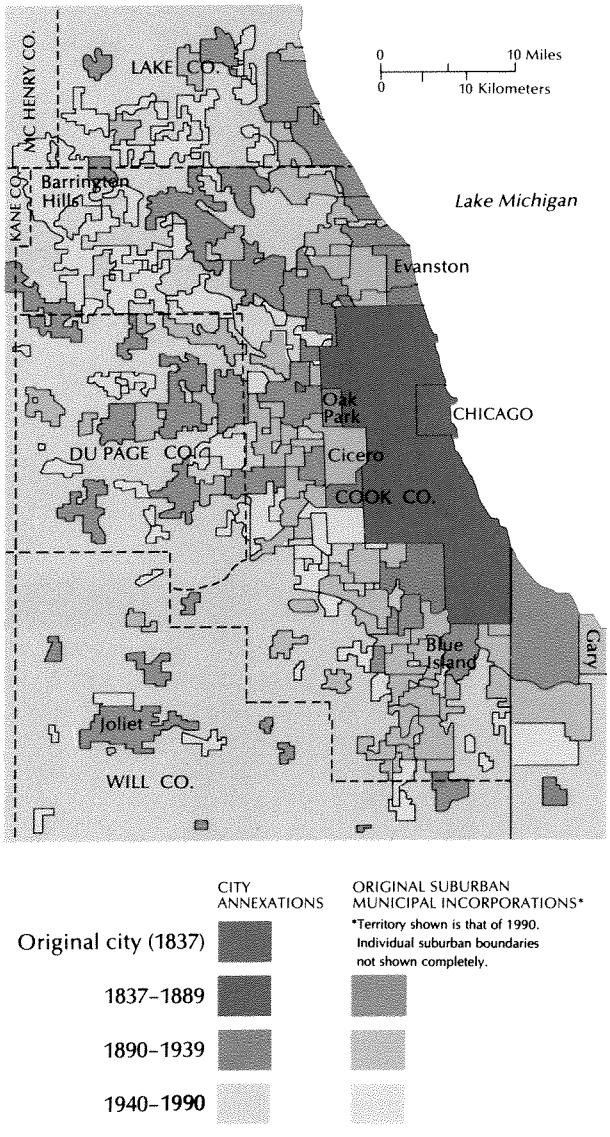
Levittown, 1949
Young mothers struggle to manage their children and their groceries as they shop at a supermarket in Levittown, New York, in 1949. The suburbs that sprang up after World War II (of which Levittown served as something of a prototype) helped create a new style of life for middle-class Americans. So did the rapid rise in the birth rate, which produced the postwar "baby boom." (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos)

Levittown houses sold for under $10,000, and they helped meet an enormous demand for housing that had been developing for more than a decade. Young couples—often newly married war veterans eager to start a family—rushed to purchase the inexpensive homes, not only in the Levittowns but in similar developments that soon began appearing throughout the country.

Why did so many Americans want to move to the suburbs? One reason was the enormous importance postwar Americans placed on family life after five years of war in which families had often been separated or otherwise disrupted. Suburbs provided new families with larger homes than they could find (or afford) in the cities, and thus made it easier to bring up larger numbers of children. They provided privacy. They provided security from the noise and dangers of urban living. They offered space for the new consumer goods—the appliances, cars, boats, outdoor furniture, and other products—that most Americans craved.

For many Americans, suburban life helped provide a sense of community that was sometimes difficult to develop in large, crowded, impersonal urban areas. In later years, the "conformity" and "homogeneity" of the surburbs would be blamed for a wide range of social ills. But in the 1950s, many people were attracted by the idea of living in a community populated largely by people of similar age and background. Not all suburbs were as homogeneous as they sometimes appeared; a famous study of one of the Levittowns, for example, revealed a striking variety of occupations, ethnic backgrounds, and incomes within a single neighborhood. Nevertheless, suburban societies tended to attract people looking for a similar life style. Women in particular often

Chicago's Annexations and the Suburban Noose



valued the presence of other nonworking mothers living nearby to share the tasks of child raising.

Another factor motivating white Americans to move to the suburbs was race. Most suburbs were restricted to white inhabitants—both because relatively few blacks could afford to live in them and because of formal and informal barriers to keep even affluent blacks out. As the black population of the nation's cities grew rapidly in the postwar years, and as urban school systems began to include increasing numbers of blacks (especially after the Supreme Court desegragation decisions of the mid-1950s), many white families fled to the suburbs to escape the integration of urban neighborhoods and schools.

One of the striking aspects of suburban life was how similar it often was from one area of the country to another. Because so many suburbs were built at about the same time, using similar construction techniques, the physical similarities alone were often striking. And because in the 1950s and 1960s many middle-class professionals were living increasingly mobile lives—moving from one city to another as the national corporations for which they worked demanded—suburban populations often did not consist of people with strong local roots. On the other hand, suburban neighborhoods, just like urban neighborhoods, were not uniform. The Levittowns ultimately became the homes of mainly lower-middle-class people, one step removed from the inner city. Other, more affluent suburbs became enclaves of far wealthier families. Around virtually every city, a clear hierarchy emerged of "good" suburban neighborhoods and more modest ones, just as such gradations had emerged years earlier within the cities themselves.

The Suburban Family

The growth of suburbs was not only a response to the growing demand for stable family life among the American middle class. It also helped shape the nature of that life. The suburban family was isolated from the activities of the city. To a large degree, it was even isolated from other suburban families. Homes were designed to maximize privacy; a distinctive feature of many new suburbs was that the back yard of each house, not the front yard, was the center of family activity. Moreover, since commercial and social facilities were generally distant enough from residential areas that they could be reached only by automobile, many suburban neighborhoods did not even include sidewalks; developers assumed that residents would seldom walk anywhere. The nature of the suburbs, in other words, encouraged families to turn inward, to focus their attention on the nuclear family unit.

For professional men (who tended to work at some distance from their homes, in the city), suburban life generally meant a rigid division between their working and personal worlds. For many middle-class

women, it meant an increased isolation from the workplace. The enormous emphasis on family life of the 1950s created a particularly strong prejudice against women entering the professions, or occupying any paid job at all. Many husbands considered it demeaning for their wives to be employed; they feared it would be seen as a sign of their own inability to provide for their families. And many women themselves shied away from the workplace when they could afford to, in part because of new ideas about motherhood that seemed to require them to stay at home with their children.

One of the most influential books in postwar American life was a famous guide to child rearing: Dr. Benjamin Spock's *Baby and Child Care,* first published in 1946 and reissued repeatedly for years thereafter. Dr. Spock's approach to raising babies was child-centered, as opposed to the parent-centered theories of many previous child-care experts. The purpose of motherhood, he taught, was to help children learn and grow and realize their potential. All other considerations, including the mother's own physical and emotional requirements, must be subordinated to the needs of the child. Dr. Spock envisioned only a very modest role for fathers in the process of child rearing.

Affluent women, then, faced heavy pressures—both externally and internally imposed—to remain in the home and concentrate on raising their children. Many women, however, had to balance these pressures against other, contradictory ones. In a society that was increasingly coming to prize the accumulation of consumer goods as a badge of success, many middle-class families found that a second income was essential for the maintenance of the standard of living they desired. As a result, the number of married women working outside the home increased in the postwar years—even as the social pressure for them to stay out of the workplace grew. By 1960, nearly a third of all married women were part of the paid work force. Many of those, of course, were women from working-class families, whose incomes were often essential to family survival. But many were also middle-class women, working to supplement the family income to permit a more comfortable life style.

The experiences of the 1950s worked in some ways to diminish the power of feminism, which for a time ebbed to its lowest point in nearly a century. But they also helped create conditions that would only a decade later create the most powerful feminist movement in American history. The increasing numbers of women in the workplace laid the groundwork for demands for equal treatment that became an important part of the feminist crusades of the 1960s and 1970s. Some middle-class women who were not employed became deeply involved in the public world through work in such organizations as the League of Women Voters, the Red Cross, YWCAs, and PTAs, gaining organizational and political skills that they would later be able to use in more explicitly feminist causes. And the growing frustrations of other women, who remained in the home, created a heightened demand for female professional opportunities, a demand that would also soon help to fuel the women's liberation movement.

The Birth of Television

The postwar era witnessed the birth of perhaps the most powerful medium of mass communication in history: television. Experiments in broadcasting pictures (along with sound) over the airwaves had begun as early as the 1920s, but commercial television did not come into existence until shortly after World War II. It experienced a phenomenally rapid growth. In 1946, there were only 17,000 sets in the entire country; by 1953, two-thirds of all American homes had televisions; and by 1957, there were 40 million television sets in use—almost as many sets as there were families. More people had television sets, according to one report, than had refrigerators.

The television industry emerged directly out of the radio industry, and all three of the major networks—the National Broadcasting Company, the Columbia Broadcasting System, and the American Broadcasting Company—had begun their lives as radio companies. The television business, like radio, was driven by advertising. Programming decisions were made largely on the basis of how best to attract advertisers; and in the early days of television, sponsors often played a direct, powerful, and continuing role in determining the content of the programs they chose to sponsor. Many early television shows came to bear the names of the corporations that were paying for them: the "GE Television Theater," the "Chrysler Playhouse," the "Camel News Caravan," and others.

The impact of television on American life was rapid, pervasive, and profound. Television news had by the end of the 1950s replaced newspapers, magazines, and radios as the nation's most important vehicle of information. Television advertising exposed

Eisenhower and Dulles
Although President Eisenhower himself was a somewhat colorless television personality, his was the first administration to make extensive use of the new medium to promote its policies and dramatize its actions. The president's press conferences were frequently televised, and on several occasions Secretary of State John Foster Dulles reported to the president in front of the cameras. Dulles is shown here in the Oval Office on May 17, 1955, reporting on the occasion of his return from Europe, where he had signed the treaty restoring sovereignty to Austria. (AP/Wide World Photos)

the entire nation to new fashions and products. Televised sports events gradually made professional and college sports one of the important sources of entertainment (and one of the biggest businesses) in America. Television entertainment programming, almost all of it controlled by the three national networks (and their corporate sponsors), replaced movies and radio as the principal source of diversion for American families.

The content of television entertainment programming has been the object of widespread ridicule and contempt through much of its history. But whatever its quality, it has been undeniably important in reflecting and shaping social values and even political ideas. Much of the programming of the 1950s and early 1960s created a common image of American life—an image that was predominantly white, middle-class, and suburban, an image epitomized by such popular situation comedies as *Ozzie and Harriet* and *Leave It to Beaver*. But television also conveyed other images: the gritty, urban working-class families in Jackie Gleason's *The Honeymooners;* the childless show-business family of the early *I Love Lucy;* the unmarried professional women in *Our Miss Brooks* and *My Little Margie*. Television not only sought to create an idealized image of a homogeneous suburban America; it also sought to convey experiences at odds with that image, but to convey them in warm, unthreatening terms. Throughout its history, the television entertainment industry has not so much avoided social diversity and cultural conflict as domesticated them, turned them into something benign and even comic.

Yet even if inadvertently, television also created

conditions that could accentuate social conflict. Even those unable to share in the affluence of the era could, through television, acquire a vivid picture of how the rest of their society lived. Thus, television ultimately became a force that, as it encouraged homogeneity among members of the white middle class, also contributed to the sense of alienation and powerlessness of groups excluded from the world it portrayed.

Science and Space

In 1961, *Time* magazine chose as its "man of the year," not a specific person but "the American Scientist." It was an indication of the widespread fascination with which Americans in the age of atomic weapons viewed science and technology. Major medical advances accounted for much of that fascination. In 1955, Jonas Salk's vaccine to prevent polio was made available to the public, free, by the federal government, and within a few years it had virtually eliminated polio from American life. Other dread diseases such as diphtheria and tuberculosis also all but vanished from society as new drugs and treatments were discovered. Infant mortality declined by nearly 50 percent in the first twenty-five years after the war; the death rate among young children declined significantly as well (although both such rates were lower in Western Europe). Average life expectancy in those same years rose by five years, to seventy-one.

The centrality of science in American life owed at least as much to other technological innovations—such as the jet plane, the computer, synthetics, and new types of commercially prepared foods. But nothing better illustrated the nation's veneration of scientific expertise than the popular enthusiasm for the American space program.

The program began in large part because of the Cold War. When the Soviet Union announced in 1957 that it had launched a satellite—*Sputnik*—into outer space, the United States reacted with shock and alarm. Strenuous efforts began—to improve scientific education in the schools, to develop more research laboratories, and above all, to speed the development of America's own exploration of outer space. The centerpiece of that exploration was the manned space program, established in 1958 with the selection of the first American space pilots. For several years, the original seven "astronauts" were the nation's most widely revered heroes. Millions of people sat by their television on May 5, 1961, as Alan Shepard became the first American launched into space (several months after a Soviet "cosmonaut," Yuri Gagarin, had made a similar, if longer, flight). John Glenn, who on February 2, 1962, became the first American to orbit the globe (again, only after Gagarin had already done so), was soon an even more celebrated national idol. Yet for all the hero worship, Americans marveling at space exploration were reacting less to the individual men involved than to the enormous scientific effort that lay behind their exploits.

Ultimately, some Americans began to tire of the space program, which never managed to convince everyone that it offered any practical benefits. But interest remained high as late as the summer of 1969, when Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin became the first men to walk on the surface of the moon. Not long after that, the government began to cut the funding for future missions. Even in leaner times, however, the space program continued to exercise a unique grip on the popular imagination. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) managed to revive some of the earlier enthusiasm for space exploration with the development of a reusable "space shuttle," which performed various commercial functions (such as launching communications satellites) as well as research and military ones. Early in 1986, an explosion destroyed one of the shuttles shortly after it took off. Seven astronauts died. The incident sparked a wave of national grief and anguish that made clear the degree to which the space program continued to embody some of the nation's most romantic hopes. It also stalled further development of the shuttle program.

Organized Society and Its Detractors

Even more than in the 1920s, Americans in the 1950s and 1960s were aware of the importance of organizations and bureaucracies in their lives. White-collar workers, who in the 1950s came to outnumber blue-collar laborers for the first time, found employment predominantly in corporate settings with rigid hierarchical structures. Industrial workers confronted ponderous bureaucracies in their own unions. Consumers discovered the frustrations of bureaucracy in dealing with the large national companies from whom they bought goods and services. More and more Americans were becoming convinced that the key to a successful future lay in acquiring the specialized training and skills necessary for work in large

organizations, where every worker performed a particular, well-defined function.

The American educational system, in particular, began to respond to the demands of this increasingly organized society by experimenting with changes in curriculum and philosophy. Elementary and secondary schools gave increased attention to the teaching of science, mathematics, and foreign languages—all of which were believed to be important for the development of skilled, specialized professionals. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 (passed in response to the Soviet Union's *Sputnik* success) provided federal funding for development of programs in those areas. Universities in the meantime were expanding their curricula to provide more opportunities for students to develop specialized skills. The idea of the "multiversity"—a phrase first coined by the chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley to describe his institution's diversity—represented a commitment to making higher education a vehicle for training specialists in a wide variety of fields.

As in earlier eras, Americans reacted to these developments with ambivalence, often hostility. The debilitating impact of bureaucratic life on the individual slowly became one of the central themes of popular and scholarly debate. William H. Whyte, Jr., produced one of the most widely discussed books of the decade: *The Organization Man* (1956), which attempted to describe the special mentality of the worker in a large, bureaucratic setting. Self-reliance, Whyte claimed, was losing place to the ability to "get along" and "work as a team" as the most valuable trait in modern character. Sociologist David Riesman made similar observations in *The Lonely Crowd* (1950), in which he argued that the traditional "inner-directed" man, who judged himself on the basis of his own values and the esteem of his family, was giving way to a new "other-directed" man, more concerned with winning the approval of the larger organization or community. Even those who lived and worked outside bureaucratic settings, some critics argued, were subjected to the homogenizing pressures of a "mass culture," dominated by television and designed to appeal to the "lowest common denominator."

The most derisive critics of the culture of the affluent society were a number of young poets and writers generally known as the "beats" (or, by derisive critics, as "beatniks"). To them, the conventional society of the American middle class was a world to be avoided and despised. They wrote harsh critiques of the sterility and conformity of American life, the meaninglessness of American politics, and the banality of popular culture. Allen Ginsberg, one of the most celebrated of the beats, attracted wide acclaim with his dark, bitter poem *Howl* (1955), decrying the "Robot apartments! invincible suburbs! skeleton treasuries! blind capitals! demonic industries!" of modern life. Jack Kerouac, a talented novelist whose severe alcoholism and early death sharply limited his creative output, nevertheless produced what may have been the leading document of the Beat Generation: *On the Road* (1957)—an account of a cross-country automobile trip that depicted the rootless, iconoclastic life style of Kerouac and his friends.

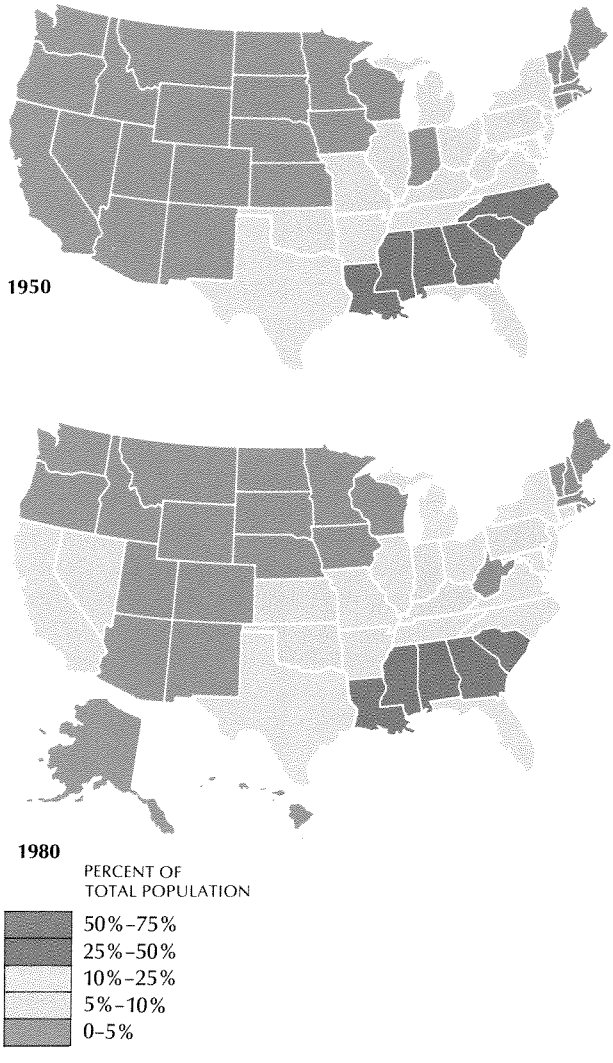
Other, less starkly alienated writers also used their work to express misgivings about the enormity and impersonality of modern society. Saul Bellow produced a series of novels—*The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), *Seize the Day* (1956), *Herzog* (1964), and others—that chronicled the difficulties of modern, urban Jews in finding fulfillment in the dehumanizing environment in which they lived. J. D. Salinger, one of the most popular writers of the era, wrote in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) of the crushing impact of modern life on vulnerable, sensitive individuals. The novel described the dilemma of prep-school student Holden Caulfield, unable to find any area of society—school, family, friends, city—in which he could feel secure or committed. In the 1950s and early 1960s, such warnings remained relatively muted, as in the writings of Bellow and Salinger, or had only a limited impact on the culture at large, as with the work of Ginsberg and Kerouac. By the late 1960s, however, these concerns were becoming crucial to the creation of a widespread and at least briefly influential "counterculture."

The Other America

Middle-class Americans in the 1950s liked to believe that their growing prosperity was reaching virtually every area of society. It was not. Important groups continued to struggle on the fringes of the economic boom, unable to share in the abundance.

Between 1948 and 1956, while national income increased 50 percent, farm prices dropped 33 percent—the victim of enormous surpluses in basic staples. In 1948, farmers had received 8.9 percent of the national income; in 1956, they received only 4.1 percent. In part, this decline reflected the steadily shrinking farm population; in 1956 alone, one out of

Black Migration, 1950–1980



every eleven rural residents moved into or was absorbed by a city. But it also reflected the deteriorating economic condition of those farmers who remained in agriculture. They experienced not only a decline in their own income but a steady increase in the prices they paid for consumer goods.

Farmers, at least, were able to attract some public attention to their plight. Other, poorer groups languished in virtual obscurity. As middle-class Americans left the cities for the suburbs, it became easier for them to ignore the existence of severe poverty in the heart of the major industrial metropolises. Black ghettoes were expanding rapidly in the 1950s, as black farmers joined the general exodus from country to city and as the black population as a whole expanded rapidly. Continuing racial discrimination helped doom large proportions of these communities to ever-increasing poverty. In New York City, Los Angeles, and elsewhere, growing Puerto Rican, Mexican, and other Hispanic communities were also earning less than what the government considered the minimum necessary for "adequate" living.

Urban ghettoes were becoming so isolated from the economic mainstream that many of their residents were finding it almost impossible to obtain employment. Thus some "inner cities" were turning into virtual prisons for poor people, who had neither the resources to move to areas where jobs were more plentiful nor the political power to force development of their own communities. A similar predicament faced residents of several particularly destitute rural regions—most notably the Appalachian areas of the Southern and border states, which were experiencing an almost total economic collapse. Lacking adequate schools, health care, and services, the residents of Appalachia, like the residents of the urban ghettoes, were almost entirely shut off from the mainstream of American economic life. Not until the 1960s, when such exposés as Michael Harrington's *The Other America* (1962) began drawing attention to the continuing existence of poverty in the nation, did the middle class begin to recognize the seriousness of the problem.

The Rise of the Civil-Rights Movement

The prosperous 1950s helped produce a mood of cautious moderation among many Americans. On at least one issue, however, these years were a time in which a major social revolution commenced. After decades of skirmishes, there began in the 1950s an open battle against racial segregation and discrimination, a battle that would prove to be one of the longest and most difficult of the century.

The emergence of civil rights as a national issue was a slow and painful process, but it was speeded along its way by several important developments. The Cold War—and the pressures it created at home to remove social blights that might serve communist propaganda purposes—helped force many white

Americans to confront racial injustice with special urgency. The federal government—slowly, at times reluctantly—began moving into position to play a crucial role in fighting for civil rights, beginning in 1954 with one of the most important Supreme Court decisions in American history. The increasingly urban character of the black population sped the growth of black protest by creating large communities in which ideas and organizational efforts could expand. It was pressure from blacks themselves that was the crucial element in raising civil rights to prominence.

The Brown *Decision and "Massive Resistance"*

In 1954, years of patient legal efforts finally bore fruit when, on May 17, the Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka*. In considering the legal segregation of a Kansas public school system, the Court rejected the doctrine of the 1896 *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* decision, which had established that communities could provide blacks with separate facilities as long as the facilities were equal to those of whites.

The *Brown* decision was the culmination of many decades of effort by black opponents of segregation. Above all, perhaps, it was the result of efforts by a group of talented black lawyers, many of them trained at Howard University in Washington by the great legal educator Charles Houston. Thurgood Marshall, William Hastie, James Nabrit, and others (working under the aegis of the NAACP) spent years filing legal challenges to segregation in one state after another, nibbling at the edges of the system, exposing its weaknesses and contradictions, and accumulating precedents to support their assault on the "separate but equal" doctrine itself. It was these NAACP lawyers who filed the suits against the school boards of Topeka, Kansas, and several other cities that became the basis for the *Brown* decision.

The Topeka suit involved the case of a black girl who had to travel several miles to a black public school every day even though she lived virtually next door to a white elementary school. When the case finally arrived before the Supreme Court, the justices examined it not simply in terms of legal precedent but in terms of history, sociology, and psychology. And they concluded that school segregation inflicted unacceptable damage on those it affected, regardless of the relative quality of the separate schools. Chief Justice Earl Warren explained the unanimous opinion of his colleagues: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

The original decision offered no guidance as to how desegregation was to be accomplished, and the justices apparently believed that any such change would have to be accomplished gradually. The following year, they issued another decision (known as "*Brown* II") to provide rules for the implementation of the 1954 order. They ruled that communities must work to desegregate their schools "with all deliberate speed," but they set no timetable and left specific decisions up to lower courts.

It was not to be an easy process. In some communities, compliance came relatively quickly and relatively painlessly, as in Washington, D.C. More often, however, strong local opposition (what came to be known in the South as "massive resistance") produced long delays and bitter conflicts. Some school districts ignored the ruling altogether. Others attempted to circumvent it with purely token efforts to integrate. The "pupil placement laws" that many school districts enacted allowed school officials to place students in schools according to their scholastic abilities and social behavior. Such laws were transparent devices for maintaining segregation; but in 1958, the Supreme Court (in *Shuttlesworth* v. *Birmingham Board of Education*) refused to declare them unconstitutional.

Southern politicians encouraged the growth of massive resistance. More than 100 Southern members of Congress signed a "manifesto" in 1956 denouncing the *Brown* decision and urging their constituents to defy it. Southern governors sometimes blocked sincere efforts by local officials to implement desegregation. Local school boards themselves occasionally took drastic action; in one county in Virginia, the school board simply closed public schools for several years rather than accede to court-ordered desegregation. White citizens' councils grew up in many Southern communities to place pressure on local officials (and parents) to resist the courts.

By the fall of 1957, only 684 of 3,000 affected school districts in the South had even begun to desegregate their schools. In those that had complied, white resistance often produced angry mob actions and other violence. Many white parents simply withdrew their children from the public schools and enrolled them in all-white "segregation academies," some of them poorly staffed and equipped. The *Brown* decision, far from ending segregation,

Rosa Parks in the Front of the Bus
In December 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to obey a law that required her to give up her seat to a white passenger and move to the back of the bus. Her defiance sparked an almost total boycott of Montgomery's transit system by black citizens. Just over a year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation of public transit systems was unconstitutional, and Mrs. Parks proudly posed for photographers sitting near the front of a city bus. (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos)

launched a prolonged battle between federal authority and state and local governments. In the years to come, federal courts would have to play an ever-increasing role in public education to ensure compliance with the desegregation rulings. And the executive branch, whose responsibility it was to enforce the decisions of the courts, found itself frequently pitted against local authorities attempting to defy the law.

The first such confrontation occurred in September 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas. The courts had ordered the desegregation of that city's Central High School. Governor Orval Faubus, a rabid and ambitious segregationist, ordered the National Guard to intervene to stop it. Faubus finally called off the Guard in response to the orders of a federal judge; but an angry mob quickly took its place in blocking integration of the school. Faced with this open defiance of federal authority (and with real danger to the safety of the black students involved), President Eisenhower finally responded by sending federal troops to Little Rock to restore order and ensure that the court orders would be obeyed. Central High School admitted its first black students; but controversy continued to plague the Little Rock school system for several years.

Eisenhower was a reluctant convert to the civil-rights cause. He had greeted the 1954 *Brown* decision with open skepticism (and once said it had set back progress on race relations by "at least fifteen years"). He had hoped not to have to intervene on behalf of such a controversial issue. But events in Little Rock forced his hand. Faubus's use of the state National Guard to resist enforcement of a federal court order, and his subsequent refusal to protect the safety of citizens exercising their rights, was too direct a threat to constitutional law for the president to ignore.

The Expanding Movement

The legal assault on school segregation was only one part of the war against racial discrimination in the 1950s. The *Brown* decision helped spark a growing number of popular challenges to segregation in one community after another. The first and most celebrated occurred in Montgomery, Alabama. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a black woman, was arrested when she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus to a white passenger (as required by the Jim Crow laws that regulated race relations in the city and throughout most of the South). Parks, who had been active for years within the black com-

munity as an advocate of civil rights, had apparently decided spontaneously to resist the order to move. Her feet were tired, she later explained. The arrest of this admired woman produced outrage in the city's black community, which organized a successful boycott of the bus system to demand an end to segregated seating.

The bus boycott was one of the first examples of a black community mobilizing itself en masse to resist segregation. It owed much of its success to the prior existence of a number of well-organized black citizens' groups committed to advancing the cause of racial justice. A black women's political caucus had, in fact, been developing plans for some time for a boycott of the segregated buses and had, along with other local civil rights leaders, been looking for an incident they could use to challenge the law. Rosa Parks was not the first black woman to defy the law; but she was, community leaders decided, the best suited to serve as a symbol of the movement.

Once launched, the boycott was almost completely effective. Black workers who needed to commute to their jobs (the largest group of which consisted of female domestic servants) formed car pools to ride back and forth to work, or simply walked, even at times over long distances. The boycott put economic pressure not only on the bus company (a private concern) but on many Montgomery merchants. The bus boycotters found it difficult to get to downtown stores and tended to shop instead in their own neighborhoods. Even so, the boycott might well have failed had it not been for a Supreme Court decision in 1955, inspired in part by the protest, that declared segregation in public transportation to be illegal. The buses in Montgomery abandoned their discriminatory seating policies, and the boycott came to a close.

The most important accomplishments of the Montgomery boycott were probably less its immediate victories than its success in establishing a new form of racial protest and, perhaps above all, in elevating to prominence a new figure in the movement for civil rights. The man chosen to lead the boycott movement once it was launched was a local Baptist pastor, Martin Luther King, Jr., son of a prominent Atlanta minister and the possessor of an oratorical power and leadership ability that even he had not previously suspected. King was reluctant at first to accept the leadership of the movement. He was new in Montgomery and feared that he would be seen as an outsider. But once he accepted the role, he became consumed by it. His life would never again be the same.

King's approach to black protest was based on the doctrine of nonviolence—that is, of passive resistance even in the face of direct assaults by white segregationists. He drew from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, the legendary Indian nationalist leader, whose life he had studied while a student in Boston; from Henry David Thoreau, and his doctrine of civil disobedience; and from Christian dogma. And he produced an approach to racial struggle that captured the moral high ground for the members of his race in a way that made it increasingly difficult for most white Americans to support his opponents. He urged blacks to engage in peaceful demonstrations; to allow themselves to be arrested, even beaten, if necessary; and to respond to hate with love. King's unparalleled rhetorical talents ensured that his message would be widely heard. And for the next thirteen years—as leader of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an interracial group he founded shortly after the bus boycott—he would be the most influential and most widely admired black leader in the country. After his tragic death in 1968, King became a revered hero, first to American blacks and gradually to most of the nation. In the 1980s, his birthday became a national holiday—making him the only American other than George Washington and Abraham Lincoln to be so honored.

Pressure from the courts, from Northern liberals, and from blacks themselves also speeded the pace of racial change in other areas. As early as 1947, one important color line had been breached when the Brooklyn Dodgers signed the great Jackie Robinson as the first black to play major-league baseball. By the mid-1950s, blacks had established themselves as a powerful force in almost all professional sports. Within the government, President Eisenhower completed the integration of the armed forces, attempted to desegregate the federal work force, and in 1957 signed a civil-rights act (passed, without active support from the White House, by a Democratic Congress) providing federal protection for blacks who wished to register to vote. It was a weak bill, with few mechanisms for enforcement; but it was the first civil-rights bill of any kind to win passage since the end of Reconstruction, and it served as a signal that the executive and legislative branches were beginning to join the judiciary in the federal commitment to the "Second Reconstruction."

Eisenhower Republicanism

It was appropriate, perhaps, that Dwight D. Eisenhower, a man who had risen to prominence as a great military leader, should preside over an era in which the American people were preoccupied with international tensions. And it was fitting, too, that this essentially conservative man, who enjoyed the company of wealthy business executives, should serve as president in a period when most Americans wanted nothing so much as a lasting stabilization of their newly prosperous economy. It should not have been surprising, therefore, that Eisenhower, the least experienced politician to serve in the White House in the twentieth century, was nevertheless among the most politically successful presidents of the postwar era. At home, he pursued essentially moderate policies, avoiding most new initiatives but accepting the work of earlier reformers. Abroad, he continued and even intensified American commitments to oppose communism but brought to some of those commitments a measure of restraint that his successors did not always match.

A Business Government

The first Republican administration in twenty years staffed itself with men drawn from the same quarter as those who had staffed Republican administrations in the 1920s: the business community. But the apparent similarities to the "New Era" governments are misleading, for much of the American business community had acquired a very different social and political outlook by the 1950s from that of their predecessors of earlier decades. Above all, many of the nation's leading businessmen and financiers had reconciled themselves to at least the broad outlines of the Keynesian welfare state the New Deal had launched and, indeed, had come to see it as something that actually benefited them—by helping maintain social order, by increasing mass purchasing power, and by stabilizing labor relations.

To his cabinet the president appointed a leading corporation lawyer (Secretary of State John Foster Dulles), the president of General Motors (Defense Secretary Charles E. Wilson), the head of a major financial firm (Treasury Secretary George Humphrey), a New England manufacturer, two automobile distributors, a farm marketing executive, and other wealthy corporate figures. Only Secretarty of Labor Martin P. Durkin, president of the plumbers' union, stood apart. "Eight millionaires and a plumber," the *New Republican* caustically remarked. Members of the new administration were not apologetic about their backgrounds. Charles Wilson assured senators considering his confirmation that he foresaw no conflict of interest because he was certain that "what was good for our country was good for General Motors, and vice versa." But missing from most members of this business-oriented administration was the deep hostility to "government interference" that had so dominated corporate attitudes three decades before.

Eisenhower's leadership style, which stressed delegation of authority to subordinates, helped enhance the power of his cabinet officers and others. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was widely believed to be running American foreign policy almost single-handedly (although subsequently released evidence made it clear that the president was far more deeply involved in international decisions than was often apparent at the time). Treasury Secretary Humphrey and Defense Secretary Wilson enjoyed wide latitude in imposing their own standards of stringency on federal fiscal policy and defense spending. The president's White House chief of staff, former New Hampshire governor Sherman Adams, exercised broad authority over relations with Congress and strictly controlled access to the president. (Late in the Eisenhower presidency, he left office in disgrace after he was discovered to have accepted gifts from a wealthy businessman, presumably in exchange for official favors).

The inclination of the Eisenhower government to limit federal activities and encourage private enterprise received clear illustration in its policies toward government power development. The president referred to the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1953 as an example of "creeping socialism" and once talked wistfully of selling "the whole thing" (although he made no effort to do so). He supported the private rather than public development of natural resources. Throughout his administration, he opposed federal public works projects in favor of private ventures.

Eisenhower moved in other areas as well to limit government involvement in the economy. To the chagrin of farmers, he lowered federal support for farm prices. He also removed the last limited wage and price controls maintained by the Truman administration. He opposed the creation of new social service programs such as national health insurance

(although he did support a bill to underwrite private insurance programs, a bill that never passed). He strove constantly to reduce federal expenditures (even during the recession of 1958) and balance the budget. He ended 1960, his last full year in office, with a $1 billion surplus.

The Survival of Social Welfare

Eisenhower's philosophy of "dynamic conservatism," as he termed it, may not have been hospitable to new social programs. But it did permit the survival, and even on occasion the expansion, of some existing ones. The president resisted pressure from the right wing of his party to dismantle those welfare policies of the New Deal that had survived the conservative assaults of the war years and after. During his term, a Republican Congress agreed to extend the Social Security system to an additional 10 million people and unemployment compensation to an additional 4 million people. The minimum hourly wage increased from 75 cents to $1. And the president supported the combination of existing federal education and social welfare programs in the new Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, which began its life in 1953.

In economic terms, the most significant legislative accomplishment of the Eisenhower administration was the Federal Highway Act of 1956, which launched a government program of vast dimensions. It authorized $25 billion for a ten-year building effort to construct over 40,000 miles of interstate highways; the program was to be funded through a highway "trust fund," which would raise revenues through a new tax on the purchase of fuel, automobiles, trucks, and tires. The cost of the program would ultimately expand far beyond that figure and would have a major impact—both directly and indirectly—in spurring economic growth.

That Eisenhower did not launch a stronger assault on existing social programs and that he actually supported some liberal reforms and spending programs resulted partly from political realities. During his first two years in office, although Congress was nominally under Republican control, a coalition of Democrats and liberal Republicans limited the freedom of conservatives to act. And from 1954 to the end of Eisenhower's years in office (indeed, until 1980), both houses of Congress remained securely in Democratic hands.

Not even Eisenhower's personal popularity was sufficient to bring his party back to power in Congress. In 1956, Eisenhower ran for a second term, even though he had suffered a serious heart attack the previous year. With Adlai Stevenson opposing him once again, he won by another, even greater landslide, receiving nearly 57 percent of the popular vote and 442 electoral votes to Stevenson's 89. Still, Democrats retained control of both houses of Congress. And in 1958—on the heels of a serious recession—they increased that control by substantial margins. The American people had endorsed Eisenhower's inclination to moderate the reforming zeal of earlier years, to "hold the line." But they were not ready, apparently, to accept the belief of others in his party that the nation should adopt an even more militantly conservative policy.

The Decline of McCarthyism

The Eisenhower administration did little in its first years in office to discourage the anticommunist furor that had gripped the nation. Indeed, it helped to sustain it. The president actually intensified the already much abused hunt for subversives in the government, which Truman had begun several years earlier. More than 2,220 federal employees resigned or were dismissed as a result of security investigations. Among them were most of the leading Asian experts in the State Department, many of whom were harried from office because they had shown inadequate enthusiasm for the now exiled regime of Chiang Kai-shek. Their absence was later to prove costly, as the government expanded its commitments in Asia without sufficient knowledge of the political realities within the region.

Among the most celebrated controversies of the first year of the new administration was the case of J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Manhattan Project during the war and one of the nation's most distinguished and admired physicists. Although Oppenheimer was now out of government service, he continued as a consultant to the Atomic Energy Commission. But he had angered some officials by his public opposition to development of the new, more powerful hydrogen bomb. In 1953, the FBI distributed a dossier within the administration detailing Oppenheimer's prewar association with various left-wing groups. The president responded by ordering a "blank wall" to be placed between Oppenheimer and government secrets. A federal investigation, requested by Oppenheimer himself and conducted in an inflamed and confused atmo-

The Army-McCarthy Hearings
Senator Joseph McCarthy uses a map to show the supposed distribution of communists throughout the United States during the televised 1954 Senate hearings to mediate the dispute between McCarthy and the U.S. Army. Joseph Welch, chief counsel for the army, remains conspicuously unimpressed. (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos)

sphere, confirmed the decision to deny him a security clearance. The episode deeply embittered much of the scientific community and caused a major public outcry.

The strong opposition to the persecution of Oppenheimer was one indication that the anticommunist hysteria of the early 1950s was beginning to abate. A more important signal of the change was the political demise of Senator Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy continued during the first year of the Eisenhower administration to operate with almost total impunity. The president, who privately loathed him, nevertheless refused to speak out in public. "I will not get into the gutter with that guy," he reportedly explained. But McCarthy finally overreached himself in January 1954 when he began launching oblique attacks against the president and a direct assault on Secretary of the Army Robert Stevens and the armed services in general. In the face of McCarthy's provocative accusations, the administration and influential members of Congress decided together that no choice remained but to stage a special investigation of the charges. They became known as the Army-McCarthy hearings, and they were among the first congressional hearings to be nationally televised. The result was devastating to McCarthy. Day after day, the public watched McCarthy in action—bullying witnesses, hurling groundless (and often cruel) accusations, evading issues, and offering churlish objections at every point. He began to appear less a hero than a villain, and ultimately less that than a mere buffoon. In December 1954, the Senate voted 67 to 22 to condemn him for "conduct unbecoming a senator." Three years later, with little public support left, he died—a victim, apparently, of complications arising from his serious alcoholism.

The Supreme Court, in the meantime, was also beginning to restrict the official harassment of suspected "subversives." Many people had expected the Court to become more conservative once the new president began to appoint new members. In fact, quite the opposite occurred. In 1953, Eisenhower

nominated the former Republican governor of California, Earl Warren, to be the new chief justice. And to the surprise of many, including Eisenhower, Warren became the moving force behind the most strenuous judicial effort to protect and expand civil liberties in the nation's history. (See below, pp. 943–944). In 1957, the Warren Court limited the FBI's latitude in using secret evidence against an opponent. More important, that same year it struck down the Smith Act, ruling that it was not a crime to urge the overthrow of the government unless a person was directly inciting illegal actions. The following year, the Court forbade the State Department to deny passports to members of the Communist party.

Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Cold War

A strong undercurrent of anxiety tinged the domestic events of the Eisenhower years, for Americans were well aware throughout the affluent 1950s how dangerous was the world in which they lived. Above all, they were aware of the horrors of a possible nuclear war, as both the United States and the Soviet Union began to make atomic weapons more and more central to their foreign policies. Yet the nuclear threat had another effect as well. With the costs of war now so enormous, both superpowers began to edge away from direct confrontations. Increasingly, the attention of the United States began to turn to the rapidly escalating instability in the nations of the Third World.

Dulles and "Massive Retaliation"

Eisenhower's secretary of state, and (except for the president himself) the dominant figure in the nation's foreign policy in the 1950s, was John Foster Dulles, an aristocratic corporate lawyer with a stern moral revulsion to communism. A deeply religious man, Dulles detested the atheistic dogmas of Marxism; a man closely tied to the nation's financial establishment, he feared the communist challenge to world free enterprise. He entered office denouncing the containment policies of the Truman years as excessively passive, arguing that the United States should pursue an active program of "liberation," which would lead to a "rollback" of communist expansion. Once in power, however, he had to defer to the far more moderate views of the president himself. Dulles began, instead, to develop a new set of doctrines that reflected the impact of nuclear weapons on the world.

The most prominent of those doctrines was the policy of "massive retaliation," which Dulles announced early in 1954. The United States would, he explained, respond to communist threats to its allies not by using conventional forces in local conflicts (a policy that had led to so much frustration in Korea) but by relying on "the deterrent of massive retaliatory power . . . a great capacity to retaliate instantly, by means and at times of our choosing." He left little doubt that the retaliation he was envisioning was a nuclear one. The new doctrine reflected in part Dulles's inclination for tense confrontations, an approach he once defined as "brinksmanship"—pushing the Soviet Union to the brink of war in order to exact concessions. But the greater force behind the massive retaliation policy was economics. With pressure growing both in and out of government for a reduction in American military expenditures, an increasing reliance on atomic weapons seemed to promise, as some advocates put it, "more bang for the buck." Many argued further that smaller, so-called tactical nuclear weapons could replace conventional forces even in limited wars. The "new look" in American defense policy seemed at first to please almost everyone. It maintained the national commitment (and, its advocates argued, the national ability) to counter communist expansion throughout the world. Yet it did so at greatly reduced cost, satisfying those who were demanding new efforts to balance the budget.

At the same time, Dulles intensified the efforts of Truman and Acheson to "integrate" the entire noncommunist world into a system of mutual defense pacts. During his years in office, he logged almost 500,000 miles in foreign travels to cement new alliances that were modeled on NATO—but that were, without exception, far weaker than the European pact. By the end of the decade, the United States had become a party to almost a dozen such treaties in all areas of the world. In Southeast Asia, there was the SEATO alliance, which included Thailand and the Philippines but few other Asian nations. In the Middle East, there was the Baghdad Pact, soon renamed the CENTO alliance (for Central Treaty Organization), which tied the United States to Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran. Other, smaller agreements pledged American aid to additional areas.

Challenges in Asia

What had been the most troubling foreign policy concern of the Truman years—the war in Korea—plagued the Eisenhower administration only briefly. The new president did indeed "go to Korea" as he had promised in his campaign—visiting briefly in the months between the election and his inauguration. But peace came as a result of other things, primarily a softening of both the American and communist positions. On July 27, 1953, negotiators at Panmunjom finally signed an agreement ending the hostilities. Each antagonist was to withdraw its troops a mile and a half from the existing battle line, which ran roughly along the 38th parallel, the prewar border between North and South Korea. A conference in Geneva was to consider means by which to reunite the nation peacefully—although in fact the 1954 meeting produced no agreement and left the cease-fire line as the apparently permanent border between the two countries.

In the meantime, however, American attention was being drawn to problems in other parts of Asia. There was, first, continuing pressure on the administration from the so-called China lobby, or "Asia firsters," who insisted on active American efforts to restore Chiang Kai-shek to the Chinese mainland. Such demands were wholly unrealistic. Chiang had nothing approaching sufficient military strength to launch an effective invasion. Even had he been able to muster the forces, he would have found virtually no popular following within China itself. Nevertheless, the administration continued to supply him with weapons and other assistance.

Almost simultaneously, the United States was becoming drawn into a long, bitter struggle in Southeast Asia. Ever since the end of World War II, France had been attempting to restore its authority over Vietnam, its one-time colony, which it had had to abandon to the Japanese during World War II. Opposing the French, however, were the powerful nationalist forces of Ho Chi Minh, determined to win independence for their nation.

Much of the later controversy over American involvement in Vietnam centered on the question of Ho Chi Minh's intentions and commitments. At the end of World War II, Ho had appealed to the United States on several occasions for support but had received no reply. Some Americans have argued that Ho was eager at that point to develop a close relationship with the United States and that the Truman administration squandered the opportunity. But whatever Ho's views of the United States in 1945, he was then, as he had been for many years, a communist; he had been trained in Moscow, and his commitment to Marxism appears to have been genuine and important to him. At least equally important, however, was Ho's nationalism. He believed in an independent and united Vietnam, and that goal, at least, he was never willing to compromise.

By 1954, Ho was receiving substantial aid from communist China and the Soviet Union. America, in the meantime, had been paying most of France's war costs since 1950 (largely because of fears of Ho's communist connections). A crisis emerged in early 1954 when 12,000 French troops became surrounded in a disastrous siege at the city of Dienbienphu, which they were incapable of defending. Only American intervention, it was clear, could prevent the total collapse of the French military effort.

Eisenhower spoke out strongly about the importance of preserving a "free" Vietnam, using the analogy once employed by Acheson of a row of dominoes. If Vietnam fell to communism, he implied, the rest of Asia would soon follow. Yet despite the urgings of Secretary of State Dulles, Vice President Nixon, and others, Eisenhower refused to permit direct American military intervention in Vietnam, claiming that neither Congress nor America's other allies would support such action. In fact, Eisenhower seemed to sense how difficult and costly such intervention would be.

Without American aid, the French defense of Dienbienphu finally collapsed on May 7, 1954; and France quickly agreed to a settlement of the conflict at a conference in Geneva that summer. The Geneva accords of July 1954, to which the United States was not a party, established a supposedly temporary division of Vietnam along the 17th parallel. The north would be governed by Ho Chi Minh, the south by a pro-Western regime. Democratic elections would serve as the basis for uniting the nation in 1956. The agreement marked the effective end of the French commitment to Vietnam, but it became the basis for an expanded American presence. Realizing that Ho Chi Minh would win any election in Vietnam, Eisenhower and Dulles decided almost immediately that they could not accept the agreement. Instead, they helped establish a pro-American government in the south, headed by Ngo Dinh Diem, a wealthy, corrupt member of his country's Roman Catholic minority. Diem, it was clear from the start, would not permit elections. He felt secure in his refusal because the United States had promised to provide him

The Nation of Israel, 1948
David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of the newly created nation of Israel (standing at left center, wearing a jacket), accepts a salute on the docks at Haifa as the last British troops prepare to leave. British soldiers had been a presence in Palestine since 1907. After their departure, Israel built up its own military strength for its long, bitter struggle with Palestinian Arabs for control of the historically contested land. (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos)

with ample military assistance against any attack from the north. (There is some evidence that the Soviet Union, eager to avoid a confrontation with the United States at this point, was at the same time pressuring Ho and his regime not to press for an election.)

Crises in the Middle East

The redirection of America's international attention toward the problems of the Third World and its growing preoccupation with threats of communism there (threats both real and imagined) were nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the Middle East. The region was a volatile and important one for two reasons: Israel and oil.

The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine had been the dream of a powerful Zionist movement that had gained strength in many parts of the world for more than half a century before World War II. The plight of the hundreds of thousands of homeless Jews uprooted by the war, and the international outrage that followed revelations of the Holocaust, gave new strength to Zionist demands in the late 1940s. Palestine had been a British protectorate since the end of World War I; and in deference to local Arab opposition, the British after 1945 had attempted to limit Jewish immigration there. But despite the British efforts to stop them, Jews had come to Palestine in such enormous numbers that they could not be ignored.

Finally, Britain brought the problem to the United Nations, which responded by recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. On May 14, 1948, the British mandate ended, and Jews proclaimed the existence of the nation of Israel. President Truman recognized the new government the following day, thus effectively blocking a UN proposal to keep the area under a temporary trusteeship. But the creation of Israel was only the beginning of the battle for a Jewish homeland. Palestinian Arabs, unwilling to accept being displaced from what they considered their own country, fought determinedly against the new state in 1948—the first of several Arab–Israeli wars. And the United States found itself with a new ally whose survival would require years of extensive American aid.

The interest of the United States in the Middle East involved much more than its strong support of Israel. America was also concerned about the stability and friendliness of the Arab regimes in the area. The reason was simple: The region contained the richest oil reserves in the world, reserves in which American companies had already invested heavily, reserves on which the health of the American (and world) economy would ultimately come to depend. Thus the United States reacted with alarm as it watched Mohammed Mossadegh, the nationalist prime minister of Iran, begin to resist the presence of Western corporations in his nation. In 1951, he ordered the seizure of Iran's oil wells from the British companies that had been developing them. During the next two years, American observers began to claim that Mos-

sadegh was becoming friendly with the Soviet Union. In 1953, the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) joined forces with conservative Iranian military leaders to engineer a coup that drove Mossadegh from office. To replace him, the United States favored elevating the young Shah of Iran, Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, from his position as a token constitutional monarch to that of a virtually absolute ruler. In return, the Shah allowed American companies to share in the development of Iranian oil reserves; and he remained closely tied to the United States for the next twenty-five years, even as his regime was becoming increasingly despotic and unpopular.

American policy was less effective in dealing with the nationalist government of Egypt, under the leadership of General Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser pressured the British in 1954 to remove their remaining troops from his country, an effort the United States accepted and even assisted. But Dulles and other policymakers were less willing to tolerate Nasser's flirtations with the Soviet Union, which took the form of Soviet shipments of armaments in return for Egyptian cotton. To punish Nasser for his transgressions, Dulles suddenly withdrew American offers of assistance in building the great Aswan Dam across the Nile. A week later, Nasser retaliated by seizing control of the Suez Canal from the British, saying that he would use the income from it to build the dam himself.

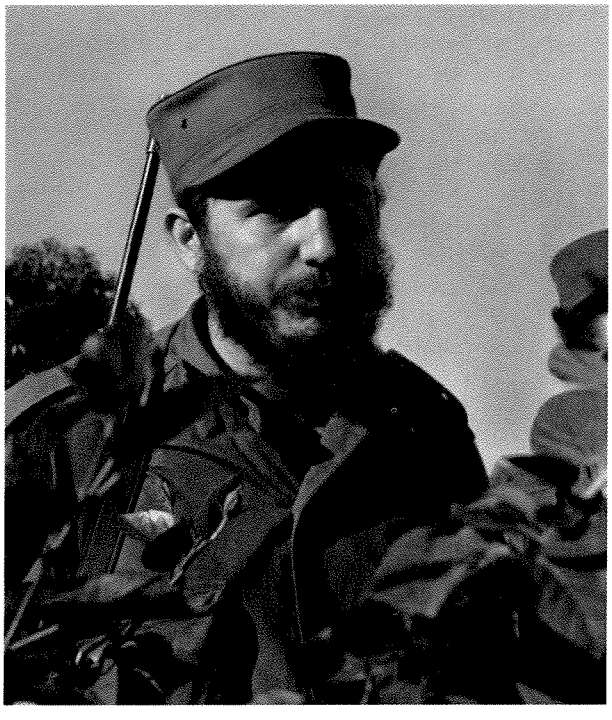
On October 29, 1956, Israeli forces struck a preemptive blow against Egypt; and the British and French followed the next day by landing troops to drive the Egyptians from the canal. Dulles and Eisenhower reacted with alarm, fearing that the Suez crisis would drive the Arab states toward the Soviet Union and precipitate a new world war. By refusing to support the Suez invasion, and by joining in a United Nations denunciation of it, the United States helped pressure the French and British to withdraw. When Egypt and Israel agreed to a cease-fire, a precarious truce was in place. In the following years, just as Dulles had feared, the government of Egypt turned to the Soviet Union for assistance, accepting Russian financing of the Aswan Dam and giving the Soviets an important (if temporary) foothold in the Middle East.

In Washington, the president responded in 1957 by enunciating the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine, which proclaimed that the United States would offer economic and military aid "to secure and protect the territorial independence" of Middle Eastern nations "against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international communism." In practice, that meant more than simply opposing Soviet aggression. It meant working to prevent the spread of pan-Arab nationalism: Nasser's efforts to unite all the Arab states into a single nation, in which he would be the dominant force. Egypt and Syria merged to form the United Arab Republic in February 1958, causing modest concern in Washington. But that concern soon turned to alarm as pan-Arab forces began to challenge the pro-Western governments of Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. The United States could do little about Iraq, which fell under the control of a pro-Nasser military government in July (although only temporarily). But in Lebanon and Jordan, the situation was different. At the request of the embattled Beirut government, Eisenhower ordered 5,000 American marines to land on the beaches of Lebanon in mid-July 1958; British troops entered Jordan at about the same time. The effect of the interventions was negligible. The governments of both countries managed to stabilize their positions on their own, and within months both the American and British forces withdrew.

Latin America and "Yankee Imperialism"

Similar difficulties were arising in an area important to, but generally neglected by, American foreign policy: Latin America. American economic interests in the region were vast; in some countries, United States corporations were the dominant force in the economy. The United States government, in the meantime, had all but abandoned even the limited initiatives of Franklin Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and was sending most of its foreign aid to Europe and Asia rather than to Latin America.

Animosity toward the United States, therefore, grew steadily during the 1950s, as many Latin Americans began to regard the influence of United States business in their countries as an insidious form of imperialism. Some nationalists in the region had once believed that the United States would support popular efforts to overthrow undemocratic governments. But in 1954, the Eisenhower administration suggested otherwise when it ordered the CIA to help topple the new, leftist government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzman in Guatemala, a regime that Dulles (responding to the entreaties of the United Fruit Company, a major investor in Guatemala fearful of



Fidel Castro
After a long struggle in the Cuban countryside, Castro's rebel forces marched toward Havana in the last days of 1958 and, as the government of Fulgencio Batista fled the country, seized control of the capital city on New Year's Day, 1959. Castro is shown here shortly before he led his troops into Havana. (UPI/Bettmann Newsphotos)

Arbenz) argued was potentially communist. Four years later, the depths of anti-American sentiment became clear when Vice President Richard Nixon visited the region, to be greeted in city after city by angry, hostile, occasionally dangerous mobs.

Americans were shocked by the outburst of animosity, and the administration began hasty, belated efforts to improve relations with its neighbors. But the legacy of more than fifty years of casual exploitation of Latin America was too strong to prevent the rise of other nationalist movements hostile to the United States. No nation in the region had been more closely tied to America than Cuba. Its leader, Fulgenico Batista, had ruled as a military dictator since 1952, when with American assistance, he had toppled a more moderate government. Cuba's economy (generally a relatively prosperous one) had become a virtual fiefdom of American corporations, which controlled almost all the island's natural resources and had cornered over half of the vital sugar crop. Beginning in 1957, a popular movement of resistance to the Batista regime began to gather power under the leadership of Fidel Castro. By late 1958, the Batista forces were in almost total disarry. And on January 1, 1959, with Batista now in exile in Spain (having taken millions of dollars in government funds along with him), Castro marched into Havana and established a new government.

Despite its long support of the Batista government, the United States had long been vaguely embarrassed by its ties to that corrupt regime. At first, therefore, Americans reacted warmly to Castro, particularly since there was little evidence that he was tied to any communist elements. But once Castro began implementing drastic policies of land reform and expropriating foreign-owned businesses and resources, Cuban-American relations rapidly deteriorated.

The new government was causing particular concern to Eisenhower and Dulles by its growing interest in communist ideas and tactics. When Castro began accepting assistance from the Soviet Union in 1960, the United States cut back the "quota" by which Cuba could export sugar to America at a favored price. Early in 1961, as one of its last acts, the Eisenhower administration severed diplomatic relations with Castro. The American CIA had already begun secretly training Cuban expatriates for an invasion of the island to topple the new regime. Isolated by the United States, Castro soon cemented a close and lasting alliance with the Soviet Union.

Europe and the Soviet Union

The problems of the Third World would soon become the central focus of American foreign policy. Through most of the 1950s, however, the United States remained chiefly concerned with its direct relationship with the Soviet Union and with the possibility of communist expansion in Europe. The massive retaliation doctrine was the first American effort to deter such expansion. The rearming of West Germany was another. Beginning in 1954, the West German government began to develop its first armed forces since the end of World War II; and in 1957, the first German forces joined NATO, making the nation a full military ally of the United States.

In the meantime, however, many Americans continued to hope that the United States and the Soviet Union would be able to negotiate solutions to some of their remaining problems. Such hopes were

buoyed when, after the death of Stalin in 1953, signs began to emerge of a new Russian attitude of conciliation. The Soviet Union extended a peace overture to the rebellious Tito government in Yugoslavia; it returned a military base to Finland; it signed a peace treaty with Japan; and it agreed at last to terminate its long military occupation of Austria (which, like Germany, had been partitioned into four zones of occupation by the Allies at the end of World War II), allowing that nation to become an independent, neutral state. Pressure for negotiation intensified when, in 1953–1954, both the United States and the Soviet Union successfully tested the new hydrogen bomb, a nuclear device of vastly greater power than those developed during the war. These factors seemed briefly to bear fruit in 1955, when Eisenhower and other NATO leaders met with the Soviet premier, Nicolai Bulganin, at a cordial summit conference in Geneva. But when a subsequent conference of foreign ministers met to try to resolve specific issues, the "spirit of Geneva" quickly dissolved, as neither side could agree to the terms of the other.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the West soured further in 1956 in response to the Hungarian Revolution. Inspired by riots in Poland a year earlier, Hungarian dissidents had launched a great popular uprising in November of that year to demand democratic reforms. For several days, they had control of the Hungarian government. But before the month was out, Soviet tanks and troops entered Budapest to crush the uprising and restore an orthodox, pro-Soviet regime. The United States had encouraged the uprising (through broadcasts over its Radio Free Europe network and other means), and some Hungarians had come to expect American intervention on their behalf. The Eisenhower administration, however, refused to risk a direct confrontation with the Soviets in what it had long ago implicitly conceded was their "sphere of influence." The suppression of the uprising convinced many American leaders that Soviet policies had not softened as much as the events of the previous two years had at times suggested.

The failure of conciliation brought renewed vigor to the Cold War. It not only helped produce tensions between the superpowers in the Third World; it also spurred a vastly increased Soviet–American arms race. Both nations engaged in extensive nuclear testing in the atmosphere, causing alarm among many scientists and environmentalists. Both nations redoubled efforts to develop effective intercontinental ballistic missiles, which could deliver atomic warheads directly from one continent to another. The apparent Russian lead in such development caused wide alarm in the United States. The American military, in the meantime, developed a new breed of atomic-powered submarines, capable of launching missiles from under water anywhere in the world.

The arms race not only increased tensions between the United States and Russia; it increased tensions within each nation as well. In America, public concern about nuclear war was becoming an obsessive national nightmare, a preoccupation never far from popular thought. Movies, television programs, books, popular songs all expressed the pervasive fear. Government studies began to appear outlining the hideous casualties that a nuclear war would inflict on the nation. Schools, local governments, and individual families built a network of bomb shelters for protection against atomic blasts and radioactive fallout. Fear of communism, therefore, combined with fear of atomic war to create a widespread national unease.

The U-2 Crisis

In this tense and fearful atmosphere, new Soviet challenges in Berlin in 1958 created a particularly troubling crisis. The linking of West Germany first to NATO and then to the new European Common Market, establishing that nation as a full partner of the West, made the continuing existence of an anticommunist West Berlin a galling irritation to the Soviets. In November 1958, therefore, Nikita Khrushchev, who had succeeded Bulganin as Soviet premier and Communist party chief earlier that year, renewed the demands of his predecessors that the NATO powers abandon the city, threatening vaguely to cut its ties to the West if they did not. The United States and its allies refused, and America and Russia were locked in another tense confrontation.

Khrushchev declined to force the issue when it became apparent that the West was unwilling to budge. Instead, he suggested that he and Eisenhower engage in personal discussions, both by visiting each other's countries and by conferring at a summit meeting in Paris in 1960. The United States eagerly agreed. Khrushchev's 1959 visit to America produced a cool but polite response, and plans proceeded for the summit conference and for Eisenhower's visit to Moscow shortly thereafter. Only days before the scheduled beginning of the Paris meeting, however, the Soviet Union announced that it had shot down an

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

1946 Dr. Benjamin Spock publishes *Baby and Child Care* (p. 863)

1947 Jackie Robinson becomes first black to play in major leagues (p. 870)
Construction begins on Levittown, New York (p. 860)

1948 UAW and General Motors agree to automatic cost-of-living increases for auto workers (p. 858)
United Nations votes to partition Palestine and create state of Israel (p. 876)

1950 David Riesman publishes *The Lonely Crowd* (p. 866)

1951 J.D. Salinger publishes *The Catcher in the Rye* (p. 866)

1952 Eisenhower elected president (p. 871)

1953 Economic recession sets in (p. 857)
Saul Bellow publishes *The Adventures of Augie March* (p. 866)
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare established (p. 872)
Earl Warren becomes chief justice (p. 874)
Truce ends Korean War (p. 875)
CIA helps engineer coup in Iran (p. 877)
Oppenheimer denied security clearance (p. 873)
Stalin dies (p. 879)

1954 Supreme Court rules on *Brown* v. *Board of Education* (p. 868)
Democrats regain control of Congress (p. 872)
Army-McCarthy hearings (p. 873)
Senate censures McCarthy (p. 873)
France surrenders at Dienbienphu (p. 875)
Geneva agreement partitions Vietnam (p. 875)
United States helps topple Arbenz regime in Guatemala (p. 877)

1955 Labor organizations reconcile and form AFL-CIO (p. 858)
Supreme Court announces "*Brown* II" decision (p. 868)
Montgomery bus boycott begins (p. 870)
Ngo Dinh Diem becomes president of South Vietnam (p. 875)
Eisenhower and Bulganin meet in Geneva (p. 879)

1956 Federal Highway Act passed (p. 872)
Eisenhower reelected president (p. 872)
Suez crisis (p. 877)
Hungarian revolution (p. 879)

1957 Postwar baby boom peaks (p. 856)
Economic recession begins (p. 857)
Labor racketeering investigations focus on Teamsters (p. 859)
Soviet Union launches *Sputnik* (p. 865)
Jack Kerouac publishes *On the Road* (p. 866)
Little Rock school desegregation crisis (p. 869)
Civil-rights act passed (p. 870)
Germany joins NATO (p. 878)

1958 American manned space program founded (p. 865)
National Defense Education Act passed (p. 866)
American marines land in Lebanon (p. 877)

1959 Castro seizes power in Cuba (p. 878)
Nikita Khrushchev visits United States (p. 879)

1960 U-2 incident precedes collapse of Paris summit (p. 880)

1961 Yuri Gagarin of Soviet Union becomes first man in space (p. 865)
Alan Shepard becomes first American in space (p. 865)
United States breaks diplomatic relations with Cuba (p. 878)
Eisenhower gives farewell address (p. 881)

1962 Michael Harrington publishes *The Other America* (p. 867)

1969 Americans land on moon (p. 865)

American U-2, a high-altitude spy plane, over Russian territory. Its pilot, Francis Gary Powers, was in captivity. The Eisenhower administration responded clumsily, at first denying the allegations and then, when confronted with incontrovertible proof, awkwardly admitting the circumstances of Powers's mis-

sion and attempting to explain them. Khrushchev lashed back angrily, breaking up the Paris summit almost before it could begin and withdrawing his invitation to Eisenhower to visit the Soviet Union. But the U-2 incident was really only a pretext. By the spring of 1960, Khrushchev knew that no agreement was possible on the Berlin issue; and he, therefore, was eager for an excuse to avoid what he believed would be fruitless negotiations.

The events of 1960 provided a somber backdrop for the end of the Eisenhower administration. After eight years in office, Eisenhower had failed to eliminate the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. He had failed to end the costly and dangerous armaments race. And he had presided over a transformation of the Cold War from a relatively limited confrontation with the Soviet Union in Europe to a global effort to resist communist subversion.

Yet Eisenhower had brought to these matters his own sense of the limits of American power. He had refused to commit American troops to anticommunist crusades except in carefully limited and generally low-risk situations, such as Guatemala and Lebanon. He had resisted pressures from the British, from the French, and from hard-liners in his own government to place American force behind efforts to maintain colonial power in Vietnam and in the Suez or to intervene in Hungary. He had placed a measure of restraint on those who urged the creation of an enormous American military establishment, warning in his farewell address in January 1961 of the "unwarranted influence" of a vast "military-industrial complex." His caution, both in domestic and in international affairs, stood in marked contrast to the attitudes of his successors, who argued that the United States must act far more boldly and aggressively on behalf of its goals at home and abroad.

SUGGESTED READINGS

General Studies. William Leuchtenburg, *A Troubled Feast* (1979); Carl Degler, *Affluence and Anxiety* (1968); John Brooks, *The Great Leap* (1966); Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (1976); William Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey* (1986); Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade and After* (1960); John P. Diggins, *The Proud Decades* (1989); Douglas T. Miller and Marion Novak, *The Fifties* (1977); William O'Neill, *American High* (1986).

The Postwar Economy. John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (1958) and *The New Industrial State* (1967); Loren J. Okroi, *Galbraith, Harrington, Heilbroner* (1986); C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (1956); Harold G. Vatter, *The U.S. Economy in the 1950s* (1963); Robert Heilbroner, *The Limits of American Capitalism* (1965); Joel Seidman, *American Labor from Defense to Reconversion* (1953); John Hutchinson, *The Imperfect Union* (1970).

Culture and Society. Paul Carter, *Another Part of the Fifties* (1983); Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the U.S. 1945–1960* (1982); George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America* (1981); Douglas T. Miller and Marion Novak, *The Fifties* (1977); Herbert Gans, *The Levittowners* (1967); Kenneth Jackson, *The Crabgrass Frontier* (1985); Ruth Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Irony of Household Technology* (1983); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (1988); Eugenia Kaledin, *Mothers and More: American Women in the 1950s* (1984); Edward J. Epstein, *News from Nowhere* (1973); David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (1979); Tom Wolfe, *The Right Stuff* (1979); Waltert A. McDougall, *. . . the Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age* (1985); R. L. Rosholt, *An Administrative History of NASA* (1966); Walter Sullivan (ed.), *America's Race for the Moon* (1962); Barbara B. Clowse, *Brainpower for the Cold War: The Sputnik Crisis and the National Defense Education Act of 1958* (1981); Paul Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light* (1986); David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (1950); William Whyte, *The Organization Man* (1956); C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (1956); Bruce Cook, *The Beat Generation* (1971); John Tytell, *Naked Angels* (1976); Ann Charters, *Kerouac* (1973); Dennis McNally, *Desolate Angel* (1979); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center* (1949); Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (1960); Howard Brick, *Daniel Bell and the Decline of Intellectual Radicalism* (1986); Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (1985); David Potter, *People of Plenty* (1954); Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (1954); Mary Sperling McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left* (1978); Daniel Bell, ed., *The Radical Right* (1963).

The Eisenhower Presidency. Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower the President* (1984); Piers Brendon, *Ike* (1986); Robert F. Burk, *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (1986); Fred Greenstein, *The Hidden-hand Presidency* (1982); Charles C. Alexander, *Holding the Line* (1975); Herbert S. Parmet, *Eisenhower and the American Crusades* (1972); Peter Lyon, *Eisenhower: Portrait of a Hero* (1974); Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years,* 2 vols. (1963–1965); Emmet John Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power* (1963); Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report* (1961); Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (1962); Nicol C. Rae, *The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Republicans* (1989); Gary Reichard, *The Reaffirmation of Republicanism* (1975); David W. Reinhard, *The Republican Right Since 1945* (1983); Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1941–1956* (1979).

Foreign Policy. Robert Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (1981); Townsend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster*

Dulles (1973); Louis Gerson, *John Foster Dulles* (1967); Stephen Ambrose, *Ike's Spies* (1981); Michael Beschloss, *MAYDAY* (1986); Chester Cooper, *Lost Crusade* (1970); Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake* (1972); John T. McAlister, Jr., *Vietnam: The Origins of Revolution* (1969); George Herring, *America's Longest War* (1979); Chester Cooper, *The Lion's Last Roar* (1978); Hugh Thomas, *Suez* (1967); Mira Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise* (1974); Kermit Roosevelt, *Counter-coup* (1980); Burton Kaufman, *The Oil Cartel Case* (1978); Richard Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala* (1982); Walter LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions* (1983); Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America* (1988); Robert A. Divine, *Foreign Policy and U.S. Presidential Elections,* 2 vols. (1974) and *Blowing in the Wind: The Nuclear Test Ban Debate, 1954–1960* (1978); Blanche W. Cooke, *The Declassified Eisenhower* (1981); Richard A. Melanson and David A. Mayers, ed., *Reevaluating Eisenhower* (1986); Burton I. Kaufman, *Trade and Aid* (1982); Howard Ball, *Justice Downwind: America's Nuclear Testing Program in the 1950s* (1986); Gregg Herken, *Counsels of War* (1985); Richard G. Hewlett and Jack M. Hall, *Atoms for Peace and War, 1953–1961* (1989); Richard Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma* (1988).

Legal and Constitutional Issues. Philip Stern, *The Oppenheimer Case* (1969); Michael Straight, *Trial by Television* (1954); Paul Murphy, *The Constitution in Crisis Times* (1972); Alexander Bickel, *Politics and the Warren Court* (1965) and *The Supreme Court and the Idea of Progress* (1970); Philip Kurland, *Politics, the Constitution, and the Warren Court* (1970); John Weaver, *Earl Warren* (1967).

Civil Rights. Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice* (1975); Anthony Lewis, *Portrait of a Decade* (1964); Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958); William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights* (1980); Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954–1980* (1981); John W. Anderson, *Eisenhower, Brownell, and the Congress* (1964); Robert F. Burk, *The Eisenhower Administration and Black Civil Rights* (1984); Numan V. Bartley, *The Rise of Massive Resistance* (1969); Elizabeth Huckaby, *Crisis at Central High* (1980); David Garrow, ed., *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: A Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson* (1987); Robert J. Norrell, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee* (1985); Howell Raines, *My Soul Is Rested* (1977).