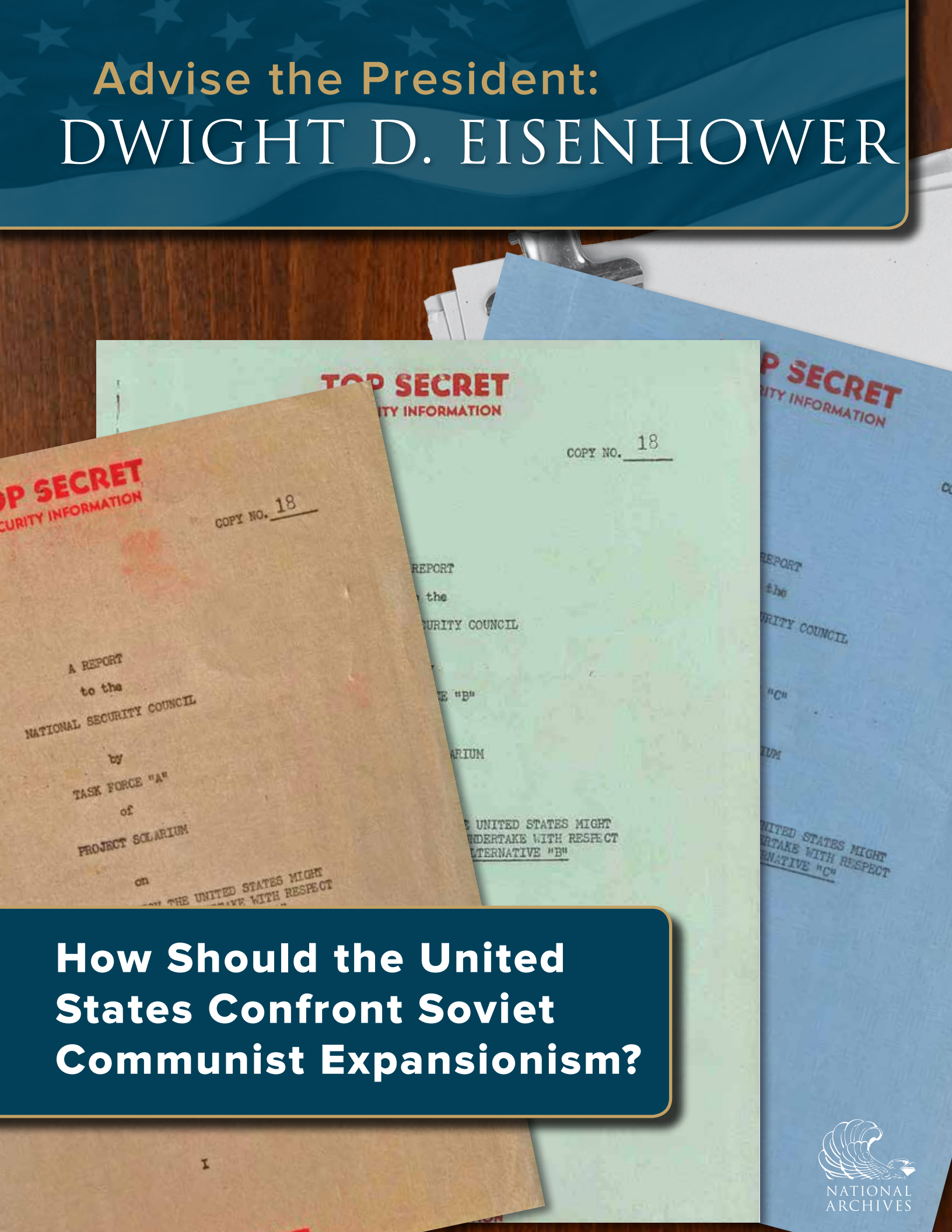
Advise the President:

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



How Should the United States Confront Soviet Communist Expansionism?

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Advise the President:

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Place: The Oval Office, the White House
Time: May 1953

The President is in the early months of his first term and he recognizes Soviet military aggression and the subsequent spread of Communism as the greatest threat to the security of the nation. However, the current costs of fighting Communism are skyrocketing, presenting a significant threat to the nation's economic well-being. President Eisenhower is concerned that the costs are not sustainable over the long term but he believes that the spread of Communism must be stopped.

On May 8, 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower has called a meeting in the Solarium of the White House with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and Treasury Secretary George M. Humphrey. The President believes that the best way to craft a national policy in a democracy is to bring people together to assess the options. In this meeting the President makes a proposal based on his personal decision-making process—one that is grounded in exhaustive fact gathering, an open airing of the full range of viewpoints, and his faith in the clarifying qualities of energetic debate. Why not, he suggests, bring together teams of "bright young fellows," charged with the mission to fully vet all viable policy alternatives? He envisions a culminating presentation in which each team will vigorously advocate for a particular option before the National Security Council.

The teams have done their work, and it is time to present their findings. You are an adviser to the President and must help him make the ultimate decision.

STEP INTO THE OVAL OFFICE.

THE PRESIDENT IS EXPECTING YOU.

Background

Americans are threatened by the expansion of Communism, and many believe it endangers our nation's existence. This chart helps explain some of the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union.

	In the United States . . .	In the Soviet Union . . .
What are the most important values?	The system of government is based on individual political power and the ideals of freedom and equality.	The system of government is based on the idea of "common ownership."
Who owns property?	Individual citizens own personal property and possessions.	All resources belong to the community. There is no private property.
Who makes decisions?	Citizens elect representatives who make rules and govern with the consent of the people.	A self-selected individual or group of people holds power and makes decisions for everyone else.
Who controls wealth?	Prices and wages are determined by business competition in a free market. Individuals or groups form their own businesses, which can lead to the development of wealth.	The government has complete control over the production and distribution of goods.
Americans are worried that the spread of Communism threatens their freedoms, their individuality, and their way of living.		

Prior to World War II, Joseph Stalin aggressively transformed the communist Soviet Union into a totalitarian state. A ruthless dictator, Stalin orchestrated the death of millions of Soviet citizens. He forced the collectivization of Soviet farms so that individuals could not produce or sell their own crops or livestock. People who resisted this or any other policy implemented by Stalin were sent to labor camps or were killed. During World War II, the United States decided that Nazi Germany posed so great a threat to the security of the free world, that it allied with the Soviet Union in order to defeat the Nazis. But after World War II, Stalin continued his aggressive tactics to spread Communism around a shattered world.

President Eisenhower with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Their May 8, 1953, meeting on national security in the White House solarium led to the creation of Project Solarium.

Stalin's death in March 1953 created a leadership vacuum and increased tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States sensed heightened danger, driven by the threat of ever-increasing Soviet nuclear capabilities. President Eisenhower now recognizes the need to craft a new national security policy. While he hopes to resolve the situation peacefully, he feels that he needs all the options on the table.

A Chance For Peace

In April 1953, President Eisenhower argued that continuing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union blights the lives of millions of people around the globe. He spoke eloquently on the human consequences of continuing on this path.

> *"This has been the way of life forced by eight years of fear and force. What can the world, or any nation in it, hope for if no turning is found on this dread road? The worst to be feared and the best to be expected can be simply stated. The worst is atomic war. The best would be this: a life of perpetual fear and tension; a burden of arms draining the wealth and the labor of all peoples; a wasting of strength that defies the American system or the Soviet system or any system to achieve true abundance and happiness for the peoples of this earth.*
>
> *Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000 population. It is two fine, fully equipped hospitals. It is some 50 miles of concrete highway. We pay for a single fighter plane with a half million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people.*
>
> *This, I repeat, is the best way of life to be found on the road the world has been taking. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron. These plain and cruel truths define the peril and point the hope that comes with this spring of 1953. This is one of those times in the affairs of nations when the gravest choices must be made, if there is to be a turning toward a just and lasting peace. It is a moment that calls upon the governments of the world to speak their intentions with simplicity and with honesty. It calls upon them to answer the question that stirs the hearts of all sane men: is there no other way the world may live?"*

The President called for an end to the Cold War and a new era in U.S.–Soviet relations. But at the same time, he knew that the United States and the free world must defend themselves from the ever-expanding reach of Communism. The question now was: How would that new policy be achieved?

Project Solarium

The conversation in the Solarium led to the development of a very specific strategic planning process known as Project Solarium. President Eisenhower created three task forces (known as A, B, and C). Each was charged with making the best possible arguments for one potential course of action. The President has been very much involved in the development process, outlining the structure and processes for the exercise, articulating the policy options, and even recommending the persons to serve on the three task forces. The project is top secret, and during the summer of 1953 participants are being sequestered at the National War College at Fort McNair in Washington, DC.

Task Forces A, B, and C are staffed by 21 members who include subject-matter experts, diplomats, and military officers, working in isolation for approximately six weeks of intense 12—14 hour days. The teams have been given unrestricted access to the expertise and information of the United States Government. Through this comprehensive and deliberative process, President Eisenhower believes that he and his advisors will build a solid basis upon which to make the decisions that will lead to a new national security policy.

Each task force approaches the problem from a different perspective. While all agree on the basic assumption that Communism should not be allowed to expand, each group will pursue a different option to preventing it. The President and his team will listen to each presentation; then the President will make his own decision about future foreign policy.

GLOSSARY

Communism: an economic system based on the idea of "common ownership" of all resources by all citizens. Individuals do not own private property.

Democracy: a form of government based on the political power of individuals and the ideals of freedom and equality. Individual citizens are responsible for their own decisions and successes.

Cold War: period of extreme political and military tension short of armed conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Soviet bloc: groups of countries dominated or controlled by the Soviet Union.

Free world: the countries aligned with the United States and Western Europe.

Brinksmanship: the idea that pushing the military to the brink of a war (without actually starting the war) will convince another nation to accede to your demands.

Containment: a policy to control the spread of Communism by physically limiting it to the countries where it already exists.

General war: term for future worldwide military conflict that would include the use of nuclear weapons.

TOP SECRET
SECURITY INFORMATION

SOLARIUM PROJECT

Principal Points Made by JFD

1. It is difficult to conclude that time is working in our favor.

2. Practically everywhere one looks - Africa, Middle East (except for British at Suez), India, South East Asia, Far East (except for U.S. at Korea and Japan), there is no strong holding point and danger everywhere of Communist penetration. South America is vulnerable. West Germany might take the Communist bait and block EDC, thus risking a NATO collapse. In the world chess game, the Reds today have the better position.

3. Incalculable factors may, of course, change the pattern of the future and dislocate Red plans.

4. The existing threat posed by the Soviets to the Western World is the most terrible and fundamental in the latter's 1000 years of domination. This threat differs in quality from the threat of a Napoleon or a Hitler. It is like the invasion by Islam in the 10th century. Now the clear issue is: can western civilization survive?

5. The Western powers, except the U.S. (and certain smaller British possessions), are weakened by the recent wars, shattered, "old people" who want to spend their remaining days in peace and repose. They are willing and glad to gamble on time bringing about a solution, limiting themselves to rear guard actions. Their hope is that the Soviets, like Ghenghes Khan, will get on their little Tartar ponies and ride back whence they came.

Only the U.S. (and certain smaller British possessions) has the strength, the dynamic, is unscarred enough to hold a different philosophy. Shall we continue to defer to our allies? Or have we a duty to take leadership in a fast and vigorous pace?

6. The present course we are following is a fatal one for us and the free world. It is just defensive: we are always worrying about what the Soviet will take next. Unless we change this policy, or get some break, we will lose bit by bit the free world, and break ourselves financially. And we will lose the support of Congress and the American people. You can't hold the world by just defensive action much longer. It is necessary to take a new, different line.

7. There are alternatives to the present course of action:

a. on a grand scale
b. on a lesser scale.

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SECURITY INFORMATION

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

THE OPTIONS

How Should the United States Confront Soviet Communist Expansionism?

Each option presents specific action steps that you could take, but each action also raises the possibility of serious consequences. There may be no clear answer. Before you decide, take some time to review the details of each option and weigh the arguments and drawbacks for each.

Option A: Contain Communism
We should contain Communism within its current borders and allow the inherent weaknesses of the Communist system to cause it to decay over time from the inside out. Our focus should be on building up the strength of the free world while pressuring the Soviets economically and diplomatically.

Option B: Threaten Massive Retaliation
We should draw a "line in the sand" and tell the Soviet Union that any attempt to expand Communism over that line will result in a massive and severe retaliation from the United States. Our focus should be on building up our own military capability to support that threat if the Soviet Union acts.

Option C: Liberate the Soviet Bloc from Communism
We should take aggressive and proactive steps to roll back Communism and free all people from Communist systems. Our focus should be on using all avenues—including military action—to liberate the people of the Soviet bloc from the oppression of Communism.

OPTION A: Isolate Communism and Apply Pressure

The United States must contain Soviet expansion inside its current boundaries and apply pressure on the Soviet Government until Communism collapses. According to this option, Communism is an inherently flawed system that will fail, even without aggressive action by the United States. The United States should focus on building up and maintaining the economic, diplomatic, political, and military strength of the free world, while pressuring the Soviet Union economically and diplomatically. Eventually, Soviet power will deteriorate to a point that no longer constitutes a threat to the security of the United States and to world peace, and the political and economic systems of the United States will prevail.

In order to stop the spread of Communism, "there is one single factor which is essential [. . .]: that is the political climate of the non-Communist world" (Task Force A report to the National Security Council). It is vital for the United States to pursue stronger relationships with our allies. Wherever possible, we must seek to strengthen free nations around the world with American investment and economic aid. Indeed, the United States should "continue to assist in building up the economic and military strength and cohesion of the free world" (Task Force A report to the National Security Council). Soviet expansion is best checked through targeted efforts to strengthen Western Europe's war-weakened economic, political, military, and diplomatic systems.

We can also contain the spread of Communism by applying pressure on the Soviet Government. It is "possible to create in the minds of Soviet leaders an image of United States posture and policy which will discourage Soviet foreign ventures. A number of useful techniques might be applied to this purpose: carefully planted intelligence information; discrete revelations to neutral diplomats; appropriate public or secret commitments guaranteeing the security of certain threatened areas; and appropriate official communications to the Soviet Government" (Task Force A report to the National Security Council).

Furthermore, says this option, we need to remember that time is on our side. The political and economic systems of the United States are innately superior to those of the Soviet Union. This approach allows the United States to appear to be seeking a "peaceful co-existence" with the Soviets, while isolating their system of government until it collapses in on itself.

Another World War?

This option hopes to avoid general war, although the United States should be prepared for it. The risk of the Soviets retaliating against comprehensive containment is moderate.

What We Could Do

Task Force A recommends that we:

- ***Continue economic aid to our allies and promote trade among Western European nations, along with stimulating American private investment in the free world.***

  But . . . this action does nothing to push back Communism, and people in communist societies will continue to be oppressed.

- ***Invest in quality intelligence, especially highly trained spies, in an attempt to undermine the Soviets and their allies.***

  But . . . our allies might think such an aggressive intelligence program will cause them and us diplomatic problems.

- ***Agree to a peaceful co-existence with the Soviets, allowing Communism to crumble on its own over time.***

  But . . . this approach will take a long time, and people of Eastern Europe may look for faster change.

- ***Add tactical nuclear weapons to our arsenal that would be used only if necessary.***

  But . . . the Soviets could see this preparation as a direct threat and retaliate.

The map above illustrates where covert operations would be directed against emerging Kremlin-inspired Communist threats. The map below shows where the roll back was expected to be by 1965, with the Soviets reeling back into Eastern Europe.

OPTION B: Threaten Massive Retaliation

President Eisenhower must deter further Soviet expansionism by boldly and definitively drawing a geographical "hard line" across Europe and at strategic points around the globe, telling the Soviet Union that any attempt to expand Communist dominance beyond that line would constitute an act of war against the United States. Such an assertion would show the Soviets that the United States means business and is determined to stop the spread of Communism. The threat of massive retaliation would deter Soviet expansion because it suggests the very real potential of a doomsday scenario.

The Soviets do not want to provoke general war and possible nuclear annihilation any more than do we. At their core, according to this option, they are far more rational in their thinking than we have been led to believe. For our part, American military power and diplomatic posture must convince the Soviets of our intention to retaliate absolutely and completely with all available measures, including the use of nuclear weapons, to halt the spread of Communism and to safeguard our national security. With President Eisenhower's international status as a war leader, the general public will recognize that he has the resolve and capacity to launch a massive retaliatory strike if necessary.

The United States must seize every opportunity to build up our own military forces and those of our allies. We must invest in the development of new systems for defensive purposes. We must not waste time or resources fighting peripheral wars, but instead, focus our efforts on responding to any advance by the Soviets. "The advance of military forces which would bring on a general war can be no trifling border incident of the sort that has happened many times in the past and will presumably happen from time to time in the future." Instead, we must be prepared to respond to "armed aggression that would be clearly recognized as such by the President and the people of the United States, and in fact by the Free World as a whole" (Task Force B report to the National Security Council).

If the Soviets cross the line, we must be prepared to respond with general war, in which the United States (assisted by allies) "would apply its full power—whenever, however, and wherever necessary to defeat the main enemy" (Task Force B report to the National Security Council).

Another World War?

This option holds that the potential for the Soviet Union to provoke general war—possibly nuclear war—is possible but unlikely.

Soviet Aircraft. The Yakolev Yak-25 "Flashlight" was a jet-propelled intercept and reconnaissance plane favored by the Soviets in the mid-1950 to protect its northern and eastern territories in case of war with the NATO alliance. Courtesy of the National Archives at Kansas City.

What We Could Do

Task Force B recommends that we:

- ***Focus on a military buildup for general war if the Soviets cross the line.***

  But . . . it is possible that this could trigger a significant war of mass destruction.

- ***Avoid fighting peripheral wars, resisting the temptation to liberate Soviet satellite countries.***

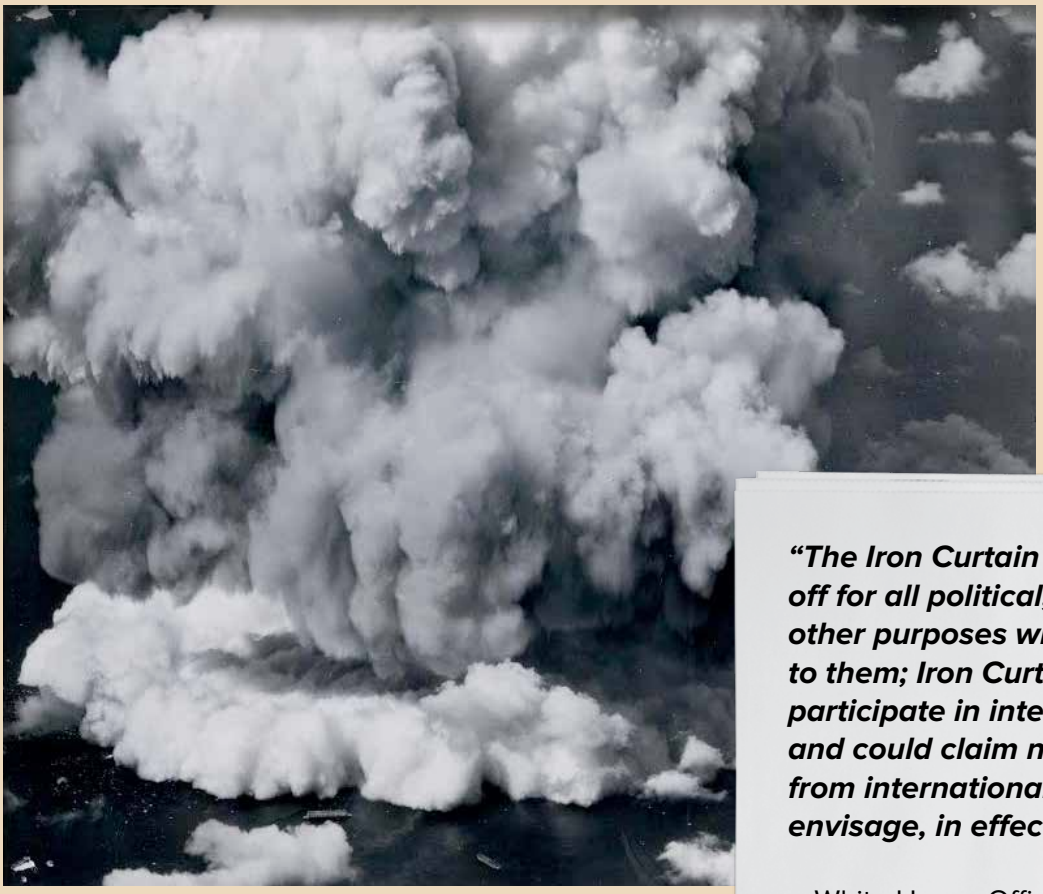
  But . . . people in these countries will continue to be oppressed.

- ***Work to create understanding and support for this policy on the part of the United States Congress, the American people, and our allies. This option could lead to complete devastation, so we must work to address the profound moral, ethical, political, and economic consequences inherent in this option.***

  But . . . this may create pressure to follow through with war even if the Soviets do not provoke it.

- ***Reduce economic aid to the free world to focus on military development.***

  But . . . other non-communist countries could be relying on that aid for non- military purposes.



Atomic Energy Experimental Explosion. "Test Baker" detonated an atomic bomb 90 feet below water in the Bikini Atoll on July 25, 1946. The United States held a monopoly on atomic weapons until 1949 when the Soviets tested their first nuclear bomb, increasing fears of a worldwide atomic war. Courtesy of the National Archives at Kansas City.

"The Iron Curtain countries would be sealed off for all political, economic, cultural and other purposes which may be advantageous to them; Iron Curtain countries would not participate in international organizations and could claim no protections or benefits from international law. The policy would envisage, in effect, two worlds."

White House Office, National Security Staff Paper 1948-1961. Disaster File, Project Solarium (1): Box 39. "Project Solarium Outline"

OPTION C: Liberate the Soviet Bloc from Communism

President Eisenhower should vigorously attempt to roll back the Soviet empire using military force if necessary, and should liberate all its satellite nations. According to this option, the United States must embrace a proactive strategy to end the Soviets' postwar expansion into Eastern Europe by all means possible. This action would force the Soviets to focus on holding what they already have rather than on gaining control of additional territories and peoples. It would (more quickly) put a definitive end to the Cold War and the expansion of Communism. This more active approach is necessary because Communism grows one day stronger for every day the United States does not act.

Each time the Soviet Union expands, the free world's security is further compromised. This option argues that containment is a new form of appeasement, which the Soviets interpret as fear, weakness, and indecision. The United States, in solidarity with her allies, must be willing to meet the Communist threat throughout the world, but particularly within the Soviet Union, with bold, decisive actions. We must "seize the political initiative and operate aggressively against the Soviet Bloc by waging a political offensive" (Task Force C report to the National Security Council).

Any strategy to undo communism must include propaganda, intelligence gathering, and political, military, and economic pressures aimed at undermining the Soviet stranglehold in Eastern Europe and Communist infiltration around the globe. "The purpose of this policy would be . . . to force the Soviets to shift their efforts to holding what they already have rather than concentrating on gaining control of additional territories and peoples and, at the same time, to produce a climate of victory encouraging to the free world" (Task Force C report to the National Security Council). We must work with our allies to actively combat Communism, but we must also be prepared to go at it alone if necessary.

These actions are bold and decisive; they are more aggressive than other options because "the only way to end the Cold War is to face up to the challenge posed by the Communist conspiracy and devote the necessary effort to the task of winning the Cold War" (Task Force C report to the National Security Council). The United States must actively work to stop the spread of Communism.

Another World War?

This option holds the risk of Soviet retaliation, however unlikely, may be high and the United States must be prepared for general war. "While this policy is not designed to provoke a war with the Soviet Union, it involves a substantial risk of general war" (Task Force C report to the National Security Council).

"Secretary Dulles believes that the United States has a moral duty to take a stand: "Only the US has the strength, the dynamic, [and] is unscarred enough to" push back against Soviet expansion. "The present course we are following is a fatal one for us and the free world. It is just defensive: we are always worrying about what the Soviet[s] will take next." He believes that Communism, unchecked, will only strengthen until the entire free world has been subjugated."

White House Office, NSC Staff Papers, 1948-61.Exec. Secretary's Subject File Series.
Folder: Project Solarium (3)

What We Could Do

Task Force C recommends that we:

- ***Use preemptive military strikes to prevent the Soviets from acquiring an atomic arsenal.***

  But . . . by acting as the aggressor, the United States opens itself up to retaliatory attacks from the Soviets and diplomatic pressure from other nations.

- ***Expand and coordinate propaganda efforts in conjunction with a long-term strategy for covert operations.***

  But . . . covert operations put U.S. citizens at significant risk for retaliation from Soviet spies.

- ***Use economic and political pressure to eliminate Communism in countries outside the Soviet Union.***

  But . . . there will be fewer resources to directly confront the Soviets.

- ***Provide military assistance to countries trying to overthrow the communists.***

  But . . . this may lead to a wider war.

This chart illustrates that the struggle against Soviet expansion could consume as much as 66 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which would double the average peacetime percentage reached in the 1950s.

SUMMARY

How Should the United States Confront Soviet Communist Expansionism?

Project Solarium serves a number of purposes for the Eisenhower administration: (1) It prompts a full review of the previous administration's policy; (2) It creates a logical structure and a dynamic mechanism whereby the best information and best thinking may be molded into a true consensus; and (3) It equips President Eisenhower with a policy that he and his administration, and other influential stakeholders, can fully support.

Now it's your turn to advise the President, what do you think he should do?

OPTION A: Isolate Communism and Apply Pressure

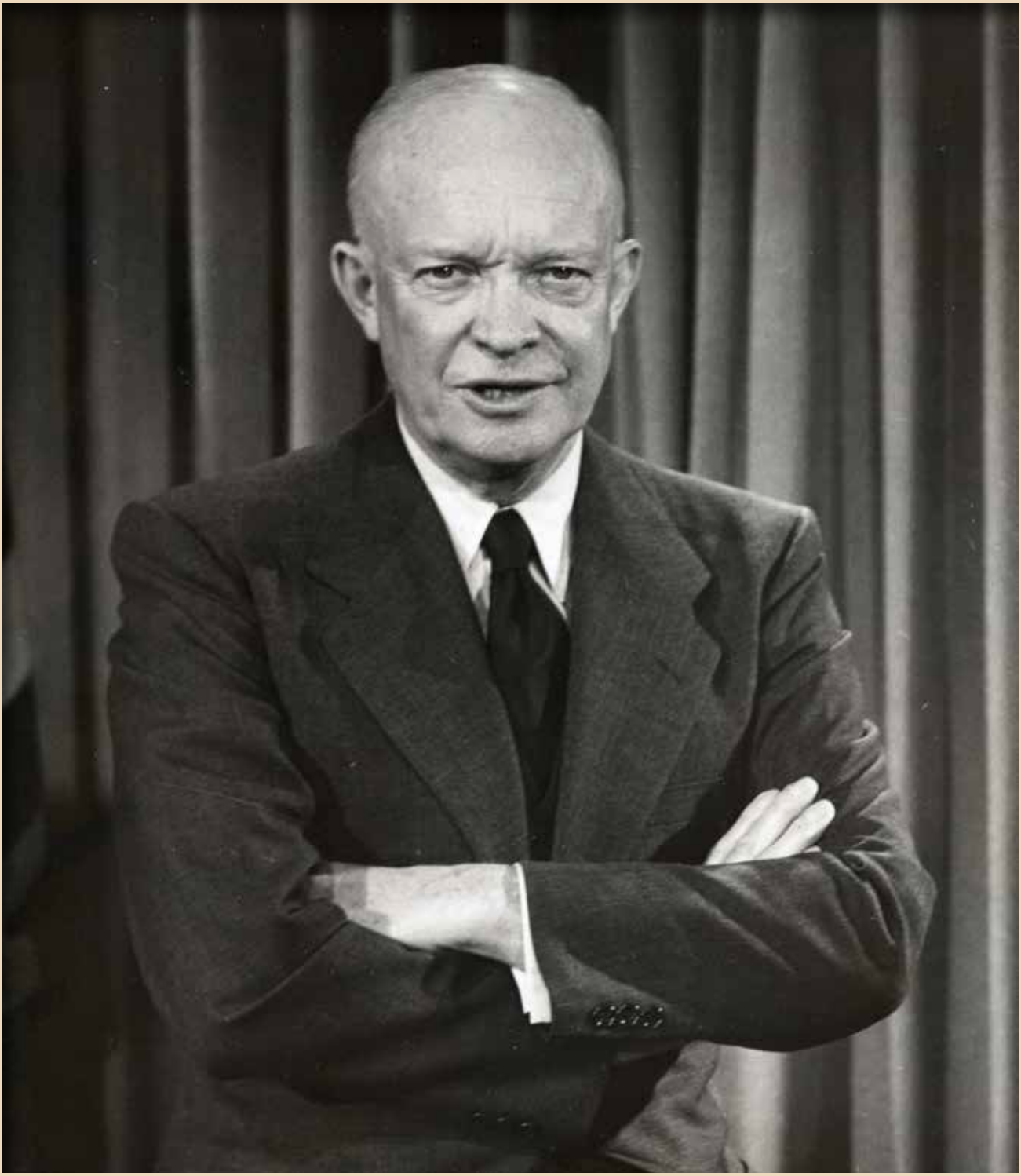
Main Arguments in Favor of This Option	Examples of What Might Be Done	Some Consequences and Trade-offs to Consider
President Eisenhower must contain Soviet expansion to its current boundaries and apply pressure on the Soviet government until Communism collapses. According to this option, Communism is an inherently flawed system that will fail, even without aggressive action by the United States. The United States should focus on building up and maintaining the economic, diplomatic, political, and military strength of the free world, while pressuring the Soviet Union economically and diplomatically. Eventually, Soviet power will deteriorate to a point that no longer constitutes a threat to the security of the United States and to world peace, and the political and economic systems of the U.S. will prevail.	Continue economic aid to our allies and promote trade among Western Europen nations, while stimulating American private investment in the free world.	People in Communist societies will continue to be oppressed.
	Invest in quality intelligence, especially highly trained spies, in an attempt to undermine the Soviets and their allies.	Our allies might think this aggressive intelligence program will cause diplomatic problems.
	Agree to co-exist with the Soviets, allowing Communism to crumble on its own over time	This approach will take a long time, and Eastern Europeans may look for faster change.
	Add tactical nuclear weapons to our arsenal that would be used only if necessary.	The Soviets could see this preparation as a direct threat and retaliate.

OPTION B: Threaten Massive Retaliation

Main Arguments in Favor of This Option	Examples of What Might Be Done	Some Consequences and Trade-offs to Consider
President Eisenhower must deter further Soviet expansion by boldly and definitively drawing a geographical "hard line" across Europe and at strategic points around the globe, telling the Soviet Union that any attempt to expand communist dominance beyond that line would constitute an act of war against the United States. Such an assertion would show the Soviets that the United States means business and is determined to stop the spread of Communism. The threat of massive retaliation would deter Soviet expansion because it suggests the very real potential of a doomsday scenario.	Focus on a military buildup for general war if the Soviets cross the line.	It is possible that this could trigger a significant war of mass destruction.
	Avoid fighting peripheral wars, resisting the temptation to liberate Soviet satellite countries.	People in these countries will continue to be oppressed.
	Work to create considerable understanding and support for this policy on the part of the U.S. Congress, the American people, and our allies.	This may create pressure to follow through with war even if the Soviets do not provoke it.
	Reduce economic aid to the free world in order to focus on military development.	Other non-communist countries could be relying on that aid for non-military purposes.

OPTION C: Liberate the Soviet Union from Communism

Main Arguments in Favor of This Option	Examples of What Might Be Done	Some Consequences and Trade-offs to Consider
President Eisenhower should vigorously attempt to roll back the the Soviet empire using military force if necessary, and should liberate all its satellite nations. According to this option, the United States must embrace a proactive strategy to end the Soviets' post war expansion into Eastern Europe by all means possible. This action would force the Soviets to focus on holding what they already have rather than on gaining control of additional territories and peoples. It would (more quickly) put a definitive end to the Cold War and the expansion of Communism.	Use preemptive military strikes to prevent the Soviets from acquiring an atomic arsenal.	By acting as the aggressor, the U.S. opens itself up to retaliatory attacks from the Soviets and diplomatic pressure from other nations.
	Expand and coordinate propaganda efforts in conjunction with a long-term strategy for covert operations.	Covert operations put U.S. citizens at significant risk for retaliation from Soviet spies.
	Use economic and political pressure to eliminate Communism in countries outside the Soviet Union.	There will be fewer resources to directly confront the Soviets.
	Provide military assistance to countries trying to overthrow the Communists.	This may lead to a wider war.



President Eisenhower gives a speech on Fear, April 5, 1954. He intended the speech to reassure the nation that while there was some justification to their fear of Soviet leaders, there was no reason to panic.

"Did you ever stop to think there is no nation in the world that has ever freely adopted communism in a vote of the people? On the contrary, every time Communists have taken over a country, even Russia, it has been done by a very small minority practicing violence."

Radio and Television Address to the American People on the State of the Nation, April 5, 1954.

STOP

Do not read any further until the forum discussion is finished.

Do not read this section until the forum discussion is finished.

How Did President Eisenhower Confront Soviet Communist Expansionism?

President Eisenhower recognized the value of listening carefully to differing opinons, so he paid close attention to all three presentations, taking few notes while he listened. When the three teams finished their presentations, the President spoke for almost 40 minutes, summarizing and comparing the three approaches. While his final policies seemed to lean most toward Team A, "Eisenhower attempted to combine what he deemed the strengths of the three positions. A congenital optimist and convinced democrat, he adopted A's dictum that time favored the free world. A fiscal conservative and the leader of the historically tight-fisted party, he favored B's emphasis on relatively inexpensive nuclear weapons as the principal sanction against Soviet aggression. A career soldier and a personal witness of war's devastation, he opted for the diplomatic and covert aspects of C's anti-Communist offensive, while frowning on that teams' willingness to run the risk of general war. Liberation was a long-term project, not something to pursue precipitately" (pp. 44—45: *The Devil We Knew: Americans and the Cold War* by H.W. Brands). Administration officials referred to the policy as "The New Look."

It is important to remember that President Eisenhower was very much concerned with the health of the American economy, so his decisions were made with that issue in the forefront of his thoughts. Fiscal concerns drove his policies and most distinguished them from President Truman's. Fiscal concern also caused him to focus on nuclear weapons, which were much cheaper than conventional military force.

President Eisenhower believed in the process; his approach to problem solving and decision-making had evolved through his military years. By the time he arrived at the White House, he was skilled at guiding a group through a highly structured process designed to bring about the best possible decision. He recognized that there might be possibilities other than those presented by the three task forces, but he believed that by exploring each of the chosen options separately, he and his advisers would be forced to look more closely at the possible actions and trade-offs involved in each one.

In 1953, Project Solarium was a top-secret project, but it has come to be recognized by historians and scholars as an example of an incredibly valuable decision-making process. The entire process relied on direct leadership from President Eisenhower; he was involved from the conception of the idea to the selection of the members for each team. He recognized that as President, it was his responsibility to "choose between various irreconcilable differences."

Some scholars argue that the "Eisenhower administration's approach to national security strategy is perhaps the best example of long-term strategic planning in the American Presidency's history." They also believe that "Project Solarium's success is directly attributable to President Eisenhower's ability to preserve and nurture long-term strategic planning as a basic prerequisite of an effective and responsible foreign policy" (from *Strategic Planning for U.S. National Security: A Project Solarium for the 21st Century*, by Michele A. Flournoy and Shawn W. Brimley).

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SECURITY INFORMATION

NSC 162/2 COPY NO. 48

A REPORT

TO THE

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

by

THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

on

BASIC NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

October 30, 1953

WASHINGTON

TOP SECRET

This booklet was prepared by the National Archives and Records Administration in collaboration with the National Issues Forums Institute and the Kettering Foundation. The booklets in the *"Advise the President"* series lead participants in guided discussions based on historic Presidential decisions.

For information about the Presidential Libraries or to access other books in the series, visit: www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/

For more information about the National Issues Forums Institute, visit: www.nifi.org

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