

EISENHOWER ON THE ISSUES OF THE 1950s

President Dwight D. Eisenhower supported a strong military to counter the growing strength of the Soviet Union. But he also warned that both sides were being hurt by the expense of the Cold War. This is a condensed selection from a famous speech after the death in 1953 of Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union.

The Chance for Peace

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.



The 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 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.

The world knows that an era has ended with the death of [the Soviet Union's leader] Joseph Stalin.

The new Soviet leadership now has a precious opportunity to awaken, with the rest of the world, to the point of peril reached, and to help turn the tide of history.

The peace we seek, founded upon decent trust and cooperative effort among nations, can be fortified, not by weapons of war, but by wheat and by cotton, by milk and by wool, by meat and timber and rice. These are the words that translate into every language on earth. These are the needs that challenge this world in arms.

We are prepared to reaffirm, with the most concrete evidence, our readiness to help build a world in which all peoples can be productive and prosperous. We are ready, in short, to dedicate our strength to serving the needs, rather than the fears, of the world.

Group Discussion: *What does President Eisenhower say is the real cost of the Cold War? What does he want both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to do?*

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As schools opened in 1957, President Eisenhower stepped in to resolve a crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, over the integration of public schools. These are condensed excerpts from his address to the nation explaining the action he was taking.

School Integration in Little Rock

For a few minutes this evening I want to speak to you about the serious situation that has arisen in Little Rock.

In that city, disorderly mobs have deliberately prevented the carrying out of proper orders from a federal court.

This morning the mob again gathered in front of the Central High School of Little Rock, obviously for the purpose of again preventing the carrying out of the court's order relating to the admission of Negro children to that school.

I have today issued an Executive Order directing the use of troops under federal authority to aid in the execution [enforcement] of federal law at Little Rock, Arkansas.

It is important that the reasons for my action be understood by all our citizens. As you know, the Supreme Court of the United States has decided that separate public educational facilities for the races are inherently unequal and therefore compulsory school segregation laws are unconstitutional.

Our personal opinions about the decision have no bearing on the matter of enforcement. The responsibility and authority of the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution are very clear.

During the past several years, many communities in our Southern states have instituted public school plans for gradual progress in the enrollment and attendance of school children of all races in order to bring themselves into compliance with the law of the land.

They thus demonstrated to the world that we are a nation in which laws, not men, are supreme.

I regret to say that this truth, the cornerstone of our liberties, was not observed in this instance.

Certain misguided persons, many of them imported into Little Rock by agitators, have insisted upon defying the law and have sought to bring it into disrepute. The orders of the court have thus been frustrated.

The very basis of our individual rights and freedoms rests upon the certainty that the president and the executive branch of government will support and insure the carrying out of the decisions of the federal courts.

Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decisions of our courts.



From intimate personal knowledge, I know that the overwhelming majority of the people in the South – including those of Arkansas and Little Rock – are of good will, united in their efforts to preserve and respect the law even when they disagree with it.

And so, with deep confidence, I call upon the citizens of the State of Arkansas to assist in bringing to an immediate end all interference with the law and its processes.

If resistance to the federal court orders ceases at once, the further presence of federal troops will be unnecessary and the city of Little Rock will return to its normal habits of peace and order, and a blot on the fair name and high honor of our nation in the world will be removed.

Thus will be restored the image of America and of all its parts as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Group Discussion: *What does President Eisenhower say was blocking efforts by black children to attend Central High School in Little Rock? What was his response as president to try to resolve the situation? What key principle of government did he say was at stake?*