



PRIMARY SOURCEBOOK SERIES

THE  
COLD  
WAR

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Foreword by  
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*Amnigraphics*

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## 6.5

### Eisenhower Warns the Soviets About Militarization of Space – 1958

#### *An Excerpt from a Letter from President Dwight Eisenhower*

*As the American-Soviet “space race” intensified, U.S. leaders expressed increasing anxiety that the Kremlin might attempt to extend its military resources into space via satellite and missile technology. U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower sought to discourage any such plans in the following diplomatic correspondence, dated February 15, 1958, to Nikolai Bulganin, Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.*

...Another new idea was that outer space should be perpetually dedicated to peaceful purposes. You belittle this proposal as one made to gain strategic advantages for the United States. Mr. Khrushchev in his Minsk speech said, “This means they want to prohibit that which they do not possess.”

Since the record completely disproves that uncalled for statement, may we now hope between us to consider and devise cooperative international procedures to give reality to the idea of use of outer space for peace only.

When the United States alone possessed atomic weapons and the Soviet Union possessed none, the United States proposed to forego its monopoly in the interest of world peace and security. We are prepared to take the same attitude now in relation to outer space. If this peaceful purpose is not realized, and the worse than useless race of weapons goes on, the world will have only the Soviet Union to blame, just as it has only the Soviet Union to blame for the fact that atomic and nuclear power are now used increasingly for weapons purposes instead of being dedicated wholly to peaceful uses as the United States proposed a decade ago.

The Soviet Union refused to cooperate in tackling the problem of international control of atomic energy when that problem was in its infancy. Consequently, it has now become too late to achieve totally effective control although there can be, as we propose, a controlled cessation of further weapons testing and of the manufacture of fissionable material for weapons purposes. But, as your Government said on May 10, 1955, a total “ban” on atomic and hydrogen weapons could not now be enforced because “the possibility would be open to a potential aggressor to accumulate stocks of atomic and hydrogen weapons for a surprise attack on peace-loving states.”

A terrible new menace can be seen to be in the making. That menace is to be found in the use of outer space for war purposes. The time to deal with that menace is now. It would be tragic if the Soviet leaders were blind or indifferent toward this menace as they were apparently blind or indifferent to the atomic and nuclear menace at its inception a decade ago.

If there is a genuine desire on the part of the Soviet leaders to do something more than merely talk about the menace resulting from what you described as “the production of ever newer types of weapons,” let us actually do what even now would importantly reduce the scope of nuclear warfare, both in terms of checking the use of fissionable material for weapons purposes and in wholly eliminating the newest types of weapons which use outer space for human destruction.

Source: Eisenhower, Dwight D. Letter to Nikolai Aleksandrovich Bulganin, February 15, 1958. *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Presidency*, edited by L. Galambos and D. van Ee. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Available online at the Presidential Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission, <http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org/presidential-papers/second-term/documents/574.cfm>.

## 6.6

### Premier Khrushchev Comments on the U.S.-Soviet Rivalry in Space – 1958

#### *An Excerpt from a Letter from Nikita Khrushchev to President Eisenhower*

*During the Space Race of the late 1950s and early 1960s, both the East and West maneuvered for political and military advantage on the issue. The following excerpt is taken from a letter from Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to American President Dwight Eisenhower dated April 22, 1958. Khrushchev insists that the USSR is dedicated to peaceful use of outer space—and pointedly questions whether the United States shares the same perspective.*

... I should like to touch upon a matter of the use of outer space for peaceful purposes.

In the course of the exchange of views in connection with the preparations for convening a summit conference, you proposed that the question of the prohibition of the use of outer space for military purposes be discussed at that meeting. We seriously considered this proposal of yours, and we stated that we were prepared to consider at a summit meeting the question of the prohibition of the use of outer space for military purposes and the liquidation of military bases in foreign territories. In this connection we proceed from the premise that any solution of this problem must take into account the security of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, and other countries. The proposal of the Soviet Government for the prohibition of the use of outer space for military purposes, the liquidation of bases in foreign territories, and international cooperation in the field of study of outer space meets this objective. We are prepared to conclude an agreement which would provide for the

prohibition of the use of outer space for military purposes and would permit the launching of rockets into outer space only in accordance with an agreed international program of scientific research. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that atomic and hydrogen weapons can be delivered to the target not only by means of intercontinental rockets but also by means of conventional bombers stationed at the numerous American military bases located in areas adjacent to the Soviet Union.

Your proposal for the use of outer space for peaceful purposes provides, in fact, for the prohibition of intercontinental ballistic missiles alone, leaving aside the other important aspects of this problem. It is easy to see that you propose such a solution of the question as would correspond to the interests of the security of the United States alone, but would not provide any measures that would remove the threat to the security of the Soviet Union or to that of many other states created by the existence of numerous American military bases in foreign territories. The essence of your proposal is to prevent, through the prohibition of intercontinental ballistic missiles, a nuclear counterblow through outer space from being delivered against yourselves. Of course, it is impossible to agree to such an inequitable solution, which would put one side in a privileged position with regard to the other. Therefore we stated that an agreement on the prohibition of the use of outer space for military purposes must also provide for the liquidation of military bases located in foreign territories, and primarily in Europe, in the Near and Middle East, and in North Africa.

Such a solution of the problem, in our opinion, is equitable because it fully meets the interests of security of the United States, of the Soviet Union, and of other countries, and offers no advantage to any of them. As for the states on the territories of which American military bases are located, it may be said with assurance that they would only profit from such a solution of the problem, in as much as a liquidation of bases would fully meet the interests of the national security of these states by averting the deadly peril which could threaten their populations in case of war.

In your message, Mr. President, you pass over our proposal in complete silence and state that you await the acceptance of your proposal by the Soviet Government. An impression is created that it is desired to impose upon us a solution of the problem of the use of outer space such as would correspond to the interests of the United States alone and would completely ignore the interests of the Soviet Union. Such a one-sided approach is absolutely inadmissible in negotiations between independent states and, of course, cannot lead to the achievement of an agreement.

Source: Khrushchev, Nikita. Letter to President Dwight Eisenhower, April 22, 1958. Reprinted in *Department of State Bulletin*, May 19, 1958.

## 9.9

**The Fall of Saigon – 1975****“After the Crusade” by Tobias Wolff**

*In January 1973 the United States and North Vietnam signed the Paris peace accords, ending the direct involvement of U.S. military troops in the war. Over the next two years, America continued to provide military advice and economic aid to South Vietnam, but the actual fighting against the Communists was carried out entirely by South Vietnamese troops. In 1974 and early 1975 North Vietnamese forces launched several defensive thrusts deep into South Vietnamese territory. These attacks were clear violations of the terms of the 1973 Paris Peace Accords, but the United States remained on the sidelines.*

*The U.S. decision not to re-enter the war sealed South Vietnam’s fate. Buoyed by the knowledge that they no longer had to worry about deadly American bombers and helicopters, Communist forces roared through South Vietnam. This offensive, which prompted a huge refugee crisis across the South, reached the outskirts of the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon in late April 1975. The United States mounted a frantic helicopter evacuation of American officials and selected South Vietnamese civilians and their families across the capital. This helicopter lift lasted from the morning of April 29 to the early morning hours of April 30, when President Gerald R. Ford ordered a halt to the evacuation. A few hours later, North Vietnamese tanks rolled into the captured city, ending the war once and for all. In the following excerpt, author—and Vietnam veteran—Tobias Wolff recalls how he felt when he heard about the fall of Saigon.*

I was living in San Francisco when Saigon fell, teaching high school. I picked up the paper after work and read it during the bus ride home. So. It was over, almost seven years to the day since I finished my own tour of duty in that already ancient war. When you’ve served in a war, gloriously or not—not, in my case—you are bound to take an interest in the news that your side has lost. I found nothing surprising in the reports of how effortlessly Saigon had been taken. But there was this picture: a helicopter perched on a mere nub of a rooftop in the city, its crew chief reaching down to help someone up a ladder while a long line of people wait below for their own chance to escape. A joke of fate that the very machine that was supposed to guarantee our victory should prove the means of our retreat.

It didn’t occur to me that this photograph would become the enduring image of our failure in Vietnam. But it worked strongly on me, and still does: that wide-open sky waiting above the helicopter like freedom itself; the dark line of people bearing

their hopes of deliverance; the apparent fragility of the craft, its precarious roost, the spindliness of the rotors on which all these hopes depend; and, most eloquent, the figure of the crew chief silhouetted against the empty sky, pulling some fearful soul from one life into another, as we had set out to do by other means so many years before.

If I found nothing to be surprised at in the fall of Saigon, of Vietnam itself, it was because the war had already been lost by the time I got there in the spring of 1967. The suspicion that this was so came upon me not as a thought but as a deepening unease at the way we treated the Vietnamese and the way they treated one another. I hadn't been 10 minutes off the plane at Bienhoa before I saw one of our troops abusing the baggage handlers; the bus driver who ferried us to the transit barracks spent most of the trip screaming insults at the people on the road, and nearly made good on his threat to run down an old woman who was slow getting out of his way.

That was just the beginning. Everywhere I went I saw Americans raining contempt on Vietnamese, handling them roughly, speaking to them like badly behaved children, or dogs. In time I learned to do it myself. Fear was our teacher; it taught us some bad lessons, and taught them well.

Still, it was obvious to even the rosier fantasists that we couldn't win this war by simple force of arms, that the real battle was for the trust and loyalty of the common man. We knew this, but our anger and fear kept getting the better of us. Why didn't they get behind us? Why didn't they care that we were dying for them? Yet every time we slapped someone around, or trashed a village, or shouted curses from a jeep, we defined ourselves as the enemy and thereby handed more power and legitimacy to the people we had to beat.

The government soldiers were worse. Their army suffered from a corruption so pervasive and timeworn that it had become institutionalized: officers didn't get paid enough money to live on because it was assumed they'd make up the rest by graft. Their soldiers had it even harder, and they passed on their sufferings, with interest, to the people they were supposed to protect. They went into the field not to fight but to oppress. There were exceptions of course. Some officers and men were honest and compassionate; some of their units fought well. Most didn't.

The war could have been won only through the most heroic moral discipline. To prevail, our side had to prove to the people that we were serving a coherent and humane vision of the future, that we cared more than our enemies did about them. But by 1967—long before then, in truth—the South Vietnamese government had suffered a catastrophic moral collapse. Same with the army. This was plain to the Americans serving there and didn't exactly stiffen our own resolve. Who wants to get killed or crippled so that bullies and thieves can go about their business in safety?

Whatever innocence we had left came to an end during the Tet offensive of 1968. The scale of the offensive surprised us and frightened us, and brought to a boil all the bitterness we felt toward the Vietnamese people—how could such a

massive operation have been carried out without their knowledge and complicity? After the first shock passed, we opened the gate of hell on that country, and we didn't spend much time making distinctions between enemies and friends. Entire towns were destroyed, others devastated by our jets and artillery. Most of the dead were civilians. In this way we taught the people—and taught ourselves, once and for all—that we didn't love them and wouldn't protect them, and that we were prepared to kill them all to save ourselves.

This recognition cost us dearly. American soldiers don't go to war in the spirit of mercenaries or legionnaires; we have to think of ourselves as crusaders. It may be self-delusion, but a sense of chivalric purpose is essential to our spiritual survival when we find ourselves called upon to kill others and risk being killed. In its absence we become at worst cynical and corrupt, at best simply professional. After Tet we were legionnaires, but legionnaires couldn't win over there, as France had already learned. The war had been fought in the soul, and lost in the soul, long before the fall of Saigon.

The last battle ended 20 years ago, but if the end of a war is peace, we're still waiting for it. The communist regime in Vietnam was so harsh and vengeful in the aftermath of its victory that more than 800,000 people took flight, hundreds of thousands on the open sea rather than remain at home. We haven't finished fighting it out here either. Even in the toxic atmosphere of our political discourse, it is hard to imagine another issue that could inspire a Congressman, speaking on the House floor, to accuse his President of treason.

A few years ago, I was invited to join a group of men who were meeting every other week or so to talk about Vietnam. Three of us had served there. Of the others, one had been a conscientious objector; another had got lucky with the draft; a third had been too old for Vietnam but was active in the antiwar movement. Though our circumstances had placed us in very different, even conflicting positions, nobody was of a mind to find fault with anyone else. Indeed, the other two veterans had both become pacifists some years back.

We came together with the best will in the world, but as soon as we began to talk, it grew obvious that our experiences had opened distances between us that no amount of goodwill could bridge. One of the veterans, a former captain, had been in almost continuous combat; the men under his command were shot up and killed so regularly that he couldn't keep track of them. One day he told us about sending out the body of an 18-year-old only a few hours after the boy had joined the unit. "What was I supposed to tell his parents?" he said. "I hadn't even met him." Then he added, in that tone of cold, slashing drollery soldiers use to mock their breaking hearts: "Tag 'em and bag 'em."

He is a man, as we all knew, of utmost gentleness and decency, but at that last phrase one of the nonveterans bridled a little; nothing was said, but our histories slammed down between us once again. The three of us who'd served couldn't help

falling into a certain manner and language when recalling those days. "You're doing it again," one of the others said to us at such a moment, with rueful good nature. We understood him, but the old covenant was too strong to resist, and too dear.

That was the simplest of the divisions between us, but hardly the only one. My tour in Vietnam had been different from the former captain's. I could not follow him to that extremity of desolation where his memories often led; he was alone there. Nor could the lottery winner follow the conscientious objector to his outpost of remembrance. The more we talked, the farther away we seemed to be. And we weren't even arguing.

But the deepest fissures were those within us. Whether you went or not, that war put a crack in you because of the impossibility of finding an untainted response to it. If you protested the war, you couldn't help worrying about the bafflement and pain you were causing those in danger, and their families. How did you make peace with the fact that, however unintentionally, you were encouraging a hard, often murderous enemy who was doing his best to kill boys you'd grown up with? If you went, you had to notice that the government we were trying to save wasn't worth saving, and the people were generally uninterested in our brand of help. In time you might even come to see them as the enemy. Where did that leave you? And why did you go in the first place? From conviction, or from fear of being thought, and thinking yourself, a coward? How could you be sure? Only the most self-satisfied ideologues on either side of the problem could avoid questioning their own motives.

After four or five meetings, my discussion group decided to pack it in. We did so with a sense of relief, and humility. We had hoped to understand one another a little better; we hadn't expected to settle anything, to cast out any demons. But I think we were all a little chastened to find out how many demons there were, and how much power they still had to complicate even our affections and trust.

Ho Chi Minh City is filled with American capitalists now. There are night-clubs and discos and billboards. You can take a tour of the Cu Chi tunnels, squeeze off a few rounds with an AK-47, a dollar a pop. I've heard good stories from guys who've gone back. One of them visited the scene of his worst memories in the company of a former NVA officer who'd led an attack against his unit. There they were, together, walking the ground where they had tried to kill each other and where friends of theirs had died. And at the end of the day they managed to do what we at home have yet to learn to do. They shook hands.

One last look at the photograph, at the figure of the crew chief reaching down to the person on the ladder. There is such gallantry in his stance. It expresses in every line the strength and simplicity of his intent: to be of help. That's why we went there in the first place, and why this final image of our leaving touches me, in the end, with pride.

Source: Wolff, Tobias. "After the Crusade." *Time*, April 24, 1995.

# GLOSSARY

## Leading Figures of the Cold War

- Allende, Salvador** (1908-1973) – President of Chile from 1970 to 1973, when he was killed during a military coup.
- Andropov, Yuri** (1914-1984) – Soviet KGB official who served as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party for sixteen months, from 1982 to early 1984, before his death.
- Batista, Fulgencio** (1901-1973) – Long-time leader of Cuba who was overthrown in 1959 in the Cuban Revolution by Fidel Castro and his followers.
- Brezhnev, Leonid** (1906-1982) – Soviet politician who served as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party from 1964 to 1982.
- Bush, George H.W.** (1924- ) – President of the United States from January 1989 to January 1993; it was during his presidency that the Soviet empire dissolved and the Cold War ended.
- Carter, Jimmy** (1924- ) – President of the United States from January 1977 to January 1981.
- Castro, Fidel** (1927- ) – Communist leader of Cuba since 1959, when he led a successful uprising against the regime of Fulgencia Batista.
- Ceaușescu, Nicolae** (1918-1989) – Dictatorial leader of Communist Romania from 1965 until December 25, 1989, when he and his wife Elena were executed after his regime was overthrown.
- Chernenko, Konstantin** (1911-1985) – Soviet politician who led the USSR for thirteen months, from February 1984 to March 1985, before his death.
- Chiang Kai-shek** (1887-1975) – Ruler of China from 1928 to 1949, when Communist Chinese opponents forced him to retreat to Taiwan and establish a government-in-exile.
- Churchill, Winston** (1874-1965) – Prime minister of England from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955.

# CHRONOLOGY

*Note: This Chronology of Cold War events includes a see reference feature. Under this arrangement, many events listed in the chronology include page references to relevant primary documents featured in the book.*

## 1945

- February 4-11 Soviet, British, and American leaders gather at the Yalta Summit. *See p. 9.*
- April 12 U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dies and Harry S. Truman is sworn in as president.
- May 7 Germany surrenders, ending World War II in Europe.
- June 26 Fifty-one nations sign the founding charter for the United Nations.
- July 17 American, British, and Soviet leaders begin postwar negotiations at the historic Potsdam Conference. *See p. 16.*
- August 6 The United States drops an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima; three days later, a U.S. airplane drops a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.
- August 14 Japan surrenders, bringing an end to World War II.

## 1946

- February American analyst George Kennan delivers his “Long Telegram” on Soviet ambitions. *See p. 22.*
- March 5 Winston Churchill delivers his “Sinews of Peace” address, in which he warns that an “iron curtain” of Communism is being drawn down across Europe by the USSR. *See p. 27.*

## 1947

- March 12 President Truman outlines the “Truman Doctrine” before a joint session of Congress. *See p. 47.*

# FURTHER READING

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(ill.) denotes illustration

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