

THE RISE OF SOCIALISM IN POLITICS IN THE USA, Part VIII

The election of 1952 brought the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower—the first Republican president in twenty years after the Democratic reign of Roosevelt for almost four terms and Truman for one. Would this shift of power change the accelerated rise of socialism and communist influence in politics in the USA after the Great Depression? And in the world?

As the supreme commander of the Allied forces leading them to total victory over Hitler and his Nazis in World War II, General Eisenhower was a popular hero after the war. In 1951 he had also become the commander of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In his presidential campaign, his ardent followers, many who crossed party lines, wore “I like Ike” buttons. His post-war popularity spilled over into the political realm.

In President Eisenhower’s first term in 1953 when he had a Republican House and Senate, many conservative Republicans encouraged him to reverse the socialistic reforms of the New Deal and the Fair Deal of Truman. Eisenhower, who “didn’t like politics,” he said, described himself as a “moderate Republican, middle of the road.” A conservative, Frank Meyer, said in March of 1954, “There seems to be little to distinguish the Eisenhower administration from his predecessors in the fight against creeping collectivism.” He made no effort to overturn socialistic programs, expanded Social Security, and created the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. His main area of concern was international.

When he first became the President, the USA had been embroiled in the unpopular Korean War after the 1950 invasion of North Korea, supported by the Soviet Union into South Korea. Mainland Communist China, whose leaders came into power in 1949, also indirectly became a player in this conflict by helping North Korea. Opposed to this war, Eisenhower helped broker peace in these hostilities in 1953, as the policy of containing communism and trying to avoid direct confrontation became a more established USA policy. There were many other external areas of concern during Eisenhower’s two-term presidency (1953-1961) with Richard Nixon at his side as the Vice-President. Soviet Communist aggression raged in Eastern Europe in Poland and in 1956 in Hungary. Regional conflicts erupted in the Middle East. Fidel Castro, a communist, revolted and took over Cuba in 1959 near the end of his presidency.

The stakes in the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the USA were great—possible annihilation of most of Western civilization by a potential nuclear holocaust. The Rosenbergs, traitors to our country, had released our nuclear secrets to the Russians, which gave them the ability to make a nuclear bomb. Eisenhower, whose expertise was military as the ex-commander of the Allied Forces and of NATO, had his hands full of very serious problems as the President. World communism rose in the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Eastern Europe, and Cuba. He fought to contain this move and keep a tenuous peace and safety for our citizens.