Dr. Strangelove
and the Nuclear Arms Race
The Arms Race

- 1945: U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- 1949: Soviet Union explodes atomic bomb
- 1952: U.S. explodes hydrogen bomb (700 times more powerful) and United Kingdom becomes third nuclear power
- 1953: Soviets explode hydrogen bomb
God bless you Dwight D. Eisenhower
As I stand next to the truck stop shower
Watching our bright destiny unfold
Now your highway rolls from here to gone
This land we’ve laid our hands upon
And so it is a sight just to behold

O God bless you Dwight D. Eisenhower
Though this is not our finest hour
Highwaymen have made off with your creed.
And now the band is marching no matter what
The eyes of history are shut
This is the hour of our deepest need.

O and the wind howls; and the wind howls
O the wind howls through the fields of Abilene.

So God bless you Dwight D. Eisenhower
Cause now the youth in all their flower
Hang on the iron cross you warned us of
And they say you wept to hang them so
And you among us all might know
These things it seems we sometimes do for love.
O these things we do for love

O and the wind howls; and the wind howls
O the wind howls through the fields of Abilene.

― "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 not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from an iron cross."

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953

In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

― “Farewell Address”, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1961
1957: Soviets launch Sputnik; the Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy founded by Coretta Scott King, Albert Schweitzer, Dr. Benjamin Spock and others.


1960: Gary Powers is shot down over the Soviet Union; France becomes 4th nuclear power.

1961: Bay of Pigs invasion fails; East Germans begin building the Berlin Wall

1962: Cuban Missile Crisis
1963: Limited Test Ban Treaty ends above ground testing. U.S. had set off 259, the Soviets 126, the British 21, and the French 6.

1964: U.S. presidential campaign focuses on threat of nuclear war; People’s Republic of China becomes 5th nuclear power.

1972: SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) result in Nixon signing the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

1974: India becomes 6th nuclear power

1979: Carter and Brezhnev sign SALT II agreement to reduce launchers, but after Soviet invasion of Afghanistan it is not ratified. Both nations adhered to its limitations until Reagan withdrew from the agreement in 1986.
1996: Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty prohibited all nuclear testing. Signed by 71 nations, but not the U.S. or India.

1998: Pakistan’s first fission weapon test.

2000: START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), first proposed by Reagan in 1982 and signed by Bush in 1991, is put into effect. Today U.S. has 5,866 in place, Russia has 4,162.

2006: North Korea’s first fission weapon test

Israel is believed to have about 200 nuclear weapons.
Dr. Strangelove:

or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)

Directed by Stanley Kubrick

Screenplay by Stanley Kubrick and Terry Southern

Based on the novel Red Alert by Peter George
Peter Sellers
Nominated for a Best Actor Oscar for his three roles.

Group Commander Lionel Mandrake

President Merkin Muffley
Maland argues that two “cornerstone assumptions” determined the most common view of America in the post-WWII period:

1. American society was basically sound. Increasing production and technological advances would solve social problems.

2. Communism was the only threat to our success.

Americans tended to underestimate American societal problems and overestimate the communist threat.
Sex and War: “man’s warlike tendencies and his sexual urges stem from similar aggressive instincts.”

Anti-Communism: “this paranoid officer ready to obliterate the world because of fluoridation … lays bare the irrational American fear of Communism as one source of the cultural malaise of the early 1960s”

Enormity of Nuclear War: “Kong’s blindness to what he is being asked to do is almost complete…Kong is fighting another war at another time.”
Inadequacy of Nuclear Strategies:
“none of the nuclear postures … are able to control the inexorable march of nuclear holocaust.”

Blind Faith in Technological Progress:
“Arising from a nearsighted rationality, this death instinct leads man first to create machines, then to use them for destroying human life.”

Nightmare Comedy: “The only way to tell the story was a black comedy … where the things you laugh at most are really the heart of the paradoxical postures that make a nuclear war possible.”