

opportunity to issue a challenge to NASA, then a fledgling civilian space agency, to develop missions appropriate to the potential of the device. The small package that was the RTG appeared and was represented as harmless and non-threatening.

Perhaps the president saw an opportunity to use this example of American technical capabilities to publicize calming themes for space research much as he attempted to tone down the nuclear contests throughout the decade. Eisenhower attempted early in his first Administration to turn world attention away from nuclear confrontations and toward peaceful uses of atomic energy. His "Atoms for Peace" address to the United Nations came in his first year in office. The Atomic Energy Act which soon followed made possible private development of nuclear power in the United States, and at the close of Eisenhower's first term the AEC made large amounts of U-235 available for use in power reactors in the United States and abroad. * President Eisenhower showed great determination throughout his Presidency to turn nuclear science and technology away from international confrontations and races for technological superiority. On the threshold of a new international race—the quiet nuclear technology was not a powerful booster for such a race but a tool for sustaining people and their machines in the space ventures, whatever the purposes of those ventures. The momentum of a race eventually would open the greatest opportunities for applications of the quiet technology.

*Sales of radioisotopes at Oak Ridge National Laboratory increased from 5,389 curies at the beginning of Eisenhower's Presidency to nearly 150,000 in the first year of his second term in office.³¹