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Eisenhower, Scientists, and Sputnik

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On October 4, 1957, the Russians launched a 184-pound satellite into Earth orbit. This event had a tremendous impact on Americans as it called into question the capability of U. S. science vis-a-vis that of the Russians. President Dwight D. Eisenhower called “his scientists” to the Oval Office and a meeting took place that Hans Bethe has called an “unforgettable hour.” I. I. Rabi, Chairman of the Science Advisory Committee made several proposals to President Eisenhower which the President accepted immediately. Today, 50-years later, we are still living with the legacy of Sputnik.