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Americans and a World in Crisis, 1933–1945



E. B. SLEDGE (Private Collection)

MOST AMERICANS AT THE TIME agreed that the United States fought a just war against aggressive Nazi Germany and Japan. As the years passed, particularly after the traumas of the Vietnam War and the economic setbacks of the 1970s, that war became remembered as the “Good War” fought by the “Greatest Generation.” Unlike the nations of Asia and Europe, the United States suffered no invasion of its homeland, no bombing of its

cities, no mass killing of its civilians. Indeed, the war lifted the United States out of the Great Depression, propelled many into the middle class, and gave unprecedented opportunities to millions of minorities and women. That “Good War,” however, had little to do with E. B. Sledge’s experience fighting in the South Pacific.

Born in 1923, Sledge had enjoyed a carefree boyhood of fishing and hunting in Mobile, Alabama, until the United States entered the Second World War. Filled with idealism and patriotism, he dropped out of school to join the marines and defend his country. His harrowing experiences drove him to write a wartime memoir of unrelenting horror, *With the Old Breed*. Describing the battles of Peleliu and Okinawa, Sledge depicts a brutal landscape of war without mercy, of kill or be killed, of prisoners tortured and the dead mutilated, of the most savage violence abetted by the most lethal technology of modern warfare.

On Peleliu, where Sledge’s Company K reported 64 percent casualties in a campaign later deemed unnecessary, he witnessed helpless comrades being slaughtered. Unable to reclaim the bodies of fallen marines, he watched as buddies oozed into a wasteland of mud and excreta, land crabs feeding on them. He saw a fellow marine use a knife to try to extract the gold teeth of a wounded Japanese soldier. Frustrated in the attempt, the marine sliced open the prisoner’s cheeks and continued to gouge and pry, unfazed by the man’s thrashing and gurgling. On Okinawa’s Half Moon Hill, he dreamed that the decomposed bodies of marines sprawled about him slowly rose, unblinkingly stared at him, and said, “It is over for us who are dead, but you must struggle, and will carry the memories all your life. People back home will wonder why you can’t forget.”

The wartime experiences of few Americans matched those of Sledge. Yet World War II fundamentally changed national institutions and transformed individual behavior. History’s greatest armed conflict proved as much a turning point in American personal lives as in world affairs. Gone were the high unemployment and low productivity of the

OKINAWA, 1945 Wounded in the head, his hands clasped as if in prayer, a GI from the Seventh Infantry Division awaits evacuation from Rocky Crags in southern Okinawa. (W. Eugene Smith/TimeLife Pictures/Getty Images/Getty Images)

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Great Depression, and the accompanying doubts about the vitality of American institutions and national purpose. Gone too was the world in which the United States played only a peripheral role. The war was a watershed, separating what had come before from what would become the dominant patterns of postwar life. The war destroyed certain traditional American ways and communities, and created a new world order that left the United States at the pinnacle of its power and sowed the seeds of a postwar crisis. It was indeed, in Eleanor Roosevelt's words, "no ordinary time."

FOCUS Questions

- How did the American people and government respond to the international crises of the 1930s?
- How did war mobilization transform the American economy and government?
- What were the major aspects of Allied military strategy in Europe and Asia?
- What were the major effects of World War II on American society, including minorities and women?
- What new issues did the U.S. government confront in defeating Germany and Japan in 1945?

The United States in a Menacing World, 1933–1939

Apart from improving relations with Latin America, the early administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) remained largely aloof from the crises in the world. Americans reacted ambivalently as Italy, Germany, and Japan grew more aggressive. Millions of Americans, determined not to stumble into war again, supported neutrality. Only a minority wanted the United States to help embattled democracies abroad. All the while, the world slid toward the precipice.

Nationalism and the Good Neighbor

President Roosevelt at first put American economic interests above all else and showed little interest in

international cooperation. He did, however, extend the internationalist approach of his predecessor in Latin America, where bitterness over "Yankee imperialism" ran high. FDR declared a "**Good Neighbor**" policy, renouncing any nation's right to intervene in the affairs of another. To that end, Roosevelt withdrew the last U.S. troops from Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and terminated the Platt Amendment, which had given the United States its right to intervene in Cuba since 1901.

An economic crisis in Cuba in 1933 brought to power a leftist regime that the United States opposed. Instead of sending in the marines, as earlier administrations might have done, the United States provided indirect aid to a conservative revolt led by Fulgencio Batista in 1934 that overthrew the radical government. American economic assistance would then allow Batista to retain power until his overthrow by Fidel Castro in 1959. In Mexico, a reform government came to power in 1936 and promptly nationalized several oil companies owned by U.S. and British corporations. While insisting on fair compensation, the United States refrained from military intervention and conceded Mexico's right to nationalize the companies. Subsequently, Mexico and the oil companies reached a compromise compensation agreement. Although the U.S. did little to improve social and economic conditions in Latin America, the better relations fostered by FDR did help the United States achieve hemispheric solidarity in World War II, and later in the Cold War.

The Rise of Aggressive States in Europe and Asia

Meanwhile, powerful forces raged across much of the world. As early as 1922, economic and social unrest in Italy enabled **Benito Mussolini** to seize power. Dictator until 1943, Mussolini suppressed dissent, imposed one-party rule, adopted anti-Semitic laws, and, hoping to recreate a Roman empire, invaded Ethiopia in 1935.

Borrowing the straight-armed Roman salute from Mussolini, **Adolf Hitler** in Germany proved yet more menacing. Hitler's National Socialist (Nazi) party had gained broad support as a result of the economic depression, fear of communism, and German resentment of the harsh Versailles treaty. In 1933 Hitler became Germany's chancellor. Crushing opponents and rivals, Hitler imposed a brutal dictatorship on Germany and began the pursuit of world domination he had proclaimed in his book *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*) (1923). He also instituted a program to purify the fatherland of Jews—whom he considered an "inferior race" responsible for Germany's defeat in World War I.

Violating the Versailles treaty, Hitler began rearming Germany in 1935. A year later, German troops reoccupied the Rhineland, a region between the Rhine River and France specifically demilitarized by the Versailles treaty. In 1938, as German tanks rolled into Vienna, Hitler proclaimed an *anschluss* (union) between Austria and Germany. London, Paris, and Washington murmured disapproval but took no action. An emboldened Hitler then claimed Germany's right to the Sudetenland, a part of neighboring Czechoslovakia containing 3 million ethnic Germans. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain and his French counterpart, insisting that their countries could not endure another war like that of 1914–1918, yielded to Hitler's demands in return for his assurance that Germany had no further territorial ambitions—a policy dubbed **appeasement**—at a conference in Munich in September 1938 (see Map 25.1).

In Japan, meanwhile, militarists gained control of the government and launched a fateful course of expansion, sending troops into the northern Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931. Japan then initiated a full-scale war against China in 1937

and soon controlled key parts of that nation (see Map 25.2). Weak protests by Washington did little to deter Japan's plans for further aggression.

The American Mood: No More War

The feeble American response reflected the people's belief that the decision to go to war in 1917 had been a mistake. This conviction was rooted in the nation's isolationist tradition—its wish to avoid military and political entanglements in Old World quarrels—as well as in its desire to have the government focus on the problems of the depression, not foreign affairs. Popular books stressing American disillusionment with World War I's failure to make the world safe for democracy strengthened isolationist sentiment. So did a 1934–1936 Senate investigation headed by Republican Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, which concluded that war profiteers, whom it called “merchants of death,” had tricked the United States into World War I for financial gain. A January 1937 poll showed that 70 percent of the people believed that the United States should have stayed out of the war.



MAP 25.1 EUROPEAN AGGRESSION BEFORE WORLD WAR II Less than twenty years after the end of World War I, war again loomed in Europe as Hitler launched Germany on a course of military and territorial expansion.



MAP 25.2 JAPANESE EXPANSION BEFORE WORLD WAR II Dominated by militarists, Japan pursued an expansionist policy in Asia in the 1930s, extending its sphere of economic and political influence. In July 1937, having already occupied the Chinese province of Manchuria, Japan attacked China proper.

By the mid-1930s, an overwhelming majority of Americans thought that the “mistake” of intervention should not be repeated. In 1935–1937, a series of **Neutrality Acts** echoed the longing for peace. To prevent a repetition of 1917, these measures outlawed arms sales and loans to nations at war and forbade Americans to travel on the ships of belligerent powers. The high point of anti-war sentiment came in 1938 when Indiana congressman Louis Ludlow proposed a constitutional amendment requiring a national referendum on any U.S. declaration of war except in cases of direct attack. Only a direct appeal from FDR steered Congress to reject the measure by the narrowest of margins.

With the public firmly isolationist and some American companies, like IBM, with large financial investments in German industry, confrontation with fascism came solely in sports. At the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, African-American track star Jesse Owens made a mockery of Nazi theories of racial superiority by winning four gold medals and breaking or tying three world records. In 1938, in a boxing match laden with symbolism, the black American Joe Louis knocked out German fighter Max Schmeling in the first round of their world heavyweight championship fight. Although

Americans cheered Lewis, they still opposed any policies that might involve them in war.

The Gathering Storm: 1938–1939

On March 15, 1939, Nazi troops overran the rest of Czechoslovakia, violating the Munich accords. Five months after that, Hitler reached an agreement with Soviet Premier **Joseph Stalin** in the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact that their nations would not fight one another and that they would divide Poland after Germany invaded it. No longer worried about waging war on two fronts, Hitler’s troops attacked Poland. As expected, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.

Although isolationist sentiment remained strong in the United States, opinion began to shift. After the fall of Czechoslovakia, Roosevelt called for actions “short of war” to check fascism, and asked Hitler and Mussolini to pledge no further aggression. A jeering Hitler ridiculed FDR’s message, while in Rome Mussolini mocked Roosevelt’s physical disability, joking that the president’s paralysis must have reached his brain. Roosevelt, however, did more than send messages. In October 1938, he asked Congress for a \$300 million military

appropriation; in November, he instructed the Army Air Corps to plan for an annual production of 20,000 planes; in January 1939, he submitted a \$1.3 billion defense budget. Hitler and Mussolini, he said, were “two madmen” who “respect force and force alone.”

America and the Jewish Refugees

Hitler and the Nazis had translated their hatred of Jews into official policy. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 stripped Jews of the rights of German citizenship and increased restrictions on Jews in all spheres of German educational, social, and economic life. This campaign of hatred reached a violent crescendo on November 9–10, 1938, when the Nazis unleashed *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass), a frenzy of arson, destruction, and looting against Jews throughout Germany.

No longer could anyone mistake Hitler’s malignant intent. Jews, who had been leaving Germany since 1933, streamed out by the hundreds of thousands, seeking haven. Between 1933 and 1938, sixty thousand fled to the United States (see *Beyond America*). Most Americans condemned the Jews’ persecution, but only a minority favored admitting more refugees. Congress rejected all efforts to liberalize the immigration law, with its discriminatory quotas, and FDR did little to translate his sympathy for the Jews into effective policies.

The consequences of such attitudes became clear in June 1939, when the *St. Louis*, a German liner jammed with 950 Jewish refugees, asked permission to put its passengers ashore at Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Immigration officials refused this request and, according to the *New York Times*, a Coast Guard cutter stood by “to prevent possible attempts by refugees to jump off and swim ashore.” The *St. Louis* turned slowly away from the lights of America and sailed back to Europe, where most of its passengers would die from Nazi brutality.

Into the Storm, 1939–1941

Following the lightning German victories in western Europe in spring 1940, President Roosevelt’s policy of neutrality to keep America out of war gave way to a policy of economic intervention. He knew that extending increasing amounts of aid to those resisting aggression by the so-called Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis, as well as his toughening conduct toward Germany and Japan, could, as he said, “push” the United States into the crisis of worldwide war. Japan’s attack on the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor would provide the push.



ISOLATIONISM VERSUS INTERVENTIONISM In front of the White House in 1941, an American soldier grabs a sign from an isolationist picketing against the United States entering the war in Europe. A diverse group, isolationists ran the gamut from pacifists who opposed all wars, to progressives who feared the growth of business and centralized power that a war would bring, to ultra-rightists who sympathized with fascism and/or shared Hitler’s anti-Semitism. (Thomas McAvoy/TimeLife Pictures/Getty Images)

The European War

The war in Europe began on September 1, 1939, as Nazi armies poured into Poland and the *Luftwaffe* (German air force) devastated Polish cities. Two days later, Britain and France, honoring commitments to Poland, declared war on Germany. Although FDR invoked the Neutrality Acts, he would not ask Americans to be impartial in thought and deed.

Tailoring his actions to the public mood, which favored both preventing a Nazi victory and staying out of war, FDR persuaded Congress in November to amend the Neutrality Acts to allow the belligerents to purchase weapons from the United States if they paid cash and carried the arms away in their own ships. But “cash-and-carry” did not stop the Nazis. In spring 1940, Hitler unleashed a *blitzkrieg* (lightning war) against Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The Nazi *wehrmacht* (war machine) swept all the way to the English Channel in a scant two months. In early June, the British evacuated most of their army at Dunkirk, and on June 22, France surrendered.

Hitler and Mussolini, Roosevelt said, were “two madmen” who “respect force and force alone.”



Beyond America

GLOBAL INTERACTIONS

Refugees from Fascism: The Intellectual Migration to the United States

In line with Adolf Hitler's obsessive and virulent anti-Semitism, the Nazi government undertook a systematic campaign to deprive German Jews of their legal rights. In 1933, they were dismissed from government service and from the universities, where, although less than 1 percent of the German population, they constituted 12 percent of the professors. In 1935, the Nuremberg laws deprived Jews of the rights of citizenship, prohibited intermarriage with non-Jews, and excluded them from hospitals, theaters, museums, and athletic fields. In November 1938, Nazi gangs murdered scores of Jews, destroyed 267 synagogues, and vandalized thousands of Jewish businesses throughout Germany. In this pogrom, known as the Night of the Broken Glass (*Kristallnacht*), for the many Jewish shop windows smashed by the brown shirts, the Nazis sent between twenty and thirty thousand Jews to concentration camps and ordered the rest to wear yellow Stars of David. Meanwhile, Hitler also stepped up his persecution of non-Jewish intellectuals, like Thomas Mann, who opposed his murderous regime.

Some Jews in central Europe (particularly Austria, Germany, and Hungary) saw the handwriting on the wall and sought to escape. Although most lacked the means to emigrate—being forbidden to bring their property out of the country with them—or found their way blocked by countries who refused to accept refugees, Nazi anti-Semitism and political repression led perhaps a half million immigrants, between 1933 and 1941, to seek safe haven in western Europe, Switzerland, or the United States—whose rigid numerical quotas on immigration blocked entry to most.

However, as the news of Nazi persecutions made its way out of Germany, various groups organized to find refuge for the many prominent artists, scholars, and scientists who were Jews or opponents of fascism. The British Academic Assistance Council and the American Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars worked to obtain university positions in the United States for émigré scholars. To take a stand for academic freedom and add eminence to their faculty the presidents of some American colleges formed the Emergency Committee in Aid of German Displaced Scholars. The New School for Social Research, in New York, hired German émigrés to train American graduate students in its

new University in Exile. Similarly, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, North Carolina's Black Mountain College, and scores of other academic, artistic, and scientific institutions opened their doors to thousands of exiles.

Although the Nazis had sought to destroy what they sneered at as Jewish science and culture, they, as one refugee scholar wrote, "spread it all over the world. Only Germany would be the loser." The United States, given the extraordinary number and talents of the refugees it accepted, would be the big winner.

Because the Second World War was in no small part a struggle of opposing scientists, the intellectual migration weakened the Axis and strengthened the Allies. The most decisive impact of the émigré scientists came in the field of nuclear physics. Fearing the possibility that Hitler might develop atomic weapons, two refugee physicists, Leo Szilard (from Hungary) and Enrico Fermi (from Italy) convinced fellow refugee Albert Einstein to sign a letter to President Roosevelt warning about recent German discoveries in uranium fission. The result would eventually be the Manhattan Project, an Anglo-American effort to produce atomic bombs. In it, scores of émigré scientists brought their different skills and intellectual traits to bear on the single objective of beating the Germans in building a super-bomb. The refugee scientists—Hans Bethe, James Franck, Edward Teller, Eugene Wigner, among others—succeeded, and changed the world.

Mainly due to the efforts of the American Psychoanalytic Association and the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, a lion's share of Europe's psychoanalytic teachers, therapists, and thinkers, among whom Jews predominated, also came to the United States in the 1930s and had a huge impact. Bruno Bettelheim, Erich Fromm, and other psychologists influenced by Sigmund Freud changed America's approach to mental illness, stressing the value of therapy. They influenced Americans to have greater tolerance for adolescent rebellious behavior, and convinced parents to pay attention to the psychological needs of the young. They also shaped attitudes toward crime and criminals—from punishment to rehabilitation; made public relations and sales experts more savvy about what motivates buyers; and popularized the notion that everyone has a right to self-fulfillment and happiness.



LAURA AND ENRICO FERMI Enrico Fermi, pictured here with his Jewish wife, Laura, emigrated to the United States in 1938 to escape the anti-Semitic persecutions in Mussolini's Italy. Credited with designing the first manmade nuclear reactor, Fermi, along with his fellow émigrés, played an indispensable role in the development of the atomic bomb by the Manhattan Project. (© Bettmann/Corbis)



ALBERT EINSTEIN Leaving Germany for the United States in 1932, Nobel Prize physicist Albert Einstein, perhaps the greatest scientist of the 20th century, aided many other Jews trying to flee persecution by the Nazis and helped alert President Roosevelt to the importance of developing an atomic bomb. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

Significant changes similarly came in the social sciences and humanities. The leading lights among Austrian intellectuals, known as the Vienna Circle, advanced the school of logical positivism in American philosophy. Joseph Schumpeter and Ludwig von Mises changed the teaching of economics in the United States, much as Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse influenced political thought. Virtually en masse, the many political and social scientists at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt escaped to the United States with the assistance of sympathetic Columbia University faculty. They would go on to make fundamental changes in sociology, emphasizing both a quantitative approach to studying social issues and a psychological approach to social phenomena, especially prejudice and discrimination.

Some of the brightest stars in the new American firmament were émigré artists. From Germany's Bauhaus school of design, furniture-maker Marcel Breuer and architects Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe became the giants of postwar American design. Great musicians—the conductors Otto Klemperer, Erich Leinsdorf, Pierre Monteux, George Szell, and Bruno Walter; the composers Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud, and Arnold Schoenberg; and the pianists Artur Schnabel, Rudolf Serkin, and Vladimir Horowitz, among many others—added luster to the concert stage and, as master teachers, influenced an entire generation of American musicians.

No other immigrant group in history had ever brought such gifts as these émigré artists and scholars brought to the United States in the 1930s. They found in the United States the freedom of thought and freedom from fear that enabled

them to pursue their talents and ideas. Despite the financial difficulties of the Great Depression, private American generosity provided the funds for many of the positions in colleges, laboratories, and music schools that enabled the refugees to earn a living. And most of the Americans they worked with welcomed them, and judged them on their abilities rather than their religion or place of birth. The government, moreover, displayed unprecedented trust in these foreign-born, hiring scores of them for positions of responsibility in the atomic bomb project and other war work.

In return, most of these refugees quickly learned English, sought and obtained American citizenship, and left an indelible mark on American life. Summing up her account of these "illustrious immigrants," Laura Fermi, the wife of atomic scientist Enrico Fermi, who had fled Italy's anti-Semitism and fascism with her husband in 1938, wrote: "In making room for countless Europeans and saving many whose lives were threatened, America proved once more a land of opportunity and a haven to which the persecuted of the world might continue to look with confidence." In return, the United States would be more than repaid in full "in a currency compounded of prestige, knowledge, and a general enrichment of culture."

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

- What were the major contributions to American life made by the refugees in the Intellectual Migration?
- What steps did Americans take to welcome émigré scholars and artists and facilitate their profound impact on American life and thought?

To defeat Hitler, FDR said, “I would hold hands with the Devil.”

Hitler then took aim against Great Britain, terror-bombing British cities in hopes of forcing a surrender or, failing that, preparing the ground for a cross-channel invasion. With thousands of civilians killed or wounded and much of London in smoking ruins, British Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** pleaded for American aid. Most Americans, shocked at the use of German air power against British civilians, favored such aid. But a large and vocal minority opposed it as wasteful of materials needed for U.S. defenses or as a ruse to lure Americans into a war not vital to their interests.

From Isolation to Intervention

In the United States in 1940, news of the “Battle of Britain” competed with speculation about whether FDR would break with tradition and run for an unprecedented third term. Not until the eve of the Democrats’ July convention did he reveal that, given the world crisis, he would consent to a “draft” from his party. The Axis threat clinched his renomination and similarly led the Republicans to nominate Wendell Willkie of Indiana, an all-out internationalist who championed greater aid to Britain.

Adroitly playing the role of a national leader too busy with defense and diplomacy to engage in partisan politics, FDR forged a coalition cabinet. For secretary of war, he selected Henry Stimson, a conservative who had held major posts under previous Republican presidents, and he chose Frank Knox, who had been Landon’s running mate on the GOP ticket in 1936, as secretary of the navy. Both men had abhorred the New Deal, but that mattered less to Roosevelt than their willingness to oppose isolationism and to support aiding the Allies against Hitler. The president also signed the Selective Service and Training Act, the first peacetime draft in U.S. history, and approved a dramatic increase in defense funding. In September, with Willkie’s support, Roosevelt engineered a “destroyers-for-bases” swap with England, sending fifty vintage American ships to Britain in exchange for leases on British air and naval bases in the Western Hemisphere.

These moves infuriated isolationists, particularly the America First Committee. Largely financed by Henry Ford, and featuring Charles Lindbergh as its most popular speaker, the AFC insisted “Fortress America” could stand alone. But a majority of Americans reassured by the president’s promise never to “send an American boy to fight in a foreign war,” chose Roosevelt for a third term.

Roosevelt now called on the United States to become “the arsenal of democracy.” He proposed a

“**lend-lease**” program to allow the U.S. to lend or lease war materiel to any nation vital to America’s security. While Roosevelt likened the plan to loaning a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was on fire, isolationist Senator Robert Taft compared it to chewing gum: after a neighbor uses it, “you don’t want it back.” Congress, however, approved lend-lease in March 1941, and supplies began to flow across the Atlantic. When Hitler’s armies invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, FDR dispatched supplies to the Soviets, despite American hostility toward communism. To defeat Hitler, FDR said, “I would hold hands with the Devil.”

To counter the menace of German submarines that threatened to choke the transatlantic supply line, Roosevelt in mid-1941 authorized the U.S. Navy to convoy British ships, with orders to destroy enemy ships if necessary. In August he met with Churchill aboard a warship off Newfoundland. They issued a statement, known as the **Atlantic Charter**, that condemned aggression, affirmed national self-determination, and endorsed the principles of collective security, free trade, and disarmament. After a German submarine fired at an American destroyer in September, Roosevelt authorized naval patrols to shoot on sight all Axis vessels operating in the western Atlantic. Now on a collision course with Germany, Roosevelt persuaded Congress in November to permit the arming of merchant ships and to allow the transport of lend-lease supplies to belligerent ports in war zones. Unprepared for a major war, America was nevertheless fighting a limited one, and full-scale hostilities seemed imminent.

Pearl Harbor and the Coming of War

Hitler’s triumphs in western Europe encouraged Japan to expand farther into Asia. Seeing Germany as America’s primary threat, Roosevelt tried to apply enough pressure to deter Japanese aggression without provoking Tokyo to war before the United States had built the “two-ocean navy” authorized by Congress in 1940. “I simply have not got enough navy to go around,” he told Harold Ickes in mid-1941, “and every episode in the Pacific means fewer ships in the Atlantic.”

The Japanese, too, hoped to avoid war but would not compromise their desire to create the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (an empire embracing much of China, Southeast Asia, and the western Pacific). Japan saw the United States as blocking its legitimate rise to power, while Americans viewed Japan’s talk of national aspirations as a smokescreen to cloak aggression. Decades of “yellow-peril” propaganda had hardened U.S. attitudes toward Japan, and even those who were isolationist toward Europe tended to be interventionist toward Asia.



DESTRUCTION ON PEARL HARBOR In the early morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes launched from aircraft carriers attacked the United States fleet moored at Pearl Harbor, on Oahu Island, Hawaii. The surprise attack by the Japanese, which brought the United States into World War II, destroyed or damaged 19 ships, including five battleships, and some 300 planes, and killed 2,335 American servicemen. It was “a date which live in infamy,” Franklin Roosevelt told Congress and the nation as he asked for a declaration of war. It would unite the country for the war effort, as well as have long-range and far-reaching consequences for American foreign relations and for American attitudes toward the world. (*Hulton Archive/Getty Images*)

The two nations became locked in a deadly dance. In 1940, believing that economic coercion would force the Japanese out of China, the United States ended a long-standing trade treaty with Japan and banned the sale of aviation fuel and scrap metal to the Japanese. Tokyo responded by occupying northern Indochina, a French colony, and signing the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in September, creating a military alliance, the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, that required each government to help the others in the event of a U.S. attack.

When the Japanese then overran the rest of Indochina in July 1941, Roosevelt froze all

Japanese assets in the United States and clamped a total embargo on trade with Japan. Tokyo had two choices: submit to the United States to gain a resumption of trade for vital resources or conquer new lands to obtain them. In October, expansionist war minister General Hideki Tojo became Japan's prime minister. Tojo set the first week in December as the deadline for a preemptive strike if the United States did not yield. By late November, U.S. intelligence—deciphering Japan's top diplomatic code—alerted the Roosevelt administration that war was imminent. Eleventh-hour negotiations under way in Washington made no headway, and warnings

went out to all commanders in the Pacific advising that a Japanese attack was imminent. U.S. officials believed the Japanese would strike British or Dutch possessions or even the Philippines—but the Japanese gambled on a knockout punch, hoping to destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and compel Roosevelt, preoccupied with Germany, to seek accommodation with Japan.

Waves of Japanese dive-bombers and torpedo planes thundered across Hawaii's island of Oahu Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, bombing ships at anchor in Pearl Harbor and strafing planes parked wingtip to wingtip at nearby air bases. In less than three hours, eight battleships, three light cruisers, and two destroyers had been sunk or crippled, and 360 aircraft destroyed or damaged. The attack killed more than twenty-four hundred Americans and opened the way for Japan's advance toward Australia. Americans had underestimated the resourcefulness, skill, and daring of the Japanese. At the same time, Japanese leaders erred in counting on a paralyzing blow at Pearl Harbor. That miscalculation assured an aroused and united nation determined to avenge the attack.

Roosevelt called December 7 a “date which will live in infamy.” On December 8, Congress declared war on Japan. (The sole dissenter was Montana's Jeannette Rankin, who had also cast a nay vote against U.S. entry into WWI). Three days later, Hitler declared war on the “half Judaized and the other

half Negrified” Americans, and Mussolini followed suit. Congress immediately reciprocated without a dissenting vote. America faced a global war that it was not ready to fight.

After Pearl Harbor, U-boats wreaked havoc in the North Atlantic and prowled the Caribbean and the East Coast of the United States. Every twenty-four hours, five more Allied vessels went to the bottom. By the end of 1942, U-boat “wolf packs” had destroyed more than a thousand Allied ships, offsetting the pace of American ship production. The United States was losing the battle of the Atlantic.

Additionally, the war news from Europe and Africa was, as Roosevelt admitted, “all bad.” Hitler's rule covered an enormous swath of territory, from the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad—a thousand miles deep into Russia—to the Pyrenees on the French-Spanish border, and from northern Norway to the Libyan desert. In North Africa the German Afrika Korps swept toward the Suez Canal, the British oil lifeline. It seemed as if the Mediterranean would become an Axis sea and that Hitler would

soon be in India to greet Tojo marching across Asia before the United States was ready to fight.

The Japanese inflicted defeat after defeat on Allied Pacific forces. Tojo followed Pearl Harbor with a rampage across the Pacific that put Guam, Wake Island, Hong Kong, Singapore, Burma, and the Netherlands East Indies under Japan's control by the end of April 1942. American forces in the Philippines, besieged for months on the island of Bataan, surrendered in May. Japan's rising sun flag blazed over hundreds of islands in the central and western Pacific, and over the entire eastern perimeter of the Asian mainland from the border of Siberia to the border of India.

America Mobilizes for War

In December 1941, American armed forces numbered just 1.6 million, and war production accounted for only 15 percent of U.S. industrial output. Pearl Harbor changed everything. Congress passed a War Powers Act, granting the president unprecedented authority over all aspects of the war. Volunteers and draftees swelled the armed forces; by war's end, more than 15 million men and nearly 350,000 women would serve. More would work in defense industries. Mobilization required unprecedented coordination of the American government, economy, and military. In 1942, those responsible for managing America's growing war machine moved into the world's largest building, the newly constructed Pentagon. Like the Pentagon, which was intended to house civilian agencies after the war, American attitudes, behavior, and institutions would also be significantly altered by far-reaching wartime domestic changes.

Organizing for Victory

To direct the military engine, Roosevelt formed the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made up of representatives of the army, navy, and army air force. (Only a minor “corps” within the army as late as June 1941, the air force would grow more dramatically than any other branch of the service, achieve virtual autonomy, and play a vital role in combat strategy.) The changing nature of modern warfare also led to the creation of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency, to conduct the espionage required for strategic planning.

Roosevelt established the **War Production Board (WPB)** to allocate materials, limit the production of civilian goods, and distribute contracts. The newly created War Manpower Commission (WMC) supervised the mobilization of men and women for the military, war industry, and agriculture; the National War Labor Board (NWLB)

Roosevelt called December 7 a “date which will live in infamy.”

mediated disputes between management and labor; and the **Office of Price Administration (OPA)** imposed strict price controls to check inflation.

Although a Nazi commander had jeered, “The Americans can’t build planes, only electric ice-boxes and razor blades,” the United States achieved a miracle of war production in 1942. Car makers retooled to produce planes and tanks; a pinball-machine maker converted to armor-piercing shells. By late 1942, 33 percent of the economy was committed to war production. Whole new industries appeared virtually overnight. With almost all of the nation’s crude-rubber supply now in Japanese-controlled territory, the government built some fifty new synthetic-rubber plants. By the end of the war, the United States, once the world’s largest importer of crude rubber, had become the world’s largest exporter of synthetic rubber.

America also became the world’s greatest weapons manufacturer, producing more war materiel by 1944 than its Axis enemies combined: 300,000 military aircraft, eighty-six thousand tanks, 2.6 million machine guns, and 6 million tons of bombs “To American production,” Stalin would toast FDR and Churchill, “without which the war would have been lost.” The United States also built more than five thousand cargo ships and eighty-six thousand warships. Henry J. Kaiser, who had supervised the construction of the Boulder Dam, introduced prefabrication to cut the time needed to build ships. In 1941, the construction of a Liberty-class merchant ship took six months; in 1943, less than two weeks. By 1945, Kaiser, dubbed “Sir Launchalot,” was completing a cargo ship every day.

Such breakneck production had costs. The size and powers of the government expanded as defense spending zoomed from 9 percent of gross national product (GNP) in 1940 to 46 percent in 1945; the federal budget soared from \$9 billion to \$98 billion. Federal civilian employees mushroomed from 1.1 million to 3.8 million. The executive branch, directing the war effort, grew the most; and an alliance formed between the defense industry and the military. (A generation later, Americans would call these concentrations of power the “imperial presidency” and the “military-industrial complex.”)

“Dr. New Deal,” in FDR’s words, gave way to “Dr. Win the War.” To encourage business to convert to war production and expand its capacity, the government guaranteed profits, provided generous tax write-offs and subsidies, and suspended antitrust prosecutions. “If you are going to try to go to war in a capitalist country,” said Secretary of War Stimson, “you have to let business make money out of the process or business won’t work.” America’s ten biggest corporations got a third of the war contracts, and two-thirds of all war-production spending

went to the hundred largest firms, greatly accelerating trends toward economic concentration.

The War Economy

The United States spent more than \$360 billion (\$250 million a day) to defeat the Axis, ten times the cost of World War I. Wartime spending and the draft not only vanquished unemployment, but also stimulated an industrial boom that made most Americans prosper. It doubled U.S. industrial output and the per capita GNP, created 17 million new jobs, increased corporate after-tax profits by 70 percent, and raised the real wages or purchasing power of industrial workers by 50 percent (see Figure 25.1).

The federal government poured \$40 billion into the West, making it an economic powerhouse, the center of massive aircraft and shipbuilding industries. California alone secured more than 10 percent of all federal funds; by 1945, nearly half the personal income in the state came from the federal government.

A dynamic Sun Belt, stretching from the coastal Southeast to the coastal Southwest, was the recipient of billions spent on military bases and the needs of the armed forces. The South’s industrial capacity increased by 40 percent and per capita income tripled. Boom times enabled hundreds of thousands of sharecroppers and farm tenants to leave the land for better-paying industrial jobs. While the South’s farm population decreased by 20 percent in the 1940s, its urban population grew 36 percent.

Full employment, a longer workweek, larger paychecks, and the increased hiring of minorities, women, and the elderly brought a middle-class standard of living to millions of families. In California the demand for workers in the shipyards and aircraft factories opened opportunities for thousands of Chinese-Americans previously confined to menial jobs within their own communities. In San Diego, 40 percent of retirees returned to work. Deafening factories hired the hearing-impaired, and aircraft plants employed dwarfs as inspectors because of their ability to crawl inside small spaces.

The war years produced the only significant shift toward greater equality in the distribution of income in the twentieth century. The earnings of the bottom fifth of all workers rose 68 percent, and those of the middle class doubled. The richest 5 percent, conversely, saw their share of total disposable income drop from 23 to 17 percent.

Large-scale commercial farmers prospered, benefiting from higher consumer prices and

“If you are going to try to go to war in a capitalist country, you have to let business make money out of the process or business won’t work.”

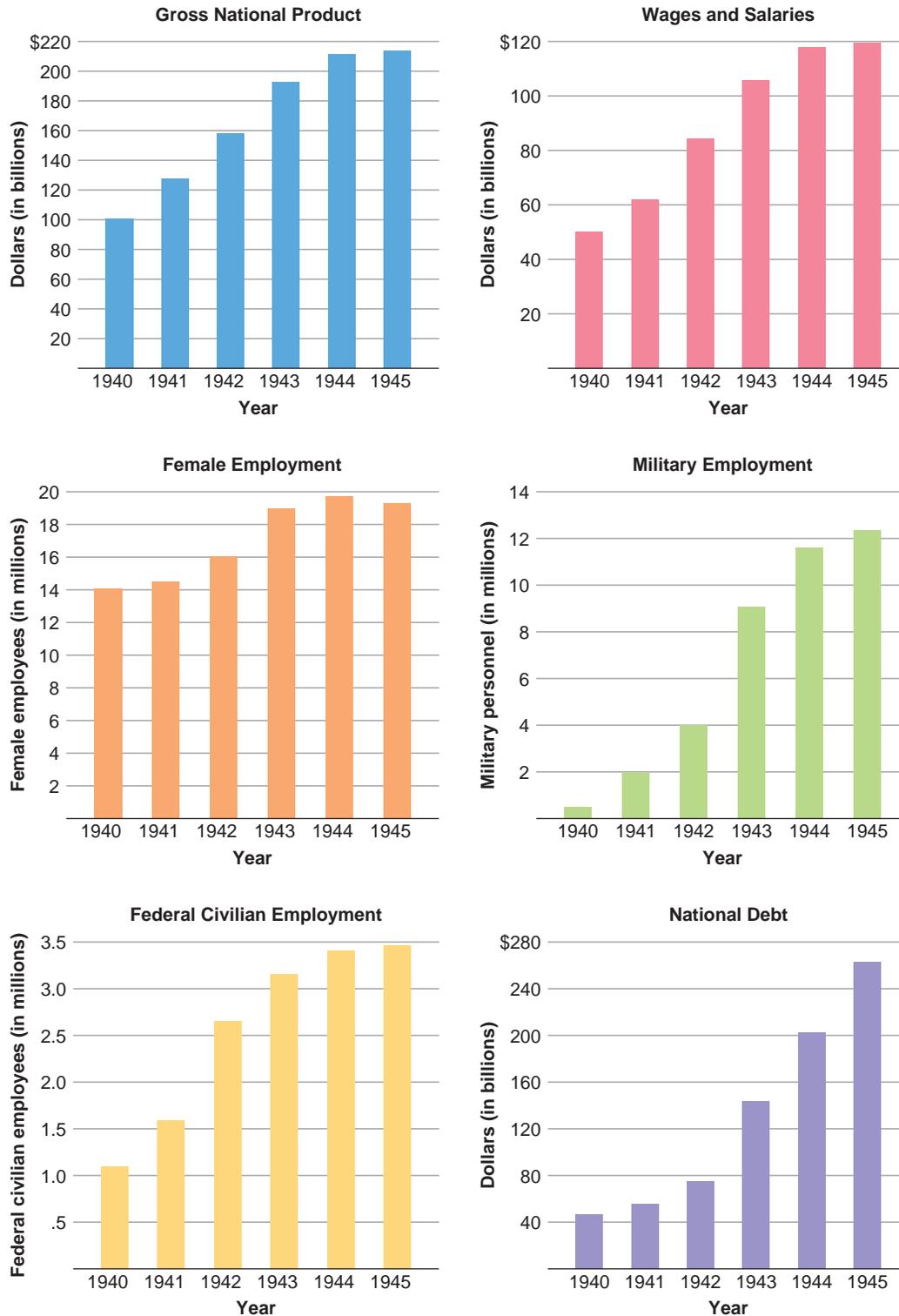


FIGURE 25.1 U.S. WARTIME PRODUCTION Between 1941 and 1945, the economy grew at a remarkable pace.

increased productivity thanks to improved fertilizers and more mechanization. As sharecroppers, tenants, and small farmers left the land for better-paying industrial jobs, the overall agricultural population fell by 17 percent. Farming became “agribusiness,” and organized agriculture wielded

power alongside organized labor, big government, and big business.

Organized labor grew mightier as union membership rose from 9 million to 14.8 million workers, in part because of the expansion of the labor force. Although the National War Labor Board attempted to limit

wage increases to restrain inflation, unions negotiated unprecedented fringe benefits for workers, including paid vacation time and health and pension plans. As most workers honored the “no-strike” pledge that they had given immediately after Pearl Harbor, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of wartime working hours was lost to wildcat strikes. Those strikes, however, cost the union movement: in 1943, Congress passed, over Roosevelt’s veto, the Smith-Connally War Labor Disputes act, empowering the president to take over any facility where strikes threatened war production.

Far more than strikes, inflation threatened the wartime economy. The OPA constantly battled inflation, which was fueled by greater spending power combined with a scarcity of goods. Throughout 1942, prices climbed at a 2-percent-per-month clip, and at the year’s end, Congress gave the president authority to freeze wages, prices, and rents. As the OPA clamped down, inflation slowed dramatically: consumer prices went up only 8 percent in the war’s last two years.

The OPA also instituted rationing to combat inflation and to conserve scarce materials. Under the slogan “Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without,” the OPA rationed gasoline, coffee, sugar, butter, cheese, and meat. Americans endured “meatless Tuesdays” and cuffless trousers, ate sherbet instead of ice cream, and put up with imitation chocolate that tasted like soap and imitation soap that did not lather. Most Americans cheerfully formed carpools, planted victory gardens, and recycled paper and fats, while their children, known as “Uncle Sam’s Scrappers” and “Tin-Can Colonels,” scoured their neighborhoods for scrap metal.

Buying war bonds—“bullets in the bellies of Hitler’s hordes!” said the Treasury Department—further curtailed inflation by decreasing consumer purchasing power, while giving civilians a sense of involvement in the distant war. Small investors bought \$40 billion in “E” bonds, and wealthy individuals and corporations invested nearly twice that amount. Bond sales raised almost half the money needed to finance the war. Roosevelt sought to raise the rest by drastically increasing taxes. Congress refused the president much of what he sought. Still, the Revenue Act of 1942 raised the top income-tax rate from 60 percent to 94 percent and imposed income taxes on middle- and lower-income Americans for the first time. Beginning in 1943, the payroll-deduction system automatically withheld income taxes from wages and salaries. In 1945, the federal government collected nearly twenty times the tax revenue it had in 1940.

“A Wizard War”

Recognizing wartime scientific and technological developments, Winston Churchill dubbed World War II “a wizard war.” Mathematicians went to



RITA HAYWORTH AIDS SCRAP DRIVE One of the many Hollywood stars who used their popularity to aid the war effort, actress Rita Hayworth displays her famous legs to urge Americans to donate scrap metals for the manufacture of military equipment. (*National Archives*)

work deciphering enemy codes, psychologists devised propaganda and, as never before, the major combatants mobilized scientists into virtual armies of invention. In 1941, FDR created the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) for the development of new weapons and medicines. The OSRD spent more than \$1 billion to produce improved radar and sonar, rocket weapons, and proximity fuses for mines and artillery shells. It also funded the development of jet aircraft and high-altitude bombsights. Other OSRD research hastened the development of the laser and insecticides, contributed to improved blood transfusions, and produced “miracle drugs,” such as penicillin.

The demand for greater accuracy in artillery required the kind of rapid, detailed calculations that only computing machines could supply. By 1944, navy personnel in the basement of Harvard’s physics laboratory were operating IBM’s Mark I, a cumbersome device fifty-one feet long and eight feet

high that weighed five tons, and contained 760,000 parts. A second-generation computer, ENIAC (electronic numerical integrator and computer), soon reduced the time to multiply two tenth-place numbers from Mark I's three seconds to less than three-thousandths of a second.

Nothing saved the lives of more wounded servicemen than improvements in battlefield medical care. Military needs led to advances in heart and lung surgery, and to the use of synthetic antimalarial drugs to substitute for scarce quinine. So-called miracle drugs, antibiotics to combat infections, a rarity on the eve of war, would be copiously produced. The use of DDT cleared many islands of malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Along with innovations like the Mobile Auxiliary Surgical Hospital (MASH), science helped save tens of thousands of soldiers' lives and improved the health of the nation as well. Life expectancy rose by three years during the war.

The atomic bomb project began in August 1939 when Albert Einstein, a Jewish refugee and Nobel Prize-winning physicist, warned Roosevelt that Nazi scientists were seeking to use atomic physics to construct an extraordinarily destructive weapon. In 1941, FDR launched a massive Anglo-American secret program—the Soviets were excluded—to construct an atomic bomb. The next year, the participating physicists, both Americans and Europeans, achieved a controlled chain reaction under the University of Chicago football stadium and acquired the basic knowledge necessary to develop the bomb. By July 1945 this program, code-named the **Manhattan Project**, had employed more than 120,000 people and spent nearly \$2 billion.

Just before dawn on July 16, 1945, a blinding fireball with “the brightness of several suns at midday” rose over the desert at Alamogordo, New Mexico, followed by a billowing mushroom cloud. Equivalent to twenty thousand tons of TNT, the blast from this first atomic explosion was felt a hundred miles away. “A few people laughed, a few people cried,” recalled J. Robert Oppenheimer, the

Manhattan Project's scientific director. “Most people were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad-Gita: ‘Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.’” The atomic age had dawned.

“Now I am become
Death, the destroyer of
worlds.”

Propaganda and Politics

People as well as science and machinery had to be mobilized. To sustain a spirit of unity, the Roosevelt administration carefully managed public opinion.

The Office of Censorship, established in December 1941, examined all letters going overseas and worked with publishers and broadcasters to suppress information that might damage the war effort, such as details of troop movements. Fearful of demoralizing the public, the government banned, until late 1943, the publication of any pictures of American war dead; then, worried about an overconfident public, it prodded the media to show American servicemen killed by the enemy.

To shape public opinion, FDR created the Office of War Information (OWI) in June 1942. The OWI employed more than four thousand writers, artists, and advertising specialists to explain the war and to counter enemy propaganda. The OWI depicted the war as a moral struggle between good and evil—the enemy had to be destroyed, not merely defeated. Hollywood films highlighted the heroism and unity of the American forces, while inciting hatred of the enemy. Films about the war portrayed the Japanese, in particular, as treacherous and cruel, as beasts in the jungle, as “slant-eyed rats.” Jukeboxes blared songs like “We’re Gonna Have to Slap the Dirty Little Jap.” U.S. propaganda also presented the war as a struggle to preserve the “American way of life,” usually depicted in images of small-town, middle-class, white Americans enjoying a bountiful consumer society.

While the Roosevelt administration concentrated on the war, Republican critics seized the initiative in domestic politics. Full employment and high wages undermined the Democrats' class appeal, and many of the urban and working-class voters essential to the Roosevelt coalition were serving in the armed forces and did not vote in the 1942 elections. Republicans gained nine seats in the Senate and forty-six in the House. A coalition of conservative Republicans and southern Democrats held power and, resentful of the wartime expansion of executive authority and determined to curb labor unions and welfare spending, it abolished the CCC and the WPA, and rebuffed attempts to extend the New Deal.

Despite the strength of the conservative coalition, the war expanded governmental and executive power enormously. As never before, Washington managed the economy, molded public opinion, funded scientific research, and influenced people's daily lives.

The Battlefront, 1942–1944

America's industrial might and Soviet manpower turned the tide of war, and diplomacy followed in its wake. Allied unity diminished as the Axis weakened; increasingly, the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union each sought wartime strategies and postwar arrangements best suited to its own interests.

Liberating Europe

After Pearl Harbor, British and American officials agreed to concentrate on defeating Germany first and then Japan. But they differed on where to mount an attack. Stalin demanded a second front, an invasion of western Europe to force Hitler to transfer troops west and thus relieve pressure on the Russians, who faced the full fury of the Nazi armies. Churchill insisted on clearing the Mediterranean before invading France, and he wanted American aid in North Africa to protect the Suez Canal. Roosevelt gave in to Churchill and American troops under General Dwight D. Eisenhower landed in Morocco and Algeria. Pushing eastward, they trapped the German and Italian armies being driven westward by the British, and in May 1943 some 260,000 German-Italian troops surrendered, despite Hitler's orders to fight to the death. All of Africa now lay in Allied hands (see Map 25.3).

Left alone to face two-thirds of the Nazi force, the Soviet Union hung on and, in the turning point of the European war, halted the German advance in the protracted Battle of Stalingrad (August 1942–January 1943). As the Russian snow turned red with

blood (costing each side more battle deaths in half a year than the United States suffered in the entire war), and its hills became “white fields,” strewn with human bones, Soviet forces saved Stalingrad, defended Moscow, and relieved besieged Leningrad. The Red Army then went on the offensive along a thousand-mile front (see Map 25.3).

Although Stalin renewed his plea for a second front, Churchill again objected, and Roosevelt again agreed to a British plan: the invasion of Sicily. In summer 1943, Anglo-American forces overran Sicily in less than a month, leading the Italian military to depose, and then execute, Mussolini, and to surrender to the Allies on September 8. As Allied forces moved up the Italian peninsula, German troops poured into Italy. Facing elite Nazi divisions in strong defensive positions, the Allies spent eight months inching their way 150 miles to Rome and were still battling through northern Italy when the war in Europe ended in May 1945.

As Russia's snow turned red with blood, its hills became “white fields,” strewn with human bones.



MAP 25.3 WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE AND AFRICA The momentous German defeats at Stalingrad and in Tunisia in early 1943 marked the turning point in the war against the Axis. By 1945, Allied conquest of Hitler's “thousand-year” Reich was imminent.

In 1943 and 1944, the United States and Britain turned the tide in the Atlantic and sent thousands of bombers over Germany. British and American air forces began round-the-clock bombardment, raining thousands of tons of bombs on German cities. In raids on Hamburg in July 1943, Allied planes dropping incendiary bombs created terrible firestorms, killing at least thirty-five thousand people and leveling the city, much as they had done earlier at Cologne and would do in February 1945 to Dresden, where an estimated sixty thousand people died.

Meanwhile, in July 1943, the Red Army, eating U.S. rations, marching in American-made boots, and driving Dodge and Ford trucks, engaged the Germans at Kursk. With a million men actively engaged on each side in the largest pitched battle of the war, Soviet soldiers won decisively and forced a German retreat. Advancing swiftly, they drove the Germans out of Soviet territory by mid-1944 and plunged into Poland, where the Soviets set up a puppet government. Late summer and early fall saw Soviet troops seize Romania and Bulgaria and aid communist guerillas under Josip Broz Tito in liberating Yugoslavia.

As the Soviets swept across eastern Europe, Allied forces opened the long-promised second front. On June 6, 1944—D-Day—nearly 200,000 Allied troops in the largest armada ever assembled landed in Normandy in northwestern France.

Within six weeks, another million Allied troops had crossed the channel and waded ashore. Under General Eisenhower, the Allies liberated Paris in August and reached the German border by the end of summer.

In mid-December, as the Allies prepared for a full-scale assault on the German heartland, Hitler desperately threw his last reserves against American positions. The **Battle of the Bulge**—named for the “bulge” eighty miles long and fifty miles wide that Hitler’s troops drove into the Allies’ line—raged for nearly a month, and when it ended American troops stood on the banks of the Rhine. It had cost the United States 55,000 soldiers dead or wounded and 18,000 taken prisoner. But the way to Germany lay open, and the end of the European war was in sight.

War in the Pacific

The day after the Philippines fell to Japan in mid-May 1942, U.S. and Japanese fleets confronted each other in the Coral Sea off northeastern Australia, the first naval battle in history fought entirely from aircraft carriers. Both sides took heavy losses, but the Battle of the Coral Sea stopped the Japanese advance on Australia. Less than a month later, a Japanese armada turned toward Midway Island, the crucial American outpost between Hawaii and Japan. Because the U.S. Signal Corps had broken the Japanese naval code, Japan’s plans and the locations of her ships were known. American carriers and their planes consequently won a decisive victory, sinking four Japanese carriers and destroying several hundred enemy planes. Suddenly on the defensive, the stunned Japanese could now only try to hold what they had already won.

On the offensive, U.S. marines waded ashore at Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands in August 1942. Facing fierce resistance as well as tropical diseases like malaria, the Americans needed six months to take the island, a bitter preview of the battles to come. As the British moved from India to retake Burma, the United States began a two-pronged advance toward Japan in 1943. The army, under General Douglas MacArthur, advanced north on the islands between Australia and the Philippines, and the navy and marines, under Admiral Chester Nimitz, “island-hopped” across the central Pacific to seize strategic bases and put Tokyo in range of American bombers. In fall 1944 the navy annihilated what remained of the Japanese fleet at the battles of the Philippine Sea and Leyte Gulf, giving the United States control of Japan’s air and shipping lanes and leaving the Japanese home islands open to invasion (see Map 25.4).



“FULL VICTORY—NOTHING ELSE!” Commander-in-Chief of Allied Expeditionary Force General Dwight D. (“Ike”) Eisenhower gives the order of the day to U.S. paratroopers in England on the eve of D-Day. (*National Archives*)



MAP 25.4 WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC American ships and planes stemmed the Japanese offensive at the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway Island. Thereafter, the Japanese were on the defensive against American amphibious assaults and air strikes.

The Grand Alliance

President Roosevelt had two main goals for the war: the total defeat of the Axis at the least possible cost in American lives, and the establishment of a world order strong enough to ensure peace, open trade, and national self-determination in the postwar era. Aware that only a common enemy fused the Grand Alliance together, Roosevelt tried to promote harmony by concentrating on military victory and postponing divisive postwar matters.

Churchill and Stalin had other goals. Britain wanted neither the United States nor the Soviet Union to reshape and dominate the postwar world; it especially sought to retain its imperial possessions. As Churchill said, he had “not become the King’s First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” The Soviet Union wanted a permanently weakened Germany and a sphere of influence (a region whose governments can be counted on to do a great power’s bidding) in eastern Europe. To hold together this fragile alliance, FDR relied on personal diplomacy to mediate conflicts.

The first president to travel by plane while in office, Roosevelt in January 1943 arrived in Casablanca,

Morocco’s main port, where he and Churchill resolved to attack Italy before invading France and proclaimed that the war would continue until the “unconditional surrender” of the Axis. By so doing, they sought to reduce Soviet mistrust of the West, which had deepened with the postponement of the second front. Ten months later, in Cairo, Roosevelt met with Churchill and Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), the anticommunist head of the Chinese government. To keep China in the war, FDR promised the return of Manchuria and Taiwan to China and a “free and independent Korea.” From Cairo, FDR and Churchill continued on to Tehran, Iran’s capital, to meet with Stalin. Here they set the invasion of France for June 1944, and agreed to divide Germany into zones of occupation and to impose reparations on the Reich. Most importantly to Roosevelt, Stalin pledged to enter the war against Japan after Hitler’s defeat.

Roosevelt then turned his attention to domestic politics. Increasing conservative sentiment in the nation led him to

Churchill said, “I have not become the King’s First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.”

drop the liberal Henry A. Wallace from the ticket and accept Harry S Truman as his vice-presidential candidate. A moderate senator from Missouri, now dubbed “the new Missouri Compromise,” Truman restored a semblance of unity to the Democrats for the 1944 campaign. To compete, the Republicans nominated moderate and noncontroversial New York governor Thomas E. Dewey. The campaign focused more on personalities than on issues, and the still-popular FDR defeated his dull GOP opponent, but with the narrowest margin since 1916—winning 53 percent of the popular vote. A weary Roosevelt, secretly suffering from hypertension and heart disease, now directed his waning energies toward defeating the Axis and constructing an international peacekeeping system.

War and American Society

The crisis of war altered the most basic patterns of American life. Few families went untouched: more than 15 million Americans served in the armed forces, an equal number moved to find jobs, and millions of women went to work outside the home. As well, the war opened some doors of opportunity for African-Americans and other minorities, although many remained closed. It heightened minority aspirations and widened cracks in the wall of white racist attitudes and policy, while maintaining much of America’s racial caste system, thereby tilling the ground for future crises.

The GIs’ War

Most servicemen griped about regimentation and were more interested in dry socks than in ideology. They knew little of the big strategies, and cared less. They fought because they were told to and wanted to stay alive. Reluctant recruits rather than professional warriors, most had few aims beyond returning to a safe, familiar United States.

But the GIs’ war dragged on for almost four years, transforming them in the process. Millions who had never been far from home traveled to unfamiliar cities and remote lands, shedding their parochialism. Sharing tents and foxholes with men of different religions, ethnicities, and classes, they experienced a “melting pot” effect that freed them from some prewar prejudices.

Besides serving with people they had never previously encountered, over a million GIs married overseas, broadening personal horizons and sowing the seeds of a more tolerant and diverse national culture. At the same time many GIs became evermore distrustful of foreigners and outsiders, and returned home obsessed with the flag as a symbol of patriotism.

Physical misery, chronic exhaustion, and, especially, intense combat took a heavy toll, leaving

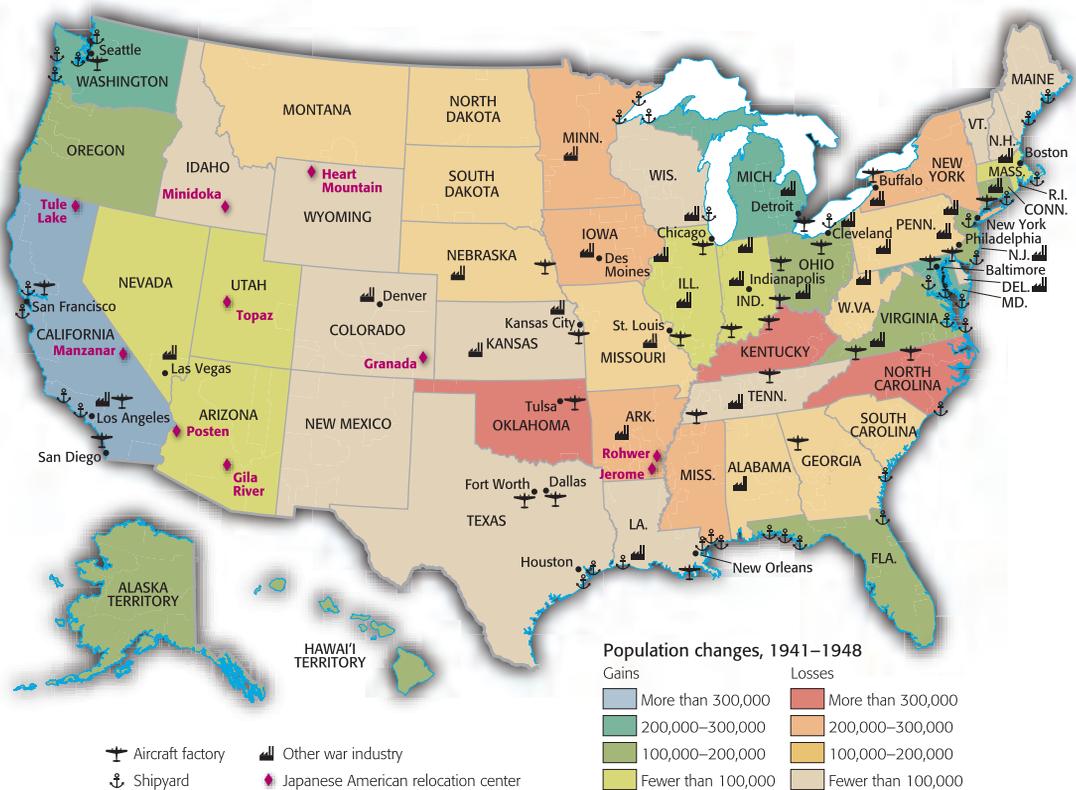
lasting psychological as well as physical wounds. Both American and Japanese troops saw the other in racist images, as animals to be exterminated, and brutality became as much the rule as the exception in “a war without mercy.” Both sides machine-gunned hostile flyers in parachutes; both tortured and killed prisoners in cold blood; both mutilated enemy dead for souvenirs. In the fight against Germany, cruelties and atrocities also occurred, although on a lesser scale. A battalion of the second armored division calling itself “Roosevelt’s Butchers” boasted that it shot all the German soldiers it captured. Some who served became cynical about human life; others, haunted by nightmares about the war, would long languish in veterans’ hospitals.

The Home Front

Nothing transformed the social topography more than the vast internal migration of an already mobile people. About 15 million men moved because of military service, often accompanied by family members. Many other Americans moved to secure new economic opportunities, especially in the Pacific Coast states. Nearly a quarter of a million found jobs in the shipyards of the Bay area and at least as many in the aircraft industry that arose in the orange groves of southern California. More than one hundred thousand worked in the Puget Sound shipyards of Washington State and half as many in the nearby Boeing airplane plants. Others flocked to the world’s largest magnesium plant in Henderson, Nevada, and to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal and Remington Rand arms plant outside Denver (see Map 25.5).

At least 6 million people left farms to work in urban areas, including several million southern blacks and whites. They doubled Albuquerque’s population and increased San Diego’s some 90 percent. This mass uprooting of people from familiar settings made Americans both more cosmopolitan and lonelier. Some who moved far from their hometowns left behind their traditional values. Housing shortages left millions living in converted garages and trailer camps, even in cars. Some workers in Seattle lived in chicken coops. The swarms of migrants to Mobile, Alabama, attracted by a new aluminum plant, two massive shipyards, an air base, and an army supply depot, transformed a sleepy fishing village into a symbol of urban disorder.

Overcrowding and wartime separations strained family and community life. High rates of divorce, mental illness, family violence, and juvenile delinquency reflected the disruptions caused in part by the lack of privacy, the sense of impermanence, the absence of familiar settings, and the competition for scarce facilities. Few boom communities had



MAP 25.5 THE HOME FRONT, 1941–1945 War-related production finally ended the Great Depression, but it also required many Americans to move, especially to western states, where the jobs were. This map shows major war-related industries and the states that gained and lost populations. For Japanese-Americans, relocation did not mean new jobs, but a loss of freedom as they were assigned to one of ten relocation centers across the country.

the resources to supply their swollen populations with transportation, recreation, and social services. Urban blight and conflicts between newcomers and old-timers accelerated.

While military culture fostered a sexist mentality, emphasizing the differences between “femininity” and “masculinity,” millions of American women donned pants, put their hair in bandannas, and went to work in defense plants. Reversing a decade of efforts to exclude women from the labor force, the federal government urged women into war production in 1942. Songs like “We’re the Janes Who Make the Planes” encouraged women to take up war work. Propaganda called upon them to take jobs and “release able-bodied men for fighting.” More than 6 million women entered the labor force during the war, increasing the number of employed women to 19 million. Less than a quarter of the labor force in 1940, women constituted well over a third of all workers in 1945.

Before the war, most female wage earners had been young and single. By contrast, 75 percent of the new women workers were married, 60 percent were over thirty-five, and more than 33 percent had children under the age of fourteen. They tended blast furnaces, operated cranes, greased locomotives, drove taxis, welded hulls, loaded shells, and

worked in coke plants and rolling mills. On the Pacific Coast, more than one-third of all workers in aircraft and shipbuilding were women. “**Rosie the Riveter**,” holding a pneumatic gun in arms bulging with muscles, became the symbol of the woman war worker; she was, in the words of a popular song, “making history working for victory” (see Going to the Source).

Yet traditional attitudes and gender discrimination existed throughout the war. Women earned only about 65 percent of what men earned for the same work and labor unions often required women to give up their jobs to men returning from military service. One popular advertisement pictured a woman in overalls about to leave for work. Her daughter asks, “Mother, when will you stay home again?” The woman responds: “Some jubilant day, mother will stay home again doing the job she likes—making a home for you and daddy when he gets back.”

The stigma attached to working mothers also shaped government resistance to establishing child-care centers for women employed in defense. “A mother’s primary duty is to her home and children,” the Labor Department’s

“We’re the Janes Who Make the Planes.”

Women War Workers of Color

African American Fanny Christina Hill moved from Texas to Los Angeles in 1940, and found work as a live-in domestic, cleaning and cooking for a white family. In 1943, while her

husband served in the military, she took a job with North American Aviation for sixty cents an hour.

Sometimes even if you're good, you just don't get the breaks if the color's not right. I could see where they made a difference in placing you in certain jobs. They had fifteen or twenty departments, but all the Negroes went to Department 17 because there was nothing but shooting and bucking rivets. You stood on one side of the panel and your partners stood on this side, and he would shoot the rivets with a gun and you'd buck them with the bar. That was about the size of it. I just didn't like it. I didn't think I could stay there with all this shooting and a'bucking and a'jumping and a'bumping. I stayed in it about two or three weeks and then I just decided I did *not* like that. I went and told my foreman and he didn't do anything about it, so I decided to leave. . . . I went over to the union and they told me what to do. I went back inside and they sent me to another department where you did bench work and I liked that much better. . . .

I must have stayed there nearly a year, and then they put me over in another department, "Plastics." . . . I worked over there until the end of the war. Well, not quite the end, because I got pregnant, and while I was off having the baby the war was over. . . .

When North American called me back, was I a happy soul! . . . So, from sixty cents an hour, when I first hired in there, up to one dollar. That wasn't traveling fast, but it was better than anything else because you had hours to work by and you had benefits and you come home at night with your family. So it was a good deal.

It made me live better. I really did. We always say that Lincoln took the bale off of the Negroes. . . . Well, my sister always said—that's why you can't interview her because she's so radical—"Hitler was the one that got us out of the white folks' kitchen."

Born in Mexico, Beatrice Morales Clifton was a married mother of four children when, over her husband's strenuous objections, she accepted a job offer from Lockheed in Los Angeles. Like Hill, she encountered resistance from male co-workers yet worked her way up to increasingly more skilled positions.

I felt proud of myself and felt good being that I had never done anything like that. I felt good that I could do something, and being that it was war, I felt that I was doing my part.

I went from 65 cents to \$1.05. That was top pay. It felt good and, besides, it was my own money. I could do whatever I wanted with it because my husband, whatever he was giving to the house, he kept on paying it. I used to buy clothes for the kids; buy little things that they needed. I had a bank account and I had a little saving at home where I could get ahold of the money right away if I needed it. Julio never asked about it. He knew how much I made; I showed him. If there was something that had to be paid and I had the money and he didn't, well, I used some of my money.

Source: *Sherna Berger Gluck, Rose the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War and Social Change, Boston: Twayne, 1987. Reprinted with permission of the author.*

QUESTIONS

1. What effects did wartime employment have on these women's sense of themselves?
2. How might their wartime experiences have helped generate the civil rights and women's movements of the post-war era?



Go to the website at www.cengage.com/history/boyerenduring7e for additional primary sources on this period.

Children's Bureau stated. "This duty is one she cannot lay aside, no matter what the emergency." Funds for federal child-care centers covered fewer than 10 percent of defense workers' children, and the young suffered. Terms like "eight-hour orphans" and "latch-key children" described unsupervised children forced to take care of themselves. Fueling fears that the employment of women outside the home would cause the family to disintegrate, juvenile delinquency increased fivefold and the divorce rate zoomed from 16 per 100 marriages in 1940 to 27 per 100 in 1944.

The impact of war on women and the family proved multifaceted and even contradictory. As the divorce rate soared, so did marriage rates and birth-rates. Although some women remained content to roll bandages for the Red Cross, more than three hundred thousand joined the armed forces and, for the first time in American history, were given regular military status and served in positions other than that of nurse. As members of the Women's Army Corps (WACs) and the Navy's Women Appointed for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) they replaced men in such noncombat jobs as mechanics and radio operators, and served as mapmakers and ferry pilots. About a thousand women became civilian pilots with the WASPs (Women's Airforce Service Pilots).

Overall, women gained a new sense of their potential. The war proved their capabilities and widened their world. Recalled one war wife whose returning husband did not like her independence, "He had left a shrinking violet and come home to a very strong oak tree." Some of these women were among the 350,000 teachers who took better-paying war work or joined the armed services, leaving schools badly understaffed. Students, too, abandoned school in record numbers. High school enrollments sank as the full-time employment of teenagers rose from 900,000 in 1940 to 3 million in 1944.

The loss of students to war production and the armed services forced colleges to admit large numbers of women and to contract themselves out to the armed forces. Nearly a million servicemen took college classes in science, engineering, and foreign languages. Harvard University awarded four military-training certificates for every academic degree it conferred. The chancellor of one branch of the University of California announced that his school was "no longer an academic tent with military sideshows. It is a military tent with academic sideshows." Higher education became more dependent on the federal government, and most universities sought increased federal contracts and subsidies. The universities in the West received some \$100 billion from the Office of Scientific Research and Development, more money than had been spent on scientific research by all the western universities since their founding.



ROSIE THE RIVETER Memorialized in song and story, "Rosie the Riveter" symbolized the women war workers who assumed jobs in heavy industry to take up the slack for the absent 15 million men in the armed services. Here a very real Rosie the Riveter is doing her job in April 1943 at the Baltimore manufacturing plant for Martin PMB Mariners. Although sometimes scorned by male workers, the dedication and efficiency of most female workers won them the praise of male plant supervisors. (*National Archives*)

The war profoundly affected American culture. Spending on books and theater entertainment doubled. More than sixty million people (in a population of 135 million) attended movies weekly, and the film industry reached its zenith in 1945–1946. But as the war dragged on, people grew tired of war films, and Hollywood reemphasized romance and nostalgia with such stars as Katharine Hepburn and Judy Garland.

Similarly, popular music went from "Goodbye, Mama, I'm Off to Yokohama," the first hit of 1942, to songs of lost love and loneliness, like "They're Either Too Young or Too Old." By 1945, bitterness pervaded lyrics, and songs like "Saturday Night Is the Loneliest Night of the Week" revealed impatience for the war's end.

In bookstores, nonfiction ruled the roost and every newsmagazine increased its circulation. The Government Printing Office published Armed Services Editions, paperback reprints of classics and new releases; and the nearly 350 million copies

distributed free to soldiers sped up the American acceptance of quality paperbacks, which were introduced in 1939 by the Pocket Book Company. Wendell Willkie's *One World* (1943) became the fastest-selling title in publishing history to that time, with 1 million copies snapped up in two months. A vision of a world without military alliances and spheres of influence, this brief volume expressed hope that an international organization would extend peace and democracy through the postwar world. Most startlingly, Willkie attacked "our imperialisms at home." Unless the United States ended its own racism, he concluded, nonwhites around the globe would rebuff its claim to world leadership.

An avid interest in wartime news also spurred the major radio networks to increase their news programs from 4 percent to nearly 30 percent of broadcasting time, and enticed Americans to listen to the radio an average of $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours a day. Daytime radio serials, like those featuring Dick Tracy tracking down Axis spies, reached the height of their popularity, as did juvenile comic books in which a platoon of new superheroes, including Captain America and Captain Marvel, saw action on the battlefield. Even Bugs Bunny donned a uniform to combat America's foes.

Racism and New Opportunities

Recognizing that the government needed the loyalty and labor of a united people, black leaders entered World War II determined to secure equal rights. In 1942, civil rights spokesmen insisted that African-American support of the war hinged on America's commitment to racial justice. They demanded a "Double V" campaign to gain victory over racial discrimination at home as well as over the Axis abroad. Membership in the NAACP multiplied nearly ten times, reaching half a million in 1945. The association pressed for legislation outlawing the poll tax and lynching, decried discrimination in defense industries and the armed services, and

sought to end black disfranchisement. Its campaign for voting rights gained momentum when the Supreme Court, in *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), ruled the Texas all-white primary unconstitutional. The decision eliminated a bar that had existed in eight southern states, although these states promptly resorted to other devices to minimize voting by blacks.

A new civil-rights organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), was founded in 1942. Employing the same forms of nonviolent direct action that Mohandas Gandhi used in his campaign

for India's independence, CORE sought to desegregate public facilities in northern cities.

Also proposing nonviolent direct action, **A. Philip Randolph**, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in 1941 called for a "thundering march" of one hundred thousand blacks on Washington if the president did not end discrimination in the armed services and the defense industry. FDR agreed to compromise.

In June 1941, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, the first presidential directive on race since Reconstruction. It prohibited discriminatory employment practices by federal agencies and by all unions and companies engaged in war-related work, and established the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to monitor compliance. Although the FEPC lacked effective enforcement powers, booming war production and a labor supply depleted by military service resulted in the employment of some 2 million African-Americans in industry and two hundred thousand in the federal civil service. Between 1942 and 1945, the proportion of blacks in war production work rose from 3 to 9 percent. Black membership in labor unions doubled to 1.25 million, and the number of skilled and semiskilled black workers tripled. Formerly mired in low-paying domestic and farm jobs, some three hundred thousand black women found work in factories and the civil service. Overall, the average wage for African-Americans increased from \$457 to \$1,976 a year, compared with a gain from \$1,064 to \$2,600 for whites.

About 1 million African-Americans served in the armed forces. Wartime needs forced the military to end policies of excluding blacks from the marines and coast guard, restricting them to jobs as mess boys in the navy, and confining them to noncombatant units in the army. From just five in 1940—three of them chaplains—the number of black officers grew to over seven thousand in 1945. In 1944, both the army and navy began token integration in some training facilities, ships, and battlefield platoons.

The great majority of blacks, however, served throughout the war in segregated service units commanded by white officers. This indignity, made worse by the failure of military authorities to protect black servicemen off the post and by the use of white military police to keep blacks "in their place," sparked rioting on army bases. At least fifty black soldiers died in racial conflicts during the war. "I used to sing gospel songs until I joined the Army," recalled blues-guitar great B. B. King, "then I sang the blues."

Violence within the military mirrored growing racial tensions on the home front. As blacks protested against discrimination, many whites resisted blacks' efforts to improve their economic and

"I used to sing gospel songs until I joined the Army, then I sang the blues."

social status. Race riots erupted in 1943 in Harlem, Mobile, and Beaumont, Texas. The bloodiest melee exploded in Detroit that year when white mobs assaulted blacks caught riding on trolleys or sitting in movie theaters and blacks smashed and looted white-owned stores and shops. After thirty hours of racial beatings, shootings, and burning, twenty-five African Americans and nine whites lay dead, more than seven hundred had been injured, and over \$2 million of property had been destroyed. The fear of continued violence led to a greater emphasis on racial tolerance by liberal whites and to a reduction in the militancy of African-American leaders.

Yet the war brought significant changes that would eventually result in a successful drive for black civil rights. The migration of over seven hundred thousand blacks from the South turned a southern problem into a national concern. It created a new attitude of independence in African-Americans freed from the constraints of caste. As the growing numbers of blacks in northern cities began to vote, moreover, African-Americans could hold a balance of power in close elections. This prompted politicians in both major parties to extend greater recognition to blacks and to pay more attention to civil-rights issues.

African-American expectations of greater government concern for their rights also resulted from the new prominence of the United States as a major power in a predominantly nonwhite world. As Japanese propaganda appeals to the peoples of Asia and Latin America emphasized lynchings and race riots in the United States, Americans had to confront the peril that white racism posed to their national security. In addition, the horrors of Nazi racism discredited America's own white-supremacist attitudes and practices. A pluralist vision of American society now became part of official rhetoric, and of the liberal-left agenda. The contradiction between American ideals of freedom and equality and the actual state of African Americans became manifest. Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal, in his massive study of race problems, *An American Dilemma* (1944), concluded that "not since Reconstruction had there been more reason to anticipate fundamental changes in American race relations . . . there is bound to be a redefinition of the Negro's status as a result of this War." Returning black veterans, and African-Americans who had served the nation on the home front, soon expected to gain all the rights enjoyed by whites.

War and Diversity

Wartime winds of change also brought new opportunities and difficulties to other minorities. More than twenty-five thousand Native Americans served in the armed forces, including 400 Navajo "code talkers" who confounded the Japanese by using their



A "DOUBLE V" PROTEST As the mobilization for war lifted the pall of the depression for white workers, management and labor joined together to exclude African-Americans from the benefits of the war boom. To protest, picketers rallied for defense jobs outside the Glenn Martin aircraft plant in Omaha, Nebraska. (*Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library/Art Resource, NY*)

complex native language to relay messages between U.S. command centers. "Were it not for the Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima," one Signal Corps officer declared.

Another fifty thousand Indians left the reservation to work in defense industries, mainly on the West Coast. The Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota lost more than a quarter of its population to migration during the war. It was the first time most had lived in a non-Indian world, and the average income of Native American households tripled during the war. Such economic improvement encouraged many Indians to remain outside the reservation and to try to assimilate into mainstream life. But anti-Indian discrimination, particularly in smaller towns near reservations, such as Gallup, New Mexico, and Billings, Montana, forced many Native Americans back to their reservations, which had suffered severely from budget cuts during the war. Prodded by those who coveted Indian lands, lawmakers demanded that Indians be taken off the backs of the taxpayers and "freed from the reservations" to fend for themselves." To mobilize against the campaign to end all reservations and trust protections, Native Americans organized the National Congress of American Indians in 1944.

To relieve labor shortages in agriculture, caused by conscription and the movement of rural workers to city factories, the U.S. government negotiated an agreement with Mexico in July 1942 to import

braceros, or temporary workers. Classified as foreign laborers rather than as immigrants, an estimated two hundred thousand *braceros*, half of them in California, received short-term contracts promising adequate wages, medical care, and decent living conditions. But farm owners frequently violated the terms of these contracts and also encouraged an influx of illegal migrants from Mexico desperate for employment. Unable to complain about their working conditions without risking arrest and deportation, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans were exploited by agribusinesses in Arizona, California, and Texas. At the same time, tens of thousands of Chicanos left agricultural work for jobs in factories, shipbuilding yards, and steel mills. By 1943, about half a million Chicanos were living in Los Angeles County, 10 percent of the total population. In New Mexico nearly 20 percent of Mexican-American farm laborers escaped from rural poverty to urban jobs. Even as their occupational status and material conditions improved, most Mexican-Americans remained in communities (*colonias*), segregated from the larger society and frequently harassed by the police.

Much of the hostility toward Mexican-Americans focused on young gang members who wore “zoot suits”—a fashion that originated in Harlem and emphasized long, broad-shouldered jackets and pleated trousers tightly pegged at the ankles. Known as *pachucos*, zoot-suited Mexican-Americans aroused the ire of servicemen stationed or on leave in Los Angeles who saw them as delinquents and draft dodgers. After a luridly publicized trial arising from a Mexican-American gang fight at a swimming hole called Sleepy Lagoon, and newspaper headlines of a Chicano “crime wave,” bands of sailors and soldiers rampaged through Los Angeles in early June 1943, stripping *pachucos*, cutting their long hair, and beating them. Military authorities looked the other way. City police intervened only to arrest Mexican-Americans, and the city council made the wearing of a zoot suit a misdemeanor. Nothing was done about the substandard housing, disease, and racism Hispanics had to endure.

Unlike African-Americans, however, more than 350,000 Mexican-Americans served in the armed forces without segregation, and in all combat units. They volunteered in higher numbers than warranted by their percentage of the population

and earned a disproportionate number of citations for distinguished service as well as seventeen Medals of Honor. Returning Mexican-American GIs joined established antidiscrimination groups, like the League of United Latin American Citizens

(LULAC) and organized their own associations, like the American GI Forum, to press for equal rights.

Thousands of gay men and lesbians who served in the armed forces also found new wartime opportunities. The military officially barred those they defined as “sexual perverts,” but owing to the urgency of building a massive armed forces, just four to five thousand men out of eighteen million examined for induction were excluded because of homosexuality. For the vast majority of gays not excluded, being emancipated from traditional expectations and the close scrutiny of family and neighbors, and living in overwhelmingly all-male or all-female environments, brought freedom to meet like-minded gay men and women. Like other minorities, many gays saw the war as a chance to prove their worth under fire. Yet some suspected of being gay were dishonorably discharged, sent to psychiatric hospitals, or imprisoned in so-called queer stockades. In 1945, gay veterans established the Veteran’s Benevolent Association, the first organization in the United States to combat discrimination against homosexuals.

The Internment of Japanese-Americans

Far more than any other minority in the United States, Japanese-Americans suffered grievously during the war. About thirty-seven thousand first-generation Japanese immigrants (Issei) and nearly seventy-five thousand native-born Japanese-American citizens (Nisei) were interned in “relocation centers” guarded by military police—a tragic reminder of the fragility of civil liberties in wartime.

The **internment of Japanese-Americans** reflected forty years of anti-Japanese sentiment on the West Coast, rooted in racial prejudice and economic rivalry. Nativist politicians and farmers who wanted Japanese-American land had long decried the “yellow peril.” Following the attack on Pearl Harbor they whipped up the rage of white Californians, aided by a government report falsely blaming Japanese-Americans in Hawaii for aiding the Japanese naval force. Patriotic associations and many newspapers clamored for evacuating the Japanese-Americans, as did the army general in charge of the Western Defense Command, who proclaimed, “It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not. . . . I don’t want any of them.”

In February 1942, President Roosevelt gave in to the pressure and issued Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal from military areas of anyone deemed a threat. Although not a single Japanese-American was apprehended for espionage or sedition and neither the FBI nor military intelligence uncovered any evidence of disloyal behavior

“A Jap’s a Jap. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not.”

by Japanese-Americans, the military ordered the eviction of all Nisei and Issei from the West Coast. Only Hawaii was excepted. Despite the far larger number of Hawaiians of Japanese ancestry, as well as of Japanese living in Hawaii, no internment policy was implemented there, and no sabotage occurred.

Forced to sell all they owned at whatever prices they could obtain, Japanese-Americans lost an estimated \$2 billion in property and possessions. Tagged with numbers rather than names, they were herded into barbed-wire-encircled detention camps in the most desolate parts of the West and Great Plains—places, wrote one historian, “where nobody had lived before and no one has lived since.” Few protested the incarceration. Stating that it would not question government claims of military necessity during time of war, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the evacuation in the *Korematsu* case (1944). By then the hysteria had subsided, and the government had begun a program of gradual release, allowing some Nisei to attend college or take factory jobs (but not on the West Coast); about eighteen thousand served in the military. The 442nd regimental combat team, entirely Japanese-American, became the most decorated unit in the military.

In 1982, a special government commission concluded in its report, *Personal Justice Denied*, that internment “was not justified by military necessity.” It blamed the Roosevelt administration’s action on “race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership” and apologized to Japanese-Americans for “a grave injustice.” In 1988, Congress voted to pay twenty thousand dollars in compensation to each of the nearly sixty-two thousand surviving internees; and in 1998 President Bill Clinton further apologized for the injustice by giving the nation’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, to Fred Korematsu, who had protested the evacuation decree all the way to the Supreme Court.

Triumph and Tragedy, 1945

Spring and summer 1945 brought stunning changes and new crises. In Europe, a new balance of power emerged after the collapse of the Third Reich. In Asia, continued Japanese reluctance to surrender led to the use of atomic bombs. And in the United States, a new president, Harry S. Truman, presided over both the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War and the nuclear age.

The Yalta Conference

By the time Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met in the Soviet city of Yalta in February 1945, the military situation favored the Soviet Union. The Red Army had overrun Poland, Romania, and



YOUNG NISEI EVACUEES AT THE TURLOCK ASSEMBLY CENTER Awaiting their turn for baggage inspection on May 2, 1942, these children would be interned in remote “relocation centers” along with 37,000 first-generation Japanese immigrants (Issei) and some 75,000 native-born Japanese-American (Nisei) citizens of the United States. Hastily uprooted from their homes, farms, and stores, most lost all their property and personal possessions, and spent the war under armed guard. (*National Archives*)

Bulgaria; driven the Nazis out of Yugoslavia; penetrated Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia; and was massed just fifty miles from Berlin. American forces, in contrast, were still recovering from the Battle of the Bulge and facing stiff resistance on the route to Japan. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, contemplating the awesome cost in American casualties of invading Japan, insisted that Stalin’s help was worth almost any price. And Stalin was in a position to make demands. The Soviet Union had suffered most in the war against Germany, it already dominated eastern Europe, and, knowing that the United States did not want to fight a prolonged war against Japan, Stalin had the luxury of deciding whether and when to enter the Pacific war.

The **Yalta accords** reflected these realities. Stalin again vowed to declare war on Japan “two or three months” after Germany’s surrender, and in return Churchill and Roosevelt reneged on their arrangement with Jiang Jieshi and promised the Soviet Union concessions in Manchuria and the territories it had lost in the Russo-Japanese War (1904) (see Chapter 22). The Big Three delegated a final

“I don’t know whether you fellows ever had a load of hay or a bull fall on you, but last night the moon, the stars, and all the planets fell on me.”

settlement of the German reparations issue to a postwar commission, and left vague the matter of partitioning Germany and its eventual reunification. The conference also vaguely called for interim governments in eastern Europe “broadly representative of all democratic elements” and for eventual freely elected permanent governments. On the matter dearest to FDR’s heart, the negotiators

accepted a plan for a new international organization and agreed to a founding conference of the new United Nations in San Francisco in April 1945.

Stalin proved adamant about the nature of the postwar Polish government. Twice in the twentieth century German troops had used Poland as a springboard for invading Russia. Stalin would not expose his land again, and after the Red Army had captured Warsaw in January 1945 he installed a procommunist regime and brutally subdued the anticommunist Poles. Conservative critics would later charge that FDR “gave away” eastern Europe. Actually, the Soviet Union gained little it did not already control, and short of going to war against the Soviets while still battling Germany and Japan, FDR could only hope that Stalin would keep his word.

Victory in Europe

As the Soviets prepared for their assault on Berlin, American troops crossed the Rhine at Remagen in March 1945 and encircled the Ruhr Valley, Germany’s industrial heartland. Churchill now proposed a rapid thrust to Berlin. But Eisenhower and Roosevelt saw no point in risking high casualties to rush to an area of Germany already designated as the Soviet occupation zone. So Eisenhower advanced methodically along a broad front until the Americans met the Russians at the Elbe River on April 25. By then, the Red Army had taken Vienna and reached the suburbs of Berlin. On April 30, as Soviet troops approached his headquarters, Hitler committed suicide. Berlin fell to the Soviets on May 2, and on May 8 a new German government surrendered unconditionally.

Jubilant Americans celebrated Victory in Europe (V-E) Day less than a month after they had mourned the death of their president. On April 12, an exhausted President Roosevelt had abruptly clutched his head, moaned that he had a “terrific headache,” and fell unconscious. A cerebral hemorrhage ended his life. As the nation grieved, Roosevelt’s unprepared successor assumed the burden of ending the war and dealing with the Soviet Union.

“I don’t know whether you fellows ever had a load of hay or a bull fall on you,” Harry Truman told reporters on his first full day in office, “but last night the moon, the stars, and all the planets fell on me.” An unpretentious politician awed by his new responsibilities, Truman struggled to continue FDR’s policies. But Roosevelt had made no effort to familiarize his vice president with world affairs. Perhaps sensing his own inadequacies, Truman adopted a tough pose toward adversaries. In office less than two weeks, he lashed out at Soviet ambassador V. M. Molotov that the United States was tired of waiting for the Russians to allow free elections in Poland, and he threatened to cut off lend-lease aid if the Soviet Union did not cooperate. The Truman administration then reduced U.S. economic assistance to the Soviets and stalled on their request for a \$1 billion reconstruction loan. Simultaneously, Stalin strengthened his grip on eastern Europe, ignoring the promises he had made at Yalta.

The United States neither conceded the Soviet sphere of influence in eastern Europe nor tried to end it. Although Truman still sought Stalin’s cooperation in establishing the United Nations and in defeating Japan, Soviet-American relations deteriorated. By June 1945, when the Allied countries succeeded in framing the United Nations Charter, hopes for a new international order had dimmed, and the United Nations emerged as a diplomatic battleground. Truman, Churchill, and Stalin met at Potsdam, Germany, from July 16 to August 2 to complete the postwar arrangements begun at Yalta. But the Allied leaders could barely agree to demilitarize Germany and to punish Nazi war criminals. Given the diplomatic impasse, only military power remained to determine the contours of the postwar world.

The Holocaust

When news of the **Holocaust**—the term later given to the Nazis’ extermination of European Jewry—first leaked out in early 1942, many Americans discounted the reports. Not until November did the State Department admit knowledge of the massacres. A month later, the American broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, listened to nationwide, reported on the systematic killing of millions of Jews, “It is a picture of mass murder and moral depravity unequalled in the history of the world. It is a horror beyond what imagination can grasp. . . . There are no longer ‘concentration camps’—we must speak now only of ‘extermination camps.’”

Most Americans considered the annihilation of Europe’s 6 million Jews beyond belief. There were no photographs to prove it, and, some argued, the atrocities attributed to the Germans in World War



EXECUTION OF AN UKRAINIAN JEW The German *Einsatzgruppen*, special mobile squads ordered to carry out the “Final Solution” of killing all Jews, murdered some 600,000 Ukrainian Jews in the summer of 1941. (*Library of Congress*)

I had turned out to be false. So few took issue with the military’s view that the way to liberate those enslaved by Hitler was by speedily winning the war. Pleas by American Jews for the Allies to bomb the death camps and the railroad tracks leading to them fell on deaf ears. In fall 1944, U.S. planes flying over Auschwitz in southern Poland bombed nearby factories but left the gas chambers and crematoria intact, in order, American officials explained, not to divert air power from more vital raids elsewhere. “How could it be,” historian David Wyman has asked, “that Government officials knew that a place existed where 2,000 helpless human beings could be killed in less than an hour, knew that this occurred over and over again, and yet did not feel driven to search for some way to wipe such a scourge from the earth?”

How much could have been done remains uncertain. Still, the U.S. government never seriously

considered rescue schemes or searched for a way to curtail the Nazis’ “final solution” to the “Jewish question.” Its feeble response was due to its overwhelming focus on winning the war as quickly as possible, congressional and public fears of an influx of destitute Jews into the United States, Britain’s wish to placate the Arabs by keeping Jewish settlers out of Palestine, and the fear of some Jewish-American leaders that pressing the issue would increase anti-Semitism at home. The War Refugee Board managed to save the lives of just two hundred thousand Jews and twenty thousand non-Jews. Six million other Jews, about 75 percent of the European Jewish population, were gassed, shot, and incinerated, as were several million gypsies, communists, homosexuals, Polish Catholics, and others deemed unfit to live in the Third Reich.

“The things I saw beggar description,” wrote General Eisenhower after visiting the first death camp liberated by the U.S. army. He sent immediately for a delegation of congressional leaders and newspaper editors to make sure Americans would never forget the gas chambers and human ovens. Only after viewing the photographs and newsreels of corpses stacked like cordwood, boxcars heaped with the bones of dead prisoners, bulldozers shoving emaciated bodies into hastily dug ditches, and liberated, barely-alive living skeletons lying in their own filth, their vacant, sunken eyes staring through barbed wire, did most Americans see that the Holocaust was no myth.

The Atomic Bombs

Meanwhile, the war with Japan ground on. Early in 1945, an assault force of marines invaded Iwo Jima, 700 miles from Japan. In places termed the “Meat Grinder” and “Bloody Gorge,” the marines savagely battled thousands of Japanese soldiers hidden in tunnels and behind concrete bunkers and pillboxes. Securing the five-square-mile island would cost the marines nearly twenty-seven thousand casualties, and one-third of all the marines killed in the Pacific. In June, American troops waded ashore on Okinawa, 350 miles from Japan and a key staging area for the planned U.S. invasion of the Japanese home islands. Death and destruction engulfed Okinawa as waves of Americans attacked nearly impregnable Japanese defenses head-on, repeating the bloody strategy of World War I. After eighty-three days of fighting on land and sea, twelve thousand Americans lay dead and three times as many wounded, a 35 percent casualty rate, higher than at Normandy.

The appalling rate of loss on Iwo Jima and Okinawa weighed on the minds of American strategists as they thought about an invasion of the Japanese

“A hell of unspeakable torments.”

home islands. The Japanese Cabinet showed no willingness to give up the war despite Japan's being blockaded and bombed daily (on March 9–10 a fleet of B-29s dropped napalm-and-magnesium bombs on Tokyo, burning sixteen square miles of the city to the ground and killing some eighty-four thousand). Japanese military leaders insisted on fighting to the bitter end; surrender was unthinkable. Japan possessed an army of over two million, plus up to four million reservists and five thousand kamikaze aircraft, and the U.S. Joint Chiefs estimated that American casualties in invasions of Kyushu and Honshu (the main island of Japan) might exceed 1 million.

The successful detonation of history's first nuclear explosion at Alamogordo in mid-July gave Truman an alternative. On July 25, while meeting with Stalin and Churchill in Potsdam, Truman ordered the use of an atomic bomb if Japan did not surrender before August 3. The next day, in the **Potsdam Declaration**, he warned Japan to surrender unconditionally or face “prompt and utter destruction.” Japan refused, and on August 6, a B-29 bomber named *Enola Gay* took off from the Marianas island of Tinian and dropped a uranium bomb on Hiroshima. It plunged the city into what Japanese novelist Masuji Ibuse termed “a hell of unspeakable torments.” The 300,000-degree centigrade fireball incinerated houses and vaporized people. More than sixty thousand died immediately from the blast, and another seventy-five thousand died from burns and radiation poisoning by late 1945. On August 8, Stalin declared war on Japan, and U.S. planes dropped leaflets on Japan warning that another bomb would be dropped if it did not surrender. Japan refused. Its military leaders preferred death to surrender. The next day, at high noon, the *Bock's Car* flattened Nagasaki with a plutonium bomb, killing over thirty-five thousand, and injuring more than sixty thousand. On August 14, Japan accepted the American terms of surrender, which implicitly permitted the emperor to retain his throne but subordinated him to the U.S. commander of the occupation forces. General MacArthur received Japan's surrender on the battleship *Missouri* on September 2, 1945. The war was over.

While Americans at the time overwhelmingly backed the atomic bombings of Japan as the necessary way to end the war quickly and with the least cost in lives, many critics later contended that Japan would have soon surrendered without the horrendous bombing. Some believed that racist American attitudes toward the Japanese motivated the decision to drop the bombs. As war correspondent Ernie Pyle wrote, “The Japanese are looked upon as something inhuman and squirmy—like some people feel about cockroaches or mice.” While racial

hatred undoubtedly stirred exterminationist sentiment, those involved in the Manhattan Project had regarded Germany as the target; and considering the ferocity of the Allied bombings of Hamburg and Dresden, there is little reason to assume that the Allies would not have dropped atomic bombs on Germany had they been available. By 1945, the Allies as well as the Axis had abandoned restraints on attacking civilians.

Other critics maintain that demonstrating the bomb's terrible destructiveness on an uninhabited island would have moved Japan to surrender. We will never know for sure. American scientists rejected a demonstration bombing because the United States had an atomic arsenal of only two bombs and they did not know whether the mechanism for detonating them in the air would work. A large number of those critical of Truman's decision believe that the president, aware of worsening relations between the United States and the USSR, ordered the atomic attack primarily to end the Pacific war before Stalin could enter it and share in the postwar occupation of Japan. At the same time, its use might also intimidate Stalin into making concessions in eastern Europe. Referring to the Soviets, President Truman noted just before the atomic test at Alamogordo, “If it explodes, as I think it will, I'll certainly have a hammer on those boys.” Truman's new secretary of state, James Byrnes, thought that the bomb would “make Russia more manageable” and would “put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war.”

Although the president and his advisers believed that the atomic bombs would strengthen their hand against the Soviets, the foremost reason for Truman's decision was to shorten the war and save American lives. As throughout the war, American leaders in August 1945 relied on production and technology to win the war with the minimum loss of American life. Every new weapon was put to use; the concept of “total war” easily accommodated the bombing of civilians; and the atomic bomb was one more item in an arsenal that had already wreaked enormous destruction on the Axis. In “Operation Thunderclap,” the Allies had obliterated miles of German and Japanese cities, making no pretense of distinguishing military and civilian targets. The rules of war that had once stayed the use of weapons of mass destruction against enemy civilians no longer prevailed. Before Hiroshima, the United States had already crossed the threshold into mass murder from the air.

No responsible official counseled that the United States should sacrifice American servicemen to lessen death and destruction in Japan, or not use a weapon developed with 2 billion taxpayer dollars. To the vast majority of Americans, the atomic bomb was, in Churchill's words, “a miracle of deliverance” that saved Allied lives. So E. B. Sledge and his



ATOMIC BOMBS BRING RELIEF AND JOY TO SOME These U.S. servicemen, like many others, hearing the news of the atomic bombs and the Japanese surrender, expressed their relief and joy that they would soon be safely coming home rather than having to participate in an invasion of Japan. (AP Images)

comrades in the First Marine Division, slated to take part in the first wave of the invasion of Japan's home islands, breathed "an indescribable sense of relief." Hearing the news of the atomic bombs and Japan's surrender, Sledge wrote, they sat in stunned silence:

We remembered our dead. So many dead. So many maimed. So many bright futures consigned to the ashes of the past. So many dreams lost in the madness that engulfed us. Except for a few widely scattered shouts of joy, the survivors of the abyss sat hollow-eyed and silent, trying to comprehend a world without war.

The atomic bombs ended the deadliest war in history. A truly global conflict, involving over

half the world's peoples, with armies ranging over continents and navies fighting on every ocean, the war affected women, men, and children as victims of civilian bombing campaigns, as war workers, as slave laborers and comfort women. Neither side gave much quarter in seeking to destroy the other's will and resources. Some fifty million died—more than half of them noncombatants. The Soviet Union lost roughly twenty million people, China fifteen million, Poland six million, Germany four million, and Japan two million. Much of Asia and Europe was rubble. Some four hundred thousand American servicemen had also perished, and, although physically unscathed, the United States had changed profoundly—for better and worse.

1931–1932	Japan invades Manchuria and creates a puppet government.	1942	Battles of Coral Sea and Midway halt Japanese offensive. Internment of Japanese-Americans. Revenue Act expands graduated income-tax system. Allies invade North Africa (Operation TORCH). First successful atomic chain reaction. CORE founded.
1933	Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany and assumes dictatorial powers.	1943	Soviet victory in Battle of Stalingrad. Coal miners strike; Smith-Connally War Labor Disputes Act. Detroit and Los Angeles race riots. Allied invasion of Italy. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin meet in Tehran.
1934–1936	Nye Committee investigations.	1944	Allied invasion of France (Operation Overlord). U.S. forces invade the Philippines. Roosevelt wins fourth term. Battle of the Bulge.
1935–1937	Neutrality Acts.	1945	Yalta Conference. Battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Roosevelt dies; Harry S. Truman becomes president. Germany surrenders. Truman, Churchill, and Stalin meet in Potsdam. United States drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Japan surrenders.
1937	Japan invades China.		
1938	Germany annexes Austria; Munich Pact gives Sudetenland to Germany. <i>Kristallnacht</i> , night of Nazi terror against German and Austrian Jews.		
1939	Nazi-Soviet Pact. Germany invades Poland; World War II begins.		
1940	Germany conquers the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Denmark, Norway, and Luxembourg. Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact. Selective Service Act. Franklin Roosevelt elected to an unprecedented third term.		
1941	Lend-Lease Act. Roosevelt establishes the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC). Germany invades the Soviet Union. Japan attacks Pearl Harbor; the United States enters World War II. War Powers Act.		

CONCLUSION

Most Americans, and their government, initially responded to the war clouds over Asia and Europe by reaffirming their isolationism. As one senator proclaimed, prior to the vote that defeated Roosevelt's effort to have the United States join the World Court, "To hell with Europe and the rest of those nations!" Not till the Japanese attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, more than two years after the war in Europe had begun, did the United States enter the fray, and even then it waited until Hitler and Mussolini declared war on it before joining the armed struggle engulfing the world. Once engaged, the Americans rapidly went on a war footing. Mobilization transformed the scope and authority of the federal government, vastly expanding presidential powers. It ended the unemployment of the depression and made American

industry more productive than it had ever been, and most Americans more prosperous than they had ever been. It tilted the national economic balance toward the South Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts. It accelerated trends toward bigness in business, agriculture, and labor. It involved the military in the economy and education as never before.

To achieve an unconditional victory, with the least possible cost in American lives, Roosevelt concentrated on defeating Germany first yet delaying a second front in Europe until Soviet forces had routed the German army in eastern Europe. Meanwhile, half a world way, a two-pronged American offensive, across the central Pacific and north from Australia, brought Japan to the brink of defeat. On the home front, the war catalyzed vital changes in racial and social relations, sometimes intensifying prejudices against minorities and women, but also broadening educational and

employment opportunities that widened their public spheres and heightened their expectations. Fighting and winning the greatest war in history, moreover, restored American faith in capitalism and democratic institutions. It was a vital coming-of-age experience for an entire generation that did much to give postwar American society a confident, “can-do” spirit, optimistic for the “American Century” that they knew lay ahead.

The awesome development and use of an atomic bomb bolstered that spirit and enabled the United

States to defeat Japan promptly, to try to force the Soviets to be more manageable, and to avoid an invasion of the Japanese home islands that might cost untold thousands of American casualties. The mass destruction of the war and total defeat of the Axis, however, brought new crises to cloud the bright dawn of peace. The world’s two superpowers—the United States and the U.S.S.R—soon squared off in a Cold War that would see the United States play a role in global affairs inconceivable to most Americans just five years before.

KEY TERMS

“Good Neighbor” policy (p. 766)

Benito Mussolini (p. 766)

Adolf Hitler (p. 766)

appeasement (p. 767)

Neutrality Acts (p. 768)

Joseph Stalin (p. 768)

Winston Churchill (p. 772)

“lend-lease” (p. 772)

Atlantic Charter (p. 772)

War Production Board

(p. 774)

Office of Price Administration

(p. 775)

Manhattan Project (p. 778)

Battle of the Bulge (p. 780)

“Rosie the Riveter” (p. 783)

A. Philip Randolph (p. 786)

Braceros (p. 788)

internment of Japanese-

Americans (p. 788)

Yalta accords (p. 789)

Holocaust (p. 790)

Potsdam Declaration

(p. 792)

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