

Chapter 27 Outline - The Second World War at Home and Abroad, 1941–1945

- I. Introduction

World War II marked a watershed in American history. The immediate challenge of defeating the enemy directly affected thousands of men and women, while the new world the war created had ramifications for millions of people.

- II. The United States at War

- A. A Nation Unprepared

When war came, the United States was unprepared. Roosevelt's 1941 survey of war preparedness estimated that the United States could not be ready to fight before June 1943.

- B. War in the Pacific

At first the war in the Pacific, largely the responsibility of the United States, did not go well.

The Japanese enjoyed early successes, but the Battle of Midway in June 1942 was the turning point in the Pacific war.

- C. "Europe First" Strategy

War plans called for the United States to work first with Britain and the Soviet Union to defeat Germany, then to deal with Japan.

From the beginning Allied leaders had differences. In particular, difficulties arose among the allies over how the Americans and the British would carry the war into Europe.

- III. The Production Front and American Workers

- A. Businesses, Universities, and the War Effort

Wartime policy encouraged the growth of big business.

- B. Manhattan Project

Wartime needs led to a new relationship between science and the U.S. military.

Universities benefited from government grants to aid the war effort, with the Manhattan Project being the most important focus of government-sponsored scientific research.

The government set up a secret community at Los Alamos, New Mexico, where scientists worked to develop an atomic bomb.

- C. New Opportunities for Workers

With millions of young men drafted into the armed services and taken out of the domestic labor pool, women, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and poor whites streamed into jobs in defense plants.

Many African Americans, under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, threatened to march on Washington in 1941 to demand equal access to jobs in defense industries. Roosevelt responded with Executive Order No. 8802, which established the Fair Employment Practices Committee.

Through the *bracero* program, the United States turned to Mexican farm workers to fill agricultural jobs. Mexicans and Mexican Americans were also employed in other defense-related industries.

- D. Women at Work

Women participated in war production on an unprecedented scale.

Wartime needs made millions of jobs available, and many women went to work for the first time.

- E. Organized Labor During Wartime

Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a White House labor-management conference agreed to a no-strike/no-lockout pledge

Roosevelt created the National War Labor Board in 1942 to settle labor disputes.

Despite a “no-strike” agreement with the government, some workers staged walkouts during the war. Congress responded with the War Labor Disputes Act, a bill designed to place limits on labor.

- F. Success on the Production Front

Largely due to the use of the assembly-line process of mass production, the United States was producing 40 percent of the world’s weaponry by the end of the war.

- IV. Life on the Home Front

- A. Supporting the War Effort

Civilians supported the war effort in a variety of ways.

The Office of Price Administration established a nationwide rationing system for some consumer goods.

- B. Propaganda and Popular Culture

The Office of War Information directed the domestic propaganda effort to build public support for the war.

Popular culture also reinforced wartime messages.

- C. Wartime Prosperity

In the years from 1939 to the end of the war in 1945, per capita income rose from \$691 to \$1,515.

The government relied primarily on deficit spending rather than taxes to finance the war.

- D. A Nation in Motion

Many Americans moved to take advantage of wartime opportunities.

- E. Racial Conflicts

Racial tensions began to develop in the North. Racial warfare broke out in Detroit in June 1943.

The “zoot-suit riots” in Los Angeles in 1943 involved attacks on young Mexican Americans.

- F. Families in Wartime

During the war, the number of marriages, births, and divorces rose markedly. The new social dynamic had long-term consequences for women.

- V. The Limits of American Ideals

- A. Internment of Japanese Americans

Many in the U.S. saw the war against Japan as a struggle against the “Japanese race.”

Life in the internment camps was bleak and demoralizing.

Despite anti-Japanese sentiment, Japanese Americans fought valiantly for the United States, as evidenced by the 442nd Regimental Combat

Team.

- B. African Americans and “Double V”

Blacks, more militant and more willing to protest, waged a “Double V” campaign. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which advocated nonviolent direct action, was founded.

- C. A Segregated Military

The U.S. military remained segregated throughout the war.

Despite a segregated military, African Americans served in the armed forces and distinguished themselves on the battlefield.

- D. America and the Holocaust

The United States did too little, too late, to greatly affect the Holocaust. At the urging of Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Roosevelt finally acted by creating the War Refugee Board in 1944.

- VI. Life in the Military

- A. Selective Service

Although the Selective Service Act provided for deferments, they did not disproportionately benefit the well-to-do.

Some 12 percent of the total population served in the military.

The interaction of people from all over the United States facilitated an exchange of ideas causing many American servicemen to become less prejudiced and less provincial.

- B. Fighting the War

Americans faced the stress of combat and struggled to cope.

- VII. Winning the War

- A. Tensions Among the Allies

The “second-front controversy” caused disagreement and tension among the Allies.

At the Teheran Conference, the Allies agreed to launch Operation Overlord and the Soviet Union agreed to enter the war against Japan once Germany was defeated.

- B. War in Europe

The second-front offensive began with the Allied landings at Normandy in June 1944. Less than a year later, Germany surrendered.

- C. Yalta Conference

The Yalta Conference of February 1945 shaped the postwar world. As the meeting convened, each of the Allies had its own agenda.

Military positions of the Allies at the time of the conference helped shape the negotiations.

- D. Harry Truman

In apparent ill health, Roosevelt defeated Thomas Dewey for a fourth term in 1944. Roosevelt died in April 1945, and Vice President Harry Truman became president.

At the Potsdam Conference, Truman, who knew the United States had achieved atomic capability, showed less deference to Stalin than had Roosevelt.

- E. War in the Pacific

Facing intense fighting, American forces “island-hopped” across the Pacific and bypassed a number of strongly held Japanese islands. The Japanese and Americans engaged in especially bloody combat on Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

- F. Bombing of Japan

Using conventional bombs, the United States bombed some sixty-six Japanese cities from March to August of 1945.

Japan began to send out peace feelers in the summer of 1945 but was unwilling to accept the “unconditional surrender” terms of the Allies.

The Japanese surrendered after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan.