

A.P. U.S. HISTORY NOTES

Chapter 38: “America in World War II”

~ 1941 – 1945 ~

- I. The Allies Trade Space for Time
 1. When Japan attacked the United States at **Pearl Harbor**, millions of infuriated Americans, especially on the west coast, instantly changed their views from isolationist to avengist.
 2. However, America, led by the wise **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, resisted such pressures, instead taking a “get Germany first” approach to the war, for if Germany were to defeat Britain before the Allies could beat Japan, there would be no stopping Hitler and his men.
 - i. In the mean time, *just enough* troops would be sent to fight Japan to keep it in check.
 3. America had the hardship of preparing for war, since it had been in isolation for the preceding decades, and the test would be whether or not it could mobilize quickly enough to stop Germany and save the world for democracy (again).
- II. The Shock of War
 1. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, national unity was strong as steel, and the few Hitler supporters in America faded away.
 2. Most of America’s ethnic groups assimilated even faster due to WWII, since in the decades before the war, few immigrants had been allowed into America.
 - i. Unfortunately, on the Pacific coast, 110,000 Japanese-Americans were taken from their homes and herded into relocation camps, where their properties and freedoms were taken away from them.
 - ii. The 1944 case of *Korematsu vs. U.S.* affirmed the constitutionality of this terrible act.
 - a. It took more than 40 years later before the U.S. admitted fault and began to make \$20,000 reparations to camp survivors.
 3. With the war, many **New Deal** programs were wiped out, such as the **Civilian Conservation Corps**, the **Works Progress Administration**, and the **National Youth Administration**.
 4. WWII was no idealistic crusade, as most Americans didn’t even know what the **Atlantic Charter** (declaration of U.S. into the war and to fight Germany first, and Japan second) was!
- III. Building the War Machine
 1. Massive military orders (over \$100 billion in 1942 alone) ended the **Great Depression** by creating demand for jobs and production.
 2. Shipbuilder **Henry J. Kaiser** was dubbed “Sir Lauchlot” because his methods of ship assembly churned out one ship ever 14 days!
 3. The **War Production Board** halted manufacture of nonessential items such as passenger cars, and when the Japanese seized vital rubber supplies in British Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, the U.S. imposed a national speed limit and gasoline rationing to save tires.
 4. Farmers rolled out more food, but the new sudden spurt in production made prices soar—a problem that was finally solved by the regulation of it by the **Office of Price Administration**.
 5. While labor unions pledged not to strike during the war, some did anyway.
 - i. The **United Mine Workers** was one such group and was led by **John L. Lewis**.
 - ii. In June 1943, Congress passed the **Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act**, which let the federal government seize and operate industries threatened by or under strikes.
 - iii. Fortunately, strikes accounted for less than 1% of total working hours of the U.S. wartime laboring force.
- IV. Manpower and Womanpower
 1. The armed forces had nearly 15 million men and 216,000 women, and some of these “women in arms” included the **WAACS** (army), the **WAVES** (navy), and **SPARS** (coast guard).

2. Because of the national draft that plucked men (and women) from their homes and into the military, there weren't enough workers, so the **Bracero Program** brought Mexican workers to America to work.
3. With the men in the military, women took up jobs in the workplace, symbolized by "**Rosie the Riveter**," and upon war's end, they did not return to their homes as in **World War I**.
 - i. It must be noted that the female revolution into the work force was not as great as commonly exaggerated, since in other nations, more women were pressed into factories, etc... than in America, and at the end of the war, 2/3 of the women *did* return home; the servicemen that came home to them helped produce a **baby boom** that is still being felt today.

V. Wartime Migrations

1. The war also forced many people to move to new places, and many young folks went to and saw new cities far from home.
2. F.D.R. used the war as an excuse to pump lots of money into the stagnant South to revitalize it, helping to start the blossoming of the "**Sunbelt**."
 - i. Still, some 1.6 million blacks left the South for better places, and explosive tensions developed over black housing, employment, and segregation facilities.
 - ii. **A. Philip Randolph**, leader of the **Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters**, threatened a "Negro March to Washington" in 1941 to get better rights and treatment.
3. The president also established the **Fair Employment Practices Commission** to discourage racism and oppression in the workplace, and while Blacks in the army still suffered degrading discrimination (i.e. separate blood banks), they still used the war as a rallying cry against dictators abroad and racism at home—overall gaining power and strength.
 - i. Membership to the **NAACP** passed the half-million mark, and a new organization, the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**, was founded in 1942.
4. In 1944, the mechanical cotton picker made the need for muscle nonexistent, so blacks that used to pick cotton could now leave, since they were no longer needed.
 - i. They left the South and took up residence in urban areas.
5. Native Americans also left their reservations during the war, finding work in the cities or joining the army.
 - i. Some 25,000 Native Americans were in the army, and the Navajo and Comanches were "code talkers," relaying military orders in the own language—a "code" that was never broken by the **Axis Powers**.
6. Such sudden "rubbing of the races" did spark riots and cause tension, such as the 1943 attack on some Mexican-American navy men in Los Angeles and the Detroit race riot (occurring in the same year) that killed 25 blacks and 9 whites.

VI. Holding the Home Front

1. America was the only country to emerge after the war relatively unscathed, and in fact, it was better off after the war than before.
 - i. The gross national product more than doubled, as did corporate profits.
 - ii. In fact, when the war ended and price controls were lifted, inflation shot up.
2. It was the plethora of spending during WWII that lifted America from its Great Depression.
 - i. The wartime bill amounted to more than \$330 billion—more than the combined costs of all the previous American wars together.
 - ii. While income tax was expanded to make four times as many people pay as before, most of the payments were borrowed, making the national debt soar from \$49 billion to \$259 billion (war cost as much as \$10 million per hour at one point).

VII. The Rising Sun in the Pacific

1. The Japanese overran the lands that they descended upon, winning more land with less losses than ever before and conquering **Guam, Wake, the Philippines, Hong Kong, British**

- Malaya, Burma** (in the process cutting the famed **Burma Road**), the Dutch East Indies, and even pushed into **China**.
2. When the Japanese took over the Philippines, U.S. General **Douglas MacArthur** had to sneak out of the place, but he vowed to return to liberate the islands; he went to Australia.
 3. After the fighters in the Philippines surrendered, they were forced to make the infamous 85-mile **Bataan death march**.
 - i. On May 6, 1942, the island fortress of **Corregidor**, in **Manila Harbor**, surrendered.
- VIII. Japans High Tide at Midway
1. Japanese onrush was finally checked in the **Coral Sea**, where American and Australian forces check them, and when the Japanese tried to seize **Midway Island**, they were forced back by U.S. Admiral **Chester W. Nimitz** during fierce fighting from June 3-6, 1942.
 - i. Admiral **Raymond A. Spruance** also helped maneuver the fleet around to win, and this victory marked the turning point in the war in the Pacific.
 - ii. No longer would the Japanese take any more land, as the U.S. began a process called “**island hopping**,” where the **Allies** would bypass heavily fortified islands, take over neighboring islands, and starve the resistant forces to death with lack of supplies and constant bombing saturation, to push back the Japanese.
 2. Also, the Japanese had taken over some islands in the Alaskan chain, the **Aleutians**.
- IX. American Leapfrogging Toward Tokyo
1. Americans won at **Guadalcanal** in August 1942 and then got **New Guinea** by August 1944.
 2. By island hopping, the U.S. also retook the Aleutian Islands of **Attu** and **Kiska** in August of 1943, and in November of that year, “**bloody Tarawa**” and **Makin**, members of the **Gilbert Islands**, fell to the Allies.
 3. In January and February of 1944, the **Marshall Islands** fell to the U.S.
 4. The assault on the **Marianas** (including Guam) began on June 19, 1944, and with superior planes such as the “**Hellcat**” fighter jet and a U.S. victory the next day in the **Battle of the Philippine Sea**, the U.S. rolled on, taking the islands and beginning around-the-clock bombing raids over Tokyo and other parts of mainland Japan.
- X. The Allied Halting of Hitler
1. The U.S. also at first had trouble against Germany, as its U-boats proved very effective, but the breaking of the Germans’ “**enigma**” code helped pinpoint those subs better.
 - i. It wasn’t until war’s end that the true threat of the German submarines was known, as it was discovered that Hitler had been about to unleash a new U-boat that could remain underwater indefinitely and cruise at 17 knots underwater.
 2. In May 1942, the British launched a massive raid on **Cologne**, France, and in August, the U.S. air force joined them.
 - i. The Germans, led by the “Desert Fox” **Marshall Edwin Rommel**, were driven to Egypt, dangerously close to the **Suez Canal**, but late in October 1942, British General **Bernard Montgomery** defeated him at **El Alamein**, west of **Cairo**.
 3. On the Soviet front, the Russians launched a new, blistering counteroffensive, regaining about 2/3 of the land they had lost before a year later.
- XI. The North African Second Front
1. The Soviets had begged the Allie to open up a second front against Hitler, since Soviet forces were dying by the millions (20 million by war’s end), and the Americans were eager to comply, but the British, remembering WWI, were reluctant.
 - i. Instead of a frontal European assault, the British devised an invasion through North Africa, so that the Allies could cut Hitler’s forces through the “soft underbelly” of the Mediterranean Sea.
 2. Thus, a secret attack was coordinated and executed by the **Dwight D. Eisenhower**-led troops, as they defeated the French troops, but upon meeting the real German soldiers, Americans were set back at **Kasserine Pass**.

- i. This campaign wasn't really successful, but important lessons were learned.
- XII. The Rough Road to Rome
 1. At the **Casablanca Conference**, Franklin Roosevelt and **Winston Churchill** met and agreed on the term of "unconditional surrender."
 2. The Allies found bitter resistance in Italy, as **Sicily** fell in August 1943 after bitter resistance.
 - i. Italian dictator **Mussolini** was deposed, and a new government was set up.
 - a. Two years later, he and his mistress were lynched and killed.
 - ii. Germany didn't leave Italy, though, and for many months, more fighting and stalemates occurred, especially at **Monte Cassino**, where Germans were holed up.
 3. The Allies finally took **Rome** on June 4, 1944, and it wasn't until May 2, 1945, that Axis troops in Italy finally surrendered.
 4. Though long and tiring, the Italian invasion *did* open up Europe, divert some of Hitler's men from the Soviet front, and get Italy to fall.
- XIII. Eisenhower's D-Day Invasion of France
 1. At the **Tehran Conference**, the Big Three (Wilson, Churchill, and **Josef Stalin**, leader of Russia) met and agreed that the Soviets and Allies would launch simultaneous attacks.
 2. The Allies began for a gigantic cross-channel invasion, and command of the whole operation was entrusted to General Eisenhower.
 - i. Meanwhile, MacArthur received a fake army to use as a ruse to Germany.
 3. The place to take was **French Normandy**, and on June 6, 1944, **D-Day** began, and after heavy resistance, Allied troops, some led by General **George S. Patton**, finally clawed their way onto land, across the jungle, and deeper into France.
 - i. With the help of the "French underground," Paris was freed in August 1944.
- XIV. FDR: The Fourth-Termite of 1944
 1. Republicans nominated **Thomas E. Dewey**, a young, liberal governor of New York, and paired him with isolationist **John W. Bricker** of Ohio.
 2. FDR was the Democratic lock, but because of his age, the vice presidential candidate was carefully chosen to be **Harry S. Truman**, who won over **Henry A. Wallace**—an ill-balanced and unpredictable liberal.
- XV. Roosevelt Defeats Dewey
 1. Dewey went on a rampaging campaign offensive while FDR, stuck with WWII problems, could not go out much, so the new **Political Action Committee of the CIO**, which was organized to get around the law banning direct use of union funds for political purposes.
 2. In the end, Roosevelt stomped over Dewey, 432 to 99, the fourth term thing wasn't even that big of a deal, since the precedence had already been broken three years before.
 3. FDR won because the war was going well, and people wanted to stick with him.
- XVI. The Last Days of Hitler
 1. On the run and losing, Hitler concentrated his forces and threw them in the **Ardennes forest** on December 16, 1944, starting the **Battle of "the Bulge"** and nearly succeeding in his gamble, but the ten-day penetration was finally stopped by the 101st Airborne Division that had stood firm at the vital bastion of **Bastogne**, which was commanded by Brigadier General **A.C. McAuliffe**.
 2. In March 1945, the Americans reached the **Rhine River** of Germany, and then pushed toward the river **Elbe**, and from there, joining Soviet troops, they marched toward Berlin.
 3. Upon entering Germany, the Allies were horrified to find the concentration camps where millions of Jews and other undesirables had been slaughtered in genocide.
 - i. Adolph Hitler, knowing that he had lost, committed suicide in his bunker on April 30, 1945.
 4. Meanwhile, in America, FDR died from a massive cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945.
 5. May 7, 1945 was the date of the official German surrender, and the next day was officially proclaimed **V-E Day** (Victory in Europe Day).

XVII. Japan Dies Hard

1. American submarines were ruining Japan's fleet, and attacks such as the March 9-10, 1945, firebomb raid on Tokyo that killed over 83,000 people were wearing Japan out.
2. On October 20, 1944, General MacArthur finally "returned" to the Philippines.
 - i. However, he didn't retake Manila until March 1945.
3. The last great naval battle at **Leyte Gulf** was lost by Japan, terminating its sea power status.
4. In March 1945, **Iwo Jima** was captured; this 25-day assault left over 4000 Americans dead.
5. **Okinawa** was won after fighting from April to June of 1945, and was captured at the cost of 50,000 American lives.
6. Japanese "kamikaze" pilots, for the sake of their god-emperor, sank many ships.

XVIII. Atomic Awfulness

1. At the **Potsdam Conference**, the Allies issued an ultimatum: surrender or be destroyed.
2. The first **atomic bomb** had been tested on July 16, 1945, near **Alamogordo**, New Mexico, and when Japan refused to surrender, Americans dropped A-bombs onto **Hiroshima** (on August 6, 1945), killing 180,000 and **Nagasaki** (on August 9, 1945), killing 80,000.
3. On August 8, 1945, the Soviets declared war on Japan, just as promised, and two days later, on August 10, Japan sued for peace on one condition: that the emperor **Hirohito** be allowed to remain on the Japanese throne.
 - i. Despite the "unconditional surrender" clause, the Allies accepted.
4. The formal end came on September 2, 1945, on the battleship *Missouri*.

XIX. The Allies Triumphant

1. America suffered 1 million casualties, but the number killed by disease and infections was very low, thanks to new miracle drugs like **penicillin**, but otherwise had suffered little losses (two Japanese attacks on California and Oregon that were rather harmless).
2. This was America's best-fought war, despite the fact that the U.S. began preparing later than usual.
 - i. This was partly thanks to the excellent U.S. generals and admirals, and the leaders.
3. Industry also rose to the challenge, putting out a phenomenal amount of goods, proving **Hermann Goering**, a Nazi leader who had scorned America's lack of manufacturing skills, wrong.
4. We won!!!