

Chapter 35: The Cold War Begins (1945-1952)

Synopsis

- The American population was at 140 million by the end of WWII
- People still worried about the Great Depression because it was still recent and relevant
- Tensions with the Soviet Union threatened a new international conflict

Truman: The “Gutty” Man from Missouri

- He was considered somewhat of an average man
 - He didn’t have a college education, “had farmed, served as an artillery officer in France during WWI, and failed as a haberdasher”
 - He had a little political and judicial experience in Missouri and Kansas City
- Truman began handling postwar problems modestly but became more cocky as time went on
 - He kept many close political friends with him like Grant did who were may have been corrupt and stayed loyal to them, thus tarnishing his reputation with theirs
 - He was very stubborn and refused to change his mind about his decisions
- However, Truman still “had down-home authenticity, few pretensions, rock-solid probity, and ... moxie” — i.e., he was very righteous and confronted problems head on

American and National Identity: Truman was a pretty ordinary man and president. Nothing about him or the beginning of his presidency was out of the ordinary. He filled in the role of the late president FDR like six other vice presidents before him. He had led ordinary jobs such as farming and fighting in the military and had a medium education. He was honest and had a high probity like many other presidents such as Lincoln or Wilson. He was loyal to his political friends from the “Missouri Gang,” like Grant had been with his close friends. He was stubborn like Theodore Roosevelt as well. He was not extremely radical or conservative, running the path of most presidents. He was a very ordinary man with no major scandals or other negative mark, and the people probably felt that he represented them well. This was a part of American identity back to the second party systems, with people that were previously very ordinary, such as poor soldier-turned-hero Andrew Jackson, finding great popularity because of the greater relatability the poor majority felt with them.

Yalta: Bargain or Betrayal?

- Many details remained unclear after the Tehran Conference between the U.S. and Russia, especially the division of the conquered lands after the war
- The Yalta Conference (February 1945) helped finalize details about the end of WWII and post-war governments
 - The leaders talked strategy about ending the last of German occupation
 - The leaders agreed upon the occupation of Germany after the war
 - The leaders agreed upon a new representative government with free elections in Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria after the war
 - However, the Soviet Union broke this promise after the war
 - The leaders decided to create a new peacekeeping international organization, the United Nations (to replace the weak League of Nations)

- The leaders discussed the eastern stage of the war regarding Japan
 - The U.S. wanted to minimize losses in the far East after losing many soldiers in the bloody battles of Okinawa and Iwo Jima
 - Stalin agreed to attack Japan three months after Germany's defeat, in return gaining some bargain lands from Manchuria and from Japan
 - The agreement to sell out Manchuria undermined Chiang Kai-shek's popularity and power in China, leading to his overthrow by the Communist party soon after the war
- The Yalta conference was not so much an overall peace agreement as it was a show of the nations' "general intentions"

The United States and the Soviet Union

- The U.S. and Russia had a long history of having tense relations with one another
 - Russian communism and American capitalism were always at odds with one another
 - As a result, the U.S. didn't recognize the Bolshevik government for many years
 - Both nations tried to impose their respective philosophies on other nations
 - The British and U.S. had delayed opening a second front to help out Russia's anti-Germany efforts
 - The U.S. denied a lend-lease bill to Russia while allowing one with Britain the next year
 - Russia was more focused on a Russian-friendly sphere of influence in Eastern Europe; the U.S. wanted more of a global society without dedicated spheres
- While the alliance between the U.S. and Russia was necessary during WWII to survive against Germany, it was not a friendly relation in peacetime
 - The tense standoff was known as the Cold War and lasted for about 45 years
 - It affected not only the U.S. and Russia, but most other nations as well

Shaping the Postwar World

- The Bretton Woods Conference (1944) established a stable international banking system to prevent a global financial crisis like that before WWII
 - It established the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to regulate currency exchange rates and the World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) to "promote economic growth in war-ravaged and underdeveloped areas"
- The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, 1947) was founded to lower tariff rates between member nations
- The U.S. was active in creating and participating in these new economic international organizations
 - This was very different than pre-war isolationist stance, because now the U.S. had a large influence over the world as a powerful victor of WWII
- The UN was different from its predecessor, the League of Nations
 - The US had a large role in this new organization
 - It gave the Big Five Nations (the main victors of the war: USSR, Britain, US, France, China) the right to veto

- This encouraged cooperation by only passing policies that all major world powers agreed to
- The UN...
 - Had its headquarters in NYC
 - Helped set up Israel as a Jewish state
 - Created UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization), the FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization), and WHO (World Health Organization) as early projects to improve people's lives globally
 - Said no to the outlawing of nuclear weapons because of a Russian veto
 - The Russians and Americans needed that they needed nukes to protect themselves in case other nations had them; they felt that they could responsibly wield them for self-defense

America in the World: The U.S. had a large say in the postwar agreements following WWII, unlike those following WWI. After WWI, Wilson had negotiated in the Treaty of Versailles to achieve many idealistic goals for the western democratic nations, such as harsh reparations from Germany and the creation of the League of Nations. However, the U.S. decided to uphold their isolationist stance rather than agree to the interventionist Treaty of Versailles policies. After WWII, however, the U.S. decided to have a large role in creating international regulating agencies to help recover after the war. This included the creation of the UN and its sub-organizations such as UNESCO, the FAO, and the WHO. It also helped establish economic stabilizing organizations such as the IMF and GATT, which helped remove protectionist measures that threw the U.S. and other nations into the downwards economic spiral of the Great Depression. Politically, they also established grounds for the democratic governance of conquered German lands following the war, such as Poland and Bulgaria. The exception to its interventionist stance was its relationship with Russia: relations became more tense as being allied with the Soviets was not necessary anymore for survival and their strong communism clashed with the U.S.'s capitalism.

The Problem of Germany

- The Allies agreed that German leaders needed to be punished if found guilty
 - The Nuremberg war crimes trial (1945-6) tried 22 top German officials for being inhumane in war and going against international treaties
 - Over half of the tried were hanged, and many were given long jail sentences
 - Many other smaller court trials for lesser German officials continued for a longer time
- The Allies had split intentions about Germany
 - Some Americans wanted to de-industrialize it, citing its pre-war industrial strength as the main source of its aggression and power
 - The Soviets wanted to take large reparations (money to repay for the wrongs done in war) from the Germans to help rebuild their nation
 - Neither this nor de-industrialization would help Europe in the long run; doing so would only cause great bitterness in Germany like the harsh punishments had after WWI
- Germany was divided into military occupation zones

- A section was given to each of the Big Four (France, U.S., Britain, USSR [the western nations of the Big Five])
- The western nations promoted the idea of a reunited Germany, while the USSR wanted to keep its part of Germany to itself (because of USSR intention, see above)
 - Eventually West Germany would separate from East Germany
- The USSR clung onto many Eastern European nations under its sphere of influence
 - This was often called the “iron curtain” of the Soviets, one with great secrecy and with totalitarian strength
 - This included eastern Germany, Poland, Hungary — these states under the iron curtain were termed “satellite” states
- Berlin was also split between the Big Four but was in the USSR section of Germany
 - The USSR cut off supplies to Berlin because of policy arguments over Germany with the other Allied nations
 - The U.S. responded with the Berlin airlift, a large movement to supply the cut-off Berlinians via plane, which eventually rendered the USSR blockade useless and led to the blockade’s end

Cold War Deepens

- Stalin broke an agreement to remove troops from Iran in order to try to get some oil stakes in Iran
 - Truman protested this action and Stalin backed down
- Truman became tired of constantly arguing with the Soviets and decided to keep them separate with the containment doctrine (1947)
 - This meant that the U.S. would try to contain the USSR and its ideologies to its own space, and not to allow communism and its ideologies spread to the U.S. or other nations
 - Truman delivered the Truman Doctrine (1947) declaring that the U.S. should be obligated to help any free people who are at risk to be suppressed by foreign military power or ideologies
 - Specifically, he wanted to send money to Greece and Turkey to resist the Soviets’ increasing influence on those nations to prevent them from becoming communist
- Many of the western European nations were suffering from famine and economic chaos from the war
 - Americans were worried that communism would take hold of these countries because of these problems
 - The Marshall Plan (1947) was an economic plan to provide aid to European nations suffering from these post-war symptoms
 - It involved the spending of \$12.5 billion in 16 nations
 - This caused the end of the communist parties in Italy and France
- Truman supported the creation of Israel
 - This was because of the high humanitarian toll on the Jewish people

- However, there was strong opposition from the Arab nations in the area who opposed having their land taken by a new nation

America Begins to Rearm

- The National Security Act (1947) was passed by Congress that revamped the U.S. military
 - It created the Pentagon and made it the center of U.S. defense
 - It created a new secretary of defense and a group of military leaders (one for the army, navy, and air force) forming the Joint Chiefs of Staff
 - It established the National Security Council (NSC) as an advising committee and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) for foreign intelligence
- The military draft created under the Selective Service System drafted millions of young men
- Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the U.S. signed a defense treaty called the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
 - This supported the idea of American containment of the USSR by ganging up in protection against it

Politics and Power: The issue of what to do with Germany, the aggressor, became a political power struggle between the Allied powers. Russia wanted much of it and much reparations from it to repay, while the western democratic nations sought to unify Germany and help it to recover. However, once the USSR tightened its grip of Eastern Germany (especially Berlin) and some other eastern European nations, the tension between the U.S. and the USSR greatly increased. This caused the U.S. to call on the containment policy to “contain” the Soviets and their communist ideology from spreading to the rest of the world. This included the Truman doctrine and the Marshall Plan, which benefitted the democratic nations by stimulating economic recovery and offering help in times of suppression, but was exclusive of the USSR. The politics of the situation became even more tense when the U.S. began to rearm itself as if it were in wartime, creating another draft and several security agencies, presumably to protect against possible Soviet aggression. All of these actions involved the increased power of the Soviets (e.g., addition of nations under its “iron curtain”) and the democratic nations (e.g., containment doctrine, Marshall Plan, rearmament).

Reconstruction and Revolution in Asia

- MacArthur led the reconstruction in Japan
 - There was a trial of Japanese officers similar to the Nuremberg trials in Germany
 - The Japanese cooperated because they knew that better cooperation meant a quicker and smoother occupation
 - New policies were adopted that included “renouncing militarism, providing for women’s equality, and introducing Western-style democratic government”
- In China, the communists took over due to the poor leadership of the Nationalists during WWII
 - This was considered one of the U.S.’s worst losses during the Cold War, because so many people fell under the new communist rule in China
 - Communist Mao Zedong won over Nationalist Jiang Jieshi
- The Soviets developed a nuclear bomb in 1949

- This prompted Truman to seek to outpace their development by engineering a more powerful “H-bomb” — this development was successful
 - The creation of such a destructive weapon created a state of “mutual terror” that prevented either side from detonating to prevent total global catastrophe

The Korean Volcano Erupts

- The Soviets took over the part of Korea north of the 38th parallel as part of the agreements near the end of WWII, and the Americans occupied the southern part
 - Although they asked for a unified Korea, Korea ended up being split into a communist north and a capitalist southern part
 - When the Soviets and American forces had both been withdrawn in 1949, North Koreans attacked South Koreans and almost wiped them out
- Truman had issued the National Security Council Memorandum Number 68 (NSC-68) stating that the U.S. quadruple its defense spending
 - The need to protect South Korea from communism justified this additional spending (i.e., the Truman Doctrine)
- The U.S. declared North Korea as an aggressor in the Korean War and called on them to help restore peace in the region
 - Truman sent U.S. army and navy forces to fight in the Korean War, along with some of MacArthur’s troops in Japan

The Military Seesaw in Korea

- The American assault by MacArthur proved successful and even went beyond the 38th parallel
 - However, they pushed too far north and irritated the Chinese, who launched a counterattack that pushed the Americans and South Koreans back to the 38th parallel
 - MacArthur wanted retaliation against the Chinese and began to criticize the president for not doing more to try to win the war
 - MacArthur was thus removed from command of the war because of his insubordination
 - Talks of truce began but nothing too groundbreaking occurred until the war ended two years later

America in the World: The Korean War was the next major military conflict by the Americans. Like all of its other military conflicts except for the Civil War and the Revolutionary War, it was not fought on U.S. turf, instead fighting on the behalf of another nation. In this case it was fighting for the democratic South Koreans against the suppressive communist North Korean aggressors because the Truman Doctrine pledged U.S. aid against any nation succumbing to communist pressure. This is similar to the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary that prompted most of the other U.S. foreign wars, such as the Spanish-American War. This continued a trend of America fighting for other nations for an idealistic cause; for the Monroe Doctrine, it was for the purity of the Americas free from European intervention, and in the Korean War it was for the sake of protecting democracy much like how the U.S. aided Britain in WWII largely to protect its democracy from falling to the totalitarianism of the Axis powers. However, despite initial successes, the Korean War was costly and ended in a stalemate,

weakening the U.S.'s reputation as being such a powerful military power as it had shown in WWII with its powerful attacks in Europe and East Asia.

The Cold War Home Front

- A new sense of anti-communism was very strong in the U.S.
 - Many Americans worried that Soviet spies were in the American government and had to be weeded out
 - Truman had the attorney general draft up a list of unloyal, supposedly communist organizations, and the Loyalty Review Board investigated 3,000,000 federal employees
 - Loyalty oaths were common in local government positions
 - The House of Representatives established the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) “to investigate ‘subversion’” — i.e., to prosecute apparent communists
 - Richard Nixon was a member of this and
 - Unfortunately, most types of social change — e.g., “declining religious sentiment, increased sexual freedom, and agitation for civil rights” — could be condemned as communist, and therefore most liberal social reform stopped during this time period
 - One major anti-red person was Joseph R. McCarthy, who made ludicrous claims of communist Congressman — shows anti-communist hysteria but little truth
 - His paranoid philosophy is dubbed McCarthyism, which affected many Americans during the Cold War
 - Eventually he ended up criticizing the army of being communist in the Army-McCarthy hearings, which resulted in him losing his position as a senator
- Some people viewed the Cold War as a theological war, between the religious west and the non-religious communists
 - The fear of non-religion prompted the addition of “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance in 1945
- Social change for civil rights were sometimes stopped because they were condemned as communist, but sometimes they were promoted to distinguish the U.S. from totalitarian and restricting Russia
 - For example, the Executive Order 9981 by Truman desegregated the U.S. military

Postwar Economic Activities

- After the war there was great economic insecurity in the U.S.
 - Joblessness went up and marriages and babies went down
 - Many soldiers came home to not have a job and income anymore
- The Taft-Hartley Act (1947) was passed by a majority-Republican Congress (but not approved by Democrat Truman)
 - This prevented the “closed shop” (labor-union-only factories) and made unions liable for damages they produce
- Operation Dixie by the CIO aimed to unionize southern laborers
 - However, it failed to “overcome white workers’ lingering fears of racial mixing”
- The Democrats created the Employment Act of 1946 to prevent another economic depression

- It was “to promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power” through the government’s policies
- The GI Bill (Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944) gave soldiers a low weekly wage and money to go to school
 - Eight million veterans went to school for free by this bill

Culture and Society: Society was greatly influenced by the U.S.’s foreign policy. (This was as opposed to before the WWII era, when the U.S. was greatly isolated and was influenced mostly by internal affairs). Many Americans became intensely anti-communist, with some officials such as McCarthy becoming paranoid and unreasonably labeling people to be investigated for being communist. As a result, many millions of people investigated, and thousands lost their jobs. Many millions of Americans became very suspicious of potential spies. A consequence of this was that social reform was also dampened because of its potential link to communism. This retarded movements for more equal rights, especially in terms of labor unions and civil rights.

Democratic Divisions in 1948

- Republicans chose Thomas E. Dewey as their presidential nominee for the election of 1948
 - They believed they would easily win over Truman, who had left taxes and prices high after the war
- The Democrats nominated Truman to be president again
 - Some Southerners nominated J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina because they didn’t like Truman’s support for blacks, especially the desegregation of the military
- The vice president Henry A. Wallace also ran for president in the Progressive Party
- Truman won the presidential election by a large margin, and the Democrats regained majority in Congress
 - One of Truman’s first acts of his second term was to aid developing nations in Latin America
 - Truman also quickly initiated the Fair Deal (1949) domestic program that “called for improved housing, full employment, national health insurance, a higher minimum wage, better farm price supports, new TVAs, and an extension of Social Security”
 - However, most of this was countered by Republicans

The Long Economic Boom, 1950-1970

- Gross national product (GNP) rose steadily and quickly from 1948 to 1970
 - By 1970, Americans formed 6% of the world’s population but had 40% of the world’s wealth
 - New prosperity allowed for the success of the civil rights movement, of new welfare programs, and of confidence in leadership (necessary in the Cold War)
- Women greatly benefitted from new prosperity
 - Many of the new jobs that came out of this era went to women, and women formed a half of the labor force 50 years later (vs. a quarter during WWII)
 - They had acceptable roles both in the home and outside

The Roots of Postwar Prosperity

- The U.S. had used WWII to boost its industrial power
- However, the great prosperity depended on a “colossal military budget” similar to that during WWII (i.e., a huge consumption and production of goods) — might be hard to maintain
- Cheap energy also allowed for the economic boom to happen
 - America had a large stake in the abundant and cheap Middle Eastern oil reserves
 - Americans’ consumption of oil and electrical power greatly increased
- Productivity greatly increased (3% increase)
 - Especially true in agriculture
 - New machinery and fertilizers allowed farmers to feed many more people per farmer
- 90% of school-age children were in school (up from ~50% in 1900)

Work, Exchange, and Technology: There was a large economic boom after the war. This was caused mostly by the huge wartime economy that persisted through the post-war years and the large desire to spend by American consumers. Another key part to the economic boom was the increase in work productivity with the mechanization of some jobs such as agriculture and the making cheaper of important commodities like electricity. The education sector also got busy as a higher percentage than ever of children went to school. Overall, the entire workforce (and student-force) got busy to their occupations, which increased spending power and spending in the long run, stimulating a good economy. This showed the effectiveness of a spending economy, as opposed to the lack of spending during the hard times of the Great Depression that worsened problems worse by creating a stagnant economy.

The Smiling Sunbelt

- There was a new increased mobility with the American people
 - After 1945, 30 million people moved house per year
 - Households became less well-established and family relationships weakened
- The Sunbelt region greatly grew in population
 - This included fifteen states “stretching in a smiling crescent from Virginia through Florida and Texas to Arizona and California”
 - People came to these regions “in search of jobs, a better climate, and lower taxes”
 - Jobs were abundant here, especially ones involving machinery and manufacturing
 - A lot of federal funding went into the Sunbelt states
- The popularity of the Sunbelt broke the trend of political dominance from the Northeast
 - All of the presidents from 1964 to 2008 came from the Sunbelt

The Rush to the Suburbs

- Most (white) people moved away from the cities and into the suburbs
 - This was encouraged by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veteran’s Administration (VA) that gave home-loan guarantees that made buying a home more attractive than a city apartment
- Increase in suburb development led to construction boom

- “Levittowns” were large suburban planning projects in which an entire neighborhood was constructed at once — like mass-producing houses
- Many blacks and poorer people moved to the cities to the vacancies that the migrating whites had left
- There was some degree of racial discrimination by the government in housing loans, which hurt racial tensions and the blacks’ economic standings

Migration and Settlement: Most Americans tended to move out of the urban areas into more suburban areas. This was in contrast to the earlier shift towards the cities from rural areas that had been happening since the Industrial Revolution, and was a result of the greater prosperity of Americans, who could now afford to move to larger homes rather than city apartments. This was further encouraged by the government, whose governmental programs such as the FHA and the VA helped civilians and veterans pay off home loans. This move to the suburbs triggered an entire industrial process of huge building projects that further stimulated the economy. Furthermore, the new empty apartments were filled by poorer African Americans who sought to work in the industrial processes of the cities, especially in the new boom towns of the Sunbelt: this also improved the economy by moving labor away from the improved machinery of the farms (which didn’t require so much labor anymore) and to the factories. Overall, the migration was caused by and caused an economic boom, a virtuous cycle of creating more jobs and cheaper homes.

The Postwar Baby Boom

- There was a baby boom — a great increase in the rate of births — from 1945-1960
 - More than 50 million new Americans were born between the end of the war and 1960
 - This ended with a declining birthrate beginning in 1957
 - This created a swell of jobs and products aimed at children of a certain age
 - E.g., more teachers and clothesmakers were necessary for the huge numbers of people in that one boom of people, and then the industries declined once the wave of people from the baby boom grew older

Culture and Society: The increased prosperity of Americans created a new “industry” — baby-making. This in turn triggered a swell of age-targeted businesses that flourished as the baby boomers reached a certain age. This increase in American population not only helped repopulate America after decreases in birthrates following the Depression and losses of American lives during the war, but it also raised morale by showing that Americans were recovering and also helped stimulate the economy by giving markets more consumers. Although this was an influx of babies that could not last forever, it still represented a cultural aim to heal the nation and restore its lost members.