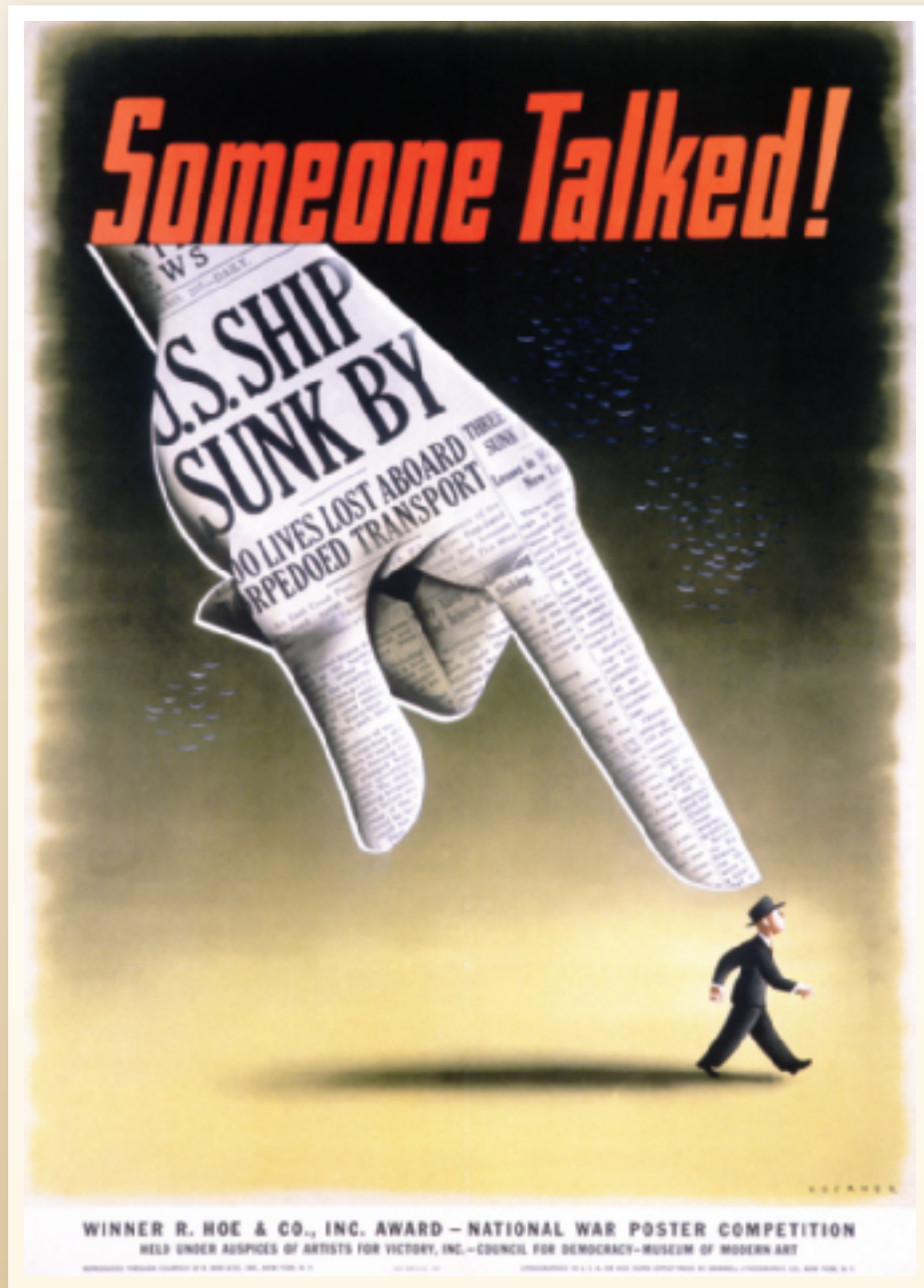


CHAPTER 26

AMERICA IN A WORLD AT WAR



"SOMEONE TALKED" This World War II poster, created by the graphic artist Henry Koerner, was one of many stern reminders to Americans from the government of the dangers of disclosing military secrets. In particular, wartime leaders were worried about soldiers and their families talking loosely about troop and ship locations (hence the title of another such poster: "Loose Lips Sink Ships"). (K. J. Historical/Corbis)

THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR thrust the United States into the greatest and most terrible war in the history of humanity. World War I had cost many lives and had destroyed centuries-old European social and political institutions. But World War II created even greater carnage and horror in Europe and in much of the rest of the globe. In the end, it changed the world as profoundly as any event of the twentieth century, perhaps of any century.

For the United States, World War II was a shorter and less costly conflict than it was for the other principal combatant nations. America did not enter the war until it had already been in progress for two years in Europe and at least seven years in Asia. Except for the 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, no battles were fought on American soil. Although more than 300,000 Americans died in World War II, many more than had died in World War I, casualties were still far fewer than for the other major participants in the war (Russia, Germany, Italy, Britain, and Japan).

In other ways, however, the United States fought a larger war than any other nation. It joined Britain, Russia, and other allies in the great struggle against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in Europe and North Africa, and ultimately played a decisive role in securing the victory of that effort. Simultaneously, the United States was fighting one of the greatest naval wars in history as well as a series of land campaigns against the Japanese Empire, and was doing so with only limited assistance from other nations. Only a few years before, the United States had possessed one of the smallest militaries in the world. It emerged during World War II as the most powerful military nation in history—a role that it has continued to play ever since. The war, in short, profoundly transformed America's relationship to the rest of the world.

The war also changed America at home—its society, its politics, and its image of itself. Except for the combatants themselves, most Americans experienced the war at a remove of several thousand miles. They endured no bombing, no invasion, no massive dislocations, no serious material shortages. Veterans returning home in 1945 and 1946 found a country that looked very much like the one they had left—something that clearly could not be said of veterans returning home to Britain, France, Germany, Russia, or Japan.

But World War II did transform the United States in profound, if not always readily visible, ways. As the poet Archibald MacLeish said in 1943: "The great majority of the American people understand very well that this war is not a war only, but an end and a beginning—an end to things known and a beginning of things unknown. We have smelled the wind in the streets that changes weather. We know that whatever the world will be when the war ends, the world will be different." The story of American involvement in the war is not just the story of how the military forces and the industrial might of the United States helped defeat Germany, Italy, and Japan. It is also the story of the creation of a new world, both abroad and at home.

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

- 1941
 - ▶ A. Philip Randolph proposes march on Washington
 - ▶ Roosevelt establishes Fair Employment Practices Commission
 - ▶ Manhattan Project begins
- 1942
 - ▶ Japanese capture Philippines
 - ▶ Battle of Midway
 - ▶ North Africa campaign begins
 - ▶ News of Holocaust reaches United States
 - ▶ War Production Board created
 - ▶ Japanese Americans interned
 - ▶ Temporary Mexican workers allowed entry to U.S.
 - ▶ Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded
- 1943
 - ▶ Americans capture Guadalcanal
 - ▶ Soviets defeat Germans at Stalingrad
 - ▶ Allies launch invasion of Italy
 - ▶ Smith-Connally Act passed
 - ▶ Race riot breaks out in Detroit
 - ▶ Sailors battle Mexican Americans in "zoot suit" riots in Los Angeles
 - ▶ Chinese Exclusion Act repealed
- 1944
 - ▶ Allies invade Normandy
 - ▶ Roosevelt reelected president
 - ▶ Americans recapture Philippines
 - ▶ Demonstrators force restaurant in Washington, D.C., to desegregate
- 1945
 - ▶ Roosevelt dies; Truman becomes president
 - ▶ Hitler kills himself
 - ▶ Allies capture Berlin
 - ▶ Germany surrenders
 - ▶ Americans capture Okinawa
 - ▶ Atomic bomb tested in New Mexico
 - ▶ United States drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
 - ▶ Japan surrenders

WAR ON TWO FRONTS

Whatever political disagreements and social tensions may have existed among the American people during

America Unified

World War II, there was striking unity of opinion about the conflict itself—“a unity,” as one member of Congress proclaimed shortly after Pearl Harbor, “never before witnessed in this country.” America’s unity and confidence were severely tested in the first, troubled months of 1942. Despite the impressive display of patriotism and the dramatic flurry of activity, the war was going very badly. Britain appeared ready to collapse. The Soviet Union was staggering. One after another, Allied strongholds in the Pacific were falling to the forces of Japan. The first task facing the United States, therefore, was less to achieve victory than to stave off defeat.

Containing the Japanese

Ten hours after the strike at Pearl Harbor, Japanese airplanes attacked the American airfields at Manila in the Philippines, destroying much of America’s remaining air power in the Pacific. Three days later Guam, an American possession, fell to Japan; then Wake Island and the British colony Hong Kong. The great British fortress of Singapore surrendered in February 1942, the Dutch East Indies in March, Burma in April. In the Philippines, exhausted Filipino and American troops gave up their defense of the islands on May 6.

American strategists planned two broad offensives to turn the tide against the Japanese. One, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur, would move north from Australia, through New Guinea, and eventually back to the Philippines. The other, under Admiral Chester Nimitz, would move west from Hawaii toward major Japanese island outposts in the central Pacific. Ultimately, the two offensives would come together to invade Japan itself.

The Allies achieved their first important victory in the Battle of Coral Sea, just northwest of Australia, on May 7–8, 1942, when American forces turned back the previously unstoppable Japanese fleet. A month later, there was an even more important turning point northwest of Hawaii. An enormous battle raged for four days,

Midway

June 3–6, 1942, near the small American outpost at Midway Island, at the end of which the United States, despite great losses, was clearly victorious. The American navy destroyed four Japanese aircraft carriers while losing only one, and regained control of the central Pacific for the United States.

The Americans took the offensive for the first time several months later in the southern Solomon Islands, to the east of New Guinea. In August 1942, American forces assaulted three of the islands: Gavutu, Tulagi, and

Guadalcanal. A struggle of terrible ferocity (and, before it was over, terrible savagery) developed at Guadalcanal and

Guadalcanal

continued for six months, inflicting heavy losses on both sides. In the end, however, the Japanese were forced to abandon the island—and with it their last chance of launching an effective offensive to the south.

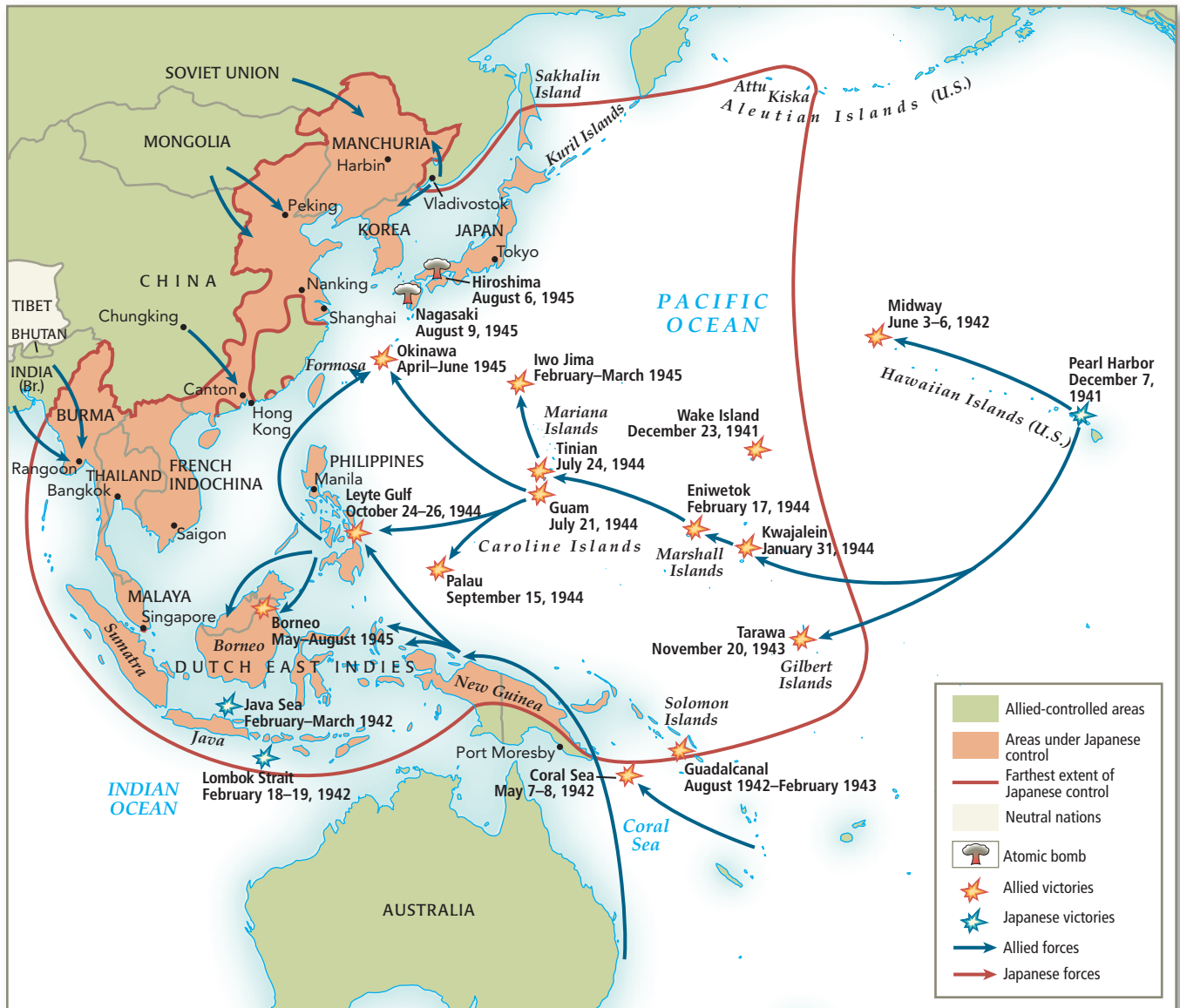
Thus, in both the southern and central Pacific, the initiative had shifted to the United States by mid-1943. The Japanese advance had come to a stop. With aid from Australians and New Zealanders, the Americans now began the slow, arduous process of moving toward the Philippines and Japan itself.

Holding Off the Germans

In the European war, the United States had less control over military operations. It was fighting in cooperation with Britain and with the exiled “Free French” forces in the west; and it was trying also to conciliate its new ally, the Soviet Union, which was fighting Hitler in the east. The army chief of staff, General George C. Marshall, supported a plan for a major Allied invasion of France across the English Channel in the spring of 1943. But the American plan faced challenges from the Allies. The Soviet Union, which was absorbing (as it would throughout the war) the brunt of the German effort, wanted the Allied invasion to proceed at the earliest possible moment. The British, on the other hand, wanted first to launch a series of Allied offensives around the edges of the Nazi empire—in northern Africa and southern Europe—before undertaking the major invasion of France.

Roosevelt realized that to support the British plan would antagonize the Soviets and might delay the important cross-channel invasion. But he also knew that the invasion of Europe would take a long time to prepare, and he was reluctant to wait so long before getting American forces into combat. And so, over the objections of some of his most important advisers, he decided to support the British plan. At the end of October 1942, the British opened a counteroffensive against Nazi forces in North Africa under General Erwin Rommel, who was threatening the Suez Canal at El Alamein, and forced the Germans to retreat from Egypt. On November 8, Anglo-American forces landed at Oran and Algiers in Algeria and at Casablanca in Morocco—areas under the Nazi-controlled French government at Vichy—and began moving east toward Rommel.

The Germans threw the full weight of their forces in Africa against the inexperienced Americans and inflicted a serious defeat on them at the Kasserine Pass in Tunisia. General George S. Patton, however, regrouped the American troops and began an effective counteroffensive. With the help of Allied air and naval power and of British forces attacking from the east under General Bernard Montgomery (the hero of El Alamein), the American offensive finally drove the last Germans from Africa in May 1943.



WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC This map illustrates the changing fortunes of the two combatants in the Pacific phase of World War II. The long red line stretching from Burma around to Manchuria represents the eastern boundary of the vast areas of the Pacific that had fallen under Japanese control by the summer of 1942. The blue lines illustrate the advance of American forces back into the Pacific beginning in May 1942 and accelerating in 1943 and after, which drove the Japanese forces back. The American advance was a result of two separate offensives—one in the central Pacific, under the command of Chester Nimitz, which moved west from Hawaii; the other, under the command of Douglas MacArthur, which moved north from Australia. By the summer of 1945, American forces were approaching the Japanese mainland and were bombing Tokyo itself. The dropping of two American atomic bombs, on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, finally brought the war to an end. ♦ *Why did the Soviet Union enter the Pacific war in August 1945, as shown in the upper left corner of the map?*

The North Africa campaign had tied up a large proportion of the Allied resources and contributed to the postponement of the planned May 1943 cross-channel invasion of France. That produced angry complaints from the Soviet Union. By now, however, the threat of a Soviet collapse seemed much diminished, for during the winter of 1942–1943 the Red Army had successfully held off a major German assault at Stalingrad in southern Russia. Hitler had committed such enormous forces to the battle, and had

suffered such appalling losses, that he could not continue his eastern offensive.

The Soviet victory had come at a terrible cost. The German siege of Stalingrad had decimated the civilian population of the city and devastated the surrounding countryside. Indeed, throughout the war, the Soviet Union absorbed losses far greater than any other warring nation (up to 20 million casualties)—a fact that continued to haunt the Russian memory and affect Soviet policy generations later. But the Soviet success in beating back the

AUSCHWITZ, DECEMBER 1944 This photograph, taken near the end of World War II, shows a group of imprisoned children behind a barbed wire fence in one of the most notorious Nazi concentration camps. By the time this picture was taken, the Nazis had been driven out of Auschwitz and were under the control of Allied soldiers. (*Keystone/Getty Images*)



German offensive persuaded Roosevelt to agree, in a January 1943 meeting with Churchill in Casablanca, to an Allied invasion of Sicily. General Marshall opposed the plan, arguing that it would further delay the vital invasion of France. But Churchill prevailed with the argument that the operation in Sicily might knock Italy out of the war and tie up German divisions that might otherwise be stationed in France. On the night of July 9, 1943, American and British armies landed in southeast Sicily; thirty-eight days later they had conquered the island and were moving onto the Italian mainland. In the face of these setbacks, Mussolini's government collapsed and the dictator fled north to Germany. But although Mussolini's successor, Pietro Badoglio, quickly committed Italy to the Allies, Germany moved eight divisions into the country and established a powerful defensive line south of Rome. The Allied offensive on the Italian peninsula, which began on September 3, 1943, soon bogged down, especially after a

serious setback at Monte Cassino that winter. Not until May 1944 did the Allies resume their northward advance. On June 4, 1944, they captured Rome.

The invasion of Italy contributed to the Allied war effort in several important ways. But it postponed the invasion of France by as much as a year, deeply embittering the Soviet Union, many of whose leaders believed that the United States and Britain were deliberately delaying the cross-channel invasion in order to allow the Russians to absorb the brunt of the fighting. The postponement also gave the Soviets time to begin moving toward the countries of eastern Europe.

Dispute over the
Second Front

America and the Holocaust

In dealing with the global crisis, the leaders of the American government were confronted with one of

history's great horrors: the Nazi campaign to exterminate the Jews of Europe—the Holocaust. As early as 1942, high officials in Washington had incontrovertible evidence that Hitler's forces were rounding up Jews and others (including non-Jewish Poles, gypsies, homosexuals, and communists) from all over Europe, transporting them to concentration camps in eastern Germany and Poland, and systematically murdering them. (The death toll would ultimately reach 6 million Jews and approximately 4 million others.) News of the atrocities was reaching the public as well, and public pressure began to build for an Allied effort to end the killing or at least to rescue some of the surviving Jews.

The American government consistently resisted almost all such entreaties. Although Allied bombers were flying missions within a few miles of the most notorious death camp at Auschwitz in Poland, pleas that the planes try to destroy the crematoria at the camp were rejected as militarily unfeasible. So were similar requests that the Allies try to destroy railroad lines leading to the camps.

The United States also resisted entreaties that it admit large numbers of the Jewish refugees attempting to escape Europe—a pattern established well before Pearl Harbor. One ship, the German passenger liner *St. Louis*, had arrived off Miami in 1939 (after having already been turned away from Havana, Cuba) carrying nearly 1,000 escaped German Jews, only to be refused entry and forced to return to Europe. Both before and during the war, the State Department did not even use up the number of visas permitted by law; almost 90 percent of the quota remained untouched. This disgraceful record was not a result of inadvertence. There was a deliberate effort by officials in the State Department—spearheaded by Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long, a genteel anti-Semite—to prevent Jews from entering the United States in large numbers. One opportunity after another to assist imperiled Jews was either ignored or rejected.

Official Anti-Semitism

After 1941, there was probably little American leaders could have done, other than defeat Germany, to save most



WORLD WAR II IN NORTH AFRICA AND ITALY: THE ALLIED COUNTEROFFENSIVE, 1942–1943 The United States and Great Britain understood from the beginning that an invasion of France across the English Channel would eventually be necessary for a victory in the European war. In the meantime, however, they began a campaign against Axis forces in North Africa, and in the spring of 1943 they began an invasion across the Mediterranean into Italy. This map shows the points along the coast of North Africa where Allied forces landed in 1942—with American forces moving east from Morocco and Algeria, and British forces moving west from Egypt. The two armies met in Tunisia and moved into Italy from there. ♦ *Why were America and Britain reluctant to launch the cross-channel invasion in 1942 or 1943?*

of Hitler's victims. But more forceful action by the United States (and Britain, which was even less amenable than America to Jewish requests for assistance) before and even during the war might well have saved some lives. Policymakers at the time justified their inaction by arguing that most of the proposed actions—bombing the railroads and the death camps, for example—would have had little effect. They insisted that the most effective thing they could do for the victims of the Holocaust was to concentrate their attention solely on the larger goal of winning the war.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE IN WARTIME

“War is no longer simply a battle between armed forces in the field,” an American government report of 1939 concluded. “It is a struggle in which each side strives to bring to bear against the enemy the coordinated power of every individual and of every material resource at its command. The conflict extends from the soldier in the front line to

the citizen in the remotest hamlet in the rear.” The United States had experienced wars before. But not since the Civil War had the nation undergone so consuming a military experience as World War II. American armed forces engaged in combat around the globe for nearly four years. American society, in the meantime, underwent changes that reached into virtually every corner of the nation.

Prosperity

World War II had its most profound impact on American domestic life by at last ending the Great Depression. By the middle of 1941, the economic problems of the 1930s—unemployment, deflation, industrial sluggishness—had virtually vanished before the great wave of wartime industrial expansion.

War-Induced Economic
Recovery

The most important agent of the new prosperity was federal spending, which after 1939 was pumping more money into the economy each year than all the New Deal relief agencies combined had done. In 1939, the federal



THE *ST. LOUIS* The fate of the German liner *St. Louis* has become a powerful symbol of the indifference of the United States and other nations to the fate of European Jews during the Holocaust, even though its forlorn journey preceded both the beginning of World War II and the beginning of systematic extermination of Jews by the Nazi regime. The *St. Louis* carried a group of over 900 Jews fleeing from Germany in 1939, carrying exit visas of dubious legality cynically sold to them by members of Hitler's Gestapo. It became a ship without a port as it sailed from country to country—Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Cuba—where its passengers were refused entry time and again. Most of the passengers were hoping for a haven in the United States, but the American State Department refused to allow the ship even to dock as it sailed up the American eastern seaboard. Eventually, the *St. Louis* returned to Europe and distributed its passengers among Britain, France, Holland, and Belgium (where this photograph was taken showing refugees smiling and waving as they prepare to disembark in Antwerp in June 1939). Less than a year later, all those nations except Britain fell under Nazi control. (Bettmann/Corbis)

budget had been \$9 billion, the highest level it had ever reached in peacetime; by 1945, it had risen to \$100 billion. Largely as a result, the gross national product soared: from \$91 billion in 1939 to \$166 billion in 1945. Personal incomes in some areas grew by as much as 100 percent or more. The demands of wartime production created a shortage of consumer goods, so many wage earners diverted much of their new affluence into savings, which would help keep the economic boom alive in the post-war years.

The War and the West

The impact of government spending was perhaps most dramatic in the West, which had long relied on federal largesse more than other regions. The West Coast, naturally, became the launching point for most of the naval war against Japan; and the government created large manufacturing facilities in California and elsewhere to serve the needs of its military. Altogether, the government made almost \$40 billion worth of capital investments (factories, military and transportation facilities, highways, power plants) in the West during the war, more than in any other region. Ten percent of all the money the federal government spent between 1940 and 1945 went to California. Other western states also shared disproportionately in war contracts and government-funded capital investments.

By the end of the war, the economy of the Pacific Coast and, to a lesser extent, other areas of the West had been transformed. The Pacific Coast had become the center of the growing American aircraft industry. New yards in southern California, Washington State, and elsewhere made the West a center of the shipbuilding industry. Los Angeles, formerly a medium-sized city notable chiefly for its film industry, now became a major industrial center as well.

Once a lightly industrialized region, parts of the West were now among the most important manufacturing areas in the country. Once a region without adequate facilities to support substantial economic growth, the West now stood poised to become the fastest-growing region in the nation after the war.

Labor and the War

Instead of the prolonged and debilitating unemployment that had been the most troubling feature of the Depression economy, the war created a serious labor shortage. The armed forces took more than 15 million men and women out of the civilian work force at the same time that the demand for labor was rising rapidly. Nevertheless, the civilian work force increased by almost 20 percent during the war. The 7 million people who had previously been unemployed accounted for some of the increase; the employment of many people previously considered inappropriate for the work force—the very young, the elderly, and, most important, several million women—accounted for the rest.

The war gave an enormous boost to union membership, which rose from about 10.5 million members in 1941 to more than 13 million in 1945. But it also created important new restrictions on the ability of unions to fight for their members' demands. The government was principally interested in preventing inflation and in keeping production moving without disruption. It managed to win important concessions from union leaders on both scores. One was the so-called Little Steel formula, which set a 15 percent limit on wartime wage increases. Another was the "no-strike" pledge, by which unions agreed not to stop production in wartime. In return, the government provided labor with a "maintenance-of-membership" agreement, which insisted that the thousands of new workers pouring into unionized defense plants would be automatically enrolled in the unions. The agreement ensured the continued health of the union organizations, but in return workers had to give up the right to demand major economic gains during the war.

Union Gains

Many rank-and-file union members, and some local union leaders, resented the restrictions imposed on them by the government and the labor movement hierarchy. Despite the no-strike pledge, there were nearly 15,000 work stoppages during the war, mostly wildcat strikes (strikes unauthorized by the union leadership). When the United Mine Workers defied the government by striking in May 1943, Congress reacted by passing, over Roosevelt's veto, the Smith-Connally Act (or the War Labor Disputes Act), which required unions to wait thirty days before striking and empowered the president to seize a struck war plant. In the meantime, public animosity toward labor rose rapidly, and many states passed laws to limit union power.

Stabilizing the Boom

The fear of deflation, the central concern of the 1930s, gave way during the war to a fear of inflation, particularly after prices rose 25 percent in the two years before Pearl Harbor. In October 1942, Congress grudgingly responded to the president's request and passed the Anti-Inflation Act, which gave the administration authority to freeze agricultural prices, wages, salaries, and rents throughout the country. Enforcement of these provisions was the task of the Office of Price Administration (OPA), led first by Leon Henderson and then by Chester Bowles. In part because of its success, inflation was a much less serious problem during World War II than it had been during World War I.

Office of Price Administration

Even so, the OPA was never popular. There was widespread resentment of its controls over wages and prices. And there was only grudging acquiescence in its complicated system of rationing scarce consumer goods: coffee, sugar, meat, butter, canned goods, shoes, tires,

gasoline, and fuel oil. Black-marketing and overcharging grew to proportions far beyond OPA policing capacity.

From 1941 to 1945, the federal government spent a total of \$321 billion—twice as much as it had spent in the entire 150 years of its existence to that point, and ten times as much as the cost of World War I. The national debt rose from \$49 billion in 1941 to \$259 billion in 1945. The government borrowed about half the revenues it needed by selling \$100 billion worth of bonds. Much of the rest it raised by radically increasing income taxes through the Revenue Act of 1942, which established a 94 percent rate for the highest brackets and, for the first time, imposed taxes on the lowest-income families as well. To simplify collection, Congress enacted a withholding system of payroll deductions in 1943.

Mobilizing Production

The search for an effective mechanism to mobilize the economy for war began as early as 1939 and continued for nearly four years. One failed agency after another attempted to bring order to the mobilization effort. Finally, in January 1942, the president responded to widespread criticism by creating the War Production Board (WPB), under the direction of former Sears Roebuck executive Donald Nelson. In theory, the WPB was to be a “superagency,” with broad powers over the economy. In fact, it never had as much authority as its World War I equivalent, the War Industries Board. And the genial Donald Nelson never displayed the administrative or political strength of his 1918 counterpart, Bernard Baruch.

The WPB was never able to win control over military purchases; the army and navy often circumvented the board entirely in negotiating contracts with producers. It was never able to satisfy the complaints of small business, which charged (correctly) that most contracts were going to large corporations. Gradually, the president transferred much of the WPB’s authority to a new office located within the White House: the Office of War Mobilization, directed by former Supreme Court justice and South Carolina senator James F. Byrnes. But the OWM was only slightly more successful than the WPB.

Despite the administrative problems, the war economy managed to meet almost all the nation’s critical war needs. Enormous new factory complexes sprang up in the space of a few months, many of them funded by the federal government’s Defense Plants Corporation. An entire new industry producing synthetic rubber emerged, to make up for the loss of access to natural rubber in the Pacific. By the beginning of 1944, American factories were, in fact, producing more of most goods than the government needed. Their output was twice that of all the Axis countries combined. There were even complaints late in the war from some officials that military production was becoming excessive, that a limited resumption of civilian

production should begin before the fighting ended. The military staunchly and successfully opposed almost all such demands.

Wartime Science and Technology

More than any previous American war, World War II was a watershed for technological and scientific innovation. That was partly because the American government poured substantial funds into research and development beginning in 1940. In that year the government created the National Defense Research Committee, headed by the MIT scientist Vannevar Bush, who had been a pioneer in the early development of the computer. By the end of the war, the new agency had spent more than \$100 million on research, more than four times the amount spent by the government on military research and development in the previous forty years.

In the first years of the war, all the technological advantages seemed to lie with the Germans and Japanese. Germany had made great advances in tanks and other mechanized armor in the 1930s, particularly during the Spanish Civil War, when it had helped arm Franco’s fascist forces. It used its armor effectively during its blitzkrieg in Europe in 1940 and again in North Africa in 1942. German submarine technology was significantly advanced compared to British and American capabilities in 1940, and German U-boats were, for a time, devastatingly effective in disrupting Allied shipping. Japan had developed extraordinary capacity in its naval-air technology. Its highly sophisticated fighter planes, launched from distant aircraft carriers, conducted the successful raid on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

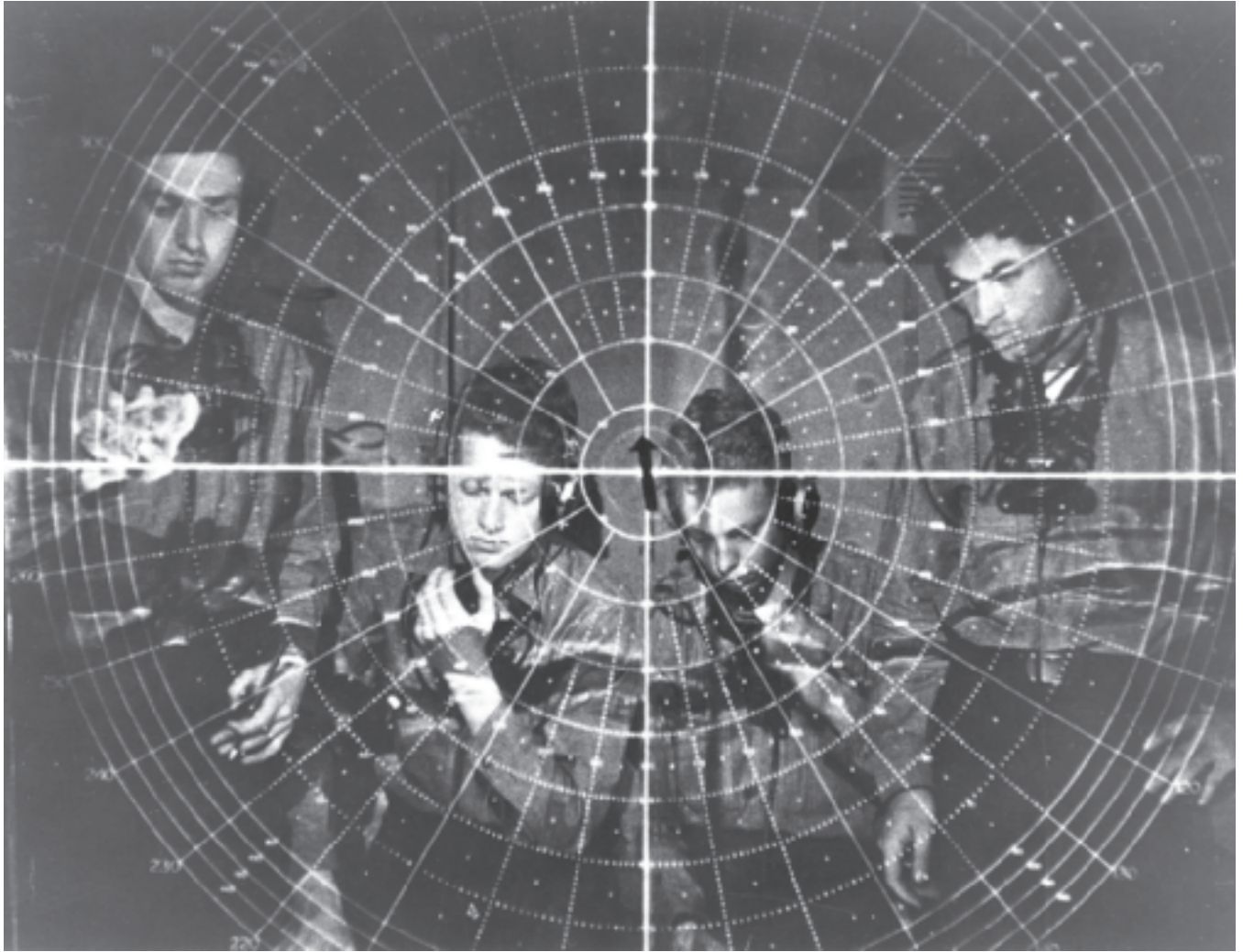
But Britain and America had advantages of their own, which quickly helped redress these imbalances. American techniques of mass production—the great automotive assembly lines in particular—were converted efficiently to military production in 1941 and 1942 and soon began producing airplanes, ships, tanks, and other armaments in much greater numbers than the Germans and Japanese could produce. Allied scientists and engineers moved quickly as well to improve Anglo-American aviation and naval technology, particularly to improve the performance of submarines and tanks. By late 1942, Allied weaponry was at least as advanced as, and coming to be more plentiful than, that of the enemy.

In addition, each technological innovation by the enemy produced a corresponding innovation to limit the damage of the new techniques. American and British physicists made rapid advances in improving radar and sonar technology—taking advantage of advances in radio technology in the 1920s and beyond—which helped Allied naval forces decimate German U-boats in 1943 and effectively end their effectiveness in the naval war. Particularly important was

National Defense
Research Committee

War Production Board

Radar and Sonar



RADAR SCOPE, 1944 Navy technicians are shown here demonstrating the new radar scopes that revolutionized the tracking of ships and planes during World War II. (*National Archives and Records Administration*)

the creation in 1940 of “centimetric radar,” which used narrow beams of short wavelength that made radar more efficient and effective than ever before—as the British navy discovered in April 1941 when the instruments on one of its ships detected a surfaced submarine ten miles away at night and, on another occasion, spotted a periscope at three-quarters of a mile range. With earlier technologies, the sub and periscope would have been undetectable. This new radar could also be effectively miniaturized, which was critical to its use on airplanes and submarines in particular. It required only a small rotating aerial, and it used newly advanced cavity magnetron valves of great power. These innovations put the Allies far in advance of Germany and Japan in radar technology. The Allies also learned early how to detect and disable German naval mines; and when the Germans tried to counter this progress by introducing an “acoustic” mine, which detonated when a ship came near it, not necessarily just on contact, the Allies developed acoustical countermeasures of their own, which transmit-

ted sounds through the water to detonate mines before ships came near them.

Anglo-American antiaircraft technology—both on land and on sea—also improved, although never to the point where it could stop bombing raids. Germany made substantial advances in the development of rocket technology in the early years of the war, and it managed to launch some rocket-propelled bombs (the V1s and V2s) across the English Channel, aimed at London. The psychological effects of the rockets on the British people were considerable. But the Germans were never able to create a production technology capable of building enough such rockets to make a real difference in the balance of military power.

Beginning in 1942, British and American forces seized the advantage in the air war by producing new and powerful four-engine bombers in great numbers—among them the British Lancaster B1 and the American Boeing B17F, capable of flying a bomb load of 6,000 pounds for

1,300 miles, and capable of reaching 37,500 feet. Because they were able to fly higher and longer than the German equivalents, they were able to conduct extensive bombing missions over Germany (and later Japan) with much less danger of being shot down. But the success of the bombers rested heavily as well on new electronic devices capable of guiding their bombs to their targets. The Gee navigation system, which was also valuable to the navy, used electronic pulses to help pilots plot their exact location—something that in the past only a highly skilled navigator could do, and then only in good weather. In March 1942, eighty Allied bombers fitted with Gee systems staged a devastatingly effective bombing raid on German industrial and military installations in the Ruhr Valley. Studies showed that the Gee system doubled the accuracy rate of night bombing raids. Also effective was the Oboe system, a radio device that sent a sonic message to airplanes to tell them when they were within twenty yards of their targets, first introduced in December 1942.

The area in which the Allies had perhaps the greatest advantages in technology and knowledge was the gathering of intelligence, much of it through Britain's top-secret Ultra project. Some of the advantages the Allies enjoyed came from successful efforts to capture or steal German and Japanese intelligence devices. More important, however, were the efforts of cryptologists to puzzle out the enemy's systems, and advances in computer technology that helped the Allies decipher coded messages sent by the Japanese and the Germans. Much of Germany's coded communication made use of the so-called Enigma machine, which was effective because it constantly changed the coding systems it used.

In the first months of the war, Polish intelligence had developed an electro-mechanical computer, which it called the "Bombe," that could decipher some Enigma messages. After the fall of Poland, British scientists, led by the brilliant computer pioneer Alan Turing, took the Bombe, which was too slow to keep up with the increasingly frequent changes of coding the Germans were using, and greatly improved it. On April 15, 1940, the new, improved, high-speed Bombe broke the coding of a series of German messages within hours (not days, as had previously been the case). A few weeks later, it began decrypting German messages at the rate of 1,000 a day, providing the British (and later the Americans) with a constant flow of information about enemy operations that continued—unknown to the Germans—until the end of the war.

Later in the war, British scientists working for the intelligence services built the first real programmable, digital computer—the Colossus II, which became operational less than a week before the beginning of the Normandy invasion. It was able to decipher an enormous number of intercepted German messages almost instantly.

The United States also had some important intelligence breakthroughs, including, in 1941, a dramatic success by

the American Magic operation (the counterpart to the British Ultra) in breaking a Japanese coding system not unlike the German Enigma, a mechanical device known to the Allies as Purple. The result was that Americans had access to intercepted information that, if properly interpreted, could have alerted them to the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. But because such a raid had seemed entirely inconceivable to most American officials prior to its occurrence, those who received the information failed to understand or disseminate it in time.

African Americans and the War

During World War I, many African Americans had eagerly seized the chance to serve in the armed forces, believing that their patriotic efforts would win them an enhanced position in postwar society. They had been cruelly disappointed. As World War II approached, blacks were again determined to use the conflict to improve their position in society—this time, however, not by currying favor but by making demands.

In the summer of 1941, A. Philip Randolph, president of the predominantly black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, began to insist that the government require companies receiving defense contracts to integrate their work forces. To mobilize support for the demand, Randolph planned a massive march on Washington, which would, he promised, bring over 100,000 demonstrators to the capital. Roosevelt was afraid of both the possibility of violence and the certainty of political embarrassment. He finally persuaded Randolph to cancel the march in return for a promise to establish a Fair Employment Practices Commission to investigate discrimination in war industries. The FEPC's enforcement powers, and thus its effectiveness, were limited, but its creation was a rare symbolic victory for African Americans making demands of the government.

The demand for labor in war plants greatly increased the migration of blacks from the rural areas of the South into industrial cities—a migration that continued for more than a decade after the war and brought many more African Americans into northern cities than the Great Migration of 1914–1919 had done. The migration bettered the economic condition of many African Americans, but it also created urban tensions. On a hot June day in Detroit in 1943, a series of altercations between blacks and whites at a city park led to two days of racial violence in which thirty-four people died, twenty-five of them African Americans.

Despite such tensions, the leading black organizations redoubled their efforts during the war to challenge the system of segregation. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), organized in 1942, mobilized mass popular resistance to discrimination in a way that the older, more conservative organizations had never done. Randolph, Bayard Rustin,

James Farmer, and other, younger black leaders helped organize sit-ins and demonstrations in segregated theaters and restaurants. In 1944, CORE won a much-publicized victory by forcing a Washington, D.C., restaurant to agree to serve African Americans. Its defiant spirit would survive into the 1950s and help produce the civil rights movement.

Pressure for change was also growing within the military. At first, the armed forces maintained their traditional practice of limiting blacks to the most menial assignments, keeping them in segregated training camps and units, and barring them entirely from the Marine Corps and the Army Air Force. Gradually, however, military leaders were forced to make adjustments—in part because of public and political pressures, but also because they recognized that these forms of segregation were wasting manpower. By the end of the war, the number of black servicemen had increased sevenfold, to 700,000; some training camps were being at least partially integrated; African Americans were beginning to serve on ships with white sailors; and more black units were being sent into combat. But tensions remained. In some of the partially integrated army bases—Fort Dix, New Jersey, for example—riots occasionally broke out when African Americans protested having to serve in segregated divisions. Substantial discrimination survived in all the services until well after the war. But within the military, as within the society at large, the traditional pattern of race relations was slowly eroding.

Native Americans and the War

Approximately 25,000 Native Americans performed military service during World War II. Many of them served in combat (among them Ira Hayes, one of the men who memorably raised the American flag at Iwo Jima). Others worked as “code-talkers,” working in military communications and speaking their own languages (which enemy forces would be unlikely to understand) over the radio and the telephones.

The war had important effects, too, on those Native Americans who remained civilians. Little war work reached the tribes, and government subsidies dwindled. Many talented young people left the reservations, some to serve in the military, others (more than 70,000) to work in war plants. This brought many Indians into close contact with white society for the first time and awakened in some of them a taste for the material benefits of life in capitalist America that they would retain after the war. Some never returned to the reservations, but chose to remain in the non-Indian world and assimilate to its ways. Others found that after the war, employment opportunities that had been available to them during the fighting became unavailable once again, drawing them back to the reservations.

The wartime emphasis on national unity undermined support for the revitalization of tribal autonomy that the

Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 had launched. New pressures emerged to eliminate the reservation system and require the tribes to assimilate into white society—pressures so severe that John Collier, the director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who had done so much to promote the reinvigoration of the reservations, resigned in 1945.

Mexican-American War Workers

Large numbers of Mexican workers entered the United States during the war in response to labor shortages on the Pacific Coast, in the Southwest, and eventually in almost all areas of the nation. The American and Mexican governments agreed in 1942 to a program by which *braceros* (contract laborers) would be admitted to the United States for a limited time to work at specific jobs, and American employers in some parts of the Southwest began actively recruiting Hispanic workers.

During the Depression, many Mexican farmworkers had been deported to make room for unemployed white workers. The wartime labor shortage caused farm owners to begin hiring Mexicans again. More important, however, Mexicans were able for the first time to find significant numbers of factory jobs. They formed the second-largest group of migrants (after African

Employment Gains for Mexican Americans



YOUNG STREET, LOS ANGELES Although the Anglo image of Mexican Americans in wartime southern California was dominated by the culture of the “zoot-suiters,” there was a longstanding and thriving Mexican-American middle class. Here two friends, Richard Garcia and John Urrea, pose in front of the Urrea home in the early 1940s. (*Shades of L.A. Archives/Los Angeles Public Library*)

Americans) to American cities in the 1940s. Over 300,000 of them served in the United States military.

The sudden expansion of Mexican-American neighborhoods created tensions and occasionally conflict in some American cities. Some white residents of Los Angeles became alarmed at the activities of Mexican-American teenagers, many of whom were joining street gangs (*pachucos*). The *pachucos* were particularly distinctive because of their members' style of dress, which whites considered outrageous. They wore "zoot suits"—long, loose jackets with padded shoulders, baggy pants tied at the ankles—long watch chains, broad-brimmed hats, and greased, ducktail hairstyles. (It was a style borrowed in part from fashions in Harlem.) For some of those who wore them, the style of dress served as a symbol of rebellion against and defiance toward conventional white, middle-class society.

In June 1943, animosity toward the zoot-suiters produced a four-day riot in Los Angeles, during which white sailors stationed at a base in Long Beach invaded Mexican-American communities and attacked zoot-suiters (in response to alleged attacks). The city police did little to restrain the sailors, who grabbed Hispanic teenagers, tore off and burned their clothes, cut off their ducktails, and beat them. But when Hispanics tried to fight back, the police moved in and arrested them. In the aftermath of the "zoot-suit riots," Los Angeles passed a law prohibiting the wearing of zoot suits.

Women and Children at War

The war drew increasing numbers of women into roles from which, by either custom or law, they had been largely barred. The number of women in the work force increased by nearly 60 percent, and women accounted for a third of paid workers in 1945 (as opposed to a quarter in 1940). These wage-earning women were more likely to be married and older than most women who had entered the work force in the past.

Many women entered the industrial work force to replace male workers serving in the military. But while economic and military necessity eroded some of the popular objections to women in the workplace, obstacles remained. Many factory owners continued to categorize jobs by gender. (Female work, like male work, was also categorized by race: black women were usually assigned more menial tasks, and paid at a lower rate, than their white counterparts.) Employers also made substantial investments in automated assembly lines to reduce the need for heavy labor.

Many employers treated women in the war plants with a combination of solicitude and patronization, which was also an obstacle to winning genuine equality within the work force. Special recruiting materials presented factory work to women through domestic analogies that male employers assumed females would find

easily comprehensible: cutting airplane wings was compared to making a dress pattern, mixing chemicals to making a cake. Still, women did make important inroads in industrial employment during the war. Women had been working in industry for over a century, but some began now to take on heavy industrial jobs that had long been considered "men's work." The famous wartime image of "Rosie the Riveter" symbolized the new importance of the female industrial work force. Women workers joined unions in substantial numbers, and they helped erode at least some of the prejudice, including the prejudice against working mothers, that had previously kept many of them from paid employment.

"Rosie the Riveter"

Most women workers during the war were employed not in factories but in service-sector jobs. Above all, they worked for the government, whose bureaucratic needs expanded dramatically alongside its military and industrial needs. Washington, D.C., in particular, was flooded with young female clerks, secretaries, and typists—known as "government girls"—most of whom lived in cramped quarters in boardinghouses, private homes, and government dormitories and worked long hours in the war agencies. Public and private clerical employment for women expanded in other urban areas as well, creating high concentrations of young women in places largely depleted of young men. The result was the development of distinctively female communities, in which women, often separated for the first time from home and family, adjusted to life in the work force through their association with other female workers. Even within the military, which enlisted substantial numbers of women as WACs (army) and WAVES (navy), most female work was clerical.

The new opportunities produced new problems. Many mothers whose husbands were in the military had to combine working with caring for their children. The scarcity of child-care facilities or other community services meant that some women had no choice but to leave young children—often known as "latchkey children" or "eight-hour orphans"—at home alone (or sometimes locked in cars in factory parking lots) while they worked.

Limited Child Care

Perhaps in part because of the family dislocations the war produced, juvenile crime rose markedly in the war years. Young boys were arrested at rapidly increasing rates for car theft and other burglary, vandalism, and vagrancy. The arrest rate for prostitutes, many of whom were teenage girls, rose too, as did the incidence of sexually transmitted disease. For many children, however, the distinctive experience of the war years was not crime but work. More than a third of all teenagers between the ages of fourteen and eighteen were employed late in the war, causing some reduction in high-school enrollments.

The return of prosperity during the war helped increase the rate and lower the age of marriage, but many of these young marriages were unable to survive the



WOMEN AT WAR Many American women enlisted in the army and navy women's corps during World War II, but an equally important contribution of women to the war effort was their work in factories and offices—often in jobs that would have been considered inappropriate for them in peacetime but that they were now encouraged to assume because of the absence of so many men. (*Library of Congress*)

Beginning of the "Baby Boom"

pressures of wartime separation. The divorce rate rose rapidly. The rise in the birth rate that accompanied the increase in marriages was the first sign of what would become the great postwar "baby boom."

Wartime Life and Culture

The war created considerable anxiety in American life. Families worried about loved ones at the front and struggled to adjust to the absence of husbands, fathers, brothers, sons—and to the new mobility of women, which also drew family members away from home. Businesses and communities struggled to compensate for shortages of goods and the absence of men.

But the abundance of the war years also created a striking buoyancy in American life that the conflict itself only partially subdued. Suddenly, people had money to spend

Economic Good Times

again and—despite the many shortages of consumer goods—at

least some things to spend it on. Audiences equal to about half the population attended movies each week, often to watch heroic war films. Magazines, particularly pictorial ones such as *Life*, reached the peak of their popularity, satisfying the seemingly insatiable hunger of readers for pictures of and stories about the war. Radio ownership and listening also increased, for the same reason.

Resort hotels, casinos, and racetracks were jammed with customers. Dance halls were packed with young people drawn to the seductive music of swing bands; soldiers and sailors home on leave, or awaiting shipment overseas, were especially attracted to the dances and the big bands, which became to many of them a symbol of the life they were leaving and that they believed they were fighting to defend. (See "Patterns of Popular Culture," pp. 742–743.)

Advertisers, and at times even the government, exhorted Americans to support the war effort to ensure a future of material comfort and consumer choice for themselves and their children. "Your people are giving their lives in useless sacrifice," the *Saturday Evening Post*

THE AGE OF SWING

To many young Americans during World War II—both those who went off to the front and those who stayed at home—nothing more strongly evoked the image of life as they remembered it and wished it to be again than the big bands, the most popular musical groups of the era. The smooth, romantic sound of brass and woodwinds, the sultry voices of the mostly female singers, the swaying bodies of hundreds—in

some places thousands—of dancers moving to the music: that, in wartime, represented to many people what the good life was all about.

The big bands always played several different kinds of jazz, but from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s, they played “swing” above all—a new form of jazz that, as its name implied, seemed made for dancing. And although swing quickly became extremely popular with white,



STARS OF THE AGE OF SWING This 1939 photograph shows a group of extraordinary musical artists who contributed to the emergence of Swing as the most popular music in America. Duke Ellington is at the piano, Cab Calloway is playing a guitar, and other guests gather around to listen at a party hosted by a political cartoonist for the Hearst newspapers. (Charles Peterson/Hulton Archive/Getty Images)



THE KING OF SWING This poster advertises a 1944 film highlighting the music of the great Swing musician Benny Goodman.

(© 20th Century Fox Film Corp. All Rights Reserved. Courtesy Everett Collection)

middle-class audiences, it had its origins—like other kinds of jazz and like the rock music that would later help displace it—in the African-American musical world. The black musician Fletcher Henderson began experimenting with swing in Harlem in the 1920s; he called it “hot jazz.” In 1934, he began working with the white jazz musician

wrote in a mock letter to the leaders of wartime Japan. “Ours are fighting for a glorious future of mass employment, mass production and mass distribution and ownership.” Even troops at the front seemed at times to justify their efforts with reference to the comforts of home more than to the character of the enemy or the ideals America claimed to be defending. “They are fighting for home,” the writer John Hersey once wrote from Guadalcanal (with at least a trace of dismay), because “Home is where the good things are—the generosity, the good pay, the comforts, the democracy, the pie.”

For men at the front, the image of home was a powerful antidote to the rigors of wartime. They dreamed of music, food, movies, material comforts. Many also dreamed of women—wives and girlfriends, but also movie stars

and others who became the source of one of the most popular icons of the front: the pinup.

For the servicemen who remained in America during the war, and for soldiers and sailors in cities far from home in particular, the company of friendly, “wholesome” women was, the military believed, critical to maintaining morale. USOs recruited thousands of young women to serve as hostesses in their clubs—women who were expected to dress nicely, dance well, and chat happily with lonely men. Other women joined “dance brigades” and traveled by bus to military bases for social evenings with servicemen. They, too, were expected to be pretty, to dress attractively (and conservatively), and to interact comfortably with men they had never met before and would likely never see again. The USO forbade women to have dates with soldiers after parties in the

Fighting for Future Prosperity

USO

arranging numbers for Goodman's own band. And in 1935, when Goodman played several of Henderson's arrangements to a wildly enthusiastic crowd of dancers in the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles, the "swing era"—the era of the new music's popularity among a broad, multiracial public—began. After his success at the Palomar, Goodman—soon to be known as the "King of Swing"—began playing more and more often on the radio, spreading the popularity of the music.

Soon new big bands were springing up, both black and white, seizing the style, modifying it at times, and spreading it further: Count Basie ("One O'Clock Jump"), who emerged from the relative obscurity of the Kansas City jazz scene in 1936 and became one of the great innovators in modern jazz; Tommy Dorsey ("Marie"); Artie Shaw ("Begin the Beguine"); the incomparable Duke Ellington ("In a Mellotone"), probably the most gifted and inventive jazz musician of his era; and—perhaps the performer etched most vividly in the memory of fighting men during World War II—Glenn Miller, whose "In the Mood" was one of the most popular songs of the 1940s, and whose early death while traveling to entertain troops made him something of a national hero.

During the heyday of swing, band leaders were among the most recognized and popular figures in American popular culture, rivaling movie stars in their celebrity. Swing dominated the radio. It drew huge audiences to dance



CAPTION TO COME

halls everywhere. It sold more records than any other kind of music. And it became one of the first forms of popular music to challenge racial taboos. Benny Goodman hired the black pianist Teddy Wilson to play with his band in 1935; other white band leaders followed.

Swing was not without its critics: people who recoiled at its black roots and at its interracial culture; and others who abhorred its openly sensual style and the romantic, at times overtly sexual, dancing it inspired. It had a "dangerously hypnotic influence," the *New York*

Times complained in 1938 (in a critique that echoed earlier attacks on jazz in the 1920s and resembled later ones on rock and rap music in the postwar years) and led dancers toward "moral weakness" and "the breakdown of conventions." But young men and women in the anxious years of depression and war found in swing an avenue to escape, romance, and excitement. "It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing," the lyrics of a celebrated 1932 Duke Ellington song said. Until at least 1945, when swing began to give way to other forms of jazz, millions of Americans agreed.

clubs, and the members of the "dance brigades" were expected to have no contact with servicemen except during the dances. Clearly, such regulations were sometimes violated. But while the military took elaborate measures to root out homosexuals and lesbians from their ranks (unceremoniously dismissing many of them with undesirable discharges), it quietly tolerated "healthy heterosexuality."

The Internment of Japanese Americans

World War I had produced widespread hatred, vindictiveness, and hysteria in America, as well as widespread and flagrant violations of civil liberties. World War II did not produce a comparable era of repression. The government barred from the mails a few papers it considered seditious, among them Father Coughlin's anti-Semitic and pro-

fascist *Social Justice*, but there was no general censorship of dissident publications. The most ambitious effort to punish domestic fascists, a sedition trial of twenty-eight people, ended in a mistrial, and the defendants went free. Unlike during World War I, the government generally left socialists and communists (most of whom strongly supported the war effort) alone.

Nor was there much of the ethnic or cultural animosity that had shaped the social climate of the United States during World War I. The "zoot-suit" riots in Los Angeles and occasional racial conflicts in American cities and on military bases made clear that traditional racial and ethnic hostilities had not disappeared. So did wartime restrictions imposed on some Italians—including provisions forbidding many of them to travel and the imprisonment of

Ethnic Distinctions
Blurred

several hundred, including the great opera singer Ezio Pinza, as “enemy aliens.” But on the whole, the war worked more to blur ethnic distinctions than to heighten them. Americans continued to eat sauerkraut without calling it “liberty cabbage.” They displayed little hostility toward German or Italian Americans. Instead, they seemed on the whole to share the view of their government’s propaganda: that the enemy was less the German and Italian people than the vicious political systems to which they had succumbed. In popular culture, and in everyday interactions, ethnicity began to seem less a source of menacing difference—as it often had in the past—than evidence of healthy diversity. The participation of, and frequent heroism from, American soldiers of many ethnic backgrounds encouraged this change.

But there was a glaring exception to the general rule of tolerance: the treatment of the small, politically powerless group of Japanese Americans. From the beginning, Americans adopted a different attitude toward their Asian enemy than they did toward their European foes. The Japanese, both government and private propaganda encouraged Americans to believe, were a devious, malign, and cruel people. The infamous attack on Pearl Harbor seemed to many to confirm that assessment.

This racial animosity soon extended to Americans of Japanese descent. There were not many Japanese Americans in the continental United States—only about 127,000, most of them concentrated in a few areas in California. About a third of them were unnaturalized, first-generation immigrants (Issei); two-thirds were naturalized or native-born citizens of the United States (Nisei). The Japanese in America, like the Chinese, had long been the target of ethnic and racial animosity; and unlike members of European ethnic groups, who had encountered similar resentment, Asians seemed unable to dispel prejudice against them no matter how assimilated they became. Many white Americans continued to consider Asians (even native-born citizens) so “foreign” that they could never become “real” Americans. Partly as a result, much of the Japanese-American population in the West continued to live in close-knit, to some degree even insular, communities, which reinforced the belief that they were alien and potentially menacing.

Pearl Harbor inflamed these longstanding suspicions and turned them into active animosity. Wild stories circulated about how the Japanese in Hawaii had helped sabotage Pearl Harbor and how Japanese Americans in California were conspiring to aid an enemy landing on the Pacific coast. There was no evidence to support any of these charges; but according to Earl Warren, then attorney general of California, the apparent passivity of the Japanese Americans was itself evidence of the danger they posed. Because they did nothing to allow officials to gauge their intentions, Warren claimed, it was all the more important to take precautions against conspiracies.

Although there was some public pressure in California to remove the Japanese “threat,” on the whole popular senti-

ment was more tolerant of the Nisei and Issei (and more willing to make distinctions between them and the Japanese in Japan) than was official sentiment. The real impetus for taking action came from the government. Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, for example, said shortly after Pearl Harbor that “the most effective fifth column [a term for internal sabotage] work of the entire war was done in Hawaii,” a statement—clearly referring to the large Japanese population there—that later investigations proved to be entirely false. General John L. DeWitt, the senior military commander on the West Coast, claimed to have “no confidence in [Japanese-American] loyalty whatsoever.” When asked about the distinction between unnaturalized Japanese immigrants and American citizens, he said, “A Jap is a Jap. It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not.”

In February 1942, in response to such pressure (and over the objections of the attorney general and J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI), President Roosevelt authorized the army to “intern” the Japanese Americans. He created the War Relocation Authority (WRA) to oversee the project. More than 100,000 people (Issei and Nisei alike) were rounded up, told to dispose of their property however they could (which often meant simply abandoning it), and taken to what the government euphemistically termed “relocation centers” in the “interior.” In fact, they were facilities little different from prisons, many of them located in the western mountains and the desert. Conditions in the internment camps were not brutal, but they were harsh and uncomfortable. Government officials talked of them as places where the Japanese could be socialized and “Americanized,” much as many officials had at times considered Indian reservations as places for training Native Americans to become more like whites.

But like Indian reservations, the internment camps were more a target of white economic aspirations than of missionary work. The governor of Utah, where many of the internees were located, wanted the federal government to turn over thousands of Japanese Americans to serve as forced laborers. Washington did not comply, but the WRA did hire out many inmates as agricultural laborers.

The internment never produced significant popular opposition. For the most part, once the Japanese were in the camps, other Americans (including their former neighbors on the West Coast) largely forgot about them—except to make strenuous efforts to acquire the property they had abandoned. Even so, beginning in 1943 conditions slowly improved. Some young Japanese Americans left the camps to attend colleges and universities (mostly in the East—the WRA continued to be wary of letting Japanese return to the Pacific Coast). Others were permitted to move to cities to take factory and service jobs (although, again, not on the West Coast). Some young men joined and others were drafted into the American military; a Nisei army unit fought with distinction in Europe.

In 1944, the Supreme Court ruled in *Korematsu v. U.S.* that the relocation was constitutionally permissible. In



MANZANAR RELOCATION CENTER Dorothea Lange, the great documentary photographer, took a series of photographs to record the experiences of Japanese Americans who were evacuated from their homes on the California coast during World War II. Here she captures a Japanese-American woman in the Manzanar Relocation Center in eastern California as she works in a vegetable garden at the center in which residents grew food for their own use. (Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, WRA no. C-685)

another case the same year, it barred the internment of “loyal” citizens, but left the interpretation of “loyal” to the discretion of the government. Nevertheless, by the end of 1944, most of the internees had been released; and in early 1945, they were finally permitted to return to the West Coast—where they faced continuing harassment and persecution, and where many found their property and businesses irretrievably lost. In 1988, they won some compensation for their losses, when, after years of agitation by survivors of the camps and their descendants, Congress voted to award them reparations. But by then, many of the internees had died.

Korematsu v. U.S.

Chinese Americans and the War

Just as America’s conflict with Japan undermined the position of Japanese Americans, the American alliance with China during World War II significantly enhanced both the legal and social status of Chinese Americans. In 1943, partly to improve relations with the government of China, Congress finally repealed the Chinese Exclusion Acts, which had barred almost all Chinese immigration since 1892. The new quota for Chinese immigrants was minuscule (105 a year), but a substantial number of Chinese women managed to gain entry into the country through other provisions covering war brides and fiancées. Over 4,000 Chinese women entered the United States in the first three years after the war. Permanent residents of the United States who were of Chinese descent were finally permitted to become citizens.

Chinese Exclusion Acts Repealed

Racial animosity toward the Chinese did not disappear, but it did decline—in part because government propaganda and popular culture began presenting positive images of the Chinese (partly to contrast them with the Japanese); in part because Chinese Americans (like African Americans and other previously marginal groups) began taking jobs in war plants and other booming areas suffering from labor shortages and hence moving out of the isolated world of the Chinatowns. A higher proportion of Chinese Americans (22 percent of all adult males) were drafted than of any other national group, and the entire Chinese community in most cities worked hard and conspicuously for the war effort.

The Retreat from Reform

Late in 1943, Franklin Roosevelt publicly suggested that “Dr. New Deal,” as he called it, had served its purpose and should now give way to “Dr. Win-the-War.” The statement reflected the president’s own genuine shift in concern: that victory was now more important than reform. But it also reflected the political reality that had emerged during the first two years of war. Liberals in government were finding themselves unable to enact new programs. They were even finding it difficult to protect existing ones from conservative assault.

Within the administration itself, many liberals found themselves displaced by the new managers of the wartime agencies, who came overwhelmingly from large corporations and conservative Wall Street law firms. But the greatest assault on New Deal reforms came from

Dismantling the New Deal

conservatives in Congress, who seized on the war as an excuse to do what many had wanted to do in peacetime: dismantle many of the achievements of the New Deal. They were assisted by the end of mass unemployment, which decreased the need for such relief programs as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration (both of which were abolished by Congress). They were assisted, too, by their own increasing numbers. In the congressional elections of 1942, Republicans gained 47 seats in the House and 10 in the Senate. Roosevelt continued to talk at times about his commitment to social progress and liberal reform, in part to bolster the flagging spirits of his traditional supporters. But increasingly, the president quietly accepted the defeat or erosion of New Deal measures in order to win support for his war policies and peace plans. He also accepted the changes because he realized that his chances for reelection in 1944 depended on his ability to identify himself less with domestic issues than with world peace.

Republicans approached the 1944 election determined to exploit what they believed was resentment of wartime regimentation and privation and unhappiness with Democratic reform. They nominated as their candidate the young and vigorous governor of New York, Thomas E. Dewey. Roosevelt was unopposed within his party, but Democratic leaders pressured him to abandon the controversial Vice President Henry Wallace, an outspoken liberal and hero of the CIO. Roosevelt, tired and ill, seemed to take little interest in the matter and passively acquiesced in the selection of Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri, a man he barely knew. Truman was not a prominent figure in the party, but he had won acclaim as chairman of the Senate War Investigating Committee (known as the Truman Committee), which had compiled an impressive record uncovering waste and corruption in wartime production.

The conduct of the war was not an issue in the campaign. Instead, the election revolved around domestic economic issues and, indirectly, the president's health. The president was in fact gravely ill, suffering from, among other things, arteriosclerosis. But the campaign seemed momentarily to revive him. He made several strenuous public appearances late in October, which dispelled popular doubts about his health and ensured his reelection. He captured 53.5 percent of the popular vote to Dewey's 46 percent, and won 432 electoral votes to Dewey's 99. Democrats lost 1 seat in the Senate, gained 20 in the House, and maintained control of both.

THE DEFEAT OF THE AXIS

By the middle of 1943, America and its allies had succeeded in stopping the Axis advance both in Europe and in the Pacific. In the next two years, the Allies themselves seized the offensive and launched a series of powerful drives that rapidly led the way to victory.

The Liberation of France

By early 1944, American and British bombers were attacking German industrial installations and other targets almost around the clock, drastically cutting production and impeding transportation. Especially devastating was the massive bombing of such German cities as Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin. A February 1945 incendiary raid on Dresden created a great firestorm that destroyed three-fourths of the previously undamaged city and killed approximately 135,000 people, almost all civilians.

Strategic Bombing

Military leaders claimed that the bombing destroyed industrial facilities, demoralized the population, and cleared the way for the great Allied invasion of France planned for the late spring. In fact, the greatest contribution of the bombing to the military struggle was to force the German air force (the *Luftwaffe*) to relocate much of its strength in Germany itself and to engage Allied forces in the air. The air battles over Germany considerably weakened the *Luftwaffe* and made it a less formidable obstacle to the Allied invasion than it might once have been. Preparations for the invasion were also assisted by the breaking of the Enigma code.

An enormous invasion force had been gathering in England for two years: almost 3 million troops, and perhaps the greatest array of naval vessels and armaments ever assembled in one place. On the morning of June 6, 1944, D-Day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied forces, sent this vast armada into action. The landing came not at the narrowest part of the English Channel, where the Germans had expected and prepared for it, but along sixty miles of the Cotentin Peninsula on the coast of Normandy. While airplanes and battleships offshore bombarded the Nazi defenses, 4,000 vessels landed troops and supplies on the beaches. (Three divisions of paratroopers had been dropped behind the German lines the night before, amid scenes of great confusion, to seize critical roads and bridges for the push inland.) Fighting was intense along the beach, but the superior manpower and equipment of the Allied forces gradually prevailed. Within a week, the German forces had been dislodged from virtually the entire Normandy coast.

D-Day

For the next month, further progress remained slow. But in late July in the Battle of Saint-Lô, General Omar Bradley's First Army smashed through the German lines. George S. Patton's Third Army, spearheaded by heavy tank attacks, then moved through the hole Bradley had created and began a drive into the heart of France. On August 25, Free French forces arrived in Paris and liberated the city from four years of German occupation. And by mid-September, the Allied armies had driven the Germans almost entirely out of France and Belgium.



WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE: THE ALLIED COUNTEROFFENSIVE, 1943–1945 This map illustrates the final, climactic movements in the war in Europe—the two great offensives against Germany that began in 1943 and culminated in 1945. From the east, the armies of the Soviet Union, having halted the Germans at Stalingrad and Moscow, swept across eastern Europe toward Germany. From the west and the south, American, British, and other Allied forces moved toward Germany through Italy and—after the Normandy invasion in June 1944—through France. The two offensives met in Berlin in May 1945. Note, too, the northern routes that America and Britain used to supply the Soviet Union during the war.

◆ *What problems did the position of the Allied forces at the end of the war help to produce?*

For an interactive version of this map, go to www.mhhe.com/brinkley13ech26maps

The great Allied drive came to a halt, however, at the Rhine River in the face of a firm line of German defenses and a period of cold weather, rain, and floods. In mid-December, German forces struck in desperation along fifty miles of front in the Ardennes Forest. In the Battle of the Bulge (named for a large bulge that appeared in the American lines as the Germans pressed forward), they drove fifty-five miles toward Antwerp before they were finally stopped at Bastogne. The battle ended serious German resistance in the west.

While the Allies were fighting their way through France, Soviet forces were sweeping westward into central Europe and the Balkans. In late January 1945, the Russians launched a great offensive toward the Oder River inside Germany. In early spring, they were ready to launch a final assault against Berlin. By then, Omar Bradley’s First Army was pushing into Germany from the west. Early in March, his forces captured the city of Cologne, on the west bank of the Rhine. The next day, in a remarkable stroke of good fortune, he discovered and seized an undamaged bridge



THE NORMANDY INVASION This photograph, taken from a landing craft, shows American troops wading ashore and onto the Normandy beaches, where one of the decisive battles of World War II was taking shape. The invasion was launched despite threatening weather and rough seas.

over the river at Remagen; Allied troops were soon pouring across the Rhine. In the following weeks the British field marshal Bernard Montgomery, commander of Allied ground operations on D-Day and after, pushed into northern Germany with a million troops, while Bradley's army, sweeping through central Germany, completed the encirclement of 300,000 German soldiers in the Ruhr.

The German resistance was now broken on both fronts. American forces were moving eastward faster than they had anticipated and could have beaten the Russians to Berlin and Prague. Instead, the American and British high commands decided to halt the advance along the Elbe River in central Germany to await the Russians. That decision enabled the Soviets to occupy eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia.

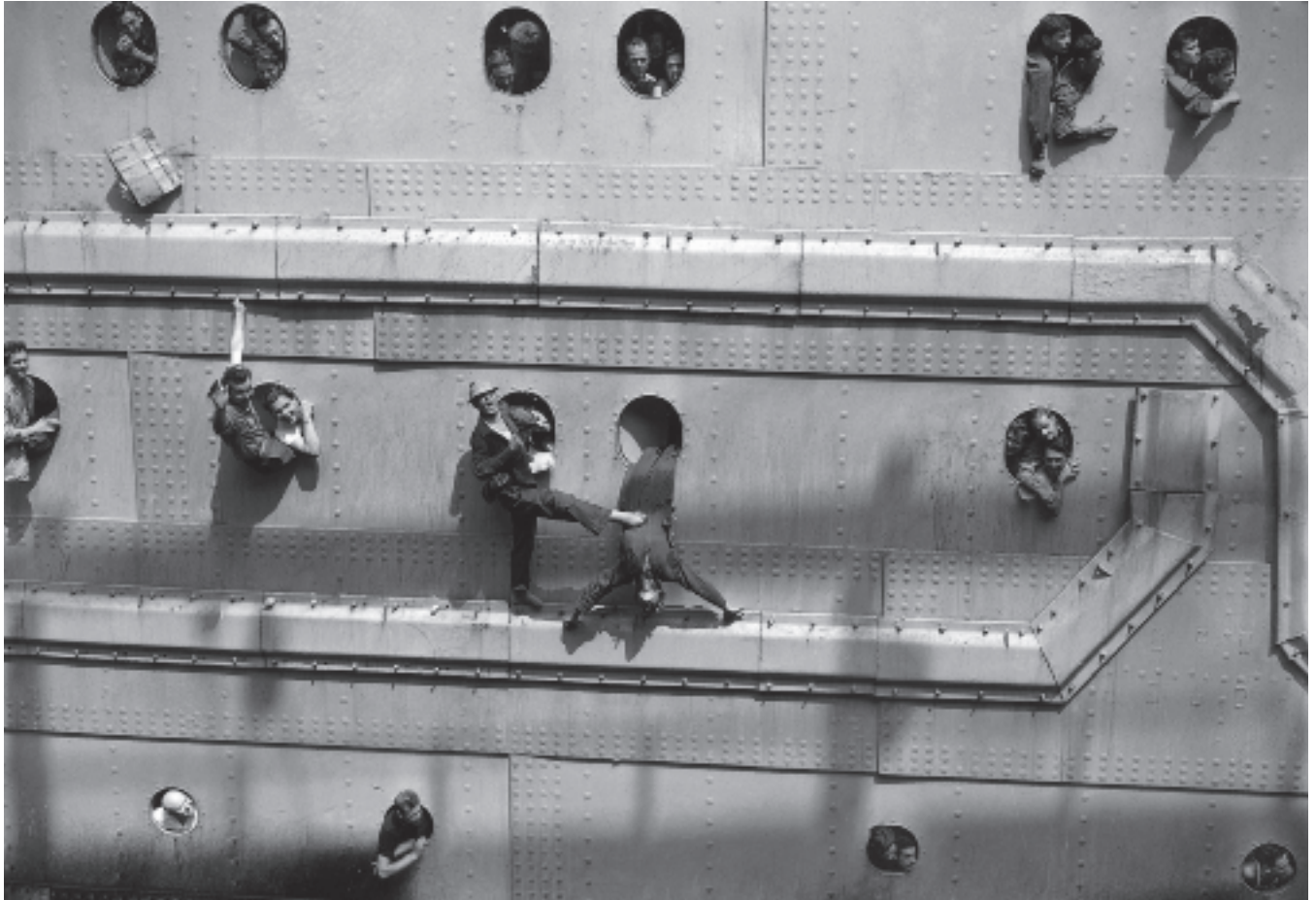
On April 30, with Soviet forces on the outskirts of Berlin, Adolf Hitler killed himself in his bunker in the capital.

Germany Defeated And on May 8, 1945, the remaining German forces surrendered unconditionally. V-E (Victory in Europe) Day prompted great celebrations in western Europe and in the United States, tempered by the knowledge of the continuing war against Japan.

The Pacific Offensive

In February 1944, American naval forces under Admiral Chester Nimitz won a series of victories in the Marshall Islands and cracked the outer perimeter of the Japanese Empire. Within a month, the navy had destroyed other vital Japanese bastions. American submarines, in the meantime, were decimating Japanese shipping and crippling the nation's domestic economy. By the summer of 1944, the already skimpy food rations for the Japanese people had been reduced by nearly a quarter; there was also a critical gasoline shortage.

Meanwhile, a frustrating struggle was in progress on the Asian mainland. In 1942, the Japanese had forced General Joseph W. Stilwell of the United States out of Burma and had moved their own troops as far west as the mountains bordering India. For a time, Stilwell supplied the isolated Chinese forces that were continuing to resist Japan with an aerial ferry over the Himalayas. In 1943, finally, he led Chinese, Indian, and a few American troops back through northern Burma, constructing a road and pipeline across the mountains into China (the Burma Road, also known as the Ledo Road or Stilwell Road), which finally opened in the fall of 1944. By then,



COMING HOME Euphoric American soldiers arrive in New York harbor back aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* after the end of the war in Europe in 1945. (AP Images)

however, the Japanese had launched a major counteroffensive and had driven so deep into the Chinese interior that they threatened the terminus of the Burma Road and the center of Chinese government at Chungking. The Japanese offensive precipitated a long-simmering feud between General Stilwell and Premier Chiang Kai-shek of China. Stilwell was indignant because Chiang (whom he called, contemptuously, the “Peanut”) was using many of his troops to maintain an armed frontier against the Chinese communists and would not deploy those troops against the Japanese.

The decisive battles of the Pacific war, however, occurred at sea. In mid-June 1944, an enormous American armada struck the heavily fortified Mariana Islands and, after some of the bloodiest operations of the war, captured Tinian, Guam, and Saipan, 1,350 miles from Tokyo. In September, American forces landed on the western Carolines. And on October 20, General MacArthur’s troops landed on Leyte Island in the Philippines. As the American forces pushed closer to Japan itself, the Japanese used their entire fleet against the Allied invaders in three major encounters—which together constituted the decisive Battle of

Battle of Leyte Gulf

Leyte Gulf, the largest naval engagement in history. American forces held off the Japanese onslaught and sank four Japanese carriers, all but destroying Japan’s capacity to continue a serious naval war.

Nevertheless, the imperial forces seemed only to increase their resistance. In February 1945, American marines seized the tiny volcanic island of Iwo Jima, only 750 miles from Tokyo, but only after the costliest single battle in the history of the Marine Corps. The marines suffered over 20,000 casualties, and the Japanese forces suffered even greater losses.

The battle for Okinawa, an island only 370 miles south of Japan, was further evidence of the strength of the Japanese resistance in those last desperate months. Week after week, the Japanese sent kamikaze (suicide) planes against American and British ships, sacrificing 3,500 of them while inflicting great damage. Japanese troops on shore launched desperate nighttime attacks on the American lines. The United States and its allies suffered nearly 50,000 casualties before finally capturing Okinawa in late June 1945. More than 100,000 Japanese died in the siege.

Okinawa



OKINAWA The invasion of Okinawa, an island near Japan, was one of the last major battles of World War II. In this photograph, taken June 18, 1945, a bullet-scarred monument provides shelter to members of the 7th Infantry of the U.S. Tenth Army as they look ahead at Japanese action. Over 11,000 Americans (and more than 80,000 Japanese) died in the rugged battle for the island, which consumed nearly three months. It ended three days after this photograph was taken. Two months later—after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—Japan surrendered. (*Bettmann/Corbis*)

The same kind of bitter fighting seemed to await the Americans in Japan. But there were also signs early in 1945 that such an invasion might not be necessary. The Japanese had almost no ships or planes left with which to fight. In July 1945, for example, American warships stood off the shore of Japan and shelled industrial targets (many already in ruins from aerial bombings) with impunity. A brutal firebombing of Tokyo in March, in which American bombers dropped napalm on the city and created a firestorm in which more than 80,000 people died, further weakened the Japanese will to resist. Moderate Japanese leaders, who had long since decided that the war was lost, were struggling for power within the government and were looking for ways to bring the war to an end. After the invasion of Okinawa, Emperor Hirohito appointed a new premier and gave him instructions to sue for peace; but the new leader could not persuade military leaders to give up the fight. He did try, along with the emperor himself, to obtain mediation through the Soviet Union. The Russians, however, showed little interest in playing the role of arbitrator.

Whether the moderates could ultimately have prevailed is a question about which historians and others continue to disagree. In any case, the question eventually became moot. In mid-July, American scientists conducted a successful test of a new atomic bomb, which led to a major event in world history, significant only in part because it ended World War II.

The Manhattan Project

Reports had reached the United States in 1939 that Nazi scientists had taken the first step toward the creation of an atomic bomb. The United States and Britain immediately began a race to develop the weapon before the Germans did.

The search for the new weapon emerged from theories developed by atomic physicists, beginning early in the century, and particularly from some of the founding ideas of modern science developed by Albert Einstein. Einstein's famous theory of relativity had revealed the relationships between mass and energy. More precisely, he had argued that, in theory at least, matter could be converted into a tremendous force of energy. It was Einstein himself, by then living in the United States, who warned Franklin Roosevelt that the Germans were developing atomic weapons and that the United States must begin trying to do the same. The effort to build atomic weapons centered on the use of uranium, whose atomic structure made possible the creation of a nuclear chain reaction. A nuclear chain reaction occurs when the atomic nuclei in radioactive matter are split (a process known as nuclear fission) by neutrons. Each fission creates new neutrons that produce fissions in additional atoms at an ever-increasing and self-sustaining pace.

The construction of atomic weapons had become feasible by the 1940s because of the discovery of the

Enrico Fermi

radioactivity of uranium in the 1930s by Enrico Fermi in Italy.

In 1939, the great Danish physicist Niels Bohr sent news of German experiments in radioactivity to the United States. In 1940, scientists at Columbia University began chain-reaction experiments with uranium and produced persuasive evidence of the feasibility of using uranium as fuel for a weapon. The Columbia experiments stalled in 1941, and the work moved to UC Berkeley and the University of Chicago, where Enrico Fermi (who had emigrated to the United States in 1938) achieved the first controlled fission chain reaction in December 1942.

By then, the army had taken control of the research and appointed General Leslie Groves to reorganize the project—which soon became known as the Manhattan Project (because it was devised in the Manhattan Engineer District Office of the Army Corps of Engineers). Over the next three years, the U.S. government secretly poured



THE MANHATTAN PROJECT J. Robert Oppenheimer, wearing the broad-brimmed hat, was one of the scientific leaders of the Manhattan Project, which developed the atomic bomb during World War II. The military commander of the project was General Leslie Groves. The two men are shown here after the war, examining the charred landscape of the Trinity site in New Mexico, where the first successful detonation of the new weapon occurred in July 1945. (Bettmann/Corbis)

nearly \$2 billion into the Manhattan Project—a massive scientific and technological effort conducted at hidden laboratories in Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Los Alamos, New Mexico; Hanford, Washington; and other sites. Scientists in Oak Ridge, who were charged with finding a way to create a nuclear chain reaction that could be feasibly replicated within the confined space of a bomb, began experimenting with plutonium—a derivative of uranium first discovered by scientists at UC Berkeley. Plutonium proved capable of providing a practical fuel for the weapon. Scientists in Los Alamos, under the direction of J. Robert Oppenheimer, were charged with the construction of the actual atomic bomb.

Despite many unforeseen problems, the scientists pushed ahead much faster than anyone had predicted. Even so, the war in Europe ended before they were ready to test the first weapon. Just before dawn on July 16, 1945, in the desert near Alamogordo, New Mexico, the scientists gathered to witness the first atomic explosion in history: the detonation of a plutonium-fueled bomb that its creators had named Trinity. The explosion—a blinding flash of light, probably brighter than any ever seen on earth, followed by a huge, billowing mushroom cloud—created a vast crater in the barren desert.

The Trinity Bomb

Atomic Warfare

News of the explosion reached President Harry S. Truman (who had taken office in April on the death of Roosevelt) in Potsdam, Germany, where he was attending a conference of Allied leaders. He issued an ultimatum to the Japanese (signed jointly by the British) demanding that they surrender by August 3 or face complete devastation. The Japanese premier wanted to accept the Allied demand, but he could not persuade the military leaders to agree. There was a hint from Tokyo that the government might agree to surrender, in return for a promise that the Japanese could retain their emperor. The American government, firmly committed to the idea of “unconditional surrender,” dismissed those proposals, convinced (perhaps correctly) that the moderates who were making them did not have the power to deliver them. When the deadline passed with no surrender, Truman ordered the air force to use the new atomic weapons against Japan.

Controversy has raged for decades over whether Truman’s decision to use the bomb was justified and what his motives were. (See “Where Historians Disagree,” pp. 752–753.) Some have argued that the atomic attack was unnecessary, that had the United States agreed to the survival of the emperor (which it ultimately did agree to, in any case), or waited only a few more weeks, the Japanese would have surrendered. Others argue that nothing less than the atomic bombs could have persuaded the hard-line military leaders of Japan to

Debating the Bomb's Use

THE DECISION TO DROP THE ATOMIC BOMB

In the fall of 1994, the Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., installed in its main hall the fuselage of the *Enola Gay*, the airplane that dropped the first atomic bomb ever used in warfare on Hiroshima in 1945. Originally, the airplane was to have been accompanied by an exhibit that would include discussions of the many popular and academic controversies over whether the United States should have used the bomb. But a powerful group of critics—led by veterans' groups and aided by many members of Congress—organized to demand that the exhibit be altered and that it reflect only the “official” explanation of the decision. In the end, the museum decided to mount no exhibit at all. The *Enola Gay* hangs in the Smithsonian today entirely without explanation for the millions of tourists who see it each year.

The furor that surrounded the Air and Space Museum installation reflects the passions that the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to arouse among people around the world, and people in the United States and Japan in particular. It also reflects the continuing debate among historians about how to explain, and evaluate, President Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb in the war against Japan.

Truman himself, both at the time and in his 1955 memoirs, insisted that the decision was a simple and straightforward one. The alternative to using atomic weapons, he claimed,



NAGASAKI SURVIVORS A Japanese woman and child look grimly at a photographer as they hold pieces of bread in the aftermath of the dropping of the second American atomic bomb—this one on Nagasaki. (Bettmann/Corbis)

surrender without a costly American invasion. Some critics of the decision, including some of the scientists involved in the Manhattan Project, have argued that whatever the Japanese intentions, the United States, as a matter of morality, should not have used the terrible new weapon. One horrified physicist wrote the president shortly before the attack: “This thing must not be permitted to exist on this earth. We must not be the most hated and feared people in the world.”

The nation's military and political leaders, however, showed little concern about such matters. Truman, who

had not even known of the existence of the Manhattan Project until he became president, was apparently making what he believed to be a simple military decision. A weapon was available that would end the war quickly; he could see no reason not to use it.

Still more controversy has existed over whether there were other motives at work behind Truman's decision. With the Soviet Union poised to enter the war in the Pacific, did the United States want to end the conflict quickly to forestall an expanded communist presence in Asia? Did Truman use the bomb to intimidate Stalin, with

American invasion of mainland Japan that might have cost as many as a million lives. Given that choice, he said, the decision was easy. "I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used." Truman's explanation of his decision has been supported by the accounts of many of his contemporaries: by Secretary of War Henry Stimson, in his 1950 memoir, *On Active Service in Peace and War*; by Winston Churchill; by Truman's senior military advisers. It has also received considerable support from historians. Herbert Feis argued in *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II* (1966) that Truman had made his decision on purely military grounds—to ensure a speedy American victory. David McCullough, the author of a popular biography of Truman published in 1992, also accepted Truman's own account of his actions largely uncritically, as did Alonzo L. Hamby in *Man of the People* (1995), an important scholarly study of Truman. "One consideration weighed most heavily on Truman," Hamby concluded. "The longer the war lasted, the more Americans killed." Robert J. Donovan, author of an extensive history of the Truman presidency, *Conflict and Crisis* (1977), reached the same conclusion: "The simple reason Truman made the decision to drop the bomb was to end the war quickly and save lives."

Other scholars have strongly disagreed. As early as 1948, a British physicist, P. M. S. Blackett, wrote in *Fear, War, and the Bomb* that the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was "not so much the last military act of the second World War as the

first major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia." The most important critic of Truman's decision is the historian Gar Alperovitz, the author of two influential books on the subject: *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam* (1965) and *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (1995). Alperovitz dismisses the argument that the bomb was used to shorten the war and save lives. Japan was likely to have surrendered soon even if the bomb had not been used, he claims; large numbers of American lives were not at stake in the decision. Instead, he argues, the United States used the bomb less to influence Japan than to intimidate the Soviet Union. Truman made his decision to bomb Hiroshima in the immediate aftermath of a discouraging meeting with Stalin at Potsdam. He was heavily influenced, therefore, by his belief that America needed a new way to force Stalin to change his behavior, that, as Alperovitz has argued, "the bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe."

Martin J. Sherwin, in *A World Destroyed* (1975), is more restrained in his criticism of American policymakers. But he too argues that a rapidly growing awareness of the danger Stalin posed to the peace made leaders aware that atomic weapons—and their effective use—could help strengthen the American hand in the nation's critical relationship with the Soviet Union. Truman, Sherwin said, "increasingly came to believe that America's possession of the atomic bomb would, by itself, convince Stalin to be more cooperative."

John W. Dower's *War Without Mercy* (1986) contributed, by implication at least, to another controversial explanation of the American decision: racism. Throughout World War II, most Americans considered the Germans and the Italians to be military and political adversaries. They looked at the Japanese very differently: as members of a very different and almost bestial race. They were, many Americans came to believe, almost a subhuman species. And while Dower himself stops short of saying so, other historians have suggested that this racialized image of Japan contributed to American willingness to drop atomic bombs on Japanese cities. Even many of Truman's harshest critics, however, note that it is, as Alperovitz has written, "all but impossible to find specific evidence that racism was an important factor in the decision to attack Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

The debate over the decision to drop the atomic bomb is an unusually emotional one—driven in part by the tremendous moral questions that the destruction of so many lives raises—and it has inspired bitter professional and personal attacks on advocates of almost every position. It illustrates clearly how history has often been, and remains, a powerful force in the way societies define their politics, their values, and their character.

whom he was engaged in difficult negotiations, so the Soviet leader would accept American demands? Little direct evidence is available to support (or definitively refute) either of these accusations.

On August 6, 1945, an American B-29, the *Enola Gay*, dropped an atomic weapon on the Japanese industrial center at Hiroshima. With a single bomb, the United States completely incinerated a four-square-mile area at the center of the previously undamaged city. More than 80,000 civilians died, according to later American estimates. Many more

survived to suffer the crippling effects of radioactive fallout or to pass those effects on to their children in the form of birth defects.

The Japanese government, stunned by the attack, was at first unable to agree on a response. Two days later, on August 8, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. And the following day, the United States sent another American plane to drop another atomic weapon—this time on the city of Nagasaki—inflicting more horrible damage and causing more than 100,000 deaths in another unfortunate community.

Hiroshima

Nagasaki



THE EMPEROR SURVEYS THE RUINS In the aftermath of the American firebombing of Tokyo, which caused as much damage and death as the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and just before the formal Japanese surrender in September 1945, Emperor Hirohito—previously visible to most Japanese only in formal portraits—walked through the ruins of the city and allowed himself to be photographed. This photograph is widely considered the first picture of the emperor to reveal any expression on his face. It was taken by Carl Mydans, a photographer for *Life* magazine. (*Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*)

Finally, the emperor intervened to break the stalemate in the cabinet, and on August 14 the government announced that it was ready to give up. On September 2, 1945, on board the American battleship *Missouri*, anchored in Tokyo Bay, Japanese officials signed the articles of surrender.

The most catastrophic war in the history of mankind had come to an end, and the United States had emerged not only victorious but in a position of unprecedented power, influence, and prestige. It was a victory, however, that few could greet with unambiguous joy. Fourteen million combatants had died in the struggle. Many more

civilians had perished, from bombings, from disease and starvation, from genocidal campaigns of extermination. The United States had suffered only light casualties in comparison with many other nations, but the cost had still been high: 322,000 dead, another 800,000 injured. And despite the sacrifices, the world continued to face an uncertain future, menaced by the threat of nuclear warfare and by the emerging antagonism between the world's two strongest nations—the United States and the Soviet Union—that would darken the peace for many decades to come.

CONCLUSION

The United States played a critical, indeed decisive, role in the war against Germany and Italy; and it defeated Imperial Japan in the Pacific largely alone. But America's sacrifices in the war paled next to those of the nation's most important allies. Britain, France, and, above all, the Soviet Union paid a staggering price—in lives, infrastructure, and social unity—that had no counterpart in

the United States, most of whose citizens experienced a booming prosperity and only modest privations during the four years of American involvement in the conflict. There were, of course, jarring social changes during the war that even prosperity could not entirely offset: shortages, restrictions, regulations, family dislocations, and perhaps most of all the absence of millions of men, and

considerable numbers of women, who went overseas to work and fight.

American fighting men and women, of course, had very different experiences than those Americans who remained at home. They endured tremendous hardships, substantial casualties, and great loneliness. They fought effectively and bravely. They helped liberate North Africa and Italy from German occupation. And in June 1944, finally, they joined British, French, and other forces in a great and successful

invasion of France, which led less than a year later to the destruction of the Nazi regime and the end of the European war. In the Pacific, they turned back the Japanese offensive through a series of difficult naval and land battles. But in the end, it was not the American army and navy that brought the war against Japan to a close. It was the unleashing of the most destructive weapon mankind had ever created—the atomic bomb—on the people of Japan that finally persuaded the leaders of that nation to surrender.

INTERACTIVE LEARNING

The *Primary Source Investigator CD-ROM* offers the following materials related to this chapter:

- A short documentary movie, **Dawn of the Nuclear Age**, on the Manhattan Project and the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan (D18).
- Interactive maps: **U.S. Elections (M7)** and **World War II (M27)**.
- Documents, images, and maps related to the massive U.S. effort in World War II and the effects of the war on the home front. Highlights include images

of the soldiers' experience in World War II, government posters encouraging women to join the wartime work force, and images and documents relating to the development of the atomic bomb.

Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/brinkley13e)

For quizzes, Internet resources, references to additional books and films, and more, consult this book's Online Learning Center.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

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