

World War II (1939-1945)—Overview and Home front

I. Overview of the War

- **Allies-** Great Britain, France, U.S., Soviet Union, China, and 50 other nations
- **Axis-** Japan, Italy, Germany
- September 3, 1939 (Germany's invasion of Poland) until May 8, 1945 (V-E Day) and September 2, 1945 (V-J Day)
 - Two Wars in one (Europe and Pacific)
- Nothing ambiguous about World War II (clearly good vs. evil) not "Make the World Safe for Democracy" as in WW I
 - Shaped U.S. foreign policy thereafter (create an identifiable enemy in future wars for "average Joe" to understand)
- Costliest war (both in \$ and lives lost)
- End of war created a whole new world order (balance of power between U.S. and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies)
 - Capitalism vs. Communism

II. U.S. Mobilization for the War and the Homefront (gov't agencies, role of women and minorities, and internal migrations)

- **Government Agencies**
 1. **War Production Board** (oversaw production of war goods and the drastic increase of farm products)
 - *eliminated non-essential items
 2. **Office of Price Administration** (controlled inflation)
 - *government influx of money in economy
 3. **War Labor Board**
 - controlled wages by placing a ceiling on raises
 - controlled strikes in government operated industry
 - *Smith-Connally Act, 1943
 - ensured adequate workforce----Bracero Program, recruitment of women and minorities
- **Role of Women and Minorities**
 - 6 million women took jobs ("Rosie the Riveter")
 - over 200,000 women served in the military (non-combat)
 - minorities given positions that were closed to them prior to the war (blacks-industry and military, Mexicans-agriculture and industry, Native Americans-"code talkers")
 - significance of women and minority participation
 - *sense of pride and accomplishment during the war will make it difficult to put them back in a 2nd class position after the war (further advanced the goal of full equality)

- **Internal Migrations**
 - Industrial centers for jobs (saw migration to all parts of the country especially the south and west)
 - 6 billion in government contracts went to the South (laid foundation for the “Sun Belt”)
 - Effects of Migration (both good and bad)
 1. caused racial tensions and in some instances riots and violence (L.A. and Detroit)
 2. diversified the economy of the South (trend over the next 50 years will be to move industry to the south)

III. **Impact of the War** (economy, size of government, and foreign policy)

- Economy (war and capitalism-----can't just be for nationalism)
 - GDP (gross domestic product) doubled during war (value of economy)
 - corporate profits doubled
 - disposable income of citizens doubled
 - unemployment decreased drastically (Great Depression ended)
 - National Debt soared from approx. \$50 billion to \$260 billion during the war
- Size of Government
 - era of big government truly began with many new agencies and departments expanded to handle the new role of the U.S. in the world (e.g. CIA, NSA, Defense Department)
- Foreign Policy (end to isolation forever---superpower, member of the United Nations, etc.)