

## **Pearl Harbor**

The U.S. fleet in the Pacific was anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, while most American sailors were still asleep in their bunks, Japanese planes from aircraft carriers flew over Pearl Harbor bombing every ship in sight. The surprise attack lasted less than two hours. In that time, 2,400 Americans were killed (including over 1,100 when the battleship *Arizona* sank), almost 1,200 were wounded, 20 warships were sunk or severely damaged, and approximately 150 airplanes were destroyed.

**Partial Surprise** The American people were stunned by the attack on Pearl Harbor. High government officials, however, knew that an attack somewhere in the Pacific was imminent because they had broken the Japanese codes. They did not know the exact target and date for the attack, which many felt would be in the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, or Malaya.

**Declaration of War** Addressing Congress on the day after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt described December 7th as “a date which will live in infamy.” He asked Congress to declare “that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.” On December 8, Congress acted immediately by declaring war, with only one dissenting vote. Three days later, Germany and Italy honored their treaty with Japan by declaring war on the United States.

**Soviet Union Invaded** By December 1941, the battlefield in Europe had shifted from the west to the east. Breaking his nonaggression pact with Stalin, Hitler had ordered an invasion of the Soviet Union. Thus, the principal Allies fighting Nazi Germany from 1942 to 1945 were Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The three Allied leaders—Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin—agreed to concentrate on the war in Europe before shifting their resources to counter Japanese advances in the Pacific.

## **World War II: The Home Front**

FDR compared the transition after Pearl Harbor to a patient with new problems. It was time for Dr. Win-the-War to take over from Dr. New Deal.

### **Mobilization**

The success of U.S. and Allied armed forces depended on mobilizing America's people, industries, and creative and scientific communities. The role of federal government expanded well beyond the anything in World War I or the New Deal.

**Federal Government** As in World War I, the U.S. government organized a number of special agencies to mobilize U.S. economic and military resources for the wartime crisis. Early in 1942, the War Production Board (WPB) was established to manage war industries. Later the Office of War Mobilization (OWM) set production priorities and controlled raw materials. The government

used a cost-plus system, in which it paid war contractors the costs of production plus a certain percentage for profit. One federal agency, the Office of Price Administration (OPA), regulated almost every aspect of civilians' lives by freezing prices, wages, and rents and rationing such commodities as meat, sugar, gasoline, and auto tires, primarily to fight wartime inflation.

Deficit spending during the depression was dwarfed by the deficits incurred during the war. Federal spending increased 1,000 percent between 1939 and 1945. As a result the gross national product grew by 15 percent or more a year. World War II proved what the New Deal did not, that the government could spend its way out of a depression. By war's end, the national debt had reached the then staggering figure of \$250 billion, five times what it had been in 1941.

**Business and Industry** Stimulated by wartime demand and government contracts, U.S. industries did a booming business, far exceeding their production and profits of the 1920s. The depression was over, vanquished at last by the coming of war. By 1944, unemployment had practically disappeared.

War-related industrial output in the United States was astonishing. By 1944, it was twice that of all the Axis powers combined. Instead of automobiles, tanks and fighter planes rolled off the assembly lines. American factories produced over 300,000 planes, 100,000 tanks, and ships with a total capacity of 53 million tons. So efficient were production methods that Henry Kaiser's giant shipyard in California could turn out a new ship in just 14 days. The war concentrated production in the largest corporations, as smaller business lost out on government contracts to larger businesses with more capacity. The 100 largest corporations accounted for up to 70 percent of wartime manufacturing.

**Research and Development** Government worked closely not only with industries, but also universities and research labs to create and improve technologies that could be used to defeat the enemy. The Office of Research and Development was established to contract scientists and universities to help in the development of electronics, such as radar and sonar, medicines such as penicillin, jet engines, rockets, and in the top secret Manhattan Project, the atomic bomb. Ironically, many of the European scientists that had to flee Fascist persecution would contribute to its defeat working in United States.

**Workers and Unions** Labor unions and large corporations agreed that while the war lasted, there would be no strikes. Workers became disgruntled, however, as their wages were frozen while corporations made large profits. John L. Lewis therefore called a few strikes of coal unions. The Smith-Connally Anti-Strike Act of 1943, passed over Roosevelt's veto, empowered the government to take over war-related businesses whose operations were threatened by a strike. In 1944, Roosevelt had occasion to use this law when he ordered the army to operate the nation's railroads for a brief period.

**Financing the War** The government paid for its huge increase in spending (\$100 billion spent on the war in 1945 alone) by (1) increasing the income

tax and (2) selling war bonds. For the first time, most Americans were required to pay an income tax, and in 1944, the practice was begun of automatically deducting a withholding tax from paychecks. Borrowing money by selling \$135 billion in war bonds supplemented the tax increase. In addition, the shortage of consumer goods made it easier for Americans to save.

**Wartime Propaganda** Few people opposed the war, so the government's propaganda campaign of posters, songs, and news bulletins was primarily to maintain public morale, to encourage people to conserve resources, and to increase war production. The Office of War Information controlled news about troop movements and battles. Movies, radio, and popular music all supported and reflected a cheerful, patriotic view of the war. For example, Norman Rockwell's popular illustrations of the "Four Freedoms" captured the liberties and values at stake in the war. The unity of Americans behind the war's democratic ideals helped that generation remember it as "the Good War."

### ***The War's Impact on Society***

Every group in the U.S. population adjusted to the unique circumstances of wartime. The increase in factory jobs caused millions to leave rural areas for industrial jobs in the Midwest and on the Pacific Coast, especially California. Entirely new communities arose around the construction of new factories and military bases. Many of the new defense installations were located in the South because of that region's warm climate and low labor costs. The wartime expansion set the stage for a post-war migration to the Sunbelt.

**African Americans** Attracted by jobs in the North and West, over 1.5 million African Americans left the South. In addition, a million young men left home to serve in the armed forces. Whether as soldiers or civilians, all faced continued discrimination and segregation. White resentment in urban areas led to dozens dying in race riots in New York and Detroit during the summer of 1943. Civil rights leaders encouraged African Americans to adopt the "Double V" slogan—one for victory over fascism abroad and one for equality at home.

Membership in the NAACP increased during the war. Another civil rights organization, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), was formed in 1942 to work more militantly for African American interests. After black leaders threatened a protest march on Washington, the Roosevelt administration issued an executive order to prohibit discrimination in government and in businesses that received federal contracts. One judicial victory was achieved in the Supreme Court case of *Smith v. Allwright* (1944), which ruled that it was unconstitutional to deny membership in political parties to African Americans as a way of excluding them from voting in primaries.

**Mexican Americans** Many Mexican Americans worked in defense industries, and over 300,000 served in the military. A 1942 agreement with Mexico allowed Mexican farmworkers, known as *braceros*, to enter the United States

in the harvest season without going through formal immigration procedures. The sudden influx of Mexican immigrants into Los Angeles stirred white resentment and led to the so-called zoot suit riots in the summer of 1943, in which whites and Mexican Americans battled on the streets.

**American Indians** American Indians also contributed to the war effort. Approximately 25,000 served in the military, and thousands more worked in defense industries. Having discovered the opportunities off their reservations, more than half never returned.

**Japanese Americans** More than any other ethnic group, Japanese Americans suffered from their association with a wartime enemy. Almost 20,000 native-born Japanese Americans served loyally in the military. Nevertheless, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese Americans were suspected of being potential spies and saboteurs, and a Japanese invasion of the West Coast was considered imminent by many. In 1942, these irrational fears as well as racism prompted the U.S. government to order over 100,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast to leave their homes and reside in the barracks of internment camps. Japanese Americans living in other parts of the U.S., including Hawaii, did not come under this order. In the case of *Korematsu v. U.S.* (1944), the Supreme Court upheld the U.S. government's internment policy as justified in wartime. Years later, in 1988, the federal government agreed the ruling was unjust and awarded financial compensation to those still alive who had been interned.

**Women** The war also changed the lives of women. Over 200,000 women served in uniform in the army, navy and marines, but in noncombat roles. As in World War I, an acute labor shortage caused women to take jobs vacated by men in uniform. Almost 5 million women entered the workforce, many of them working in industrial jobs in the shipyards and defense plants. The number of married women in the workforce increased to 24 percent. A song about "Rosie the Riveter" was used to encourage women to take defense jobs. However, they received pay well below that of male factory workers.

**Wartime Solidarity** The New Deal helped immigrant groups feel more included, and serving together as "bands of brothers" in combat or working together for a common cause in defense plants helped to reduce prejudices based on nationality, ethnicity and religion. The wartime migrations also helped to soften regional differences, and open the eyes of many Americans to the injustice of racial discrimination.

### ***The Election of 1944***

With the war consuming most of people's attention, the presidential election of 1944 had less interest than usual.

**Again, FDR** Many felt that, in the war emergency, there should be no change in leadership. The president therefore sought and received the Democratic nomination for the fourth time. There was a change, however, in the Democrats' choice of a vice presidential running mate. Party leaders felt that Roosevelt's third-term vice president, Henry Wallace, was too radical and

unmanageable. With Roosevelt's agreement, they replaced Wallace with Harry S. Truman, a Missouri senator with a national reputation for having conducted a much-publicized investigation of war spending. Although Roosevelt publicly denied medical problems, those near him recognized his uncertain health.

**Thomas Dewey** The Republicans nominated the 42-year-old governor of New York, Thomas Dewey, who had a strong record of prosecuting corruption and racketeering. The Republican candidate was unable to offer any real alternative to Roosevelt's leadership or generate enthusiasm for change.

**Results** Winning 53 percent of the popular vote and an overwhelming 432-99 victory in the electoral college, the president was elected to an unprecedented fourth term. As it proved, however, FDR would live for less than three months after his inauguration. Most of his term would be served by Truman.

## **World War II: The Battlefronts**

The fighting of World War II was waged on two fronts, or "theaters of operation." In the Pacific, Japanese forces reached the height of their power in 1942, occupying islands throughout the western Pacific Ocean. In Europe, much of the fighting in the first year of war was between the Germans and the Soviets, as the latter fought desperately to prevent the conquest of Russia.

### ***Fighting Germany***

The high tide of the German advance ended in 1942, partly as a result of U.S. entry into the war but mainly because of a Soviet victory at Stalingrad in the winter of that year.

**Defense at Sea, Attacks by Air** Coordinating their military strategy, the British and Americans concentrated on two objectives in 1942: (1) overcoming the menace of German submarines in the Atlantic and (2) beginning bombing raids on German cities. The protracted naval war to control the shipping lanes was known as the Battle of the Atlantic. German submarines sank over 500 Allied ships in 1942. Gradually, however, the Allies developed ways of containing the submarine menace through the use of radar, sonar, and the bombing of German naval bases. The U.S. bombers carried out daylight "strategic bombing" raids on military targets in Europe, but the lines between military and civilian targets became blurred as the war carried on, especially in Japan,

**From North Africa to Italy** The Allies had the daunting task of driving German occupying forces out of their advance positions in North Africa and the Mediterranean. They began their North Africa campaign, Operation Torch, in November 1942. Led by U.S. General Dwight Eisenhower and British General Bernard Montgomery, Allied forces succeeded in taking North Africa from the Germans by May 1943.

The next U.S.-British target was the Mediterranean island of Sicily, which they occupied in the summer of 1943, preparatory to an invasion of



Italy. Mussolini fell from power during the summer, but Hitler's forces rescued him and gave him nominal control of northern Italy. In fact, German troops controlled much of Italy at the time that the Allies invaded the peninsula in September 1943. The Germans put up a determined resistance to the Allied offensive, holding much of northern Italy until their final surrender in May 1945.

**From D-Day to Victory in Europe** The Allied drive to liberate France began on June 6, 1944, with the largest invasion by sea in history. On D-Day, as the invasion date was called, British, Canadian, and U.S. forces under the command of General Eisenhower secured several beachheads on the Normandy coast. After this bloody but successful attack, the Allied offensive moved rapidly to roll back German occupying forces. By the end of August, Paris was liberated. By September, Allied troops had crossed the German border for a final push toward Berlin. The Germans launched a desperate counterattack in Belgium in December 1944 in the Battle of the Bulge. After this setback, however, Americans reorganized and resumed their advance.

**German Surrender and Discovery of the Holocaust** Since 1942, Allied bombing raids over Germany had reduced that nation's industrial capacity and ability to continue fighting. Recognizing that the end was near, as the Russian army closed in on Berlin, Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. The unconditional surrender of the Nazi armies took place a week later, on May 7.

As U.S. troops advanced through Germany, they came upon German concentration camps and witnessed the horrifying extent of the Nazis' program of genocide against the Jews and others. Americans and the world were shocked to learn that 6 million Jewish civilians and several million non-Jews had been systematically murdered by Nazi Germany.

### ***Fighting Japan***

In Europe, British, Soviet, and U.S. forces were jointly responsible for defeating Germany, but in the Pacific, it was largely the U.S. armed forces that challenged the Japanese. After the Pearl Harbor attack, Japan seized control of much of East Asia and Southeast Asia. By early 1942, Japanese troops occupied Korea, eastern China, the Philippines, British Burma and Malaya, French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos), the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and most of the Pacific islands west of Midway Island.

**Turning Point, 1942** The war in the Pacific was dominated by naval forces battling over a vast area. Intercepting and decoding Japanese messages enabled U.S. forces to destroy four Japanese carriers and 300 planes in the decisive Battle of Midway on June 4–7. This battle ended Japanese expansion.

**Island-Hopping** After the victory at Midway, the United States began a long campaign to get within striking distance of Japan's home islands by seizing strategic locations in the Pacific. Using a strategy called "island-hopping,"

commanders bypassed strongly held Japanese posts and isolated them with naval and air power. Allied forces moved steadily toward Japan.

**Major Battles** Early in 1942, the Japanese had conquered the Philippines. When General Douglas MacArthur, the commander of army units in the Southern Pacific, was driven from the islands, he famously vowed, "I shall return." The conflict that prepared the way for U.S. reoccupation of the Philippines was the largest naval battle in history. At the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, the Japanese navy was virtually destroyed. For the first time in the war, the Japanese used *kamikaze* pilots to make suicide attacks on U.S. ships. Kamikazes also inflicted major damage in the colossal Battle of Okinawa (April to June 1945). Before finally succeeding in taking this island near Japan, U.S. forces suffered 50,000 casualties and killed 100,000 Japanese.

**Atomic Bombs** After Okinawa, a huge invasion force stood ready to attack Japan. Extremely heavy casualties were feared. By this time, however, the United States had developed a frightfully destructive new weapon. The top-secret Manhattan Project had begun in 1942. Directed by the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the project employed over 100,000 people and spent \$2 billion to develop a weapon whose power came from the splitting of the atom. The atomic bomb, or A-bomb, was successfully tested on July 16, 1945, at Alamogordo, New Mexico. The new president, Harry Truman, and his wartime allies called on Japan to surrender unconditionally or face "utter destruction." When Japan gave an unsatisfactory reply, Truman consulted with his advisers and decided to use the new weapon on two Japanese cities. On August 6, an A-bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, and on August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. About 250,000 Japanese died, either immediately or after a prolonged period of suffering, as a result of the two bombs.

**Japan Surrenders** Within a week after the second bomb fell, Japan agreed to surrender if the Allies would allow the emperor to remain as a titular (powerless) head of state. General MacArthur received Japan's formal surrender on September 2, 1945, in Tokyo harbor aboard the battleship *Missouri*.

## Wartime Conferences

During the war, the Big Three (leaders of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain) arranged to confer secretly to coordinate their military strategies and to lay the foundation for peace terms and postwar involvement.

**Casablanca** The first conference involved only two of the Big Three. In January 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed on the grand strategy to win the war, including to invade Sicily and Italy and to demand "unconditional surrender" from the Axis powers.

**Teheran** The Big Three—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—met for the first time in the Iranian city of Teheran in November 1943. They agreed that the British and Americans would begin their drive to liberate France in the spring

of 1944 and that the Soviets would invade Germany and eventually join the war against Japan.

**Yalta** In February 1945, the Big Three conferred again at Yalta, a resort town on the Black Sea coast of the Soviet Union. Their agreement at Yalta would prove the most historic of the three meetings. After victory in Europe was achieved, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin agreed that

- Germany would be divided into occupation zones
- there would be free elections in the liberated countries of Eastern Europe (even though Soviet troops controlled this territory)
- the Soviets would enter the war against Japan, which they did on August 8, 1945—just as Japan was about to surrender
- the Soviets would control the southern half of Sakhalin Island and the Kurile Islands in the Pacific and would have special concessions in Manchuria
- a new world peace organization (the future United Nations) would be formed at a conference in San Francisco

**Death of President Roosevelt** When the president returned from Yalta and informed Congress of his agreement with Churchill and Stalin, it was apparent that his health had deteriorated. On April 12, 1945, while resting in a vacation home in Georgia, an exhausted Franklin Roosevelt died suddenly. News of his death shocked the nation almost as much as Pearl Harbor. Harry S. Truman entered the presidency unexpectedly to assume enormous responsibilities as commander in chief of a war effort that had not yet been won.

**Potsdam** In late July, after Germany's surrender, only Stalin remained as one of the Big Three. Truman was the U.S. president, and Clement Attlee had just been elected the new British prime minister. The three leaders met in Potsdam, Germany (July 17–August 2, 1945) and agreed (1) to demand that Japan surrender unconditionally, and (2) to hold war-crime trials of Nazi leaders.

## The War's Legacy

The most destructive war in the history of the world had profound effects on all nations, including the United States.

### Costs

The deadliest war in human history resulted in the deaths of some 50 million military personnel and civilians worldwide. Fifteen million Americans served in uniform and approximately 300,000 Americans lost their lives either in Europe or the Pacific, and 800,000 were wounded. Excluding the Civil War, more