Chapter 12 Notes America and World War II

Section 1: The Road to War

The Rise of Dictators

Bitterness over the outcome of World War I and serious economic problems led to the rise of dictators in several countries.

- Adolf Hitler and other ruthless dictators rose to power by taking advantage of people’s fear, anger, and suffering in depressed economic times.

- In Italy, Benito Mussolini made fascism popular and forced Italy’s king to name Mussolini the head of government.
  - Mussolini ended democratic rule and built up the military.

- Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party, blamed Jews for the problems in Germany, and his anti-Semitism led to unspeakable horrors.
  - Hitler ended democracy and established a totalitarian state.

- Japanese leaders, feeling they did not have enough land or resources, invaded mineral-rich Manchuria, a region of China, in 1931.

- In 1940, Japan joined Germany and Italy in the “Axis” alliance.

- Joseph Stalin—who rose to power in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s—used force to obtain obedience from his people.

- In America, Congress passed the Neutrality Acts, which banned weapons sales and loans to nations at war.

Germany on the March

Other European countries stood by as Germany expanded its territory.

- In March 1936, Hitler ordered German troops into the Rhineland.

- Hitler insisted that Austria be unified with Germany and sent troops there in March 1938.

- When Hitler declared it Germany’s right to take over the German-speaking Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, Britain and France tried to avoid war through appeasement.

  - At the Munich Conference, British and French leaders gave the Sudetenland to Germany in exchange for Hitler’s pledge that he would not expand any further.

  - In March 1939, however, Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia.
Section 2: War Begins

War in Europe

World War II began in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, and Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

- France and Great Britain declared war on Germany after Hitler sent his armies into Poland on September 1, 1939.
- The Germans called their swift and fierce attack on Polish targets a Blitzkrieg, or lightning war.
- In April 1940, the Netherlands and Belgium asked the Allied Powers—Britain and France—for help from the German attack but were soon overwhelmed.
- In June 1940, the Germans crossed into France. Italy joined the Germans and attacked France from the southeast, and the French surrendered after German troops took Paris.
- Germany, Italy, and Japan formed the Axis Powers.
- In August 1940, the Germans began bombing British air bases, shipyards, and cities.
  - Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Great Britain, provided inspiration to his people.
- In June 1941, German forces invaded the Soviet Union.
  - As the Soviets retreated, Stalin ordered a scorched-earth policy to make it harder for Germans to supply their troops and to keep advancing.

America and the War

Wanting to defend democracy, the United States gradually became involved in the European conflict on the side of the Allies.

- Although he vowed to remain neutral, President Roosevelt prepared for war.
  - In 1938, Congress strengthened the navy.
  - The new Neutrality Act of 1939 allowed for warring nations to purchase American goods as long as they paid cash and carried the goods on their own ships.
  - In 1940, Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in United States history.
• Roosevelt ran for a third term as president in 1940 and won easily against Republican Wendell Willkie.

• In March 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, which allowed the U.S. to sell, lend, or lease weapons to any country vital to the defense of the United States.

• In August 1941, Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt drew up the Atlantic Charter, which set goals for the world after the destruction of the Nazis.
  
  o They urged disarmament and the creation of a “permanent system of general security.”

The Japanese Threat

The United States entered World War II as a result of Japan’s attack on the Pearl Harbor military base in 1941.

• While Hitler and Mussolini waged war in Europe, the Japanese made military conquests in the Far East.
  
  o Japan planned on taking the American territory of the Philippines.

• In response, Roosevelt froze all Japanese funds in U.S. banks and stopped the sale of oil, gasoline, and other resources that Japan lacked.

• On December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes attacked the American military base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
  
  o More than 2,300 soldiers, sailors, and civilians were killed.

  o The next day, the United States declared war on Japan.

  o Japan’s allies—Germany and Italy—declared war on the United States.

  o The United States joined the Allied nations and declared war on Germany and Italy.

Section 3: On the Home Front

America Prepares

The United States had to refocus its economy to provide supplies for the war effort.

• More than 15 million Americans joined the armed forces during the war, both as volunteers and as draftees.

• About 250,000 women served in the WACs (Women’s Army Corps), the WAVES (Women Appointed for Volunteer Emergency Service in the Navy), and women’s units in the marines, Coast Guard, and army air corps.
• New agencies were created to speed up **mobilization** for war.
  
  o The War Production Board supervised automakers as they **shifted** from manufacturing cars to producing trucks, jeeps, and tanks.
  
  o The Office of Price Administration established limits on consumer prices and rents to prevent inflation.
  
  o The National War Labor Board helped resolve labor disputes that might slow down war production.
  
• The Revenue Act of 1942 raised corporate taxes and required individuals to pay income taxes in order to help fund the war effort.

**Wartime America**

During World War II, Americans faced hardships but united to help the war effort.

• For many American families, the war meant separation from loved ones serving **overseas**.

• With industries geared to producing goods to fight the war, Americans faced shortages of many consumer goods.

• The government issued coupons for individuals to purchase certain items—such as gasoline and meat—that were **rationed**.

• Many Americans helped the war effort by planting victory gardens, collecting scrap metal, or joining in **civil defense**.

**Women and Minorities**

World War II brought new opportunities to women and minorities, but inequalities remained.

• Women were needed to fill the vacancies in the labor force left by men going to war.

• About 1 million African Americans served in the armed forces during World War II.

• The 332nd Fighter Group, known as the **Tuskegee Airmen**, shot down more than 200 enemy planes.

• President Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Commission to combat discrimination in industry.

• Thousands of Native Americans left reservations to work in defense industries and serve in the armed forces.

• A group of Navajo soldiers known as the “code talkers” used a special code based on the Navajo language to send messages that the Japanese could not decipher.
• More than 250,000 Latinos served in the armed forces.

• The bracero program recruited thousands of farm and railroad workers from Mexico to work in American industry.

• Although about two-thirds of Japanese Americans were Nisei—American citizens who were born in the United States—many people questioned their loyalty.
  o President Roosevelt directed the army to relocate more than 100,000 Japanese Americans who lived on the West Coast to internment camps.
  o In 1944 in Korematsu v. United States, the Supreme Court upheld the order providing for the relocation of Japanese Americans.

Section 4: War in Europe and Africa

North African Campaign

Allied armies fought a successful campaign against Axis forces in North Africa.

• Allied leaders decided to concentrate on defeating Hitler before dealing with Japan.

• Roosevelt and Winston Churchill agreed to attack Germany in North Africa first.
  o In November 1942, the British defeated German general Rommel at the battle of El Alamein.
  o British and American forces led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower drove the Germans out of North Africa in May 1943.

• American general George Patton and British general Bernard Montgomery took Rome, Italy, in June 1944.

The Tide Turns in Europe

From 1944 to 1945, the Allies fought a two-front war in Europe to defeat the Nazis.

• In 1941, German troops began a siege of Leningrad that lasted 900 days; however, the Germans could not take the city.

• The Germans were also unsuccessful in their attempts to take Moscow, the Russian capital, and Stalingrad, a major industrial port.

• As the Soviets pushed toward Germany from the east, the Allies were tense as they prepared for Operation Overlord—the invasion of occupied Europe.

• On June 6, 1944, or D-Day, the Allies began their invasion of Europe.

The Germans counterattacked in Belgium, but were eventually defeated in the Battle of the Bulge.

Realizing the situation was hopeless, Hitler committed suicide in Berlin on April 30, 1945.

Germany signed an unconditional surrender on May 7, and the Allies declared May 8 V-E Day for “Victory in Europe.”

President Roosevelt died suddenly on April 12, 1945, and Harry S. Truman became president.

The Holocaust

The Nazis increased their persecution of the Jews and set up death camps in an effort to kill all of Europe’s Jewish population.

- The Nazis planned genocide—wiping out an entire group of people—of the Jews.
- About 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust, along with millions of others—Slavs, Roma (Gypsies), communists, homosexuals, and people with handicaps.
- When Hitler gained power in 1933, Jews were quickly deprived of their rights and citizenship.
- On November 9, 1938, the Nazis killed many Jews, burned Jewish places of worship, destroyed Jewish shops, and sent about 30,000 Jewish men to concentration camps.
- The mass killing of Jews began when the German army invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.
- In January 1942, the Nazis agreed on what they called the “final solution” to destroy the Jews.
  - In death camps—such as Auschwitz and Treblinka—healthy prisoners became slave laborers, while the elderly, disabled, sick, and mothers and children were sent to the gas chambers.

Section 5: War in the Pacific

The Pacific Front

The Allies fought the Japanese for four long years in the Pacific.

- On the same day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Japanese bombers struck American airfields in the Philippines and on the islands of Wake and Guam—key American bases in the Pacific.
• American general **Douglas MacArthur** and his Filipino and American troops were forced to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula and the small island fortress of Corregidor.

• Allied troops surrendered after months of fierce fighting, and more than 20,000 of the troops died during the **Bataan Death March** to a prison camp.
  
  o General MacArthur had left for Australia to command Allied forces in the Pacific two months prior to the surrender in Bataan.

• James Doolittle’s bombing raid of Tokyo and the American victory in the Battle of the Coral Sea helped improve low American morale.

• The navy destroyed four Japanese aircraft carriers and hundreds of airplanes in a victory at the **Battle of Midway**.

• General MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz adopted a strategy know as **island hopping**—attacking and capturing certain key islands.
  
  o American forces met stiff resistance when fighting for control of **Guadalcanal**, but the Americans finally **secured** the island in February 1943.
  
  o American forces captured Guam and neighboring islands in June 1944.
  
  o American ships destroyed most of the Japanese fleet at the **Battle of Leyte Gulf** in the Philippines in October 1944.

• In March and June of 1945, American forces seized the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

• In desperation, the Japanese unleashed suicide pilots known as **kamikazes**.

**The End of the War**

American use of the atomic bomb brought about Japan’s surrender in the Pacific conflict.

• Although faced with certain defeat, the Japanese continued to fight.

• President Roosevelt created a top-secret operation—the Manhattan Project—to create the first atomic bomb.

• President Truman, who took office after Roosevelt’s death, regarded the atomic bomb as a military weapon and believed it was his duty to use it to save American lives.

• The Allies issued the Potsdam Declaration, warning that if Japan did not surrender, they faced “prompt and utter destruction.”

• On August 6, 1945, the **Enola Gay** dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. A second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki three days later.
- Between 80,000 and 120,000 people were killed in Hiroshima, and the Nagasaki bomb killed between 35,000 and 74,000 people.

- Japan surrendered, and August 15, 1945, was proclaimed **V-J Day** for “Victory over Japan.”

- World War II was the most destructive **conflict** in history, with more than 55 million people losing their lives.

  - American casualties—about 322,000 dead and 800,000 injured—were high, but light compared to other nations.
1943
Feb. Germans are defeated at Stalingrad.
July Allies invade Sicily; Mussolini resigns.
Aug. Women Air Force Service Pilots is formed.
Sept. Allies invade mainland Italy; Italy surrenders.

1944
June 6 D-Day: Allies launch an invasion of Europe.
Aug. Paris is liberated from German control.

1945
Feb. U.S. flag is raised over Iwo Jima.
April Franklin Roosevelt dies; Harry Truman becomes president.
May 8 Germany surrenders, victory in Europe.
June U.S. troops capture Okinawa, liberate Philippines.
Aug. Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
Sept. 2 Japan signs unconditional surrender, ending World War II.

Raising the flag on Iwo Jima

Time Line Rise of Nazism

Path to Power By 1933 the Nazis—once a small, obscure group—had become Germany's most powerful political party.

1918 Germany defeated in World War I
1921 Hitler becomes leader of Nazi party
1923 Nazis try to seize power in Munich
1925 Hitler writes Mein Kampf in prison
1929 Great Depression begins
1930 Many Nazis elected to Germany's parliament
1933 Hitler named chancellor, or head of government
Military Increases  After Hitler’s invasion of Poland, the United States began to expand its armed forces and defense plants.

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<th>U.S. Military Personnel on Active Duty</th>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>334,473</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>458,365</td>
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<td>1941</td>
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<td>11,541,719</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>12,123,455</td>
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U.S. Military Aircraft Production

Year

Source: John Ellis, World War II: A Statistical Survey

Primary Source  Shock at Pearl Harbor

A Surprise Attack  The Japanese succeeded in their surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Sailor Charles Christensen describes the terrible scene on the USS Arizona:

“The oil was on fire, and they were trying to swim out of it. They’d come up and try to get their breath. The whites of their eyes were red. Their skin was coming off.”

—from Remember Pearl Harbor

U.S. Losses at Pearl Harbor

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<th>Human Casualties</th>
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<table>
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<th>Ships</th>
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<td>Sunk or beached</td>
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<tr>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Damaged</td>
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The Allies Invade Europe

The D-Day invasion marked a turning point in the war in Europe. Paris soon fell to the Allies, and, early in 1945, the final Allied assault in Europe began. D-Day was the beginning of the end of the war.
**Primary Source**  
Amphibious Warfare

The LVT “Amphtrac” In the invasion of Tarawa, only one vehicle—the LVT, or amphibious tractor “amphtrac”—was able to cross hazardous coral reefs and deliver troops onto the beaches. The “amphtrac” is like a boat with tank tracks. A true amphibian is capable of movement afloat and ashore.

![Amphibious Warfare Diagram]

- **A** Armor-plated pontoon (float)
- **B** Tracks
- **C** Machine guns

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**War in the Pacific**

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*Honoring Those Who Died*  
Enlisted men from the Naval Air Station at Kaneohe, Hawaii, place leis on the graves of their comrades killed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

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- **Japanese Empire, 1936**
- **Japanese occupied territory**
- **Extent of Japanese control, 1942**
- **Allied troop movements**
- **Major battle**
- **Atomic bombing**