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## THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

### THE PROGRESSIVE ERA AND WORLD WAR I (1900–1920)

The Populist movement dissipated, but not before raising the possibility of reform through government. The Populists' successes in both local and national elections encouraged others to seek change through political action. Building on Populism's achievements and adopting some of its goals (e.g., direct election of senators, opposition to monopolies), the **Progressives** came to dominate the first two decades of twentieth-century American politics. While the Populists were mainly aggrieved farmers who advocated radical reforms, the Progressives were urban, middle-class reformers who wanted to increase the role of government in reform while maintaining a capitalist economy.

## THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

One of the reasons Populism failed is that its constituents were mostly poor farmers whose daily struggle to make a living made political activity difficult. The Progressives achieved greater success in part because theirs was an urban, middle-class movement. Its proponents started with more economic and political clout than the Populists. Furthermore, Progressives could devote more time to the causes they championed. Also, because many Progressives were Northern and middle class, the Progressive movement did not intensify regional and class differences, as the Populist movement had.

The roots of Progressivism lay in the growing number of associations and organizations at the turn of the century. The National Woman Suffrage Association, the American Bar Association, and the National Municipal League are some of the many groups that rallied citizens around a cause or profession. Most of these groups' members were educated and middle class; the blatant corruption they saw in business and politics offended their senses of decency, as did the terrible plight of the urban poor.

Progressivism got a further boost from a group of journalists who wrote exposés of corporate greed and misconduct. These writers, dubbed "muckrakers" by Theodore Roosevelt, revealed widespread corruption in urban management (Lincoln Steffens's *The Shame of the Cities*), oil companies (Ida Tarbell's *History of Standard Oil*), and the meatpacking industry (Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*). Their books and news articles raised the moral stakes for Progressives.

Over the course of two decades, Progressives achieved great successes on both the local and national levels. They campaigned to change public attitudes toward education and government regulation in much the same way reformers of the 1830s had campaigned for public enlightenment on the plight of orphans, prostitutes, and the mentally infirm.

New groups arose to lead the fight against discrimination but met with mixed success. W. E. B. Du Bois headed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the quest for racial justice, an uphill battle so strenuous that, after a lifelong struggle, Du Bois abandoned the United States and moved to Africa. Meanwhile, women's groups continued to campaign for suffrage. The adamant, conservative opposition they faced gave birth to the feminist movement. One early advocate, Margaret Sanger, faced wide opposition for promoting the use of contraceptives (illegal in most places). The movement's greatest success was in winning women the right to vote, granted by the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Wisconsin governor Robert LaFollette led the way for many Progressive state leaders. Under his leadership Wisconsin implemented plans for direct primary elections, progressive taxation, and rail regulation. Many states extended greater power to voters by adopting the ballot initiative, through which the voters could propose new laws; the referendum, which allowed the public to vote on new laws; and the recall election, which gave voters the power to remove officials from office before their terms expired. The most famous recent example of a recall occurred in California when Arnold "Total Recall" Schwarzenegger became the new governor. Working-class Progressives also won a number of victories on the state level, including limitations on the length of the work day, minimum-wage requirements, child labor laws, and urban housing codes. Many states adopted progressive income taxes (taxes that charge higher percentages for people with higher incomes), which served partially to redistribute the nation's wealth.

The most prominent Progressive leader was President Theodore Roosevelt. People expected Roosevelt, a war hero, to be conservative because he was McKinley's vice president, but his politics surprised almost everyone. He was the first to successfully use the Sherman Antitrust Act against monopolies, and he did so repeatedly during his term, earning the nickname "the Trustbuster." Among Roosevelt's other progressive achievements were tightening food and drug regulations, creating national parks, and broadening the government's power to protect land from overdevelopment.

(Roosevelt, an avid outdoorsman, was a particularly impassioned conservationist.) Presidents Taft and Wilson continued to promote Progressive ideals. **William Howard Taft** spearheaded the drive for two constitutional amendments, one that instituted a national income tax (the Sixteenth Amendment) and another that allowed for the direct election of senators (the Seventeenth Amendment). He pursued monopolies even more aggressively than Roosevelt.

The third Progressive president was **Woodrow Wilson**, a Democrat who attempted to distinguish himself from his Republican opponent, Teddy Roosevelt, who ran for reelection (after Taft's one term) on the **Bull Moose** ticket in the 1912 election. The ideological differences between the two presidents are reminiscent of the political differences between **Alexander Hamilton** and **Thomas Jefferson**. While Roosevelt's policies are often referred to as **New Nationalism** (in the way that Henry Clay's American System can be described as "neo-Federalist"), Wilson referred to his ideas and policies as **New Freedom**.

Thomas Paine had suggested, "That government is best which governs least," while Jefferson, citing Locke, had declared that man, not God, created government, and therefore only granted it limited powers. The purpose of government, according to Locke, was to protect man's natural rights: life, liberty, and property. The Progressive Era is a turning point in American history because it marks the ever-increasing involvement of the federal government in our daily lives. It's no coincidence that Prohibition took effect during this era. While Jefferson suggested limiting the power of the federal government to protect individual liberty, Wilson now argued that the federal government had to assume greater control over business to protect man's freedom. For Roosevelt there were "good trusts and bad trusts." For Wilson trusts were monopolies, which violated freedom for workers and consumers. Wilson was committed to restoring competition through greater government regulation of the economy and lowering the tariff.

Wilson created the **Federal Trade Commission**, lobbied for and enforced the **Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914**, and helped create the **Federal Reserve System**, which gave the government greater control over the nation's finances.

Progressivism lasted until the end of World War I, at which point the nation, weary from war, stepped back from its moral crusade. The war had torn apart the Progressive coalition; pacifist Progressives opposed the war while others supported it. A "Red Scare," heightened by the Russian Revolution, further split the Progressive coalition by dividing the leftists from the moderates. Moreover, the Progressive movement had achieved many of its goals, and as it did, it lost the support of those interest groups whose ends had been met. Some say that the Progressive movement was brought to an end, at least in part, by its own success.

## **FOREIGN POLICY AND U.S. ENTRY INTO WORLD WAR I**

Roosevelt differed from his predecessors on domestic policy, but he concurred with their foreign policy. Roosevelt was, if anything, an even more devout imperialist than McKinley had been. In 1903 the Roosevelt administration strong-armed Cuba into accepting the **Platt Amendment**, which essentially committed Cuba to American semicontrol. Under Platt's stipulations Cuba could not make a treaty with another nation without U.S. approval, and the United States had the right to intervene in Cuba's affairs if domestic order dissolved. A number of invasions and occupations by the Marines resulted. For 10 of the years between 1906 and 1922, the American military occupied Cuba, arousing anti-American sentiments on the island.

Roosevelt's actions were equally interventionist throughout Central America. During his administration, the country set its sights on building a canal through the Central American isthmus, because a canal would greatly shorten the sea trip from the East Coast to California. Congress approved a plan for a canal through **Panama**, at the time a province of Colombia. Because Colombia asked for more

than the government was willing to spend, the United States encouraged Panamanian rebels to revolt, then supported the revolution. Not surprisingly, the new Panamanian government gave the United States a *much* better deal. Because American commercial interests were so closely tied to the canal's successful operation, the United States military became a fixed presence throughout the region. During the next 20 years, troops intervened repeatedly, claiming that Latin American domestic instability constituted a threat to American security. This assertion came to be known as the **Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine** and is often referred to as the Big Stick Policy.

American foreign policy continued to adhere to the Monroe Doctrine, which asserted America's right to assume the role of an international police force and intervene anywhere in the Western Hemisphere where it felt its national security was at stake. It also stated that the United States wanted no part of Europe's internal disputes. American commitment to that aspect of the Monroe Doctrine would soon be tested, as Europe started down the path leading to **World War I**. Complicating matters was the fact that the United States and England were quickly forming a close alliance. To America's benefit, England had not opposed its many forays into Central American politics, although it could have. The British were not merely being friendly; they were trying to line up the United States as a potential ally in their ongoing rivalry with Germany, the other great European power of the era.

Fortunately, you do not need to know the tangled series of events that led Europe into war in 1914. You do, however, have to know about the United States' initial efforts to stay out of the war and the events that ultimately drew it into the conflict. Woodrow Wilson won the election of 1912, a three-way race in which the third-party candidate, Theodore Roosevelt, outpolled Taft, the Republican incumbent. Wilson entered office with less than a commanding mandate—only 40 percent of the electorate voted for him. However, with regard to the simmering European conflict, he and the electorate were of the same mind: The United States should stay out of it.

When war broke out in Europe in August 1914, Wilson immediately declared the U.S. policy of **neutrality**. Neutrality called for America to treat all the belligerents fairly and without favoritism. It was Wilson's hope that the United States would help settle the conflict and emerge as the world's arbiter. However, the neutrality policy posed several immediate problems, owing to America's close relationship with England and relatively distant relationship with Germany and Austria-Hungary. A number of Wilson's advisors openly favored the Allies (led by the British).

The situation quickly grew more complicated. England's strategic location and superior navy allowed it to impose an effective **blockade** on shipments headed for Germany, particularly those coming from the West (namely, American shipments). Protests proved futile; the British government impounded and confiscated American ships. They then paid for the cargo, reducing the pressure that American merchants would otherwise have put on the U.S. government to take action against the blockade.

Germany attempted to counter the blockade with **submarines**, or **U-boats**. According to contemporary international law, an attacker had to warn civilian ships before attacking. Submarines could not do this, because doing so would eliminate their main advantage. Furthermore, when the Germans attacked civilian ships, it was usually because those ships were carrying military supplies. The Germans announced that they would attack any such ship, but that did not satisfy Wilson, who believed that the Germans should adhere to the strict letter of international law. Thus, when the German submarines sank the passenger ship *Lusitania* in 1915 (killing 1,200 passengers), the action provoked the condemnation of both the government and much of the public. That the *Lusitania* was carrying tons of ammunition to the British was a fact that received much less public attention than did the loss of 1,200 innocent lives.

The sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the bad publicity it generated, led the Germans to cease submarine warfare for a while. Britain made steady gains, however, and as the U-boats were Germany's most effective weapon, the Germans resumed their use. In 1916, while Wilson was campaigning for reelection on the slogan "He kept us out of war," Germany sank another passenger liner, the *Arabic*. In response, Wilson, while still maintaining neutrality, asked Congress to put the military into a state of "preparedness" for war, just in case. While most Americans wanted to stay out of the war, popular support for entry was beginning to grow.

Then, in early 1917 the British intercepted a telegram from German Foreign Minister Zimmerman. The telegram, imaginatively called the **Zimmerman telegram**, outlined a German plan to keep the United States out of the European war. The telegram stated that if Mexico were to declare war on the United States, Germany would provide Mexico help in regaining the lands lost in the Mexican War. The telegram also suggested that Germany would help Japan if they, too, wanted to go to war against America. Published in newspapers around the country, the telegram convinced many Americans that Germany was trying to take over the world. Although the public was by no means universally behind the idea of war, the balance had shifted enough so that within a month, America would declare war on Germany.

## WORLD WAR I AND ITS AFTERMATH

As is often the case during wartime, the government's power expanded greatly during the three years America was involved in World War I. The government took control of the telephone, telegraph, and rail industries, and a massive bureaucracy arose to handle these new responsibilities. The **War Industry Board**, created to coordinate all facets of industrial and agricultural production, sought to guarantee that not only the United States but also the rest of the Allies would be well supplied. (European production had been drastically cut by the war.) The WIB had mixed success; like most large bureaucracies, it was slow and inefficient.

The government also curtailed individual civil liberties during the war. In response to the still-sizable opposition to U.S. involvement, Congress passed the **Espionage Act** in 1917 and the **Sedition Act** in 1918. The Espionage Act prohibited anyone from using the U.S. mail system to interfere with the war effort and draft. (The draft had been instituted upon America's entry into the war.) The Sedition Act made it illegal to try to prevent the sale of war bonds or to speak disparagingly of the government, the flag, the military, or the Constitution. Like the Alien and Sedition Acts in the late 1790s, both laws violated the spirit of the First Amendment but were worded vaguely, giving the courts great leeway in their interpretation.

In 1919 the Supreme Court upheld the Espionage Act in three separate cases, the most notable being *Schenck v. United States*. Schenck was a prominent socialist and ardent critic of American capitalism, which he believed was the reason the United States had gone to war in the first place. He was arrested and convicted for violation of the Espionage Act when he printed and mailed leaflets urging men to resist the draft. Schenck argued that the draft was a blatant violation of the Thirteenth Amendment whose ratification in 1865 had abolished slavery; the wording of the amendment, however, did not mention slavery but rather prohibited "involuntary servitude." Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes ruled that one's civil liberties were not absolute and could in fact be curtailed if one's actions posed a "clear and present danger" to others or the nation. In essence, you cannot yell "FIRE!" in a crowded movie theater if there is no fire.

These laws soon became useful tools for the suppression of anyone who voiced unpopular ideas. A mood of increased paranoia pervaded the era, heightened by the **Russian Revolution** in 1917, which placed Russia under Communist control. Suddenly, Americans began to fear a communist takeover.

Radical labor unions, such as the International Workers of the World, were branded enemies of the state, and their leaders were incarcerated. Eugene Debs, the Socialist leader, was also imprisoned for criticizing the war. A new government agency, the **Federal Bureau of Investigation**, was created to prevent radicals from taking over; **J. Edgar Hoover** headed the nascent agency (and continued to run it until the 1970s). Business assumed greater power, while unions lost power. Under the pretext of stamping out radicalism, businesses increased their use of strikebreakers and other forceful tactics against unions. The government helped: In the **Palmer Raids** in early 1920, the government abandoned all pretext of respecting civil liberties as its agents raided union halls, pool halls, social clubs, and residences to arrest 4,000 suspected radicals. Six hundred were eventually deported, some for no other crime than their expression of sympathy for the communist movement.

The government helped create this frenzied atmosphere through its wartime propaganda arm, the **Committee on Public Information (CPI)**. As the war progressed, the CPI's messages grew more sensational. At lectures and movie theaters, in newspapers and magazines, the CPI created the image of the Germans as cold-blooded, baby-killing, power-hungry Huns. During this period, Americans rejected all things German; for example, they changed the name of sauerkraut to "liberty cabbage." More serious were the many acts of violence against German immigrants and Americans of German descent.

Wartime also presented new opportunities for women. Although the number of women in the workforce did not increase greatly during the war, their means of employment did change. Many women quit domestic work and started working in factories; at one point, 20 percent of factory-floor manufacturing jobs were held by women. (The symbol of Rosie the Riveter, however, belongs to World War II.) These workplace advances ended with the war, as veterans returned home and reclaimed their jobs.

Southern blacks, realizing that wartime manufacturing was creating jobs in the North, migrated to the big cities, like New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and Detroit. During the war, more than 500,000 blacks left the South in search of work. Many blacks joined the army; W. E. B. Du Bois encouraged blacks to enlist, hoping that military service would provide an inroad to social equality. Sadly, the army segregated blacks and assigned them mostly to menial labor. Fearful of the effects of integration, the army assigned black combat units to French command.

American participation in the war tipped the balance in the Allies' favor, and two years after America's entry, the Germans were ready to negotiate a peace treaty. Wilson wanted the war treaty to be guided by his **Fourteen Points**, his plan for world peace delivered to Congress in January of 1918, before the end of the war. The Fourteen Points called for free trade through lower tariffs and freedom of the seas; a reduction of arms supplies on all sides; and the promotion of self-determination, both in Europe and overseas (in other words, the end of colonialism). The plan also called for the creation of the League of Nations, a mechanism for international cooperation much like today's United Nations. Wilson's Fourteen Points served as a basis for initial negotiations, but the negotiations soon took a different direction.

The European Allies wanted a peace settlement that punished Germany, and ultimately they got it. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to cede German and colonial territories to the Allies, to disarm, to pay huge reparations, and to admit that the war was Germany's fault. Most historians agree that by leaving Germany humiliated and in economic ruin, the Treaty of Versailles set the stage for World War II. Although much of Wilson's plan was discarded, the Treaty of Versailles did create the League of Nations. Wilson hoped that the League would ultimately remedy the peace settlement's many flaws, but when he returned home, a rude surprise awaited him. According to the Constitution, the president has the power to negotiate treaties with foreign nations, but these treaties are subject to Senate ratification. This illustrates the principles of **separation of powers** and **checks and balances**.

At the center of the conflict was the debate over the League of Nations, particularly Article X of the League's covenant, which many people believed curtailed America's ability to act independently in foreign affairs, specifically Congress's power to declare war. The Senate split into three groups: Democrats, who sided with Wilson and were willing to accept America's entrance into the League of Nations; a group of Republicans who were totally opposed to the League and were known as the Irreconcilables; and the Reservationists, a group of Republicans led by **Henry Cabot Lodge**, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Wilson's political nemesis and intellectual rival.

Much has been made of Wilson's stubbornness and inability to compromise, in particular, his refusal to accept what were known as the Lodge Reservations. Ultimately, the Democrats and Irreconcilables joined forces and defeated the treaty, which had been amended to include the changes suggested by Henry Cabot Lodge and the Reservationists. Thus, the United States was not only not a signatory of the Treaty of Versailles, but also never joined the League of Nations, an international organization envisioned by an American President to maintain world peace. Weary of war, America was receding into a period of isolationism. The public wanted less interaction with Europe, not more, as the League would have required. Wilson tried to muster popular support for the treaty. However, while campaigning, Wilson suffered a major stroke, thereby ending whatever chance the treaty may have had for ratification. Many people wonder if the League of Nations would have been more successful in preventing World War II had the United States been a member.

## **THE JAZZ AGE AND THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1920–1933)**

After World War I the American economy started to grow rapidly (after a brief slump). By 1922 America was hitting new peaks of prosperity every day. The invention of a practical electric motor was largely responsible for the economic boom; like computers in the 1990s, electric motors became essential to work and home environments, driving industrial machines and household appliances. With the new prosperity other industries arose to serve the growing middle class in its search for the trappings of affluence.

### **PRO-BUSINESS REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATIONS**

As the age of progressive reform ended, many Americans became more comfortable with the idea of large, successful businesses. Some of these businesses, such as department stores, offered both convenience and reasonable prices. Others, like the automobile industry, offered products that made life more convenient and conferred status on their owners.

The government, which had worked closely with business leaders as part of the war effort, also grew to be more **pro-business** during the era. Government regulatory agencies (such as the Federal Trade Commission) more often assisted business than regulated it. Labor unions fell further out of public favor, particularly when they struck against industries necessary to keeping industrial America running smoothly. Unions striking for higher wages and safer work conditions in the steel, coal, and railroad industries were suppressed by federal troops. The Supreme Court overturned a minimum wage law for women and nullified child labor restrictions.

All three of the era's presidents—**Warren Harding**, **Calvin Coolidge**, and **Herbert Hoover**—pursued pro-business policies and surrounded themselves with like-minded advisors. Like Grant, Harding, an honest man, had the misfortune of surrounding himself with corrupt advisors; several of his cabinet members wound up in prison. The most infamous incident of his administration was the **Teapot Dome Scandal**, in which oil companies bribed the secretary of the interior in order to drill on public lands. Conservative on economic issues, Harding proved more liberal than his predecessor Wilson on

issues of civil liberty. He supported anti-lynching laws and tried to help farmers (who were benefiting less from the new economy than were middle-class city dwellers) by providing more money for farm loans. Harding died in office, and Coolidge, his vice president, assumed the presidency. When Coolidge ran for the presidency in 1924, he turned the election into a debate on the economy by running on the slogan "Coolidge prosperity." Coolidge won easily and, following his mandate, continued Harding's conservative economic policies. He also pushed for lower income-tax rates. We will discuss Hoover's presidency later, when we discuss the causes of the Great Depression.

The pro-business atmosphere of the era led to a temporary decline in the popularity of labor unions; membership levels dropped throughout the decade. Also contributing to this drop were the efforts of businesses to woo workers with pension plans, opportunities for profit sharing, and company parties and other events designed to foster a communal spirit at work. Businessmen hoped that, if they offered some such benefits, they could dissuade workers from organizing and demanding even more. Such practices were often referred to as **welfare capitalism**.

## MODERN CULTURE

No consumer product better typified the new spirit of the nation than the **automobile**. At first, automobiles were expensive conveniences, affordable only to the extremely wealthy; then, Henry Ford perfected the assembly line and mass production, which lowered the cost of automobiles. By the end of the decade, most middle-class families could afford a car. The automobile allowed those who worked in the cities to move farther away from city centers, thus giving birth to the **suburbs**, which, in turn, transformed the automobile from a convenience to a necessity. The impact of the automobile on the 1920s was tremendous, forcing areas to quickly develop roadways and the means of policing traffic. In 1929, with the population topping 100 million in the most recent census, more than 23 million automobiles were registered in the United States.

The **radio** followed automobiles in changing the nation's culture. Ten million families owned radios, and in cities it was not unusual for several families to gather at the home of a radio owner and settle in for the evening. As more houses gained access to electric power, household appliance sales boomed as well. The **advertising industry** grew up during the decade to hype all these new products. Although advertisements from that era look pretty goofy to us now, they were quite effective at convincing people to buy stuff they did not really need (not too different from today!).

All this consumerism required money, and as single-earner households often couldn't afford to "keep up with the Joneses," more women entered the working world. While the vast majority of married women continued to stay at home, more than ever—about 15 percent—entered the work force. Women continued, as they had in the past, to work in predominantly female-dominated professions (often called "pink collar jobs"), such as school teaching or office-assistant work, and to earn much less than men.

Despite the persistence of traditional roles for women, a new image of American women emerged and became a symbol of the Roaring Twenties—the **flapper**. World War I, the allure of the "big city," the right to vote, and new attitudes brought about by the ideas of Sigmund Freud (whose ideas were just beginning to circulate in the United States during the 1920s) opened up a whole new world for this new generation of emancipated women. They discarded the corset, layers of petticoats and long, dark dresses worn by their Victorian grandmothers, in favor of waistless dresses worn above the knee (shocking!), flesh-colored silk stockings (brought back from Paris), cute little hats, strings of long beads, a wrist full of bracelets, and ruby-red lips. Many flappers risked ruining their reputation by smoking cigarettes; drinking in public (despite Prohibition); and dancing the tango, the lindy, and the shimmy!



The rapid modernization of American society was reflected in the way it entertained itself. **Movies** grew tremendously popular during the decade, reflecting back at the nation its idealized self-image; on movie screens, young, independent-minded, gorgeous heroes and heroines defied all odds to succeed in romance and—at the same time—strike it rich. Sports grew more popular as well, especially baseball, whose greatest player of the era, Babe Ruth, was idolized by millions. In literature America gained international prominence through such world-class authors as **F. Scott Fitzgerald**, **Ernest Hemingway**, and playwright **Eugene O'Neill**. Ironically, many of these writers moved to Europe, where they chronicled their alienation from the modern era, which explains why they came to be known as the **lost generation**.

In the largest black neighborhood of New York City, theaters, cultural clubs, and newspapers sprang up—a development called the **Harlem Renaissance**. W. E. B. Du Bois opened writers' centers, and his prominence helped draw attention to Harlem's cultural movement. Among the great figures of the Harlem Renaissance were the poets **Langston Hughes**, **Countee Cullen**, and **Zora Neale Hurston**. Another major black cultural development was the popularization of **jazz**. Because jazz featured improvisation and free-spiritedness, it came to be seen as emblematic of the era (which is how the decade came to be known as the **Jazz Age**). Probably the most popular and most gifted of the era's jazz musicians was trumpeter **Louis Armstrong**.

## **BACKLASH AGAINST MODERN CULTURE**

Not all Americans were excited about the rapid transition into the modern age, and the 1920s were also a time of considerable reactionary backlash and renewed nativism. Most prominently, the **Ku Klux Klan** grew to more than 5 million members and widened its targets, attacking blacks, Jews, urbanites, and anyone whose behavior deviated from the Klan's narrowly defined code of acceptable Christian behavior. Anti-immigration groups grew in strength as well, targeting the growing number of southern and eastern European immigrants. Accusations that America's newcomers were dangerous subversives intensified when two Italian immigrant anarchists, **Sacco and Vanzetti**, were arrested on charges of murder. (Their trial immediately became a cause célèbre for the political left, as the evidence against them was inconclusive. Nonetheless, they were convicted and executed.) At the start of the decade, the United States started setting limits and quotas to restrict immigration. The **Emergency Quota Act of 1924** set immigration quotas based on national origins and discriminated against the "new immigrants" who came from southern and eastern Europe. These limits were set to reduce "foreign influence" on the country.

Another famous trial also illustrated the societal tensions of the decade. In 1925 Tennessee passed a law forbidding teachers to teach the theory of evolution. **John Thomas Scopes** broke that law, and his trial (dubbed the **Scopes Monkey Trial**) drew national attention, due in part to the two prominent attorneys arguing the case—**Clarence Darrow** and **William Jennings Bryan**, who, you may recall, ran for president in 1896. The case also captivated the nation because, for many, it encapsulated the debate over whether to stick with tradition or abandon it for progress's sake.

Nineteenth-century morals played a part in the institution of **Prohibition**, which banned the manufacture, sale, or transport of alcoholic beverages. The Prohibition movement had its roots in the reform campaigns of the 1830s and remained a mainstay of women's political agendas until, on the eve of women's enfranchisement (1917), the **Eighteenth Amendment** outlawed drinking. Many people soon came to resent the government's intrusion in what they considered a private matter. Prohibition was further weakened by the effectiveness of organized crime in producing and selling liquor, especially in the cities. Open warfare between competing gangs and between criminals and law enforcement earned this period the title of the "**gangster era**," which inspired many movies and television series. Prohibition was repealed in 1933.

## HERBERT HOOVER AND THE BEGINNING OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In 1928 the Republicans nominated **Herbert Hoover**. Like Coolidge, Hoover was able to parlay a strong economy into an easy victory. During his campaign, Hoover predicted that the day would soon come when no American would live in poverty. He turned out to be very wrong.

In October 1929 the bottom fell out of the stock market, and this was one of the reasons for the Great Depression, but not the main reason. Prices dropped, and no matter how far they dropped, nobody wanted to buy. Hoover and his advisers underestimated the damage that the stock market crash would eventually cause. Convinced that the economy was sound, Hoover reassured the public that only stock traders would be hurt because of their irresponsible speculation. (Traders had been allowed to buy on margin, which meant that they might only have to put up 10 or 20 percent of the cost of each stock, allowing them to borrow against future profits that may or may not materialize. Margin buying is a destabilizing practice that was made illegal soon after the crash.) Unfortunately, among those speculators were huge banks and corporations, which suddenly found themselves on the verge of bankruptcy and unable to pay employees or guarantee bank deposits.

Other factors contributed to plunging the nation into a deep depression. Manufacturers and farmers had been overproducing for years, creating large inventories. This led factories to lay off workers and made the farmers' crops worth much less on the market. Furthermore, production of new consumer goods was outstripping the public's ability to buy them. Supply so exceeded demand for so many goods, that this might be the main underlying cause for the Great Depression, ultimately leading to deflation, unemployment, and business failures. Finally, government laxity in regulating large businesses had led to the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a very few businessmen. When their businesses failed, many people were thrown out of work.

The Depression had a calamitous effect on tens of millions of Americans. People lost their jobs as their employers went bankrupt or, to avoid bankruptcy, laid off the majority of workers. People lost their life savings as thousands of banks failed, and many lost their homes when they could not keep up with mortgage payments. The homeless built shantytowns, sarcastically called "**Hoovervilles.**" In rural areas farmers struggled to survive as produce prices dropped more than 50 percent. Furthermore, a prolonged drought afflicted the Great Plains area of the Midwest, turning the region into a giant **Dust Bowl**. The situation encouraged agrarian unrest; farmers fought evictions and foreclosures by attacking those who tried to enforce them. Farmers also conspired to keep prices at farm auctions low, then returned the auctioned property to its original owner. In addition, they formed the **Farmers' Holiday Association**, which organized demonstrations and threatened a nationwide walk-out by farmers in order to raise prices.

At first Hoover opposed any federal relief efforts because he believed they violated the American ideal of "rugged individualism," but as the Depression worsened, he initiated a few farm assistance programs and campaigned for federal works projects (such as the Hoover Dam and the Grand Coulee Dam) that would create jobs. He hoped that raising tariffs would help American business, but the **Hawley-Smoot Tariff** actually worsened the economy. The Hawley-Smoot Tariff was the highest protective tariff in U.S. history, and it was enacted during one of the worst economic depressions ever.

Hoover's most embarrassing moment came in 1932 when Congress considered early payment of benefits to World War I veterans. Tens of thousands of impoverished veterans and their families, calling themselves the **Bonus Expeditionary Force**, came to Washington to lobby for the bill. When the bill was narrowly defeated, many refused to leave. They squatted in empty government offices or built shanties and stayed through the summer. In July Hoover ordered the Army to expel them, which Douglas MacArthur chose to do with excessive force. Employing the cavalry and attacking with tear gas, Army forces drove the veterans from D.C., then burned their makeshift homes. One hundred people died during the attack, including two babies who suffocated from exposure to tear gas.

News of the Army attack on the BEF killed any chance Hoover had for reelection, partly because he had taken the heat for MacArthur's actions. Nonetheless, by the summer of 1932, he had already secured the Republican nomination. He ran a campaign stressing his traditional conservative values. (His main concession was to accept the repeal of Prohibition; Hoover had opposed repeal during his first term.) His opponent, New York Governor **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, argued for a more interventionist government. Roosevelt also promised relief payments to the unemployed, which Hoover had opposed throughout his term. Roosevelt won the election easily.

## THE NEW DEAL AND WORLD WAR II (1934–1945)

In his inaugural address, Roosevelt declared war on the Depression, and he asked the country to grant him the same broad powers that presidents exercise during wars against foreign nations. He also tried to rally the public's confidence. In the most famous line of the speech, Roosevelt declared, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified fear." A powerful presidency and the people's confidence in Roosevelt both played a large part in the implementation of his sweeping reforms, called the **New Deal**.

### THE FIRST NEW DEAL

Early in 1933 Roosevelt summoned an emergency session of Congress to work out the details of his recovery plan. The period that followed is often called the **First Hundred Days** because (1) that's how long it lasted, and (2) it was during this time that the government implemented most of the major programs associated with the **First New Deal**. (The **Second New Deal** began two years later.)

Roosevelt first sought to reestablish America's confidence in its banking system. The **Emergency Banking Relief Bill** put poorly managed banks under the control of the Treasury Department and granted government licenses (which functioned as seals of approval) to those that were solvent. In the first of many **fireside chats** broadcast over the radio, Roosevelt reassured the public that the banks were once again secure. More than 60 million Americans listened, and they obviously took Roosevelt at his word. The following week, millions redeposited their savings (which they had withdrawn during the bank failures of the previous years). American banks, once on the verge of ruin, were again healthy and could begin to contribute to the economic recovery. Later during the first hundred days, the government passed the **Banking Act of 1933**, which created the **Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)** to guarantee bank deposits, which was a big deal since people used to lose all of the money in their accounts if a bank went bankrupt. Roosevelt also instituted a number of intentionally inflationary measures in order to artificially raise prices (to get more money flowing into the economy).

Roosevelt then set out to provide relief for the rural poor. At the time, farmers were overproducing. They hoped that by growing more they could make up for falling produce prices, but their efforts were futile; the more they produced, the further prices fell, just as they had in the 1800s during the time of the Populists. Roosevelt's solution was the **Agricultural Adjustment Act**, referred to as the **AAA**. (So many of Roosevelt's new agencies were referred to by their acronyms that the entire group became known as the "**alphabet agencies**.") The AAA provided payments to farmers in return for their agreement to cut production by up to one-half; the money to cover this program came from increased taxes on meat packers, millers, and other food processors. A month later, Congress passed the **Farm Credit Act**, which provided loans to those farmers in danger of foreclosure.

Several other New Deal programs established government control over industry. The **National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA)** consolidated businesses and coordinated their activities with the

aim of eliminating overproduction and, by so doing, stabilizing prices. The NIRA also established the **Public Works Administration (PWA)**, which set aside \$3 billion to create jobs building roads, sewers, public housing units, and other civic necessities. At the same time, the **Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)** provided grants to the states to manage their own PWA-like projects. In one of the New Deal's most daring moves, the government took over the **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)**. Under government control the TVA (which provided energy to the Tennessee Valley region) expanded its operations greatly, which led to the economic recovery of the region.

In June 1933 Congress adjourned, ending the First Hundred Days. Most of the programs that made up the First New Deal were in place, although others, such as the creation of both the **National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)**—which mediated labor disputes—and the **Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)**—which regulated the stock market—were not implemented until 1934. The First New Deal was an immediate success, both politically and economically; the unemployment rate fell and wages rose. In the midterm elections of 1934, the Democrats increased their majorities in both houses.

## THE SECOND NEW DEAL

Not everyone, however, was enamored of the New Deal. In fact, both ends of the political spectrum criticized Roosevelt. **Conservatives** opposed the higher tax rates that the New Deal brought; they also disliked the increase in government power over business, and they complained that relief programs removed the incentive for the poor to lift themselves out of poverty. Additionally, the government had to borrow to finance all of its programs, and its **deficit spending** was also anathema to conservatives. **Leftists** complained that the AAA policy of paying farmers *not* to grow was immoral, given that many Americans were still too poor to feed themselves. They also felt that government policy toward businesses was too favorable; they wanted more punitive measures as many on the left blamed corporate greed for the Depression. The despair caused by the Depression provided fodder for a more radical left, and the **Socialists** (and, to a lesser extent, the **Communist Party of America**) were gaining popularity by calling for the nationalization (that is, a takeover by the government) of businesses.

Then, in 1935, the Supreme Court started to dismantle some of the programs of the First New Deal in a series of cases, one of which came to known as the "sick chicken case." *Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States* invalidated sections of the NIRA on the grounds that the codes created under this agency were unconstitutional. According to the Constitution, only Congress can make laws. However, the NIRA empowered an agency within the executive branch of government to set wage and price ceilings, maximum work hours, and regulations regarding labor unions. The court ruled that these codes were in effect "executive legislation" and beyond the limits of executive power.

Roosevelt had argued that like war, the Great Depression had created a national crisis that warranted the expansion of the executive branch of government. The following year, the Supreme Court struck down the AAA in *United States v. Butler*. Roosevelt responded by attempting to "pack the court" with justices who supported his policies. The size of the Supreme Court had changed a few times since its creation, but Roosevelt's attempt to increase the size of the court from nine justices to 15, thus clearly giving him the power to pick justices whose views he liked, was too much for most Democrats and Republicans. As a result, this **court-packing scheme** was rejected by Congress.

Roosevelt then continued with a package of legislation called the **Second New Deal**. First, he established the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, which created the **Works Progress Administration (WPA)**, whose name was later changed to the Works Project Administration. The WPA generated more than 8 million jobs, all paid for by the government. Along with public works projects such as construction, the WPA also employed writers, photographers, and other artists to create travel guides and to record local and personal histories.

The summer of 1935 is often called Roosevelt's **Second Hundred Days** because the amount and importance of legislation passed then is comparable to that of the First Hundred Days. During this period, Congress passed legislation that broadened the powers of the **NLRB**, democratized unions, and punished businesses with anti-union policies. During this time, Congress also created the **Social Security Administration** to provide retirement benefits for many workers, including the disabled and families whose main breadwinner had died. Furthermore, the government increased taxes on wealthy individuals and top-end business profits. The cumulative effect of these programs led to the creation of the **New Deal coalition**, made up of union members, urbanites, the underclass, and blacks (who had previously voted Republican, out of loyalty to the party of Lincoln). This new Democratic coalition swept Roosevelt back into office with a landslide victory in 1936 and held together until the election of Reagan in 1980.

### **ROOSEVELT'S TROUBLED SECOND TERM**

Several problems marred Franklin Roosevelt's second term. The first major failure of his presidency came as the term began. Angry that the Supreme Court had overturned much of the First New Deal and worried that the same fate awaited the Second New Deal, Roosevelt drafted a **Judicial Reorganization** bill. The bill proposed that Roosevelt be allowed to name a new federal judge for every sitting judge who had reached the age of 70 and had not retired; if passed, it would have allowed Roosevelt to add six new Supreme Court justices and more than 40 other federal judges. A not-so-subtle effort at **packing the courts** with judges more sympathetic to Roosevelt's policies, the bill was soundly defeated in the Democratic Congress, and Roosevelt came under intense criticism for trying to seize too much power. Ultimately the court situation worked itself out to Roosevelt's benefit. A number of justices retired not long after the incident, and Roosevelt was able to replace them with more liberal judges.

In 1937 the economy went into a **recession** (a period of continually decreasing output). The cause was twofold: Roosevelt, satisfied that the New Deal was doing its job, cut back government programs in an effort to balance the budget. At the same time, the Federal Reserve Board tightened the credit supply in an effort to slow inflation. Both actions took money out of circulation, resulting in a slower economy. The recession lasted for almost three years and caused a substantial increase in the unemployment rate.

To top off Roosevelt's second term, by 1938, it was becoming evident that Europe might soon be at war again. This situation forced Roosevelt to withdraw some money from New Deal programs in order to fund a military buildup. The administration succeeded in passing a second **AAA** that met the standards set by the Supreme Court's rejection of the first AAA; it also secured the **Fair Labor Standards Act**, which set a minimum wage and established the 40-hour workweek for a number of professions. Not long after, however, the New Deal came to an end.

Did the New Deal work? Historians like to debate this question. Those who argue "yes" point to the many people who escaped life-threatening poverty because of government assistance, and especially to the immediate relief provided by the First New Deal. They also point to the many reforms of banking, finance, and management/union relations. In these areas the New Deal remade America in ways that are still recognizable today. Finally, proponents of the New Deal argue that Roosevelt should be praised for taking bold chances in a conservative political climate; he risked new initiatives when it was clear that old solutions were failing.

On the other hand, those who assert that the New Deal failed have some compelling statistics to back their arguments. By 1939 the unemployment rate was up near 20 percent, and America did not come close to a decent employment rate again until the war revived the economy (invigorating such industries as armaments and airplanes). During FDR's time in office, the key factor affecting unemployment was the rate of government spending, which increased the federal deficit. Conservative historians argue that the New Deal thus did not solve the unemployment problem. Furthermore, today's social welfare system stems from the New Deal; those who feel that the current American system has failed can point to Roosevelt as the man who started it all. Lastly, the New Deal did not benefit all equally. Minorities, in particular, reaped fewer (and sometimes no) benefits. The AAA actually hurt blacks and tenant farmers by putting them out of work; some of the public works projects underhired blacks, and almost all were segregated.

## FOREIGN POLICY LEADING UP TO WORLD WAR II

In the decade that followed World War I, American foreign policy objectives were aimed primarily at promoting and maintaining peace and have been described as "independent internationalism" rather than "isolationism." The **Washington Conference** (1921–1922) gathered eight of the world's great powers; the resulting treaty set limits on stockpiling armaments and reaffirmed the Open Door Policy toward China. In 1928, 62 nations signed the **Kellogg-Briand Pact**, which condemned war as a means of foreign policy. Although it contained no enforcement clauses, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was widely considered a good first step toward a postwar age.

In Latin America, the United States tried to back away from its previous interventionist policy and replace it with the **Good Neighbor Policy** in 1934. The name, however, is misleading; the United States continued to actively promote its interests in Latin America, often to the detriment of those who lived there. The main change in policy was that the American government proceeded by less obvious means. However, the Platt Amendment was repealed at this time. The United States achieved its foreign policy objectives mainly through economic coercion and support of pro-American leaders (some of whom were corrupt and brutal). The United States also figured out how to maintain a strong but less threatening military presence in the area, both by paying for the privilege of maintaining military bases in the countries and by arranging to train the nations' National Guard units.

In Asia, the United States had less influence. Consequently, when Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 (and in so doing violated the Kellogg-Briand Pact, which Japan had signed), the League of Nations was powerless, and the American government could do little. When Japan went to war against China in 1937, the United States sold arms to the Chinese and called for an embargo on arms sales to Japan. However, fearful of provoking a war with Japan, the government did not order an embargo on commercial shipments to Japan from the United States.

Throughout the Republican administrations of the 1920s, the U.S. government kept tariffs high; this policy is called **protectionism**. Early in Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, the government devised a method of using economic leverage as a foreign policy tool. The **Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act** allowed the president to reduce tariffs if he felt doing so would achieve foreign policy goals. Countries granted **most favored nation (MFN) trade status** were eligible for the lowest tariff rate set by the United States, if they played their cards right. MFN trade status remains a foreign policy tool today.

Disenchantment with the results of World War I fed isolationist sentiment, a stance amplified by the findings of the **Nye Commission**. Led by Senator Gerald Nye, the commission's report in 1936 revealed unwholesome activities by American arms manufacturers; many had lobbied intensely for entry into World War I, others had bribed foreign officials, and still others were currently supplying fascist governments with weapons. Congress responded by passing a series of **neutrality acts**. The first neutrality act (1935) prohibited the sale of arms to either belligerent in a war. (Roosevelt sidestepped

this act in the 1937 sale of arms to China by simply refusing to acknowledge that China and Japan were at war.) The second neutrality act banned loans to belligerents.

All the while, Roosevelt poured money into the military—just in case. As it became more apparent that Europe was headed for war, Roosevelt lobbied for a repeal of the arms embargo stated in the first neutrality act so that America could help arm the Allies (primarily England, France, and, later, the Soviet Union). When war broke out, Congress relented with a third neutrality act, which allowed arms sales and was termed “cash and carry.” It required the Allies to (1) pay cash for their weapons, and (2) come to the United States to pick up their purchases and carry them away on their own ships. From the outset of the war until America’s entry in 1941, Roosevelt angled the country toward participation, particularly when Poland fell to German troops and other countries followed in rapid succession. In 1940 Hitler invaded France, and a German takeover of both France and England appeared a real possibility. The chance that America might soon enter the war convinced Roosevelt to run for an unprecedented third term. Again, he won convincingly.

Within the limits allowed by the neutrality acts, Roosevelt worked to assist the Allies. He found creative ways to supply them with extra weapons and ships; he appointed pro-Ally Republicans to head the Department of War and the Navy; and he instituted the nation’s first peacetime military draft. It becomes increasingly difficult to describe U.S. foreign policy as isolationist by the 1940s. In 1941 Roosevelt forced the **Lend-Lease Act** through Congress, which permitted the United States to “lend” armaments to England, which no longer had money to buy the tools of war. Roosevelt sent American ships into the war zone to protect Lend-Lease shipments, an act which could easily have provoked a German attack. Later in the year, Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met at the **Atlantic Charter Conference**. The Atlantic Charter declared the Allies’ war aims, which included disarmament, self-determination, freedom of the seas, and guarantees of each nation’s security.

Given all this activity in the European theater, it seems odd that America’s entry to the war came not in Europe but in Asia. Japan entered into an alliance (called the **Tripartite Pact**) with Italy and Germany in 1940. By 1941 France had fallen to Germany, and the British were too busy fighting Hitler to block Japanese expansion, which had continued south into French Indochina (modern-day Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos). The United States responded to Japanese aggression by cutting off trade to Japan, which was dependent on foreign imports. The embargo included oil, which Japan needed to fuel its war machine. Despite peace talks in November of 1941 between the United States and Japan to avoid war, the United States had broken Japan’s secret communication codes and knew that Japan was planning an attack but did not know the location. Secretary of War Henry Stimson encouraged Roosevelt to wait for the Japanese attack in order to guarantee popular support for the war at home. He did not have to wait long. The Japanese attacked **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii, on December 7, and U.S. participation in the war began.

## **WORLD WAR II**

Complicated military strategy and the outcome of key battles played a big part in World War II. Fortunately, you do not have to know much about them for the AP exam; nor do you need to know about the many truly unspeakable horrors the Nazis perpetrated on Europe’s Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and dissidents. You should know about the various wartime conferences, however, when the Allies met to discuss military strategy and the eventual postwar situation. It was no secret that the Grand Alliance between the Soviet Union and the West was tenuous at best, held together by the thread of a common enemy but threatened by Stalin’s impatience at the Allies’ delay in opening a “second front” while the Soviets bore the brunt of the Nazi onslaught.

The first meeting of the “big three” (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) took place in the Iranian capital of Teheran in November of 1943. It was here that they planned the Normandy invasion, **D-Day**,

and agreed to divide a defeated Germany into occupation zones after the war. Stalin also agreed to enter the war against Japan once Hitler had been defeated. The Allies fought the Germans primarily in the Soviet Union and in the Mediterranean until early 1944, when Allied forces invaded occupied France (on D-Day). The Soviet Union paid a huge price in human and material loss for this strategy and after the war sought to recoup its losses by occupying Eastern Europe. In the Pacific both sides incurred huge numbers of casualties. The Allies eventually won a war of attrition against the Germans, and the Americans accelerated victory in the East by dropping two atomic bombs on Japan.

As it had during the Civil War, World War I, and the New Deal, the government acquired more power than it previously had. The War Production Board allowed the government to oversee the mobilization of industry toward the war effort; in return, businesses were guaranteed generous profits. **Rationing** of almost all consumer goods was imposed. The government sponsored scientific research directed at improving weaponry, developing **radar** and the atomic bomb during this period. The government also exerted greater control over labor. The **Labor Disputes Act** of 1943 (passed in reaction to a disconcerting number of strikes in essential industries) allowed government takeover of businesses deemed necessary to national security, which gave the government authority to settle labor disputes. **Hollywood** was enlisted to create numerous propaganda films, both to encourage support on the home front and to boost morale of the troops overseas. Not surprisingly, the size of the government more than tripled during the war.

FDR signed the **Selective Training and Service Act of 1940**, which created the first peacetime draft in U.S. history and established the Selective Service System, which ultimately provided about 10 million soldiers toward the war effort. (Although the draft was discontinued in 1973, after the United States' involvement in Vietnam, the Selective Service System remained in place and currently requires that all male citizens register for the draft within 30 days after turning 18.)

World War II affected almost every aspect of daily life at home and abroad. It created both new opportunities and new tensions within American society. More than a million African-Americans served in the U.S. military during World War II, but they lived and worked in segregated units. The U.S. army was not desegregated until after the war, during the Truman administration in 1948. A popular image, familiar to most Americans, is that of Rosie the Riveter. Originally featured on a poster of the era, Rosie came to symbolize the millions of women who worked in war-related industrial jobs during World War II. Unfortunately for the cause of feminism, most women were expected to take off the coveralls and put the apron back on when the soldiers returned home.

Again, as during World War I, the government restricted civil liberties. Probably the most tragic instance was the **internment of Japanese Americans** from 1942 to the end of the war. Fearful that the Japanese might serve as enemy agents within U.S. borders, the government imprisoned more than 110,000 Japanese Americans, over two-thirds of whom had been born in the United States and thus were U.S. citizens. None of those interned was ever charged with a crime; imprisonment was based entirely on ethnic background. The government placed these Japanese Americans in desolate prison camps far from the West Coast, where they feared a Japanese invasion would take place. Most lost their homes and possessions as a result of the internment.

The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of both the evacuation and internment of Japanese Americans. As in the *Schenck* case of 1919, the Court ruled that a citizen's civil liberties can be curtailed and even violated in time of war. "Citizenship has its responsibilities as well as its privileges, and in time of war the burden is always heavier. Compulsory exclusion of large groups of citizens from their homes, except under circumstances of direst emergency and peril, is inconsistent with our basic governmental institutions. But when under conditions of modern warfare our shores are threatened by hostile forces, the power to protect must be commensurate with the threatened danger..." wrote Justice Hugo Black in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944). It wasn't until 1988 that a government apology was made and reparations of about \$1.6 million were disbursed to surviving internees and their heirs.



## THE END OF THE WAR

As the war neared its end in Europe, the apparent victors—the Allies—met to discuss the fate of postwar Europe. In February of 1945, the Allied leaders met at **Yalta** and in effect redrew the world map. By this time the Soviet army occupied parts of Eastern Europe, a result of the campaign to drive the German army out of the USSR.

Stalin wanted to create a “buffer zone” between the Soviet Union and Western Europe; he wanted to surround himself with nations that were “friendly” toward the government in Moscow. Because of the presence of the Red Army, Stalin was given a free hand in Eastern Europe, a decision the other Allies would later regret, with the promise to hold “free and unfettered elections” after the war. Despite this promise Soviet tanks rolled into Romania three weeks after Yalta, thus beginning the establishment of Soviet **satellites** and the descent of the **Iron Curtain**. (The Iron Curtain was a metaphor coined by Winston Churchill in 1946 to describe the symbolic division of Eastern and Western Europe, and thus the origins of the Cold War following World War II.)

The Allies agreed on a number of issues concerning borders and postwar settlements. They also agreed that once the war in Europe ended, the USSR would declare war on Japan. Toward the end of the war, the Allies agreed to help create the **United Nations** to mediate future international disputes. The Allies met again at **Potsdam** to decide how to implement the agreements of Yalta. This time, **Harry S. Truman** represented the United States, as Roosevelt had died in April. Things did not go as well at Potsdam; with the war’s end closer and the Nazis no longer a threat, the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union were growing more pronounced.

Some argue that American-Soviet animosity prompted Truman’s decision to use the **atomic bomb** against the Japanese. (By this argument, America feared Soviet entry into the Asian war where the Soviets might then attempt to expand their influence, as they were doing in Eastern Europe. Along the same line of reasoning, one could assert that the United States wanted to put on a massive display of power to intimidate the Soviets.) However, the manner in which the war in the Pacific had been fought to that point also supported Truman’s decision. The Japanese had fought tenaciously and remained powerful despite the long war; casualty estimates of an American invasion of Japan ran upward of 500,000. Some military leaders estimated that such an invasion would not subdue Japan for years. In August the United States dropped two atomic bombs, first on **Hiroshima** and then three days later on **Nagasaki**. The Japanese surrendered soon after.