Chapter 27
Postwar America
1946-1952

The Cold War Begins

- Roosevelt wants Russia to attack Japan in Asia
- Attack on Japan projected as costly in deaths.
- Russian Presence in Europe was feared
- Communist parties in place in European countries; usually well-organized minorities.
- Roosevelt believed Russians had learned lesson
- Truman did not fall into FDR’s overconfidence
- Truman saw Russian imperialism as real threat.

Stalin Tyrannical as Hitler

- Churchill warns of “Iron Curtain” descending across Europe; name sticks.
- Soviets undermine post-war governments
- Military occupation becomes excuse for control; Soviet empire emerges from war.
- Populations deported; ethnic cleansing.
- Poland and Germany’s borders changed.

Truman’s Proposal

- The Truman Doctrine—proactive response.
- Assistance to countries opposing Communists—financial support to rebuild.
- Communism gains foothold where there is economic crisis, social chaos or deprivation
- Financial assistance totally unlike the penalties assessed after World War I

The Marshall Plan

- Based on lessons learned after WWI
- Don’t allow economic chaos again.
- Hitler rose to power in such chaos.
- U.S. provides aid to rebuild all Europe.
- Cheaper to help people than wage war later
- Credited with saving Europe from turning all Communist; a lesson forgotten at times.

The Iron Curtain

- Russian troops rushed to conquer Germany
- Point of meeting agreed by FDR; U.S. troops had to wait days at pre-arranged meeting point
- U.S. military unhappy with meeting point
- Communists engineer coup in Czechoslovakia
- The Berlin Blockade (June 1948)
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Latin America

- Rio Pact for collective hemispheric security
- Response to Cuban Revolution; Anti-Communism replaces business imperialism;
- Organization of American States (OAS)
- Repressive governments still the norm
- Poverty, corruption, injustice and political oppression still major problems in the region.
China

• Civil War leads to Communist victory
• Communists replace Nationalist dictator
• Nationalists flee to island province off coast
• China’s long suspicion of foreigners is combined with Communism & imperialism.
• A suspicion based on foreign exploitation.
• The Chinese believe they are true Communists not the Russians; some truth to view.

Russia Has The A-bomb

• Germany had been working on Atomic Bomb; war’s outcome would be different.
• Russians captured German scientists as US did
• U.S. spies provide Russians with plans
• Rosenbergs were not the major players claimed
• Changes the balance of power; sets up Cold War; a military balance which prevented war.

The Korean War

• Russian supported North Korea attacks South
• U.S. enters under United Nations pretense
• U.S. decides to “unify” the two Koreans
• Unexpectedly, China joins North Korea’s side
• U.S. soldiers driven back down peninsula
• MacArthur violates Truman’s direct orders
• Truman fires MacArthur; nation shocked
• War ends with ceasefire that changed nothing.

Truman Sets in Korea

• U.N. mandate was not for unification
• Likelihood of Chinese counterattack
• No peace treaty, just a cease fire; no change
• Still debating treaty today in 2006.
• Problems with North Korea in 2006 related to problems created by division of Korea.
• North Korea and Cuba are the only two remaining old-line Communist countries.

Truman Continues New Deal

• Postwar Congress more Conservative
• Republicans unite with Dixiecrats
• Dixiecrats led by Governor Strom Thurmond; anti-integration Southern Democrats
• Unlike FDR, Truman has courage to integrate all of the armed services.
• Truman had lived in an integrated city.
• FDR had lived the sheltered life of the rich.

Undoing the New Deal

• Right to Work laws end union power
• Police protect scabs, i.e. strikebreakers
• Laws limit sympathy strikes, industry strikes.
• Laws promote open shops, i.e. no unions
• Republicans reverse many of the advances made by labor; programs favor businesses.
• In the name of ending union stranglehold, Conservatives restrict right to negotiate.

Taft-Hartley Act (June 1947)

• Passed over Truman’s veto
• Bans “closed shops.” i.e. union-only shops
• Ban industry-wide bargaining
• Creates so-called Right to Work states which really prevent unions from organizing—voting for union not secret.
• Companies only hire those opposed to unions; condition for employment.
• Businesses claim all unions are corrupt.

**Truman Moves on Civil Rights**
• Unlike FDR Truman knew Black people
• A haberdasher who had Black customers
• Integrates the Armed Forces
• Dixiecrats were opposing Black rights
• The beginning of the end of Southern racists finding a home in the Democratic Party
• Democrats pass civil rights platform in 1948
• Strom Thurmond runs as segregationist.

**Republicans nominate Dewey**
• All polls show Dewey winning
• Polls were based on telephone calls
• Many without telephones voted for Truman
• Early newspapers declare Dewey the winner
• Dixiecrats nominate South Carolina governor Strom Thurmond as president.
• This splits “conservative” vote two ways.

**The Cold War impacts on Constitutional Freedoms**
• Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy
• Targets current and former Communists
• Many people flirted with Communism in their youth during Great Depression
• Some were Communists still; very few.
• Anti-Semitism plays role; Jews targeted
• McCarthy unstable bully and alcoholic.

**Nixon Gains Notoriety in House**
• House Un-American Activities Committee
• Not as harsh as McCarthy—A political career hunting alleged Communist
• Ike brings him on as Vice-President
• Constitutional protections discarded
• Russian files now indicate a handful were spies; not nearly as many as claimed.

**America Turns Republican**
• Often immediately after a war, the people turn to the opposing party, true in 1952.
• Churchill had been voted out in England.
• FDR had four terms; Truman had his own.
• Democrats nominate a divorced governor.
• Divorce becomes a major “moral” issue.
• Republicans nominate war hero Eisenhower.

**The Postwar Baby Boom**
• Great Depression led to couples postponing marriage and/or having babies
• World War II prevents more couples from having children; husbands stationed abroad.
• Almost two full generations begin having children at the same time; not planned.
• Schools & society in general are unprepared.