

CHAPTER THIRTY

THE AFFLUENT SOCIETY

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter 30 should enable the student to understand:

1. The strengths and weaknesses of the economy in the 1950s and early 1960s.
2. The changes in the American lifestyle in the 1950s.
3. The significance of the Supreme Court's desegregation decision and the early civil rights movement.
4. The characteristics of Dwight Eisenhower's middle-of-the-road domestic policy.
5. The new elements of American foreign policy introduced by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.
6. The causes and results of increasing United States involvement in the Middle East.
7. The sources of difficulties for the United States in Latin America.
8. The reasons for new tensions with the Soviet Union toward the end of the Eisenhower administration.

Main Themes

1. That the technological, consumer-oriented society of the 1950s was remarkably affluent and unified despite the persistence of a less privileged underclass and the existence of a small corps of detractors.
2. How the Supreme Court's social desegregation decision of 1954 marked the beginning of a civil-rights revolution for American blacks.
3. How President Dwight Eisenhower presided over a business-oriented "dynamic conservatism" that resisted most new reforms without significantly rolling back the activist government programs born in the 1930s.
4. That while Eisenhower continued to allow containment by building alliances, supporting anticommunist regimes, maintaining the arms race, and conducting limited interventions, he also showed an awareness of American limitations and resisted temptations for greater commitments.

Glossary

1. Third World: A convenient way to refer to all the nations of the world besides the United States, Canada, the Soviet Union, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, China, and the countries of Europe. Basically, the Third World is made up of the less industrially developed regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The term sometimes also excludes Mexico, South Africa, and much of the oil-rich Middle East.
2. Zionists: Members of a militant worldwide movement dedicated to the goal of establishing a Jewish nation in Palestine. The Zionist movement took its name from a hill in Jerusalem on which Solomon's Temple had been built.
3. summit conference: A diplomatic meeting of the heads of government of major nations; that is, a conference held at the summit of power.

Pertinent Questions

THE ECONOMIC "MIRACLE" (790-793)

1. What were the causes of the great economic growth from 1945 to 1960? What was the impact on the American standard of living?
2. Why did the West grow faster than the rest of the nation in the post-World War II era?
3. Explain Keynesian economic theory. How did the developments of the 1950s and early 1960s seem to confirm the theory?
4. What was the post war trend in economic consolidation?
5. What was the nature of the "postwar contract" that developed between big labor and big business? What were "escalator clauses"?
6. How was the labor movement hampered by scandal, new government restrictions, and other factors?

THE EXPLOSION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (793-798)

7. Describe the major medical advances of the mid twentieth century. What was the societal result?
8. What key developments in electronics in the 1950s and 1960s transformed consumer and industrial products and paved the way for the computer revolution?
9. How did America react to the Soviet *Sputnik*? What was the result?

PEOPLE OF PLENTY (798-807)

10. Explain the expanded role of advertising and consumer credit. Why can it be said that the prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s was substantially consumer-driven?
11. What was the impact of the automobile and the super highway on metropolitan development patterns, especially the traditional downtown? What was the impact of the automobile culture on railroads, energy consumption, air pollution, and retailing?
12. What was the appeal of Levittown and similar suburban developments? How did typical suburbs transform family life and shape women's attitudes?
13. Why can it be said that television "was central to the culture of the postwar era?" How did the medium simultaneously unify and alienate Americans?
14. How did writers in the 1950s respond to the growing tension between an organized, bureaucratic society and the tradition of individualism?
15. What were the manifestations of the widespread restlessness among young Americans in the 1950s?
16. How did the music of African Americans influence the development of rock and roll? To what extent was the audience multi-racial?

THE "OTHER AMERICA" (807-809)

17. What groups in society seemed mired in "hard core" poverty largely outside the prosperity of the 1950s? Why?
18. What demographic shifts occurred in minority population during WWII and the postwar era?
19. Compare and contrast rural poverty and inner-city poverty. What was the result of the "urban renewal" program?

THE RISE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT (809-812)

20. On what reasoning did the Supreme Court base its *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling?
21. Describe the "massive resistance" pattern reflected in the Deep South. What did President Eisenhower do in response to the open defiance in Little Rock?

22. What was the importance of the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott?
23. What philosophy shaped the approach of Martin Luther King, Jr., to civil rights protest? Why did he become the principal leader and symbol of the movement?
24. What forces within the African American community led to the civil rights movement of the 1950s? Why was the movement able to attract notable non-southern white support?

EISENHOWER REPUBLICANISM (812-813)

25. From what segment of society did President Dwight Eisenhower draw most of the members of his administration? How did these individuals differ from their 1920s counterparts of similar background?
26. How did the domestic policies of the Eisenhower administration compare and contrast with Roosevelt and Truman administrations?
27. Even though anticommunist sentiment did not disappear, what led to the demise of Senator Joseph McCarthy?

EISENHOWER, DULLES, AND THE COLD WAR (813-818)

28. Why did John Foster Dulles move the United States toward the policy of massive retaliation?
29. How did the Korean War end?
30. Describe the background of the struggle in Southeast Asia. How did the United States respond to the French predicament at Dien Bien Phu?
31. What role did the United States play in the creation of modern Israel?
32. Why was the United States so committed to friendliness and stability in the Middle East? How was this approach implemented in Iran?
33. What led to the Suez Crisis of 1956? What position did the United States take?
34. What led to Fidel Castro's rise in Cuba? How did the United States deal with his new regime at first and why did the American position quickly change?
35. What international episodes during the Eisenhower administration illustrated that the Cold War persisted but that the U.S. would exercise restraint?

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: LUCY AND DESI (804-805)

36. What did Lucille Ball mean when she said that the success of the show was that "We just took ordinary situations and exaggerated them."? What one thing about her situation that was a bit out of the ordinary almost kept the show from ever airing?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. baby boom
2. AFL-CIO
3. Salk vaccine
4. DDT
5. UNIVAC
6. IBM
7. hydrogen bomb
8. ICBM
9. NASA

American capitalism. Only a few intellectuals questioned the rampant consumerism and the values of the growing corporate bureaucracies. The politics of the period, symbolized by President Eisenhower the cautious war hero, reflected the popular contentment. African Americans, inspired by the *Brown* school desegregation decision, began the protests that would bring the civil rights revolution of the 1960s. Locked into a policy of containment and a rigidly dualistic worldview, the United States was less successful in its overseas undertakings. Despite a string of alliances, an awesome nuclear arsenal, and vigorous use of covert operations, the nation often found itself unable to shape world events to conform to American desires.

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. Analyze the causes and consequences of the economic boom of the 1950s. Were the Keynesians correct in asserting that government action could ensure both economic stability and economic growth?
2. Describe the tendency toward economic consolidation in business, agriculture, and labor. How did this change the American economy?
3. Did the assumptions of containment lead the United States into unwise commitments and actions in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, or was the nation acting prudently in response to hostile communist expansionism?
4. What new cultural developments accompanied the prosperity and suburbanization of the 1950s? How did intellectuals regard the highly organized and homogenized new society?

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. America's economic prosperity in the 1950s was fueled by:
 - a. increased public funding of schools, housing, veterans' benefits, welfare, and interstate highways.
 - b. massive cold-war-inspired military spending.
 - c. the "baby boom" and rapid expansion of the suburbs.
 - d. all of the above.
 - e. none of the above.

2. Which portion of the nation grew most rapidly during the late 1940s and 1950s?
 - a. Northeast
 - b. Southeast
 - c. Midwest/Great Plains
 - d. West
3. According to the principles of Keynesian economics, which of the following tactics should government employ to combat recession?
 - a. Reduce interest rates.
 - b. Cut the federal budget.
 - c. Raise taxes.
 - d. All of the above.
4. Keynesian economics seemed to offer government the proper theories to eliminate forever the problems of:
 - a. maldistributed wealth.
 - b. trade deficits.
 - c. financial injustice.
 - d. economic instability.
5. The prosperity of the 1950s was accompanied by:
 - a. a decrease in government spending.
 - b. corporate mergers and the formation of conglomerates.
 - c. equitable distribution of corporate profits.
 - d. the survival and renewal of the family farm.
6. All of the following trends marked the American labor movement of the 1950s *except*:
 - a. merger of the AFL and CIO to create the giant federation, the AFL-CIO.
 - b. fairly stable membership numbers.
 - c. greater success in organizing new workers than in winning benefits for workers already organized in strong unions.
 - d. signs of corruption and indifference among some labor leaders as the unions themselves became wealthy, powerful bureaucracies.
7. Which TWO of the following were major developments in allowing electronic devices to become smaller and cheaper in the 1950s and later.
 - a. transistors
 - b. vacuum tubes
 - c. thermal fuses
 - d. integrated circuits
8. According to many social observers, American culture in the 1950s seemed dominated by a(n):
 - a. restless search by individuals for identity and purpose.
 - b. quest for economic political justice within the United States.
 - c. absorption with consumer goods by a growing middle class.
 - d. isolationist desire to avoid international affairs or commitments.

9. In contrast to that of the central cities, life in suburbia became attractive to many American families in the 1950s because the suburbs seemed to provide:
- variety and excitement in lifestyles and entertainment.
 - racial integration in neighborhoods and schools.
 - greater opportunities for cultural and educational advancement.
 - larger, safer, and more private homes.
10. According to the widely respected child-care expert of the late 1940s and 1950s, Dr. Benjamin Spock, mothers should:
- fulfill their career and professional goals.
 - subordinate their activities and interests to the needs of their children.
 - share the role of parenting equally with the fathers.
 - work to supplement the family income.
11. According to the text, during the 1950s, television:
- affected only a small percentage of the total population.
 - encouraged independent value formation among members of the white middle class.
 - heightened the sense of alienation and powerlessness among minority groups.
 - failed to attract significant interest from commercial advertisers.
12. According to the text, the most widely revered heroes of the United States during the early 1960s were the nation's:
- medical researchers.
 - professional athletes.
 - astronauts.
 - industrial tycoons.
13. The United States accomplished which of the following feats *before* the Soviet Union did?
- launching of a satellite into outer space
 - sending a manned flight into outer space
 - landing a man on the surface of the moon
 - none* of the above
 - all* of the above
14. Three of the following statements accurately describe the American economic and demographic conditions in the 1950s. Which is the *exception*?
- The rate of population growth declined.
 - There was a continual annual growth in GNP.
 - Unemployment was a tolerable 5 percent or less.
 - Inflation was in the range of a modest 3 percent per year.

15. When the governor of Arkansas and, later, an angry mob of citizens attempted to prevent the court-ordered racial integration of a high school in Little Rock, President Eisenhower responded by:
 - a. ordering the Governor to be arrested.
 - b. negotiating a settlement that delayed local integration for a three-year "cooling-off" period.
 - c. sending federal troops to uphold the court order.
 - d. refusing to involve the federal government in what he considered to be strictly a state matter.
16. The Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott was significant in establishing a new form of racial protest and in elevating which black leader to prominence as a new leader in the civil rights movement?
 - a. Malcolm X
 - b. H. Rap Brown
 - c. Stokely Carmichael
 - d. Martin Luther King, Jr.
17. The black man who broke the race barrier in major league baseball was:
 - a. Henry Aaron.
 - b. Roy Campanella.
 - c. Willie Mays.
 - d. Jackie Robinson.
18. Joseph McCarthy's influence in the nation waned quickly mainly as a consequence of:
 - a. the Oppenheimer case.
 - b. his expulsion from the Senate.
 - c. the reports that he was an alcoholic.
 - d. his behavior in the Army-McCarthy hearings.
19. The expression "more bang for a buck" was related to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles's announced policy of:
 - a. liberation.
 - b. containment.
 - c. mutual security.
 - d. massive retaliation.
20. In his farewell address in January 1961, Eisenhower warned the American people against:
 - a. the rise of military pacifism.
 - b. the tendency to hysterical anticommunism.
 - c. the risk of creeping socialism.
 - d. the influence of the military-industrial complex.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

1. From 1945 to 1960 the American economy grew significantly because of rapid population growth, but the growth was misleading because the economy was actually declining in real per capita dollars.

2. Even though IBM (International Business Machines) had not been a pioneer in the invention of the computer, its superior marketing approach to business made it the world leader in the computer business of the 1950s and 1960s.
3. In 1955 the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) split due to philosophical differences and did not reunify until the early 1980s.
4. The effect of "escalator clauses" in union contracts was to base wages on seniority.
5. A major reason for the growth of the western United States was that the region received a disproportionate amount of federal spending, including military contracts.
6. The economic expansion that followed the Kennedy-Johnson tax cuts was an example of a successful application of Keynesian economic theory.
7. Although most middle-class families had TV by the end of the 1950s, television was not available in the majority of American homes until about 1965.
8. The major radio networks resisted television, so the emerging medium was mostly controlled by new corporations in California.
9. One result of the launching of *Sputnik* was that American schools began to give increasing emphasis to math and science.
10. The "beats," or "beatniks," argued that American life and culture was mostly sterile, conformist, and banal.
11. In the 1950s, Native Americans were the most economically deprived group, even more so than Hispanics and African Americans.
12. The term "massive resistance" was generally used to signify the widespread efforts on behalf of racial desegregation such as sit-ins, boycotts, marches, and so on.
13. The Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court at the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling was Earl Warren.
14. Martin Luther King, Jr., drew much of his philosophy of nonviolent, passive opposition to segregation from the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi of India.
15. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles believed that the U.S. military had placed too much reliance on the atomic bomb and "massive retaliation" strategy, so he began to shift military spending priorities toward "flexible response."
16. Before the Eisenhower administration learned that Fidel Castro was a communist, significant military aid was funneled to his rebels who were attempting to overthrow the corrupt anti-American dictator of Cuba.
17. The Korean War ended very early in the Eisenhower administration with an armistice that left the Korean peninsula divided at approximately the 38th parallel.
18. The United States armed the rebels in the Hungarian Revolution, but refused at the last minute to provide air cover as promised by the CIA.
19. In 1948 when the Jews in Palestine proclaimed the existence of the independent nation of Israel, President Truman delayed for several months extending diplomatic recognition to the new nation because he did not want to offend the oil-rich Arab countries.