

GCSE Hi Edexcel Modern World - Divided Union revision notes

A5: A DIVIDED UNION? The USA: 1941-80

The USA and the Second World War

After the First World War the USA had returned to Isolationism, but when war broke out in Europe in 1939, President Roosevelt wanted to help Britain and prepare the USA for war against Germany.

How did Roosevelt prepare the USA for war and try to help Britain?

In 1939 he asked Congress for \$1,300,000,000 to build up the armed forces

In 1940 he signed the destroyers for bases deal with Britain.

In 1941 he signed the Lend Lease Act with Britain. This allowed the US government to supply equipment to Britain which could be returned or paid for at the end of the war

On 7 December Japanese forces attacked Pearl Harbor. Congress voted for war against Japan on 8 December and against Germany and Italy on 11 December.

How did the war affect the lives of US citizens?

Unemployment fell rapidly, in early 1941 there were still 8,000,000 people out of work, despite the New Deal, by the end of 1942 unemployment was at an all time low. By 1944 it was at 1.4%

16,000,000 US citizens served in the armed forces, many had never travelled before.

There were so many jobs available that many students left education to start work. The number of 16-19 year olds at work increased 300%.

The number of working mothers also increased dramatically. This led to an increase in juvenile crime. Many women found work in the defence industries. The percentage of women working rose from 27 to 37 between 1941 and 1945.

There was strong government pressure upon women to work; the most famous example was the poster campaign based upon 'Rosie the Riveter'.

But at the end of the war many women were persuaded to give up work and return to family life.

The impact of the war upon black Americans

Roosevelt had ordered that blacks should get equal treatment under the New Deal, although in the CCC they had to attend separate camps. The same policy continued during the Second World War.

In 1941 Philip Randolph organised a march of 100,000 on Washington, with the slogan 'We loyal Americans demand the right to work and fight for our country'. In 1942 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was set up.

Black Americans were recruited into all three armed services, but had to serve in separate units. Black officers were also appointed in all three services. The Air Force began to train black pilots, 600 in all by the end of the war.

Roosevelt attempted to force industry to employ blacks. In 1941 he set up the Fair Employment Practices Committee, but had no power to enforce his policy, except to refuse to give government contracts to companies that would not agree.

1,000,000 black Americans served in the armed forces and 700,000 moved north and west from the southern states. Probably the greatest influence that the war had upon them was that they were taking part in a struggle against a racist dictator.

In 1945 they returned to the USA where many blacks were unable to vote and were condemned to be second class citizens. In this respect the war was a big boost to the civil rights movement.

By 1946 the NAACP, the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, had 460,000 members. Nevertheless there were riots against blacks in many cities in the USA in 1943 and more than 30 blacks were killed and more

Japanese-Americans

When war broke out it was decided to move 110,000 Japanese-Americans from their homes on the west coast, because they might be a security risk.

Many were forced to sell most of their belongings and lost \$500,000,000 as a result. They were moved to relocation camps where conditions were very poor.

The impact of the war upon the economy

During the war many factories, such as Ford Motors were changed to war production. Wages rose faster than prices, despite controls on both. 17,000,000 jobs were created in the USA

Federal spending rose 1000% during the war.

War in Europe meant a big increase in demand for US farm products and prices rose.

USA emerged from the war as an industrial giant. Its economy was head and shoulders above the ruined economies of other nations.

The Cold War continued the high level of spending on armaments into the next decades. Government spending actually doubled from 1950 to 1960.

The standard of living of almost all Americans rose as a result.

Many Americans expected a depression after the end of the war, as there had been in 1920-21, but in fact that economy continued to expand.

The boom of the 1940s carried on into the 1950s. The key features of that boom, hire purchase, advertising, and a mass market, continued.

By the 1950s most Americans were experiencing the highest standard of living in the world. There was a move out to the suburbs and by 1959 a quarter of all Americans lived in suburbs.

By 1960 87% of homes had a TV. Advertising ensured that the boom continued. By 1960 75% of households had a car.

The Interstate Highways Act of 1956 led to the building of many new roads.

The impact of the war upon US foreign policy

It made the USA into a Superpower. Many Americans felt isolationism was partly to blame for the war. In 1945 the USA did not return to isolationism, and took a lead in setting up the United Nations.

The USA also took up the challenge it saw from Communism, and the Cold War began. This made Americans very suspicious of Communism and led to attacks on people suspected of being communists.

In 1947 President Truman announced the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. To persuade Congress to vote for them, Truman talked of a Communist threat to the USA and approved the Federal Employee Loyalty Program. This led to every Federal worker being investigated for Communist sympathies. 4,000,000 people were checked and no cases of spying were discovered. But it was the start of the Red Scare, which led to McCarthyism.

What was McCarthyism?

The USA had always had a hatred of Communism. In the Cold War this increased. The apparent success of Communism - the victory of Communists in China in 1949, the Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb in 1949, the Korean War which began in 1950 - seemed to confirm the danger.

Senator Joe McCarthy made a name for himself by exploiting these fears. In 1950 he claimed to have a list of many known Communists in the US government.

McCarthy attacked members of the government, scientists, diplomats, politicians, actors, film producers and writers.

Many of the people he attacked were blacklisted and could not find work for years.

Charlie Chaplin left the USA to live in Switzerland and only returned in the 1970s to receive an Oscar.

In fact, only one or two cases were ever brought, such as that against Alger Hiss in 1948, which added fuel to McCarthy's accusations. All those who had opposed the New Deal joined in a reaction.

Hiss was sentenced to five years in 1950, but always denied any criminal acts.

The Hiss trial was followed by the passing of the McCarran Internal Security Act, which stated that it was illegal for Americans to take part in any actions that might lead to a communist government in the USA and imposed other controls on communists.

Immediately after the Hiss case, the Rosenbergs were arrested for spying for the Soviet Union and were eventually executed for passing atomic secrets in 1953.

McCarthy now claimed that he had a list of 205 communists working in the State Department. When a Senate committee chairman said that this was fraud, McCarthy accused him of being a communist.

Why was McCarthy so successful?

Many Americans believed that he was defending the country, they saw him as a crusader against communism.

McCarthy was also clever, he always attacked and if anybody stood up to him he tried to smear them as well. This meant that few people were prepared to stand up to him, not even President Truman.

McCarthy was the chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee. This gave him real power in Washington and access to television and the media.

In 1953 President Eisenhower agreed to an investigation of the Civil service and nearly 7,000 people lost their jobs.

Many Americans believed that communism was a real threat to the USA and believed McCarthy's statements. In 1950 and 1951 the communist victories in Korea gave McCarthy a perfect opportunity.

He forced General Marshall to resign for 'deliberately allowing communist victories'.

McCarthy was a skilful and powerful speaker, able to mix up facts with lies until it was difficult to know what to believe.

Why did McCarthy's influence disappear in 1954?

He never actually produced any real evidence, he always claimed that it was in his briefcase.

In 1954 McCarthy attacked the army and accused officers of being communist spies.

The hearings of HUAC were shown on TV, and McCarthy was revealed as a bully.

He never produced any of his lists of names. McCarthyism and the Red Scare were over.

In December 1954 he was censured by the Senate and he died in 1957.

However, McCarthy's influence survived him. The communist party was banned in the USA in 1954 and people that he had accused continued to be blacklisted for many years.

The civil rights movements and their impact on American society

Black Americans (about 12% of Americans) are descended from the slaves brought over from Africa to work the tobacco, cotton and sugar plantations. They were theoretically freed in 1863, but still suffered from poverty, segregation and discrimination of all kinds.

In the southern states in the USA blacks had their own, separate, cafes, cinemas, transport, toilets, etc. Jim Crow Laws prevented blacks from voting and enforced separate, and unequal, schools. These were state laws that forced, for example, blacks to pass tests in order to vote. Many suffered violence and intimidation at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan.

The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People), which had been founded in 1909, particularly tried to raise the issue of their denial of civil rights. However, their struggle gained strength in the 1950s until it dominated US politics.

The experiences of black Americans during the war, the FEPC etc., encouraged hopes that there would be real changes when the war ended.

How did the Civil Rights Movement develop after the war?

In 1946 Truman set up a President's Committee on Civil Rights and produced a programme of reforms in 1947, including a bill to outlaw lynching and ban Jim Crow Laws, but this was crushed by Congress. The Republicans and southern Democrats voted against it.

In 1948 Truman ended segregation in units in the armed forces. This came into effect in 1950.

Education

Because all but sixteen states had segregated schools, education provided a series of test cases in the 1950s and became the focus of civil rights activity. It also led to a series of rulings by the Supreme Court, the most important legal body in the USA, and one that could be neither ignored nor overruled.

In 1950 the Supreme Court declared that black and white student could not be segregated in the same school and that the education provided in segregated schools had to be equal in every respect.

The Brown Case

In 1954 Oliver Brown used the Supreme Court ruling to take the City of Topeka in Kansas to court for forcing his daughter to attend a school a long way away, instead of being allowed to go to a nearby whites only school.

The NAACP supported the case and Brown was represented by Thurgood Marshall, who later became the first black member of the Supreme Court.

Eventually Oliver Brown won his case. In 1954 the Supreme Court declared that all segregated schools were illegal, because separate must mean unequal.

In 1955 the Supreme Court ordered all states with segregated schools to integrate black and white schoolchildren.

Little Rock

Almost immediately there was another case. Elizabeth Eckford and eight other black students tried to enrol at Little Rock High School in Arkansas. She was stopped by the State Governor, Orval Faubus, who surrounded the school with the state National Guard.

President Eisenhower sent federal troops to escort her and protect her and the other students.

After a month they were replaced by National Guards men under the orders of the President, they stayed at the school for a year

Why was Little Rock important?

It forced President Eisenhower, who would have preferred to do nothing, to take some action.

In 1957 Eisenhower introduced the first Civil Rights Act since 1875. It set up a commission to prosecute anybody who tried to deny American citizens their rights.

It attracted world-wide attention and was on television screens across the USA.

When Faubus closed all the schools in Arkansas in September 1958, he was forced to reopen them to black and white students by the Supreme Court.

But by 1963 there were only 30,000 children at mixed schools in the South, out of a total of 2,900,000 and none at all in Alabama, Mississippi or South Carolina.

Civil Disobedience

In 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give her seat on a bus to a white man. Martin Luther King organised a boycott of the buses which lasted for a year until the bus company gave in.

In 1956 the Supreme Court said that segregation on buses was also illegal.

Martin Luther King was the leader of the Southern Christian Leadership conference. He was influenced by Mohandas Gandhi's campaign of non-violence and urged black Americans to show their opposition to discrimination peacefully.

King began to organise non-violent protests all over the South. Their main method was the sit-in. The first was at Woolworth's in Greensboro North Carolina, where eighty-five students demanded to be served at a whites only counter. When they were refused they organised a sit-in. Altogether 70,000 took part and 3,600 went to jail. When whites turned violent there was widespread television coverage and support for Civil Rights.

Student protests were organised by the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee.

John F Kennedy and civil rights

In 1961 President Eisenhower was replaced as President by John F Kennedy. While Eisenhower had always enforced the law, he had never tried to make a big issue of Civil Rights. Kennedy was different, he seemed moved by the plight of black Americans and had made promises to tackle Civil Rights. But his inauguration speech contained no references to civil rights.

Kennedy began to appoint black Americans to important positions. His brother Robert, who was Attorney General, prosecuted people who tried to prevent blacks from voting.

In 1961 the Freedom Riders began to make bus journeys to break Jim Crow Laws. They were members of the Congress of Racial Equality. Once again they were arrested, but gained tremendous publicity. The Freedom Riders wanted to put pressure on the Kennedy. They succeeded; later the same year all railway and bus stations were desegregated.

In 1962 Kennedy sent the National Guard and federal troops soldiers into Mississippi to make sure that a black student, James Meredith, could take his place at a university. But when rioting followed, 23,000 troops were needed to keep order.

1962 Robert Kennedy, along with civil rights groups organised the Voter Education Project. This aimed at persuading and helping blacks to register to vote. The numbers of black voters rose quickly, but blacks were attacked and their houses and property burnt to try to intimidate them.

The focus of attention now became the state of Alabama

Events in Birmingham, Alabama

In 1962 the city of Birmingham closed all public parks etc. to avoid integrating them. Martin Luther King organised a campaign to force the city to back down.

The Police Commissioner, Eugene 'Bull' Connor responded with water cannon, dogs and baton charges. Arrests reached 500 a day, but it was all shown on television and most people were sickened by the violence.

In 1963 Kennedy forced the city to give way and Alabama, the last state, was forced to allow desegregated schools.

The passage of the Civil Rights Act

Kennedy now introduced a Civil Rights Bill to Congress. However, it got bogged down, partly because of opposition from Kennedy's own party the Democrats, who were strong in the South.

So even John Kennedy was unable to do anything really effective. He was not prepared to force the measure through and possibly lose support.

When Martin Luther King planned a march through Washington in support of the Bill, Kennedy asked him to call it off. King refused and 200,000 people marched.

Things changed after Kennedy's death. There was a great wave of sympathy for him and for his aims. An important Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 by Kennedy's successor President

Johnson.

Johnson was a southerner from Texas, where segregation was common, so it was surprising that he forced Congress to accept the act. This was partly a result of Kennedy's assassination, but also because Johnson had been a schoolteacher who had seen the effects of segregation.

The Civil Rights Act

Made segregation in education and housing illegal

Stated that all Americans were entitled to equal employment opportunities

Stated that all Federal projects must include racial integration

The Voting Rights Act, 1965, made it illegal to try to prevent blacks from registering for the vote by setting literacy tests for voters.

Black Power

As early as the late 1950s some black Americans began to reject the methods of Martin Luther King. This led to the formation of a number of groups, which demanded Black Power.

Why did the Black Power movement develop?

The pace of change was too slow, King was prepared to wait for his tactics to work.

They believed that US society was fundamentally white and that nothing would change it.

There was growing interest in Islam, which was seen as a black religion.

There was a rejection of the idea of integration and in some cases a demand for a separate black society.

Malcolm X was a leader of the Black Muslims and founded the Nation of Islam. He advocated violence as a means of self-defence for blacks.

Stokeley Carmichael wanted to set up a separate black society. He became the leader of the SNCC in 1966 and turned it into a violent organisation.

The Black Panthers, founded in 1966, wanted to start a race war against white Americans.

What effects did Black Power have?

Riots broke out in many US cities. In 1965 there were serious riots in the Watts area of Los Angeles and 34 people died.

There were further riots in the next three years in Chicago, Philadelphia, Cleveland and New York. 1967 was the worst year, with 150 cities affected. It seemed that civil war was breaking out in the USA.

In 1967 Johnson appointed Governor Kerner of Illinois to head a commission to discover what was causing the riots.

The report was published in April 1968 and stated that the main cause was frustration of young blacks. In the same month Martin Luther King was assassinated, which led to a new wave of riots.

Also in April 1968, the Open Housing Law banned discrimination in the sale or rental of houses.

The Civil Rights Act of 1968

Banned discrimination in housing and made it a Federal offence to injure civil rights workers, or even to cross a state boundary with the intention of committing such a crime.

Why did the issue of Civil Rights become less significant in the 1970s?

Federal programmes were beginning to have some effect. Blacks were being appointed to prominent posts for the first time

Johnson's Poverty Program helped blacks in particular.

Unemployment fell in the early 1970s, although blacks were still more likely to be out of work.

Vietnam became a more important issue for many young Americans.

The New Frontier and the Great Society

What was the New Frontier?

It was Kennedy's idea of a programme to get the USA going again. He believed that the country had been allowed to stagnate under Eisenhower. He tried to appeal to the younger generation by referring to the pioneering spirit of the nineteenth century.

The programme included

Deliberately not balancing the budget to increase economic growth and reduce unemployment.

A programme of public works that cost \$900,000,000.

A general tax cut and an increase in the minimum wage from \$1.00 to \$1.25

These were all very successful, although the real effects were only felt after Kennedy's death.

Less successful were Medicare, a system of state health insurance, improvements in education and housing.

The Area Redevelopment Act, which allowed the Federal Government to give loans and grants to states with long term unemployment.

The Manpower and Training Act that provided retraining for the unemployed.

The Housing Act that provided cheap loans for the redevelopment of inner cities.

The Great Society

This was the programme of Lyndon Johnson, who succeeded Kennedy in November 1963. As well as the Civil Rights Act, 1964 and the Voting Rights Act, 1965, this included

The Medical Care Act, which provided Medicare (for the old) and Medicaid (for the poor) tried to ensure equal access to health for all.

The Appalachian Recovery programme applied the idea of FDR's TVA to another run-down area.

The Office of Economic Opportunity set up schemes to help poor people in inner cities: education, loans, community projects. This was the basis of Johnson's Programme for Poverty.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided the first major federal support for state education ever.

The Model Cities Act continued Kennedy's policy of urban renewal.

How successful was the Great Society?

At the beginning of his presidency, Johnson took advantage of the sympathy for the government after the death of Kennedy.

Later the policies brought huge opposition from both Republicans and members of his own party, the Democrats.

Johnson also had to wind many of his projects down because of the cost of the Vietnam War.

Eventually Johnson himself was worn down by the Vietnam War and decided not to stand for re-election in 1968.

The changing roles of women in the USA

Why did demands for equality for women develop?

The Second World War had given women new roles and opportunities.

The birth control pill became available in the 1960s.

In 1961 John F Kennedy appointed Eleanor Roosevelt to lead a Commission on the Status of Women.

In the early 1960s 5% of managers and senior administrators were women. 12% of professionals were women. 35% of undergraduates were women.

Women earned on average 59% of the pay of men for the same work,

How did the roles of women change?

The Equal Pay Act of 1963 stated that men and women had to be given the same pay for the same job.

In 1963 Betty Friedman published the 'Feminine Mystique'.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discrimination on the basis of gender.

In 1966 the National Organisation for Women was set up, by 1970 it had 40,000 members.

In 1972 the Educational Amendment Act banned all forms of gender discrimination in education, including in school books

In 1976 women were admitted to West Point and Annapolis, the elite academies for army and naval officers.

The student movement

Young people's protest began in the 1950s:

Beatnik poets, like Allen Ginsberg protested at the smug life of suburbia. He suggested dropping out, taking drugs etc.

Rock n' roll outraged middle class America when it appeared in 1955. Teenagers' music became a separate world.

James Dean and Elvis Presley became heroes of the younger generation.

However, the real protests began in the 1960s

Why did protests increase dramatically in the 1960s?

The growth of pop music focused more attention on the younger generation.

Increased education meant that teenagers did not have to earn their livings.

The death of Kennedy raised questions about US society and Civil Rights encouraged civil disobedience and Kennedy himself backed the Freedom Riders.

The bombing of North Vietnam in 1965 led to many student protests. 3,000,000 Americans served in the war and their average age was nineteen. Many resorted to drugs to help themselves survive the horrors of the war.

By the later 1960s the tactics adopted by the USA to try to win the war clearly involved killing civilians and brutalising soldiers.

The slogan 'Hey! Hey! LBJ! How many kids have you killed today?' became widespread. The two issues of Civil Rights and Vietnam joined together, as blacks pointed out the disproportionate numbers of black soldiers in the Vietnam War.

Protests reached a peak in 1968, when 'Flower Power', with its slogan 'make love not war' became the rage.

In 1970 four students at Kent State University were killed by National Guardsmen. Crowds shouted at President L B Johnson: "Hey! Hey! LBJ! How many kids have you killed today?"

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The Watergate Scandal and its impact

The Watergate Scandal was caused by an attempt to bug the offices of the Democrat Party in the Watergate building in Washington. Five men were arrested in June 1972. The men were employed by CREEP, Committee to re-elect the President.

President Nixon stated that the White House was not involved in any of these activities, but at the same time authorised the payment of \$460,000 to the five men. The trial took place after Nixon was re-elected and one of the five men admitted that White House had been involved.

A Senate Committee was set up to investigate and many of Nixon's closest advisers were forced to resign. The president, however, continued to maintain his innocence. He even appointed Archibald Cox as a special investigator. He hoped that he would produce a whitewash.

It was then revealed that all conversations in the White House since 1971 had been recorded on tape. The Senate demanded the tapes, but Nixon refused to hand them over.

Some tapes were eventually handed over in November 1973 and the US public was shocked by the attitudes and the language of Nixon. But the tapes had been edited.

Nixon finally handed over the unedited tapes only after a ruling from the Supreme Court and an announcement by the House of Representatives that it was about to begin impeachment proceedings.

The tapes proved that Nixon had lied and that he had tried to prevent the investigation, but not that he had known about the original break in and bugging. Nixon resigned in August 1974 to avoid the disgrace of impeachment.

What were the effects of the Watergate Scandal?

It was one a series of revelations about US presidents that hit Americans very hard. The truth about Kennedy's affairs and Johnson's perversions were already beginning to come out and Nixon's own vice-president, Spiro Agnew, had been forced to resign for tax evasion.

Thirty-one of Nixon's advisers went to prison as a result of the investigation.

It came at the same time as the withdrawal from Vietnam, which was seen by many as a defeat for the USA.

Congress acted to reduce the powers of the president. In future he would have to:

Consult Congress before sending US troops into action.

Stop using federal money for personal reasons.

Congress also set limits on contributions to presidential campaign funds and also allowed private citizens access to any files that the federal government had about them.

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