

Chapter 27 Peace and Prosperity

There was a period of peace and prosperity after World War II.

However, issues such as the Cold War and the civil rights movement greatly affected American society. As you study this chapter, consider in what ways nuclear weapons might affect a society, how a conflict between two nations might affect other countries, and why minority groups might fight for increased rights in the courts.

Chapter 27

Section 1: The Eisenhower Administration

In this section you will learn that prosperity in the United States after World War II was overshadowed by events of the Cold War. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

hydrogen bomb

Sputnik

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

massive retaliation

brinkmanship

covert operations

Central Intelligence Agency

Suez Crisis

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- What policies did President Dwight D. Eisenhower pursue?
- How did the existence of nuclear weapons influence Eisenhower's foreign policy?
- What methods did the United States use to fight communism

abroad?

Chapter 27.1 Section Summary

Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president in 1952. Middle class people from both parties supported him. President Eisenhower supported programs to help the economy and to meet citizens' basic needs.

During Eisenhower's presidency, people made more money. This new wealth allowed more people to buy suburban homes, to take vacations, and to send their children to college. Not everyone shared in this new wealth, however.

Americans lived under the threat of nuclear war in the 1950s. In 1952 the United States tested its first **hydrogen bomb**, a device much stronger than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan. Less than one year later, the Soviet Union tested its own hydrogen bomb. Both countries rushed to increase their nuclear stockpiles. This frightened many people.

In October 1957 the Soviets launched *Sputnik*, the world's first artificial satellite, into space. Some feared that the Soviets were gaining an edge in the Cold War. Congress responded by creating the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration**, NASA, an agency to conduct space research.

President Eisenhower attempted to eliminate communism throughout the world. His plan relied on the idea of **massive retaliation**, or the use of nuclear weapons to fight communism. Many people believed that the United States would have to go to the very brink, or edge, of war to oppose communist nations. This was known as **brinkmanship**.

President Eisenhower sometimes used **covert operations**, or secret actions, to advance the United States' position in the Cold War. President Eisenhower used the **Central Intelligence Agency**, or CIA, to conduct these covert operations. The CIA had been created in 1947 to carry out secret spy operations against foreign enemies of the United States. In 1953 the CIA helped bring the pro-U.S. leader back into power in Iran. In 1954 the CIA tried to overthrow the president of Guatemala.

Problems arose in the Middle East in the early 1950s. The United States decided not to help Egypt build the Aswan High Dam, an irrigation project on the Nile River. The president of Egypt decided to pay for the project by charging a fee to use the Suez Canal. This canal was very important for trade to Britain, France, and Israel. These three nations invaded Egypt in 1956. The United States, fearing a

third world war, joined the Soviet Union in condemning the invasion.

This episode is known as the **Suez Crisis**.

There appeared to be a thaw in the Cold War. In 1959 the Soviet leader, Nikita Krushchev [CRUISE-chev], visited the United States, and Vice President Richard Nixon visited the Soviet Union. Then in May 1960 the Soviets shot down an American U-2 spy plane over Soviet territory. Relations froze again.

Chapter 27

Section 2: A Prosperous Nation

In this section you will learn that many people began to criticize the values of American society. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

automation

Sunbelt

Highway Act

Levittown

baby boom

urban renewal

beats

silent generation

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- How did changing business and migration patterns affect Americans?
- What was life like in the suburbs?
- What were the major complaints of social critics of the 1950s?

Chapter 27.2 Section Summary

During the 1950s, the working environment changed greatly. New technology allowed many factories to increase **automation**, or the use of machines in production. Automation decreased the need for workers because companies replaced them with machines.

More people moved in the 1950s. They moved to take new jobs and to find what they hoped would be a better life. The **Sunbelt** states of the South and the West were very popular, because they tended to offer low taxes and had warm weather. The **Highway Act**, which provided money to create a national highway system, made it easier for people to move or go on vacation.

Some people moved from the city into suburbs. **Levittown**, on Long Island in New York, was a typical suburb. Houses in the suburbs looked much the same. People liked the large rooms and big lawns. Americans welcomed these as a **baby boom**, or significant increase in the birth of children, took place after World War II.

Suburban children usually participated in a lot of different activities. Some took music and dance lessons, while others participated in Boy and Girl Scouts. Many people did not like the suburbs because they thought everyone who lived there looked and acted the same.

As middle-class whites moved to the suburbs, they left behind many poor and non-white residents. A decline began in many cities. In response, the government began an **urban renewal** program to improve life in the cities.

The 1950s were a television age. By 1953 more than 20 million houses had at least one television set. Lucille Ball's *I Love Lucy* show was one of the most popular programs on television.

In the 1950s a number of important scholars, writers, and artists criticized American society. They thought that American society was shallow and even dangerous. A group of young writers called beatniks or **beats** criticized American society through their uncommon writing. Other young people wanted to avoid conflict and just be part of the crowd. They were known as the **silent generation**.

The 1950s saw the rise of two important new styles of music—bebop and rock 'n' roll. Bebop got its start in the mid-1940s and was a quick, sophisticated type of jazz music.

Many teenagers challenged society through rock 'n' roll. Loud and enthusiastic, rock 'n' roll drew heavily from African American rhythm and blues. Many adult critics argued that rock 'n' roll caused teenagers to behave badly.

Chapter 27

Section 3: The Early Civil Rights Movement

In this section you will learn that after World War II, African Americans took up a fight against discrimination in the United States. As you study this material, pay attention to the following terms:

Committee on Civil Rights

Brown v. Board of Education

Little Rock Nine

Montgomery Bus Boycott

Montgomery Improvement Association

You will also want to keep the following questions in mind as you review this material:

- How did African American World War II veterans influence the early civil rights movement?
- What were some of the main events in the struggle for school desegregation?
- Why did the Montgomery Bus Boycott succeed?

Chapter 27.3 Section Summary

Many returning African American veterans focused their efforts on voting discrimination. In many southern states, fees, reading tests, and threats of violence kept many African Americans from voting. This caused many conflicts in the South.

As the violence grew, African Americans asked President Truman for help. President Truman responded by appointing the **Committee on Civil Rights**. This committee was to investigate racial discrimination and find answers to this problem. In 1948 President Truman issued an executive order that banned segregation in the military and racial discrimination in federal jobs.

Starting around 1950, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or the NAACP, decided to completely focus its efforts on ending school segregation. A number of school segregation cases came together under the title of ***Brown v. Board of Education***. The title case involved Linda Brown, a seven-year-old from Kansas. Brown's father sued to allow Linda to attend the white school that was closer to her house. The Supreme Court ruled in the *Brown* case that segregation in public schools was harmful to children. It also ruled that school segregation was illegal. Some accepted the Court's decision; others did not.

In 1957 the school board of Little Rock, Arkansas, selected nine African American students, nicknamed the **Little Rock Nine**, to attend Central High School, an all-white school. However, the governor of Arkansas said he would never allow the black students to attend the school. He sent the state National Guard to keep them from entering the school. Finally, President Eisenhower sent federal troops so that the African American students could go to Central High School.

African Americans also fought to integrate public transportation. In December 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks, an African American woman, refused to give her bus seat to a white passenger. She was arrested. The **Montgomery Bus Boycott** soon followed. This meant that African Americans would refuse to use the city's bus system. African Americans set up the **Montgomery Improvement Association**. This local group was led by Martin Luther King Jr. and helped support the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Boycott leaders arranged carpools so that black riders could get to work or school. Some whites used violence to try to end the boycott. In November 1956 the Supreme Court ruled that Montgomery's bus segregation was illegal. The victory brought an important new

leader—Martin Luther King Jr.—to the forefront. It also energized the black community.