Chapter 25 – World War II

The Twisting Road to War

❖ Europe on the Brink of War
  ➢ In 1934, Adolph Hitler announced a program of rearming Germany in violation of the Treaty of Versailles
  ➢ In Italy, Benito Mussolini was also building a powerful military force
  ➢ Many American adults belonged to peace organizations and were determined never again to enter a foreign war

❖ War in Europe
  ➢ Roosevelt, while not an isolationist, was determined to keep America out of the European war
  ➢ March 1938: Hitler takes the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia and later overruns the entire country
  ➢ August 1939: Germany and Russia sign non-aggression pact; Germany attacks Poland, making the official beginning of World War II as France and Britain were treaty-bound to come to the aid of Poland

❖ Lend-Lease
  ➢ Roosevelt broke a long tradition in American politics and ran for a third term which he handily won
  ➢ Roosevelt constructed a plan for sending material aid to Britain without demanding payment termed the Lend-Lease Act of 1941
  ➢ The Act destroyed all pretensions of neutrality; German U-Boats began sinking American merchant ships in earnest

❖ Pearl Harbor
  ➢ Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was home to the American Pacific Fleet in 1941
  ➢ Japan, in retaliation for the economic stance of the U.S. in terms of material sales and trade, launched a surprise attack on the base on December 7
  ➢ This action unified the country and threw America into World War II

The Home Front

❖ Mobilizing for War
  ➢ The War Productions Board (WPB) offered businesses lucrative contracts for retooling for the war effort
  ➢ Large commercial farmers also received incentives for war production
  ➢ Labor unions offered “no strike pledges” for the duration of the war
  ➢ Taxes were raised, bonds were sold and the general tax based was increased

❖ Internment of Japanese Americans
  ➢ After the tragedy of Pearl Harbor, Americans were eager to act on racial stereotypes
  ➢ Eventually, the government built special relocation centers in remote sections of the U.S. and evacuated about 110,000 Japanese (including 60,000 citizens of Japanese heritage).
Social Impact of the War

❖ Wartime Opportunities
  ➢ 15 million Americans moved during the war, usually from rural areas to the cities
  ➢ The west coast of the U.S. saw explosive growth with attendant problems of housing, school, and service shortages
  ➢ Thousands of women took jobs in a wide range of areas never before open to them

A War of Diplomats and Generals

❖ A Strategy for Ending the War
  ➢ Eisenhower decided that the European war had to have priority over the Pacific campaign
  ➢ An invasion of France and North Africa, and an airborne assault of Italy were the footholds in the European theater for the Allies
  ➢ Ultimately, the Russian army took Berlin, ending the European war; later, two atomic weapons were dropped on the island of Japan, ending the Pacific campaign in 1945