THE LEGACY OF WORLD WAR II

What was the overall impact of the second world war? Read the following information carefully, and **summarize each topic in ONE complete sentence** in the space below it.

**The Cost of the War**

There is no official casualty count of World War II, but it was clearly the greatest and deadliest war in human history, with estimates reaching 57 million lives lost. In combat, approximately 7.5 million Russians, 3.5 million Germans, 1.2 million Japanese, and 2.2 million Chinese soldiers lost their lives. Great Britain and France each lost hundreds of thousands. The civilian toll was probably higher – an estimates 22 million Soviet citizens were lost, and 6 million Jews in the Holocaust. For the United States, the losses were smaller, but still alarming - more than 400,000 dead and over 600,000 wounded.

**NATIONAL IMPACT**

World War II was a time of opportunity for millions of Americans. Jobs abounded and, despite rationing and shortages, there was money to spend again. Workers complained about long hours, overtime, and night shifts, but they were able to save money for the future. Farmers also prospered during the war, as crop production increased and farm income tripled. Women also enjoyed employment gains during the war, but many left the workforce after the war ended.

**ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY** -

After World War II, the United States assumed a new position as a global superpower. America emerged from the war with minor casualties compared to the other Allies and to the Axis powers, needed no rebuilding, and was also the only nation possessing the atomic bomb. Clearly, the United States was the leader in world affairs.
As military costs escalated, so did the deficit. But at the same time, social spending plummeted. Senate liberals, for example, introduced legislation to broaden the coverage of Social Security, and another bill to provide comprehensive national health care. Both were pushed aside in favor of military spending.

The end of the New Deal and World War II brought about a political, psychological, and economic shift to the right in the U.S. Three issues troubled Americans during the war years and immediately afterward - that government was becoming too big, the economy was controlled too much by the government, and Communism was infiltrating the United States. New Deal reform measures of the past were canceled or defeated.

During the war, the number of civilian employees working for the federal government rose from one million to nearly four million. At the same time, Washington's spending grew from nine billion dollars to ninety-eight billion dollars. The war also accelerated the growth of the authority of the President. Now, important decisions concerning both domestic and foreign policy were not made by Congress, but by the President and his advisors.

An organized relationship arose between big business and the military's spending on defense. During the war, the average daily expenditure on military contracts was two hundred fifty million dollars, which inflated American industrial capacity. Small companies disappeared as two-thirds of government contracts went to the hundred largest corporations.

As African Americans moved into crowded industrial cities, racial tensions grew outside of the South. Blacks made some progress in the military and the workforce, and many cities formed committees to improve race relations. Mexican Americans faced discrimination in Southern California. Japanese Americans faced discrimination during the war, especially in the relocation camps, and struggled to rebuild their lives after the war.

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also called the G.I. Bill, provided a range of benefits for returning World War II veterans. GIs received low-cost mortgages, loans to start businesses or farms, money for extending education in college or vocational education, and one year of unemployment compensation. It was available to every veteran who had been on active duty during the war years for at least ninety days and had not been dishonorably discharged. Combat was not required.
GLOBAL IMPACT

As the Allies liberate the concentration camps, they were shocked at what they found. Many survivors were displaced and lost their lives searching for a new home. While the United States and other Allied countries were aware of much of what was going on with Hitler’s final solution, nothing was done. The Holocaust remains one of the darkest events in human history, as approximately 6 million Jews lost their lives (and approximately 6 million others).

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY -

Allies decided during the war to pursue charges against war criminals after the Allied victory, in fear of POW reprisals. Most Nazi trials were held at Nuremburg, Germany. At the most famous Nuremburg Trial, 21 Nazi officials were tried for crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, many a result from the Holocaust. 14 were sentenced to hang, the remainder were given prison sentences. Many other trials were held concerning specific concentration camps, including Buchenwald and Dachau. The Japanese trials began in Tokyo and were eventually shifted to the Philippines. Some others were held in Yokahoma, Japan. In Tokyo, 25 men were indicted, and 22 were found guilty of war crimes, including Hideki Tojo, Japan’s leader throughout the war. The war crimes trials demonstrated that “just following orders” was not an acceptable defense for crimes against humanity.

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY -

Created in response to the failure of the League of Nations, the United Nations was based on the idea that an international body could resolve disputes through discussion and diplomacy to avert or stop wars. The US agreed to the UN, seeing that isolationism could not protect the country and may actually be dangerous. However, due to the setup of the General Assembly and the veto power of the five permanent members, the UN seemed destined to fail. The UN has played a constructive role in the resolution of many disputes.

ONE SENTENCE SUMMARY -

As the U.S. rose to superpower status, so did the Soviet Union, and both countries tried to spread their respective forms of government. The Soviet Union drew many Eastern European nations into their influence, especially with the organization of the Warsaw Pact. The U.S. and other Western democracies created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, pledging to protect democracies beyond those involved in the Warsaw Pact. Nations all over the world attempted to develop their nuclear arms capability in order to improve their status among world powers. A global competition for power and influence developed, with the United States and their allies (the West) against the Soviet Union and their allies (the East).