Aditya Patel

APUSH

Period 4

03/29/2021

CH 29 Test

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1. The Great Society

After the legislative slowdown and failure of passing New Frontier policies by John F Kennedy, hope for liberal legislation was low. However, the assassination of Kennedy led the next President Lyndon B Johnson and Congress into spurning out major new laws. With Johnson’s great negotiation skills, he was able to build massive support in Congress for his policies, and the nation was eager to accept them after the death of JFK. Johnson achieved all of these through legislative victories. He was an excellent negotiator and was able to convince congressmen and congresswomen by invading their personal place and intimidating them into submission. The first and most everlasting changes of the Great Society were the Medicare and Medicaid programs, which brought healthcare and a pension program for all elderly people and those in need. These programs continue to this day and are still being built upon. This was part of Johnson’s “Assault on Poverty”, which was his goal to help the American underclass. He also created the Community Action Program to provide job opportunities, education, and political experience for the poor and underrepresented. However, this program was much less successful than Medicare and Medicaid. It had a high startup cost in the billions, but it did not eliminate poverty, as promised. As the Vietnam War began later in the decade, funding was drastically cut for the program, and its ineffectiveness began to show. Johnson also created the Housing Act of 1961 to jumpstart city infrastructure and public housing. He also passed significant immigration reforms to reduce racism in the system, and significantly increased immigration from all non-European nations. During this time period, the economy went through continuous growth, and many wondered if the progress of society and reduction of poverty came through Johnson’s “War on Poverty” or the continuous increase in America’s wealth. As such, many of Johnson’s programs were defunded and removed, due to growing belief that they programs were inefficient, and that private progress was better.

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1. The Vietnam War

Even twenty years after the end of the Second World War, problems from it were occurring. Japan’s conquests after the war were left in disarray, and French Vietnam was one of those left in disarray. However, as the French attempted to regain control of the South East Asian country, a Communist Nationalist movement called the Vietminh fought back to take the country. In this Indochina War, the Vietminh were able to push back the French invasion and had won the war by 1953. The United States were unwilling to intervene after their own intervention in Korea, and without Eisenhower’s support, the world took a diplomatic solution. At the Geneva Conference, the powers decided that Vietnam would be split in half, with the Vietminh controlling the north and pro-American government in the south. America set up a government led by Ngo Ninh Diem, a nationalist who suppressed all opposition in the south. The Geneva Conference also dictated that there would be an election in 1956, to choose which government would continue to control both North and South Vietnam. However, this election was never held, as Diem was hugely unpopular in the country, and with his NLF, which oppressed people across his government, and large population of the north, he stood no chance. After Diem was overthrown by military forces, Johnson and Congress were pressured into putting Americans in Vietnam. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution gave Johnson power to deploy many troops into Vietnam. He started off with the support of the American people, but as Americans started to deploy and a war of attrition began, soldiers started to die, and it was clear the war was not going to end quickly, public opinion turned against the war. Pacifism and peace grew in the hearts of the youth, especially as young soldiers were forced to go to Vietnam and were killed and traumatized. After the economy faltered during the war because of inflation, Johnson’s approval began to tank and support for the war largely died.

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1. Civil Rights

African Americans had been fighting for equal rights and representation since the end of slavery, but their movement to do so took up steam during the 1960s. After partaking greatly and sacrificing much in both World Wars, African Americans were more ready to fight than ever before. A growing educated, middle class led by Martin Luther King Jr. led this movement. Early movements in the south, such as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, created sit ins and protests for African Americans and all people to partake in. These movements continued to gain popularity, especially with the popularization of television, as people in the north and the west gained access to what was happening in the South. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a major success for Black Americans and proved that change through nonviolent protest was definitely possible. This boycott forced the Montgomery Bus system to desegregate its bus, and introduced America to new symbols of the movement, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. Later, in 1963, Americans from across the country saw horrific events happen to peaceful African American protestors from the police in Birmingham, and national troops were sent in to stop the police brutality. The Civil Rights Movement continued to gain popularity and strength, culminating in the March on Washington, where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I have a dream” speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial. After the announcement of wholehearted support by John F Kennedy, the Voting Rights Act passed, removing roadblocks for many African Americans to vote. Previously, Democratic Presidents were afraid to embrace the Civil Rights Movement due to fear of alienation from the South, a Democratic Stronghold, but JFK finally did what he believed was right, at the peak of the movement’s popularity. Afterwards, the Civil Rights Movement continued to advocate for increased rights, and successfully combatted Je Jure and De Facto Segregation, resulting in a desegregated and greatly improved America after the movement.

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