

HISTORY ESSAY

Introduction

The post war era of 1945-1960 was one of the unique and thriving periods in the history of the world more especially in Europe and America. These paper discusses the post war era between 1945-1960 which is described as an era of an affluent society shaped by consensus and conformity and also portrayed as an era shaped by Cold War fears and anxieties. It also discusses the primary beneficiaries of this emerging society and the ones who were left out.

The post war era between 1945 and 1960

The era was characterized by an affluent society shaped by consensus and conformity. Further, it was characterized by the taking of some nations by others as so little to an extent that the nations turned to each other with much hatred. Some countries which are industry dominated such as the United States changed towards an economy that is service based. The conventional employment enhanced some significant increases and the various customer traditions contributed to the extensive consistence in the American life which was realized in the religious convictions, general functions and educational institutions. At the post war era, most Americans had fears on the great depression that could result from the reduction in the subsequent spending in the military but this changed when the consumer demand led to economic growth during the postwar. The affluence did not however to each corner of the United States, hence the minorities and the underprivileged groups such as the black Africans and Hispanics faced prejudice and inadequate opportunities (BOOK Rags).

Most Americans were unaware of the poor people who suffered poverty. These people lived in the crowded inner cities to the mountains of Appalachia to the farmlands of the West.

They struggled to survive amid inadequate healthcare, poor housing, and inadequate opportunities to move out of their poverty situation. The African Americans and Hispanics who lived in the inner cities faced the additional racial discrimination problem, long working hours, inadequate pay, and unbearable living conditions. Also the Native Americans who are the poorest group in the nation lived in worsened conditions which resulted after the federal government employed a termination policy that integrated them into the mainstream society. Finally, the Middle-class people were subjected to social problems and there was increase in juvenile delinquency in 1950s (The American vision @2010). The postwar was also portrayed as an era shaped by Cold War fears and anxieties. For instance, the United States feared of losing its opportunity of becoming a super power to other nations and the spread of communism. The fears were due to the invisible war between United States and Soviet Union in efforts to discover who was powerful than the others.

Elements creating consensus and conformity

The postwar era of 1945-1960 has been referred to by many names such as age of consensus, age of anxiety and age of conformity by historians. The conformity and consensus of this postwar era grounded a generation that was recently referred to as “the greatest generation” which was the target of the unrest in 1960. The children of this generation attacked upon the American values on which America was built. During the postwar era, 1950s was considered a paradox as conformity and consensus were simultaneously in force. This paradox was underscored by the media-radios, televisions and movies Contemporary American Theatre Company).

In 1950s, there was a consensus about the “American way” and there were some uncertainties in the world which made the Americans to be uneasy and anxious. America did not hold a monopoly over the nuclear power and the government wrote pamphlets on the ways to survive the atomic attack. The Africans Americans in America were very unhappy and they demanded for access to public places and economic opportunities which were denied to them by the laws of Jim Crow and the American racial customs. They also demanded for the rights to vote and right from violence which led to the emergence of civil rights movement to underscore the American foreign policy hypocrisy. In 1950s, the white Americans were in resistances against the African Americans following their demands and the president never took any stand on the issue (Contemporary American Theatre Company).

The beneficiaries

Various constructive business conditions were advanced and wartime savings were facilitated. As the cold war unfolded, the United States benefited as it experienced a high economic growth. This era brought returns of prosperity and the United States was able to consolidate its position as the richest nation in the entire world. For instance, the value of goods and services that were manufactured in the United States increased from 200000 dollars in 1940 to 300000 dollars in the year 1950 and finally 500000 dollars in 1960. This improved the living standards of many Americans as they considered themselves the middle class members. The sources for this American economy growth include the growth of the major corporations in the country. The corporations formed mergers and conglomerates where the firms which had their holdings in many industries were allowed to lead others. The large corporations led to the growth through the establishment and development of their holding in other countries. Secondly, the automobile industry contributed to the growth in this era. The number of the produced

automobiles increased in a period between 1946 to 1955. Thirdly, there was a housing program which ensured easily affordable mortgages for the returning war servicemen which further facilitated the economic growth (United States History).

In addition to United States of America, Europe also benefited during the postwar era. For instance, it was able to realize high economic recovery which was facilitated by the following factors.

i. Technological and scientific advancements

Many industries such as the electrical and chemical engineering industries were advanced during the postwar time. These led to the production of new varieties of the chemical and electrical goods such as radios, refrigerators, televisions and others that were sold at relatively low prices. The high demand for these new industrial goods facilitated the economic growth (ECONOMIC COOPERATION 1945-1960).

ii. Government policy changes

Before the war, the laissez policy was used in the European countries. During the postwar period, most of the countries tried to stimulate their economic growth through more government investments. For example, Britain adopted the Beveridge Report which implied that the British government made investments that could lead to the development of welfare services in Britain only. In France, a comprehensive modernization scheme was drawn in 1946 whereby the French government gave resources for the modernization of the machines in the industries, construction of infrastructure such as roads. As a result, these encouraged private investments and employment thus promoting the European economic growth (ECONOMIC COOPERATION 1945-1960).

iii. World trade growth and foreign aid

During the postwar period, the European countries started to lower their tariffs and cooperated with others. The reduced tariffs led to the growth of intra European trade. Also the trade increased between Europe, Asia and Africa. The high demand of the European goods in Africa and Asia led to its growth. Finally, Europe was assisted to speed its economic growth during the postwar period through the injection of foreign aids into its economy (ECONOMIC COOPERATION 1945-1960).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the postwar era of 1945-1960 was characterized by the parties that benefited from it and the others who did not benefit such as the African Americans and Hispanics. The benefits were as a result of development of industries and production of new industrial products. Also they came as a result of changes of various governments' policies.