Chapter 39

The Stalemated Seventies

1. Sources of Stagnation
   1. Sudden slump in productivity was attributed to the increasing presence in the work force of women and teenagers who had fewer skills than adult males and were less likely to take full time, long-term jobs-some blamed it on new machinery but no one knows for sure.
   2. During Nixon’s presidency, Americans experienced the first serious inflation since the immediate post World War II years.
2. Nixon “Vietnamizes” the War
   1. He could be brittle and testy in the face of opposition yet his broad knowledge and thoughtful expertise in foreign affairs was valuable.
   2. Vietnamization policy was announced-it would withdraw the 540,000 U.S. troops in South Vietnam
   3. Nixon Doctrine thus evolved.
      1. Proclaimed that the U.S. would honor its existing defense commitments that in the future, Asians and others would have to fight their own wars without the support of large bodies of American ground troops
      2. Nixon sought to end the war without further spilling of American blood
      3. War had become grotesquely unpopular, even among troops in the field
3. Cambodianizing the Vietnam War
   1. On April 29, 1970 Nixon ordered American forces to join with the South Vietnamese in cleaning out enemy sanctuaries in officially neutral Cambodia
      1. This caused protests, Nixon withdrew the troops after only two months
      2. But still deepened the bitterness between the right wing and left wing groups
   2. The Senate repealed the Gulf of Tonkin blank check
      1. To pacify America’s youth they shortened the dilatability period and lowered the voting age to eighteen.
4. Nixon’s Détente with Beijing (Peking) and Moscow
   1. Nixon hoped to enlist the aid of the Soviet Union and China in pressuring North Vietnam into peace.
      1. Nixon visited communist China in February 1972
      2. Then he went to Moscow in May and ushered an era of détente or relaxed tension with the two communist powers
   2. The U.S. band the USSR started to slow the armistice and agreed to a series of arms-reduction negotiations
      1. Nixon’s diplomacy ceased the Cold War but was still anti-communist
5. A New Team on the Supreme Bench
   1. Several court rulings sought to prevent abusive police tactics but appealed to conservatives to coddle criminals and subvert law and order
      1. Conservatives also objected to the court’s views on religion
      2. Public schools could not require prayer or bible reading
   2. From 1954 on, the court came under relentless criticism
      1. President Nixon sought appointees who would strictly interpret the constitution, cease “meddling” in social and political questions and not coddle radicals or criminals
6. Nixon on the Home Front
   1. Surprisingly, Nixon presided over expansion of welfare programs like food stamps and medicade
      1. He also implemented the Philadelphia Plan requiring goals and time-tables for hiring blacks
      2. Protected groups against discrimination
   2. The actions of Nixon and the court opened employment and educational opportunities for minorities and women
      1. Cities protested these actions as “reverse discrimination”
   3. Environmental Protection Agency created in 1970
      1. First Earth Day April 22, 1970
      2. Clean Air Act of 1970 and Endangered Species Act of 1973 passed. The EPA stood on the front line of the battle for ecological sanity
   4. Warned about inflation, Nixon imposed a 90-day wage and price freeze, took the nation off the gold standard and devalued the dollar
7. The Nixon Landslide of 1972
   1. The Democratic candidate was George McGovern
   2. Nixon won the election in a landslide
      1. Shaky peace with Vietnam at the time
8. The Secret Bombing of Cambodia and the Wars Power Act
   1. In July America was shocked to learn that the U.S. Air Force had secretly induced some 3,500 bombing raids against North Vietnam
      1. While they were going on, American officials, including the president had sworn that Cambodian neutrality was being respected
   2. Congressional opposition to the expansion of presidential war-making powers led to the war powers act
      1. Required the president to report to congress within 48 hours after committing troops to a foreign conflict.
      2. Had to end within 60 days unless extended
   3. “New Isolationism” began – mood of ration and resistant
9. The Arab Oil Embargo and the Energy Crisis
   1. In act 1973 Syrians and Egyptians unleashed surprise attack on Israel. American ordered nearly $2 billion in war material to help Israeli’s.
      1. America’s backing up Israel enacted a heavy penalty
      2. The oil-rich Arab states cut their oil production which triggered a recession
   2. The 5 months of Arab “blackmail” embargo in 1974 signaled the end of the era of cheap and abundant energy
   3. America was oil-addicted by 1974
      1. Huge new oil bills disrupted the trade balance and added inflation
10. Watergate and the Unmaking of a President
    1. Nixon’s electoral triumph was eventually undone by the Watergate scandal
       1. June 17, 1972, 5 men arrested after trying to implant electronic bugs in the Democratic party’s headquarters
       2. Turned out to be one of Nixon’s administration’s “dirty tricks”
    2. Nixon denied any prior knowledge of the break-in but John Bean III revealed a secret taping of Nixon’s oval office conversations
       1. The “smoking gun” tape revealed the president giving orders, six days after the Watergate break-in that convicted him of having known
       2. The Judiciary committee drew up articles of impeachment
    3. Nixon choked back his tears and announced his resignation on television on August 8, 1974
11. The First Unelected President
    1. Gerald Rudolph Ford was the 1st man to be made president by congress’ vote
       1. Ford granted a complete pardon to Nixon
    2. Ford at first sought to enhance the détente that Nixon had made
       1. But the USSR didn’t send trade terms their way
12. Defeat in Vietnam
    1. The North Vietnamese eventually beat the South and the American soldiers had to be evacuated via helicopter
    2. Technically Americans had not lost the war; their client nation did but technicalities aside, America had lost more than the war
       1. It lost money, force is the eyes of others, confidence, and self-esteem
13. Feminist Victories and Defeats
    1. American feminists showed vitality and momentum and provoked the rethinking of gender roles
       1. In 1972 congress passed an amendment prohibiting sex discrimination in any federally assisted educational program
    2. Equal Rights Amendment non congressional approval in 1972 but it wasn’t ratified by enough states
       1. Antifeminists blamed women’s movements for rising divorce rates and believed that the ERA would threaten basic family structures
14. The Seventies in Black and White
    1. Race remained an explosive issue in the 1970’s
       1. The topic of desegregating schools was worked on and it was ruled that it shouldn’t require students to move across school district lines
    2. Native Americans gained power through using the courts
15. The Bicentennial Campaign
    1. America’s 200 year birthday fell during an election year 1976. President republican Gerald Ford vs. democrat James Earl “Jimmy” Carter Jr.
       1. Carter won, especially important were the votes of the African Americans, 97% of whom cast their ballots for Carter
    2. Carter enjoyed success at first, but the happiness didn’t last long; he was an inexperienced outsider
16. Carter’s Humanitarian Diplomacy
    1. Carter displayed concern for “human rights”
       1. He invited president Anwar Sadat of Egypt and prime minister Menachem Begin of Israel to sign a peace accord
       2. Resumed diplomatic relations with China
       3. Gave the Panama Canal back to Panama
17. Economic and Energy Woes
    1. Adding to Carter’s troubles was the failing economy
       1. Inflation was over 13%
    2. The “oil-shocks” of the 1970s taught Americans that they could never seriously consider a policy of economic isolation.
       1. Some 27% of gross national product depended on national trade by the end of the century
       2. Interest rates rose crazily
    3. Iran’s shah that was friendly to America was overturned and the new one denounced the U.S. as the “Great Satan”
       1. Iranian oil stopped flowing steadily
    4. In July 1979 Carter retreated to Camp David and called in over a hundred leaders to give him their views on the situation
       1. Gave the nation his malaise speech chiding his citizens for being too concerned with material goods
18. Foreign Affairs and the Iranian Imbroglio
    1. Carter met with soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to sign the SALTII agreements – limiting levels of lethal strategic weapons and their arsenals
    2. On November 4, 1979 anti American Muslims took a U.S. embassy hostage
       1. Soviets took Persian Gulf’s side
       2. Carter but on an embargo and boycotted Moscow’s Olympic games
    3. Carter at first tried to apply economic sanctions against the Iranian hostage crisis to no avail
       1. Carter at last ordered a daring rescue mission