Chapter 40 The Resurgence of Conservatism 1980-1992

I. The Election of Ronald Reagan, 1980

1. Reagan denounced the activist government, he championed the “common man” against big government.

* He condemned federal intervention in local affairs.

2. He drew on the ideas of neoconservatives

* Supported free-market capitalism and took tough, anti-soviet positions in foreign policy.

3. He was an actor-turned-politician and enjoyed enormous popularity

* He attacked the incumbent’s fumbling performance in foreign policy

4. On election day the Republicans won for the first time in 26 years.

II. The Reagan Revolution

1. He found common cause with great Britain on his crusade for a smaller government, less bureaucracy and freer markets.

* Conservative margaret Thatcher became Britain’s first female Prime Minister.

2. Reagan pursued his smaller-government policies with zeal and effectiveness and the US was a receptive audience.

III. The Battle of the Budget

1. Reagan proposed a new Federal budget and congress approved both it and a tax reform to lower taxes. “Supply-side economics” at first didn't seem to help. unemployment reached nearly 11% and the period of 1981-1982 was called the “Reagan Recession”

2. Economy recovery finally got underway in 1983

* However the poor got poorer, the very rich go much richer.

IV. Reagan Renews the Cold War

1. Reagan believed in negotiating with the soviets but only from a position of overwhelming strength.

* His new strategy -a strategic defense initiative known as Star Wars called for battlestations in space that could fire laser beams to vaporize other missiles.

2. Relations with the Soviets nosed dived

* Soviets shot down a Korean plane also containing Americans and they boycotted the Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

V. Troubles Abroad

1. Israel strained bonds of friendships with the United States by invading Lebanon.

* The US had to step in to help, but a suicide bomber blew up an explosives truck and killed over 200 marines.

2. Central America was also unruly.

* Reagan accused the Sandinistas of ruining their country into a base for soviet and cuban military penetration.
* Reagan sent military “advisers” to prop up the pro-american government of El Salvador.

VI. Round Two for Reagan

1. Reagan got a little opposition when running for his second term.

* His opponent was democrat Walter Mondale.

2. Foreign-policy issues dominated the news in his second term.

* New Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev announced two policies- Glasnost “openness ”and Perestroika “reconstructing”.
* Both required that the USSR shrink the size of its enormous military and redirect it to the economy, which necessitated an end to the cold war.

3. After three Summit meetings the two leaders signed the intermediate- Range Nuclear Forces Treaty banning all these missiles from Europe which ended the cold war.

4. Reagan’s administration provided strong backing for the oust of the Dictator Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines.goal

5. Also ordered an air raid against Libya in retaliation for alleged sponsorship of terrorist attacks.

VII. The Iran- Contra Imbroglio

1. Unknown to the American public, American diplomats secretly arranged arms sales to Iran and the money earned from that went to help the contras in Nicaragua.

* News of the secret dealing broke in November 1968 and ignited controversy.

2. The Iran-contra affair cast a dark shadow over the Reagan record on foreign policy.

VIII. Reagan’s Economic Legacy

1. Reagan had taken office vowing to invigorate the American economy but the combination of tax reduction and increases in military spending added $2 Trillion to the national debt.

* The deficits represented an economic failure but ultimately reached his political goal: the containment of welfare because the government couldn't afford any more social spending.
* The consequences of “Reaganomics” would be durable.

IX. The Religious Right

1. Religion pervaded American Politics in the 1980’s

* A group of conservative Christians were known as the Religious Right and they were a reflection or answer to the Sixties radicalism.

2. What had in the past been personal matters became political.

* Protests in the 80’s blocked entrances to abortion clinics.

X. Conservatives in the Courts

1. The courts became Reagan’s principal instrument, by the time he had left office he had appointed a near-majority of the Judges including the first woman judge in 1981.

2. Reagan reputed affirmation action and abortion.

3. The issue of abortion reached the court in 1989

* The court ruled that so states could restrict access to abortion as long as it did not place an “undue” burden on the woman, minors had to notify parents but wives didn't have to notify their spouses.

XI. Referendum on Reaganism in 1988.

1. republicans lost control of the senate in the 1986 elections and the democrats hoped for a time to rise up.

2. Black monday, October 19, 1987- The stock market plunged the largest one day decline to that point.

3. Democrats nominated michael Dukakis for the 1988 elections and republicans nominated Reagan’s vice president, George H.W. Bush.

* Bush Won.

XII. George H.W. Bush and the End of the Cold War

1. George H.W, Bush was born with a silver ladle in his mouth.

* He left the business world to serve in public service and promised to work for a “kinder, gentler America.”

2. Pro Democratic movements were seen in China and in Eastern Europe.

* The two Germanys were reunited in 1990.
* The USSR was dissolving and that brought an end to the Cold War era.

3. The disintegration of the Soviet union brought up questions like who would honor the agreements with the US and who would take command of the nuclear arsenal.

4. Ethnic warfare flared in countries now that waves of nationalistic fervor and long-suppressed ethnics and racial hatreds were taken out.

5. The end of the Cold War was a mixed blessing for the U.S.

* Huge economic sectors that provided military preparedness were shut down causing unemployment to soar.

6. Elsewhere in the world democracy marched forwards.

XIII. The Persian Gulf Crisis

1. Sadly the end of the Cold War did not mean the end of all wars.

2. In the summer of 1990 Saddam Hussein overran Kuwait to take their oil and pay some war debt.

* He eventually also wanted control over the entire Persian Gulf region and to totally extinguish Israel.
* Ironically, America had supplied them with the weapons beforehand.

3. The U.N. deliver

ed an ultimatum to SaddamHussein for him to Leave Kuwait by January 15, 1991 or UN forces would use “all necessary means” to expel his troops.

4. The United States and its UN allies unleashed an air attack on Iraq for 37 days.

* Iraq made a military response and on feb 23 the land war dubbed operation Desert Storm began.
* Feb 27 Hussein accepted a cease-fire.

XIV. Bush on the Home Front

1. Bush signed the Americans with Disabilities act in 1990.

* A landmark law prohibiting discrimination against the 43 million US citizens with physical or mental disabilities.

2. The President also signed a water projects bill that put the interests of the environment ahead of agriculture.

3. In 1991 Bush nominated for supreme court the conservative African American Clarence Thomas.

4. A “gender-gap” opened between the two political parties, as pro-choice women grew increasingly cool towards the strong anti-abortion stance of the republicans.

5 The economy had been sputtering since the beginning of his administration.

* The federal budget deficit grew.
* To try to stop it Bush agreed to new taxes.