

## Fascist Dictators (1919-1939)

### Communism and Fascism

As you read in the previous unit, the world experienced a severe **economic depression** after World War I. In Europe the Great Depression caused many citizens to lose faith in their democratic governments. In many countries, people turned to extremist political groups. Some turned to **communism**; others turned to **fascism**. People began looking for new leaders to help them solve their problems and rebuild their countries. Sometimes these new leaders became **dictators**, or rulers with complete power and control over their countries. Many of these *dictators* believed in denying people civil rights. Fascist dictators eventually rose to power in Italy, Germany, and Spain.

*Fascism* was a new political movement that emphasized **autocratic** and Nationalist policies. The Fascists believed that the *state*, or the nation's government, must be all-powerful. Rights of the individual were less important than those of the state. Benito Mussolini in Italy, Adolf Hitler in Germany, and Francisco Franco in Spain were three such Fascist dictators who gained control of their countries. By the end of their reigns, Hitler and Mussolini had brought their countries to near ruin. Millions of people had died, and the world had fought its *second* world war.

Like Communist rule in Russia, fascism gave supreme power to the state and permitted only one political party: the Fascist Party.

These two systems of **totalitarianism**, however, began with many differences. Under *communism*, the right to rule, in theory, came from the workers and peasants. However, the Fascist governments of Mussolini and Hitler drew their support from industrialists and the military. And Spanish Fascists under Franco drew support from the military and the wealthy landowners.

Fascists urged people to concentrate on their own nations, while Marxist Communists ignored national borders and tried to inspire a worldwide movement. The two forms of government also differed in what they advocated for the economy. Communists opposed **capitalism** and promised a classless society. Fascism, on the other hand, supported

*capitalism* and private ownership of factories and the means of production. Fascism promised economic security by keeping the existing class structure. In other words, those with economic wealth and power would keep it.

		<b>Characteristics of Totalitarianism</b>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one-party rule</li> <li>• dictatorship</li> <li>• state controls most aspects of life</li> </ul>	
		<b>Fascism/Nazism</b>	<b>Communism</b>
Basic Principles Political Social Economic Cultural Examples	Basic Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leader identified with state</li> <li>• authoritarian</li> <li>• action-oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leninism</li> <li>• Marxism</li> <li>• dictatorship of the proletariat (urban working class)</li> </ul>
	Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• racist (nazism)</li> <li>• nationalist</li> <li>• militarist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nationalist</li> <li>• internationalist</li> </ul>
	Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supported by industrialists and the military</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• supported by peasants (China) and workers (Soviet Union)</li> </ul>
	Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• control by state corporations or state governments</li> <li>• private property</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• government (state) planning</li> <li>• collective ownership</li> </ul>
	Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• censorship</li> <li>• indoctrination</li> <li>• secret police</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• censorship</li> <li>• indoctrination</li> <li>• secret police</li> </ul>
	Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fascism in Italy and Spain</li> <li>• nazism in Germany</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communism in China and in the Soviet Union</li> </ul>

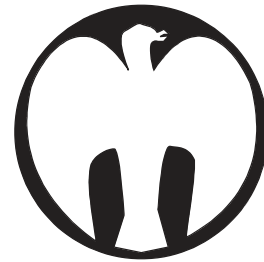
## Fascism

After World War I, Benito Mussolini organized the Fascist movement. He derived the word *Fascist* from the ancient Roman symbol of authority, the *fasces*—a bundle of rods surrounding an ax. This symbol represented a strong central government uniting all its people in one goal. Fascists favored **dictatorship** and **nationalism**; they opposed **democracy** and communism.

**Against Democracy.** Fascists believed that democratic governments were weak and inefficient.

**For Dictatorship.** Fascists believed in seizing power by force and violence. They believed that dictatorship was a strong and efficient form of government. Under fascism, the government would control every aspect of human activity. This is called a *totalitarian state*.

**For Extreme Nationalism.** Fascists exaggerated the accomplishments of their nation. They supported **imperialism** so their nation could develop and rule an empire. They glorified war and claimed that military might was proof of the nation's strength and vitality. Only superior nations would have power in the world.



*symbol of Italian Fascists*

**Against Communism.** Fascists opposed the Communist ideals of Marxism. They did not support the idea of a classless society or a worldwide revolution of the working class and peasants. They believed that having a property-owning class and a worker class maintained a stable and healthy economy.

**For the Benefit of the State or Nation.** Fascists believed that society should work for the benefit of the state or nation, not themselves or the greater good.

## Italy: The Rise of Fascism

Following World War I, Italy was ruled by a **constitutional monarchy**. This government, however, faced many difficult problems after the war, as did the governments of many other European nations. The country's economy was weak, and the Italian government was deeply in debt. High unemployment and **inflation** left many Italians jobless and poor.

One person who offered Italy a solution to all its problems was Benito Mussolini. Mussolini's *Fascist Party* wore black shirts as their uniform, and so they were called *Black Shirts*. Mussolini's speaking ability inspired Italians to trust him and his plan to make Italy wealthy and powerful. He boldly promised to rescue Italy by reviving its economy and rebuilding its military forces.

### **Benito Mussolini (1883-1945)**

Benito Mussolini was dictator of Italy (1924-1943) and founder of fascism. He was the editor of the Socialist Party paper, but he split with the Socialists when he advocated that Italy join the Allies in World War I.

Mussolini formed a Fascist group in 1919 which attracted many Italians because it blended nationalism and socialism. The Fascist Party was nationally organized in 1921. In 1922 the Fascist militia marched on Rome which led the king to make Mussolini premier. Mussolini eliminated opponents and began a brutal foreign policy. In 1940 he joined Hitler and declared war on the Allies in 1943. Italy suffered many defeats in the war and Mussolini was captured by the Allies. He was rescued by the Germans to head the Fascist puppet regime in Northern Italy, but on its collapse, Mussolini was shot. His body was hung upside down (by the feet) in a public place in a small town in Italy.

### **Mussolini Gains Power**

Some farmers and workers in Italy who suffered after World War I wanted a Communist revolution. They believed that land, factories, and industry should be owned by the *state*. Mussolini gained popularity by leading his Fascist Party against the Communists. Because he was anti-Communist and believed in *private* ownership of industry and land, many business people and landowners contributed money to his party to fight the Communists. His promise of rebuilding a strong military also attracted the support of soldiers.

In October 1922, claiming that the Italian government in Rome needed to be defended from a Communist revolution, Mussolini sent his Black Shirts to the rescue. This tactic led the king, Victor Emmanuel III, to appoint Mussolini premier and the head of the government. Mussolini and his Fascists had gained power without a revolution.

### **Black Shirts**

“Black Shirts” was the nickname for the street fighters organized by Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini in 1919. The black shirt was a distinctive element of the Fascist uniform. Mussolini organized his supporters into combat squads which rejected the democratic process in favor of violent action. The Black Shirts would break up socialist rallies, smash leftist presses, and attack farmers’ unions. Using terror and intimidation, they forced out officials in northern Italy.

Once in power, Mussolini began working to keep power. He quickly outlawed all other political groups and ended elections. He took away the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. People who were against Mussolini were either murdered or exiled. By 1927 Mussolini and his Fascist Party completely controlled Italy. Mussolini was now *Il Duce*, the leader. He ruled by decree—his word was law. He could make or change laws whenever he wanted. Mussolini was now a true dictator. Terror and violence were commonplace. Entire families could be arrested if one family member committed a crime. Any Italian could be arrested for any reason whatsoever. The citizens had lost all civil rights.

Mussolini gained power by making Italians believe he would rid Italy of Communists and make Italy respected again. Mussolini held power by creating a myth. To make Italy a great nation, he claimed that every Italian must do exactly what he wanted. Fascists held parades and built monuments all over Italy. All education was controlled by the Fascists. People were told that Italy’s economy was improving because of Mussolini and his laws. The truth was that only a few of Mussolini’s Fascist followers were getting richer. The people were actually no better off.

## Mussolini Attacks Ethiopia

During the 1930s, Mussolini set out to prove to the world just how powerful Italy and its army was. To do this, in 1935 Italy attacked Ethiopia, a poor, almost defenseless country in east Africa. Expecting a quick victory, Mussolini was surprised to find that his army unable to defeat its weak opponent without suffering many casualties. The Ethiopians, however, were no match for the Italian army and eventually had to surrender.

The League of Nations demanded that Mussolini withdraw his soldiers, but he refused. In 1939 Mussolini also invaded and conquered Albania. By 1940, Mussolini, with the help of Hitler, gained control of much of the Mediterranean region.



*Mussolini attacked Ethiopia, a poor and almost defenseless country in east Africa to prove to the world just how powerful Italy and its army was.*

## The Rome-Berlin Axis

Under Mussolini's leadership, Italy became a model for the rise of fascism in other countries. Using his **tactics**, many Fascist leaders, including Francisco Franco in Spain and Adolf Hitler in Germany, rose to power in Europe in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Hitler's growing strength in Germany convinced Mussolini that he should form an alliance with Germany. In October 1936, Italy and Germany formed an agreement known as the *Rome-Berlin Axis*. Later, Japan would also join Italy and Germany to form the **Axis Powers**. The three nations agreed to fight Soviet communism and not interfere with one another's plans for expansion. The *Axis Powers* became the aggressors who began World War II as they tried to increase their empires.

After suffering defeat after defeat in World War II and realizing that their government was weak and corrupt, the Italian people overthrew their Fascist government and joined the **Allied Powers** or *Allies* to defeat Germany. Mussolini was arrested. After escaping, he was shot. His body was hung upside down (by the feet) in a public place in a small town in Italy.

## Spain: Fascists Win the Civil War and Gain Control of Government

Following World War I, Spain was an underdeveloped agricultural country. Most of Spain's people farmed; fewer worked in factories. During the 1920s, Spain faced extremely harsh economic conditions that its weak government could not solve. A bitter struggle between peasants and workers on one side and the property-owning class and army on the other side resulted in violence and bloodshed.

In 1923 an army general named Miguel Primo de Rivera led a military takeover of Spain's government. When the military government could not solve Spain's problems, Spain became a **republic** in 1931. Spain's new government tried to solve the problem of high unemployment and prices that had continued to plague the country. However, it was also unsuccessful.

### Civil War Breaks Out in Spain

The Spanish Civil War began in 1936. Two groups fought each other for control of Spain. The leader of the Right Wing revolutionaries was General Francisco Franco. Franco and his followers, known as the *Nationalists*, fought against the Left Wing, or *Loyalists*, to overthrow the government. This bloody civil war lasted three years.

#### Francisco Franco (1892-1975)

Francisco Franco (1892-1975) was a Spanish general and the head of state of Spain from 1939 to 1975. He joined the 1936 military revolt in Spain while in Morocco. In 1937 he became the leader of the Falange party and head of the anti-republican army. Franco became the head of state after his forces captured Madrid in 1939. He was able to retain all of his power until shortly before his death in 1975, after which Prince Juan Carlos became king.

### Spain Becomes a Fascist Dictatorship

Franco and his Fascist followers were supported by the governments of Germany and Italy. Germany and Italy believed that, with Spain as an ally, the Fascists could gain control of France and threaten Great Britain.

The Loyalists, who supported Spain's *republic*, received aid only from the Soviet Union. The United States, Great Britain, and France chose to remain neutral and not risk involvement in another war. The Loyalists were not strong enough to fight Franco's army, strengthened by troops and arms sent from Germany and Italy. In 1939 Franco defeated the Loyalist forces. He then established a Fascist dictatorship. As chief of state, commander in chief, and head of Spain's only legal political party, Franco severely limited the people's freedoms.

After gaining control of Spain, Franco decided not to join the Germans and Italians in the Rome-Berlin Axis and World War II.

#### **The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)**

The Spanish Civil War inspired classic works of literature and art. Many writers wrote books on the topic. The American writer Ernest Hemingway wrote *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a book about an idealistic American fighting Fascist forces in Spain. The English writer George Orwell wrote *Homage to Catalonia*, an autobiographical book about his experience on the Aragon Front. The bombing of the city of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War inspired one of Pablo Picasso's greatest paintings, the *Guernica*.



## Germany: The Fall of the Republic and the Rise of Fascism


### Weaknesses of the Weimar Republic

Following World War I, Germany became a **federal republic**, and its national government was elected by its citizens. Because the new constitution had been written in the city of Weimar, Germany's government became known as the *Weimar Republic*. For the first time, Germany had a democratic form of government. But continued joblessness and an *inflation* rate that made the country's money practically worthless left the Weimar Republic open to blame. It fell under continuous attack from the *right* (the army, industrialists, and large landowners) and the *left* (Socialists and Communists).

Throughout the 1920s, the Weimar Republic was governed by well-meaning leaders. But the problems faced by Germany required solutions, not good intentions. Sadly, with the scarcity of money, few remaining factories, large debts, lost national pride, very high inflation, and many other serious problems, the Weimar Republic headed for failure. Added to these problems was the fact that Germans were not used to a democratic form of government. All of these factors provided the ingredients for revolution. When the effects of the Great Depression were felt in Germany, Germans were eager for a leader who promised to rebuild the country. Adolf Hitler was this man.

### The Nazis and Hitler

After World War I, many political parties had formed, battling for power in Germany. One of these political parties, the **National Socialist German Workers' Party**, or the *Nazi Party*, began to attract supporters in 1920. The party adopted the *swastika*, or hooked cross, as its symbol. The Nazi Party was extremely nationalistic and anti-Communist. Promising to keep

Swastika	
	
swastika of ancient civilizations	swastika of Nazi Germany
<p>The swastika was an ancient symbol of well-being and prosperity used by many different groups of people—Greeks, Celts, Native Americans, and the Hindus of India. The clockwise swastika, or Nazi swastika, was adopted as the symbol of the National Socialist German Workers' Party of Germany (Nazi Party). Today, the swastika is one of the most hated symbols in history, standing for all the atrocities of the Nazi regime.</p>	

industry and land privately owned, Hitler and his Nazi Party attracted the support of wealthy landowners and businessmen. In addition, the hardships brought on by the Great Depression encouraged popularity of the Nazis among working-class Germans as well. With the German government and economy about to collapse, Hitler saw his chance to seize power. In the election of 1930, many Germans cast their votes for the Nazis. By 1933 the Nazi Party was the largest party in the **parliament** of the German government.

Once in power, Hitler turned the government into a Fascist dictatorship. He had convinced the people that he had the answers to Germany's problems. After a brief try at a democratic form of government, Germany once again would have an **authoritarian** form of government. Under an *authoritarian* form of government, leaders have total power over the people. There is no limit to their power to make or break laws. Eventually, Hitler would have complete power over the German people.

### **Adolf Hitler's Background**

Adolf Hitler was born in Austria on April 20, 1889. In school, he took an interest in German nationalism. In 1908 Hitler moved to Vienna, the capital of the Austrian Empire, to become an artist. Rejected by the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, he lived on a small inheritance and orphan's pension. Hitler became **anti-Semitic** (hostile toward Jews) during this period. He developed a belief that the Jewish people were the cause of all the problems in Austria, Germany, and the rest of Europe.

In 1913 Hitler moved to Munich, Germany. He had no real future in sight. Eventually he joined the German army and was wounded during World War I. Hitler was



*Hitler reviews troops in Berlin, Germany.*

Courtesy of the United States  
Holocaust Memorial Museum  
(USHMM) Photo Archives

furious over the German defeat and began planning to make Germany a powerful nation again. In 1919, following World War I, Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, an extreme right-wing Nationalist party in Munich. This party was later renamed the *National Socialist Workers' Party*, or Nazi Party, for short. He wanted his party to gain support from both workers and German Nationalists. As a member of the Nazi Party, he made good use of his ability to speak to large crowds. In most of his speeches, he talked about the evils of socialism and communism. Hitler helped the party develop into a movement complete with followers, flags, uniforms, party badges, a newspaper, and political power.

In November 1923, Hitler was arrested for staging an armed uprising against the government of Munich. This uprising, called the *Beer Hall Putsch*, was crushed. Hitler was sent to jail. While in jail, he wrote the book *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that the German race of people (the so-called *Aryan* "race") was better than any other race of people. Hitler claimed that the Aryans were a master race. He also declared that the non-Aryan "races"—such as Jews, Slavs, and Gypsies (the Roma and Sinti)—were inferior or subhuman. Germany was overcrowded, Hitler said, and needed more *lebensraum*, or living space. Hitler planned to conquer Eastern Europe and Russia and **annex** land for Germany.

## Hitler's Rise to Power

Hitler's popularity increased when the Great Depression hit Germany. In his speeches, Hitler criticized the government for failing to solve Germany's problems. He spoke of German pride. He reminded the German people, over and over again, that they had been treated unfairly at the end of World War I. He also blamed the Jews and Communists for causing problems in Germany and the rest of Europe. By blaming the government, the Jews, and the Communists for Germany's problems, Hitler was able to bring Germans together against common enemies.

### **Adolf Hitler (1889-1945)**

Adolf Hitler was the Austrian-born dictator of Germany from 1933-1945. History has judged Hitler an evil, unstable man but a political genius. Hitler grew up in Austria and left school at age 16 to try to make a living as an artist. He was drafted into the military during World War I and was twice awarded the Iron Cross. Hitler joined the *German Workers' Party*, which he turned into the *National Socialist Workers' Party* or *Nazi Party*. After a failed attack against the Bavarian government, he served nine months in prison where he wrote *Mein Kampf*, which set out his plans to restore greatness to Germany. By 1932 he was able to make the Nazi Party into the largest national party in the country.

Hitler became chancellor in 1933 and prepared his country for war. After gaining power in Germany, he began a campaign to destroy the Jews and to put those who disagreed with him in concentration camps. He spread propaganda that blamed all of Germany's problems on the Jews and the Communists. Hitler started by slowly removing Jews from German society. Then he began a systematic extermination of the Jews through mass executions, gassing, starvation, and being worked to death in labor camps.

Hitler seized much foreign land and his invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 began World War II. His war plans were effective at first, but in 1941 he was unable to maintain a war on two fronts. German forces lost North Africa and were pushed back on both sides after D-Day. Hitler was able to still maintain popular support although he became increasingly unbalanced.

Hitler is considered one of the most evil people in history. His life ended when he committed suicide on April 30, 1945, after realizing that his cause was a failure and he was losing the war.

Many young, unemployed Germans joined Hitler's party militia, known as the *Storm Troops* or SA (Brown Shirts). The Storm Troops **persecuted** Jews and suspected Communists. They burned synagogues (temples), Jewish places of worship.

Hitler also began to make secret deals with important groups in Germany: the army and the industrialists. He knew that to get and hold power, he would need their support. Hitler promised army leaders that when he became the leader of Germany, he would rebuild the army. He promised industrialists that he would outlaw labor unions and put a stop to communism. The industrialists and the army believed that, with Hitler as their leader, they would regain the influence they held before World War I. Army leaders and industrialists also thought that they could control Hitler once he was in power. Both groups were disappointed in this once Hitler became dictator.

The Nazi Party made gains in the German parliament during 1930-1932. By 1932 the Nazis had 800,000 members. They had become the country's largest political party in *The Reichstag* (German Parliament), with 230 seats. On January 30, 1933, Germany's President Paul von Hindenburg appointed Hitler as the chancellor, or prime minister. Thus Hitler came to power legally.

On February 27, 1933, a mysterious fire destroyed the parliament building. Hitler and the Nazis blamed the Communists. Many people today feel that the Nazis set the fire and blamed the Communists. Hitler asked Von Hindenburg to give him emergency powers to take any action necessary to destroy the Communist **menace**. Von Hindenburg agreed. Civil liberties were taken from the German people. The Nazis could now arrest or jail anyone. On March 23, 1933, the Reichstag passed the *Enabling Act*. This gave the government the power to put aside the Constitution for four years while laws for dealing with the country's problems could be enacted. With his new powers, Hitler quickly brought the German government under Nazi control. It was during this time that the Nazis opened **concentration camps** for political prisoners and all political parties and trade unions were abolished. On August 2, 1934, when Von Hindenburg died, Hitler became the sole ruler of Germany.

## Hitler in Power

In 1934 Hitler took the title of *der Führer*, or “the leader.” Violence and terror quickly swept across Germany. Hitler’s Storm Troops (SA) arrested, beat, tortured, and murdered anyone opposed to Hitler. The *Secret Police* (SS), loyal only to Hitler, also searched out any opposition to Hitler. Under the direction of Heinrich Himmler, the *Gestapo*, a special group of secret police, had unlimited power to arrest, torture, and murder anyone. The Gestapo were responsible for the concentration camps, execution squads, and **death camps** that had been created for the attempted extermination of all Jews in Europe. Germany had entered its darkest period. A nightmare had fallen upon Germany. Then it would fall upon Europe, and finally the world. The *Third Reich*, or third empire, had begun its brutal and merciless reign.

The Third Reich was filled with names that frightened many Germans and most people throughout the world. Hermann Goering was Hitler’s right-hand man. Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels was Minister for Propaganda. Martin Bormann, a close advisor of Hitler’s, was in charge of the Nazi Party. Albert Speer took command in re-arming Germany.

By 1938 Hitler had created a terrifying police state in Germany. There was no real opposition to the Nazis. The army was firmly under Hitler’s control. People just disappeared in the night. Some Germans tried to help Jewish people to escape from Germany during Hitler’s terror. However, most Germans showed **apathy** and simply “looked the other way.”

### The Hitler Youth

Hitler Youth was an organization for young people between the ages of 10 to 18. It was established as a means of indoctrinating young Germans, both boys and girls, to become loyal supporters of Hitler’s Nazi Party.

Members had to take an oath of loyalty to the Führer (the title given to Hitler), pledging to give up their life for him if necessary. Hitler Youth members had their own uniforms and participated in a number of activities including camping, hiking, and sports.

Hitler Youth encouraged duty, obedience, strength, and ruthlessness. Young boys were also trained in the military arts. Young girls were taught domestic skills such as cooking, cleaning house, and caring for children.

Hitler and his Minister of Propaganda, Dr. Goebbels, used radio, newspapers, magazines, large rallies, and movies to maintain support for the Nazis. Hitler and Goebbels appealed to German nationalism. They used themes which were anti-Communist and anti-Jewish. They told the German people that Germans were members of an Aryan master race born to conquer the whole world. They burned books which did not meet their approval. In short, everything the German people heard was carefully controlled by Hitler and Goebbels. This included everything taught in schools.

## The Jews in Nazi Germany (1933-1938)

In his book *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that *anything* is justified to help the interests of the German people. Hitler made life unbearable for many groups of people, but especially for Jewish people. For generations, Germans had been seeking a **scapegoat**, or someone to blame for their failures and frustrations. Hitler's expression of his deep personal hatred for Jews brought *anti-Semitism* to the surface in Germany. Although his accusations were false, Hitler justified his treatment of Jews by convincing the German people that the Jewish people were the cause of Germany's problems. He promised to kill the Jews and create a master race.

### Persecution Begins

In January of 1933, Hitler was elected chancellor of Germany. By August of 1934, Hitler had become the Führer or leader of Germany. He quickly did away with personal freedoms. A series of laws known as the *Nuremberg Laws* passed on September 15, 1935. This order was Hitler's first move toward creating a German "master race." This mass destruction based on racial or ethnic grounds would become known as the **Holocaust**. His first



The sign read: "Germans! Defend yourselves! Do not buy from Jews!"

Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives

targeted group was the Jews. The *Holocaust* refers to a specific event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the state-sponsored, systematic *persecution* and **annihilation** of 11 million people, including six million European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945.

The Nuremberg Laws forbade Jews to practice law or medicine. Jews were not permitted to hold any government job. The laws called for segregation on public transportation and restricted Jews from shopping except during specified hours. They were forbidden to marry non-Jews. Thus in 1935, Jewish people in Germany were stripped of their citizenship, civil rights, and property. They were required to wear a yellow Star of David, a six-pointed star, so they could be easily identified.



The 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany provided Hitler with a prime opportunity to show the superiority of the Aryan race, which, according to the Nazis, was a non-Jewish white race. However, the games provided Hitler only with embarrassment and humiliation as *Jesse Owens*, an African-American athlete, won four gold metals. Owens broke three world records and tied one world record. Hitler refused to take part in honoring Owens, and the world got a taste of his **bigotry**. Few people realized the extent of his hatred and **aggression**, but the Jews did not have to wait long to feel it.

Between 1933 and 1938, thousands of Jewish **refugees** came to America, including *Albert Einstein* and the future United States Secretary of State *Henry Kissinger*. However, by the end of 1938, isolationist and anti-immigrant feelings were so strong that Congress and President *Franklin D. Roosevelt* refused to relax **immigration** laws and thus contributed to Hitler's success in persecuting Jews and other targeted groups.

### **A Nazi Pogrom: Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass)**

On the evenings of November 9 and 10, 1938, members of the Nazi Party attacked Jewish homes, synagogues, and businesses. This attack became known as *Kristallnacht*, or Night of Broken Glass. Nazis destroyed thousands of Jewish-owned buildings and beat up the occupants. Nazi-led mobs vandalized and looted Jewish communities throughout Germany. More than 8,000 Jewish businesses and almost 200 synagogues were destroyed. Not even hospitals or schools were spared. Over one hundred Jews were killed, thousands more were tortured, and 30,000 Jewish males were sent to concentration camps. Most of these people died, leaving 20,000 children homeless and fatherless.

To add insult to injury, the Jews were ordered to clean up the mess. They were not allowed to collect insurance payments for damages to their property. The entire Jewish community was blamed and fined one billion marks, or 20 percent of their property, for "causing" all the trouble.

### **Trude Heller**

Following is an account by Trude Heller, a concentration camp survivor who lives in South Carolina today. After Hitler took over her hometown in Austria in 1938, Trude was sent to a concentration camp until 1945. She, other Holocaust survivors, and liberators have shared their experiences to help teach about the consequences of **intolerance** and *apathy* in the face of

*bigotry*. (See pages 278-282, Unit 8 pages 346-369, and Appendix A, B, and C for other personal Holocaust survivor, liberator, and Nazi war criminal accounts.)

Trude Heller was born in Vienna, Austria in 1922. She was 15 years old in March 1938 when Hitler took over Austria. Trude's parents were merchants, leading a comfortable, middle-class life. They lived in an area of Vienna occupied by many Jewish families. In the following account, she describes how life changed for her and her parents after the Nazis gained control of her country.

#### **Trude in Austria**

The first week that Hitler took over they came and got our car. An Austrian Storm Trooper carrying a rifle came to our apartment. He knocked on the door and said, "Car keys." And that was that. We handed them over.

A little while later a non-Jewish couple wanted our apartment. A uniformed official came with the people who wanted the apartment. He told us whatever is not out in six hours stays and if you're not out by then, you get killed. So my mother went to look for an apartment. My father went to get boxes and I started packing. Within six hours we were out. Of course, we had to leave almost everything behind. There were several buildings that were not so nice anymore where people like us could move. We moved to one of those places. The people there were mostly Jews who had been displaced from their homes.

Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Education

#### **Jewish Emigration from German Territory: 1938-1939**

After the horrible events of 1938, every Jew in German territory wanted to **emigrate** to a foreign country to escape the Nazis. Money was needed for travel and resettlement expenses. Hitler made this difficult by demanding that Jewish emigrants could not leave Germany with more than four dollars in their pockets. If not for the help of International Jewish Organizations and families in foreign countries, Jews would not have been able to leave.

However, many Jews were not so lucky. Dishonest government officials took advantage of the Jews' desperate situation. Gestapo members took huge sums of money for exit visas that proved to be worthless.

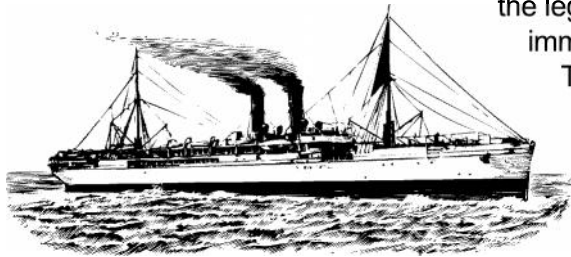
Hitler also ordered hundreds of thousands of Austrian and Czech Jews to leave their countries. The Nazis themselves made the **emigration** problem impossible. They soon began to **expel**, or force out, Jews. By the end of 1938, a serious *refugee* crisis had developed. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were pouring out of Germany and other lands. Because of **quotas** placed on *immigration*, many countries did not accept the refugees.

After 1938 Jews lost their right to leave Germany. They could not hold any jobs. All Jewish shops were destroyed. All Jewish workers were fired. Jews who owned homes had their homes and possessions taken away.

### The SS *St. Louis*

On May 13, 1939, the SS *St. Louis* set sail from Hamburg, Germany for Havana, Cuba. On board were 937 passengers, of whom 930 were Jewish refugees fleeing persecution from Nazi Germany after the horror of Kristallnacht, the **pogrom** of burning, mass arrest, and murders in November of 1938. *The SS St. Louis* was one of the last ships to leave Nazi Germany before war began in Europe.

Upon reaching Havana, the Cuban government refused entry to the passengers. Appeals to allow passengers into Miami also failed even though the American Jewish community was willing to help with the cost of their maintenance. President Roosevelt and the legislature were not willing to lift immigration limitations in the 1930s.



The ship was forced to return to Hamburg with its passengers. While the ship was en route to Europe, Great Britain, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, each of these countries agreed to grant

temporary refuge until homes in other countries could be found. Following the German invasion of Europe, many of the former SS *St. Louis* passengers found themselves under Nazi rule again. They became victims of Hitler's Final Solution and did not survive the Holocaust.

### The Final Solution

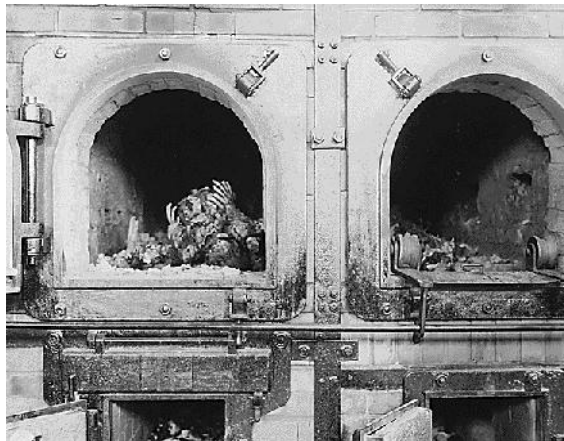
Finally, in 1939, Hitler announced the *Final Solution*. The Final Solution was the outright killing process and meant that Hitler intended to kill

every Jewish man, woman, and child in Germany and in Europe. Although not all victims were Jews, all Jews were victims. Nazi murder squads were assigned to round up Jews and shoot them in cold blood. When shooting was found to be too slow and too disturbing for the shooters, new methods were tried. After the *Einsatzgruppen* (commanders of the mobile killing squads from the German middle class) had tried using carbon monoxide gas piped into mobile gas vans, the death factories were started. Instead of the killers rounding up the victims, the victims were sent to the **ghettos** and then to the killing centers.

### Ghettos and Genocide

Most Jews were herded into small sections of the cities, or *ghettos*, which were sealed in by barbed wire or walls. They were confined in overcrowded conditions, forced into heavy labor, and provided little to eat. Jewish people were not permitted to leave without permission. Many were left to starve or die of disease. The Nazi ghettos for Jews became transition areas and used as collection points for shipment to larger ghettos or to death camps and concentration camps. All ghettos had horrible, inhumane living conditions. In Warsaw, the largest ghetto held 400,000 people. The large ghettos were closed in by stone or bricks, wood, and barbed wire.

Jews were dragged from their homes and herded onto trucks and trains for shipment to death camps and concentration camps. Healthy Jews were



*Crematorium used to burn the remains of prisoners.*

Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

sent to labor camps to perform slave labor. The rest were sent to extermination camps. The horrifying result of this plan was a cold-blooded and systematic **genocide**, or deliberate killing of an entire people. In 1933 approximately nine million Jews lived in the 21 countries of Europe that Germany would occupy during the war. By 1945 two out of every three, or two-thirds, of the European Jews had been killed.

## Life in Nazi Germany (1933-1938)

During Hitler's reign, Germans had to learn to survive in a country filled with suspicion—at any moment anyone could be picked up by the Secret Police or the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp or murdered. Germans learned that to survive, they had to pretend to support the Nazis and look the other way as Nazis brutalized their neighbors.

Hitler did, however, attract the support of many Germans. He was a spellbinding speaker who could influence his audiences. His typical speaking style was to speak louder and louder as he vented his anger at Germany's enemies. The purpose of his speeches was to arouse German patriotism. Hitler believed that the bigger the lie, the more believable it would sound. Hitler's belief in the *big lie*, along with his speaking ability, moved many Germans to love him during the early years of his dictatorship.



*Hitler forced thousands and thousands of people to work as slaves in his concentration work camps.*

Courtesy of the South Carolina  
Department of Education

The economic and social life of some Germans did improve. These Germans could afford to buy cars and take vacations. However, many Germans did not know that Hitler was paying for these improvements by stealing from others. He forced thousands and thousands of people to work as slaves in his concentration work camps.

A knock on the door in the middle of the night brought terror to the Jews of Nazi Germany. If Jewish school children were beaten as they walked home from school, there was no reaction from onlookers. People watched as Jewish-owned shops and Jewish synagogues were burned. Jewish families disappeared. These are just some examples of the Nazi

campaign against the Jews. By 1938 tens of thousands of Jewish men, women, and children had been sent to concentration camps such as Dachau, near Munich. Families were separated. Children were taken from

screaming mothers. Members of families watched as relatives were beaten to death. This was merely the beginning of a campaign that was to end with the Holocaust—the mass killing of six million Jews.

At first, concentration camps were places where political prisoners were sent. These political prisoners included anti-Nazi Germans. Anti-Nazi Germans were considered to be enemies of the Third Reich. The concentration camps became death camps around 1942. This happened because the Nazis wanted to speed up the killing of Jews and other minorities. Adolf Eichmann was the Nazi in charge of the death camps. (See Appendix B.)



*Inmates at forced labor in a concentration camp at Mautausen, Austria, 1942.*

Courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives



*Many prisoners were found nearly starved to death at the Wobbelin Concentration Camp near the city of Ludwigslust, Germany by troops of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division in 1945. The former prisoners are being taken to a hospital for medical attention.*

Courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration

Note the following two maps. The first one shows the locations of concentration camps and killing centers. The second map shows deaths per country.



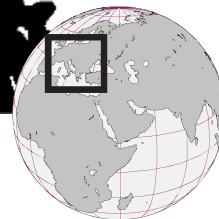
*Concentration Camps and Killing Centers*

Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Education



*Holocaust Deaths per Country*

Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Education





## Holocaust Survivor Testimonies

### Experiences of Leo Diamantstein

#### Leo Diamantstein

Leo Diamantstein was born in Heidelberg, Germany in 1924. He was the middle child in a family of three boys. His family moved to the city of Frankfurt where the following events he describes took place.

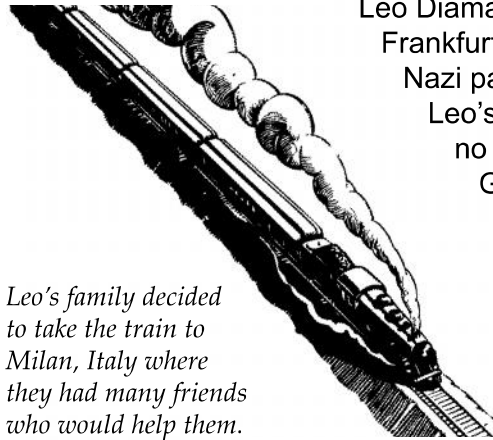
#### **Leo Adjusts to Life under Hitler**

All went relatively well for our family until 1933. That was the turning point. That year Hitler came to power, fair and square, winning an election. Other right-wing political parties supported him. It wasn't just the Nazi party who wanted a candidate who stood for law and order. Shortly after he came to power, little by little, Hitler took over. The Parliament was dissolved and a puppet parliament created.

Things started to be very bad for us. One day my brother Maurice and I were walking down the street when a group of Nazi Storm Troopers marched by singing a song which translates, "The heads are rolling, the Jews are crying." It is very vivid in my mind because I was shivering. I was eight years old. Jewish people were beaten. It became common practice when we saw a bunch of kids coming to go to the other side of the street. There was always a good chance they would attack us, and there were always more of them than us. They carried knives and wore the uniforms of the Hitler Youth.

In 1934 my father decided there was no future for us in Germany, and we decided to leave. Whoever would let us in; that's where we were going to go. We had our things packed to go to France; at the last moment the French decided they didn't want any more Jews, and they wouldn't let us in. The only country that would let us in was Italy. They didn't even require a visa. In June 1934 we left without taking anything. We were required by Hitler to leave everything behind.

Read the following account about Leo and his family after they moved to Italy.



*Leo's family decided to take the train to Milan, Italy where they had many friends who would help them.*

Leo Diamantstein's family was living in Frankfurt, Germany when Hitler and the Nazi party came to power in 1934.

Leo's father soon saw that there was no future for the family in Germany, and they moved to Italy. Four years later, Germany and Italy formed an alliance called the Axis, and in June 1940, Italy entered the war on the side of Germany.

One month later, the Italian special police began arresting all foreign Jews in

Italy. In 1941 Leo's family spent many months in a large Italian prison and lived for about a year in a small village in northern Italy as part of a less strict form of imprisonment known as free internment. Then in September 1943, the Germans occupied Italy and life became much more dangerous for Leo and his family. To escape almost certain arrest by the Nazis and deportment to concentration camps, Leo's family decided to take the train to Milan, Italy where they had many friends who would help them.

Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Education

## Restrictions Bert Gosschalk Describes

### Bert Gosschalk

Bert Gosschalk was born in 1920 in a little village called Wihe in Holland. When he was two or three years old, his family moved to the nearby town of Deventer where he went to school and college. He came from a family of five, two brothers and two sisters. All five survived the war.

In May 1940, the Germans marched into Holland, and it became a part of Occupied Germany. For Jews living in Holland, life changed slowly, but in 1942, Bert and his wife decided to go into hiding to avoid capture by the Nazis. Read the following by Bert as to why they decided to go into hiding.

### Bert Recalls Restrictions

On May 10, 1940, when I woke up at six o'clock in the morning, I was already behind the German lines. The Germans had run through town, crossed the river, and we were in an occupied country. It came as a surprise. We were now in occupied territory. It took five years to get to liberation.

For the first few months after occupation, the Germans were busy waging and winning a war. They didn't have time yet to start with the civilian population. But gradually after a few months, they started tightening up a little bit at a time. It took a while for us to realize what was happening. First, Jews were not permitted in the movie theaters. A little sign said *Jews Not Allowed*. A little while later the Nazi Dutch government started issuing identity cards. If you were Jewish, they put a *J* on it. Later on we were not allowed in restaurants. Then Jewish kids could not go to public schools. Jews could not go to non-Jewish doctors. There was a special curfew for Jews. The regular population could not leave the house after 11 o'clock at night. Jews were not allowed out after seven o'clock.

Many of these things we could live with. It is only unpleasant, but the bigger things came a little later. First we couldn't have an automobile or a horse and a cart. Then we couldn't have bicycles. All bicycles were taken away. We were not allowed to have a radio. All the radios were confiscated. Money and any bank accounts that we might have or stocks and bonds had to be deposited in a certain

bank controlled by the Nazis. Jews could only go to stores between five and six in the evening. This was after everybody else had bought out what was available that day. Then we could buy the wilted lettuce or rotten tomatoes, if there were any.

Jews could not have a job so there was no income. We were all moved. We couldn't live in our own homes anymore. We were told that we had to move to a certain area, a ghetto. We had to start wearing a star on our clothes. Any time we were outside we had to wear a yellow star, the Star of David, with the word Jew in it.



*Any time we were outside we had to wear a yellow star, the Star of David, with the word Jew in it.*

Courtesy of the South Carolina Department of Education

## Review

In the years after World War I, three Fascist leaders rose to power. Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Germany, and Franco in Spain quickly developed totalitarian governments. The governments of these three Fascist leaders put the interests of the state ahead of the rights of the individual. They eliminated and controlled any political opposition and watched over all aspects of the daily lives of their citizens. In Italy and Germany, totalitarian governments arose from problems caused by World War I and the Great Depression. Mussolini promised a return to the glories of the Roman Empire, and Hitler promised greatness that Germany had never seen.

Adolf Hitler put Germany back to work by rebuilding its military forces and made plans to expand Germany's borders. He used Storm Troopers, Secret Police, the Gestapo, and concentration camps to destroy his opposition and the Jewish people. His Final Solution was a plan to murder all the Jews in the world. The aggression of Hitler's and Mussolini's totalitarian nations eventually led to another war: World War II.