Hitler and the Rise of Nazi Germany

In November 1923, a German army veteran and leader of an extremist party, Adolf Hitler, tried to follow Mussolini’s example by staging a small-scale coup in Munich. The coup failed, and Hitler was soon behind bars. But Hitler proved to be a force that could not be ignored. Within a decade, he made a new bid for power. This time, he succeeded by legal means.

Hitler’s rise to power raises disturbing questions that we still debate today. Why did Germany, which had a democratic government in the 1920s, become a totalitarian state in the 1930s? How could a ruthless, hate-filled dictator gain the enthusiastic support of many Germans?

The Weimar Republic’s Rise and Fall

As World War I drew to a close, Germany tottered on the brink of chaos. Under the threat of a socialist revolution, the kaiser abdicated. Moderate leaders signed the armistice and later, under protest, the Versailles treaty.

In 1919, German leaders drafted a constitution in the city of Weimar (vye mahyr). It created a democratic government known as the Weimar Republic. The constitution set up a parliamentary system led by a chancellor, or prime minister. It gave women the vote and included a bill of rights.
Political Struggles  The republic faced severe problems from the start. Politically, it was weak because Germany, like France, had many small parties. The chancellor had to form coalitions that easily fell apart. The government, led by moderate democratic socialists, came under constant fire from both the left and right. Communists demanded radical changes like those Lenin had brought to Russia. Conservatives—including the old Junker nobility, military officers, and wealthy bourgeois—attacked the government as too liberal and weak. They longed for another strong leader like Bismarck. Germans of all classes blamed the Weimar Republic for the hated Versailles treaty. Bitter, they looked for scapegoats. Many blamed German Jews for economic and political problems.

Runaway Inflation  Economic disaster fed unrest. In 1923, when Germany fell behind in reparations payments, France occupied the coal-rich Ruhr Valley. Germans workers in the Ruhr protested using passive resistance and refused to work. To support the workers, the government continued to pay them, and printed huge quantities of paper money to do so. Inflation soon spiraled out of control, spreading misery and despair. The German mark became almost worthless. An item that cost 100 marks in July 1922 cost 944,000 marks by August 1923. Salaries rose by billions of marks, but they still could not keep up with skyrocketing prices. Many middle-class families saw their savings wiped out.

Recovery and Collapse  With help from the Western powers, the government did bring inflation under control. In 1924, the United States gained British and French approval for a plan to reduce German reparations payments. Under the Dawes Plan, France withdrew its forces from the Ruhr, and American loans helped the German economy recover. Germany began to prosper. Then, the Great Depression hit, reviving memories of the miseries of 1923. Germans turned to an energetic leader, Adolf Hitler, who promised to solve the economic crisis and restore Germany’s former greatness.

Weimar Culture  Culture flourished in the Weimar Republic even as the government struggled through crisis after crisis. The tumultuous times helped to stimulate new cultural movements, such as dadaist art and Bauhaus architecture. Berlin attracted writers and artists from around the world, just as Paris did. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht sharply criticized middle-class values with The Three-Penny Opera. The artist George Grosz, through scathing drawings and paintings, blasted the failings of the Weimar Republic itself were not in keeping with Germany’s illustrious past.

Checkpoint  What political and economic problems did the Weimar Republic face?

The Nazi Party’s Rise to Power  Adolf Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. When he was 18, he went to Vienna, then the capital of the multinational Hapsburg empire. German Austrians
In 1923, as you have read, Hitler made a failed attempt to seize power in Munich. He was arrested and found guilty of treason. While in prison, Hitler wrote Mein Kampf (“My Struggle”). It would later become the basic book of Nazi goals and ideology.

**Hitler’s Manifesto** In 1923, as you have read, Hitler made a failed attempt to seize power in Munich. He was arrested and found guilty of treason. While in prison, Hitler wrote Mein Kampf (“My Struggle”). It would later become the basic book of Nazi goals and ideology.

**Mein Kampf** reflected Hitler’s obsessions—extreme nationalism, racism, and anti-Semitism. Germans, he said, belonged to a superior “master race” of Aryans, or light-skinned Europeans, whose greatest enemies were the Jews. Hitler’s ideas were rooted in a long tradition of anti-Semitism. In the Middle Ages, Christians persecuted Jews because of their different beliefs. The rise of nationalism in the 1800s caused people to identify Jews as ethnic outsiders. Hitler viewed Jews not as members of a religion but as a separate race. (He defined a Jew as anyone with one Jewish grandparent.) Echoing a familiar right-wing theme, he blamed Germany’s defeat in World War I on a conspiracy of Marxists, Jews, corrupt politicians, and business leaders.

In his recipe for revival, Hitler urged Germans everywhere to unite into one great nation. Germany must expand, he said, to gain Lebensraum (LAY buns rwo), or living space, for its people. Slavs and other inferior races must bow to Aryan needs. To achieve its greatness, Germany needed a strong leader, or Führer (fyooər). Hitler was determined to become that leader.

**Hitler Comes to Power** After less than a year, Hitler was released from prison. He soon renewed his table-thumping speeches. The Great Depression played into Hitler’s hands. As unemployment rose, Nazi membership grew to almost a million. Hitler’s program appealed to veterans, workers, the lower middle classes, small-town Germans, and business people alike. He promised to end reparations, create jobs, and defy the Versailles treaty by rearming Germany.

With the government paralyzed by divisions, both Nazis and Communists won more seats in the Reichstag, or lower house of the legislature. Fearing the growth of communist political power, conservative politicians turned to Hitler. Although they despised him, they believed they could control him. Thus, with conservative support, Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933 through legal means under the Weimar constitution.

Within a year, Hitler was dictator of Germany. He and his supporters suspended civil rights, destroyed the socialists and Communists, and disbanded other political parties. Germany became a one-party state. Like Stalin in Russia, Hitler purged his own party brutally executing Nazis he felt were disloyal. Nazis learned that Hitler demanded unquestioning obedience.

**Checkpoint** Describe the Nazi party’s ideology and Hitler’s plans for ruling Germany.

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**History Background**

The Fortunes of the Young Hitler

As a young man, Hitler moved to Vienna from the Austrian countryside to try to become an artist. Although he had some talent, the Academy of Fine Arts denied him entry twice. He remained in Vienna, living in poverty. However, he soon found his niche—as a soldier in the German army during World War I. He served bravely and received an unusual number of awards. He was wounded in the Battle of the Somme in 1916, and again when he was gassed in 1918. After the war, Hitler finally gained financial security with the publication of his manifesto, Mein Kampf, in 1925. When he became chancellor of Germany in 1933, sales skyrocketed, making him a millionaire.
The Third Reich Controls Germany

Once in power, Hitler and the Nazis moved to build a new Germany. Like Mussolini, Hitler appealed to nationalism by recalling past glories. Germany's First Reich, or empire, was the medieval Holy Roman Empire. The Second Reich was the empire forged by Bismarck in 1871. Under Hitler's new Third Reich, he boasted, the German master race would dominate Europe for a thousand years.

To combat the Great Depression, Hitler launched large public works programs (as did Britain and the United States). Tens of thousands of people were put to work building highways and housing or replanting forests. Hitler also began a crash program to rearm Germany and schemed to unite Germany and Austria. Both measures were a strong repudiation, or rejection, of the hated Versailles treaty.

Germany Becomes a Totalitarian State To achieve his goals, Hitler organized an efficient but brutal system of totalitarian rule. Nazis controlled all areas of German life—from government to religion to education. Elite, black-uniformed troops, called the SS, enforced the Führer's will. His secret police, the Gestapo (guh STAY-poh), rooted out opposition.

The Campaign Against the Jews Begins In his fanatical anti-Semitism, Hitler set out to drive Jews from Germany. In 1935, the Nazis passed the Nuremberg Laws, which deprived Jews of German citizenship and placed severe restrictions on them. They were prohibited from marrying non-Jews, attending or teaching at German schools or universities, holding government jobs, practicing law or medicine, or publishing scientific or religious works.

SS.912.W.7 & 8 Analyze the restriction of individual rights and the use of mass terror against populations in Nazi Germany

“The Night of Broken Glass”

On the night of November 9, 1938, and into the next day, German mobs smashed the windows of Jewish homes and businesses, looted Jewish shops, and burned synagogues. Many Jewish people were dragged from their homes and beaten in the streets. Not only did the Nazi government authorize these attacks, it made the Jewish victims pay for the damage.

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Link to Economics

Hitler’s Popularity Hitler promised Germany an economic recovery—and he delivered it. As most of the world was gripped by the Great Depression, Hitler launched a massive public works program. Millions of Germans were employed constructing superhighways, office buildings, sports arenas, public housing, and military materials. As a result, unemployment dropped from six million in 1932 to one million in 1936. By 1938, there was a shortage of workers and women began taking jobs outside the home. Between 1932 and 1938, the standard of living for employed Germans rose by more than 20 percent. For the masses of ordinary Germans, those who were not Jews, Slavs, Gypsies, communists, or other persecuted minorities, Hitler had produced an economic miracle.

The Third Reich Controls Germany

Instruct

■ Introduce: Key Terms Ask students to find the key terms Gestapo and Nuremberg Laws (in blue) in the text and explain their meanings. Ask students to write a sentence that relates these two terms to each other and describes their significance to Nazi Germany.

■ Teach Ask What did Hitler do in defiance of the Versailles treaty? (built up Germany’s military and schemed to unite Austria and Germany)

How did Hitler expand his control over the German people? (He brought business and labor under his control; he indoctrinated young people with Nazi ideology; he limited women’s roles; he organized a system of terror and repression of opposition; he placed severe restrictions on Jews; he demanded that education and the arts reflect Nazi values; he sought to replace religion with his racial creed.

Quick Activity Ask students to look at the images on this page and the next page. Read the captions and discuss the visuals as a class. Ask students to use the visuals to describe what life was like in the Third Reich.

Independent Practice

Viewpoints To help students better understand the propaganda techniques used by Hitler, have them read the selection Hitler’s Propaganda Machine and complete the worksheet.

Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 55

Monitor Progress

Have students reread the black headings and summarize the content under each one. Ensure that students understand that Hitler’s regime was based on totalitarian control of the German state and people.
Authoritarian Rule in Eastern Europe

Instruct

- Introduce Remind students that the entire world faced economic problems from 1919 to 1939. Ask them to recall how Britain, France, Italy, and Germany responded to this challenge and then have them predict how the nations in Eastern Europe would react to the same challenge.
- Teach Ask What problems did the new nations in Eastern Europe face in the postwar years? (lack of capital to develop industry, social inequalities, little experience in democracy, ethnic and religious tensions) Where did dictators use these problems to gain power? (every Eastern European country except Czechoslovakia and Finland) How were these dictators similar to Hitler? (They promised order and won the support of the military and the wealthy, and they used Jews as scapegoats for many problems.)
- Quick Activity Display Color Transparency 173: Ethnic Groups of Eastern Europe, 1936. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion on how these ethnic groups were a source of conflict after World War I.
- Color Transparencies, 173

Independent Practice

Have students fill in the Outline Map Fascist Governments in Europe, 1939 and label the areas taken over by fascist dictators.

Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 56

Monitor Progress

- Circulate to make sure students are filling in their Outline Maps accurately. Ensure that students have shaded Czechoslovakia and Finland as the two Eastern European countries not under fascist rule.
- Check Reading and Note Taking Study Guide entries for student understanding.

Answer

The Nazi party maintained power by keeping some of Hitler’s promises and brutally cracking down on dissent.

730 The Rise of Totalitarianism

books, Nazis beat and robbed Jews and roused mobs to do the same. Many German Jews fled, seeking refuge in other countries.

Night of Broken Glass On November 7, 1938, a young Jew whose parents had been mistreated in Germany shot and wounded a German diplomat in Paris. Hitler used the incident as an excuse to stage an attack on all Jews. Kristallnacht (krih STAHHL nahkt), or the “Night of Broken Glass,” took place on November 9 and 10. Nazi-led mobs attacked Jewish communities all over Germany, Austria, and the annexed portions of Czechoslovakia. Before long, Hitler and his henchmen were making even more sinister plans for what they called the “Final Solution”—the extermination of all Jews.

Nazi Youth To build for the future, the Nazis indoctrinated young people with their ideology. In passionate speeches, the Führer spewed his message of racism. He urged young Germans to destroy their so-called enemies without mercy. On bikes and in camps, the “Hitler Youth” pledged absolute loyalty to Germany and undertook physical fitness programs to prepare for war. School courses and textbooks were rewritten to reflect Nazi racial views.

Like Fascists in Italy, Nazis sought to limit women’s roles. Women were dismissed from upper-level jobs and turned away from universities. To raise the birthrate, Nazis offered “pure-blooded Aryan” women rewards for having more children. Still, Hitler’s goal to keep women in the home and out of the workforce applied mainly to the privileged. As German industry expanded, women factory workers were needed.

Purging German Culture The Nazis also sought to purge, or purify, German culture. They denounced modern art, saying that it was corrupted by Jewish influences. They condemned jazz because of its African roots. Instead, the Nazis glorified old German myths such as those re-created in the operas of Richard Wagner (VAHG-nur).

Hitler despised Christianity as “weak” and “flabby.” He sought to replace religion with his racial creed. To control the churches, the Nazis combined all Protestant sects into a single state church. They closed Catholic schools and muzzled the Catholic clergy. Although many clergy either supported the new regime or remained silent, some courageously spoke out against Hitler.

Checkpoint How did the Nazi party maintain its control of Germany?

Authoritarian Rule in Eastern Europe

Like Germany, most new nations in Eastern Europe slid from democratic to authoritarian rule in the postwar era. In 1919, a dozen countries were carved out of the old Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and German empires. Although they differed from one another in important ways, they faced some common problems. They were small countries whose rural agricultural economies lacked capital to develop industry. Social and economic inequalities separated
Why did dictators rise? Hitler’s rise was based on hate. He was appealing and using a system of terror and repression to control all aspects of German life.

Ethnic Conflict Old rivalries between ethnic and religious groups created severe tensions. In Czechoslovakia, Czechs and Slovaks were unwilling partners. Serbs dominated the new state of Yugoslavia, but restless Slovenes and Croats living there pressed for independence. In Poland, Hungary, and Romania, conflict flared among various ethnic groups.

Democracy Retreats Economic problems and ethnic tensions contributed to instability, which in turn helped fascist rulers gain power. In Hungary, military strongman Nicholas Horthy (hawr tay) overthrew a Communist-led government in 1919. By 1926, the military hero Joseph Pilsudski (peel sht oot sko) had taken control over Poland. Eventually, right-wing dictators emerged in every Eastern European country except Czechoslovakia and Finland. Like Hitler, these dictators promised order and won the backing of the military and wealthy. They also turned to anti-Semitism, using Jewish people as scapegoats for many national problems. Meanwhile, strong, aggressive neighbors eyed these small, weak states of Eastern Europe as tempting targets.

Checkpoint Why did authoritarian states rise in Eastern Europe after World War I?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. Terms, People, and Places
   1. Place each of the terms listed at the beginning of the section into one of the following categories: politics, culture, or economy. Write a sentence explaining your choice.

Note Taking

2. Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas
   Use your completed flowchart to answer the section Focus Question: How did Hitler and the Nazi Party establish and maintain a totalitarian government in Germany?

Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. Express Problems Clearly List three problems faced by the Weimar Republic.

4. Recognize Ideologies What racial and nationalist ideas did Nazis promote?
5. Summarize What were some of the restrictions that Hitler placed on German Jews?
6. Demonstrate Reasoned Judgment Do you think that there are any reasons why a government would be justified in banning books or censoring ideas? Explain.
7. Identify Effects Why did dictators gain power in much of Eastern Europe?
8. Draw Conclusions Both Stalin and Hitler instituted ruthless campaigns against supposed enemies of the state. Why do you think dictators need to find scapegoats for their nation’s ills?

Progress Monitoring Online
For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice
PearsonSchool.com/WorldHist

SS.912.W.7.3
SS.912.W.7.5
SS.912.W.7.6

Assess and Reteach

Assess Progress

- Have students complete the Section Assessment.
- Administer the Section Quiz.

Adapted Teaching Resources, Unit 6, p. 48
- To further assess student understanding, use
  Progress Monitoring Transparencies, 122

Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section summary.

1. Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 262

2. Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 262

3. Spanish Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 262

Extend

Ask students if they think a leader like Adolf Hitler could gain support and take over the government in any present-day European country. Ask them to write a paragraph expressing their opinion and giving reasons for it.

SS.912.W.7.3
SS.912.W.7.5
SS.912.W.7.6

Answers

Chart Skills Germany would suffer from the loss of talent and ability.

- Economic problems, ethnic tensions, and inexperience in democracy fostered the rise of authoritarian states in Eastern Europe.

- Sample: scapegoating deflects the blame away from dictators.

- Writing About History

Accept any answers that correctly use the suggested phrases.

For additional assessment, have students access Progress Monitoring Online at PearsonSchool.com/WorldHist.