

## CHAPTER 25

# THE EUROPE OF ECONOMIC DEPRESSION AND DICTATORSHIP



In 1922, Benito Mussolini became the first dictator to take power in Europe. By the end of 1925, fascist parties demanding the imposition of dictatorships had sprung up in many other nations. Other more traditional right-wing authoritarian movements, too, were on the rise. In Portugal, where junior army officers had overthrown the monarchy in 1910 and declared a republic, right-wing military officers staged a coup d'état in 1926. General Józef Piłsudski overthrew the Polish Republic the same year. All of the Eastern European and Balkan states became dictatorships in the 1920s and 1930s, with the exception of Czechoslovakia. In the meantime, Joseph Stalin transformed the Soviet Union into a totalitarian state. Amid the ravages of the Great Depression that began in 1929, Europe entered an even more dangerous period of instability. In 1933, a right-wing government came to power in Austria, and Adolf Hitler, leader of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party, became chancellor of Germany. The right-wing nationalist revolt against the republic of Spain began in 1936, starting a civil war that ended in 1939 with the victory of General Francisco Franco's right-wing nationalist forces. Britain and France were the only major powers in which parliamentary government was strong enough to resist the authoritarian tide. Democracy also survived in the smaller states of Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, despite the existence of small fascist movements in each.

### ECONOMIES IN CRISIS

The global economic Depression that began in October 1929 had dramatic political consequences in Europe. Economic insecurity and accompanying

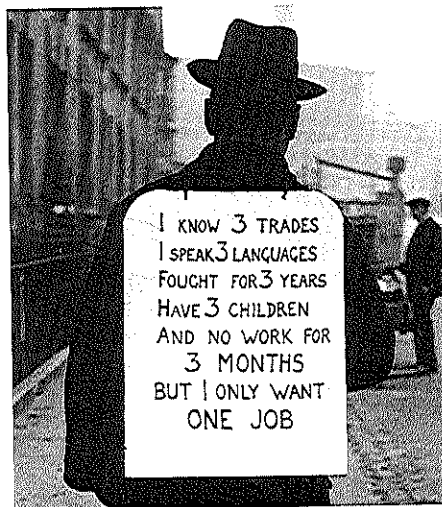
social unrest undermined parliamentary rule. More and more people sought scapegoats who could be blamed for hard times: Jews, Socialists, Communists, ethnic minorities and other nationalities, big business. Under such circumstances, many people could be convinced that parliamentary government itself was to blame and that nationalistic dictatorships were the solution. Amid plunging confidence and general bewilderment, international cooperation became more difficult, particularly as the powers began to blame each other for adopting policies that adversely affected them. Germans castigated their wartime enemies for assessing massive, seemingly unjust reparations; people in Britain and France blamed Germany for not paying all the reparations; many Americans blamed their own former allies for not paying back loans. The vicious cycle of mistrust grew.

### *The Great Depression*

By 1924, prosperity seemed to have returned to much of post-war Europe, at least in the Western states. But beneath the surface, the increasingly interdependent world economy had not recovered from the war. The wartime inflation greatly increased during the years that followed the armistice. At the same time, steel and iron prices fell sharply after the war when demand plunged for tanks, artillery pieces, and munitions. Overproduction and the increasing use of hydroelectricity and oil caused the price of coal to fall rapidly. Slowly some industrial jobs began to disappear.

European agriculture, particularly in Eastern Europe, was in a depressed state well before the Crash of 1929. More grain, meats, and other food sup-

(Left) The Wall Street Crash, October 1929. (Right) An unemployed Briton seeks work, 1930.



plies arrived on the continent from Australia, Argentina, Canada, and the United States. The price of locally produced agricultural goods fell. Lower farm incomes, aggravated by the burden of taxation, in turn reduced demand for manufactured goods.

European states reacted by erecting tariff barriers to try to protect their internal markets for domestic agricultural products. Countries like Bulgaria that depended on agricultural exports saw their foreign markets dry up, or they received less for what they sold. With less income and less Western investment, Eastern European and Balkan nations could not repay their wartime debts. Germany's defeat, the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Russian Revolution significantly weakened the region's three largest pre-war trading partners.

The contraction of demand and price deflation probably would not have been enough to generate full-fledged economic disaster. But unrestrained financial speculation also undercut the world economy. In Germany, high interest rates attracted considerable foreign investment following the 1924 economic recovery. Credit was easily available, and companies issued huge amounts of stock shares based upon insufficient real assets. In the United States, a sizable reduction in demand for goods was already apparent by 1927. Wealthy people began to invest in highly speculative stocks.

Wartime loans and post-war debts made the finances of the larger powers more interdependent and helped destabilize the international economy. German reparations also adversely affected the world economy because, ironically, they accentuated the flow of capital into Germany. Following the Dawes Plan, which in 1924 extended the schedule of reparations, Germany borrowed \$110 million from U.S. banks to meet its reduced reparations payments to the Allies, rather than paying them out of current income through higher taxes. German railroads served as collateral for the loans, which were immediately oversubscribed in New York. Like bonds and speculative investments, reparation loans diverted investment away from industry and ignited further foreign lending. Besides loans to pay reparations, other loans also poured into Germany. Most of this debt was short term rather than long term, which made Germany even more vulnerable to a sudden calling in of those loans. In 1928, U.S. banks refused to issue more loans to Germany, investing available funds instead in the Wall Street stock market, further undercutting German banks.

By early 1929, the U.S. economy was in recession. In late October, the New York stock market crashed. Thousands of large and small investors were ruined as stocks lost most of their value. American and British investors with assets still tied up in Germany now began to pull their money out as quickly as possible. German gold reserves were depleted, as banks owed far more money to creditors than they had assets. Table 25.1 shows the importance of the U.S.-German financial connection, which contributed to the fact that the Depression began earlier and production fell more in those two countries than in the other major powers.

TABLE 25.1. INDICES OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

Year	Germany	United States	France	Britain
1925	79.3	93.7	85.0	94.8*
1927	97.2	95.5	86.6	101.2
1929	101.4	107.2	109.4	106.0
1930	83.6	86.5	110.2	97.9
1931				
August	71.9	74.8	99.2	84.6
December	59.4	66.7	87.4	84.7
1932				
January	55.2	64.9	82.7	90.1
August	54.7	53.2	73.2	89.2

\*For Great Britain, 1924.

Source: David E. Sumner, *A History of Europe in the Twentieth Century* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1973), p. 145.

As unemployment mounted to unprecedented levels, the "roaring twenties" became the "threadbare thirties." Jobs disappeared and families were compelled to spend the savings they had so painstakingly amassed over the previous five years, even as manufacturing and agricultural prices continued to fall because of the dramatic contraction of demand. Manufactured goods piled up on the docks.

Confronted by a catastrophic fall in production and prices, as well as unemployment approaching 20 percent of the workforce, British government officials and economists debated strategies that might revive their floundering economies. There were no easy answers. The economic orthodoxy of the day held that the way out of the crisis was to reduce public expenditures. The inflation of the immediate post-war period, particularly the hyperinflation that had ravaged Germany in 1922 and 1923, frightened statesmen and economists away from even limited financial or fiscal expansion.

National policy options, too, were further constrained by the interdependence of the international economy, especially under the gold standard. For example, James Ramsay MacDonald's British Labour government first reacted to the Wall Street crash by increasing unemployment benefits and funding more public works, while raising taxes. These expenditures further increased the government deficit, already soaring because of reduced tax revenue. But the British government was then forced to reduce unemployment benefits in order to be deemed creditworthy by New York and Parisian bankers, in the hope of stabilizing the pound and maintaining the gold standard.

The international monetary system collapsed as the world economy plunged into dark Depression. Banks and private interests that had loaned

money to Germany began to call in debts. Already reeling from agricultural Depression in Eastern Europe, the failure of the largest Austrian bank in May 1931 immediately brought the collapse of several German banks to which it owed money. A general financial panic ensued. U.S. President Herbert Hoover (1874–1964) suggested a moratorium on the repayment of all reparations and war debts, hoping that confidence and the end of the cycle of defaults would follow. The other powers accepted the moratorium in August 1931.

As the British economy floundered because of the decline in world trade, European bankers intensified the run on the pound. They exchanged their holdings of British pounds sterling for gold, 2.5 million pounds' worth per day during the summer of 1930, dangerously reducing Britain's gold reserves. As investors panicked, sterling quickly lost a third of its value.

With Labour not having a majority in the House of Commons, MacDonald was forced to negotiate with the other parties, but the latter insisted on reducing the budget, including cutting unemployment benefits. This MacDonald's Labour colleagues could not accept. But instead of resigning as everyone expected, MacDonald formed a "National Government" of members from the three parties, although most Labour leaders declined to join him. He thus stayed on as prime minister. Worsening conditions forced the National Government to take Britain off the gold standard in September 1931. This meant that the Bank of England would no longer remit gold in exchange for pounds. This seemed like a step into the economic unknown. Wild fluctuations in the values of other currencies followed. This further discouraged business, and international trade declined even more steeply, but it did permit some domestic recovery. In April 1933, the United States, too, went off the gold standard.

In Britain, the Conservatives' deflationary measures, which sought to reduce expenditures, seemed to British voters to be the only way out of the crisis. In the elections of October 1931, the Tories won an overwhelming majority of seats in the House of Commons. Neville Chamberlain (1869–1940) now became chancellor of the Exchequer. His aloof manner, inveterate dullness, rasping voice, and whiny disposition did little to inspire confidence—one critic suggested that he had been "weaned on a pickle." Chamberlain promised a "doctor's mandate" to extract Britain from the economic crisis. The government imposed higher tariffs, further reducing consumer spending. Many members of the Labour Party called MacDonald a traitor for going along with deflationary measures because they included reducing unemployment benefits, and they proposed the nationalization of mining, the railways, and other essential industries as first steps toward the implementation of a more planned economy. But Labour's campaign ran headlong into traditional Conservative opposition and middle-class fear of socialism, as well as the orthodoxy of deflationary economic policies.

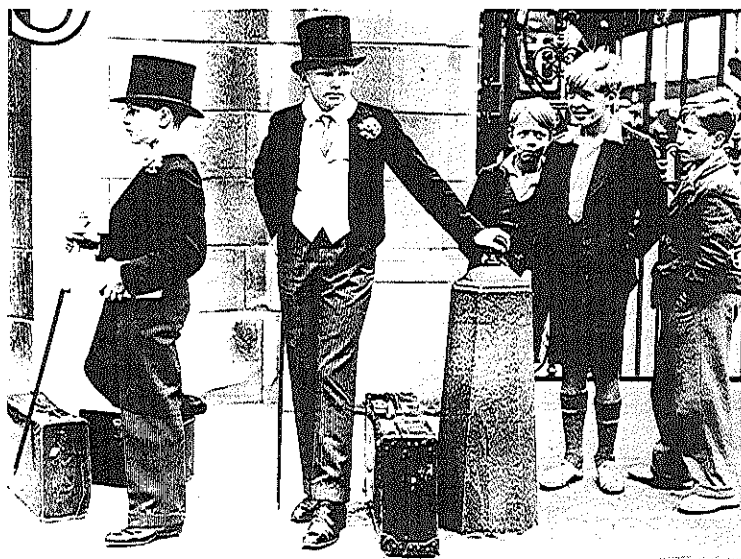
Across the English Channel, smaller-scale industries, artisans, and family farmers in France at first were sheltered from the Depression because they

depended, above all, on local markets. France also had considerable gold reserves, which helped maintain business and consumer confidence and keep consumer spending at a relatively high level. The run on the British pound and the German mark, too, at first aided France, as gold exchanged by investors ended up in Paris. The franc initially remained stable, and undervalued, encouraging the purchase of French goods. But gradually French prices also fell and unemployment rose, again revealing the interdependence of the global economy. The Depression hit France only in 1932. French exports declined with the contraction of the world market, particularly because the franc, which had not plunged like the pound, was now overvalued, making French goods expensive abroad. But most French leaders considered devaluation to be anathema. "Who touches the franc," cautioned one newspaper, "touches France!" The French government, like that of Britain, stuck to classical economic remedies, ignoring demands for active state intervention to stimulate the economy both from right-wing corporatists who sought support for cartels and from left-wing socialists who called for the nationalization of crucial industries and more unemployment benefits.

### *Gradual European Economic Revival*

In the rest of Europe, government leaders debated strategies that they hoped would pull their countries out of the Depression. The major powers acted in their own interests—establishing high tariffs and devaluing their currencies—without prior consultation with other governments. The U.S. government, like that of Britain, followed contemporary economic orthodoxy. Both sharply reduced government spending, cutting unemployment benefits and restricting credit. However, John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), the English economist, insisted that recovery would depend upon just the opposite strategy: an increase in government expenditures, including deficit spending—for example, on public works—to stimulate consumer spending by reducing unemployment. Keynes argued that deflationary measures, such as cutting government spending, reducing unemployment benefits, or encouraging companies to limit production and thus keep prices artificially high, were counterproductive. They could prolong the Depression by reducing the demand for goods. With one-quarter of the labor force out of work early in 1933 and wages falling, there was insufficient demand to generate a manufacturing upswing in Great Britain, the United States, or anywhere else. But Keynes stood virtually alone, and most of what he had written was then still largely unknown.

Only very gradually did the Depression begin to recede in the industrialized countries. A modest recovery began in Britain in 1932. But it was not due to the dramatic improvement of British international trade upon which the Conservatives had counted. Rather, it followed a slow increase in consumer spending. Keynes had been right. Increases in 1934 and 1935



Reflecting the enormity of class divisions in Britain during the Depression, these working-class boys look in amazement at two Eton students outside a cricket ground.

of unemployment benefits and the restoration of government salaries to their pre-Depression levels helped. The subsidized construction of more houses pumped money into the economy, helping to increase consumer confidence. While some inefficient steel and textile manufacturers went under, others consolidated and became more efficient, perhaps benefiting from the imposition of higher tariffs on industrial imports. Real wages slowly rose. The imposition of quotas on agricultural imports aided farmers. As industry and agriculture gradually returned to prosperity, unemployment began to fall.

The German economy also slowly improved, at least in part because, after Hitler came to power in 1933, rearmament created many jobs. Business confidence slowly returned. In 1930, the Young Plan, named after its American originator, had extended the date by which Germany was to have paid all reparations to 1988. Then the Lausanne Conference of 1932 simply declared the end of reparations payments. In France, the Depression lingered longer than in any other European industrialized power. The government, constrained by weak executive authority, failed to act decisively until 1935, when it lowered taxes to encourage consumption, after trying to protect France with a wall of protectionism and productions quotas. When other countries devalued their currencies, France's comparative advantage disappeared, and demand for exports trailed off. Moreover, France's low birthrate, combined with the horrific loss of life during the war, reduced demand.

In the United States, where the Depression hit hardest, recovery came even more slowly. Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945), elected president in 1932, implemented his “New Deal.” It facilitated loans that saved banks, provided relief for the unemployed through public works programs, and provided assistance to farmers and to businesses. When Keynes learned of Roosevelt’s plans, his assessment was that “Roosevelt was magnificently right” (though as someone noted Keynes might have said that he was “magnificently left”). Gradually, a return of consumer confidence, boosted by the president’s low-key “fireside chats” by radio to the American people, improved the economy. But only with the entry of the United States into the Second World War in 1941, with its massive mobilization of economic resources in the production of war materials, did the Depression finally end its grip on the United States.

## THE DYNAMICS OF FASCISM

It is against the background of hard times that followed the Great War that the rise of fascism and other authoritarian movements must be seen both in the industrialized countries of Western Europe and in the largely agrarian states of Eastern Europe and the Balkans (see Map 25.1). Fascist parties developed in the 1920s as political movements seeking mass mobilization—but not political participation. There was nothing democratic about fascist organizations: they were hierarchically structured and, rejecting parliamentary rule, sought to bring dictators to power.

Several factors contributed to the rise of the extreme right, with none serving as a single explanation. If in the nineteenth century the middle class had stood as a bulwark of liberal values in Europe, this was no longer the case in the post-war climate. In Germany, Italy, and Austria, fascists found disproportionate support among the middle class, which had been ravaged by years of economic crisis. Middle-class families watched in horror as their pensions and modest savings disappeared. They feared union leaders, Socialists, and Communists, who all demanded an extension of public programs to aid unemployed workers. Many in the middle class feared such reforms would come at their expense. Big business in Italy and Germany, in particular, turned against parliamentary rule. But middle-class frustrations do not provide a sufficient explanation for the rise of authoritarian movements in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where the middle classes were extremely small. Moreover, the middle classes in Britain and France endured many of the same economic frustrations, but only in France did a minority turn to authoritarian political movements.

Fascists, Nazis, and other authoritarian right-wing groups blamed parliamentary government itself for the weaknesses and failures of their states in the post-war years. They believed parliamentary regimes to be unstable and weak by their very nature, undercut by factionalism and class divi-





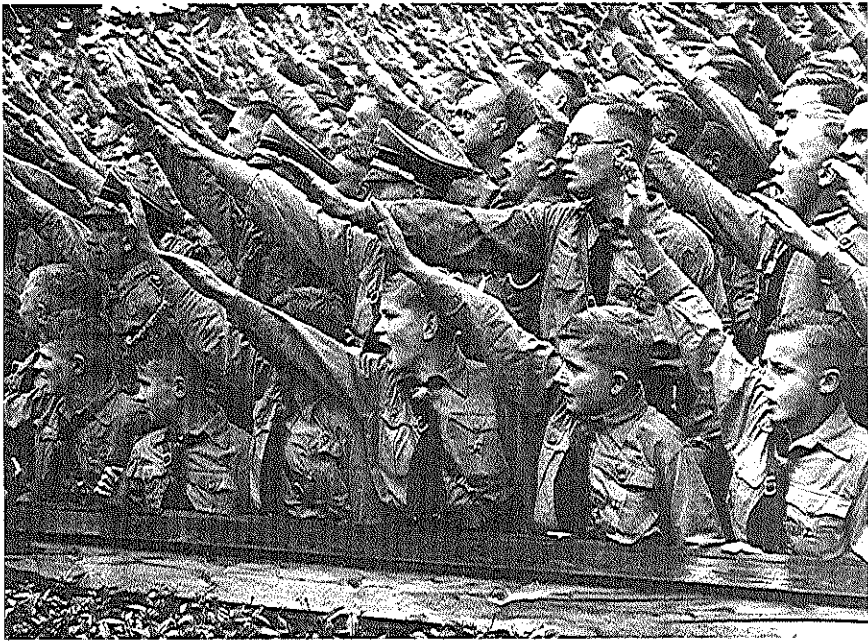
MAP 25.1 DICTATORSHIPS IN EUROPE, 1932–1937 States ruled by dictators before 1932; states that became dictatorships after 1932; remaining democracies in 1937.

sions. The states in which authoritarian dictators came to power lacked strong traditions of parliamentary democracy. Moreover, the seeming instability of parliamentary regimes in times of crisis during the 1920s contributed to the attractiveness of the idea of a strong leader—a dictator who would restore order and embody nationalist aspirations, fulfilling what some considered their nation's "historic destiny." Frenzied crowds, with arms raised in fascist salutes, greeted their authoritarian leaders as heroes. The irony was, of course, that fascist gangs themselves were largely responsible for creating the political turmoil that ultimately led to the destruction of parliamentary governments.

Fascism was less of an ideology per se than a violent plan of action with the aim of seizing power. Fascists most often defined themselves by denouncing who and what they were against, such as parliamentary democracy, rather than what they were for. Fascists did not put forward "programs" for authoritarian rule. They saw themselves as building a new social and political order based upon service to the nation. This idea of creating a new elite also distinguished fascist from authoritarian movements in Spain and Portugal, where nationalists tried to affirm the domination of traditional elites, such as nobles and churchmen, and remained suspicious of mass movements in general.

Fascist movements opposed trade unions, Socialists, and Communists with particular vehemence because all three emphasized class differences they believed were endemic in capitalist society, espoused working-class internationalism, and based their appeal primarily on the perceived needs of workers. Fascists, by contrast, viewed economic and social tensions as irrelevant, arguing that it was enough that all people shared a common national identity, and that this national community meant more than did economic disparities between social classes. Fascism would make such divisions obsolete. Mussolini and Hitler covered up the brutal realities of their rule by promising with vague rhetoric that the needs of the "national economic community" would be fulfilled. In the early 1920s, Mussolini had added "international finance capital" to his list of enemies, a holdover from the rhetoric of his days as a socialist before the war, trying to convince workers that he spoke for their interests, too. Like Mussolini, dictators Engelbert Dollfuss in Austria (1892–1934) and Antonio Salazar (1889–1970) in Portugal also added "corporatism" to their list of promises, announcing that associations of employers and workers would be formed within each industry. But fascist states remained capitalistic in nature, with big business accruing great profits and workers lagging far behind.

There was no single fascist ideology, and not all of the right-wing authoritarian movements in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s can be qualified as fascist. In Spain, Francisco Franco imposed a military dictatorship like that of Salazar in neighboring Portugal; both were predicated upon the influence of traditional elites, the Catholic Church, and the army. Yet, while sharing the anti-Bolshevism of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, neither the Spanish nor the Portuguese dictatorship shared the expansionist ideology of those regimes, and both distrusted the kind of mass movement that helped sweep the Italian fascists and German Nazis to power. The agrarian populist authoritarian regimes of Eastern Europe may also be described as fascist states, or at least "para-fascist" dictatorships. Some of these also were aggressive, nationalist mass movements built upon anti-communism, anti-Semitism, and fierce opposition to parliamentary rule. Yet although inspired in some ways by Italian fascism and German National Socialism, they had no illusions about expanding their states beyond what each claimed as the "historic" limits of their nationality. Moreover, Stalin's Soviet Union, too,



An enthusiastic crowd, which includes many youths, greets Hitler at a rally at the Nuremberg stadium in 1937.

had become a state dictatorship, like the fascist regimes, but one organized at least on Communist rhetoric about creating a workers' paradise. Stalin, casting aside the claims of the many non-Russian nationalities, and for that matter, of the workers themselves, tolerated no opposition to or within the Communist Party. The Soviet Union was also a totalitarian state, with centralized control of all political functions by a dictator ruling through terror in the name of a single party.

Hatred of parliamentary and democratic rule, Socialists, Communists, and Jews helped give fascism an international character. In 1935, there was even a short-lived attempt to create a fascist international, similar to the Communist International (Comintern) on the other end of the political spectrum. Mussolini contributed funds to the Belgian, Austrian, and British fascist movements. But the stridently nationalist aspect of fascism worked against fascist internationalism. Yet fascist and right-wing authoritarian states found ready allies among similar regimes, as joint German and Italian assistance to the nationalist rebellion during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) solidified the alliance between Hitler and Mussolini.

Middle-class economic frustration, anti-parliamentarianism, upper-class fears of socialism, anti-Semitism, aggressive nationalism, and the belief that a dictator could bring order and national fulfillment were all present in European society before the Great War. But the cataclysmic experience

of the war channeled them all in new and frightening directions, contributing to the proliferation of aggressive nationalism. For many veterans of the trenches, the experience of the war had made them increasingly indifferent to brutality and human suffering. To an extent, nationalism represented a continuation of the Great War—and the camaraderie of the trenches—now transformed into a race war against those considered internal or external enemies. In Germany, in particular, right-wing movements attracted demobilized soldiers, who had returned home with weapons, habits of military order, and experience with violence. Fortunate enough to have returned home from the war at all, demobilized troops found not a significantly better life to repay them for their sacrifices, but hard times driven by inflation. They kept right on marching. Paramilitary squads of war veterans destabilized political life in France and Italy, in victorious states, but above all in revisionist states that did not accept The Versailles Settlement (see Chapter 24). The Free Corps in Germany, the Home Guard in Austria, and the Cross of Fire in France denounced the “decadence” and “softness” of parliamentary regimes. They wanted continuation of war, the dominant experience in their lives, not peace.

Aggressive nationalism easily became racism. From the beginning, Hitler's National Socialism espoused German racial supremacy. Nazism manifested an unparalleled capacity for violence and destruction based upon the assumption that Nazis could assume the authority to determine who could live and who could die. Their principal target was Jews. This carried Nazi ideology and practice beyond other violent nationalist right-wing regimes. Germans were not alone in believing spurious literature proclaiming the superiority of their race and the degeneration of other races. Eastern European dictators denounced other ethnic groups and nations, which could be blamed for practically anything. Anti-Semitism also characterized authoritarian movements in Austria, Poland, Romania, and Yugoslavia, as well as in France and Belgium. Inspired by Hitler, Mussolini also added anti-Semitism to his nationalist ravings in 1938.

Fascism borrowed some symbols and rites that represented spiritual revolution (for example, “blood” and “martyrdom”) from Christianity, replacing the latter with nationalism. Fascism became something of an all-embracing civic religion that sought to build a “national community.” In a totalitarian way, fascism sought to eliminate the distinction between private and public life. Fascists sought to create the “new man” who would serve the nation (women were to remain at home) and a new elite defined by service to the state. Fascists emphasized youth and youthful energy, contrasting the “new men” with what they considered the old, failed political systems. Lining up behind authoritarian dictators whom they believed to be natural, aggressive leaders who incarnated their national destiny, fascists trumpeted the historical rights of, and duties to, the nation, which they believed outweighed any other rights. In their view this gave them the right to exclude from the national community—and, for some fascists, to kill—those they considered

outsiders in the interest of racial "purity." They believed that this also gave them the right to expand their national frontiers toward what they considered their proper "historical" limits. They placed such struggles in the context of what they conceived of as a Darwinian struggle of the fittest that they would win, and celebrated what they considered to be the beauty of violence. When the film version of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on The Western Front* appeared in 1930, Nazis marched in protest and shut down some theaters.

Fascists did more than rule through terror—their dictatorships were also built upon popular consensus. Fascism created what has been called a "magnetic field" in Europe in the 1920s. Extreme right-wing movements won widespread support among millions of ordinary people in many corners of Europe, beginning in Italy.

### *Mussolini and Fascism in Italy*

The economic and social tensions of the immediate post-war period destabilized Italy's liberal government. The dissatisfaction of Italian nationalists with the Treaty of Versailles accentuated a political crisis. This made Italy vulnerable to a growing threat from the far right.

Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), a bombastic, decadent poet, had in 1914 described war as perfect hygiene for the modern world. Having proclaimed, "I am not, and do not wish to be, a mere poet," he took matters into his own hands. In September 1919, the decorated war veteran who had lost an eye in combat swept into the Adriatic city of Fiume (Rijeka). He led a force of 2,000 men, many of whom were demobilized soldiers. D'Annunzio planted the Italian flag, forcing the Italian government to begin negotiations with the new Yugoslav state, which also claimed the Adriatic port. Both countries agreed that Fiume would be independent, but that most of Istria and northern Dalmatia would remain in Yugoslavia, as the Treaty of Versailles had specified. D'Annunzio's little republic lasted sixteen months, until Italian ships lobbed a few shells in the general direction of the city and sent the poet and his small force packing.

D'Annunzio had briefly stolen the thunder of another fervent Italian nationalist, Benito Mussolini (1883–1945). Mussolini was born to a family of modest means in northern Italy. His father, a blacksmith, was something of a revolutionary; he had taught himself to read from socialist tracts and named his son after the Mexican revolutionary Benito Juarez. The young Mussolini was a schoolyard bully quick to raise his fists and pull a knife, once stabbing a girlfriend. He had no close friends and was proud of it—"Keep your heart a desert," he once advised.

Mussolini read Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche, whose espousal of daring revolt and the "will to power" intrigued him. After a stint in the army, Mussolini proclaimed himself a socialist and anti-militarist and became a political journalist. He took to the streets to denounce Italy's



Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his fascists, 1935.

colonial war against Libya (see Chapter 21). Late in 1912, Mussolini became editor of the Italian Socialist Party's newspaper, *Avanti!* At the outbreak of war in 1914, Mussolini led a chorus of socialists demanding that Italy remain neutral.

In October 1914, a small number of members broke away from the Socialist Party, demanding that Italy join the war. They took the name "fascists" from the Latin word *fascio*, meaning "a bundle of sticks," or, by extension, an association. When Italy entered the war in 1915, Mussolini joined the army. His views toward war were already changing. "Only blood," he wrote, "makes the wheels of history turn." The influence of Nietzsche was overwhelming that of Marx in his mind. Lightly

wounded in 1917, he returned to journalism. At the war's end, Mussolini led the chorus of nationalist demands for a peace settlement favorable to Italian interests. In March 1919, he founded the National Fascist Party.

The post-war crisis of Italy's liberal state aided the fascists. The major parties of Italy—the Liberals, the Socialists, and the new Catholic Popular Party—struggled in vain to find consensus. While governments formed and fell in quick succession, severe economic difficulties followed the armistice. Hundreds of thousands of demobilized troops joined the ranks of the unemployed. Inflation soared, eroding middle-class savings and undercutting the already low standard of living of workers and landless peasants. Agricultural Depression compounded high unemployment.

As in Britain, France, and Germany, workers flocked to organized labor in Italy, and waves of strikes spread in 1919 and 1920. Peasant laborers demanded land and formed unions called "red leagues." In the south, thousands of poor families had begun to occupy some of the vast, often uncultivated holdings belonging to wealthy landowners. Banditry exploded in the south and Sicily.

During these "red years" of 1920–1922, many landowners and businessmen turned against parliamentary rule. The Liberal government had alienated the wealthy by proposing a progressive tax on income and a high imposition on war profits and outraged them by legalizing peasant land seizures. Wealthy industrialists helped bring the Italian fascists to power. In

the north, ship owners and iron and mining magnates, as well as wealthy landowners, provided funds for Mussolini's fascists. Uniformed squads of fascists wearing black shirts intervened on behalf of big landowners and businessmen, attacking Socialists, Communists, and union members. Laborers and sharecroppers fought back against the fascists, but had little chance because the landowners supplied the *squadri* with weapons. The left was divided and hesitant.

Mussolini, now boasting a private army and a sizable clique, or "applause squad," of paid supporters, praised the "bath of blood" that swept parts of Italy. He reveled in rumors of a coup d'état associated with his name, cranking out violent articles denouncing parliamentary government.

In 1921, the Liberals, hoping to find a parliamentary mandate to impose order, offered the fascists qualified support and accepted them as electoral allies. Mussolini and several dozen other fascists were elected to the Italian Parliament. The fascist leader now had an ideal soapbox for his flamboyant oratory, as well as immunity from prosecution. The Liberal government of Giovanni Giolitti (see Chapter 17) resigned, succeeded by another coalition government.

The fascists were now a powerful political movement with prominent allies, money, newspapers, and hundreds of thousands of party members. Fascist thugs had carved out territories in which their word was law. They disrupted local political life, shattering the organization and support for the traditional parties. Mussolini, who took the title of the Duce, or "the leader," presented himself as a defender of law and order, blaming Socialists and the newly formed Communist Party for the turmoil for which the fascists were largely responsible. Fascists enjoyed the tacit support of many state and police officials, and fascist violence went unpunished.

For Mussolini, fascism was an ideology of violent confrontation, a means of winning and maintaining political power, more than a coherent doctrine of political philosophy. Italian fascists, as with their counterparts who would soon emerge elsewhere, advocated a strong, virulently nationalist, militarized state. Italy would fulfill its "historic destiny" by transforming the Mediterranean into "a Roman lake."

In October 1922, Mussolini made his move. He pressured indecisive King Victor Emmanuel III (ruled 1900–1946), a shy man who loved to hunt, wear military uniforms, and collect coins, to name him and several other fascists to cabinet posts. The king remained out of Rome for weeks at a time as the crisis built, hoping that it would simply go away. Even as he planned a coup d'état, Mussolini charmed members of the royal family. He told 40,000 fascists in Naples, "Either we are allowed to govern, or we will seize power by marching on Rome." The prime minister asked the king to declare martial law and to use the army to restore order by suppressing the fascists, who had seized control of several towns.

The king declared a state of emergency and then changed his mind even as thousands of black-shirted fascists surged toward Rome on the night of

October 27, 1922. Mussolini took a comfortable night train to the capital. When one politician refused the king's request to form a government, Victor Emmanuel turned to Mussolini. On October 29, the Duce became prime minister. Fascists celebrated in the streets by beating up political enemies and shutting down left-wing newspapers.

Despite the fact that his party held a small proportion of the seats in the chamber and could not claim the party allegiance of a single senator, Mussolini convinced both bodies to grant him full powers to rule by decree for a year. Many mainstream politicians endorsed him because the fascists promised to restore social order. They also assumed that Mussolini could not long survive once brought into respectable political life.

Mussolini's shrewd management of fascist newspapers and his ability to plant favorable articles in other papers through cajoling and bribery helped win further support. Aided by the intimidating tactics of the fascist militia, the National Fascist Party won enough votes in the 1923 elections to emerge as the majority party, at least with the support of the Catholic Popular Party.

Despite a major political crisis in 1924 that followed his implication in the murder of a Socialist deputy, Mussolini developed an almost cult-like following. The Duce encouraged the phrase "Mussolini is always right" and managed to convince millions of people that this was indeed the case. He was the first politician of the twentieth century to make use of modern communication techniques. Mussolini subsidized several films about his accomplishments; his rambling speeches, voluminous tomes, an autobiography, and several authorized biographies were sold in glossy editions. By the early 1930s, Italian journalists were required to capitalize He, Him, and His when referring to the Duce, as they did when mentioning God or Jesus Christ. All Italians at age eighteen had to take an oath to obey Mussolini. Italian press agents worked to enhance his image abroad. In Vienna, Sigmund Freud at first praised him; the American poet Ezra Pound remained an admirer. The U.S. ambassador saluted "a fine young revolution," and *Time* magazine put him on its cover eight times. To some foreign visitors, Mussolini's fascism seemed to offer a third way—namely, corporatism—that lay between unchecked capitalism and the contentious challenge of socialism and communism. The Duce became known abroad as the genius who managed to make Italian trains run on time, although, in fact, such a description applied only to those carrying tourists to the ski resorts in the Italian Alps.

Not long after Mussolini took power, however, French newspapers began to describe him as a Carnival Caesar. The tag stuck. The Duce strutted about, boasting egregiously, his eyes rolling and his chin jutting out as he piled falsehood upon exaggeration. He insisted that officials and assistants sprint to his desk, and ordered photographers to take pictures of him fencing, playing tennis, or jogging by troops he was reviewing. Mussolini obnoxiously boasted of his sexual energy and prowess. But despite his insistence that he be portrayed as dynamic, he was rather lazy. To some extent, the



Italian dictator was an actor, and the balconies from which he thundered speeches were his stage.

Mussolini planned an army of "eight million bayonets" and an air force that would "blot out the sun." But despite the dictator's attempt to project an image of fascism that emphasized youthful physical vigor, relatively little military training actually took place in Italy. The Italian army remained beset by inadequate command structures and poor training.

The Duce took over the most important operations of the state and was like an orchestra conductor trying to play all of the instruments at once. He warned ministers not to disagree with him because they might divert him "from what I know to be the right path—my own animal instincts are always right." Officials reported only what they thought Mussolini wanted to hear. The gap between Mussolini's assessment of Italy's military strength and reality widened.

Mussolini treated domestic policy as an afterthought, once claiming that "to govern [Italy], you need only two things, policemen, and bands playing in the streets." Yet while it is easy to emphasize the farcical aspects of Mussolini's rule, in Italy, as in other fascist states, there was nothing comical about the brutality of the police or about his provocative foreign policy, which made Europe an increasingly dangerous place.

In order to placate a potentially powerful source of opposition, Mussolini made peace with the Catholic Church, which had previously denounced the regime after fascist squads smashed Catholic workers' cooperatives along with similar Socialist organizations. In 1929, the Duce signed the Lateran Pacts with the Church, a concordat that left the Vatican an independent papal enclave within Rome. In exchange, the papacy for the first time officially recognized Italy's existence. The Italian dictator returned religious instruction to all schools, and banned freemasonry, literature that the Church considered obscene, the sale of contraceptives, and swearing in public. Mussolini won further Church support with his pro-natal campaign (which included a tax on "unjustified celibacy"), vague statements about the importance of the family, measures limiting Protestant publications, and fulminations against women participating in sports. The Duce now had his grown children baptized and his marriage recognized by the Church, ten years after his civil marriage to a wife with whom he no longer lived. Pope Pius XI called Mussolini "the man sent by Providence."

Like Hitler and Stalin, Mussolini sought to eliminate the boundary between private and public life. He wanted the "new Italian woman" to espouse the values of, and serve, the nationalist state. With the fascist motto, "Everything within the State, nothing outside the State," he viewed the family as an essential component of fascism. "The Nation is served even by keeping the house swept. Civic discipline begins with family discipline," advised an Italian children's book. But fascism could never overcome the inevitable tensions between family obligations and what fascists considered national duties. Mussolini and the fascists believed they were

restoring old values. But the idea of women serving the nation-state was very new—for example, the attempt to create mass fascist organizations of women ranging from after-work recreational clubs to female paramilitary squads. The Duce disliked the fact that women had obtained the right to vote in Great Britain, Germany, and several other countries, and that more Italian women were going to work. In Italy's fascist state—as in Hitler's Germany—the place of women was, in principle, in the home, obeying their husbands and having babies.

Mussolini viewed corporatism (see Chapter 24) as a possible remedy to the economic problems that beset Italy. The Duce created twenty-two corporations, or assemblies, overseen, at least in theory, by a National Council of Corporations. Each corporation was based on a council of employers and employees. But Italian fascist corporatism had very little impact in Italy. Its chief practical consequence, at least until the early 1930s, was to swell the number of state bureaucrats hired to supervise creaky, inefficient, and largely superfluous organizations.

The Duce wanted to make Italy economically independent. State agencies invested in industries Mussolini considered crucial to the colonial and European wars he was planning. By 1935, no other European state, except Stalin's Soviet Union, controlled such a large portion of industry, with major shares in industries like steelworks and shipbuilding. Hydroelectricity and automobile manufacturing developed, but Italian industry still depended on raw materials imported from abroad, including copper, rubber, and coal.

Mussolini dubbed his most ambitious agricultural program the "battle for grain." But wheat production was uneconomical in many regions; by converting from labor-intensive crops to wheat, the Duce's pet program generated unemployment and reduced pasture and fruit-growing lands and the number of farm animals. High tariffs on grain imports raised food prices. Land reclamation and irrigation projects also failed. While Mussolini's speeches celebrated "blood and soil" (a constant refrain on the fascist and authoritarian right in inter-war Europe), the number of Italian peasant proprietors declined.

The failures of Mussolini's economic policies were compounded by the demands of military spending, which absorbed a full third of Italian income by the mid-1930s. While the state spent heavily on planes and submarines, Italy's per capita income remained about that of Britain and the United States in the early nineteenth century. Illiteracy remained high, particularly in the south. Under fascism, the gap between the more industrialized north and the poor south continued to grow.

The paradox of Italian corporatism was revealed in Mussolini's rhetoric that there were no social classes in Italy, only Italians. The Duce cheerily proclaimed the end of class struggle and bragged that he had done more for workers than any other leader. But employers and workers were certainly not on an equal footing. Their trade unions destroyed (replaced by fascist trade unions), their conditions of life basically unimproved, and strikes now



Italian women with gas masks line up for the Duce as part of a parade of 70,000 fascist women and girls in celebration of the twentieth anniversary of fascism in 1939.

illegal, most workers remained skeptical about Mussolini. The fascist government did limit the workday in 1923, and in 1935 it introduced a five-day workweek. But employers broke contracts with impunity. The conditions of life for sharecroppers and other landless laborers worsened.

In other respects, some things went on as before. In the south, where peasants particularly resented and resisted the state, the Mafia provided an alternative allegiance, a parallel underworld government. Mussolini failed to destroy the power of the Neapolitan and Sicilian Mafias, even though the number of Mafia-related killings fell dramatically. The Church also remained at least an alternative source of influence to fascism. A Catholic revival, which included a rapid rise in the number of priests and nuns, was independent of fascism. Pope Pius XI lost some of his enthusiasm for Mussolini's fascism, denouncing in the early 1930s "the pagan worship of the state." Few Italians paid attention to the Duce's attempts to convince Italians to stop singing in the streets, or his insistence that they dress babies in fascist black shirts. That not all Italians listened to Mussolini's bombastic rhetoric (nor to the Catholic Church) was demonstrated by the continuing fall of the birthrate (from 147.5 births per 1,000 in 1911 to 102.2 in 1936), despite the call of the Duce for more baby soldiers and the ban on the sale of birth-control devices. Massive emigration out of Italy continued throughout the 1920s and 1930s. However, overall, most Italians still supported Mussolini, if only passively.

Like Italian fascism, the rise of the Nazis became closely identified with the rise to power of a charismatic leader, Adolf Hitler (1889–1945). Hitler was born in the small Austrian town of Braunau, on the border with Bavaria. His father was a customs official of modest means. As a boy, the young Hitler lacked discipline and was, as a teacher remembered, “notoriously cantankerous, willful, arrogant, and bad-tempered. He had obvious difficulty in fitting in at school.”

Hitler quit school in 1905. Turned down for admission to the School of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, he nonetheless moved to the imperial capital where he lived in a hostel with little money and few friends. In the 1914 city directory, Hitler had himself listed as “painter and architect,” although his painting amounted to earning a little money painting postcards for tourists.

Hitler was of average height with a large head, dark hair, broad cheekbones, and an unusually high forehead. Wearing baggy clothes and sporting his characteristic trimmed mustache, he was not an impressive-looking man. He had bad teeth and poor eyesight. Hitler was compulsive about daily routines, did not drink coffee or smoke, was a vegetarian, and took only an occasional drink. He enjoyed the company of women but may, in fact, have been impotent.

During this time in Vienna, Hitler expressed great hatred for the Social Democrats, not Jews, despite Vienna’s rampant anti-Semitism. He moved to Munich and, as a German nationalist, cheered the proclamation of war. He joined the German army and was wounded in the leg in 1916, gassed in a British attack just before the end of the war, and decorated on three occasions for bravery. But his superiors found Hitler unfit for promotion to the officer corps, believing that he lacked leadership qualities.

Hitler would later recall “the stupendous impression produced on me by the war—the greatest of all experiences . . . the heroic struggle of our people.” He claimed to have warned fellow soldiers that “in spite of our big guns victory would be denied” to Germany because of “the invisible foes of the German people,” Marxists and Jews. The war accentuated Hitler’s fanatical German nationalism and transformed him into a raging anti-Semite.

In 1918, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) published the first volume of *The Decline of the West*. He blamed Germany’s defeat on the decay of Western civilization. “We no longer believe,” he wrote, “in the power of reason over life. We feel that life rules over reason.” He anticipated that new, powerful leaders would emerge out of the maelstrom to destroy “impotent democracies.” Spengler believed that the German race would emerge victorious in a biological struggle against its competitors. German culture would be embodied in a new state in which the individual would be subsumed in the racial nation.

By 1919, Hitler had constructed a view of the world that was strikingly similar to that of Spengler. Moreover, it was increasingly shared by many Germans. It was composed of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-communism, and aggressive nationalism. He believed that Germans were "Aryans," descended from a superior Caucasian people. That year, Hitler joined the German Workers' Party, a newly formed right-wing nationalist organization. The following year, when Hitler became the head of the organization, he renamed it the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party. Some Nazis now referred to Hitler as the "Führer," or "leader," as Mussolini was the Duce in Italy.

Nazis organized a paramilitary organization, the "storm troopers," known after 1921 as the S.A. (*Sturmabteilung*), led by the hard-drinking Bavarian Ernst Röhm (1887–1934). Like the Free Corps, the S.A. offered comradeship and an outlet for violence to frustrated right-wing war veterans. To its members, Hitler appeared to be a man of action, a survivor of the trenches—one of them.

Emboldened by their success at attracting adherents, the Nazis marched out of a Munich beer hall on November 9, 1923, planning to seize power and then march on Berlin. Troops loyal to the government put an end to the "Beer Hall Putsch." An anti-republican judge sentenced Hitler to five years in prison. He served only one year and emerged from prison a national figure. Hitler then built up the Nazi Party.

Some of the first Nazi storm troopers in 1922, with swastikas on their arms and flag.



In 1925, Hitler published *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), which he had written in his comfortable jail quarters. Here he reiterated the claim, originally that of General Paul von Hindenburg and believed by many Germans, that Germany had been stabbed in the back by Jews and Communists during the war. It was easy to forget that the military front had collapsed before the home front, a convenient collective amnesia. "If, at the beginning and during the war," Hitler wrote, "someone had only subjected about twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew destroyers of the people to poison gas—as was suffered on the battlefield by hundreds of thousands of our best workers from all social classes and all walks of life—then the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain." His identification of communism with Jews intensified his obsessive anti-Semitism. Hitler never strayed from the most salient themes of his appeal, believing that people could only absorb a few ideas, which must be hammered in over and over again. Germany would rearm and then conquer "living space" at the expense of the "inferior" Slavic peoples. Many Germans now believed that the problem was not that Germany had fought the war, but only that victory had been stolen from them.

In these early days, the Nazis, like Mussolini's fascists, drew much of their support from the middle class, which had been devastated by the hyperinflation of the early 1920s and turned against the Weimar Republic itself. Pensioners struggled to make ends meet; many small businessmen, shopkeepers, craftsmen, and clerks had to sell or pawn silver or other items of value that had been passed down in their families for generations. Many big businessmen were at first suspicious of Nazism's mass appeal. They preferred more traditional kinds of authoritarian ideas that appealed to their sense of social exclusiveness, such as a monarchy backed by the armed forces in the Prussian tradition. Middle-class businessmen of more modest means early on were more likely to back the Nazis. They looked to Hitler to protect them from "Bolsheviks" and did not care how he did so.

Slowly the Nazis built their party. They won less than 3 percent of the vote in the 1928 elections. But German political life was moving to the right, led by the powerful National People's Party, most of whose members were increasingly anti-republican but not yet necessarily attracted to the Nazis. They preferred a monarchy or military dictatorship. The death in October 1929 of Gustav Stresemann, Germany's able and respected foreign minister, removed a powerful voice of support for the republic, gravely weakening the Weimar coalition in the Reichstag. Socialists, too, were divided, despite considerable popularity—indeed the largest veterans' organization was that of the Socialist (SPD) Party. The political center disappeared as support for Weimar crumbled. The American Wall Street Crash in October 1929 compounded social and political instability. The economic hardship of the Great Depression swelled the ranks of parties committed to overthrowing parliamentary rule in Germany and other states.

*Right-Wing Authoritarian Movements in Eastern Europe*

In Eastern and Central Europe, parliamentary governments did not survive the instability wrought by the economic dislocation of the 1920s and 1930s, nor the bitter ethnic rivalries within these nations, which included states that already existed at the outbreak of the war (Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece, as well as Poland, once again independent) and the new state of Yugoslavia. Except for the kingdom of Yugoslavia, each of these multinational states had some sort of liberal constitution in the 1920s. But by the end of the 1930s, only Czechoslovakia had not become a dictatorship.

With the exception of Czechoslovakia, which included industrialized Bohemia, all of these countries were heavily agricultural, poor, and had high percentages of illiteracy. When compared with the countries of Western Europe, the countries of Eastern Europe had very small middle classes, except Czech Bohemia, parts of Serbia, and major cities like Budapest.

A daunting variety of conflicting economic interests could be found among the people of Eastern Europe, ranging from those of wealthy Hungarian landowners to Bosnian mountain dwellers scratching out a meager living from thankless land. In Eastern Europe, most peasants were not interested in politics and associated states with taxes. But they wanted land reform, and this demand brought them into the political process. After the war, the governments of the Eastern European states did implement ambitious land reform programs that reduced the number and size of the large estates, adding to the ranks of small landholding farmers. But populist agrarian parties, such as the Smallholders in Hungary and the Romanian National Peasant Party, were essentially single-interest parties that fell under the sway of fascist demagogues. Such agrarian parties vilified Jews as ethnic outsiders, mobilizing resentment against their economic roles as bankers, small businessmen, and shopkeepers. In Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, wealthy landowners, desperate to protect their estates against further land reform and frightened by the rise of small Communist parties, turned toward authoritarian rule. As political parties and ultimately parliamentary rule failed amid agricultural Depression, nationalism filled the gap, becoming ever more strident and aggressive.

Poland was the first Eastern European state to become a dictatorship. General Józef Piłsudski seized power in 1926, imposing a military dictatorship that survived his death in 1935 (see Chapter 24). The Yugoslav experiment in parliamentary rule ended abruptly in 1929, when King Alexander I (ruled 1921–1934) dissolved the assembly and banned political parties. That year, Croats established the Ustaša (Insurrection) Party, a right-wing nationalist party that demanded an independent Croatia. In 1934, King Alexander was assassinated, with the help of Ustaša members. Five years later, Croatia won status as an “autonomous” region with its own assembly, but this did not reduce Serb domination of the multinational state. In Yugoslavia, then, the principal battle was not between partisans of dictatorship



King Alexander I of Yugoslavia and French Foreign Minister Jean-Louis Barthou were assassinated while driving through Marseilles in 1934; the assassin was later lynched by onlookers.

and those of parliamentary government, as in Germany, but between the authoritarian Serb government and a right-wing Croat organization.

In Hungary, Admiral Miklós Horthy (1868–1957), the head of state since 1920, appointed a fascist prime minister in 1932 but repressed the extreme right-wing parties when they threatened to seize power for themselves. Bulgarian political life was marked by assassinations and coups d'état followed by dictatorship in 1935. In Greece, republicans, monarchists, and military officers battled it out. In 1936, Greek King George II (1890–1947) gave his blessing to the dictatorship of General Ioannis Metaxas (1871–1941), who, in the fascist style, took the title of "leader." In 1938, Romanian King Carol II (1893–1953) established a dictatorship by suspending the constitution. He did so to protect his rule against a challenge from the fascist "Legion of the Archangel Michael" and particularly its murderous shock troops, the "Iron Guard," a fanatically Orthodox religious group with strong anti-Semitic prejudices. Romanian fascists drew upon peasant discontent created by agricultural deflation. The king's bloody suppression of the Legion and the Iron Guard only postponed the victory of fascism in Romania.

In Eastern Europe, only Czechoslovakia managed to achieve political stability as a parliamentary democracy, despite differences between Czechs and Slovaks. The two largest political parties, the Agrarian Party and the



Social Democratic Party, drew members from both peoples. By the late 1930s, it was apparent that the greatest threat to parliamentary rule in Czechoslovakia would come from Nazi Germany, as Hitler seized upon ethnic tensions in the Czech Sudetenland between the German-speaking population and the Czechs. Consequently, even Central and Eastern Europe's most stable country was not immune from destabilizing ethnic rivalries.

### *Fascism in Austria*

In Austria, the undersized, German-speaking remnant of the Habsburg Empire, fascism was closely tied to German nationalism and anti-Semitism. Moreover, lying between Germany and Italy, Austria almost inevitably came under the influence of those states. During the 1930s, Mussolini wanted to absorb the Austrian Tyrol, although only the southern part was Italian speaking, and Hitler wanted Germany to annex all of Austria. The Nazi Party of Austria was eager to assist Hitler by destabilizing political life.

The split between right and left in Austria led to "Bloody Friday," July 15, 1927, when police killed a hundred striking workers during demonstrations in Vienna by Socialists protesting right-wing violence. Yet in Vienna social democracy was rooted in areas of public housing on the edge of the city. The contrast between the stately inner city, where some of the old Habsburg nobles still lived, and its political "red belt" of working-class housing could not be missed. Much of the tax burden fell on the Viennese middle classes, which were for the most part socially conservative, fervently Catholic, and overwhelmingly supportive of the conservative ruling Christian Social Party. Anti-Semitism had deep roots in Vienna as well as in provincial Austria. As everywhere, the Depression accentuated existing social and political tensions and violence.

The violent anti-parliamentary groups in neighboring Bavaria, where Hitler had got his start, served as a point of attraction for the Austrian Nazis. Members of the Austrian right-wing Home Guard wore traditional green woolen coats, lederhosen, and Alpine hats, but carried quite modern machine guns. The Social Democrats formed their own guard, determined to protect their members.

In 1933, Chancellor Dollfuss, a diminutive, awkward man who wore traditional Austrian peasant garb because he was proud of his provincial origins, dissolved the Austrian Parliament because it stood in the way of an authoritarian state. In February 1934, after Home Guard raids on workers' organizations and newspapers, the workers of Vienna, led by the Social Democrats, undertook a general strike. Fighting erupted when Dollfuss unleashed the Home Guard and army against the left. Army units attacked the industrial suburbs with artillery fire, killing several hundred workers during four days of fighting. Police closed down all Social Democratic organizations, and tried and executed some of their leaders. Dollfuss then banned all political parties except the fascist Fatherland Front.

Fascist parties in France had their origins in the anti-republican nationalism of the late nineteenth century. The Great War and the economic and social frustrations of the post-armistice period, as elsewhere, contributed to the rise of the far right. War veterans were prominent in the *Faisceau* movement, which was founded in 1919 and emulated the newly created Italian fascist organization, and in the *Cross of Fire*, established in 1929. French fascist leaders included two renowned producers of luxury products, the perfume magnate François Coty and the champagne baron Pierre Taittinger. The latter's Patriotic Youth movement, founded in 1924, counted more than 100,000 members by the end of the decade.

The rise in immigration to France increased xenophobia and racism. Beginning in 1935, more people died in France each year than were born there, and its population grew only because of the arrival of immigrants—Italians, Poles, Spaniards, and Belgians, as well as Jews from Eastern Europe. About 7.5 percent of the French population in the late 1930s consisted of immigrants—the highest percentage in Europe.

French fascists decried the existence of the Third Republic, which seemed to them an anomaly in a continent of dictators. Political power in France lay not with a strong executive authority but with the Chamber of Deputies. Governments came and went in turn, increasing rightist dissatisfaction. In 1934, a seamy political scandal offered the extreme right an opening for action. The appearance of government complicity in a fraudulent bond-selling scheme engineered by Serge Stavisky (1886–1934), a Ukrainian-born Jew, led to violent rightist demonstrations against the republic. On February 6, 1934, right-wing groups rioted, charging across the Seine River in Paris toward the Chamber of Deputies before being dispersed by troops, with casualties on both sides. But, unlike the right in Germany, Italy, or Spain, the French right did not have a dominating figure capable of uniting opposition to parliamentary rule. On February 12, millions of French men and women marched in support of the republic.

The formation of the Popular Front in France, an alliance between the Radical, Socialist, and Communist parties, must be seen in the context of the threat posed by the right not only in France but throughout Europe. Socialists and Communists had been at odds since the Congress of Tours in 1920. The split became policy when the Communist International (Comintern) of 1927 adopted the tactic of “class against class,” which tolerated no concessions to “bourgeois” parties, including the Socialist Party. But in the 1930s, the reality of the threat of the right to France overcame ideology. Stalin's fear of German rearmament led the Comintern to repudiate the “class versus class” strategy in June 1934. The French Communist Party was now free to join forces with the Socialist and Radical parties in a Popular Front to defend the republic against fascism. The three parties prepared a compromise program incorporating tax reform, a shorter workweek,

increased unemployment benefits, support for the League of Nations and international disarmament, and the dissolution of the fascist leagues.

The Popular Front won a clear victory in the subsequent elections of May 1936. But the Communists refused to participate in the ensuing government, on orders from Moscow. Léon Blum (1872–1950) became prime minister of the Popular Front government. That the Socialist leader was Jewish intensified the rage of the extreme right. Shouts of “Better Hitler than Blum!” echoed in Paris.

As unions, encouraged by the Popular Front’s pre-election promises, put forward demands for better work conditions, the largest strike wave in French history broke out across the country. For the first time, workers occupied plants, singing, putting on theatrical productions, and staging mock trials of bosses. The strikes, many by non-unionized workers, took both French labor organizations and the Communist Party by surprise. The Communists tried to bring the strikes to a speedy conclusion, fearful that defeat might hurt their influence with workers or help the Socialists. The Communist Party newspaper *L’Humanité* answered the workers’ optimistic slogan “Everything is possible” with the headline “Everything is not possible!”

Blum convinced employers and union representatives to sign the “Matignon Agreements,” establishing a forty-hour workweek, pay raises, and paid vacations. The strikes gradually ended. But the economy continued to falter in the face of intransigent opposition from employers and wealthy families shipping assets out of France. Moreover, the reduced workweek undercut production. Blum declared a “pause” in his reform program, and cut back social benefits and other state expenditures.

The Popular Front began to unravel. In March 1937, police fired on workers demonstrating against the rightist Cross of Fire group. The Communists denounced the government, which they had helped bring to power but never joined. The government had to devalue the franc several times because of the flow of gold abroad. Blum asked the Senate to grant him power to rule by decree. When the conservative-dominated Senate refused, he resigned in June 1937. For all intents and purposes, the Popular Front was over. A centrist government lurched on in France as the international situation worsened.

### *Fascism in the Low Countries and Britain*

Fascism threatened even Belgium and the Netherlands, as well. In Belgium, the fascist party “Rex” (from the Latin for “Christ the King”), led by Léon Degrelle (1906–1994), drew on the frustrations of white-collar workers and shopkeepers, victims of the Depression who blamed competition from department stores and socialist consumer cooperatives for their plight. Economic malaise compounded tensions generated by the linguistic division between French-speaking Walloons and the Flemish speakers of Flanders, some of whom demanded Flemish autonomy. A wave of strikes tore through

Belgium in 1936, similar to the one in France at the same time. However, Belgian fascists never won more than 12 percent of the vote. The majority of the middle class remained loyal to parliamentary government. Banks and the Socialist and Catholic parties successfully pressured the government for action to assist the lower middle class by increasing credit available to small retailers and extending union rights to white-collar employees. The Catholic Church's condemnation of Rex in 1937 led many of the group's members to return to moderate Catholic parties.

Similarly, in the Netherlands, the Dutch National Socialist League, which emulated the Nazis, was condemned by both the Calvinist Reform Church and the Catholic Church. It won the support of only 8 percent of Dutch voters in 1937.

In the depths of the Depression, a fascist movement developed even in Britain, the home of parliamentary government. That there were considerably fewer immigrants in Britain than, for example, France, probably limited the appeal of the nationalistic far-right parties. However, Oswald Mosley (1896–1980) started a small fascist party in Britain. Born into a wealthy aristocratic family, Mosley left the Conservative Party in 1924 over his concerns about unemployment in Britain. The philandering Mosley proclaimed his new motto “Vote Labour, Sleep Tory.” In 1931, he founded a small party with disastrous electoral results. Then, infatuated with Mussolini and the idea of corporatism, he attacked “international finance capital,” as well as the Labour Party, and formed the British Union of Fascists in 1932, delivering violent speeches attacking Jews. Mussolini provided funds, as did Hitler, who served as best man at his second wedding. Mosley surrounded himself with black-shirted toughs, but he attracted more attention than followers (they never numbered more than 20,000). The British people once again avoided political extremes.

## THE THIRD REICH

In Germany, the Depression helped swell the ranks of not only the Nazi Party but also other parties and groups (including powerful army officers and big businessmen) committed to the end of parliamentary government. Political parties, labor unions, and voluntary associations crumbled before the Nazi onslaught. Nazi organizations enrolled millions of Germans.

### *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic*

The Depression increased opposition to the Weimar Republic, particularly among the middle classes. The Nazis in 1929 were but one of a number of extreme right-wing groups determined to overthrow the republic. The Depression also further eroded the centrist coalition within the Reichstag upon which the republic had depended from the beginning. In March

1930, the last remnants of the Weimar coalition came apart under the pressure of the economic turmoil; the government, led by the Social Democrats, resigned. Social and political compromise seemed impossible. President Hindenburg began to rule by decree.

The new elections held in September 1930 confirmed the erosion of the parliamentary center. The Nazis received five times more votes than in the last elections, obtaining 18 percent of the popular vote and 107 seats in the Reichstag. The Communist Party, too, gained seats, while the Social Democratic Party remained the largest party with 143 deputies, although it lost seats, as did the moderate conservative parties. Bolstered by rising numbers of supporters, in 1932 Hitler ran for president against Hindenburg, winning 13.5 million votes to the general's 19 million and the Communist candidate's 4 million. The Nazi Party now had more than 800,000 members.

Traditional conservatives, including military men, not the least of whom was Hindenburg, turned against the republic. Franz von Papen (1879–1969), power broker of the traditional anti-parliamentarian right, became chancellor in June 1932. After elections for the Reichstag in November 1932, the Nazis became the largest party in the Reichstag (with 196 seats against 121 held by Social Democrats, 100 by Communists, and 90 by the Catholic Center Party). Although support for the Nazis had fallen by 2 million votes, the Nazis and Communists, both of whom rejected the Weimar Republic, had won more than half the votes cast.

Papen resigned as chancellor in December 1932. His successor, General Kurt von Schleicher (1882–1934), an enemy of Papen's who had arranged his fall, wanted to form a parliamentary majority by wooing some Nazis—but excluding Hitler—and even trade unionists, an improbable idea. When Schleicher's government resigned the next month, Papen, intriguing with Hitler, proposed a coalition government that would include the Nazis, with Hitler as chancellor. Hoping to transform Germany from a republic into a military authoritarian regime (perhaps through a monarchical restoration), Papen believed that Hitler could serve his purposes if the Nazis received only three of twelve cabinet posts. Once Hitler and the Nazis had helped assure the end of the Weimar Republic, they could be tossed aside. In Italy, Giolitti's Liberals had made the same fatal miscalculation in 1922 in their dealings with Mussolini.

Now joined by members of Hindenburg's family and staff, Papen convinced the president to appoint Hitler as chancellor, believing that he could control Hitler in his capacity as vice-chancellor. On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler formed the seventeenth—and last—Weimar government. "We've boxed Hitler in," was the way Papen memorably put it, "We have hired him."

Many Prussian nobles and generals still mistrusted Hitler. To the former, he seemed a vulgar commoner; to the latter, a mere foot soldier who made boastful claims of military expertise. But the generals had been taught, above all, to obey orders. Furthermore, Hitler's denunciations of Bolshevism

appealed to their dislike of Russia, their enemy on the eastern front during the Great War.

Most wealthy businessmen still preferred more traditional nationalists like Hindenburg and Papen and worried about Hitler's unpredictability and his early denunciations of capitalists and promises to create a new elite. The Nazi Party found only one major donor among big businessmen; a group of industrialists even tried to convince Hindenburg to leave Hitler out of the cabinet. Although some big businessmen shared the Nazis' virulent anti-Semitism, they were uneasy with the foreign condemnation it brought, and concerned that it might one day undercut their markets abroad.

But big business nonetheless contributed to the fall of Weimar. Most Rhineland industrialists were no more in favor of parliamentary government than were Prussian Junkers. Hitler flattered business leaders and promised public order, which was good for business, even if achieved at gunpoint.

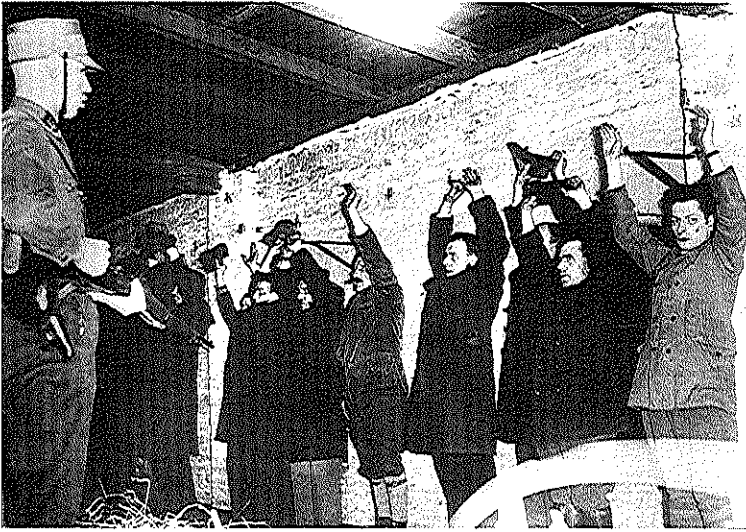
### *The Nazi State*

Hitler's appointment as chancellor sparked a wave of systematic and brutal Nazi attacks on union members, Socialists, Communists, Jews, and some Catholics who opposed Nazism. Mussolini had consolidated his power over the Italian state in about three years. It took Hitler less than three months. During the night of February 27, 1933, a fire caused considerable damage to the Reichstag building in Berlin. The police arrested a deranged, homeless Dutch Communist, charging him with arson.

Citing an imaginary Communist plot, Hindenburg issued an emergency decree suspending virtually all individual rights. Penalties of imprisonment and even death could be imposed without due legal process as police arrested thousands of Communists. Hermann Göring (1893–1946), one of Hitler's long-time disciples and now minister of the interior in Prussia, authorized a new auxiliary police force made up of members of the S.A. and other paramilitary groups.

But the parliamentary elections of March 5, 1933, which Hitler promised would be the last held in Nazi Germany and which took place amid enormous Nazi intimidation, did not give Hitler the overwhelming majority he had anticipated—the Nazis emerged with 44 percent of the vote. Nonetheless, Hitler proceeded as if the vote had been unanimous. On March 23, the cowed Reichstag approved an Enabling Act, which extended the unlimited “emergency” powers of the Nazis. The liberal political parties of the Weimar Republic simply disbanded. In July 1933, Hitler banned all political parties except the Nazi Party. It tripled in size, with 2.5 million members by the end of 1933, adding so many people that the “old fighters” who had joined early in the 1920s began to grumble that the party was losing its so-called elite character.

The Nazis implemented a dictatorial state. In May 1933, they organized the state-controlled German Labor Front to replace the unions they had



Communists under arrest after the Reichstag fire of 1933.

decimated. Strikes were illegal. Hitler dissolved the state parliaments and took away the remaining autonomy of the individual German states, appointing Nazis to take over state governments. A new law empowered officials to dismiss subordinates whom they considered potentially disloyal to the Nazis, or who could not prove that they were of pure "Aryan" racial stock. In October, the first concentration camp began operation at Dachau near Munich for the incarceration of political prisoners.

Despite Nazi rhetoric about a racially pure community of Germans, Hitler was far from envisioning social equality, which he associated with socialism and communism. Still, for some Germans, the Nazi Party, and particularly the S.S. (*Schutzstaffel*, security units that guarded Hitler), provided a means of social mobility; military trappings conveyed the respectability many Germans associated with a uniform. Although the Nazis drew support from all social classes (although proportionately less support from workers), the Depression in particular drove desperate middle-class Germans into the Nazi fold.

Hitler needed the loyalty of Germany's army. But many German officers were becoming increasingly wary of the S.A., which was now almost 3 million strong and which seemed out of control. Its members openly competed with Nazi officials for appointments and influence. Röhm announced that henceforth members of his force could not be tried by courts and that they were not subject to police authority. Believing that Hitler would betray the party's radicalism, he foolishly bragged that he would free Hitler from his "stupid and dangerous" advisers.

The S.S. and the Gestapo (the Nazi secret police) crushed the S.A. on June 30, 1934. They killed at least eighty people, including Röhm. The

"night of the long knives" also swept up some conservatives and military officers, as Hitler had feared trouble from the old right as well as from the S.A. Hitler convinced President Hindenburg that the gory purge had saved the German Third Reich (Third Empire) from a plot.

Hindenburg's death in August 1934 allowed Hitler to combine the titles of chancellor and *Führer* ("leader"), which replaced that of "president," a title that smacked of a republic. The army agreed to take an oath of personal allegiance to "the executor of the whole people's will." Ninety percent of those voting in a plebiscite approved Hitler's assumption of both functions.

The Nazi program of "coordination" was applied to most aspects of civil society, such as organized groups and activities outside the family. The Nazis had already gradually taken over voluntary associations, such as professional associations and sports clubs. Depoliticized, closely monitored voluntary associations and churches could remain centers of local public life without threatening Nazi domination. The Nazis worked to convert schools into mouthpieces for Hitler's state, providing new textbooks with instructions for teachers as to what should be taught, including "racial theory" and "Teutonic prehistory." Instead of students fearing their teachers, as had often been the case in German schools, non-Nazi teachers now had reason to fear their students; members of the Hitler Youth organization were quick to report to Nazi Party members teachers who did not seem enthusiastic about Nazism. New university chairs in "racial hygiene," military history, and German prehistory reflected Nazi interests. Pictures of Hitler went up in every classroom and radios broadcast his speeches.

The Nazis brought hundreds of thousands of active Germans into carefully controlled Nazi organizations, the goal of each being to "reach toward Hitler"—that is, to share the racist, nationalist goals of the *Führer*. By 1936 the Hitler Youth included almost half of all German boys between ten and fourteen years of age; a League of German Girls also flourished. The Nazis reduced social life to its most basic component, the family. (At



Hitler paying homage to Hindenburg shortly before the latter's death.



the same time, the Nazis encouraged children to denounce their parents for being disloyal to the fatherland, and the party sponsored "Aryan breeding" programs outside the family.) Vicarious participation in Nazi ceremonies and rituals also helped augment a sense of national identity.

Hitler implemented the Nazi "leadership principle," which he defined as a "doctrine of conflict." He applied a strategy of "divide and rule" to the higher echelons of government, such as the three chancelleries that replaced the cabinet. He tolerated and even encouraged open competition between his most trusted subordinates and between branches of government. Those who enjoyed Hitler's confidence ruthlessly and aggressively carved out personal fiefdoms. Unlike Stalin, who watched over even the most minor details with obsessive care, the Führer provided little supervision to government agencies. Occasionally something would catch Hitler's attention and brief, frenzied activity would follow. But he missed meetings, worked irregular hours, and was often disorganized. Hitler valued personal loyalty far more than efficiency.

The "doctrine of conflict" adversely affected the economic goals Hitler set for the state. The army and the air force quarreled over resources, the S.S. and the police over jurisdiction. The Four-Year Plan launched in 1936 under Göring's direction illustrated the functioning of the Nazi state. Hitler wanted to stimulate economic development, above all in industries necessary for rearmament: steel, iron, and synthetic fuel and rubber. Göring spent much time warring with other branches of government. Furthermore, industrialists resisted state intervention in their businesses. The Four-Year Plan failed to achieve its lofty goals.

Hitler had to confront the daunting challenge of unemployment. Although he knew or cared very little about economics, Hitler correctly determined that the rapid rearmament of Germany would help create jobs. Food shortages remained severe until 1936, but public works projects helped reduce unemployment and inflation. Big industrial concerns prospered, particularly those manufacturing war materials. The German gross national product rose by 81 percent, in part because of state direction of the economy. Hitler bragged that he had wrought an economic miracle. Millions of Germans believed him. An ordinary German woman wrote in her diary, "One feels absolutely insignificant in the face of the greatness, the truthfulness and the openness of such a man."

More consumer goods, such as radios, reached the consumer market, contributing to a sense of optimism about material conditions of life. The Labor Front organized cut-rate Nazi vacations. Some families of modest means who had never had the opportunity to travel took cruises in the Baltic Sea or even in the Mediterranean Sea. Hitler named this program "Strength Through Joy," taking the idea from Mussolini's after-work program of recreational trips in Italy. However, production of Hitler's planned low-cost "Volkswagen," or "people's car," was postponed because factories were needed for military production.

Yet sectors of the German economy remained weak. German industry depended on imports of iron ore, copper, oil, rubber, and bauxite. Many Germans found that their share in the "national community" was small. And although Hitler liked to identify the German people with what he considered rural virtues—"blood and soil"—the number of small farms continued to decline. There was no marked return to the soil as Germany continued to urbanize.

Like Mussolini, the Führer preached that a woman's place was in the kitchen or in the delivery room. A Nazi book for children announced, "The German resurrection is a male event." The state offered attractive financial benefits to families with children, and the German birthrate continued to rise, bolstered by an improving economy. Just months after becoming chancellor, Hitler forced women to give up industrial jobs and excluded them from public service and teaching. Fewer women went on to university. Certain occupations were classified as "women's work," primarily those involving traditional textile or handicraft production or farm work. But, despite the slogan "Women at home," the reality in Nazi Germany, as in Mussolini's Italy, was increasingly otherwise. The campaign to remove women from paid employment ended in the late 1930s, as women were needed to replace men conscripted into the army. The number of women working in German industry rose by a third between 1933 and 1939.

Hitler and the Nazis did not rule by sheer terror alone. Hitler also sought and won overwhelming popular approval. After defeat in the Great War, humiliation by the Treaty of Versailles, and years of Weimar instability in which the Nazis and other right-wing groups played a major part, Germans applauded as he dismantled the treaty piece by piece. But most ordinary Germans also approved of police action undertaken by the well-organized apparatus of the Nazi state. Regular police units drawn from every walk of German life assisted. The Nazi state won approval with a harsh campaign against crime, which had increased during the Depression. Most ordinary Germans approved of and indeed many collaborated in the arrest and imprisonment of common criminals. The Gestapo and the "Kripo," or criminal police, who became ever more aggressive, also arrested people considered "work shy," or others like gays who did not seem to them to fit in. Doctors used sterilization as a form of punishment and social control, part of Nazi "racial hygiene." Germans looked the other way or were indifferent to the rounding up of political dissidents and Jews. A contemporary described a Gestapo office:

Grimy corridors, offices furnished with Spartan simplicity, threats, kicks, troops chasing chained men up and down the reaches of the building, shouting, rows of girls and women standing with their noses and toes against the walls, overflowing ashtrays, portraits of Hitler and his aides, the smell of coffee, smartly dressed girls working at high speed

behind typewriters—girls seemingly indifferent to the squalor and agony about them . . . and Gestapo agents asleep on tables.

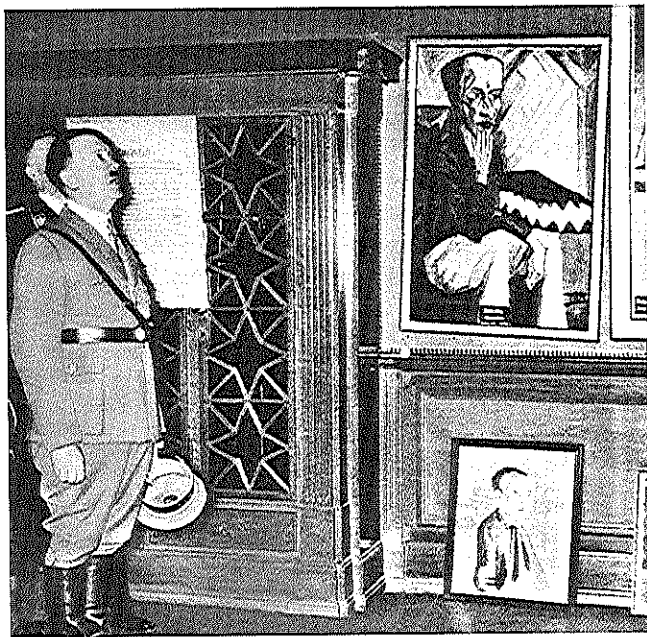
Moreover, thousands of Germans denounced neighbors to the Gestapo for being Jewish, Socialist, or Communist, and did so well aware of the consequences of their acts. Certainly by 1939, most Germans were fully aware of the existence of concentration camps. Indeed the Nazi government eagerly publicized the “trials” and sentences that sent people to them.

Some intellectuals and artists jumped on the Nazi bandwagon. Very few members—though the novelist Thomas Mann, who had moved from being an angry conservative to a supporter of the republic by 1922, was one—resigned from the prestigious Prussian Academy of Arts when called upon to pledge allegiance to Hitler. The philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) saluted the Führer as “guided by the inexorability of that spiritual mission that the destiny of the German people forcibly impresses upon its history.” Hitler hauled out Heidegger on formal occasions to claim that Germany’s finest scholars had become Nazis. In fact, some of the finest German minds were already leaving Germany.

The Nazis burned books that espoused ideas of which they disapproved. In May 1933 storm troopers coordinated the burning of books by Jews, Communists, Socialists, and other disapproved authors. In 1937, posters in the municipal library of Essen boasted that in the four years that had elapsed since the book burnings, there had been a “healthy” decline in books borrowed and in the use of the reading room.

Hitler railed against what he called “decadent” art and its new experimental forms, ordering many works removed from museums. During the Weimar period, Berlin, a city with 40 theaters and 120 newspapers, had become a center of daring and successful experimentation by artists, writers, and composers, as well as scholars. In 1919, the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) had begun a school that combined art and applied arts in the town of Weimar. The Bauhaus—“House of Building”—set the architectural and decorative style of Weimar, stressing simplicity and beauty, expressing function through form, combining art and craft. By using the most modern materials available in the quest for “total architecture,” Gropius hoped to reconcile art and industry. The Bauhaus’s modernism and the presence of foreign architects, artists, and designers made it suspect to Nazis. Hitler, the former aspiring artist, detested modernism. He closed the Bauhaus as a symbol of “cultural Bolshevism.”

In 1937, the Nazis in Munich staged an “Exhibition of Degenerate Art,” including expressionist and dadaist paintings, among other modernist works. A Great German Art Show opened at the same time, putting on view officially approved painting. While Stalin’s preferred style of “socialist realism” emphasized work, Nazi art celebrated being German. Nazi artists offered sentimental portraits of German families tilling the land, blond



Adolf Hitler visiting the "Exhibition of Disgrace" in 1935, which anticipated the so-called "Exhibition of Degenerate Art" of 1937.

youths hiking in the Pomeranian forests, and square-jaw soldiers portrayed as medieval Teutonic knights.

In their attacks upon modernist composers, the Nazis reserved particular vehemence for the works of Jewish composers, while the late-nineteenth-century compositions of the anti-Semitic Richard Wagner delighted Hitler. The theater, too, suffered from censorship, as well as from the departure of a number of Germany's leading playwrights. Hitler himself preferred light plays, such as a rustic comedy that earned the Critic's Prize in Berlin in 1934, in which the leading character was a pig. Anti-modernism could be seen in Nazi attacks on the supposed hedonism of the "roaring twenties," which Nazis associated with licentiousness, homosexuality, neon lights, jazz, and modern dances. Nazis did not do the Charleston.

Joseph Goebbels (1897–1945), Hitler's minister of propaganda, orchestrated the cult of Hitler. The Führer commissioned the popular filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl (1902–2003) to produce *Triumph of the Will*. This imposing propaganda film, which depicts the carefully orchestrated Nuremberg rally of 1934 where 250,000 regimented, uniformed Germans with Nazi banners and flags saluted Hitler, contributed to the cult of the Führer. The Nazis encouraged the production of a number of virulently anti-Semitic films, above all *The Jew Süss* (1940), the story of an eighteenth-century

Jewish financier who betrays a German state and is executed, to the cheers of Nazi audiences.

### *Hitler's New Reich and the Jews*

Hitler made anti-Semitism a cornerstone of Nazi ideology and state policy. In 1935, the Nuremberg Laws, which made the swastika the official symbol of Nazi Germany, deprived Jews (defined by having had at least one Jewish grandparent) of citizenship. Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David prominently on their clothing when they left their homes. In the quest for racial "purity," the laws also forbade marriage or sex between non-Jewish Germans and Jews. Signs in restaurants, movie houses, and parks warned that Jews were not allowed, such as one proclaiming "Jews enter this locality at their own peril!" Yet some Jewish businesses, including banks, at first continued to operate, if only because Hitler feared the economic consequences if they were closed. Some of these were "Aryanized" by removing Jewish owners and managers. By July 1938, only 9,000 of the 50,000 businesses owned by Jews were still open. Shortly thereafter, the German state forced Jewish families to list the value of what they owned and to turn over their assets to Gentile trustees, who could dispose of these estates as they wished. Decrees established a list of professions and occupations from which Jews were to be excluded.

When Hitler came to power, some Jews emigrated immediately, or made plans to do so. With Jews unable to teach in universities after early 1933 or to attend university as of 1937, many distinguished Jewish scholars and artists left for Britain or the United States, including the brilliant physicist Albert Einstein (1879–1955). More than 1,600 scholars and scientists had lost, resigned, or left their positions. Other intellectual exiles from Hitler's Germany were not Jewish, among them the poet Stefan George, the writer Thomas Mann, and the painter Max Beckmann. But one had to have some



Nazi post placards in a Jewish shop window. The notice reads "It is forbidden to buy from this Jewish shop."

place to go. The borders of Hungary and Yugoslavia were closed to refugees. One by one, countries that had accepted Jewish refugees refused to do so. In 1938, the French government greatly tightened restrictions on the admission of refugees. Britain made it harder for Jews to get in, or to go to Palestine, which Britain controlled. Switzerland, which had been known as a haven for political exiles, also in 1938 closed the door on Jews fleeing Germany or Austria. Moreover, the Swiss government suggested that German passport officials stamp "non-Aryan" on passports of Jews so that they could be easily identified and turned back at the frontier. The Swiss police hunted down refugees living in Switzerland whom they deemed illegal residents, putting them across the German border, or other frontiers.

On the evening of November 9, 1938, following the assassination of a German embassy official in Paris by a Polish Jew, S.S. and other Nazi activists launched planned attacks on specific Jewish businesses and homes throughout Germany. They destroyed stores, killed several hundred Jews, and beat up thousands of others. Thirty thousand Jews were imprisoned in camps. The terrifying night became known as *Kristallnacht*, because the sound of shattering glass windows resounded in German cities that night. Few Germans protested.

### *Hitler's Foreign Policy*

Hitler had never concealed his goal of shattering the Treaty of Versailles. German foreign policy came to dominate European international affairs. Hitler planned to rearm Germany, and he demanded the return of the Saar Basin, whose rich mines the French held north of their border, and of German parts of Upper Silesia on the border of Poland, the remilitarization of the Rhineland, and the absorption of the Polish (or Danzig) Corridor, which divided Prussia from East Prussia. But Hitler's long-term goals, which were far greater, were inseparable from his megalomaniacal determination to expand Germany by armed conquest.

Hitler's foreign policy was predicated upon the German conquest of "living space" (*Lebensraum*) and his theory that the Aryan race was superior to any other and therefore had the right, indeed the obligation, to assert its will on the "inferior" Slav peoples. A week after becoming chancellor in January 1933, Hitler told German generals of his plans to rearm Germany, to conquer land for agricultural production, and to establish German settlements in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The Slavic peoples of the Soviet Union, Poland, and Czechoslovakia would serve the German "master race" as slaves.

Once Hitler came to power, he was less open about his previously stated goals because Germany was then vulnerable to invasion, but these goals did not change. Hitler had to move with particular caution to avoid confrontation with Britain and, particularly, France. For the moment, Poland and Czechoslovakia each had a stronger army than Germany. Hitler had to carry

out his foreign policy with patience. He left in place the foreign minister and much of the old diplomatic corps, although he viewed them as weak and suspected their loyalty. Four months after coming to power, he declared that he had no intention of rearming Germany and that he wanted only peace. That October, in a typical switch, Hitler announced that Germany would walk out of the Geneva Disarmament Conference, which had begun the previous year, and that it would leave the League of Nations, to which it had been admitted in 1926. He insisted that Germany wanted peace and respect and would take only legal steps to "break the chains of Versailles."

In the meantime, Germany worked to extend its influence in Eastern Europe. During the Depression, as France pulled back credits, German officials signed a series of economic agreements with Eastern European states, bringing them into Germany's economic orbit and increasing their economic dependency. Hitler's policy of deficit spending—particularly to rebuild Germany's armed forces despite the Treaty of Versailles—was perceived in Eastern Europe as successful.

Hitler signed a nonaggression agreement with Poland in January 1934 (the Soviet Union had done the same two years earlier), while assuring his generals that he had no intention of respecting the agreement. The German-Polish pact was a blow to France's plans to maintain Germany's diplomatic isolation by a collective treaty system directed against Hitler. French military alliances with the Eastern European states of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia would have left Germany surrounded by potential enemies, albeit relatively small ones. The Polish dictator Józef Pilsudski did not trust Hitler, but Pilsudski believed that he might be able to balance Poland's strategic position between Germany and the Soviet Union and could take advantage of a possible German attack on either Austria or Czechoslovakia to annex disputed territories. The Soviet Union, which had joined the League of Nations in 1934, signed a defense treaty with France a year later and another with Czechoslovakia soon after, which bound the Soviets to defend Czechoslovakia in case of a German attack, but only if France fulfilled its treaty obligations.

### *The Führer and the Duce*

While France scurried to find allies, Germany for the moment had none. Hitler had long admired Benito Mussolini. Both had taken advantage of economic and social crisis to put themselves in a position of unchallenged authority. Both intended to overturn the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler's territorial ambitions in Eastern Europe did not conflict with Mussolini's goal of empire-building in the Balkans and North Africa. But because of possible conflicting interests, notably Hitler's long-range intention to annex Austria and Mussolini's claim of the Austrian Tyrol for Italy, some possible tension existed. Yet fascist Italy and Nazi Germany seemed natural allies, sharing an

ideology as well as France as an enemy. The Duce had proclaimed in 1933, the year Hitler came to power, "Hitler's victory is also our victory."

Mussolini had reduced Albania, the small, impoverished nation across the Adriatic, to a virtual Italian protectorate, although it had almost no Italian population. In the South Tyrol, absorbed by Italy under the terms of the post-war settlement, Mussolini ordered a policy of Italianization, forbidding the use of the German and Slovene languages in schools. Somalia, the country at the horn of Africa that Italy had conquered before the war, turned into a military base from which new conquests could be launched. Italian troops burned villages and slaughtered their inhabitants. In Libya, Italian forces routinely ordered the use of mustard gas and public hangings to solidify their control.

Mussolini worked to increase international tensions in the hope of taking advantage of instability. The Duce had signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928, in which the major powers renounced war as an instrument of national policy, not because he believed in its principles, but because he wanted Britain and France to treat Italy as a great power. Meanwhile, Italy funneled secret arms to Germany and trained German pilots in violation of post-war treaties. In the Balkans, Italian agents provided financial support to right-wing terrorist groups, including ethnic Hungarians and Croats plotting against the Yugoslav government.

Hitler's plan to absorb Austria required Italian support, or at least neutrality, until Germany had been fully rearmed. But for the moment, Germany was still in no position to antagonize France. However, the German dictator took a calculated risk in 1934. Dictator Dollfuss shared much with the Nazis, but intended to maintain Austrian-independence and had banned the Austrian Nazi Party, which was funded by German Nazis. He had also signed alliances with Italy and Hungary. Austrian Nazis, backed by Hitler, assassinated Dollfuss during their badly organized coup attempt. The steely Kurt von Schuschnigg (1897–1977) replaced Dollfuss as leader of an authoritarian government. Schuschnigg, like his predecessor, believed he could maintain right-wing rule in Austria without German help. The dual allegiances to Austrian independence and to an institutional role for the Catholic Church separated Austria's authoritarian regime from its German counterpart.

Hitler correctly assessed that it was unlikely that Britain, France, and Italy—Mussolini was absorbed by planning an invasion of Ethiopia in East Africa—would mount an effective, concerted response to blatant German moves to overthrow the Austrian government. Each government limited itself to a protest against German meddling in Austrian internal politics, asserting its interest in Austria's independence. The British government was convinced that conciliatory moves toward Germany might keep Hitler in line, particularly if, as a good many British conservatives believed, Hitler wanted no more than to be recognized as a power and to be able to defend Germany's borders. The French government did no more than express irritation, as it was confronting a fascist threat at home.



In 1935, Hitler's foreign policy entered a new and more aggressive phase. He defied the Versailles Treaty in March by announcing that Germany's army would be increased to half a million men, that military service would become compulsory, and that the German air force had already been rebuilt, despite the prohibition of the peace agreement. British, French, and Italian representatives met in Stresa, Italy, in April 1935 to discuss Germany's violation of the Treaty of Versailles—as did the League of Nations itself—and to reaffirm the Treaty of Locarno of 1925, in which the German government had joined Britain, France, and Italy in pledging to resolve future international disputes peacefully. Hitler then made the usual reassuring noises, stating that he would sign bilateral agreements with any of the powers (as opposed to the collective security agreements he had already helped shred), uphold the Treaty of Locarno, and recognize the territorial integrity of Austria.

Great Britain expressed wariness by signing a naval agreement with Germany in June 1935 that established a ratio of 100 to 35 between the two navies. This agreement, however, enraged the French government, which had not even been informed by Britain of the hasty negotiations that led to the agreement. France then signed a secret treaty with Italy, the goal of which was to assure Austrian independence.

In October 1935, Mussolini's armies invaded Ethiopia, where Italian forces had suffered humiliating defeat in 1896. Determined to expand Italy's fledgling empire, a quarter of a million Italian women, including the

Ethiopian soldiers use donkeys to carry machine guns to confront the Italian invasion, 1935.



queen, pawned their wedding rings (women who turned in their gold rings received in exchange tin ones blessed by the pope) to help raise money for the war of conquest. The Duce correctly assessed that Britain and France would do little more than denounce the invasion because they still desired Mussolini's support against Hitler. Realizing this, Hitler had encouraged Italy to attack Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie (1892–1975) appealed to the League of Nations for help for his country, which had been a member nation since 1923. The League imposed economic sanctions against Italy, but left them weak by excluding oil from the list of products affected, and it did not try to prevent passage of Italian ships through the Suez Canal on the way to Ethiopia. The British government made it clear that it considered the appeasement of Italy the only way to end the crisis and placed an embargo against the sale of arms to Ethiopia. U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt even offered Italy American loans in order to develop Ethiopia.

Italian troops took the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa in May 1936. Over 500,000 Ethiopians were killed in the one-sided fighting. Italy lost only 5,000 soldiers, a number Mussolini decried as so small that it seemed to cheapen his victory. On July 15, 1936, the League of Nations formally lifted all sanctions against Italy. The Stresa agreement, which had been made with the goal of containing Hitler, collapsed. The Duce now began referring to himself as the "invincible Duce."

### *Remilitarization and Rearmament*

On March 7, 1936, German troops moved into the Rhineland, which had been declared by the Treaty of Versailles to be a demilitarized zone. Hitler had secretly promised his anxious generals that he would order German forces to pull back if the French army intervened. Whether or not an armed British and French response might have stopped Hitler at this point has long been debated.

German ambassadors in the European capitals then claimed that the move had been necessitated by the destruction of the Locarno agreements by France's pact with the Soviet Union. The German ambassador to Britain, Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893–1946, who had simply added the aristocratic "von" to his name), failed to browbeat the British into an alliance with Germany. France pushed the British government to react sharply against Hitler's brazen move, but would not act alone. In Germany, Hitler's prestige soared. He had delivered as promised, facing down the powers that had imposed the Treaty of Versailles and destroying the Locarno Treaty.

Hitler now speeded up the pace of German rearmament, particularly of the air force. By 1938, armament production absorbed 52 percent of state expenses and 17 percent of Germany's gross national product. Prodded by the Labour Party, British military expenses more than doubled between 1934 and 1937; however, the total amount was far less than what Germany spent

TABLE 25.2. DEFENSE EXPENDITURES OF THE GREAT POWERS, 1930-1938  
(IN MILLIONS OF 1989 DOLLARS)

Year	Japan	Italy	Germany	U.S.S.R.	U.K.	France	U.S.
1930	218	266	162	772	512	498	699
1933	183	351	452	707	333	524	570
1934	292	455	709	3,479	540	707	803
1935	300	966	1,607	5,517	646	867	806
1936	313	1,149	2,332	2,933	892	995	932
1937	940	1,235	3,298	3,446	1,245	890	1,032
1938	1,740	746	7,415	5,429	1,863	919	1,131

Source: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage, 1989), p. 296.

at the same time (see Table 25.2). Germany also had the advantage of rearming with the most up-to-date war materials, including glistening fighter planes of steel and bombers with four engines that increased their range.

## THE SOVIET UNION UNDER STALIN

In the meantime, under Joseph Stalin (1879-1953), the Soviet Union was transformed into a totalitarian Communist state. Stalin assured his dictatorship by purging dissident groups within the Soviet Leadership. The Left Opposition to Stalin was led by Leon Trotsky (1879-1940) and Gregory Zinoviev (1883-1936), the humorless but scrupulous curly-haired party secretary of Leningrad (Petrograd's name after Lenin's death) and a former ally of Stalin. The Left Opposition believed that the Soviet Union ought to support independent—that is, non-Communist—working-class organizations, and criticized Stalin for abandoning Communist internationalism. Stalin, in contrast, argued that the Bolsheviks first had to build “socialism in one country”—that is, the Soviet Union. Between 1925 and 1927, Stalin isolated leaders of the left by assigning their allies to inconsequential posts in distant places.

Against the backdrop of a severe shortage of grain that lasted two years, in 1927 the Left Opposition demanded an immediate accelerated industrialization in the state sector and worker mobilization against “bourgeois” bureaucrats. It feared the effects of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), which it viewed as having been an unnecessary ideological compromise that risked bringing back capitalism (see Chapter 23). Wealthier peasant proprietors, the Left Opposition argued, could be forced to provide the surplus that would sustain gradual industrialization. If the state, which controlled heavy industries, kept the prices of manufactured goods high, state revenue would increase, permitting further industrial development. In

1927, the Central Committee, with Stalin completely in charge, voted to expel Trotsky and Zinoviev from the Communist Party and refused to publish Lenin's "Political Testament," which had suggested that Stalin be replaced as general secretary.

### *Five-Year Plans*

Stalin believed that socialism could not be fully implemented until the Soviet Union had a stronger industrial base. Then an expanded proletariat would provide a larger base for Soviet Communism. After purging the Left Opposition, he then openly favored their plan of accelerated industrialization. This would be paid for by extracting more resources from the peasantry. In 1928 and 1929, Stalin resumed the forced requisitioning of "surpluses" and expropriated the land of wealthier peasants, the "kulaks." When this led to growing peasant opposition, he took the next step in 1930: the forced collectivization of agriculture—the elimination of private ownership of land and animals. The Five-Year Plan marked a complete abandonment of Lenin's New Economic Policy.

Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938) objected to a policy of renewed requisitioning and immediate collectivization on the grounds that it would greatly undermine peasant support for the regime. The result would ultimately be to slow down rather than speed up industrialization. In 1928, he became the leader of the Right Opposition, which also disagreed with Stalin's complete abandonment of the principle of collective leadership, thus fortifying Stalin's personal authority. Stalin accused Bukharin of trying to surrender to "capitalist elements." By the end of 1930, Stalin had purged the Right Opposition from the party. With both the Left Opposition and the Right Opposition out of the way, the long dictatorship of Joseph Stalin really began. Bukharin was executed in 1938.

In formulating his Five-Year Plan, Stalin sought to take advantage of social tensions in Soviet society. He knew that workers believed that material progress was not coming fast enough and that they blamed peasants and smug bureaucrats. Stalin wanted to inspire workers to storm the "fortress" of remaining inequalities in Soviet society. He used the rhetoric of class struggle as a means of mobilizing effort, trying to turn workers against kulaks and "bourgeois" managers and technical specialists.

The first Five-Year Plan (1928–1933) led to a bloodbath in the countryside. Hundreds of thousands of peasants who refused to turn over their harvests, animals, or farms were killed. An officer in the secret police told a foreign journalist: "I am an old Bolshevik. I worked in the underground against the tsar and then I fought in the Civil War. Did I do all that in order that I should now surround villages with machine guns and order my men to fire indiscriminately into crowds of peasants?" Peasants, often led by women, resisted with determination and resourcefulness the establishment of collective farms, the redistribution of land, or the introduction of new



The deportation of prosperous peasants (kulaks) from a Russian village during land collectivization, 1930.

crop systems. In 1929, 30,000 fires were reported set in Russia. Peasants slaughtered livestock rather than allowing them to be taken by the collective farm. The number of horses fell from 36 million in 1929 to 15 million four years later, cattle from 67 million to 34 million.

Small plots were forcibly consolidated into collective farms. Peasants had to work a certain number of days each year for the collective farm; the state supplied machinery, seed, and clothing. The free market disappeared and the state set production quotas and prices. One of the primary goals of the collectivization of agriculture was to force peasants into industrial labor. During the first Five-Year Plan, the Soviet Union's industrial and urban populations doubled, as 9 million peasants were conscripted to work in factories.

In March 1930, Stalin signed an article in *Pravda* entitled "Dizzy with Success." He announced that his Five-Year Plan was succeeding beyond his wildest expectations and that the time had come for a pause. In fact, forced collectivization had catastrophically reduced Soviet agricultural production. Indeed, Stalin ordered officials to return expropriated animals to their owners. But he viewed this as a lull, not a change in theory.

When the Five-Year Plan ended in 1932 after four years and three months (in part because of the effects of peasant resistance), 62 percent of peasants now worked for the state on collective farms. Peasants were allowed to retain small private plots; the vegetables and fruits that they grew provided almost half of the produce reaching markets.

Overall, however, living conditions deteriorated in the Soviet Union during the Five-Year Plan. Shortages of fuel and machine parts became severe. Hundreds of thousands of peasants had been killed, and perhaps 2 million exiled to Siberia or other distant places under the sentence of hard labor. Around 7 million people died of hunger between 1930 and 1933, and 4 to 5 million people starved during 1932 and 1933, most in Ukraine. In Kazakhstan in Central Asia, about 2 million people (one-tenth of the population) died or were killed between 1926 and 1933.

The campaign for heavy industrialization was successful, but only if the human cost is conveniently forgotten. Despite inaccurate and sometimes misleading Soviet data, the state did meet some ambitious production targets in heavy industry (iron and steel), fuel production (oil and electricity), new industries (especially chemicals), and in the manufacture of tractors. While the Depression devastated Western economies, between 1929 and 1934 the Soviet economy may have had an annual growth rate of a remarkable 27 percent. These successes occurred despite inefficiency due to inadequate planning, chaotic reporting of figures (compounded by the mounting sense of urgency to report successes), and the replacement of many of the most able technicians (because of their social class) by dedicated but semi-literate workers or peasants who sometimes mistook mud for oil.

Giant show projects such as the Dnieper Dam and the new industrial city of Magnitogorsk in the Ural Mountains attracted international attention. Foreign visitors found many workers who seemed enthusiastic. Party officials selected "heroes of labor," praised for surpassing their production targets by record amounts. A certain Andrei Stakhanov, a Don Basin miner, was credited in August 1935 with cutting 102 tons of coal during a single shift. A "Stakhanovite" became the idealized Soviet worker, working as fast as he or she could, and ready to step forward to denounce "Trotskyite wreckers and saboteurs."

The second Five-Year Plan (1933–1937) relied less on the shrill rhetoric of class warfare, despite ongoing collectivization. By 1936, 93 percent of peasants labored on collective farms. Stalin relaxed the ideologically charged campaign against "experts" of bourgeois origins, and technocrats again appeared in factories. But the quality of Soviet life did not significantly improve. Centralized planning had its bizarre aspects: the sudden arrival of women's red stockings or of ketchup in stores, or of bathtubs, even if someone had forgotten to order the production of plugs for them. The promised "radiant" future always seemed to be far away.

In the meantime, Stalin reinforced his hold on power. Even with most consumer goods still wanting, 4.5 million radios in the Soviet Union broadcast Stalin's speeches in the 1930s. The grandson of a Soviet minister recalled, "Stalin was like a God for us. Somebody told me that Stalin could be the best surgeon. He could perform a brain operation better than anyone else, and I believed it." A poem from the 1930s entitled "There Is a Man in Moscow" reflects this bizarre, troubling adulation:

Who is that man who appears to the toilers,  
Spreading happiness and joy all around?  
It is Stalin, I shout, so the whole world will hear,  
It is Stalin, our Leader and Friend.

### *Soviet Culture*

Many artists and writers were originally enthusiastic about the Russian Revolution, and a spirit of utopianism survived into the early 1920s. The Communists wanted to build a unique culture based upon mass mobilization and commitment that would both reflect and accentuate the collectivization of life in the Soviet Union, helping forge consensus. The culture of utopianism would be defiantly proletarian and egalitarian.

In view of Stalin's determination that the Soviet Union rapidly industrialize, the machine was a common motif in Soviet imagery in the inter-war period. Soviet artists and writers believed that mechanization in the service of capitalists had further enslaved the masses but that technology could be potentially liberating. The state created art schools and provided assistance to struggling artists, hoping to enroll them in the service of the Revolution. In its first years, the Soviet state patronized futurists (see Chapter 20) as revolutionary artists who had embraced technological change and who would provide a new aesthetic for socialism in the construction of an ideal society. Soviet futurists issued a manifesto in which they promised to "re-examine the theory and practice of Leftist art, to free it from individualist distortions, and develop its Communist aspects." Artists collaborated with designers in producing models for standardized clothing and household items.

As the Soviet state subsumed most aspects of public life, the initial mini-explosion of cultural forms that had occurred during the first years of the Soviet state gave way to repressive orthodoxy. Rejecting traditional and avant-garde art as bourgeois escapism, Stalin believed that art and literature should assume a social function, depicting what he called "socialist realism." Stalin preferred monumental murals that presented smiling workers toiling for the state. Artists who did not conform stood accused of pandering to "bourgeois values," an increasingly dangerous denunciation. The Union of Communist Youth (*Komsomol*) sent out members to preach cultural uniformity, disrupting plays considered "bourgeois."

Stalin charmed and deceived many foreign statesmen and visitors, impressing them with the fact that millions of working-class children were now entering school for the first time. Some workers attended night classes, or even university. Women obtained training and positions in fields from which they previously had been excluded, such as medicine. Soviet guides whisked foreign visitors around on Moscow's new subway to see the Soviet capital's improved housing, water supply, and sewage facilities. "Potemkin village" was a series of gleaming facades that impressed visitors who did not realize that virtually nothing stood behind them. Although church and

state had been officially separated in 1918, religious life went on as before, at least in rural areas, both in Orthodox regions and in the Islamic republics. Moreover, despite promoting atheism Stalin nonetheless discouraged unmarried couples from living together, banned abortion, and forbade homosexuality. Gradually in the 1930s, Stalin's early enthusiasm for equal opportunity for women waned; the state-approved image of the female as mother of committed Soviet children prevailed.

### *"Darkness at Noon": Stalin's Purges*

By 1934, Stalin was no longer content merely to expel from the party those who did not share his views. He promulgated a state decree that expedited the punishment of those deemed to be "terrorists." As arrests mounted in number, executions replaced sentences of hard labor. The charges became more and more outrageous—accusations of secretly plotting to overthrow the state, of "wrecking" Soviet industries, of trying to restore capitalism, or of simply being "bourgeois" or the wife of an "enemy of the people." Lead-



The first Stalinist "show trial," 1930: an accused bureaucrat "confesses" to industrial sabotage.



ers of the Polish Communist Party were liquidated in Moscow in 1938 after having been invited there by Stalin.

The first of the great show trials—staged before audiences and cameras—took place in 1936, the last in March 1938, when Bukharin and the remainder of the Right Opposition faced judges who sometimes appeared to be more nervous than they. Those on trial were forced to sign confessions in court, where sympathetic foreign observers sometimes nodded in agreement to absurd accusations. Children—who could be executed at age twelve—were encouraged to denounce their parents for crimes against the state. At least 680,000 people were sentenced to death in 1937–1938 and probably about 1 million people were executed in the camps (in addition to those who died of harsh conditions).

The poet Osip Mandelstam (1889–1938) mocked Stalin with a poem that he read to friends in 1933. He noted the rumor about Stalin's origins in Ossetia, in the mountains of Georgia, and, as dictator, related the enormous weight of his words:

We live, deaf to the land beneath us,  
Ten steps away no one hears our speeches,  
But where there's so much as half a conversation  
The Kremlin's mountaineer will get his mention  
His cockroach whiskers leer  
And his boot tops gleam.  
Around him a rabble of thin-necked leaders—  
Fawning half-men for him to play with.  
They whinny, purr or whine  
As he prates and points a finger,  
One by one forging his laws, to be flung,  
Like horseshoes at the head, the eye or the groin.  
And every killing is a treat  
For the broad-chested Ossete.

Mandelstam was arrested in 1934, sent to a camp for three years, and, after returning to Moscow, arrested again and sentenced to five years hard labor in another camp. There, in 1938, he died or was executed.

Estimates of the number of prisoners in labor camps, colonies, and prisons have ranged from about 1.5 million to 7 million. These included an elderly woman sentenced to camp terms for having said "if people prayed they would work better." Increasingly paranoid, Stalin's long arm reached far beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union to force Communist parties in Spain, France, and other nations to purge those who disagreed with his policies. Stalin's agents caught up with Trotsky, who had gone into exile in 1929 and lived outside Mexico City, and stabbed him to death with an ice pick as he sat in a garden in August 1940.

The purge of the "national deviationists," accused of nationalist sentiments, for example in the Muslim lands of Central Asia, was an economic

blow to the Soviet Union. It eliminated many engineers and other people with badly needed technical expertise. Furthermore, at a time when the rise of Hitler to power in Germany was increasing international tensions, the purge weakened the Soviet armed forces. Behind Stalin's move against military commanders was his fear that they might one day oppose his conduct of foreign policy. Among the 30,000 to 40,000 officers who perished, all 8 Soviet admirals were executed, as were 75 out of 80 members of the Supreme Military Council.

A journalist recalled that one of the most striking things about the Russian Revolution of 1917 "was the speed with which the masses, after the overthrow of tsarism, created new forms of organization," including soviets of workers and soldiers, factory committees, military organizations at the front, peasant soviets that supplemented township committees, and rural land committees. But once the Bolsheviks seized power on behalf of the working class and poor peasants, they never relinquished it. They destroyed these popular organizations that had embodied the aspirations of millions of people. The Russian Revolution, which had begun as a quest for economic and social justice by intellectuals, workers, middle-class and lower-middle-class radicals, peasants, and non-Russian nationalists, turned into the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Under the rule of Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union took on some of the murderous characteristics of the fascist regimes its leaders so bitterly denounced. This was the tragedy of the Russian Revolution.

## THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Spain became the battlefield of European ideologies during the bloody civil war that began in 1936. The world's attention turned to Spain for the first time since the time of Napoleon. Indeed, there was relatively little to distinguish the Spain of 1920 from that of more than a century earlier. The days of empire and glory had long since passed. With the exception of relatively industrialized Catalonia and the Basque provinces in the north-western corner of the country, Spain remained an overwhelmingly agricultural society. Coalitions between the nobility, the Catholic Church, and the army determined political power in Madrid.

### *Social and Political Instability*

The ineffectual King Alfonso XIII (ruled 1886–1931) confronted social and political problems that defied solution. Catalanian and Basque regional separatism challenged the Spanish government in Madrid. Chronic political and social instability helped push the army into the role of chief arbiter of political life. Labor strife, assassinations, street battles, and police violence became the order of the day in the early 1920s. Spain had declared a protectorate over northern Morocco in 1912 and used poison gas against

Moroccan insurgents who wanted independence. In 1921 Moroccans inflicted a shocking defeat on Spanish forces, costing the lives of 10,000 Spanish soldiers. This increased pressure from socialists and republicans on the monarchy.

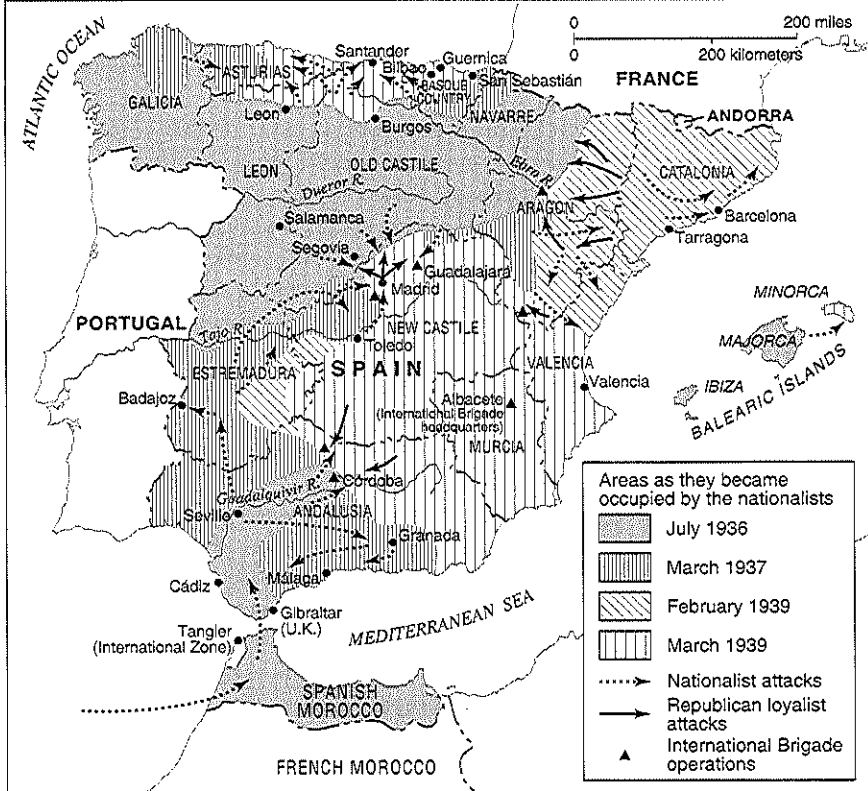
In 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870–1930) seized power with the support of the army and even the king. Four years later, espousing “nation, church and king,” Primo de Rivera set out to “modernize” Spain, ordering the construction of dams, sewers, roads, and prisons. He became a familiar sight in the cafés and bars of Madrid, and such evenings occasionally were followed by gushing, incoherent bulletins to the Spanish people drafted on his return home. Primo de Rivera antagonized the left by promulgating a constitution in 1927 that left ministers no longer responsible to the Cortes and upset army officers (so numerous that they made up one-sixth of the army) by intervening in promotions. The weak Spanish economy eroded middle-class support for his regime. Primo de Rivera resigned in 1930.

The following year, Alfonso XIII left the country after elections returned an anti-monarchist majority to the Cortes. The army refused to save the monarchy, because most officers now hoped to impose authoritarian rule. The nobles, upon whose support the kings of Spain had for centuries depended, sat back and watched the monarchy fall.

A coalition of republicans and moderate Socialists established the Second Spanish Republic in 1931. The government of Manuel Azaña (1880–1940) enacted anticlerical measures, including the formal separation of church and state, imposed new taxes, passed labor reforms, and enacted land reform, including the outright expropriation of some of the largest estates. Strikes, land seizures by peasants, and attacks on churches and convents drove wealthy landowners and churchmen farther toward the anti-parliamentary right. The Spanish Republic could not count on the support of the unions, which wanted even more far-reaching social reforms, or of anarchists, who wanted the abolition of the state itself. Azaña fell from power in September 1933.

Thus began the republic’s two “black years,” marked by increasing social and political violence. The inclusion of the right in a more conservative republican government angered the left. During the “October Revolution” of 1934, leftists in Madrid, Catalan autonomists, and miners in the northern province of Asturias rose up, quickly setting up local “soviets” throughout their region. They held out for two weeks before being brutally crushed by Moroccan troops commanded by General Francisco Franco (1892–1975).

In 1935, Radicals, Socialists, Communists, and some anarchists formed a “Popular Front” in defense of the republic against the right. It barely won a majority in elections held at the beginning of the next year, and then quickly fell apart because of ideological differences amid high unemployment and political violence. The Falange, a small paramilitary fascist movement begun in 1933, further destabilized the republic, emulating the Italian fascist



MAP 25.2 THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-1939 The growing domination of Spain by the nationalists; arrows show nationalist and republican loyalist attacks during the Spanish Civil War.

“black shirts.” In response to a wave of violence against republicans, the government declared the Falange illegal and arrested its leader in March 1936.

A military insurrection against the republic began in Morocco on July 17, 1936. It was quickly followed by planned garrison uprisings in most of Spain’s major cities (see Map 25.2). German and Italian planes carried insurgents to the Spanish mainland. Right-wing nationalist rebels overwhelmed loyalist troops and soon held the traditionally conservative regions of Castile, Galicia, and Navarre.

The fragility of the loyalist alliance compromised the loyalist defense of the Spanish Republic. In Madrid, socialist trade unions held the upper hand. In Catalonia and Andalusia, anarchist workers and peasants were a majority. They took the outbreak of the war as a signal to begin a social revolution, expropriating land, occupying factories, and establishing cooperatives. Workers’ committees, holding power in some regions, unleashed terror against the upper classes. The Socialists now were in the awkward position

of trying to rein in the social revolution for which they had originally called. Communists feared that an attempted social revolution from below would compromise the attempt to save the republic and, furthermore, that it might undercut support for their party. The Communist Party grew six-fold in less than a year, adopting the centralized, hierarchical structure upon which Stalin in Moscow insisted. It purged members who had joined the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification (POUM), which supported Trotsky against Stalin. The Communists withheld supplies and ammunition from anarchist and Socialist units.

Whereas the loyalists suffered the consequences of disunity, the nationalists benefited from increasing unity. General Franco, who believed that freemasons had undermined Catholic Spain, considered himself a warrior king struggling against infidels who deserved no mercy.

### *The Struggle between Loyalists and Nationalists*

The Spanish Civil War was fought with a savagery unseen in Western Europe since the seventeenth-century wars of religion. At least 580,000 people, and probably many more, died as a result of the war. Of these, only about a sixth died on the battlefield. Ten thousand died in (largely nationalist) air raids on civilians, and thousands more died from disease and malnutrition. During the war, nationalists executed at least 200,000 loyalists, and about that same number died at the hands of the loyalist forces or from disease in prison. Throughout the first two months of the war, in areas controlled by the loyalists, social and political tensions exploded in violence and death. Members of the Falange and monarchists were taken from their cells in the Madrid prison and shot; in the province of Catalonia alone, more than 1,000 clergy and nuns perished. The nationalists made effective propaganda use of loyalist atrocities, real or imaginary—the pro-nationalist London *Daily Mail* proclaimed “Reds Crucify Nuns.” The nationalists organized “fiestas of death” in bull rings, machine-gunning loyalists, including prominent intellectuals and Basque priests.

The Spanish Civil War polarized Europe because it pitted against each other the political extremes that had emerged in Europe since the Great War. For the political right, religion and social hierarchy were at stake in a pitched battle against socialism and communism, as well as anarchism. Those supporting the Spanish Republic saw the civil war as a struggle against international fascism. Foreign volunteers, including 20,000 Britons and Irish and many refugees from Nazi Germany, joined the loyalist forces. The volunteers of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the United States fought with idealism and determination—but with only occasional effectiveness. However, these “International Brigades” were largely responsible for the heroic defense of Madrid that began in November 1936. The writers who fought in the Spanish Civil War, virtually all on the loyalist side, produced some of the most remarkable literature about war written in the twentieth

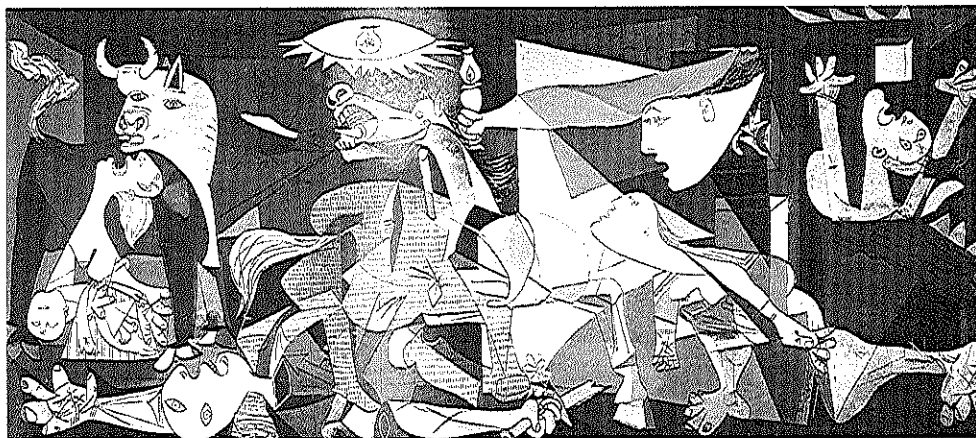
century, including the American novelist Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). The British writer George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) memorably related an account of his service on the loyalist side and of the damaging divisions between the major political factions, above all, the role of the Communists.

The nationalists enjoyed a significant military advantage over the loyalists because their forces included the bulk of the Spanish armed forces. The loyalists lacked such necessities as reliable maps. Orwell recalled his amazement at being issued an 1896 model German Mauser rifle and at the difficulties of forging an able fighting force out of a motley crew of illiterate peasants, anarchist workers, shop clerks, and foreign volunteers, many of whom did not speak Spanish and for whom the only word known in common was "comrade."

The republican loyalists depended on receiving arms, munitions, and other supplies from the Western democracies. But the British government wanted to maintain peace at all costs, and many of its prominent political figures admired Franco. In France, Premier Léon Blum's Popular Front government hesitated to take any steps that would widen the Spanish conflict and further polarize his own country. Moreover, he did not want to alienate the British government, as he was counting on its assistance in any eventual war against Germany. Without tanks, airplanes, and other supplies from the Soviet Union, the Spanish Republic probably would have almost immediately collapsed in the face of the nationalist forces.

German and Italian assistance to the nationalists proved decisive. While Britain, France, and the United States abided by nonintervention agreements, Italy sent 100,000 soldiers to Spain. However, the loyalists easily defeated the ill-equipped Italian forces, which relied on Michelin tourist

Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937), mourning a German and Italian air attack on the Basque village.



maps in a spring 1937 ground battle. The Italians fared somewhat better in the air, where they faced virtually no opposition. Mussolini's pilots helped destroy loyalist supply lines. Hitler used the Spanish Civil War as a military training ground, sending planes, guns, munitions, and other supplies through Portugal. German advisers trained nationalist pilots and military personnel. The pilots of the German Condor Legion flew bombing runs against loyalist forces, as well as against civilians. On April 26, 1937, German and Italian planes bombed and strafed the small town of Guernica, killing more than 100 residents. Within a month, the Spanish-born painter Pablo Picasso had immortalized the martyrdom of Guernica on his canvas depicting the horrors of modern warfare.

When the nationalists attacked Madrid at the end of August 1937, the Communist militant Dolores Ibarruri, known as "La Pasionaria" (1895–1989), rallied loyalists with her defiant shout, "They shall not pass!" However, in the north, the nationalists reached the Atlantic coast, cutting off the loyalist Basque region from France. The loyalists struggled along an imposing front that stretched from the Mediterranean south of Granada to the Pyrenees. When Franco's army reached the Mediterranean Sea, it isolated Catalonia from remaining loyalist territory. Barcelona fell in January 1939. Britain and France (where the Popular Front had fallen from power) quickly recognized the Franco regime. Republican refugees carried what they could through the mountains and snows of the Pyrenees to France. Those who fled into Portugal, where the republic had been overthrown in 1926, were returned to Spain by the dictatorship of Salazar to be killed or

(Left) Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri, "La Pasionaria." (Right) General Francisco Franco.



imprisoned. Bloody reprisals against loyalists in Spain began immediately, and 150,000 more Spaniards were executed.

Franco, now known as “Caudillo,” or “leader”—like the Italian Duce and the German Führer—established authoritarian rule based on the support of the army, the Church, and wealthy landowners, three forces that had opposed the republic. But recognizing Spain’s weakness, Franco did not pursue a policy of expansion that characterized Italian fascism or German National Socialism. The Catholic Church’s institutional role in Franco’s Spain or Salazar’s Portugal would have been unthinkable in Nazi Germany, and was less significant in Italy.

## CONCLUSION

The collapse of the political center in Europe in the aftermath of the Treaty of Versailles and the Depression helped create the Europe of dictatorships. When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, World War II began. In retrospect, given the deterioration of the political climate, the rise of dictatorships, and the violence of the inter-war period of economic, social, and political crisis in the Europe of extremes, one can view the entire period between 1914, when World War I began, and 1945, when World War II finally ended, as a war of thirty years.