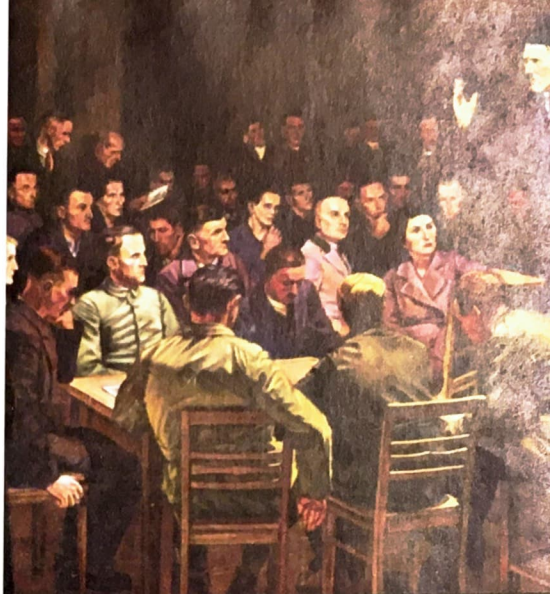


As World War I drew to a close, Germany tottered on the brink of chaos. Under the threat of a socialist revolution, Kaiser William II abdicated. Moderate leaders signed the armistice and later, under protest, the Treaty of Versailles.



>> The Nazi Party was active between 1920 and 1945. Hitler served as the party's leader starting in 1921. Initially, the Nazis focused on anti-big business and anti-capitalist rhetoric.



Interactive Flipped Video

The Rise of Nazi Germany

The Weimar Republic

In 1919, German leaders drafted a constitution in the city of Weimar (vY mahr). It created a democratic government known as the Weimar Republic. The constitution set up a parliamentary system led by a **chancellor**, or prime minister. It gave women the right to vote and included a bill of rights. However, the Weimar Republic faced numerous problems, including political extremists, extreme inflation, and the Great Depression, all of which led to the Republic's eventual fall.

Political Turmoil The republic faced severe problems from the start. Politically, it was weak because Germany, like France, had many small parties. The chancellor had to form coalitions that easily fell apart.

The government, led by moderates, came under constant fire from both the left and right. Communists demanded radical changes like those Lenin had brought to Russia. Conservatives—including the old Junker nobility, military officers, and wealthy bourgeoisie—attacked the government as too liberal and weak. They longed for another strong leader like Bismarck.

Germans of all classes blamed the Weimar Republic for the hated Versailles treaty, with its war guilt clause and heavy reparations.

>> Objectives

Summarize the political and economic problems faced by the Weimar Republic.

Analyze Hitler's rise to power.

Describe the political, social, economic, and cultural policies of Nazi Germany.

Explain why Eastern Europe turned to authoritarian rule.

>> Key Terms

chancellor
Ruhr Valley
hyperinflation
Adolf Hitler
Third Reich
Gestapo
Nuremberg Laws

Bitter, they looked for scapegoats. Many scapegoated Marxists or German Jews for Germany's economic and political problems.

Economic Hardship Economic disaster fed unrest. In 1923, when Germany fell behind in reparations payments, France occupied the coal-rich **Ruhr Valley**, (rur) taking over its iron, coal, and steel industries. German workers in the Ruhr protested using passive resistance and refused to work. To pay the workers, the German government printed huge quantities of paper money.

Inflation soon spiraled out of control, spreading misery and despair. The German mark became almost worthless. An item that cost 100 marks in July 1922 might have cost 944,000 marks by August 1923. Such an extremely rapid and sharp increase in prices is known as **hyperinflation**. Salaries rose by billions of marks, but they still could not keep up with skyrocketing prices. Many middle-class families saw their savings wiped out.

Recovery and Depression With help from the Western powers, the government did bring inflation under control. In 1924, the United States gained British and French approval for a plan to reduce German

reparations payments. Under the Dawes Plan, France withdrew its forces from the Ruhr, and American loans helped the German economy recover.

Germany began to prosper. Then the Great Depression hit, reviving memories of the miseries of 1923. Germans turned to an energetic leader, Adolf Hitler, who promised to solve the economic crisis and restore Germany's former greatness.

Culture in the Weimar Republic Despite political and economic turmoil, culture flourished in the Weimar Republic. The tumultuous times helped to stimulate new cultural movements, such as dadaist art and Bauhaus architecture. Berlin attracted writers and artists from around the world, just as Paris did. The German playwright Bertolt Brecht sharply criticized middle-class values with *The Three-Penny Opera*. The artist George Grosz, through scathing drawings and paintings, blasted the failings of the Weimar Republic.

Most of the art and music produced during the Weimar Republic reflected the culture of that time. However, many believed that this modern culture and the Weimar Republic itself were not in keeping with Germany's illustrious past. They condemned the new culture as immoral and rejected American influences, such as jazz.

? SUPPORT IDEAS WITH EXAMPLES Describe the problems of the Weimar Republic.

Hitler Leads the Nazi Party

The Great Depression sent the German economy into a downward spiral. As discontent rose, Germans began to listen to the ideas of **Adolf Hitler**, who had operated on the fringe of German politics for a decade.

Early Years Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. When he was 18, he went to Vienna, then the capital of the multinational Hapsburg empire. German Austrians made up just one of many ethnic groups in Vienna. Yet they felt superior to Jews, Serbs, Poles, and other groups. While living in Vienna, Hitler developed the fanatical anti-Semitism, or prejudice against Jewish people, that would later play a major role in his rise to power.

Hitler went to Germany and fought in the German army during World War I. In 1919, he joined a small group of right-wing extremists. Like many ex-soldiers, he despised the Weimar government, which he saw as weak. Within a year, he was the unquestioned leader of the National Socialist German Workers, or Nazi, party.



>> Analyze Political Cartoons The terms of the Treaty of Versailles resulted in Germany losing large amounts of territory as well as its overseas colonies. What do you think the turkey in this cartoon represents?



Interactive Timeline

Like Mussolini, Hitler organized his supporters into fighting squads. Nazi “storm troopers” fought in the streets against their political enemies.

Hitler’s Ideological Manifesto In November 1923, Hitler tried to follow Mussolini’s example by staging a small-scale coup known as the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. The coup failed, and Hitler was soon behind bars. While in prison, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”). It would later become the basic book of Nazi goals and ideology.

Mein Kampf reflected Hitler’s obsessions—extreme nationalism, racism, and anti-Semitism. Germans, he said, belonged to a superior “master race” of Aryans, or light-skinned Europeans, whose greatest enemies were the Jews.

Hitler’s ideas were rooted in a long tradition of European anti-Semitism, dating back to the persecutions of the Middle Ages. The rise of nationalism in the 1800s caused people to identify Jews as ethnic outsiders. Hitler viewed Jews not as members of a religion but as a separate race. (He defined a Jew as anyone with one Jewish grandparent.) Echoing a familiar right-wing theme, he blamed Germany’s defeat in World War I on a conspiracy of Marxists, Jews, corrupt politicians, and business leaders.

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

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

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

Within a year, Hitler was dictator of Germany. He and his supporters suspended civil rights, destroyed



>> A Nazi propaganda poster from 1934 urges the German people to support their country by purchasing German produce.

the Communists, and disbanded other political parties. Germany became a one-party, totalitarian state. Like Stalin in Russia, Hitler purged his own party, brutally executing Nazis he felt were disloyal. Nazis learned that Hitler demanded unquestioning obedience.

Hitler’s rise to power raises disturbing questions that we still debate today. Why did Germany turn from democracy to totalitarianism? How could a ruthless, hate-filled dictator gain the enthusiastic support of many Germans?

2 CHECK UNDERSTANDING Describe the ideology of Hitler and the Nazi Party.

The Third Reich

Once in power, Hitler and the Nazis moved to build a new Germany. Like Mussolini, Hitler appealed to nationalism by recalling past glories. Germany’s First Reich, or empire, was the medieval Holy Roman Empire, which had lasted more than 800 years. The Second Reich was the empire forged by Bismarck in 1871. Under Hitler’s new **Third Reich**, he boasted, the German master race would dominate Europe for a thousand years. His aggressive goals would eventually lead Germany—and the world—into another war.

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

Like Mussolini, Hitler preserved capitalism but brought big business and labor under government control. Few objected to this loss of freedom because their standard of living rose. Nazi propaganda highlighted the improvements.

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

At first, many Germans welcomed Hitler, who took forceful action to ease the effects of the Great Depression and promised to revive German greatness. Any people who criticized Hitler became victims of terror or were cowed into silence in fear for their own safety.



>> The Gestapo was the official secret police agency of Nazi Germany. It was formed in 1933 and was under the administration of Heinrich Himmler by April 1934.

Anti-Semitism Campaign Begins In his fanatical anti-Semitism, Hitler set out to drive Jews from Germany. In 1935, the Nazis passed the **Nuremberg Laws**, which deprived Jews of German citizenship and placed severe restrictions on them. They were prohibited from marrying non-Jews, attending or teaching at German schools or universities, holding government jobs, practicing law or medicine, or publishing books. Nazis beat and robbed Jews and roused mobs to do the same. Many German Jews fled, seeking refuge in other countries, but these countries often closed their doors and limited Jewish immigration.

On November 7, 1938, a young German Jew whose parents had been deported to their native Poland shot and wounded a German diplomat in Paris. Hitler used the incident as an excuse to stage an attack on all Jews. The incident became known as *Kristallnacht* (krih STAHL nahkt), or the “Night of Broken Glass.” On the night of November 9 and into the following day, Nazi mobs in Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia smashed the windows of Jewish homes and businesses. The experience was terrifying for Jews.

They broke our windowpanes, and the house became very cold.” . . . We were standing there, outside in the cold, still in our night clothes, with only a coat thrown over...Then they made everyone lie face down on the ground. . . ‘Now, they will shoot us,’ we thought. We were very afraid.”

—Sophie Nussbaum, quoted in *48 Hours of Kristallnacht*

Over 1,000 synagogues were burned and more than 7,000 Jewish businesses destroyed. Many Jewish schools, hospitals and homes were damaged, and many Jews were injured and killed. The Nazis arrested 30,000 Jews and forced them into concentration camps.

Kristallnacht reflected so badly on Germany that it was not repeated. Yet Hitler made the Jewish victims of the attacks pay for the damage. Before long, Hitler and his henchmen were making even more sinister plans for what they called the “Final Solution”—the extermination of all Jews.

Nazi Social Policies Like Italian Fascists and Soviet Communists, the Nazis indoctrinated young people with their ideology. In passionate speeches, the Führer spewed his message of racism.

He urged young Germans to destroy their so-called enemies without mercy. On hikes and in camps, the “Hitler Youth” pledged absolute loyalty to Germany and undertook physical fitness programs to prepare for war. School courses and textbooks were rewritten to reflect Nazi racial views.

Like Mussolini's Fascists, Nazis sought to limit women's roles. Women were dismissed from upper-level jobs and turned away from universities. To raise the birthrate, Nazis offered "pure-blooded Aryan" women rewards for having more children.

Still, Hitler's goal to keep women in the home and out of the workforce applied mainly to the privileged. As German industry expanded, women factory workers were needed.

Purifying German Culture The Nazis used education and the arts as propaganda tools to purge, or purify, German culture. At huge public bonfires, Nazis burned books of which they disapproved. They denounced modern art, saying that it was corrupted by Jewish influences. They condemned jazz because of its African roots. Instead, the Nazis glorified old German myths such as those re-created in the operas of Richard Wagner (VAHG nur).

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

? DESCRIBE How did the Nazi Party maintain its control of Germany?

Authoritarian Rule in Eastern Europe

Like Germany, most new nations in Eastern Europe slid from democratic to authoritarian rule in the postwar era. In 1919, a dozen countries were carved out of the old Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and German empires. Although they differed from one another in important ways, they faced some common problems. They were small countries whose rural agricultural economies lacked capital to develop industry. Social and economic inequalities separated poor peasants from wealthy landlords. None had much experience with the democratic process.

Further complicating the situation, rivalries left over from World War I hindered economic cooperation between countries. Each country in the region tried to be independent of its neighbors, which hurt all of them. The region was hit hard by the Great Depression.



>> The Hitler Youth program emphasized activism, physical training, and Nazi ideology, as well as absolute obedience to Hitler and the Nazi Party.

 **Interactive Gallery**

Ethnic Rivalries Old rivalries between ethnic and religious groups created severe tensions. In Czechoslovakia, Czechs and Slovaks were unwilling partners. More than three million Germans lived in northern Czechoslovakia, and some of them wanted to join Hitler's Nazi Germany.

Serbs dominated the new state of Yugoslavia, but restless Slovenes and Croats living there pressed for independence. In Poland, Hungary, and Romania, conflict flared among various ethnic minorities.

Dictators Replace Democracy Economic problems and ethnic tensions contributed to instability, which in turn helped fascist rulers gain power. In Hungary, military strongman Nicholas Horthy (HAWR tay) overthrew a Communist-led government in 1919. By 1926, the military hero Joseph Pilsudski (peel SOOT skee) had taken control of Poland. Eventually, right-wing dictators emerged in every Eastern European country except Czechoslovakia and Finland.

Like Hitler, these dictators promised order and won the support of the military and wealthy. They also turned to anti-Semitism, using Jewish people as scapegoats for many national problems. Meanwhile, strong, aggressive neighbors eyed these small, weak states of Eastern Europe as tempting targets. Before

long, Eastern Europe would fall into the orbit of Hitler's Germany and then of Stalin's Soviet Union.

? IDENTIFY CENTRAL ISSUES How did World War I impact the growth of authoritarian states in Eastern Europe?

ASSESSMENT

1. **Describe** Describe the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic.
2. **Support Ideas with Examples** How was Hitler able to shift political thought in Germany in order to establish and maintain a totalitarian state?
3. **Identify Cause and Effect** Describe the effects of Eastern Europe's economic problems and ethnic and religious tensions.
4. **Describe** Describe Hitler's fanatical anti-Semitism and how he tried to drive Jewish people from Germany.
5. Why did the Nazi Party glorify old German myths and denounce modern art?