

REPORT ON



ADOLF HITLER



THE RISE OF DICTATORS

TOP SECRET

PROPERTY OF
UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT

THIS IS A TOP SECRET REPORT ON THE RISE OF ADOLF HITLER OBTAINED BY AMERICAN SPIES BASED IN GERMANY.



Hitler's Early Years Adolph Hitler was born in Austria in 1889, the son of a customs official. He dropped out of high school and tried unsuccessfully to become an artist. When World War I broke out, Hitler enlisted in the German army, and he emerged from the war an extreme nationalist. He believed that Germany had been sold out by the Weimar Republic when it signed the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler settled in Munich, where his skill in public speaking made him popular among extreme nationalists.

Hitler and the Nazi Party Hitler became involved with the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi Party) in 1921, at which time it was only a small force in German politics. In wildly emotional speeches, Hitler attacked the Weimar Republic and denounced the Treaty of Versailles. In 1923 he led an uprising in Munich that was quickly crushed by the army. For that action, Hitler was put in prison for a year. While in prison, he wrote *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"), a book in which he detailed his political ideas for Germany. Hitler claimed the German people belonged to a superior "Aryan" race that was destined to control inferior races and rule the world. Hitler considered Jews an inferior race and blamed them for Germany's economic troubles and Germany's defeat in World War I. He also attacked the Soviet Union, which he considered as an obstacle to German expansion.

Hitler Becomes Dictator After his release from prison, Hitler worked hard to rebuild the Nazi Party. He promised benefits to peasants, workers, and the middle class, and the membership of the party grew dramatically. Between 1928 and 1932 the Nazis were voted into more and more seats in the *Reichstag*, the German legislature. By 1932 the Nazis had become the largest single party in the *Reichstag*, and the German president, Paul von Hindenburg, asked Hitler to become chancellor. Swiftly, Hitler formed a coalition government and increased his power. Hitler called for elections, hoping to increase Nazi strength in the *Reichstag*. The S.S., or storm troopers, staged the burning of part of the *Reichstag* building, and Hitler used the event as a pretext for suspending all constitutional rights.

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On August 2, 1934, Hindenburg died and Hitler combined the offices of chancellor and president and declared himself *Führer* ("leader"). He proclaimed the birth of the Third Reich, the successor to the Holy Roman Empire and the German Empire. The next day, he had all members of the army take an oath to obey him. Hitler then took control of all aspects of government, outlawed his organized political opposition, and censored dissent from the German media. Within just one year of gaining control of Germany, Hitler had established a fascist state.

Anti-Semitic Policies Hitler also moved ruthlessly against German Jews. Jews were expelled from all government jobs and from teaching positions. Soon afterward, Jews were forbidden to practice law and medicine. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 deprived German Jews of their citizenship and banned marriages between Jews and non-Jews. All Jews had to register with the government and wear yellow Stars of David on their clothing so they could be easily identified. Though the majority of German Jews did not want to leave the country of their birth, many emigrated to other countries in Europe and around the world.

Hitler's Policies Hitler's appeal grew among the German public despite the atrocities. He promised economic recovery and territorial expansion for Germany, and focused on building both foreign policy and domestic strength. Hitler saw a military buildup as the handmaiden to economic recovery, renewed national pride, and the coming of the Third Reich. He used his belief in the "Aryan master race" to convince people that Germany had the right to expand eastward and win more territory. Claiming that Germany had to defend itself against the Soviet Union, he ignored the Treaty of Versailles and began rebuilding the German military, employing thousands of workers. He also built housing, highways, and sports arenas. To pay for his programs, Hitler increased taxes and controlled wages and prices. By the mid 1930s Hitler had made German strength and determination clear to the world.

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Turmoil in Italy Like Germany, Italy faced severe political and economic problems in the years immediately following World War I. Though the Italian government had promised social change and land reform during the war, it did not live up to its promises. In addition, Italy did not gain all the territory it wanted in the Treaty of Versailles. Peasants and workers joined Italian nationalists in denouncing the government for its weaknesses. The Socialist Party, which promised relief to the workers and peasants, was gaining power in the parliament at this time but seemed unable to prevent worker revolts or preserve order in the countryside. This turmoil was used by an ambitious politician, Benito Mussolini, to gain power.

Mussolini and Fascism As a young man, Mussolini had been a socialist. When World War I broke out, he became an enthusiastic nationalist, fighting for Italy. After the war, Mussolini organized many war veterans into the Fascist Party. Mussolini's goal was to unite Italians using reminders of the glory of ancient Rome to inspire patriotism and obedience to authority. Fascists condemned democracy, which Mussolini felt destroyed the unity of the state. They despised socialism and communism and defended a form of capitalism that was to be regulated by the government. Elements of fascism included aggressive nationalism and glorification of military sacrifice.

Fascism appealed to many Italians. They applauded the idea of reviving the glories of ancient Rome. They were impatient with Italy's slow parliamentary government and wanted a strong leader who would establish order. World War I veterans liked the fascist emphasis on militarism, feeling that they had been cheated by the Treaty of Versailles. Many Italians liked the Fascists' ideas about private property and feared the rise of communism.

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Mussolini's Rise to Power In 1922 Mussolini led a "March on Rome" to defend the capital from a supposed Communist revolution. As was hoped, the march succeeded in frightening the government into surrender. King Victor Emmanuel III refused to use the army against the Fascist groups, and a few days later, he named Mussolini prime minister. In the next few years, Mussolini moved to increase his power. Outwardly, the government remained a monarchy with an elected parliament. Internally, however, Mussolini had the right to make laws on his own. Under his leadership, Fascists controlled elections and outlawed all opposition. Party members held all important jobs in the army and police. Mussolini imposed government censorship, and Fascists bought the Italian newspapers and wrote articles full of praise for him.

To improve the Italian economy, Mussolini introduced a new type of economic organization, the corporative system. In the system, employers and employees in each industry joined a government-sponsored corporation that controlled wages and prices in the industry. Mussolini succeeded in reducing unemployment and promoting public-works programs. He modernized agriculture and industry, and he improved transportation and education systems.

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Militarism in Japan In addition to those in Spain, German, and Italy, a dictatorship arose in Japan in the years prior to World War II. While Japan's economy had not been adversely affected after World War I, it was so dependent on world markets that the Great Depression of the 1930s caused economic disaster. Also, the Japanese were dissatisfied with the instability of their country and resented their reputation as a second-rate power. This enabled a group of military leaders to rise to power. These leaders built up Japan's military and sought to expand its control in Asia. Within Japan, the military-controlled government imposed censorship, arrested government critics, and dismissed liberal professors from the universities. A secret police was set up to punish enemies of the state. The press and the schools preached total obedience to the emperor. Nationalist groups glorified war and the empire.

Japanese Imperialism Seeking to expand Japanese territory, in 1931 the Japanese army attacked Manchuria, a region of northeastern China rich in coal and iron. Arguing that Japan's 65 million people could hardly be expected to remain within its tiny and crowded confines, one Japanese politician stated, "We are only seeking room that will let us breathe." Japan also sought support from other fascist powers, and in 1936 signed a military agreement with Italy and Germany, forming the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Hitler contemplated using Japan to attack Russian and British possessions in Asia. Japan continued to prepare for continued aggression in Asia.

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