

# Rise of Fascist Dictators

Conditions after World War I in Europe and East Asia were unstable. The widespread destruction of the war left much of Europe in economic and political chaos. Unstable economic and political conditions led to the rise of authoritarian governments.

- **Fascism** – a political philosophy based on extreme nationalism, the totalitarian power of the state (government) and a strong opposition to communism. Fascists believed that the nation's cause was far more important than individual rights and nothing should stop the growth and expansion of the government. Fascists began in Italy with Benito Mussolini. The Italian word *fasci* was the origin of the party name.
- **Totalitarianism**: a dictatorial form of government that controls almost every aspect of a citizen's life – social, economic, political, and cultural. Totalitarian regimes (governments) grew in Germany and the Soviet Union. Strong leadership (either from an individual or military group) is important to the existence of a totalitarian regime. Totalitarian regimes must have the support of the military to exist, because they often use the military to keep down protest and those who oppose them.
- **Nazism** – The word Nazi is an abbreviation of the German word *Nationalsozialist*. The Nazis were members of the National Socialist German Workers Party that was Hitler's fascist party. Nazi aggression led to World War II.
- **Racism** – extreme hatred of another group based on racial/ethnic/cultural characteristics. This was used to the extreme by Hitler during the *Holocaust*.

## Main Ideas/My Notes

### Fascism in Italy

- Began with Mussolini, in Italy, after World War I as a response to the economic collapse of the Italian government. Mussolini and others formed the Fascist Party to address Italy's problems.
- Economic instability help Italian workers take over factories.
- Italian peasants rioted and took land from nobles.
- Mussolini used his "blackshirts"(private army) to attack opponents of fascist ideals.
- In the mid-1920's Mussolini was named Prime Minister of Italy and continued to use his private army (blackshirts) to impose economic and political reorganization in Italy.
- As a way to deal with unemployment, Mussolini built up the Italian military and promised the Italians that he would restore Italy to "former greatness".

### Fascism/Nazism in Germany

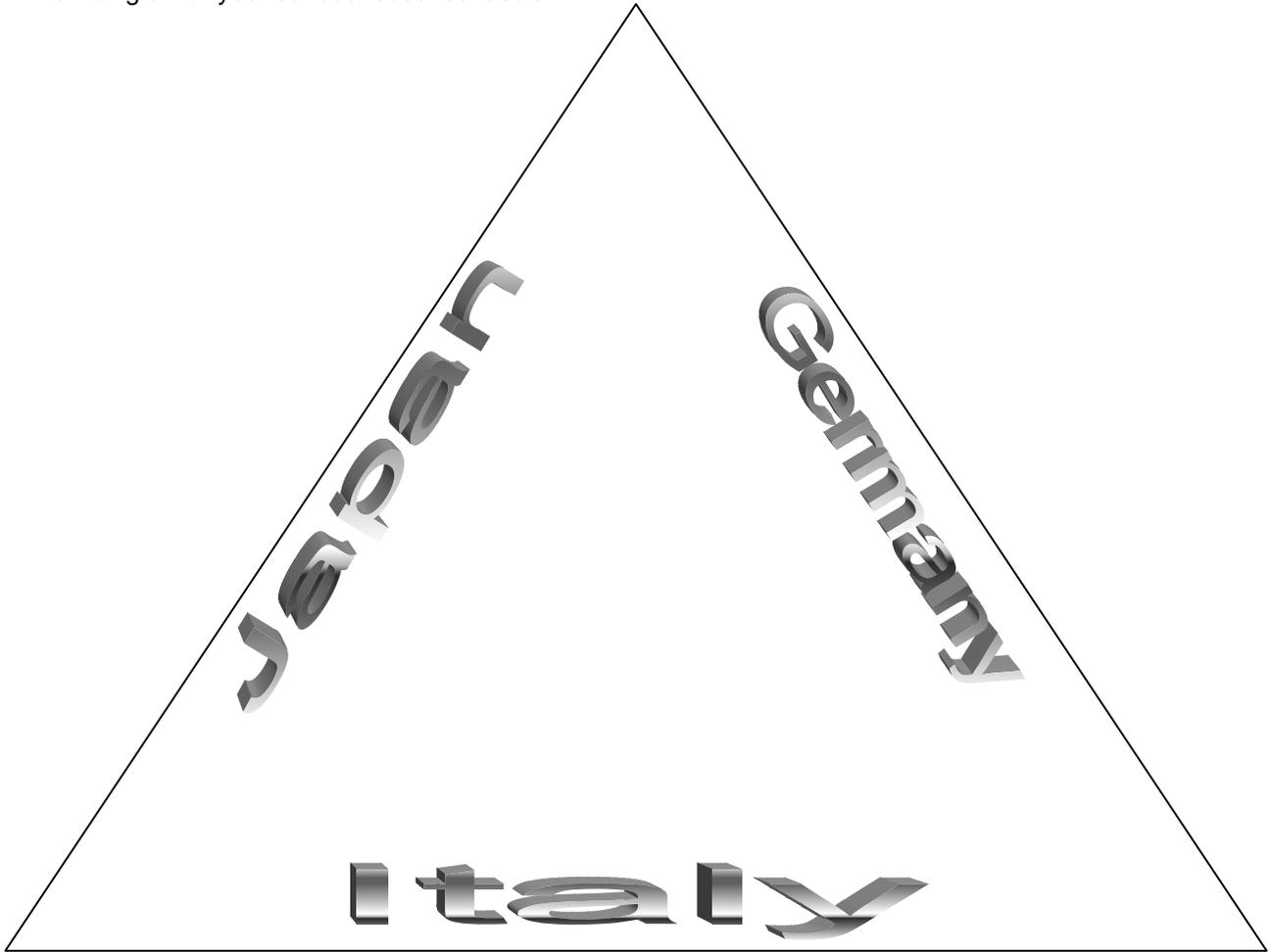
- Adolf Hitler served in the Germany army in WWI and joined the extreme right-wing nationalist German Workers Party in 1919. He controlled this political group by 1921.
- Hitler was a consummate politician and he appealed to the need of the German people to be "strong and powerful" again.
- Hitler took advantage of an unstable democratic government (Weimar Republic), severe economic depression, building hatred for the Allies and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and a methodical process of "scapegoating" and racism related to Jews and others within Germany to appeal to German voters. Hitler's persecution of the Jews resulted in the *Holocaust* in which 10 million people were killed because of racist policies.

- Hitler, as head of the Nazi party, rose to power in legal ways. He promised to restore full employment to Germany, restore the power of the German military, and make Germany “great again”. People elected the Nazi party to seats in the German legislature called the *Reichstag*, and Hitler was named Chancellor.
- Hitler consolidated his power and used his “private army”, the *brownshirts*, to force people to support the Nazi party. He created a totalitarian regime that grew more and more powerful in the 1930’s.
- Hitler created a government called *The Third Reich* and took the title of *der Führer*. He passed the *Nuremberg Laws* that took away citizenship rights from Jews and others.
- He used propaganda and control of news sources to build nationalism and dictatorial power. He censored writing and scientific works. Many Germans (such as Einstein) fled the country and immigrated to the U.S. or other places.
- Beginning in 1933, Hitler began to use his secret police (the *Gestapo*) to gain further control over people’s lives. The first of many *concentration camps* opened in 1933 at Dachau. Jews and other “enemies of the state” were imprisoned without trial and their property was confiscated. Later these *concentration camps* were turned into death camps where millions were killed by firing squads or in poison gas chambers.
- Hitler and Nazi leaders encouraged Germans to boycott Jewish businesses. Hitler convinced Germans that Jewish people were the “enemy within Germany.” Nazi –led mobs often attacked Jewish communities and businesses. Jews were dragged from their homes and beaten in the streets. Synagogues were broken into and burned. In 1938, one very vicious series of attacks called “night of broken glass (*Kristalnacht*)” marked a severe and continued threat to the individual rights of Jews in Germany.

### **Fascism in Japan**

- The island nation of Japan lacked sufficient resources to support its growing industries. The Japanese needed raw materials for manufacturing and oil reserves to fuel their shipping fleet. The Japanese government looked to mainland China, Indonesia, Singapore, and Indochina (Southeast Asia) for land and resources.
- Japan already had an authoritarian, militaristic government. The Japanese military became increasingly powerful, finally assuming strong government leadership and influence over Emperor Hirohito.
- Using extreme nationalism as a rallying cry, the Japanese attacked China in the 1930’s. Their invasion was successful. After Hitler took control of most of Europe and the European nations could no longer protect their Southeast Asian colonies, the Japanese moved into those colonies also.
- In the fall of 1940, the military regime of Japan joined with Germany and Italy to form the *Axis Powers* and nearly all of eastern Asia was brought under Axis control.

**Instructions:** Use your notes and textbook to record examples of totalitarianism/fascism in each country. Record your information in the appropriate space outside of the triangle. Draw a picture or write word(s) in the triangle that you feel best describe fascism.



**Summary:** Write a short paragraph that describes the nature and impact of fascism on individual freedom.

A large empty rectangular box provided for writing a summary paragraph.