

Holocaust History
Hitler's Rise to Power Timeline

Name: _____

Directions: Complete the timeline below by using the attached reading. For each statement, fill in the correct year and include some kind of supporting evidence (information that further explains the statement, answers may vary)

1. Hitler joined a small political group known as the National Socialist German Worker's Party

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

2. Hitler drew thousands of people to mass Nazi political meetings

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

3. Hitler tries to overthrow the German government

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

4. Hitler sent to jail

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

5. Hitler writes *Mein Kampf*

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

6. The German people looked to their political leaders to get them out of their Great Depression.

Year(s): _____

Supporting Evidence:

7. The Nazi Party becomes the largest political party in the German parliament.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

8. Hitler loses to Hindenburg in the national presidential elections.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

9. Hitler is appointed chancellor by President Hindenburg.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

10. Hitler suspended freedom of speech and the press.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

11. The Nazis gained enough seats to dominate the Reichstag.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

12. Hitler convinces the parliament to give him dictatorial powers.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

13. Hitler becomes president of Germany.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

14. The Depression in Germany ends.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

15. German troops entered the Rhineland to begin and regain their dominant position in the world.

Year: _____

Supporting Evidence:

Reading: Hitler's Rise to Power Timeline

In 1919, Hitler joined a small political group that became the National Socialist German Worker's Party, also known as the Nazi Party. Nazism was a form of fascism shaped by Hitler's fanatical ideas about German nationalism and racial superiority.

Hitler's powerful public-speaking abilities quickly made him a leader of his party. The Nazis held mass meetings at which Hitler spoke passionately against Germany's national humiliation. One such meeting in 1921 drew more than 8,000 people. Nazi posters helped to boost attendance:

"White collar and manual workers of our people, you alone have to suffer the consequences of this unheard-of-treaty. Come and protest against Germany being burdened with the war guilt. Protect against the peace treaty of Versailles which has been forced upon us..."

-Nazi poster, Munich, Germany, March 1921

In November 1923, with some 3,000 followers, Hitler tried to overthrow the German government. Authorities easily crushed the uprising. Although a German court sentenced Hitler to five years in prison, he spent only 9 months in confinement.

While in prison, Hitler began writing an autobiography, *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle"). In it Hitler outlined the Nazi philosophy, his views of Germany's problems, and his plans for the nation. According to *Mein Kampf*, Germany had been weakened by certain groups that lived within its borders. In particular, Hitler bitterly criticized the nation's Jewish population, which he blamed irrationally for Germany's defeat in WWI.

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler proposed, in defiance of the Versailles Treaty, strengthening Germany's military and expanding its borders to include Germans living in other countries. He also called for purifying the so-called "Aryan race" (blond, blue-eyed Germans) by removing from Germany those groups he considered undesirable. In time, removal came to mean mass murder of millions of Jews and other people.

After Germany's economy recovered from an inflationary crisis in the mid-1920s, the Great Depression hit in the early 1930s. The German people, facing more poverty, looked to their political leaders for help. In response, Hitler and the Nazis promised to stabilize the country, rebuild the economy, and restore the empire that had been lost.

Hitler's promises gradually won him a large following. In the 1932 elections, the Nazi Party became the largest group in the *Reichstag* (the lower house of the German parliament.) Also in 1932, Hitler placed second to Paul von Hindenburg, a general in WWI, in the presidential election. In January 1933, the elderly President Hindenburg made Hitler chancellor, or head of the German government.

Hitler soon moved to suspend freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Thousand of Nazi thugs, called storm troopers or Brownshirts, waged a violent campaign that silenced those opposed to Hitler's policies. In the March elections, the Nazis gained enough seats to dominate the *Reichstag*. Less than three weeks later, the Reichstag building burned down in a suspicious fire. Hitler blamed the Communists and used the disaster to convince the parliament to pass an Enabling Bill, which gave him dictatorial powers. When Hindenburg died in August 1934, Hitler became both chancellor and president. He gave himself the title *Der Fuhrer* ("the leader").

Determined to put Germans to work while restoring Germany's military might, the Nazis secretly began spending money on rearming and expanding the armed forces in violation of the Versailles Treaty. They also hired unemployed workers to build massive public buildings and a network of highways known as the *autobahn*. Unemployment fell to near zero, industry prospered, and, by 1936, the Depression had ended in Germany. In addition, the Nazis were now in a position to put Hitler's expansion plans into action.

Hitler saw expansion as a way to bolster national pride. He also longed to see Germany return to a dominant position in the world. To do this, he believed, Germans needed more territory, or what he called "living space" to the east. Hitler's main goal, therefore, became the conquest of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. First, he needed to assert German military power within Germany's own borders.

On March 7, 1936, German troops entered the Rhineland, a region in western Germany. The Versailles Treaty had expressly banned German military forces from this region, which Germany used as a base for the 1914 attack on France and Belgium. Since the Allies had taken no action in 1935 when Hitler revealed Germany's illegal rearmament, he had reason to believe that the Allies would not enforce the treaty.

Still Hitler took an enormous gamble in remilitarizing the Rhineland. The German army was not ready for war. However, neither Britain nor France chose to react to this blatant violation of the Versailles Treaty. Many people believed that the treaty had been too harsh on Germany. The British and French had not forgotten the awful costs of WWI, and their leaders were reluctant to challenge Hitler.

In 1936, Hitler signed an alliance with Italy's dictator, Benito Mussolini. Germany and Italy, joined later by Japan, became known as the Axis Powers.