

The History Guide

Lectures on Twentieth Century Europe

Lecture 10

The Age of Totalitarianism: Stalin and Hitler

*We live, not feeling the country beneath us,
Our speech inaudible ten steps away,
But where they're up to half a conversation*

--

*They'll speak of the Kremlin mountain
man.*

*His thick fingers are fat like worms,
And his words certain as pound weights.
His cockroach whiskers laugh,
And the tops of his boots glisten.*

*And all around his rabble of thick-skinned
leaders,
He plays through services of half-people.
Some whistle, some meow, some snivel,
He alone merely caterwauls and prods.*

*Like horseshoes he forges decree after
decree --
Some get it in the forehead, some in the
brow,
some in the groin, and some in the eye.
Whatever the execution -- it's a raspberry
to him
And his Georgian chest is broad.*

---Osip Mandelstam, *We Live, Not Feeling*,
1934?

The Age of Anxiety, the age of the lost generation, was also an age in which modern Fascism and Totalitarianism made their appearance on the historical stage. By 1939, liberal democracies in Britain, France, Scandinavia and Switzerland were realities. But elsewhere across Europe, various kinds of dictators reared their ugly heads. Dictatorship seemed to be the wave of the future. It also seemed to be the wave of the present. After all, hadn't Mussolini proclaimed that this century would be a century of the right? Of Fascism? And this is what bothered such writers as [Arthur Koestler](#) (1905-1983), Yevgeny Zamyatin (1884-1937), [Aldous Huxley](#) (1894-1963), [Karel Capek](#) (1890-1938) and [George Orwell](#) (1903-1950). It was a nightmare world in which human individuality was subsumed under the might of totalitarian collectivism. The modern totalitarian state rejected liberal values and exercised total control over the lives of its subjects. In this way,

totalitarianism became a new [POLITICAL RELIGION](#) for the Age of Anxiety. How this indeed occurred is the subject of this lecture.

It goes without saying that the governments of Europe had been conservative and anti-democratic throughout their long histories. The leaders of such governments -- whether monarch or autocrat -- WERE the government, and by their very nature, prevented any incidence of social or political change that might endanger the existing social order. Of course, there have been enlightened monarchs but few of them would have been so enlightened to have removed themselves from the sinews of power.

Before the 19th century these monarchs legitimized their rule by recourse to the divine right theory of kingship, an idea which itself appeared in medieval Europe. Such was the case in France until the late 18th century when French revolutionaries decided to end the Bourbon claim to the throne by divine right by cutting off the head of Louis XVI. Of course, France ended up with [Napoleon](#) who also claimed the divine right of kingship. Only this time, divine right emanated from Napoleon himself. In a country such as England, on the other hand, twenty years of civil war in the 17th century as well as the [Glorious Revolution of 1688](#), produced a constitutional monarchy.

In the 19th century, it was the dual revolution -- the Industrial and [French Revolutions](#) -- which created the forces of social change which monarchs, enlightened or not, could not fail to take heed. A large middle class had made its appearance in the 18th century but lacked status. Now, in the 19th century, this large class of entrepreneurs, factory owners, civil servants, teachers, lawyers, doctors, merchants and other professionals wanted their voices heard by their governments. They became a force which had to be reckoned with and the government began to utilize its talents by creating large, obedient bureaucracies. In this way, government seemed to reflect the interests of all when in actual fact, they represented the interests of the bourgeoisie. So European governments maintained order by giving the middle classes a stake in the welfare of the nation. Governments also built strong police forces and armies of loyal soldiers. Meanwhile, the great mass of people, the "swinish multitude," lay completely unrepresented. And radicals were either imprisoned or exiled because of their liberal, democratic, socialist, communist or anarchist inclinations.

Despite these measures, and there were others as well, traditional authoritarian governments were not completely successful. Their power and their objectives were limited. These governments lacked modern communications and modern transportation. They lacked, in other words, the ability to totally control their subject populations. The twentieth century -- thanks to improved technology -- would change all that. In fact, it can be said that true totalitarian regimes are limited only by the extent to which mass communications have been made a reality. And, of course, with mass communications comes mass man, and the capability of total control.

Following World War One, there was a revival of traditional authoritarian regimes, especially in Eastern Europe. By 1938, of all the central and eastern European countries, only Czechoslovakia remained true to liberal political ideals. It has been remarked that the reason for this development was the perception that liberal democracy was a failure. It was not "made" for Eastern European nations. These nations lacked a tradition of self-government but they did have lengthy traditions of ethnic conflict as well as a steady growth in nationalism. As agrarian nations, the large landowners and the Church opposed any efforts at land reform. These countries also contained a small and relatively weak middle class. In a way, the 18th century seemed to have ignored these countries. Finally, for nations such as Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Austria and Estonia, it was the Great Depression that dashed any hopes for a liberal government based on the western model.

Although many of these central and eastern European countries would adopt fascist characteristics, their general aim in doing so was not to become fascist themselves. Instead, their aim was to maintain the established order. They wanted to avoid revolution and more important, they wanted to avoid another world war.

Modern totalitarian regimes made their appearance with the total effort required by the Great War. The reason for this is quite simple -- war required all institutions to subordinate their interests to one objective at all costs: victory. The individual had to make sacrifices and so their freedoms, whatever they might have been, were constantly reduced by increasing government intervention. The invisible hand of Adam Smith had to be replaced by the visible hand. Governments could no longer remain idle hoping that some "laissez-faire" mentality would carry them through the day. No. Governments had to intervene and the great event which made this notion of intervention a necessity, was the Great War.

Beyond this, the crucial experience of World War I was [Lenin](#), the Bolsheviks and the [Russian Civil War](#). Lenin had shown how a dedicated minority -- the Bolsheviks -- could make a dedicated effort and achieve victory over a majority. This was as true of the Revolution as much as it was of the Civil War when the Bolsheviks overcame the White Army who were numerically superior. Lenin also clearly demonstrated how institutions and human rights might be subordinated to the needs of a single party and a single leader. So, Lenin provided a model for a single party dictatorship, i.e. the Bolsheviks. It was Lenin, who provide the model for Stalin as well as Hitler and Mussolini.

Totalitarian regimes -- thanks to technology and mass communications -- take over control of every facet of the individual's life. Everything is subject to control -- the economy, politics, religion, culture, philosophy, science, history and sport. Thought itself becomes both a form of social control as well as a method of social control. Those of you familiar with Orwell's premonitory novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, should have an easy time understanding this development.

The totalitarian state was based on boundless dynamism. Totalitarian society was a fully mobilized society, a society constantly moving toward some goal. Which begs the question: Is democracy the means to an end or the end itself? Paradoxically, the totalitarian state never reached its ultimate goal. However, it gave the illusion of doing so. As soon as one goal was reached, it was replaced by another. Such was the case in Stalin's Russia. Stalin implemented a series of Five Year Plans in an effort to build up the industrial might of the Soviet Union. Production quotas were constantly announced well before they had been reached in order to supply the illusion that the Five Year Plan was working. But before the Five Year Plan had run its course, another Five Year Plan was announced. Hopefully, you can intuit the psychological necessity of such an act on Stalin's part.



In the end, totalitarianism meant a "permanent revolution," an unfinished revolution in which rapid and profound change imposed from above simply went on forever. Of course, a permanent revolution also means that the revolution is never over. The individual is constantly striving for a goal which has been placed just a hair out of reach. In this way, society always remains mobilized for continual effort. The first example of such a permanent revolution the "revolution from above," instituted by [Joseph Stalin](#) in 1927 and 1928. After having suppressed his enemies on both the left and the right, as well as the center, Stalin issued the "general party line." Anyone who deviated from that line was condemned to either exile or execution -- in most cases, execution. Stalin's aim was to create a new kind of society and a new human personality to inhabit that

society: socialist man and socialist woman -- *Homo Sovieticus*. At the same time, a strong army would have to be built as well as a powerful industrial economy. Once everything was owned by the State, Stalin believed, a new kind of human personality would emerge. The Soviets under Stalin were by no means successful. Just the same, the Soviets did build a new society, one whose basic outlines survived right down to the late 1980s.

However, Stalinist society did have its frightening aspects and none was more frightening than the existence of brutal, unrestrained police terrorism. First used against the wealthy peasants or kulaks during the 1920s and 1930s, terror was increasingly used against party members, administrators and ordinary people. No one would ever be above suspicion -- except Stalin, of course. Some were victims of terror for deviating from the party line -- others were victims for no apparent reason other than Stalin's moodiness. One Soviet recalled that in 1931, "we all trembled because there was no way of getting out of it. Even a Communist can be caught. To avoid trouble became an exception."

As we now know, Stalin's second wife also publicly rebuked Stalin for the destruction the terror famine was working and she committed suicide in 1932. And on December 1, 1934, Sergei Kirov, the man who in some circles was rumored to be Stalin's heir, was assassinated in Leningrad on Stalin's orders. Using Kirov's death as an excuse, Stalin systematically purged the Communist Party of his opponents. Hundreds of party members were shot for their alleged complicity in Kirov's death. Kirov was a full member of the ruling Politburo and leader of the Leningrad party apparatus as well as an influential member of the ruling elite. His overt concern for the welfare of the Leningrad workers and his skill as an orator earned him considerable popularity. It is doubtful that Kirov represented a serious threat to Stalin, however, Kirov did disagree with Stalin on several key issues.

But Stalin had already begun to doubt the loyalty of the Leningrad party and he looked for a pretext to begin a broad purge. The murder of Kirov was necessary. Although it was Leonid Nikolaev who committed the assassination, it is now clear that the whole episode had been, over a period of two years, crafted by Stalin and the NKVD. Stalin, of course, then used the crime as an excuse to introduce severe laws against all political crimes. So, following the death of Kirov at the end of 1934, there began the Soviet witch-hunt which culminated in the Great Terror of the years 1935-1939.

In 1936, Stalin brought his old comrades [Zinoviev](#) and Kamenev to a staged public trial. An international press corps was invited to lend a sense of legitimacy to the proceedings. When their trial had ended Zinoviev, Kamenev and fourteen other old Bolsheviks either admitted involvement in the [Kirov Affair](#) or signed confessions that had been fabricated for them. These men had not been conspirators but they did satisfy Stalin's paranoia. As to be expected, they were all executed. The confessional process was helped by the black jack, continuous interrogation and the swan dive, where towelling was put between the jaws and the feet and tightened, arching and breaking the back. But often, the confession was voluntary because the Party demanded it. As one survivor recalled, "serving the party was not just a goal in life but an inner need."

In January 1937 a second great show trial was held in which seventeen leading Bolsheviks declared that they had knowledge of a conspiracy between [Trotsky](#) and the German and Japanese intelligence services by which Soviet territory was to be transferred to Germany and Japan. A crowd of 200,000 packed Red Square in frigid weather to hear Nikita Khrushchev read out the death sentences. All seventeen were executed. Then on June 11, 1937, the cream of the Red Army, stripped of their medals and insignia, were ushered into the courtroom. They included Marshal Tukhachevsky, the most brilliant soldier of his generation and the pioneer of armored and airborne warfare. The generals were accused of spying for the Germans, found guilty, shot and dumped in a trench on a construction site, all within eighteen hours. Six of the officers who condemned them were soon shot. Of 85 corps commanders 57 disappeared within a year. Of the 100,000 Red Army officers on active duty in 1937, perhaps 60,000 were purged.

The last of the public trials took place in March 1938, as twenty-one leading Bolsheviks, including [Nikolai Bukharin](#) (1888-1938), confessed to similar charges and were executed. Also to go was Yagoda, Stalin's hand-picked head of the NKVD.

These public show trials and the secret trials of the generals provide only a faint idea of the extent of the Great Terror. Every member of Lenin's Politburo except Stalin and Trotsky were either killed or committed suicide to avoid execution. A partial list of those who ceased to exist would include:

- two vice-commissars of foreign affairs
- most of the ambassadors in the Soviet diplomatic corps
- numerous members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party
- almost all the military judges who had sat in judgment and had condemned
- the Red Army generals
- two successive heads of the NKVD
- the prime ministers and chief officials of all the non-Russian Soviet republics
- the director of the Lenin Library
- the man who had led the charge against the Winter Palace in 1917
- a 70 year old schoolteacher who owned a book which included a picture of Trotsky
- an 85 year old woman who made the sign of the Cross when a funeral passed
- a man who took down a portrait of Stalin while painting a wall

Not since the days of the Inquisition had the test of ideological loyalty been applied to so many people. And not since the days of the French Revolution had so many died for failing the test. Arrests multiplied tenfold in 1936 and 1937. Anything was used as an excuse for an arrest: dancing too long with a Japanese diplomat, not clapping loudly enough or long enough after one of Stalin's speeches, buying groceries from a former kulak. People went to work one day and simply did not return -- they were either killed immediately or sent to the [GULAG](#). The NKVD employed millions of secret informers who infiltrated every workplace. Most academics and writers came to expect arrest, exile and prison as part of their lives. A historian could be sent to exile for describing Joan of Arc as nervous and tense just when the general party line wished her described as calm in the face of death. When a linguistic theory that held that all language was derived from four sounds was accepted as official, professors who opposed this view had their books confiscated. By 1938 at least one million people were in prison, some 8.5 million had been arrested and sent to the GULAG and nearly 800,000 had been executed. In fact, before the KGB was dissolved in 1991, it was revealed that 47 million Soviet citizens had died as a result of forced collectivization and the purges. That figure, of course, represents the recorded tally. How many more people died without being recorded is a matter of conjecture.

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that Stalin wanted to destroy any possibility of future conspiracies. So he trumped up charges against anyone who could conceivably become a member of a regime that might make the attempt to replace his own. He did this to maintain his power. He also did this, as his biographers are quick to point out, because he was paranoid. Despite the upheaval of the constant purge trials, the Soviet state did not break down. New bureaucrats were found to replace the old. New Stalin-trained officials filled all top-level posts and terror became one of the principal features of the government itself. In the end, the purgers were also purged. They were the scapegoats used by Stalin to carry out the Great Terror. Meanwhile, Trotsky had been out of Russia for years but he continued to use his pen to attack Stalin in his journal, *The Bulletin of the Opposition*. In Stalin's eyes, Trotsky could not be left free.

Stalin's purges baffled nearly all foreign observers. He saw threats everywhere. Were they real? Leading Communists confessed to crimes against the State they never committed. Some were brainwashed, others tortured. Still others, like Nikolai Bukharin, were shot in the head. And eventually, even Trotsky was murdered in Mexico City in 1940, an ice pick to the head.

Soviet life in the 1930s, purge trials aside, was one of constant propaganda and indoctrination. Party members lectured to workers in factories and peasants in the field. Newspapers, films and radio broadcast endless socialist achievements and capitalist evil. Art, literature, film and science were politicized -- sovietized. The intellectual elite of the 1930s were ordered by Stalin to become

"engineers of human souls" or, as Maxim Gorky put it, the "[CRAFTSMEN OF CULTURE](#)." Russian nationalism had to be glorified. Capitalism was portrayed as the greatest of evils. Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great were resurrected and depicted as the forerunners of Stalin. History had to be rewritten. "Who controls the past, controls the future; who controls the present controls the past," wrote Orwell. Stalin rarely appeared in public but his presence was everywhere: portraits, statues, books, films and quotations from his idiotic books surrounded the Soviet man and woman.

Life was hard inside Soviet Russia and the standard of living declined in the 1930s, despite Stalin's claim that the Five Year Plans had modernized the nation. Black bread and shabby clothes came to represent the Russian masses. There were constant shortages of food although heavily taxed vodka was always available. Housing was poor and in short supply.

Although life was hard, the Soviet people were by no means hopeless. The average Russian saw himself heroically building the world's first socialist society while capitalism was crumbling in the west. On the positive side, the Soviet worker received social benefits such as old age pensions, free medical services, free education and even day care facilities. Unemployment was technically non-existent and there was the possibility of personal advancement. The key to advancement was specialized skills and a technical education. Rapid industrialization under the Five Year Plans required massive numbers of experts, technocrats, skilled workers, engineers and managers. So the State provided economic incentives for those people who would faithfully serve the needs of the State. But for the unskilled, low wages were the rule. But, the State dangled high salaries and special housing to those members of the growing technical and managerial elite. This elite joined forces with the "engineers of the human mind" to produce a new social class -- and all this in a supposedly classless society.

Stalin's ego mania and paranoia eventually contributed to the near destruction of Soviet Russia. His perpetual and pathological lying and deception, culminating in the infamous purge trials of the 1930s, took the Soviet Union down a road out of which it is now slowly recovering, if, in fact, it ever will recover. I am reminded of the political history of the Roman Empire following the death of Augustus Caesar in 14 A.D. First Caligula, then Nero, Commodus, Severus and so on -- 250 years of military assassinations, strangulations and poisoning.

In the 1770s, Edward Gibbon sat down to complete his major work of historical scholarship, [The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire](#). In it, he says, "The story of Rome's ruin is simple and obvious and instead of inquiring why the Roman Empire was destroyed we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted for so long.... The stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight." Now, I don't mean to take the position that Soviet Russia was identical to the Roman Empire, but I do think that we should be surprised that Stalinist Russia existed for so long. In retrospect, however, we should acknowledge the terror, criminality and totalitarian regime of Joseph Stalin. This is indeed what Nikita Khrushchev did in his [SECRET SPEECH](#) of 1956, three years after Stalin's death.

Despite all that has been said, popular memory reveals that of all the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, none was more terrifying than that of Nazi Germany. As a product of Hitler, Germany's social and political situation, and the general attack on liberalism, Nazi Germany emerged rapidly after 1933 when Hitler came to power. The Nazis smashed all independent organizations, mobilized the economy and began the systematic extermination of the Jewish and other non-German populations.

The story of Hitler is well-known -- there is an entire Hitler *industry* of book publishing these days, unmatched only by books on the JFK assassination. Why this might be the case is rather obvious. Hitler seemed to be evil incarnate. So too was Stalin. But then again, the west did not fight a war, not a hot one, at least, against Stalin. We also have more information regarding the Nazis than we do Stalin, whose regime was always clouded in secrecy. The Nazis, on the other hand, kept good records. In his now classic work, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, William

Shirer mentions that in 1945 the U.S. First Army seized 485 tons of records of the German Foreign Office in the Harz Mountains as they were about to be burned on orders from Berlin. Such a figure, it must be added, represents only part of the whole.

Hitler was born in Austria in 1889 (for more on Hitler, see [Lecture 9](#)). He dropped out of school at age 14 and then spent four years as a tramp before he left his home for Vienna to become an [artist](#). He applied to the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts and was denied admission. He was told he had no artistic talent. Back on the streets, the tramp Hitler began to absorb a nationalist ideology. In Vienna he discovered that the Germans were a superior race of people and the natural masters of the inferior races of Europe. He also learned his anti-Semitism, racism and hatred of all Slavic people. An ex-monk by the name of Lanz von Liebenfels inspired Hitler's twisted Darwinism. Liebenfels stressed the superiority of the Germans, the inevitability of racial conflict and the inferiority of the Jews. The master race, by its very nature, had to grow. Selective breeding and the systematic sterilization of inferior races was the answer.

When [war](#) broke out in 1914, Hitler believed he had found salvation. The struggle and discipline of war gave meaning to Hitler's life. Life was struggle and so too was war. What better atmosphere for Hitler to further develop his nationalist and social Darwinist sentiments. But when defeat came in 1918, Hitler's world was shattered. The war had been his reason for living. What could have happened? Well, for Hitler, the Jews and Marxists had stabbed Germany in the back. Therefore, these parasitic intellectuals ought to be removed.

Back home following the war, Hitler began to make wild speeches to small audiences in the streets. He didn't care if many people heard him out, only that he could articulate his message of anti-Semitism and German nationalism. And people did listen to Hitler. And they began to take seriously what he gesticulated on the streets. By 1921, Hitler had become the leader of a small but growing political party. It is interesting to note that Hitler shared very little of the interests of this party, instead, he simply took it over because he needed a party of his own. The [German Workers' Party](#) denounced all Jews, Marxists and liberals. They promised national socialism. They used propaganda and theatrical rallies. They wore special badges and uniforms and as they marched, robotlike, through the streets of M_iñich, they rendered their special salute. Most effective of all their tools was the mass rally -- a rally made for mass man. Songs were sung, slogans were cast about. It was a revivalist movement, or at least it had the atmosphere of a religious revival. Hitler was a charismatic speaker and easily worked his audiences up into a frenzy.

Party membership began to grow. In 1923, Hitler launched a [plot](#) to march on M_iñich, a plot that eventually failed and sent Hitler to prison for five years. At his trial, Hitler presented his own program to solve Germany's problems. The audience listened and he began to attract their attention. He dared utter what everyone knew all along but were afraid to express. A new wave of converts began to side with the German Workers' Party. While in prison, Hitler wrote [Mein Kampf](#). Its basic themes were German racial superiority, virulent anti-Semitism, the concept of *Lebensraum*, or living space, pan-Germanism and the necessity of yet another war. The Nazis now had their Bible.

By 1928, the Nazi Party now had 100,000 members and Hitler had absolute control. The Nazis were still a marginal political group but world events in 1929 and 1930 produced a new mania for the Hitler program. Unemployment stood at 1.3 million in 1929. The following year, it had risen to 5 million while industrial production in 1932 fell by more than 50%. In that same year, 43% of all Germans were unemployed. Hitler now began to promise Germany economic salvation as well as military and political restitution for the "[war guilt clause](#)" specified at Versailles. He focused on the middle and lower middle classes---the office workers, civil servants and teachers. These were the people who had barely survived through the period of wild inflation following World War One. These were the people who were begging for salvation.

The Nazis also made their appeal to [GERMAN YOUTH](#). Hitler and his aides were, in general, much younger than other leading politicians. In 1931, for instance, 40% of all Nazis were under thirty years of age, 70% were under 40. This is quite different from what we would find in Stalinist Russia at the same time. National recovery, rapid change and personal advancement formed the main appeal of the Nazi Party. By 1932, Hitler had gained the support of key people in the army and in big business. These individuals thought they could use Hitler for their own financial interests. So, they accepted Hitler's demand to join the government only if he became Chancellor. Since the government was a coalition consisting of two Nazis and nine conservatives, they reasoned that Hitler could be used and controlled. And so, on January 30th, 1933, Hitler legally became the [Chancellor of Germany](#).

Hitler moved quickly to establish a dictatorship. He used terror to gain power while maintaining an air of legality throughout. He called for new elections to Parliament and then had the Parliament building [burned to the ground](#). He blamed the Communists for this act thus helping to get them out of the way and out of any possible public following. He convinced President Hindenburg to sign an emergency act that [1] abolished the freedom of speech and [2] abolished the freedom of assembly. On March 23, 1933, the Nazis pushed the [Enabling Act](#) through Parliament, thus making Hitler dictator for a period of four years. Communist Party members were arrested, the Catholic Center Party withdrew all opposition and the Social Democratic Party was dissolved. So it was that Germany, like Soviet Russia under Stalin, became a one party State.

In the economic sphere, all strikes were made illegal and unions were abolished. The members of professional organizations such as doctors, lawyers, professors and engineers were swallowed up in Nazi-based organizations. In the cultural sphere, the press now fell under total state control. Blacklisting became the rule, books were burned, modern art was prohibited and anti-intellectualism became the rule of the day.

Hitler promised the German people work and bread and he delivered both. As most shrewd politicians are capable, Hitler gave the people what they wanted the most. He launched a massive public works program to pull Germany out of the Depression. Superhighways, office buildings, huge stadiums and public buildings were constructed at a rapid pace. By 1936, however, government spending was now being directed almost entirely to the military, necessary for the coming war Hitler had already specified in *Mein Kampf*. Meanwhile, unemployment dropped steadily. In January 1937, unemployment stood at 7 million. Twelve months later it had fallen to 1 million and by 1938, Germany witnessed a shortage of labor. The standard of living increased by 20% and business profits were finally increasing.

What all this recovery showed was that Hitler was more than show -- he was no Mussolini who made the trains run on time. No, Hitler had accomplished something for Germany and the German people. For those Germans who were not Jews, Slavs, Gypsies or communists, liberals, non-Germans, or insane or weak, Hitler's government meant greater opportunity and greater equality. Older class barriers were replaced by individuals who, like Hitler, were rootless and had risen to the top. The Nazis tolerated privilege and wealth, but only when it served the Party. Big business was constantly ordered around thus making, once again, the invisible hand of Adam Smith, a thing of the past. Of course, you can identify a similar tendency in the United States with the New Deal and Stalin's Five Year Plans in Soviet Russia. Planning was, in other words, essential.

Although economic recovery and increased opportunity won Hitler support, Nazism was totally guided by two main ideas: *Lebensraum* and race. As Germany regained economic strength and built up its military, Hitler formed alliances with other dictators and began to expand. Meanwhile, western Europe simply sat back and tried to appease Hitler in order to avoid another World War.

War did break out in 1939 for one specific reason -- Hitler's ambitions were without limit. The Nazi armies scored impressive victories until late in 1942. Hitler's aggression was so strong that a mighty coalition of nations was needed to destroy his growing empire. By the summer of 1943, the

tide had turned and two years later, Germany lay in ruins, utterly defeated. The one thousand year Reich was decidedly short-lived.

The Second World War marked the climax of the Age of Anxiety. Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany rejected all liberal ideas. They tried to subordinate everything to the State. Basic human rights were subjected to brutality and to terror. Whereas Stalin, however, was content to extend his control over the Soviet Union, it was Hitler who aimed at unlimited territorial and racial aggression of a master race. Hitler made war inevitable: first with France, then with Britain and Russia and ultimately with the United States.

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