

GERMANY AND AUSTRIA IN THE 1930s

1929

1930

Unemployment reaches 2.8 million in Germany.

Riots break out in Berlin between the Communists and the police in an episode known as *Blutmai* (Bloody May).

U.S. stock market crash affects the global economy. American banks recall all loans to Germany. Unemployment continues to rise.

The Great Coalition formed in 1923 between the four main pro-democratic parties in Germany is dissolved. Heinrich Brüning forms a minority government and serves as German Chancellor until 1932.

French troops leave Germany.

Dissolution of the German Reichstag (Parliament).

The Young Plan is adopted to solve the question of German war reparations. Unemployment surpasses 3.5 million. In the elections, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) wins a majority, but the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), or Nazi Party, reaches 18.3% (95 seats in the parliament) and becomes a strong political faction.

1931

The German government cuts salaries and pensions of public employees.

A banking crisis ensues after the collapse of the Darmstädter and National Bank (Danat Bank). The German stock market is closed until September.

4.5 million are unemployed in Germany. There is a failed coup attempt by Austrian Heimwehr (national paramilitary group) commander Walter Pfirmner in Styria.

A second German government is formed under Heinrich Brüning. The Harzburg Front, a short-lived and radical anti-democratic group, is formed in the town of Bad Harzburg to oppose the Weimar democracy and the government of Chancellor Brüning.

The federal government of Germany declares a state of emergency.

1932

More than 6 million are unemployed in Germany.

Paul von Hindenburg is reelected President of Germany with 53% of the vote. Adolf Hitler comes in second with 37% and the Communist, Ernst Thälmann, secures third place with 10%. Temporary ban on the Sturmabteilung (Assault Division, or SA) and Schutzstaffel (Protective Squadron, or SS) after Hindenburg's reelection.

Franz von Papen named Chancellor of Germany.

So-called "Prussian Blow" takes place. The Prussian government is overthrown and power is transferred to Chancellor Von Papen under an emergency decree by President Paul von Hindenburg. This effective coup d'état contributes to the downfall of the Weimar

1933

Republic and to the Nazi rise to power. The Nazi Party reaches close to 38% in the parliamentary elections (230 seats), but during the following weeks, Hindenburg refuses to name Hitler Chancellor.

Federal elections held in Germany, with losses for the Nazi Party. It is the last free election before the Nazis seize power in January 1933.

Von Papen is forced from office. Kurt von Schleicher is named Chancellor and is the last one to serve under the Weimar Republic.

Von Schleicher resigns. Hitler is appointed Chancellor on January 30 and Von Papen is named Vice-Chancellor.

The German parliament is dissolved. An arson attack on the German parliament leads to the false accusation that the Communists were behind the fire. The National Socialist regime led by Hitler starts to rule by emergency decree. Around 4,000 Communists are arrested.

The Austrian parliament is dissolved and Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss begins a semi-dictatorship. Federal elections are held in Germany just days after the Reichstag fire. The Nazis wins 44% of the vote, and shortly thereafter, other political parties are banned. Joseph Goebbels is appointed Minister of Propaganda for the Third Reich. The

concentration camp at Dachau is opened for political prisoners. The Enabling Act is passed, granting Hitler dictatorial powers. Only the Social Democrats (SPD) vote against it in the Reichstag.

The Nazis organize a boycott of Jewish shops and businesses in Germany.

Book burnings across Germany of works deemed "un-German."

Dollfuss bans all activities of the NSDAP in Austria. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) is banned in Germany.

The Nazi Party is proclaimed the only political party in Germany that is permitted to exist.

The Reich Chamber of Culture is established under Goebbels.

1934

Civil War in Austria between the Austrian army and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The SDP is subsequently banned in Austria.

New constitution is enacted in Austria under Dollfuss, leading to authoritarian rule and the establishment of a Ständestaat (corporate state).

First meeting between Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

Under the Röhm purge, Hitler asks Himmler to lead the SS in murdering the SA leaders and conservative opponents. The SS under Himmler becomes responsible for the concentration camp system. The July Putsch is a failed coup attempt against the National Socialist fascist regime in Austria. Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss is murdered.

German President Hindenburg dies and Hitler becomes Führer (Leader). The German army swears allegiance to Hitler.

1939

1934

France, Great Britain, and Italy declare Austria's autonomy.

1935

Reintroduction of general conscription in Germany.

Adoption of the Nuremberg Race Laws.

1936

Hitler sends German troops into the demilitarized Rhineland.

Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg and German Ambassador Franz Von Papen sign a treaty whereby Germany will recognize Austrian sovereignty and the Austrians will release Nazi prisoners.

Germany and Italy send troops to Spain to support General Franco during the Civil War. The Olympic games are held in Berlin.

Germany and Italy announce the Rome-Berlin Axis Pact.

1937

Opening of the "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich.

Goebbels opens the exhibition "The Wandering Jew" in Munich.

1938

Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg resigns and is succeeded by Arthur Seyss-Inquart.

German troops cross the Austrian border and encounter no resistance; they are greeted by cheers and Nazi salutes. Hitler declares the *Anschluss* (Annexation) of Austria on the Heldenplatz (Square of Heroes) in Vienna.

Referendum held in German-occupied Austria to the German Reich. More than 99% of voters support unification. "Aryanization" of the German economy begins, whereby Jewish businesses and property are transferred to non-Jewish owners.

After the Munich Agreement is signed granting Germany annexation of portions of Czechoslovakia, known as the Sudetenland, the German Army abandons plans to replace Hitler.

German diplomat Ernst vom Rath is shot by a Polish-Jewish student, Herschel Grynszpan, in Paris. In response to Rath's death, synagogues are burned in Germany, Jewish businesses are vandalized, and Jewish men arrested on the nights of November 9–10. The term *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) is used to describe the violent and murderous pogrom.

German troops invade Czechoslovakia. Poland forms a military alliance with France and the United Kingdom.

Hitler issues an order to prepare for war against Poland.

German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact signed in Moscow.

The German Wehrmacht attacks Poland. England and France declare war on Germany, marking the outbreak of World War II.

Hitler signs order authorizing euthanasia and backdates it to September 1 to protect those enforcing it and to link with outbreak of war.

Johann Georg Elser's attempt to assassinate Hitler and other Nazi leaders in Munich fails.

