

# **How Did Powerful Dictators Rise to Power During World War II, and What Were the Goals of Those Dictators?**

## **A World in Crisis Opens the Door to Dictatorship**

Before World War II began, many countries were facing serious problems. The Great Depression had left millions without jobs, and people were hungry, scared, and looking for strong leaders to fix things. In this time of crisis, dictators—leaders with total control—began to rise in several countries. These men promised to restore order, bring pride back to their nations, and make their countries powerful again. But their rise to power often came at the cost of freedom, peace, and human rights.

## **The Rise of Adolf Hitler in Germany**

Germany was struggling after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles had forced Germany to accept blame for the war, pay huge reparations, and give up land. Many Germans felt angry and humiliated. Adolf Hitler took advantage of this anger. As leader of the Nazi Party, he blamed Jews and other groups for Germany's problems. He promised to make Germany strong again, rebuild the military, and create more jobs. By 1933, Hitler had become Chancellor and quickly turned Germany into a dictatorship. He banned other political parties, controlled the media, and used fear to stay in power. His main goals were to expand German land, build a "pure" Aryan race, and destroy enemies like Jews and communists.

## **Benito Mussolini and Fascism in Italy**

In Italy, Benito Mussolini rose to power in the 1920s. Like Germany, Italy was unhappy with the results of World War I. Mussolini started the Fascist Party and promised to bring Italy back to its former greatness, like the Roman Empire. He gained the support of business leaders and the military by promising order and control. Mussolini used violence, propaganda, and fear to silence his opponents. He turned Italy into a fascist state, where the government had total power. His goal was to expand Italy's empire, especially in Africa, and to make Italy a dominant world power.

## **Joseph Stalin's Control in the Soviet Union**

While Hitler and Mussolini were gaining power in the West, Joseph Stalin had already taken control of the Soviet Union in the East. Stalin became the leader after the death of Vladimir Lenin. Under his rule, the Soviet Union became a communist dictatorship. Stalin used brutal methods to stay in control, including secret police, forced labor camps, and purges where millions of people were executed or imprisoned. His main goal was to turn the Soviet Union into a powerful, industrial nation. He also wanted to spread communism and protect the country from outside threats.

## **Other Dictators and Totalitarian Leaders**

Other countries also saw dictators rise to power. In Spain, Francisco Franco led a military revolt and took control after a bloody civil war. In Japan, military leaders like Hideki Tojo gained power and pushed for expansion in Asia. These dictators often worked together or had similar goals—taking over new lands, building strong armies, and controlling every part of their societies. They used fear, lies, and violence to keep people in line and crush anyone who disagreed with them.

## **The World Responds Too Late**

At first, many countries did not stop these dictators. Some leaders believed they could avoid another war by giving in to some of their demands. Others were too weak or busy with their own problems. This gave dictators

the time they needed to grow stronger. By the time countries like Britain, France, and the United States decided to fight back, the dictators had already started World War II. Their aggressive actions, like invading other countries and committing mass violence, caused death and destruction around the world.

### **The Goals Behind the Power**

Each dictator had their own reasons for gaining power, but they shared common goals: control their people, expand their land, and silence opposition. They believed in powerful, one-party rule and used nationalism to rally their citizens. Their ideas were often based on hatred of certain groups, like Jews or political enemies. These dangerous beliefs led to horrible crimes like the Holocaust, where six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis.

### **The End of Dictators and the Cost of Their Rule**

By the end of World War II, the world saw the true cost of letting dictators rise unchecked. Hitler died by suicide as Germany fell, Mussolini was captured and killed, and Japan's leaders surrendered after the atomic bombings. The war caused more than 70 million deaths worldwide. After the war, many countries worked to create governments that protected freedom and human rights. Trials were held to punish those responsible for war crimes, and new organizations like the United Nations were formed to promote peace.

### **Learning from the Past**

The rise of dictators during World War II is a powerful reminder of what can happen when fear and anger are used to take away freedom. These leaders promised strength but delivered war and suffering. Today, countries continue to teach about this time to help prevent such leaders from rising again. People are reminded to speak out against hate, protect democracy, and make sure that power is never used to harm others. The world learned a hard lesson: freedom and peace must always be defended.

#### **Parent/Guardian & Child Discussion Questions**

1. **Why did some people support dictators like Hitler and Mussolini during hard times?**  
→ How do you think fear, anger, or economic struggles can make people trust leaders who promise quick solutions?
2. **What were the main goals of the dictators during World War II?**  
→ Why do you think expanding land and gaining total control was so important to them?
3. **How did dictators use fear and propaganda to keep their power?**  
→ What can happen when people are not allowed to speak freely or disagree with their government?
4. **Why is it important to learn about how dictators rose to power?**  
→ How can understanding this history help protect freedom and prevent similar events in the future?



## Parent/Guardian Directions:

Your child is practicing **reading fluency** using this short article. Please have them **read it aloud** to you. You can help by listening, correcting tricky words, or taking turns reading paragraphs. The goal is to read smoothly and understand the meaning. Thank you for your support!

### **How Did Powerful Dictators Rise to Power During World War II, and What Were the Goals of Those Dictators?**

During the years leading up to and during World War II, several powerful dictators rose to power in countries like Germany, Italy, and Japan. These leaders took control during times of economic trouble, political chaos, and public fear. In Germany, Adolf Hitler gained support by promising to fix the economy and restore national pride after World War I. In Italy, Benito Mussolini offered strong leadership and promised to rebuild the Roman Empire. In Japan, military leaders pushed for expansion to gain more land and resources. People in these countries supported these dictators because they were desperate for change and stability.

#### **The Rise of Dictators and Their Control**


Dictators used propaganda, fear, and violence to stay in power. Hitler and the Nazi Party spread racist ideas and blamed minority groups, especially Jews, for Germany's problems. Mussolini used secret police and strict rules to control the people and silence his enemies. In Japan, military leaders controlled the government and encouraged citizens to obey without question. These dictators promised to make their nations strong again, but they also took away people's rights and freedoms. They used schools, newspapers, and radio to spread their ideas and make sure everyone supported them.

#### **Goals of World War II Dictators**

The goals of these dictators were focused on expansion, power, and control. Hitler wanted to take over parts of Europe to create more living space for Germans and build a powerful empire. He also wanted to remove anyone he saw as a threat, especially Jewish people, leading to the Holocaust. Mussolini wanted Italy to control land around the Mediterranean Sea. Japan's leaders aimed to take over much of Asia and the Pacific to gain natural resources and grow their empire. These goals led to invasions, battles, and the start of World War II in 1939.

#### **Why the Rise of Dictators Still Matters Today**

The rise of dictators during World War II shows what can happen when people feel hopeless and leaders take advantage of fear. These dictators caused millions of deaths and brought terrible suffering to many people around the world. Learning about how they came to power helps us understand why it is important to protect democracy, human rights, and freedom of speech. Today, people and governments work to prevent dictators from gaining too much power again. The history of these leaders reminds us to stay aware and stand up for justice, fairness, and peace.

 **Fluency Tracking: Write down the time it took your child to read each day. Count any missed words to help track progress.**

Day 1 Time	Day 2 Time	Day 3 Time
# words missed day 1	# words missed day 2	# words missed day 3