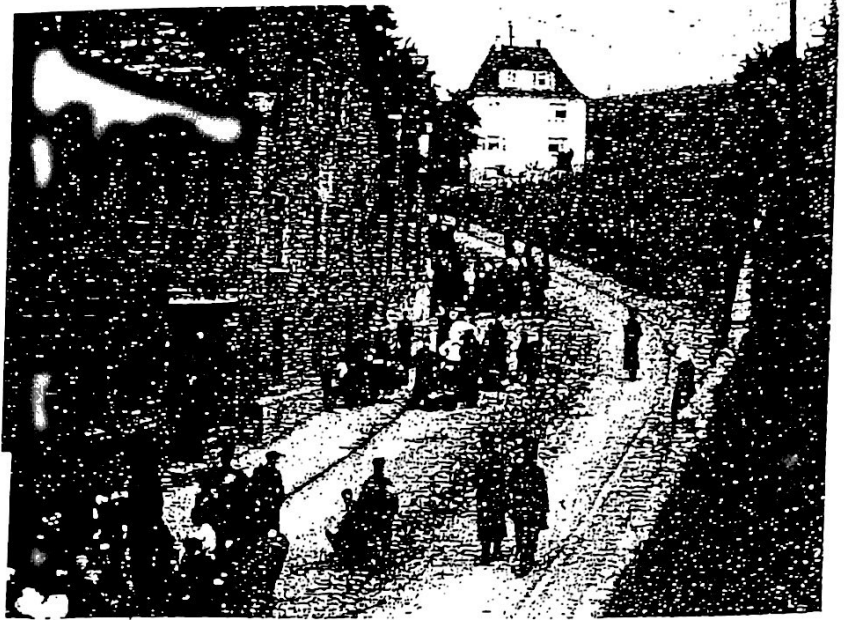


Excerpt from  
Life and Death in  
Hitler's Europe



### Influence

The Germans controlled some countries by influence. In other words, if another country agreed with Nazi views, they were seen as allies and allowed to keep their own government. At the start of the war, Italy, which was ruled by the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, was one such country. The Nazis also made agreements with the leaders of countries that were not sympathetic to Nazi views. These leaders could still run their countries—as long as they did so the way the Nazis told them to. However, if an allied country did not completely support Nazi policies, it soon became an enemy of Germany—this reversal happened to both Italy and the Soviet Union. The German army marched in and influence quickly became occupation.

### A Different View

The Nazis had strong ideas about **racial superiority**. They treated the people in the countries they took over in different ways, depending on how they fit into Nazi ideas about **race**. German soldiers were taught that people such as the Slavs, who included the Poles and the Russians, were **inferior races**. One soldier advancing into Poland said:

*I do not understand how these people are biologically capable of staying alive. Also they live in indescribably filthy conditions. The Polish Jews have alien-looking faces.*

On the other hand, German soldiers were taught that "**Aryans**" were the best race. Although the people of Scandinavia, Britain, and France were not as important as the Germans, they were not thought to be *untermenschen*, or "subhuman," like the Slavs. So the German army, Nazi officials, and police behaved far better toward the people of France than they did to the people of Poland—as long as they did as they were told.

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# The Nazis and the Holocaust

Of all the groups of people that Adolf Hitler despised as “inferiors,” he hated Jewish people the most. This hatred was clear even before the Nazis came to power in Germany. Once they were in power, they began to act against Jews immediately.

## Step by Step

The Nazis began by passing laws that stopped Jews from working in certain jobs. They moved on to pass laws that stopped Jews from using the same transportation, schools, public facilities, even park benches as non-Jews. Then they began working to make Germany and the countries it controlled *Judenfrei*—Jew free. In occupied countries, Jews were herded into walled-off ghettos in cities and were not allowed to live anywhere else. Once Jews were cut off from other people, it was easier for the Nazis to work even further against them.



## The Holocaust

The Nazis had tried to force the Jews in Germany to leave the country before the war. After war broke out, German policy against the Jews became more and more severe. Eventually, they moved on to what they called the “Final Solution.” They set up **death camps** at Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek, and Auschwitz-Birkenau. The only purpose of these camps was to kill Jewish people.

## Mein Kampf

In 1923, Hitler and the Nazis had tried to take power in Germany by force. They failed, and Hitler was sent to prison. While he was in prison, the Nazi Party fell apart. During the eight months Hitler spent in prison, he wrote a book called *Mein Kampf* or “My Struggle”, outlining his beliefs. Once the Nazis came to power in 1933, everyone was expected to read this book. In it, Hitler clearly says that he thought Jewish people were ruining Germany and that they must not be allowed to be German citizens.

## Targets of Hatred

Once they were in power, the Nazis lost no time in persecuting Jews. They started by trying to get people not to buy goods from Jews. These Nazis are going around urging German people not to shop at Jewish stores. In many cases, the Nazis stood guard over the stores hoping to frighten people away.