

Rejecting Liberalism

Key Skill:

Identifying the impact of significant historical changes and events on the present

Key Terms and Concepts:

- Bolsheviks
- communism
- dictatorship
- dissent
- eugenics
- fascism
- Leninism
- Nazism
- social Darwinism
- Stalinism
- subsistence agriculture

Key Issue:

To what extent should we embrace an ideology?

Related Issue:

Is resistance to liberalism justified?

Chapter Issue:

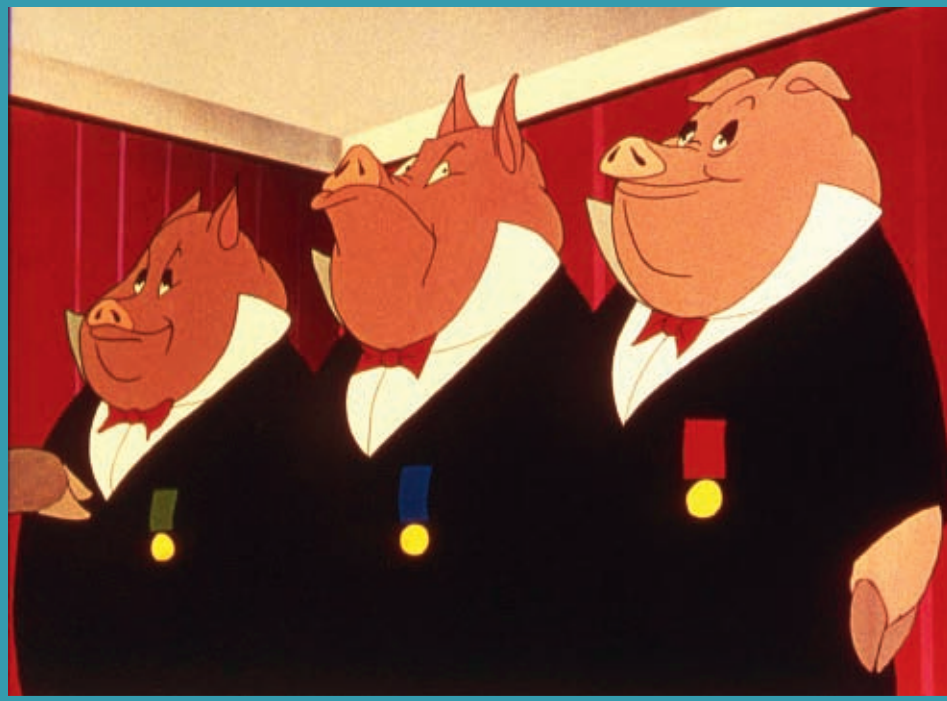
To what extent is communism or fascism a valid response to liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #1:

How was communism in the Soviet Union a rejection of liberalism?

Question for Inquiry #2:

How was fascism in Nazi Germany a rejection of liberalism?



▲ **Figure 7-1** The animated film *Animal Farm* (1954) was based on British writer George Orwell's famous book by the same title.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) describes an uprising of farm animals, led by pigs, against the human owners of the farm. The goal of the revolution is to free the animals (the working class) from the tyranny of their owners (the ruling class). Major, one of the pigs who leads the revolution and whom Orwell modelled after Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, says the following to the other farm animals:

"Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth."

—Source: George Orwell, *Animal Farm*
(Toronto: Random House of Canada Ltd., 1993), p. 3.

The pigs talk about improving conditions for the animals and about all the farm animals living as equals; however, after the pigs successfully take over the farm, little changes for the working animals. The pigs in charge become more and more like the humans they overthrew, even to the point of wearing their clothes and walking on two legs. The animals now live under one commandment: "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." Does this really describe a state of equality?

Through the story of *Animal Farm*, Orwell criticizes Soviet communism and the idea of a utopian society in which it is claimed that all people are equal. The book and film criticize aspects such as dictatorships, rigid class systems, and power struggles among world leaders. In this chapter, you will explore the rise of communism in the Soviet Union and its rejection of liberalism. As you read the chapter, think about the one commandment of the animals in Orwell's book. Do you think it is an accurate description of Soviet communist rule?

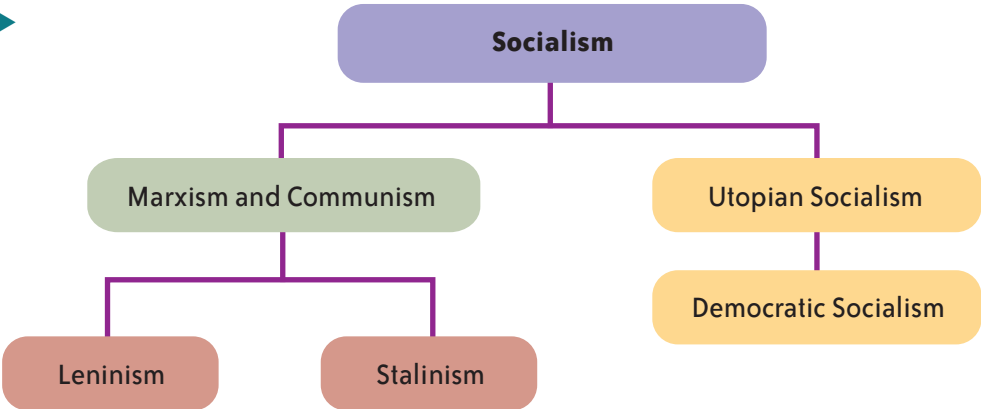
Chapter Issue:

To what extent is communism or fascism a valid response to liberalism?

Modern liberalism and socialism were not the only responses to the practices of classical liberalism in industrializing countries. This chapter will help you better understand the circumstances under which the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany chose to reject the values of liberalism between the First and Second World Wars. In the chapter's first section, you will examine two interpretations of communism in the Soviet Union, Leninism and Stalinism, and see how they were influenced by and responded to the rise of liberalism. In the second section, you will examine how fascism in Nazi Germany also rejected liberal values.

Through your exploration of the origins and applications of these two ideologies, communism in the Soviet Union and fascism in Nazi Germany, you will gain the tools you need to address the Chapter Issue: *To what extent is communism or fascism a valid response to liberalism?*

Figure 7-2 As you work through the chapter, refer back to this chart, which you first saw on page 150, to help you consider the relationships among these ideologies based on the values of collectivism.

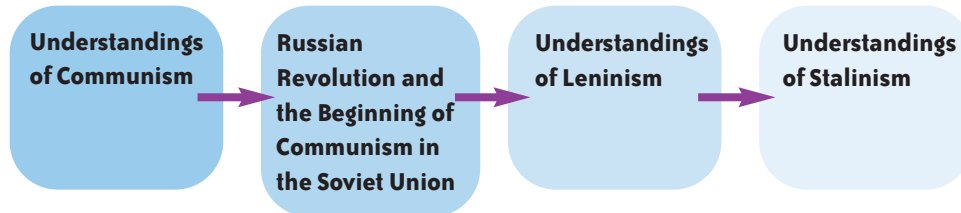


Exploring Soviet Communism

Question for Inquiry

1. How was communism in the Soviet Union a rejection of liberalism?

In this section ...



Understandings of Communism

As you read in the previous chapter, Karl Marx was one of the most significant socialist thinkers, and he inspired socialist movements around the world. His works, especially *The Communist Manifesto*, greatly influenced the development of communist ideologies, even long after his death. Marx believed that through revolution people could move closer to a state of society called **communism**. According to Marx, communism is a classless society in which all people share in the production of goods and no government is needed.

In communist ideology, the collective is more important than the individual. Communists also believe that the well-being of individuals is primarily the responsibility of the government rather than of the individuals themselves. The founding values of communism include collective ownership of the means of production (resources, land, and capital), the elimination of private property, and economic equality. One key way in which communism differs from democratic socialism is that communism promotes revolutionary change rather than gradual change within a liberal democracy.

During the 20th century, different forms of communism developed in different countries around the world based on different interpretations: Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism developed in the Soviet Union, and Maoism developed in China. These understandings of communism are defined by the beliefs of the different leaders, how they interpreted the ideas of Marxism, and how they proposed to apply them. Communism then becomes an interpretation of Marxism. Some people, however, choose to see communism and Marxism as the same.

Figure 7-3 Some key ideas from communist theory of the 20th century

Political Ideas	Economic Ideas	Social Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers will revolt and overthrow the wealthy business owners and landowners. The state will be governed by the Communist Party in the interests of the people. The political structure will have less hierarchy. There will be a more collective form of government with better representation for all people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There will be collective ownership of the means of production (resources, land, and capital). Private property will be abolished. Incomes will be equalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A classless society will be created. Women will have equal rights. There will be co-operation instead of competition.

Communism, like other forms of socialism, stresses the importance of collectivism in meeting all of society’s basic needs; however, the forms of communism that developed in the 20th century argued for a great deal of government involvement and control to achieve this. Whereas Marx believed that a truly communist society would have no need for government, the application of communism during this period included large and powerful government organizations.

One of the most successful and well-known communist movements developed in Russia in the early 1900s and lasted until the early 1990s. With this movement came the creation of the Soviet Union, a socialist state in which different republics were organized under a common communist government. In this section, you will explore the rise of Soviet communism and its rejection of liberal ideas.

Russian Revolution and the Beginning of Communism in the Soviet Union

The Failure of Liberal Reform

By the 1800s, Russia was far less industrialized than Western Europe. Due in part to its vast size and focus on **subsistence agriculture** (in which people farm only what they need to survive), Russia was slow to develop economically. Poverty was widespread, especially among the Russian serfs, or peasants, who worked for the landowning nobility.

During this time, Russia was ruled by a powerful monarch called a czar. The czar had complete control over the social, political, and economic aspects of the country. People did not have the basic rights that had already been established through liberal movements in other countries, such as Britain, the United States, and France, and the serfs were essentially enslaved to the landowners.

In 1861, Czar Alexander II finally freed the serfs, and, over the next 20 years, he introduced a series of liberal reforms. For example, he abolished capital punishment and created local governments that included representatives from all classes. These representatives made decisions on such things as taxation and education. The reforms, however, did not go far enough for a number of small revolutionary socialist groups. They wanted immediate change. Members of one radical group, the People's Will, attempted to assassinate Czar Alexander II several times, and finally succeeded in 1881. After the assassination, many of the czar's liberal reforms were reversed, and the freedoms of the Russian people were greatly restricted by the new czar, Alexander III.

The Rise of Socialism

During the 1800s, many industrialized capitalist countries in Europe invested money to develop Russia. New factories and roads were built quickly, thrusting Russia into a period of sudden social and economic change. Because Russia joined the Industrial Revolution late, it experienced a period of rapid growth to catch up with other countries. Russian nobility and business owners, and the foreign investors, prospered from this rapid industrialization.

As with other countries that experienced industrialization, the gap between the rich and the poor widened. The people of the working class, employed by the growing number of factories and other businesses, were often treated poorly and were overworked in terrible conditions. By the turn of the 20th century, many Russians felt that the treatment of the working class was unfair. Some found inspiration for change in the pages of *The Communist Manifesto* and in the ideas of Marxism.

In 1898, a group of Marxists decided to form the Socialist Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), but the Russian czar banned the political group. The members of the SDLP were forced into exile in other European countries, but they kept up their revolutionary spirit by working on an illegal newspaper called *Iskra* (*Spark*). Among the members of the SDLP were Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin.

Despite the exile of many socialist activists, unrest grew among the people of Russia. In January 1905, the people of Saint Petersburg marched to Czar Nicholas's Winter Palace to demand food and better working conditions. As this large group arrived at the palace gates, it was met by the czar's soldiers, who opened fire on the crowd, causing hundreds of people to lie dead or dying. The day became known as Bloody Sunday.

Figure 7-4 In this still photo from the film *Devyatoe yanvarya*, the czar's soldiers massacred hundreds of peaceful demonstrators who had come asking for better working and living conditions in 1905.

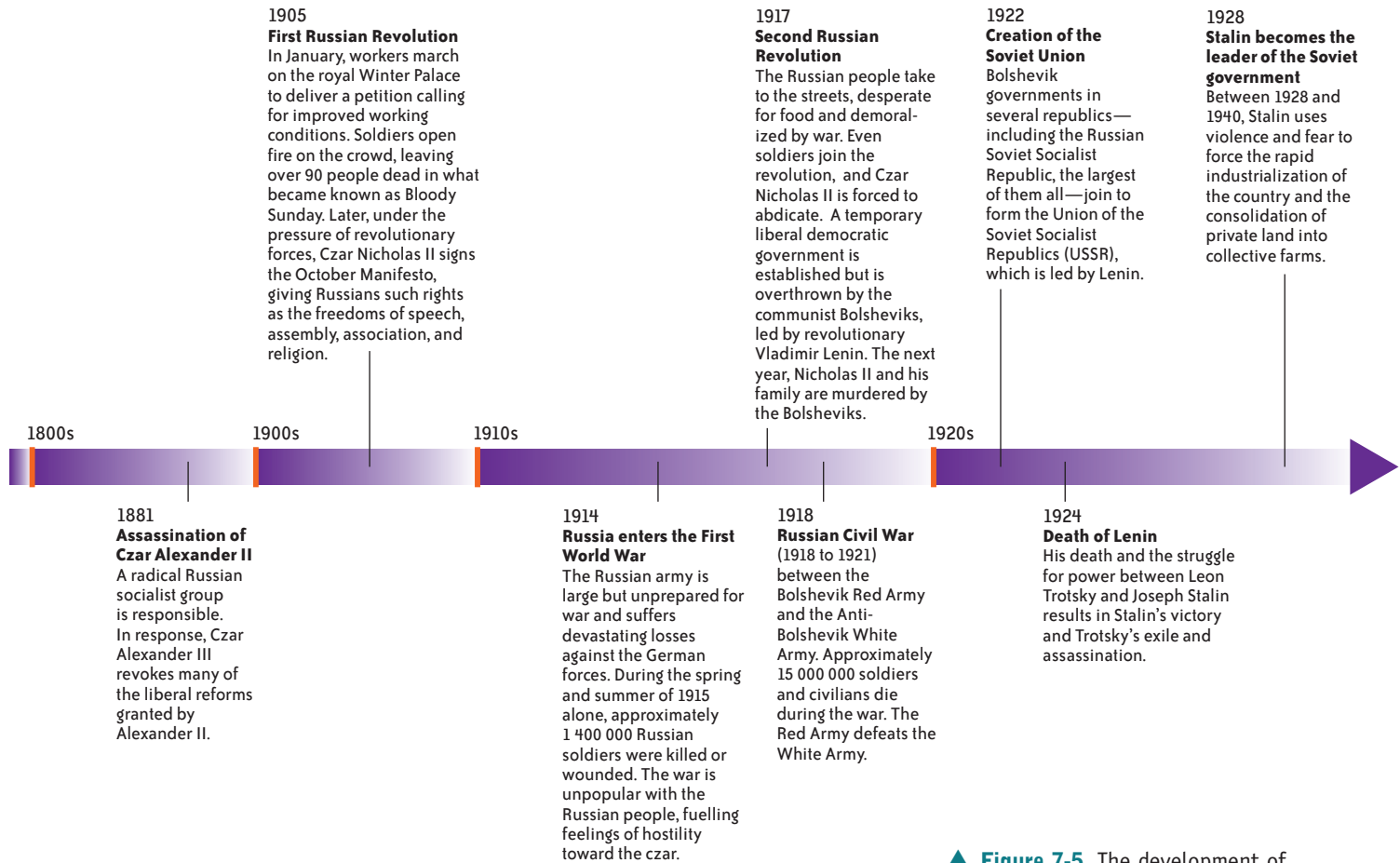


The events of Bloody Sunday inspired mass strikes across the country. Due to growing pressure from the people, Czar Nicholas II agreed to allow an assembly of the people's representatives. In October, the St Petersburg Soviet (council) was formed. It called for a general strike and encouraged people to refuse to pay their taxes. Czar Nicholas II then signed the October Manifesto, allowing the formation of political parties and giving the people of Russia basic civil rights, such as the freedoms of speech and religion. The events of 1905, referred to as the first Russian Revolution, increased the popularity of socialism, setting the stage for the Revolution of 1917, the abdication of the czar, the civil war, and the establishment of the first communist country in the world.

Understandings of Leninism

As a result of the revolution and forced abdication of Czar Nicholas II, Russia was without a formal leader during the last years of the First World War. A temporary government was put in place for most of 1917, which was led by Alexander Kerensky. Despite some initial success, however, this liberal democratic government struggled to have any real power in Russia. Its decision to refuse land to poor peasants in rural areas and to continue fighting in the First World War caused it to lose the support of the Russian people.

Support for communist and Marxist ideas, however, grew among the poor working class and peasants. In April 1917, Vladimir Lenin, founder



▲ **Figure 7-5** The development of communism in the Soviet Union. This timeline illustrates some of the key events that led to the rejection of some liberal ideas and the development of communism in the Soviet Union. Included in the timeline are the following terms, which are used to describe the country of “Russia” and vary according to time period:

- **Russia** or the **Russian Empire** The name of the empire located in Eastern Europe and North Asia prior to 1922
- **The Soviet Union (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR)** The name used between 1922 and 1991 for the communist-led country made up of 15 republics, the largest of which was the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic
- **Russia** or **Russian Federation** Since 1992, after the various republics of the USSR had declared their independence, the largest republic, Russia, has continued as its own democratic country

and leader of the communist Bolsheviks, called for the end of Russian participation in the war. The slogan of the Bolsheviks, “Peace! Land! Bread!”, gained popularity as it reflected that which peasants and working class Russians had been demanding for many years.

By October 1917, Lenin’s supporters and the Bolshevik Party had the strength and support to take power. Leon Trotsky joined Lenin, and together they were successful in establishing a new Russian government. Lenin’s government quickly transformed Russia based on his interpretation of communism, which is commonly referred to as **Leninism**. Lenin took many of Marx’s ideas to form the foundations of his own political and economic policies. Similar to Marx, Lenin believed that revolution—and, if need be, violence—was an acceptable means to achieve an ideal society. Lenin’s form of communism differed from Marx’s in that Lenin believed that a communist government was necessary.

There were, however, many Russians who did not share Lenin’s views. In 1918, Lenin was shot during an assassination attempt. Shortly afterwards, he attempted to eliminate his rivals through a campaign called



▲ **Figure 7-6** Vladimir Ilich Lenin was the first leader of a communist country.

the Red Terror, during which many people were tortured and executed. At this time, civil war erupted between the Bolshevik Red Army and the Anti-Bolshevik White Army, who were supported by other countries whose leaders feared and disapproved of Russian communism. White Army supporters included liberal democratic and capitalist countries such as the United States, Canada, France, and Britain. After years of brutal and bloody fighting, the Russian Civil War ended with the defeat of the White Army, most of whom were then executed or exiled.

In 1922, several republics joined to create the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR or Soviet Union), which was led by Lenin. The people of the Soviet Union saw many positive changes:

- Land was redistributed to the people.
- Factories were given to the workers so that they could make decisions about wages and working conditions.
- Men and women were considered equal and valuable contributors to society.
- Art and music flourished as there were no longer restrictions on what one could create.

Lenin's application of Marxist values had given many poor and working class people much more power over their lives than they had known under czarist rule. There were also those, though, that did not feel represented by Lenin or his supporters. Some political turmoil continued during his rule, as well as famine and violent responses by Lenin to those who opposed his government. Positive developments as well as opposition to Lenin came to an abrupt end after Lenin died from a stroke in 1924.

Understandings of Stalinism

With Lenin's death, the Soviet Union experienced a transition into a new form of communism under Joseph Stalin known as **Stalinism**. Stalin's rise to power was not without controversy. Lenin had been highly suspicious of Stalin and did not want him to be the next ruler of the Soviet Union. Following Lenin's death, there was a struggle for power between Trotsky and Stalin. Trotsky had been an ally of Lenin and shared Lenin's interpretation of Marxist ideas and opposed Stalin's leadership. By 1928, Stalin became the supreme leader of the country. Stalin and his supporters arranged for Trotsky's removal from the Communist Party and for his exile and eventual assassination in Mexico.

Although Stalin claimed to be a Marxist-Leninist, his own interpretation of communism was influenced by his desire to maintain absolute power and control. This desire for control caused many of his policies and the development of Soviet communism to be a means of oppression and fear rather than of revolution and freedom. Stalin also completely rejected almost all liberal values, believing that they could not help the USSR achieve its goals. Some examples of his policies include the following:



▲ **Figure 7-7** Joseph Stalin, nicknamed the Man of Steel, is considered by many to have been a cruel dictator who industrialized the Soviet Union at the expense of millions of peasants' lives.



Figure 7-8



Figure 7-9

▲ **Figures 7-8, 7-9** The primary person missing from Figure 7-9 is Trotsky. He was labelled an “enemy of the people” after he criticized Stalin’s style of leadership. Stalin had all images of and references to Trotsky removed from the Soviet archives, media, and educational materials. What does this say about Stalin’s leadership and his beliefs and values?

- the creation of the Gulag (prison camp) system to contain those who opposed his views
- the use of secret police (the NKVD) to control people through terror and force
- the purges of 1936 and 1939 during which he eliminated his opponents within the Communist Party and the Soviet armed forces
- the rewriting of history by altering the Soviet archives and prescribing a state view of the history of the country
- the rapid, forced industrialization of the country
- the collectivization of all farms, through which private farms were taken by force and used to create a collective farming system



Industrialization in Defence

Stalin had become a ruler of a country that was considered by many to be one of the least industrialized countries in Europe. In a 1931 speech to industrial managers, Stalin said,

“(We) must put an end to its backwardness in the shortest possible time... There is no other way. That is why Lenin said on the eve of the October Revolution: ‘Either perish, or overtake and outstrip the advanced capitalist countries.’

We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall be crushed.”

—Joseph Stalin, speech to industrial managers, February, 1931.

Documents in Russian History, Seton Hall University,

<http://artsci.shu.edu/reesp/documents/Stalin--industrialization.htm>.

- 1 What reasons does Stalin give for the necessity of the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union?
- 2 Thinking back to the Russian Civil War, why might Stalin have feared capitalist countries?

Figure 7-10 Ukraine President Viktor Yushchenko places a wreath during a memorial ceremony at the new Holodomor Memorial in Kiev in November 2008. Ukraine commemorated the millions who died in the 1932–1933 famine that the government of Ukraine calls an act of genocide by the Soviets. In 2008, some countries' governments recognized the Holodomor as an act of genocide, including the government of Alberta.

READING GUIDE

To help you analyze the impact of significant events, time periods, and changes over time in history, use the following questions: Did or does the historical event or time period

- affect a large number of people in a significantly positive or negative way?
- cause lasting effects on some or many of these people's ancestors or fellow citizens, who still remember the effects of what occurred in history?
- receive recognition by governments and citizens as an important historical event with lasting consequences?
- create lasting changes locally, nationally, or globally in society that continue to affect people's lives and government decisions?
- represent important issues that still exist for some or many people in society today?



In implementing his vision of communism for the Soviet Union, Stalin clearly rejected liberal values and the practices of capitalism, individual freedoms, and multi-party democracy.

In 1932 and in 1933, Ukraine experienced both severe drought as well as the effects of what some now refer to as a planned famine by Stalin and his plans for industrialization, higher agricultural output, and government ownership of land. This famine is known as the Holodomor and resulted largely from Stalin's collectivization policies, which were designed in part to suppress Ukrainian nationalism. Stalin suppressed opposition to his leadership, required large grain quotas to be filled, and then withheld stockpiled grain from many, effectively starving between 7 and 10 million people in order to remove resistance to his plans for collectivization.

In 2008, governments around the world recognized the Holodomor as a crime against humanity and an act of genocide, including the Government of Alberta. How could international recognition of the Holodomor as a genocide reflect the significance of this historical event?

Through these measures, Stalin transformed the Soviet Union into a dictatorship and, at the same time, into one of the most industrialized and powerful forces in the world. Soviet citizens paid a tremendous price for this transformation, and Stalin would become known as one of the most ruthless leaders of the 20th century. You can read more on Stalin's policies and their tragic consequences in the Investigation and Exploration feature at the end of the chapter.

After Stalin's rule came to an end in 1953, he was succeeded by various communist party leaders. Over the next 30 years, most of the world was split in two: those countries allied with the Soviets and those allied with the Americans. The political, economic, and military tensions between the two powerful countries were referred to as the **Cold War**, which you will examine in Chapter 8.

In the mid-1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union. He was the first leader in the Soviet Union who embraced the values of liberalism, most notably in his policies of openness and greater freedoms (known as *glasnost*) instead of policies similar to Stalin-like censorship and control. Gorbachev also reformed the Soviet Union's political and economic systems, including a move to a market economy, private ownership of business, and some democratic reforms, such as multi-party elections. The restructuring of the political and economic systems of the USSR was known as *perestroika*. In the following years, Russia and many of the countries of the former Soviet Union have faced challenges in their efforts to successfully put in place liberal democratic practices.



Figure 7-11 ▲ In 1990, one of the first signs of the market economy to appear in the Soviet Union was the McDonald's restaurant that opened up in Moscow. The Moscow McDonald's was widely seen as one of the first Western businesses to take advantage of perestroika, the Soviet Union's restructuring of its economy. As of 2002, the Pushkin Square McDonald's was still the largest and busiest McDonald's in the world. Its record for biggest opening day still stood.



Modern Russian Leader, Vladimir Putin

Vladimir Putin (democratically elected Russian President from 2000 to 2008) has been criticized for showing some appreciation for Stalin, at least for his role in the victory of

the Russians over the Germans during the Second World War. In 2007, Putin proposed to change the national anthem to the Stalin-era national anthem. Even though a public contest was held to find new words to the anthem, this was viewed by many as an inappropriate choice, especially by those directly affected by the brutality of Stalin's regime. Putin has also been criticized for his restriction of the media in Russia.

In September 2007, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian citizens commented on Putin's leadership and policies:

Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev warned Wednesday against whitewashing the crimes of dictator Josef Stalin, stressing that Russia cannot move forward without facing the truth about its bloody past.

In words that appeared aimed at President Vladimir Putin, Gorbachev also emphasized the need to pursue democracy.

His remarks, less guarded than usual, came amid growing concern among Russia's marginalized liberals that Putin's government is recasting Stalin's legacy to justify its own increasingly tight control.

The Stalin era is being portrayed as a "golden age," said Gorbachev, whose 1980s "glasnost" campaign as the last Soviet president prompted stunning revelations about Stalin's murderous policies.

"We must remember those who suffered, because it is a lesson for all of us—a lesson that many have not learned," Gorbachev said at a discussion marking the 70th anniversary of the bloodiest year of Stalin's Great Terror...

"It's not just forgetfulness, not just a lack of cultural memory—what's happening is a massive attack aimed at revising our memory," said Irina Shcherbakova of Memorial, a prominent non-governmental group dedicated to investigating Stalin's repression.

As one of the signs that Stalin's crimes are being swept under the rug, she said a teacher's manual that suggests his actions were justified by the need to modernize the economy is being pushed on high schools countrywide...

Putin has stressed the need for patriotism and pride, restored Soviet-era symbols such as the music for the national anthem, and has said repeatedly that western portrayals of Russia and its history are too negative.

In June, he told social studies teachers that no one should try to make Russia feel guilty about the Great Terror and that worse things happened in other countries, pointing to the U.S. atomic bombs dropped in Japan and its bombing of Vietnam.

Putin and his allies "have sympathies to that time and to that way of ruling the country," liberal politician Grigory Yavlinsky said, referring to the Stalin era...

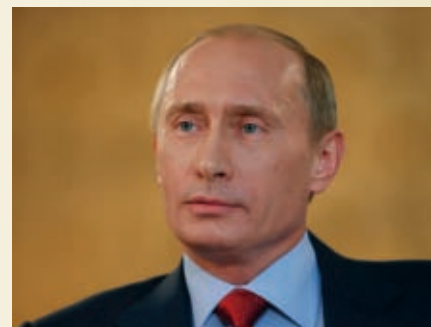


Figure 7-12 ▲ At the turn of the 21st century, Vladimir Putin emerged as a new Russian leader. A controversial figure, Putin is seen by some as a modern visionary and by others as a throwback to the Stalinist era. As a political figure, Putin has had tremendous support from the Russian people (his approval ratings have always been over 65 per cent), due in part to his ability to revive a sense of Russian nationalism, pride, and unity.

- 1 Based on the information in the source, why do you think that Gorbachev and some Russian citizens are critical of Putin's approach to democracy in Russia?
- 2 To what extent should Stalin be portrayed as a national hero to Russian students today?
- 3 Which leader seems to embrace liberal values to a greater extent: Gorbachev or Putin? Justify your answer.

“We must do everything we can to ensure we take the path of democracy,” [Gorbachev] said. “We must all keep in mind that it’s necessary to suffer for democracy, to support it and to take the democratic road.”

—Source: Steve Gutterman, *The Canadian Press*, “Gorbachev warns against whitewashing Stalin’s crimes, rewriting Soviet history.” September 26, 2007.

Summary

Of the many socialist movements that developed from Marxism, none was more successful than the **communist** movement in Russia. Inspired by Marxist ideas regarding the revolution of the working class and the development of a communal society, activists such as Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and Joseph Stalin worked to overthrow the czarist government. Russian socialists fought for some basic liberal freedoms such as equality, yet promoted the creation of a political and economic system that was based on collectivist ideas and that rejected such liberal values as individual rights and freedoms, including economic freedoms such as competition.

Under Lenin, the Soviet Union became the first communist country in the world, and the people of the Soviet Union entered into an era of equality and collectivism. Lenin believed that Soviet communism would be able to look after the needs of all people through state-controlled programs. After his death, however, this state control developed into an even more increasingly powerful, harsh, and oppressive force under Stalin’s **dictatorship**. Based on what you have learned about the development and application of Soviet communism, can you form a response to the Question for Inquiry: *How was communism in the Soviet Union a rejection of liberalism?*

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1 Reproduce the following chart in your notes, and fill in each of the boxes with your understandings of Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism.

Marxism:
Leninism:
Stalinism:

- 2 Add to the chart in question 1 by listing the similarities and differences between the ideologies of Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism and the ideology of democratic socialism that was discussed in Chapter 6.

	Similarities to democratic socialism	Differences from democratic socialism
Marxism:		
Leninism:		
Stalinism:		

- 3 Explain how Soviet communism could be viewed as a rejection of liberal values.

Exploring Nazi Fascism

Question for Inquiry

2. How was fascism in Nazi Germany a rejection of liberalism?

In this section ...



▲ **Figure 7-13** This photo shows Nazis rounding up books to burn in Hamburg, Germany, in 1933. Why do you think a government would burn some books and not others?

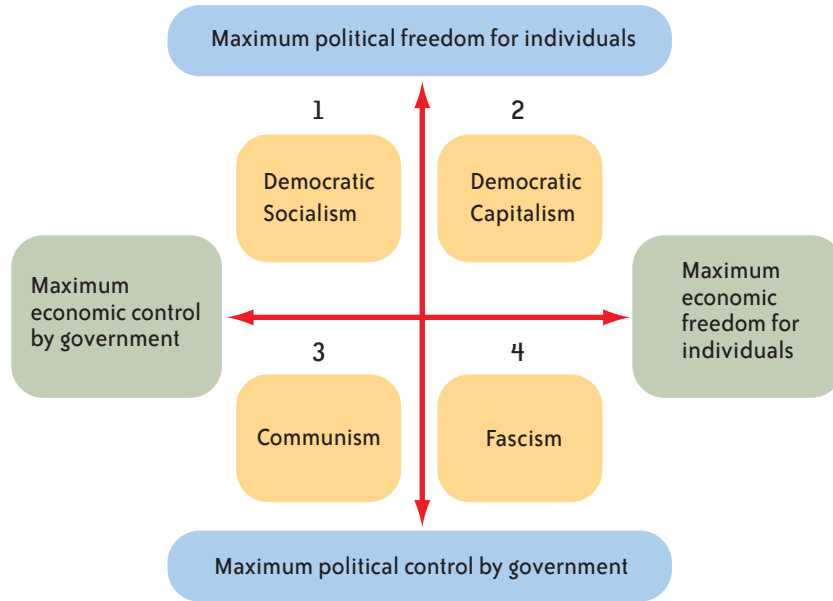
Have you ever wondered what society would be like if you were not allowed to think for yourself or express what was on your mind? There have been many governments, including the fascists of Nazi Germany, that have tried to take the freedoms of thought and expression away from their citizens. The Nazis attempted to control what German citizens believed by controlling the ideas to which they were exposed. This went against the idea of individual freedoms, a central concept of liberalism.

Understandings of Fascism

Political Ideas	Economic Ideas	Social Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cult of the leader and elite rule• extreme nationalism• organized violence and war and military force• it is in the country's national interest to expand its territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a government-directed private enterprise economy to serve the needs and interests of the state• anti-union/anti-workers' rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inequalities between individuals and groups of people• racial purity• racial or national superiority• national strength more important than individual rights

Source: A. Ebenstein, W. Ebenstein, and E. Fogelman, *Today's Isms: Socialism, Capitalism, Fascism, Communism* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1994), pp. 79–109.

Figure 7-14 ▲ Fascism of the 20th century. Look at Figure 7-3 on page 162. What similarities and differences do you see between fascism and communism?



◀ **Figure 7-15** Political-economic grid based on the degree of economic and political freedom or government control favoured by particular ideologies

Source: Adapted from David J. Rees, *Global Systems* (Edmonton, AB: Arnold Publishing, 1999), p. 24.

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was the first to use the term **fascism** when he became leader of Italy in 1922. Mussolini was Italy's leader until he was overthrown in 1943. The word *fascism* comes from the Italian word *fascio* and the Latin word *fasces*, meaning sticks bundled around an axe, which was an ancient Roman symbol of power and authority.

Fascism was a response to liberal democracy and its economic and political ideas, such as capitalism and democracy. Fascists rejected some liberal values, such as democracy and individual rights and freedoms, and some communist values, such as egalitarianism and the empowerment of the working classes. In general, fascism rejected liberal political ideas and communist economic ideas while proposing radical social ideas incompatible with both liberalism and communism.

After the end of the First World War, fascism grew in popularity, especially in Italy and Germany, where people began rejecting liberal values. Many felt that the values of liberalism had, in part, resulted in the devastating war. From a fascist perspective, democratic governments seemed weak, unstable, and unable to solve the social, economic, and political problems that some countries faced after the First World War.

A key principle of fascism is the belief that society as a whole has a shared purpose (for example, rebuilding the country). Fascists want their particular nation-state to dominate other nations in the world. They are also very aware of ethnic and cultural group distinctions (for example, Aryans or Jews). They believe that their goal of dominating other peoples can be achieved only through discipline, obedience, and the creation of an all-powerful state.



▲ **Figure 7-16** Social Darwinists adopted and interpreted ideas by Charles Darwin, such as the idea of “the survival of the fittest” as a part of their own ideological beliefs and values. They applied Darwin’s ideas not only to the animal world, but also to human societies, cultures, and “races.” What does the cartoonist suggest Darwin’s views would have been about using his scientific ideas to justify ideological ideas behind laissez-faire capitalism and eugenics?

Social Darwinism

In his book *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Charles Darwin (1809–1882) proposed the popular notion that animals evolve through competition and natural selection. The strongest and fittest survive, and the weak do not. Some people argued that Darwin’s theory also applied to societies, cultures, and “races.” A new ideology called **social Darwinism** developed, which promotes the notion that some individuals or groups achieve power and advantage over others because they are stronger and fitter. In the 1800s, these theories were used to support liberal beliefs such as laissez-faire capitalism and political conservatism. According to social Darwinists, people or governments who try to reform society interfere with the natural order of

things. As well, dividing people into different classes was justified by the argument that there are “natural” inequalities among individuals.

Related to social Darwinism, eugenics is an ideology based on the “improvement” of the human species through selective breeding or genocide. As such, it proposes that societies should promote the reproduction of people with certain traits (for example, geniuses, athletes) and discourage the reproduction of others with “less desirable” traits (for example, people with illnesses or mental or physical disabilities).

Some fascists adopted the ideas of social Darwinism and eugenics and used them to justify policies that discriminated against some individuals and groups, often with violence. The idea of “the survival of the fittest” was also adopted by fascists. It motivated them to make their nation-states as strong as possible, as they believed that all countries were in a struggle for survival with one another.

As with other ideologies, there have been different interpretations of how to best practise fascist beliefs and values in a society. Next, you will explore the most powerful fascist society of the 20th century: Nazi Germany.

Setting the Stage for Fascism in Germany

When a system based on the ideas of classical liberalism created political, economic, and social problems in the 1800s and early 1900s, some people looked to other ideologies for answers. After the First World War and the imposition of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was left in ruins. When the Great Depression hit the world after the American stock market crash in October 1929, the German people were suffering and the country was in a political and economic crisis.

The Treaty of Versailles and the End of the First World War

After being unified as one country in 1871 by Otto von Bismarck, Germany was well on its way to presenting a formidable challenge to Europe’s other

major powers. The First World War did not end the way that Germany had hoped, however. When Germany's new liberal democratic government, the Weimar Republic, was forced to accept the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, a chain reaction was started in Germany that led to a number of crises.

The Treaty of Versailles was very harsh on Germany: 414 of its 440 clauses were aimed at punishing Germany for "all the loss and damage" of the war. (Source: "Peace Treaty of Versailles," Article 231. The World War I Document Archive, Brigham Young University Library, <http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/versa7.html>.) The Treaty included the following terms:

- Germany must give up some of its own territory and all of its overseas colonies.
- Germany must accept responsibility for causing all loss and damage to Allied governments.
- Germany must pay the equivalent of 20 000 000 000 gold marks (approximately US\$4.5 billion at the time) in reparations to Allied governments between 1919 and 1921, and an additional 80 000 000 000 gold marks (with interest) after this time.

Growing Instability

Although Germany was forced to accept the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, it could not afford to pay the reparations that the Treaty demanded. In 1923, Germany simply stopped paying.



▲ **Figure 7-17** Germany is shown being crushed by all the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

Date	German Marks for Each American Dollar
December 1918	1 US dollar equal to 8.25 German marks
December 1919	1 US dollar equal to 48 German marks
December 1920	1 US dollar equal to 73 German marks
December 1921	1 US dollar equal to 192 German marks
December 1922	1 US dollar equal to 7 590 German marks
June 1923	1 US dollar equal to 110 000 German marks
September 1923	1 US dollar equal to 99 000 000 German marks
October 1923	1 US dollar equal to 25 000 000 000 German marks
November 1923	1 US dollar equal to 2 160 000 000 000 German marks
December 1923	1 US dollar equal to 4 200 000 000 000 German marks

Source: Bernd Widdig, *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), p. 42.

◀ **Figure 7-18** The more marks to the dollar, the less the marks are worth. To put this in context, in September 1923, one pint (0.47L) of milk cost 250 000 marks. At that same time, in the United States, a pint of milk cost only US\$0.05.



Figure 7-19 ▲ The shaded areas represent land lost by Germany in the First World War under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were accepted by Germany's liberal democratic government of the Weimar Republic.

At the same time, the German mark (the currency in Germany) dropped in value because the German government had irresponsibly been printing massive amounts of money. As a result of these and other conditions, the German people faced hyperinflation. Prices increased drastically at the same time that the mark lost its value.

The Weimar Republic (post-First World War Germany) faced some of the most serious economic problems ever experienced by a liberal democracy. Uncontrollable hyperinflation, massive unemployment, and a large drop in living standards were the primary economic problems in Germany in the 1920s. The Depression of the 1930s led to a worldwide recession. Germany was particularly affected because it depended heavily on American loans, which ended as a result of the Depression. By 1932, more than 5 million Germans were unemployed. Many blamed the democratic German government for not effectively addressing

these economic problems.

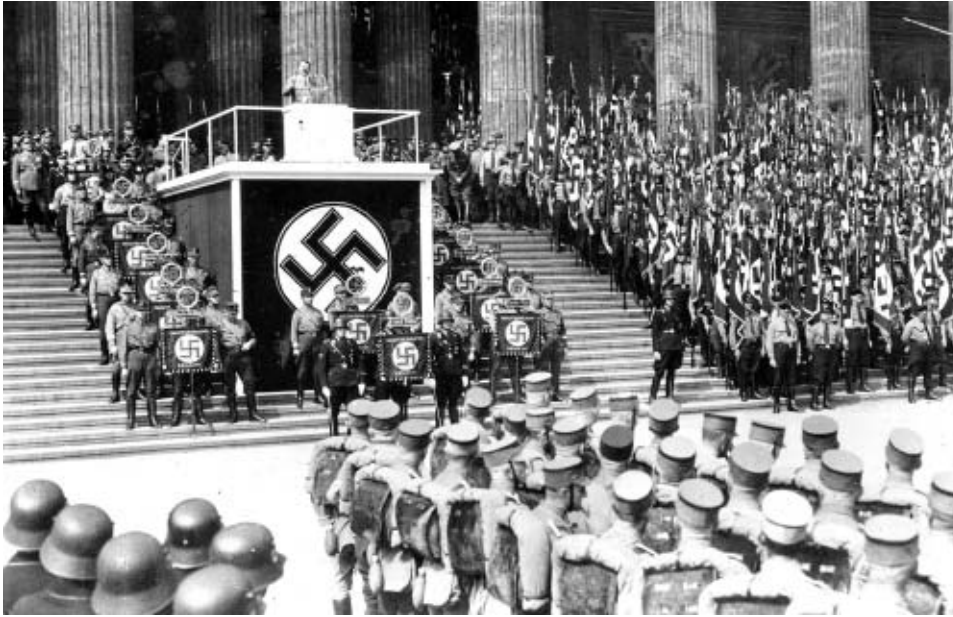
Political chaos developed in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s. There was no clear leadership and no strong leader. The Weimar Republic lost support with many Germans because it had accepted the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. Many rival political groups were trying to change the government. Various political parties were formed as a response, including the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazi Party.

Economic and political problems were definitely factors that contributed to the rise of Adolf Hitler and fascism in Germany, but there was also an underlying fear and hatred of communism among many business owners and landowners throughout the country. Europeans had witnessed Russia turn into a communist country through the Revolution of 1917. Many did not want their own countries to experience a similar revolution.

The German people began to question whether liberal values and practices could solve their problems. Those who had seen their life savings wiped out by hyperinflation in the early 1920s were ready to listen to new ideas that rejected liberalism. The multi-party liberal democracy did not seem to be working in Germany. As the Depression continued, the lives of everyday German people deteriorated and unemployment skyrocketed. Germans looked desperately for a solution.

Hitler and the Rise of Nazism

During the 1920s, Hitler began his rise to power in the Nazi Party. He started by giving lectures to promote his ideas, but by 1923 he had decided that the Nazi Party would need to seize power by force. After his attempt to take over the government by force failed, he was tried and sent to jail, and the Nazi Party was banned. While in prison, Hitler wrote a book describing his understandings of fascism that would influence the fascist movement in Germany for years to come. The book was called *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*).



◀ **Figure 7-20** The swastika is a symbol that has been used in many cultures and historical periods, but always with different meanings. It was used as an official emblem of the Nazi Party, as seen in the banners displayed during this Nazi parade in 1933.

By 1925, Hitler promised to use only legal means to promote his politics and was released from prison. The ban on the Nazi Party was also lifted, and within two years, support for the party had grown. Its political battles for power once again turned violent as members of the Nazi Party fought with members of the Communist Party of Germany in bloody street fights.

Hitler blamed Germany's economic, political, and social problems on a variety of scapegoats (see page 178 for a list of groups who were persecuted by Hitler and the Nazis) as a means of achieving more support for his party. The Weimar government, communists, the Jewish population, and other minority groups in Germany became targets of blame for Germany's problems. When a country is in trouble, people tend to be more willing to accept extreme ideas, including blaming others for their problems. Support for the Nazis continued to grow.

Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany, leader of the democratically elected government, on January 30, 1933. On February 27, 1933, Hitler and the Nazis were presented with an opportunity. The German Parliament building, the Reichstag, was on fire, and a member of the Communist Party was found inside. Hitler believed that this was his chance to use the people's fear of communism as a means to gain complete control of Germany. The fire was blamed on the communists to build on people's fears that there was a plot underway to start a communist revolution in Germany.

Due to public and political concerns, a snap election was called and the Nazis became the party with the most seats in the German Parliament; therefore, the Nazi Party formed the government. Soon after, Hitler passed the Enabling Act, and all political opposition was wiped out, along with many individual rights and freedoms. Germany ceased to be a democratic country and became a dictatorship.



Hitler on Communism

Hitler played on the Germans' fear of communism and painted a bleak picture of what might happen if communists were to gain power in Germany.

"Communism with its method of madness is making a powerful and insidious attack upon our dismayed and shattered nation...Beginning with the family, it has undermined the very foundations of morality and faith and scoffs at culture and business, nation and Fatherland, justice and honour.

Fourteen years of Marxism [referring to the previous liberal democratic government of the Weimar Republic] have ruined Germany; one year of bolshevism [communism] would destroy her. The richest and fairest territories of the world would be turned into a smoking heap of ruins. Even the sufferings of the last decade and a half could not be compared to the misery of a Europe in the heart of which the red flag of destruction had been hoisted."

—Adolf Hitler, "Berlin: Proclamation to the German People,"
speech given on February 1, 1933. Hitler Historical Museum,
<http://www.hitler.org/speeches/02-01-33.html>.

1 Explain which elements of society Hitler believed communism "destroyed."

Hitler the Dictator

Hitler created his own form of fascism, **Nazism**. His ideological approach to fascism included the belief that there was one superior race, the Aryans. To ensure the support of the German people, Hitler used such techniques as the following:

- propaganda
- youth movements
- the elimination of his opposition
- the use of terror and force (the SA [*Sturmabteilung*] storm troopers and later the SS [*Schutzstaffel*])
- scapegoats (for example, the Jewish population, communists, the Weimar government)

These techniques encouraged the rejection of the political values of liberalism in Germany. Hitler used his own version of fascism to take away individual rights and freedoms from people he did not deem part of his ideal society. Hitler and the Nazis persecuted many different groups in German society, including the Jewish population, the Roma people (sometimes negatively referred to as Gypsies), people with mental or physical disabilities, homosexuals, and anyone whose political beliefs were opposed to their rule (for example, communists, feminist groups, democratic socialists).

The Jewish people became the biggest target of Hitler's blame. They were a main scapegoat for everything that was wrong with Germany, even though they accounted for less than 1 per cent of the German population. Hitler's hatred for Jews was well detailed in *Mein Kampf*. Hitler believed that the northern European "Aryans" were the superior race and that the Jewish peoples and others were inferior and needed to be removed so that

PAUSE AND REFLECT

What similarities and differences exist between Hitler's and Stalin's use of dictatorship techniques?



◀ **Figure 7-21** Prisoners, most of them Jews, stand on a train platform at the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944. Passengers sent to the right were sentenced to slave labour; passengers sent to the left went to gas chambers.

Germany could become as strong as possible. When he became Germany's leader, Hitler began to act on his hatred. He passed the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 with the intention of defining who the Jewish people were and how to ensure the preservation of "pure Aryan" Germans, or the "master race."

Further persecution of the Jewish people occurred on November 9 and 10, 1938, which is known as Kristallnacht (Night of the Broken Glass). Sparked by the assassination of a Nazi German official in Paris by a 17-year-old Jewish youth, a riot erupted across Germany. Nazi officials and many of their supporters went on a rampage, vandalizing and burning the shops, homes, and synagogues of German Jews. Many Jews were beaten, and 91 were killed, and around 30 000 Jews were sent to concentration camps.

The internment and death of over six million Jewish people in Nazi concentration camps was to follow in what has come to be known as the Holocaust. Millions of other people were also persecuted and killed, including



PAUSE AND REFLECT

Think about the idea that Stalin "felt it was necessary to make the USSR strong before spreading communism to other countries." Did Hitler feel the same way about fascism? Did any one leader "spread" liberalism, or did it spread on its own?

Techniques of Dictatorships

- Censoring the media, for example, writers and artists, and controlling participation
- Glorifying the leader and his accomplishments
- Rewriting curriculum and textbooks to portray the glory of the nation and the leader
- Finding an enemy (scapegoat) to blame for the suffering of the country and directing popular (people's) discontent
- Holding rallies, giving powerful speeches, and creating youth movements to teach "accepted" values
- Using propaganda, indoctrination, terror and force
- Using the military or police, and violence, to create a climate of fear
- Removing leaders or parties that pose a threat to the dictator
- Imprisoning or exiling dissidents (those who oppose the dictator) and not allowing **dissent** (speaking out against the government)
- Holding elections in which it is impossible for people to vote for anyone else
- Eliminating opposition, that is, having only one party in power

◀ **Figure 7-22**

Polish people, Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's Witnesses, and anyone, including German civilians, who opposed the Nazi Party's beliefs or values. Many believe that over 14 million people were killed in the Holocaust created by Hitler and his government.

Ultimately, Nazism rejected the political values of liberalism by creating a dictatorship that limited people's freedoms. Individuals did not have a place in a fascist society unless they were serving the state. Rights and freedoms were not important values that Hitler was interested in preserving. The state and only the state became the primary concern of Hitler's Nazi Party. All liberal values that went against the state were rejected.

Summary

Fascists proposed that individuals should not be treated as equals, because they believed that some people are weaker than others. They also embraced the idea that humans and nations are in competition with one another for survival. **Fascism**, which arose in opposition to liberalism and communism, emphasizes the importance of the state and proposes that individuals sacrifice their self-interests for the good of the state. An extreme and militaristic nationalism is key to fascism, sometimes leading the way to genocide. Loss of individual rights is enforced by an authoritarian state led by a dictator exerting total control over people's political and economic lives. The rise of fascism in the 20th century is, in part, a response to the belief that liberalism was unable to address the needs of citizens in times of suffering after the First World War and during the Great Depression.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler took advantage of a dire economic situation and political turmoil to promote his radical ideas. The rise of the Nazi Party relied on the desperation, fear, and vulnerability of the German people, who were looking for a solution to the deterioration of their country and way of life. Hitler's Nazi Party used a number of techniques, such as propaganda, the elimination of opposition, terror, and force, to transform German society into one that no longer embraced individual rights and freedoms and the democratic values of liberalism. Once a **dictatorship** was established, the Nazi government could use any policies or practices it wished to achieve its goals, including the practice of killing the millions of people that it blamed for Germany's troubles.

Knowledge and Understanding

- 1

List five different techniques of dictatorship that Hitler used to gain and hold onto power in Germany. Provide an example of each technique, and explain how each technique rejects the political values of liberalism.
- 2

Explain why Hitler rejected many communist ideas and allowed some of the economic ideas of liberalism and capitalism to exist in Nazi Germany. What economic liberal values did he not reject? Why?
- 3

Consider the results of Hitler's rejection of the political values of liberalism and his support of some of its economic ideas. Nazi Germany overpowered much of Europe, and economic conditions in Germany improved for a time. At the same time, millions of people were killed, including an estimated 14 million people in the Holocaust. How much individual freedom would you be willing to sacrifice for what a government tells you is for the greater good?

Industrialization: Stalin's Five-Year Plans

Something to Think About:

How did Stalin's rejection of liberal values affect his people?

An Example:

Stalin had his own interpretation of Marxism. In fact, if Marx had been alive during Stalin's time, he might not have recognized his own ideas in Stalin's version of communism. Stalin's interpretation of communism was very much influenced by his desire to maintain absolute power and control. This developed into a **personality cult**, which is when a leader uses a variety of media to establish his or her status as a national hero. It is this desire for control that drove many of his policies and style of dictatorial communism. His economic policies included Five-Year Plans, which involved

- the collectivization of agriculture
- rapid industrialization
- control by the government's economic planning committee, Gosplan

Thus, as a part of his Five-Year Plans, Stalin used the people to achieve what he thought the Soviet Union desperately needed: industrialization. In 1928, he began the first of his Five-Year Plans to industrialize the Soviet Union as quickly as possible. Emphasis was placed on heavy industry, such as steel, coal, and machinery. Stalin pursued any means that would help the Soviet Union catch up to more industrialized countries. The effects of Stalin's "catch up" plan were devastating for citizens of the Soviet Union.

To help pay for this industrialization and to force people into factories, Stalin decided that all farms needed to be collectively owned. In other words, public ownership of land was necessary because people would never work hard for the state if they still owned their own land. Stalin believed that land worked collectively would be more efficiently worked, thus increasing productivity.

Stalin wanted to stomp out any capitalistic elements in his communist society. In particular, Stalin focused on the kulaks, the richer landowning peasants in the Soviet Union. To speed up the process of collectivizing agriculture, many kulaks were killed or exiled to the Gulag prison camps in Siberia.

Stalin's forced collectivization was deadly for many Soviet citizens, particularly in Ukraine. Famines started all over the Soviet Union once Stalin forced the peasants to hand over the grain produced on collective farms. The grain was mostly exported, and the proceeds of the exports contributed to Stalin's industrialization program by buying equipment and food for industrial workers. Stalin even exported this life-saving grain from Ukraine so he could generate foreign currency funds. Millions of people starved as crops were exported to pay for the industrialization program.

Stalin's Desire to Industrialize

Stalin's first Five-Year Plan harmed many people. Nevertheless, he pursued his idea of building up the Soviet Union industrially. He was determined to establish communism as the ideology that was going to bring his country into the modern industrial age.

Production	1927	1933	1937
Electricity (million kilowatts)	1.698	5.583	8.235
Coal (million tons)	32.3	76.3	128.0
Oil and Gas (million tons) (Crude Oil Production)	10.3	21.5	28.5
Iron (million tons)	5.0	14.5	27.8
Steel (million tons)	3.6	6.9	17.7

▲ **Figure 7-23** Electricity, Coal, Oil and Gas, Iron, and Steel Production in 1927, 1933, and 1937. Historians have found that Stalin's statistics overstated the increase in production by about 30 per cent. The statisticians did not dare report the true increases as Stalin wanted everyone to believe that his Five-Year Plans were a remarkable success. Anyone who found otherwise would likely have been sentenced to hard labour in a Siberian prison camp.

Source: Roger A. Clarke and Dubravko J. I. Matko, *Soviet Economic Facts, 1917–1981* (London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1983), pp. 83–84, 86, 89, 91.

Stalin's reign as the leader of the Soviet Union was quite controversial. He pushed the citizens of the Soviet Union into the modern industrial age and created one of the two superpowers of the last half of the 20th century; however, he did this at the expense of innocent lives and by ignoring basic human rights.

Questions for Reflection

- 1 Look at the results of Stalin's rejection of liberalism. In what ways did Stalin's economic policies benefit and harm the people of the Soviet Union?
- 2 Stalin's personality cult resulted in the rewriting of history and in the editing of many images, including of those that contained himself. What criteria do you think Stalin would have used to decide what to remove from Soviet history? What significance do you think the selection of items to be re-written would have had on their future historical significance in the Soviet Union and Russia?
- 3 How is Stalin's reworking of history a rejection of some liberal values? Was this rejection of liberalism in any way justifiable?
- 4 A historical event or past leader's actions can be interpreted in different ways over time. According to *Time* magazine, "Joseph Stalin is an old communist tyrant who has been reinvented as a modern Russian hero." (Source: Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Time*, Canadian edition, "His Place in History." December 31, 2007/January 7, 2008, p. 62.) How is this reinvention possible? On what positive Stalin legacies are modern-day Russians focusing? How might Stalin's actions be justified by those that see Stalin as a hero today?

FURTHER EXPLORATION

- 1 Imagine that you and your classmates are factory workers experiencing the horrible living and working conditions of the Industrial Revolution. As a class, write your own manifesto (program) against laissez-faire capitalism or classical liberalism. Start by brainstorming what potential issues could have resulted from society following classical liberal practices. Next, think about possible solutions.
- 2 Statement: When people are living in poverty and struggling to provide for themselves and their families, they are more likely to be Marxist. When people are financially comfortable, they tend to embrace liberal values such as capitalism.
 - a) Do you think there is some truth to this statement? Explain your answer.
 - b) This statement could apply to Karl Marx, who lost three children to poor nutrition and health due to poverty; however, Friedrich Engels, Marx's colleague, was a wealthy man. Why might a member of the bourgeoisie embrace an ideology that rejected classical liberalism?
 - c) To what extent do you think that people who have suffered themselves may place a greater value on meeting the needs of all people in society? Explain your answer and support it with examples.
- 3 Consider Stalin's and Hitler's rejections of liberalism.
 - a) How and why did Stalin and Hitler reject liberalism? How did they use communism and fascism to do so?
 - b) In what ways could Stalin's and Hitler's rejections of liberalism be seen as failures?
 - c) **To what extent is communism or fascism a valid response to liberalism?** Explain your answer with reasons and support. Include as a part of your support an example of a contemporary leader who is applying his or her interpretation of communism or fascism today and to what extent he or she is doing so successfully. Select a contemporary leader that you believe is having or will likely have a significant historical impact because of his or her beliefs, values, and actions.
- 4
 - a) Should Canadians be concerned that other countries might adopt extreme ideologies if a major world crisis such as the Great Depression were to happen again? Explain your answer.
 - b) Do you think that Canadians as a people would ever adopt ideologies such as communism or fascism? Explain your answer.

Chapter Summary and Reflection

In this chapter, **communism** and **fascism** were explored as ideologies embraced in reaction to the effects of liberalism. For various economic, political, and social reasons, leaders in the Soviet Union and Germany rejected liberal values in the early 20th century.

In Russia, Vladimir Lenin attempted to solve his country's economic and social problems by basing society on the value of equality, a value that was not present under the czar's rule. He met resistance, however, within Russia and internationally, leading to a bloody battle for control that divided the country. Lenin's victory, and then his death, led to Joseph Stalin's leadership of the Soviet Union. Stalin's interpretation of communism and his methods for applying his beliefs resulted in a brutal **dictatorship** in which he rejected liberal political ideas, such as democracy and individual freedoms, and liberal economic ideas, such as capitalism.

In Germany, Adolph Hitler offered the people of Germany extreme solutions to an extreme situation. Based on the fundamental beliefs of fascism, such as the survival

of the fittest and the inequalities among people, Hitler led the development of **Nazism**. Nazism promoted a hatred of minorities and the glorification of a nation of Aryan Germans. When Hitler and the Nazi Party gained control of the German government, a **dictatorship** was established and liberal freedoms were abolished. The liberal value of individualism was exchanged for the fascist value of the all-important state.

Is resistance to liberalism justified? In answering this question, consider whether or not it is possible for one ideology to provide all the answers to all the problems that society encounters. If there were one ideology with all the answers, would every country embrace it? What role do the leaders who interpret the ideology play? What effect does the state of the economy have on a people's ideology? How does one country's relationship with others influence the ideology accepted by its people? If resistance to liberalism can be justified, how does this influence your response to the Chapter Issue: *To what extent is communism or fascism a valid response to liberalism?*