

Student Background Information/Timeline

How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?

In October 1929, the greatest worldwide depression in history began in the United States. Over the next several weeks, the depression would spread to most parts of the world. Millions of people, particularly those in war-ravaged Europe, lost their jobs and endured hardships that were previously unknown. Without the help of loans from U.S. banks, Germany was unable to make its World War I reparation payments to France and Britain. As a result, France and Britain were unable to make their payments to the United States. Economies across the world collapsed.

As the Great Depression rolled on with no end in sight, many people began to lose faith in the ability of democratic governments to solve the problems of their world. People in Europe, in particular, had reached a point of utter despair. The sense of misery and hopelessness they suffered from forced them to turn in another direction for leadership: the totalitarian leader. Italy, the Soviet Union, and Germany were three states in which totalitarian leaders came to power in the 1920s and 1930s. In all three instances, the leaders (Benito Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, and Adolf Hitler) promoted nationalism and extreme programs that resulted in tremendous social and economic changes. These changes helped to create stable governments, greater discipline, jobs for the masses, and a sense of pride among the population. But they also came at a horrible cost. In return, those totalitarian leaders demanded total control of every aspect of the lives of their citizens and blind devotion from them as well. The totalitarian leaders also used their power to hunt down and systematically murder whole groups of people they considered to be “undesirable.” They were able to keep their power through the use of secret police, the military, and fear tactics.

As you examine the following documents, keep this question in mind: How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?

- 1922: Benito Mussolini comes to power in Italy
- 1924: Joseph Stalin comes to power in the Soviet Union
- October 1929: the beginning of the Great Depression
- 1928: Stalin launches his first Five Year Plan
- 1932: Stalin's ruthless policies (along with seasonal crop failure) results in the death of millions of Soviet citizens, especially peasants
- 1933 – Adolf Hitler comes to power in Germany
- 1935 – the Nazi Party passes the Nuremberg Laws, limiting the rights of Jews
- 1936 – Germany occupies the Rhineland, land taken from Germany following World War I

Document A (excerpted)

By the 1930s, Benito Mussolini needed some military victories to prove Italy's greatness to its people and the rest of the world. He set his sights on Abyssinia (known as Ethiopia today), in Eastern Africa. He launched a full invasion of the country in 1935.

I have attempted in the **foregoing** paragraphs to resume in the briefest possible manner the main features of the Italian war effort on sea, on land, in the air and in the field of economics and finance. There remains the home front proper, which is mainly concerned with the feelings and reactions of the population as a whole. I have in previous **dispatches** given in some detail accounts of the development of public opinion in this country. In the early part of the year the Abyssinian adventure was by no means generally popular throughout Italy – in many **quarter**, indeed, it was the reverse. The position is changed today. After one month of war in East Africa, the whole of the Italian people stand, as I have said, solidly behind their leader, and the general feeling is one of single and **fervent** loyalty to Italy.... The intervention of **the League**, which is, of course, in Italian eyes, the intervention of Great Britain, has indeed had the most remarkable effect. The Abyssinian adventure is now widely popular, and the threat of **sanctions** has unified the Italian people to a degree, which has astonished many observers.

Source: *Dispatch from the British ambassador in Rome, Sir Eric Drummond, on the opinion of the Italian people, November 1935*



Word Bank:

foregoing – previously stated

dispatches – messages

quarter – places

fervent – glowing, enthusiastic

League – the League of Nations

sanctions – action by one or more states toward another state to force it to comply with legal obligations

Full Text Available: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesvillains/q3/cs2/q3cs2s3.htm>

Document B

Much of Adolf Hitler's popularity after coming to power rested on his achievements in foreign policy. A recurring theme in Nazi propaganda before 1939 was that Hitler was a man of peace, but one who was determined to recover German territories 'lost' as a result of the Versailles Treaty of 1919, drawn up at the end of World War One.



Source: German propaganda, “The seed of peace, not dragon’s teeth” cartoon of Adolf Hitler, from the magazine *Kladderadatsch*, March 22, 1936

Full Source Available: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/nazi_propaganda_gallery_02.shtml

Document C

Gareth Jones visited Germany on three occasions during 1933-1934, witnessing rallies where Adolf Hitler spoke, and, at one point, being granted an interview with the Fuhrer himself. This excerpt attempts to explain the country's hatred of Jews.

One day a leading Nazi said to me: "I tremble when I think of England. You are on the verge of a **precipice** and nothing but ruin awaits you. Do you know why?"

I waited for the reply, and it came "You are doomed because of the Jews who are working your downfall."

I almost rubbed my eyes. Here was a man of influence in the government of Germany, and he was talking in the terms of the Middle Ages.... his eyes sparkled as he **enumerated** the sins of the Jews. As I listened to him I felt as if I had been transported back many centuries, to an age of witchcraft and black magic, so unreal was his description of the Hebrew race.

The most brutal and also the **pettiest** methods are adopted to drum hatred of the Jews into the German people. As I was walking down ... a main street in Berlin, a newspaper boy shouted, "Buy the 'Aryan Review.'" I bought it, and discovered that it was wholly devoted to proving that the Jews were the leaders of the forces of evil and the originators of wars, and that God wished the Germanic Aryans to be the lighters for idealism in the world.

Why are the Nazis determined to treat the Jews as an inferior people and to deprive them of posts? The first reason is that the Nazi philosophy is based upon the supremacy of the Aryan race. Hitler writes in *My Struggle*:

"Everything which we see in human civilization, in achievements of art, science, and engineering, is almost exclusively the creative production of the Aryan."

With one sentence he sweeps Japanese art, Chinese philosophy, and Jewish science, the achievements of an Einstein or the healing of Jewish doctors, into the wastepaper basket. The facts that the Germans are a people of mixed origin are brushed aside scornfully, for Hitler has spoken and Hitler is always right.

Secondly, Nazis justify themselves by religious arguments for persecuting the Jews. One pamphlet tells you that the Nazis are the true defenders of Christianity, for it is the Nazis who fight the Jews, thus fighting the enemies of Christianity!

Source: Excerpts from Gareth Jones, a young Welsh investigative journalist, "Campaign of Hatred Against the Jews," June 7, 1933.

Word Bank:

precipice – a situation of great peril

enumerated – named one by one

pettiest – of little or no importance

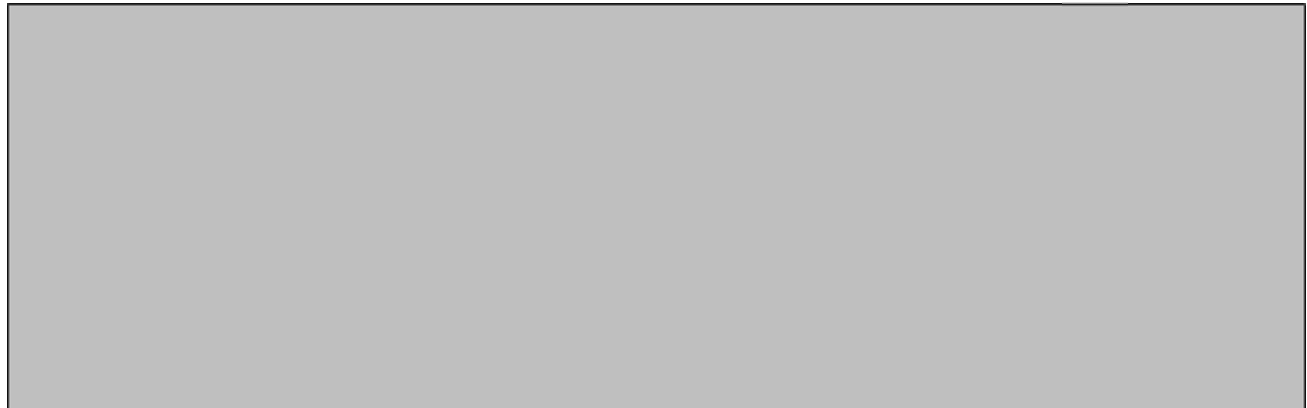
Document D

*Joseph Stalin became the undisputed leader of the USSR (Soviet Union) in 1929. He took control of all farms, made workers give most of their produce to the government, and he sent uncooperative citizens to **gulags**. Many people who opposed Stalin's programs were imprisoned or executed, and people lived in fear that some neighbor or co-worker might turn them into Stalin's secret police.*

You see you may remember that from about 1929 to about 1933, the Soviet Union carried out two extremely interesting and tragic **campaigns**. One was the so-called **liquidation** of the Kulaks (well-off peasants). Now by the way, liquidation meant liquidation – was a real true physical liquidation. Parallel to this and on the basis of this liquidation a forced **collectivization** was carried out....

Secondly you will recall that in 1933-34 there were so-called party **purges**. The **party** had some kind of critical mind, independent mind, who questioned the wisdom of this collectivization and liquidation of Kulaks. Now these purges freed the party and I must add here the party was and still is the only part, it was the ruling party. It was the party who ran the state. Now that party was freed of its most brilliant personnel members, the thinking part. That too affected the state of affairs. You will see my conclusion in a second. Then you will recall that on December 1, 1934, a member of **Politburo**, Kirov, was assassinated. From then onwards, until about the end of 1939, the USSR was a country, or the country of notorious show trials and extremely unusual but dreadfully tragic – err – I don't really know, people in the West call it purges, but it's worse than purges, it was a national tragedy, its purpose being to eliminate not only from the party but from the whole state all those who had some kind of critical mind.

Source: Grigori Tokaty, a former Russian soldier speaking in a recorded interview in 1972, recalls Stalin's brutal policies in the 1930s.



Word Bank:

gulags – a system of forced labor camps

campaigns – military operations

liquidation – the elimination of

collectivization – process by which peasants had to give up their individual farms and join large, collective farms run by the government

purges– military operations designed to eliminate disloyal people

party – a group gathered for a special purpose (in this case, Communists)

Politburo – chief policymaking body of the Communist Party

Full Text Available: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesvillains/q4/cs2/q4cs2s5.htm>

Name _____ Period _____

Document Chart - How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?

Document A: Dispatch from the British ambassador in Rome

First Read: Paying close attention to the source and context of the document, answer the questions, using <u>text evidence</u> whenever possible.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sourcing: Who is the audience for this document?2. Sourcing: What is the purpose the document?3. Contextualization: The British ambassador says public opinion on the war changed within a month. Why do you think that may be?
Second Read: Provide <u>text evidence</u> to support your answer to the framing question: <i>How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?</i>	

Document B: German propaganda

First View: Paying close attention to the source and context of the document, answer the questions, using <u>evidence</u> whenever possible.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sourcing: Who is the audience for this document?2. Sourcing: What is the purpose the document?3. Contextualization: In 1936, the same year this propaganda was published, Germany occupied the Rhineland, land taken from Germany following World War I. How might that event have influenced this piece of propaganda?
Second View: Provide <u>evidence</u> to support your answer to the framing question: <i>How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?</i>	

Document C: Gareth Jones report on Germany

First Read: Paying close attention to the source and context of the document, answer the questions, using <u>text evidence</u> whenever possible.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sourcing: Who is the audience for this document?2. Sourcing: What is the purpose the document?3. Contextualization: This was written in the year Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany (1933), a full six years before the beginning of WWII in Europe. How do you think other people should have responded (if at all) to news such as this?
Second Read: Provide <u>text evidence</u> to support your answer to the framing question: <i>How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?</i>	

Document D: Interview with former Russian soldier

First Read: Paying close attention to the source and context of the document, answer the questions, using <u>text evidence</u> whenever possible.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sourcing: Who is the audience for this document?2. Sourcing: What is the purpose the document?3. Contextualization: This interview was conducted in 1972, several decades after Stalin's death. Why would Tokaty wait until 1972 to share this information?
Second Read: Provide <u>text evidence</u> to support your answer to the framing question: <i>How did totalitarian leaders gain the support of their people?</i>	