

Adolf Hitler Comes to Power



Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi Party, making a speech.

By the year Anne Frank was born, 1929, life in Germany had become very hard. Poverty and unemployment were at an all-time high, and most Germans were very dissatisfied with their government. A new party founded in 1920 called the German National Socialist Labor Party (NSDAP) was attracting increasing numbers of followers.

The leader of this organization, which was commonly known as the Nazi Party (derived from the German word *Nationalsozialistische*), was Adolf Hitler. Hitler believed that the German people were a superior race, stronger, more intelligent, and better than any other people in the world. Hitler promised that once this race regained control of the government and of the lands in other countries that Germany needed to survive and prosper, the German people would enjoy a beautiful future.

And who was responsible for the problems that now gripped Germany? In ranting speeches Hitler blamed the Jews, a degenerate race that was evil, dishonest, and dangerous to all Germans. This use of anti-Semitism was not new. Throughout history, Jews had been persecuted and discriminated against, and anti-Semitism still exists in countries around the world. But in 1929 this prejudice won strong support from people desperate to find a scapegoat for their troubles and to believe in their own power again.

By 1933 the Nazi Party was the largest party in Germany and Hitler was appointed to head the government. Now the real aims of the Nazis became clear. All parties except the Nazis were banned, democracy in Germany ceased to exist, and Hitler took control of every aspect of daily life in Germany. Anyone who opposed him was beaten or imprisoned. Soon the prisons were so overcrowded that new ones, called concentration camps, had to be built. These camps, heavily guarded and surrounded by high barbed-wire fences (usually electrified), were almost impossible to escape from. They held large

numbers of prisoners "concentrated" in small areas and living under inhuman conditions. Many Germans who opposed Hitler's policies kept quiet out of fear. But many more admired and blindly followed Hitler.

Hitler continued to inflame hatred of the Jews, launching a campaign of anti-Semitism on the radio, in newspapers, in films and more. He enacted laws against Jews, segregating Jewish schoolchildren, depriving Jews of jobs and property. And this was only the beginning.



On the night of November 9-10, 1938, Nazis throughout Germany went on a rampage, burning and smashing Jewish-owned shops and synagogues. That night was called "Kristallnacht," Crystal Night or the Night of Broken Glass. In the days that followed, about 30,000 Jewish men and boys were rounded up and taken to concentration camps.

Fleeing to Another Country

Jewish children on their way to England. Many parents sent their children ahead to safer countries, though the parents themselves would often be turned away, forced to remain in Germany.



The Frank family left Germany when Hitler came to power in 1933. Otto Frank, like thousands of others now fleeing Germany, was worried about the events taking place in his country. With the rising anti-Semitism, these new refugees suspected that for them life in Germany would become intolerable. However, many more decided to wait and see what Hitler would do next, hoping things would turn out all right. But the Nazis kept introducing more measures against their opponents and Jews. New laws were passed depriving them of their work, their money, and their freedom.

Over the next few years, thousands of German Jews tried to escape to other countries. But this became more

difficult every day. Refugees needed money, both for their journey and to gain entry into their new countries, many of which demanded that they already have jobs or their own income. But with Hitler taking control of Jewish businesses, this was often impossible. The governments of many countries, believing that the stories of persecution and the horrible conditions in concentration camps were exaggerated, began putting increasing restrictions on refugees. Some stopped accepting them altogether. Nevertheless, roughly 300,000 people, about half of the Jewish population, managed to escape Germany between 1933 and 1939.

Those who had no money, were too old or sick to travel, or could not pass the regulations for admittance, had to remain in Germany. For them, life became a nightmare. Humiliated on the streets and in school, deprived of their livelihoods, they saw every freedom taken away step by step, until they had no rights at all.



The station in Naarden. These Jewish refugees have just arrived in the Netherlands.

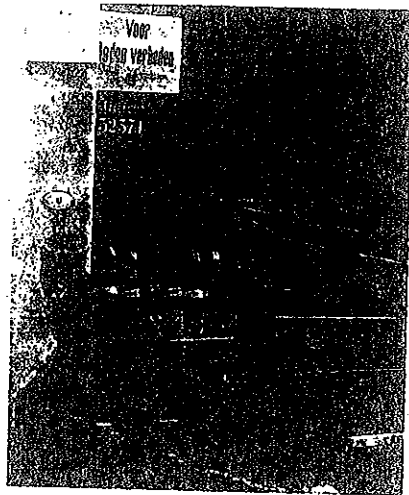
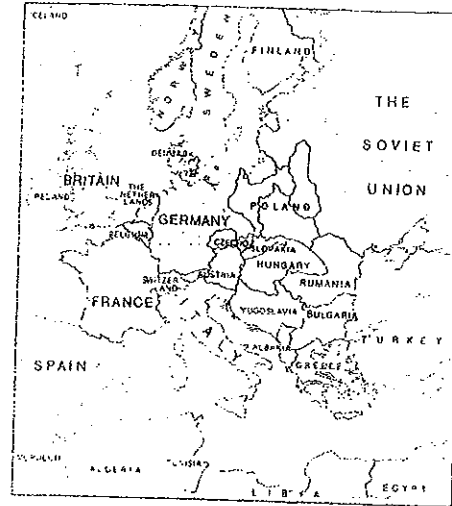
The Netherlands Is Occupied, the Persecution Begins

Germany in 1942

German allies

Axis-occupied territory

From 1942 to 1944, Germany continued its invasion of Europe and expanded its campaigns into North Africa and the Soviet Union; Germany was supported by Italy and Japan, known collectively as the Axis powers. They were opposed by the Allies, which included the United States, England, France, and the Soviet Union.



The sign in the window says "Forbidden to Jews." Such signs appeared throughout the Netherlands under the German occupation.

While the Frank family lived a fairly trouble-free life in the Netherlands, Hitler and his supporters went ahead with their plans in Germany. In 1933 Hitler began preparing the country for war. In 1938, the German Army occupied Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia. When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, England and France declared war. Yet the German advance continued, reaching the Netherlands on May 10, 1940. The Dutch government and the Royal Family fled to England. After the bombing of Rotterdam on May 14, which killed almost one thousand civilians, and the Germans' threat to bomb other cities, the Netherlands surrendered.

After the first few weeks of shock and panic, daily life for most people returned to normal. In the first year of the occupation, people went to work and attended school as usual, feeling that life was little changed under German rule.



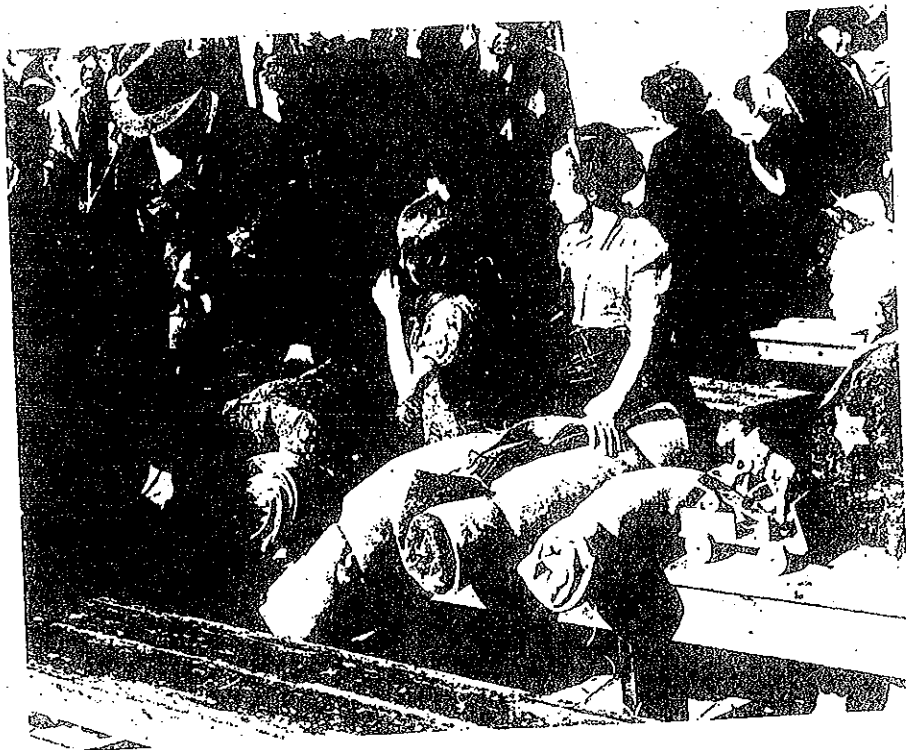
It was different for Jews. At the end of 1940, all Dutch people had to register with the authorities, so the Germans knew the names and addresses of all Dutch Jews. In November 1940, all Jewish civil servants were dismissed. The following year, all Dutch citizens were given an identity card, a sort of internal passport. The cards of Jews were stamped with a "J." With every Jew now easily identifiable, the same laws which had been enacted against Jews in Germany were steadily introduced in the Netherlands.

How did the non-Jewish population in the Netherlands respond? Most people did not oppose the new restrictions. Some were afraid of the German reaction. Others didn't think the measures were serious enough to risk defying. Most just hoped the war would soon be over.

In the meantime, many people stopped associating with Jews, fearing this was too dangerous. And that was exactly what the Germans wanted. As more anti-Jewish measures were passed, the people who could have helped the Jews let them grow isolated, while the Jews became powerless to help themselves. But what was the ultimate goal of these measures? That was a carefully kept secret.

From May 1942, all Jews aged six and above had to wear a yellow Star of David with the word "Jew" written in the middle, one of the measures designed to identify and isolate Jews.

Deportation of the Dutch Jews



Jews waiting for transport.

On Monday, June 29, 1942, every Dutch newspaper ran an announcement that the German occupiers had decided to deport all Jews to labor camps in Germany. The Jews in the Netherlands panicked: what would happen to them? What could they do? If they stayed home, they would be caught eventually, as the Germans had already recorded every Jew's name and address. Many Jews thought about going into hiding, but this was an enormously difficult undertaking.

On Sunday, July 5, a thousand Dutch Jews received a card commanding them to report to a given address. Margot Frank was one of this first group. Upon reporting to the address, each Jew was given a form stating when his or her train was leaving and what he or she

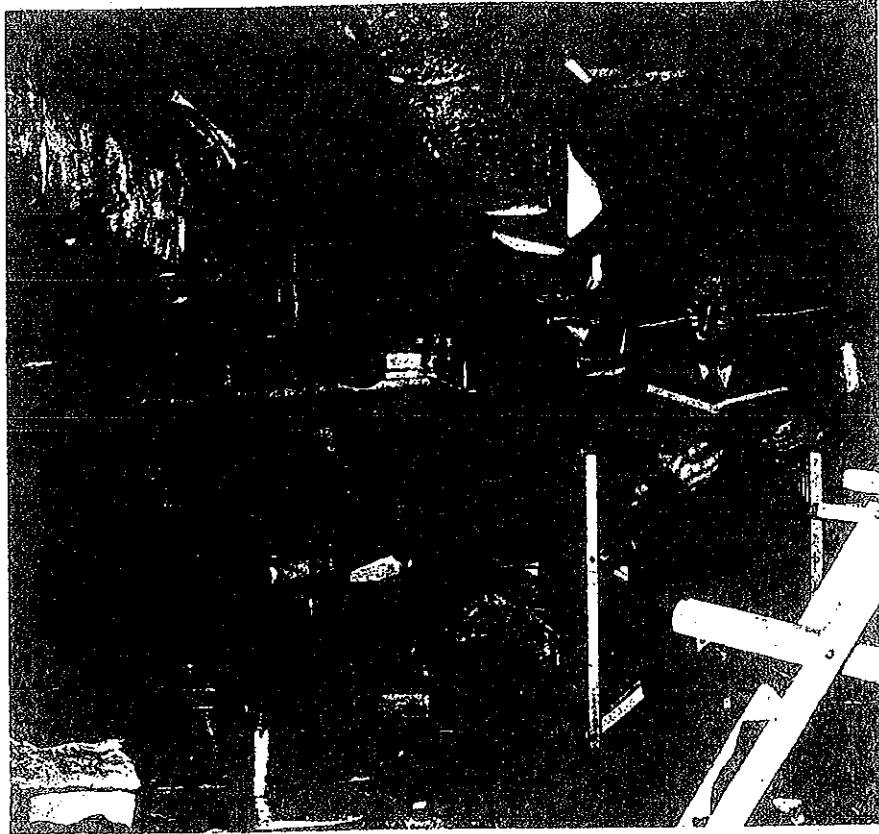
had to take along. They were told only that the trains were taking them to the camp at Westerbork. No one knew what would happen to them after they arrived.

Over the next year and a half, the Germans called up all the Jews in the Netherlands for deportation. Many did not turn up, so the German police adopted tougher tactics. Without warning, they showed up at a house and took all the Jews away with them. They carried out raids on whole neighborhoods, sometimes with the help of the army, sealing off the area and rounding up all the Jews. People were dragged from their homes, loaded onto trucks, and transferred to the trains that would take them to Westerbork.

The Germans were helped to a large extent by the Dutch police, as well as by Dutch Nazis. When they entered Jewish homes, often the first thing they did was to steal everything of value: money, jewelry, and food. By the end of September 1943, the Germans had succeeded in rounding up nearly all the Jews in the Netherlands. Then they adopted even harsher tactics to uncover and deport the Jews in hiding.

Bounty hunters were used to track down Jews—men, women, and children—who didn't show up for deportation. This is a receipt for 37.50 florins, the reward for betraying Jews to the German police. This bounty equaled a Dutch average weekly salary.

Going into Hiding



Many people in hiding did not have as spacious rooms as the Frank family. These people are living in secret under the floorboards of a house.

Many Jews tried to escape German deportation by going into hiding, though this had become extremely difficult. Where could they go? When the war began, no organizations existed to help people go underground. Anyone who wanted to go into hiding had to have the help of non-Jews to provide a secret home and all the provisions needed from the outside. But as a result of all the measures introduced by the Germans, most Jews had lost all their non-Jewish friends and acquaintances.

It hardly ever happened that a whole family could hide in one place. The Frank family was remarkably lucky. It was easier to find a place for children to hide than for adults, since a child could easily be passed off as a cousin from the city. Some parents, in order to save their children, gave them to complete strangers.

Finding a place to hide was difficult enough. Finding enough money to do it could be even harder. Often people demanded that the Jews pay a lot of money for their keep, something most Jews could not afford, especially after the Germans had deprived them of their jobs and incomes.

Going into hiding held many dangers. Anyone caught would be sent to a concentration camp. The punishment for a non-Jew helping Jews was equally severe. For this reason alone, many Jews decided against going underground. Fortunately, there were still many people who helped the Jews, despite the dangers.

Several thousand Jewish children were saved. Many found a place to hide with farmers in the countryside. Most of them never saw their parents again.





In the winter of 1944-45, thousands of people died of hunger and cold in the western Netherlands.

At the beginning of the war, most people tried not to become involved with anything connected to it. However, it soon became impossible not to get involved. Chocolate, coffee, cigarettes, and many other once common items became luxuries virtually impossible to buy. People had to surrender their bicycles and radios. Anything of value was taken to Germany by the occupying forces. More and more people were entering the ranks of the very poor.

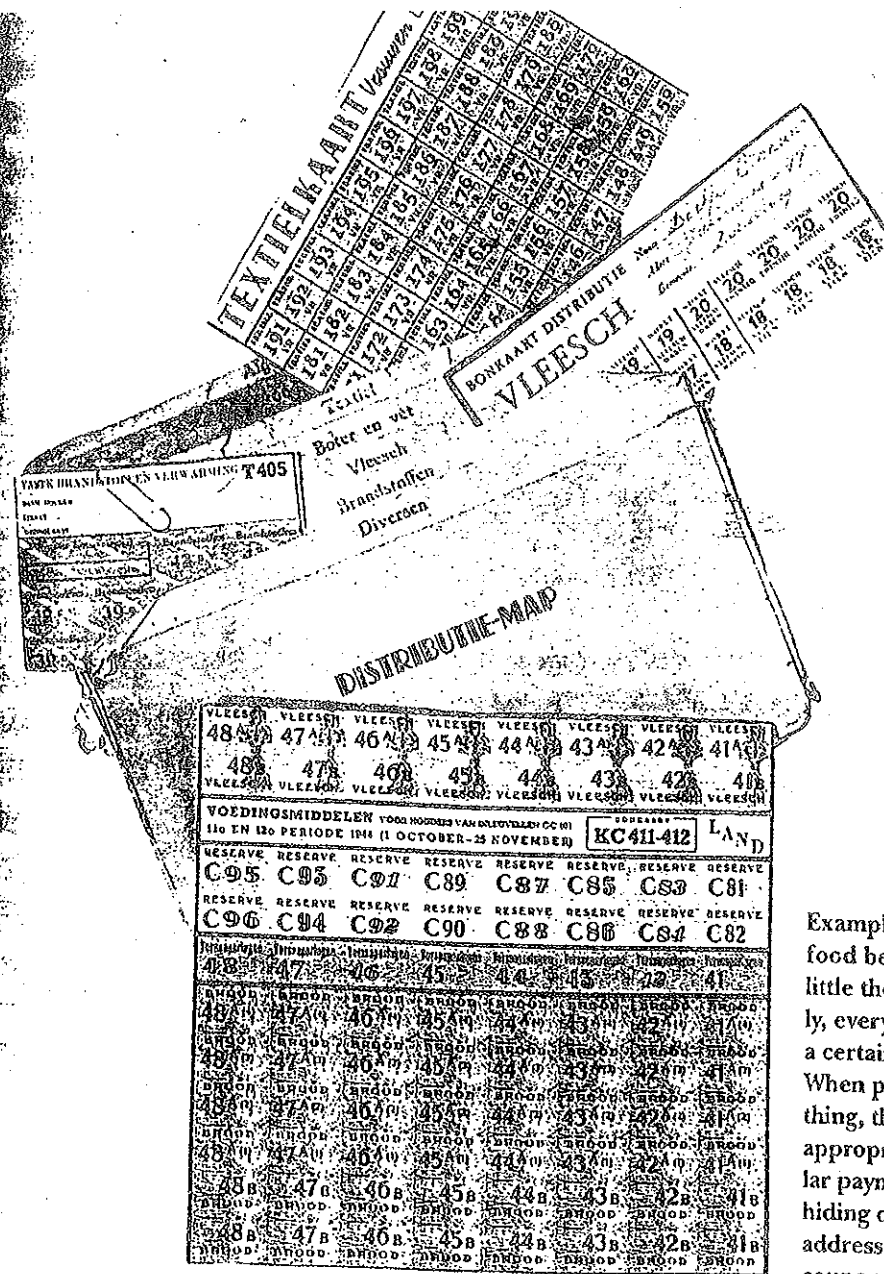
The official newspapers contained only articles approved by the Germans, ones that said the German Army was winning battles everywhere, that members of the Resistance were all criminals, and that Jews were an inferior race.

But more and more underground newspapers appeared, papers that had to be written and printed in secret because they told the truth about German losses. People also secretly listened to *Radio Oranje*, a program in Dutch broadcast every night from London. Oranje is the name of the Dutch Royal Family.

In 1943, it became clear that Germany would lose the war. Increasing numbers of people began complaining openly about the occupation. The Resistance gained strength, though the German occupying forces tried to suppress it. Members of the Resistance were often simply shot dead in the street, a method the Germans used to intimidate the people who might sympathize with Resistance workers.

In the autumn of 1944, the Allies liberated the south of the Netherlands. The rest of the country remained occupied. That winter there was a severe food shortage in the western Netherlands, particularly in the big cities, where there was hardly any food left. About 20,000 people died that winter from hunger, cold, and disease.

On May 5, 1945, the whole of the Netherlands was liberated after five years of war.



Examples of coupons issued when food became scarce. So that what little there was could be shared fairly, every registered citizen received a certain number of coupons. When people wished to buy something, they had to surrender the appropriate coupon as well as regular payment. People who were in hiding did not have an official address, so couldn't receive coupons. They and their helpers had to rely on coupon suppliers in the Resistance to purchase scarce items.

The Murder of Millions

The Nazis declared that the German people were a super-race, and that there was no place in their empire for people they considered inferior, a list which included gypsies, blacks, homosexuals, handicapped people, and Jews.

In January 1942, the leadership of the Nazi Party decided to murder more than 11 million Jews then in Europe—simply because they were Jews. To this end, they built extermination camps. These were concentration camps specially designed for the fast and efficient execution of millions. The death camps were all run by the "Death's Head" S.S., so called for the skull insignia on their caps and their talents for torture and cruelty. These camps were built in total secrecy in isolated areas of Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau (the largest death camp), Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor, Chelmno, and Maidanek. No one was to know the real reason the Jews were deported here. The Nazis claimed that the Jews were simply being taken to work camps in Poland. Most people believed the lie.

Gypsy children from a German children's home. Shortly after this photograph was taken, they were transported to Auschwitz and murdered.



People being transported in cattle cars to the camps.

Trains from every European country under German occupation went back and forth to Poland carrying Jews crowded together in cattle cars. The journey could take days, with nothing given to the prisoners to eat or drink, and no word said about what was to become of them. Most trains went straight to the death camps. Most people were murdered in the gas chambers a few hours after arriving, their bodies then burned in huge incinerators. For a while the Nazis spared those people they thought they could use. Yet even these strong young men and women had to work so incredibly hard for the Germans, under such wretched conditions, that most died within a few weeks. A few very lucky ones were still alive when the Allied Forces liberated the camps in 1945. Altogether, roughly 6 million Jews were murdered. The great majority of gypsies who had been deported to the camps from the occupied countries also did not survive the war.

Adolf Hitler Comes to Power Name _____
Hour _____

Use complete sentences to answer the following questions.

1. How did Hitler get the Germans to follow him?

2. What happened if you didn't follow Hitler?

3. What were Jews deprived of?

4. Did other countries believe concentration camps really existed?

5. How many Jews were able to escape Germany when concentration camps were first introduced?

6. How did Hitler know who was Jewish and who wasn't?

7. By age 6 and above, what did Jews have to wear?

8. What year did all Jews get sent to concentration camps?
9. How long did it take to get all the Jews to camps?
10. When did Hitler finally get overtaken?
11. How many Jews did Hitler and the Nazis set out to kill?
12. Where did the Jews think they were going?
13. How many Jews actually died?