

Culture Box / Europe in the Inter-War Years

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UNDERSTAND CONTEXT Read the texts about Europe in the 1930s.

A. Give each paragraph a title.

Discrimination and Persecution in Hitler's Germany Revolutionary Ideologies
The Spanish Civil War

- B. Which economic factors contributed to the rise of extremism?
C. Why do you think that the Spanish Civil War was referred to as a 'dress rehearsal' for World War II?
D. List the measures Hitler took against the Jewish community chronologically with their dates.
E. What problems did refugees fleeing Nazism face?

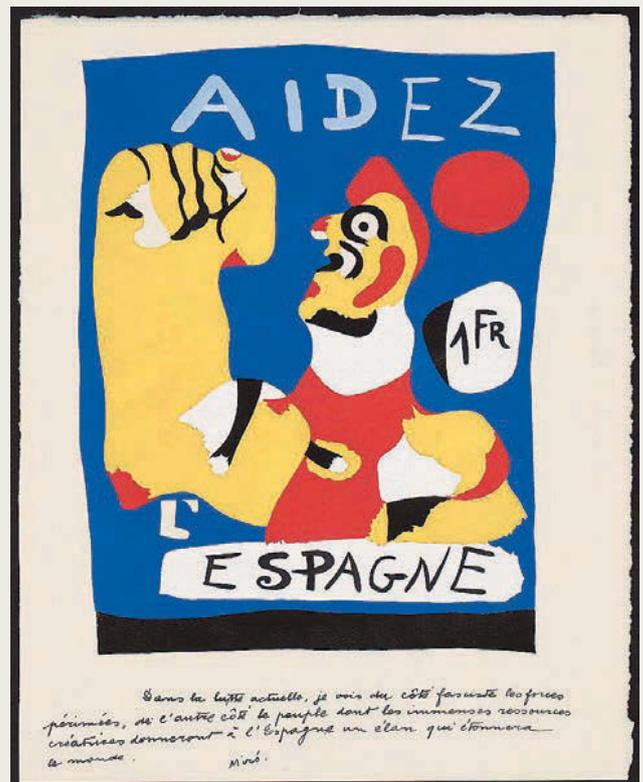


The inter-war years in Europe were marked by significant social and political turmoil. The losses incurred during World War I, both in terms of human life and the destruction and devastation of property and land, led to a situation of widespread poverty and high unemployment as the European powers struggled to recover. This was further compounded by the Great Depression of 1929-1933, an economic crisis which began in the United States and had a profound impact on the European nations. These conditions provided a fertile breeding ground for the rise of the two great ideologies of this period — socialism and Fascism — both revolutionary in nature but opposed in their outlooks, the former preaching world revolution and international socialism, while the latter was more militantly nationalistic.



In Spain in 1936 the Popular Front, an alliance of republicans, socialists, communists and anarchists, won the elections. However, five months later, in July 1936, a military coup took place, led by General Francisco Franco, marking the beginning of the Civil War. Fearing the spread of Soviet-style communism throughout Europe, the British government was reluctant to oppose the military uprising in Spain and in September 1936 a Non-intervention Agreement was signed by 27 countries including Britain, France, Germany and Italy. Faced with their governments' failure to respond to the situation, volunteers from Europe and the United States began to enlist in the International Brigades, who fought on the side of the left in Spain.

→ Joan Miró, *Aidez l'Espagne*, poster in support of the freedom fight of the Spanish people.





As soon as Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 he began to openly express his anti-Semitic views. Partly basing himself on his readings of the 'Jim Crow laws' in the United States which segregated whites from blacks, his aim was to force Jews to leave the country by making their life in Germany as unpleasant as possible. Jewish shops and businesses were boycotted and Jews were prevented from using public transport or entering public parks and swimming pools. Non-Aryans were banned from working as civil servants or teachers and Jewish farmers were no longer allowed to own land or inherit property. Jewish intellectuals found they could no longer work and book-burning became a common sight. In 1933, nearly 40,000 Jews left Germany, but many remained in the hope that the Nazi regime would be short-lived.

In September 1935 a new set of laws was passed, known collectively as the 'Nuremberg Laws'. The aim of these racial laws was to institutionalise discrimination and exclude Jews from German society. Jews were denied of their citizenship and were forbidden to marry or have sexual relations with Aryans. Further decrees followed the Nuremberg Laws leaving the Jews in Germany completely deprived of all rights as human beings.

As the number of refugees grew, neighbouring European countries and Palestine became increasingly reluctant to accept them. The emigrants began to consider more remote destinations such as North America, Latin America and even China. Anti-Jewish sentiment culminated in the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of 1938 (the 'Night of Broken Glass'). On the night of the 9th-10th November, Jewish shops were attacked and destroyed and synagogues were burned down. Many Jews were killed and some 20,000 were sent to concentration camps.

→ Windows of shops run by Jews with the glass shattered after the *Kristallnacht*, between 9th and 10th November 1938.

“ It wasn't easy. They wanted us to leave but they made it very hard. You had to go and stand in line for half the night to get a passport. But still, they wanted you to go and then nobody in Europe wanted us. The United States didn't want us either. ”

— **Lucy White**, a Jewish refugee who escaped from Austria in 1938.

↓ Jews queue for visas outside the Consulate in Vienna, 1933-1939.

