



In Nazi propaganda, like this poster, racially “pure” German youths fought for the Führer.*

* TRANSLATION: “The German Student Fights for the Führer and the People.”

1942-43, Germany’s attack on the Soviet Union was stopped at Stalingrad. Hitler had reached too far.

It took two more years to defeat Germany. In April 1945, as the Allies closed in on his underground bunker in Berlin, Hitler killed himself. One week later, his generals surrendered. (The war finally ended four months later, when the Allies defeated Japan.)

Decades later, experts debate the question: Could Hitler happen again? When Russian President Vladimir Putin seized the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine this year, he said he’d done it to protect ethnic Russians—as Hitler claimed about Germans in Czechoslovakia. Dictators continue to plague the world with mass executions, as Cambodian ruler Pol Pot did when he killed more than 1 million of his own people in the 1970s.

Yet many historians believe that it would be hard to re-create the specific conditions that led to the Nazis’ rise. “What happened in Germany in 1933, and its aftermath, will remain a uniquely terrible episode in history,” Kershaw writes.

Black agrees. All the same, he admits, “Before the First

World War, one could not have foreseen” the forces that brought the Nazis to power. He points to the chaos resulting from the civil war in Syria (see pp. 8-13).

“We have no way of predicting what is going to come out of it,” Black says. In the same way, there is no way to know if the world will ever see another Adolf Hitler.

—Bryan Brown

DID YOU KNOW?

Nearly every country was caught up in World War II. About 298,000 Americans died in the conflict.

Solution” to “the Jewish problem.” Throughout Germany and the countries that it occupied, the Nazis put into place a machinery to wipe out the Jewish people. With a highly efficient system of mobile killing squads, train lines, and concentration camps, millions of Jews were shot, gassed, or worked or starved to death. Other groups considered inferior, such as Roma (gypsies), the disabled, and gays were also persecuted and murdered in the Holocaust.

At the start of the war, Hitler’s military gambles paid off in a string of victories. But in time the tide turned against him. In December 1941, after Japan attacked the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the U.S. joined the Allies. Then in the winter of

5 ways the war changed the U.S.

1 The U.S. became a superpower. American leadership during the war gave the U.S. a dominant role around the globe after it ended in 1945.

2 U.S. factories, which churned out goods for the war effort, created millions of jobs and helped to finally end the Great Depression.

3 While men were off fighting, more than 6 million women entered the work force. Many stopped working after the war. But the seeds of change had been planted. Women are about 57 percent of today’s work force.



4 In 1944, Congress passed the G.I. Bill, which helped millions of veterans go to college—making higher education a common goal for Americans.

5 More than 900,000 African-Americans enlisted in the military during WWII. After fighting for freedom overseas, blacks demanded their own at home—leading to the civil rights era. In 1948, President Harry Truman desegregated all U.S. forces.

