

### Up for Discussion

As long as things in a country work smoothly, does the kind of government matter?

## Did Canada respond to increased international totalitarianism?

In the early 1920s, Benito Mussolini, who later ruled Italy as a dictator, coined the word *totalitario* to describe his government. “All within the state, none outside the state, none against the state,” Mussolini said.

From Mussolini’s term came the English word **totalitarian**. A totalitarian government restricts individual rights and makes everyone subordinate to the government. Totalitarian governments stay in power by using fear and oppression.

By the end of the 1930s, people around the world were tired of the Depression and looking for answers — any answers. Totalitarian dictators offered quick solutions and easy answers. People wanted jobs and economic security, and they thought that a leader with a strong hand would be able to make that happen. Consequently, the world saw the emergence of a number of totalitarian states. Some, such as Italy and Germany, were **fascist**. Fascism is a form of totalitarianism that tells citizens that their nation and race are superior.

Totalitarian regimes believe that democracies are soft, decadent, and lacking moral strength. Citizens of totalitarian countries are persuaded, often through the effective use of propaganda, to set aside their personal ambitions for the good of the state. This message helps discourage questions about human rights and the state’s leadership.

**Historical Perspective:** What might totalitarian states offer citizens to ensure their obedience? Why might some citizens support totalitarian governments even when their rights have been restricted?

### Communism in the Soviet Union

In 1917, many people in Russia were discouraged by the toll World War I was taking on the country and unhappy with the leadership of the czar. That February, a popular uprising dethroned the czar and established a temporary government to run the country.

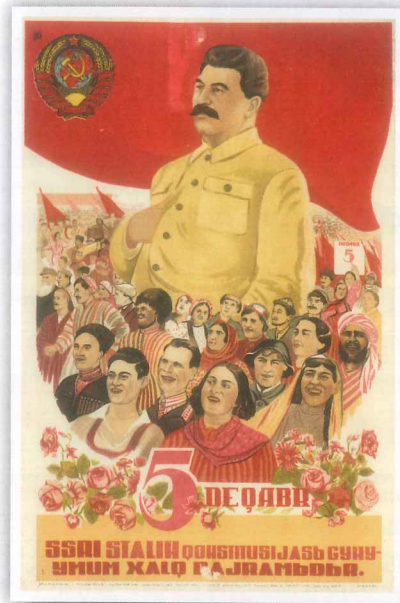
By October 1917, the communist Bolsheviks were strong enough to overthrow the temporary government and establish “a dictatorship of the proletariat.” “Proletariat” is a term that describes people who make a living by earning a wage.

Though a civil war followed, the Bolsheviks managed to hang on to and consolidate their power. The communist government took control of many aspects of the economy, such as banks, mines, and oil companies. They discouraged religion and used the media as a propaganda tool.

In 1924, Joseph Stalin emerged as leader of the Communist Party — and the government. He united Russia with surrounding states to form the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.), or Soviet Union.

Stalin was a ruthless dictator who used force to crush all opposition. During the 1930s, millions of Soviet citizens were executed, imprisoned, deported, or starved to death.

**Figure 9–26** This poster, created by the Soviet government, shows dictator Joseph Stalin with Azerbaijanis, one of the many peoples who were part of the Soviet Union. The slogan — in Azerbaijani — urges people to support the Soviet Union’s new constitution. What is the poster’s underlying message? Why would conveying this message be important in a dictatorship?



### Canada and Communism

During hard times, communist ideas often attracted people who wanted to build a better society. This was the situation in 1921, when the Communist Party of Canada was founded secretly near Guelph, Ontario. From the beginning, police harassed suspected communists. They raided meetings, searched offices, seized documents, and arrested leaders.

Many Canadians supported the police actions. The violence of the Russian Revolution and the ruthlessness of Joseph Stalin’s dictatorship had turned many people against communism. They feared that it threatened democracy, and these fears were often fed by politicians, such as Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, and other Canadians. They said that recent immigrants and labour unions promoted communism and wanted to overthrow the government.

**Continuity and Change:** Read Bennett’s words in Voices. Would a Canadian leader of today be likely to make a similar speech? Explain your response.

### The Rise of Fascism in Germany

During World War I, Germany had been a monarchy, but after the war, the victorious Allies established a democratic government in the country. But Germans had little experience with democracy and little love for a political system that had been forced on them. Political parties were unable to establish solid voter support, and leaders were ineffective at running the country.

Many Germans also resented the war guilt clause that had been included in the Treaty of Versailles, described in Chapter 6. In addition, the need to pay reparations kept the country struggling economically. This struggle was made worse by a period of hyperinflation in 1922. The value of the Deutschmark — German money — was reduced to nearly zero, and prices rose more than 100 times.

As a result, many Germans failed to prosper even during the boom of the later 1920s. Poverty was widespread, and people were openly frustrated. When the Depression started in 1929, the situation became even worse.

Many Germans wanted a leader who could fix their country’s political and economic troubles — and Adolf Hitler seemed to fit this bill. Born in Austria, Hitler’s childhood was marked by problems, including an abusive father and failure at school. Hitler served in the army during World War I, but when the war ended, he joined the ranks of the unemployed.

In 1920, Hitler joined a small new political party — the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, also known as the Nazis. By 1921, he was the party’s leader.

### Voices

We know that throughout Canada this [communist] propaganda is being put forward by organizations from foreign lands that seek to destroy our institutions. And we ask that every man and woman put the iron heel of ruthlessness against a thing of that kind.

— R.B. Bennett, prime minister, in a speech, 1932

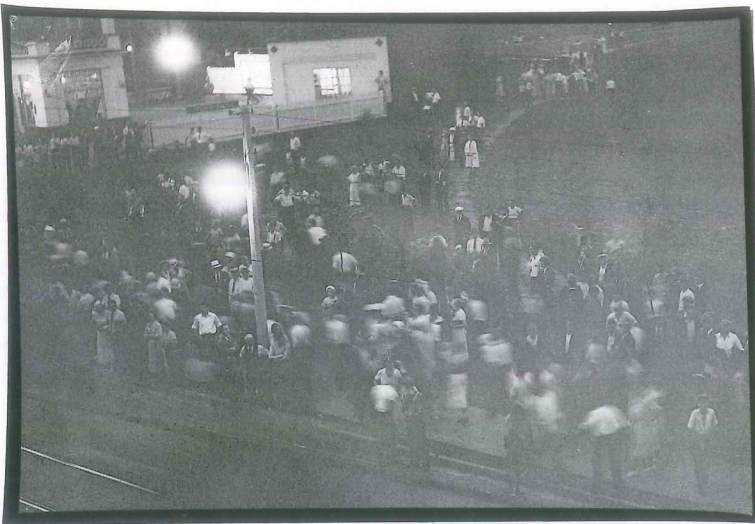
**Figure 9–27** By 1932, Adolf Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party. In this photograph, he poses with children during the 1932 German election campaign. Hitler’s propaganda machine made sure that he was frequently photographed with young people. What messages would an image like this send to the German people?





## Adolf Hitler's Rise to Power

**Figure 9–28** On August 16, 1933, a riot broke out in a Toronto park after someone shouted "Heil Hitler!" following a community baseball game. It was Toronto's first race riot — later known as the Christie Pits riot — and highlighted the discrimination felt by many Jewish people in the city. Historians believe that the situation was made worse by the Great Depression and the ascent to power of Adolph Hitler in Germany. What do you think? Why might these forces be at work in this situation?



### Check Forward ➡

You will read more about appeasement and German expansion in Chapter 10.

### CONNECTIONS

When Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor, he gave himself the title "Führer." "Führer" is a German word that means "leader" or "guide," but Germans today tend to avoid this word because of its strong association with Hitler.

For Adolf Hitler and the Nazis, the turning point was the onset of the Great Depression. A powerful speaker, Hitler found support among the growing ranks of unemployed and disillusioned people. He said that those who supported democracy were traitors and that Aryans — often fair-haired, blue-eyed, light-skinned people — were the master race. He said that some groups, such as Jews and Roma, were inferior and that communists, gay men, and people with disabilities were undesirable.

By 1933, the Nazis had become the largest party in the Reichstag, holding 288 of 647 seats. Hitler then created alliances with smaller parties to gain control of the Reichstag, and in January 1933, he was appointed chancellor, the highest political position in Germany.

Once in power, Hitler took over the country. He suspended the constitution, abolished all political parties except the Nazis, and created a secret police force called the Gestapo to ensure that no one challenged his rule. He also built concentration camps to hold political prisoners. Anyone could be arrested and held without charge or trial.

Hitler also began to rebuild Germany's military. This was a violation of the Treaty of Versailles, but the League of Nations did nothing to stop it. The League also did nothing when Hitler began taking over neighbouring areas and countries with German-speaking populations. He claimed that he was protecting them and bringing them home to the "fatherland."

World leaders knew what was happening, but many were afraid that intervening would provoke another devastating war — and they wanted to avoid this at all costs. So they followed a policy of **appeasement**, a policy of pacifying an enemy by giving in to some of his or her demands, while hoping that Hitler would stop once he had gained what he wanted.

## The Campaign Against Jews

Jews were very successful citizens of Germany, integrated at all levels of society. Then Hitler made Jews a particular target of hatred. In 1935, he outlawed marriages between Jews and Aryans and made it illegal for Jews to practise law and medicine or to perform music. Some Jewish businesses and synagogues were closed.

During the night of November 9–10, 1938, Jewish communities throughout Germany were attacked in what became known as *Kristallnacht* — the night of the broken glass. Homes, shops, and synagogues were burned, and Jews were arrested and murdered.

After this, Hitler increased the persecution of Jews. They were barred from owning businesses, and their children could not attend school. Other laws restricted their movements. Many thousands were arrested and sent to concentration camps, which soon became death camps.

## Thinking Historically: Historical Perspective

# What They Thought of Hitler

Taking a historical perspective is to look at the world through the eyes of a person who lived in the past. It's a difficult thing to do. How can we truly know what an historical actor was thinking or feeling many years ago?

The truth is that we can't. But we can get close by examining the evidence and making valid inferences based on what the evidence reveals.

Examine the following two primary source documents. What do they tell you about what the two writers thought and felt about Hitler?



In June 1937, Prime Minister **WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING** met Adolf Hitler in Berlin. King recorded some of his thoughts about this meeting in his diary.

I told him that I had been anxious to visit Germany . . . because I was most anxious to see the friendliness of relationships existing between the peoples of the different countries . . . I spoke then of what I had seen of the constructive work of his regime, and said that I hoped that that work might continue. That nothing would be permitted to destroy that work. That it is bound to be followed in other countries to the great advantage of mankind. . .

He smiled very pleasantly and indeed had a sort of appealing and affectionate look in his eyes. My sizing up of the man as I sat and talked with him was that he is really one who truly loves his fellow man.



**WINSTON CHURCHILL**, who would later lead Britain through World War II, responded quickly after British prime minister Neville Chamberlain signed the Munich peace agreement with Hitler in 1938. The agreement allowed German forces to annex (take over) a Czechoslovakian region called Sudetenland.

Our loyal, brave people . . . should know the truth. They should know that there has been a gross neglect and deficiency in our defences; they should know that we have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road. . . And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of the bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we rise again and take our stand for freedom as in olden time.

## Explorations

- For both historical actors, make inferences from the evidence to answer the following questions:
    - Did he consider Hitler honourable?
    - Did he think Hitler could be appeased?
    - Did he think Hitler was underhanded and planning to make war on all of Europe?
  - What other valid inferences can you make about what King or Churchill was thinking or feeling?
  - For every inference you have made, identify the phrases that helped you make that inference.
- When King's diaries were published long after the war, many people criticized his judgment. Was this fair? Write two criteria to help people make fair judgments about the views of people in the past.



## Voices

We must nevertheless seek to keep this part of the continent free from unrest and from too great an intermixture of foreign strains of blood, as much the same thing lies at the basis of the oriental problem. . . . I fear that we would have riots if we agreed to a policy that admitted numbers of Jews. Also we would add to the difficulties between the Provinces and the Dominion.

— William Lyon Mackenzie King, prime minister, in a diary entry, March 1938

**Figure 9–29** The *St. Louis* in the harbour of Havana, Cuba, and two passengers at a porthole. With land in sight and fleeing Nazi anti-Semitism in their homeland, the passengers were told they would not be allowed to stay. How might the outcome have been different if today's communication tools had been available to the passengers?



## Did intolerance grow in Canada?

Germany was not the only place in the world to persecute Jews. While Jewish immigration to Canada had held steady during the 1920s, during the Depression, all immigration dropped dramatically. In 1936, for example, fewer than 12 000 immigrants arrived.

**Anti-Semitism** — prejudice against Jews — was widespread in Canada. Jews were often excluded from clubs and other social organizations and discouraged from buying homes in certain neighbourhoods.

**Cause and Consequence:** In Canada, hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, sprang up. Encouraged by anti-Semitic activities in Germany, where the Nazis were persecuting Jews and other minorities, these groups targeted visible minorities, Jews, and Catholics. What strategies might governments use to deal with the rise of hate groups?

Canada had no refugee policy that allowed immigrants to be accepted on the basis of need. Jews who faced persecution in Germany were required to follow the same immigration procedures as other applicants. And because few immigrants were being accepted, German Jews had little hope of escaping to Canada.

From 1933 to 1945, Canada admitted fewer than 5000 Jewish immigrants. During the same years, the United States accepted more than 200 000, Britain accepted about 70 000, and the city of Shanghai, China, received tens of thousands of Jewish refugees.

### The *St. Louis*

Though Liberal prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was sympathetic to the problems of German Jews, he was also convinced that allowing Jewish refugees into Canada would threaten national unity and his party's political support in Québec. There, the provincial government opposed all immigration.

The *St. Louis* tragedy showed the depth of anti-Semitism in the upper chambers of the Canadian government. In the spring of 1939, the passenger liner *St. Louis* left Hamburg, Germany, with more than 900 Jews on board. Trying to escape Nazi persecution, they were bound for Cuba. They carried tourist visas but hoped to be accepted as refugees. But when they arrived, they were not allowed to disembark.

So they appealed for help to both Canada and the United States, but both countries refused to accept them. The *St. Louis* was forced to sail back across the Atlantic. Some of the refugees were eventually allowed into European countries that were taken over by Germany during World War II — and more than half the passengers were eventually killed by the Nazis.

## The Rise of Fascism in Italy

Like Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini had fought in the trenches of World War I. In the turmoil that followed the war, Mussolini started a fascist party in Italy. One of the party's main planks was a nationalistic belief in a strong union of citizens, regardless of social rank.

Under Mussolini's leadership, squads of black-shirted army veterans attacked communists, socialists, and members of other political parties at rallies and parades. The blackshirts claimed to be restoring order to the streets. Many Italians agreed with their policies and party membership grew quickly.

Government officials did little to stop the attacks. Like officials in many countries, they were concerned about communists and believed that the fascists were performing a useful service.

Mussolini was elected to the Italian parliament in 1921, and in 1922, with the support of many business and military leaders, he persuaded the king to appoint him prime minister. After this, his party used intimidation and violence to rig elections.

Finally, in 1925, Mussolini abandoned all appearance of democracy and took complete control of the government. Even municipal politicians were replaced by officials appointed by the fascists. People who spoke out against the regime were harshly punished.

Mussolini then set out to fix the Italian economy. Agricultural programs improved wheat harvests, and hydroelectric developments helped reduce unemployment. The railways were restructured, and their efficiency was improved. The country's automobile and aircraft industries expanded quickly.

At first, these measures improved the lives of many Italians, who wholeheartedly supported Mussolini. Even many world leaders admired Mussolini's economic success.

Next, Mussolini decided to improve Italy's international influence by expanding the country's territories in Africa. So in 1935, Italian forces invaded the independent country of Ethiopia.

The Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, appealed to the League of Nations for help, but his pleas were ignored. In Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King's government refused to condemn Italy's actions because King did not want to be drawn into a war. As with Hitler, appeasement was considered preferable to confrontation.

In 1936, Hitler and Mussolini formed the Rome–Berlin Alliance, and Mussolini introduced anti-Semitic laws to Italy.

**Cause and Consequence:** With a partner, consider the situation in Germany and Italy in the 1920s and 1930s. List at least two conditions that are necessary for a totalitarian regime to thrive.

## CONNECTIONS

Benito Mussolini called himself “Il Duce” — the leader — and tried to pass laws controlling every aspect of Italian life. In 1926, for example, Italian law required bread to have at least 15 per cent non-white flour. Laws also limited newspapers to six pages, and no goods could be sold after 10 p.m.

## Voices

No interest in Ethiopia, of any nature whatsoever, is worth the life of a single Canadian citizen. No consideration could justify participation in such a war.

— Ernest Lapointe, Canadian minister of justice, 1935

**Figure 9–30** In 1936, Haile Selassie travelled to Geneva, Switzerland, to deliver his appeal to the League of Nations in person. In his speech, Selassie told of the suffering that occurred when Italian planes sprayed poison gas on soldiers, civilians, and livestock. What criteria should world leaders have used when deciding how to respond to Selassie's appeal?





## CONNECTIONS

Despite dictator Francisco Franco's heavy-handed rule, Spain and the United States were allies during the Cold War. The United States encouraged Franco's anti-communist policies, and when the dictator died, former U.S. President Richard Nixon remarked, "General Franco was a loyal friend and ally of the United States."

## The Rise of Fascism in Spain

Between 1931 and 1936, Spain struggled to maintain a form of democracy. The Depression had caused widespread poverty, and the country was divided by political strife.

Finally, in 1936, a coalition of army officers and conservative groups tried to seize power. But the attempt was disorganized and succeeded only in parts of the country. This set off a brutal civil war as opposing forces fought for control. In this war, which often pitted family members against one another, more than a million Spaniards, including many civilians, were killed.

The rebels, who called themselves Nationalists, were led by General Francisco Franco. A strong military leader, Franco admired and was supported by both Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. The Nationalist strategy used brutality and terror to scare people into submission.

On the other side were the Republicans, who were the legitimate elected government.

The League of Nations did little to try to stop the fighting in Spain. As with other conflicts that arose during the 1930s, isolationist attitudes led many governments to follow a policy of non-intervention in foreign affairs.

Some historians believe that Hitler used the Spanish Civil War as a practice session for the world war that started in 1939. In one of the first examples of what was to come, Hitler bombed the city of Guernica. It was one of the first aerial bombing attack on defenceless civilians.

The war progressed slowly and brutally. But Nationalist forces gradually began to win territory from the Republicans. By February 1939, about 250 000 Republican soldiers had been forced to flee across the border into France. Within a few weeks, the rest of the Republican forces had surrendered and Franco controlled the country completely.

Once in power, Franco put in place a ruthless, totalitarian regime. Critics were silenced through censorship and violence. Franco's tactics included torture, long prison sentences, forced labour, and concentration camps. He remained in power until his death in 1975.

**Figure 9-31** The Spanish painter Pablo Picasso, who sided with the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War, painted this horrifying depiction of the German bombing of the town of Guernica in 1937. The Republicans commissioned Picasso to create the large mural. What does the painting tell you about the bombing? What does it tell you about Picasso?



## Canadians in Spain

Although most governments, including Canada's, refused to get involved in the Spanish Civil War, many Canadians were eager to fight fascism. So when the Republicans appealed for help, about 40 000 people from other countries, such as Britain, the United States, and Canada, responded and joined the International Brigade.

At first, the Canadian volunteers were placed in an American battalion, but a Canadian battalion was formed in 1937. Called the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, after the leaders of the 1837 rebellion in Canada, its members were known as Mac-Paps.

Canadians continued to sign up even after the federal government passed a law forbidding Canadians to join a foreign army. By the time the civil war ended in 1939, nearly 1700 Canadians had fought in Spain — and about one-third of them had died.

One of the Canadians was Norman Bethune, a doctor born in Gravenhurst, Ontario. As a young surgeon, Bethune made a mark by improving surgical instruments, developing new surgical techniques, and writing for medical journals. During the Depression, he supported a government-run medical system, an idea opposed by the Canadian medical establishment.

When the Spanish Civil War started, Bethune joined the Republicans. But Bethune was an independent spirit who disliked following orders, and he was asked to leave Spain in 1937. Returning to Canada, he learned that Japan had invaded China. So in 1938, he travelled to China, where he joined the communists. He helped set up battlefield surgery units and train doctors to work at the front. Bethune, who is still revered in China, died in 1939 after developing an infection while operating on a wounded soldier.



**Figure 9-32** While in Spain, Norman Bethune (right) developed a mobile blood transfusion service that used refrigerated trucks to rush blood supplies to the wounded. His approach was responsible for saving many lives. Would you go to war in a foreign country to support your beliefs?

## The Rise of Totalitarianism in Japan

Throughout the 1930s, the major powers in the League of Nations clung to the belief that appeasement would prevent another world war. As in Europe, they applied this belief when Japan started expanding its territory in Asia.

By the late 1920s, power in Japan had shifted to hard-line militarists who believed in military solutions to problems, encouraged nationalistic sentiments, and labelled Japan's form of democracy "un-Japanese." By 1931, this group dominated the Japanese government.

## CONNECTIONS

Many of the Mac-Paps had been involved in the On-to-Ottawa Trek and were older than volunteers from other countries. When the civil war ended and the survivors returned home, many were treated as criminals who had disobeyed Canadian law.



World War I had taught Japanese militarists that natural resources were necessary to fight wars. But Japan was not rich in natural resources, and in the 1930s, Japanese industries relied on imported raw materials. Manchuria, in northern China, was a major source of resources such as iron, coal, salt, and farmland. As a result, Japanese businesses had invested heavily in this region.

But Chinese nationalism was on the rise, and it included anti-Japanese sentiment. Many Chinese people were angry that the Allies had awarded Germany's Chinese territory to Japan as a reward for siding with the Allies during World War I. Although the territory was later restored to China, Japan and China were traditional enemies, and Japanese officials worried that China might limit access to Manchuria. So in 1931, Japanese forces invaded and occupied the region.

When China appealed to the League of Nations for help, the League condemned Japan's action but did nothing more. The League's weak

response emboldened Japan's leaders, who developed plans to take over other parts of China. In 1932, Japanese forces landed at Shanghai, and in 1937, they launched a multipronged attack. This started a full-scale war between the two countries.

Japanese leaders ordered intense bombings of civilian targets, causing millions of casualties. Brutality was just as common on the ground. The Chinese capital city of Nanjing endured a massacre that lasted six long weeks. During this time, Japanese soldiers raped and murdered as many as 300 000 Chinese soldiers and civilians. The Japanese also used chemical weapons during the war. These atrocities caused the United States and other Western countries to begin to harden their attitudes toward Japan.

**Figure 9–33** This famous photograph of a lone child sitting in the bombed-out Nanjing railway station in August 1937 came to symbolize the brutality of Japan's expansionist efforts in China. What elements of this photograph make it a compelling tool for swaying public opinion?



### Recall... Reflect... Respond

1. Create a timeline to show the rise of totalitarian governments in Europe and Asia up to 1938. Include at least five events that marked the growing strength of the various regimes. For each event, include a point-form note explaining the reason(s) for your choice.
2. Identify two or three forces at work during the 1930s and explain how each promoted the rise of totalitarian governments. Could the same thing happen today? Explain the reasons for your response.
3. The world's failure to confront totalitarian governments led to another world war that started in 1939. Who or what should be blamed for this failure to stop totalitarian governments? Or was no one to blame? How should nations make decisions about when and how to help? Express your opinion in a paragraph that provides evidence to justify your position.

## Spotting Ethical Judgments of a Tragedy

Every history every written — even the one you're reading now — contains ethical judgment. Just consider the word “tragedy” in the title for this feature.

Sometimes an ethical judgment is explicit, or clearly stated. Other times it is implicit, or hinted at. Consider Charles P. Stacey's description of World War II in an article at the website of the *Canadian Encyclopedia*:

The World War II was one of the most significant events in Canadian history. Canada played a vital role in the Battle of the Atlantic and the air war over Germany, and contributed forces to the campaigns of western Europe beyond what might be expected of a small nation of then only 11 million people.

Stacey makes an explicit judgment about the significance of the war to Canadian history. He has examined the evidence and come to that conclusion. Further, Stacey implies that Canadians should be proud of this history. We can understand that from his statement that Canada contributed more than would have been expected from a small nation. Sometimes, an ethical judgment is communicated by telling one part of a history instead of another. For example, Stacey mentions three major contributions to the war, but says nothing about the efforts on the home front.

The following description of the Tragedy of the S.S. *St. Louis* appears on the website of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museum. Read it, watching for examples of both implicit and explicit ethical judgment.

Rumours abounded from even before the war that the Nazis were perpetrating detestable atrocities on European Jews and other so-called *Untermenschen* (“subhumans”). However, most Canadians dismissed these rumours as mere propaganda. Some German Jews certainly understood what was going on and tried to escape. The case of the passenger liner *St. Louis* provides a poignant example of the difficulties they faced in finding a safe haven. The German Jews aboard the ship could find no country to accept them. The *St. Louis*, which travelled the Atlantic stopping at ports in Canada, the United States, South America, and Europe, eventually ended up back in Germany because no one would let its passengers land! When Canadian and other Allied soldiers liberated the death camps and witnessed first-hand the enormous evil that had taken place, their lives were changed forever.

### Explorations

1. What explicit and implicit ethical judgments can you spot in the museum excerpt? What words or phrases helped you spot those judgments?
2. In your opinion, how should historians — or anyone writing a historical narrative — ensure that their ethical judgments are sound?
3. Describe the ethical judgment in each of the following titles of books about World War II.
  - *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption*
  - *Slaughterhouse-Five*
  - *Women Heroes of World War II: 26 Stories of Espionage, Sabotage, Resistance, and Rescue*
  - *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*
  - *The Rape of Nanking*
  - *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*
  - *Because We Are Canadians: A Battlefield Memoir*
  - *Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944–45*