

## The Main Characteristics of European Fascism

In the late 1920's and early 1930's a political movement known as **Fascism** began to take hold around the world, especially in Italy, Spain and Portugal, and Germany.

**Italy – Benito Mussolini**

**Spain and Portugal – Generalissimo Francisco Franco**

**Germany – Adolf Hitler**

Some long-held beliefs helped prepare the way for the rise of Fascism.

**Anti-Semitism** – the hatred of Jews. They were often persecuted in times of social unrest and economic difficulty

**Racism** – the contempt for other races. This was strong within Europe due to overseas imperialism and nationalism

**Social Darwinism** – when applied made anti-Semitism and racism acceptable. Social Darwinists claimed that stronger groups had the right to succeed and that weaker groups deserved to die out.

### Nationalism

Fascists were extreme nationalists who believed that the highest value was the nation. They took this belief to extremes, claiming that their nation was superior to others. Fascists were also strongly opposed to communism.

### Unity of All Social Classes

Fascists felt a single national party should unite all classes. They also believed that the strong had a natural right to dominate the weak. They opposed worker unions and strikes.

### All-Powerful Leaders

Fascists believed that a single all-powerful leader could best represent the national will and lead the nation to social and economic success.

### Extreme Militarism

Fascists used violence to defeat their political opponents and prepared to use war for national expansion. Fascists saw war as a glorious experience.

Sources: Killoran, Zimmer, Jarrett: Mastering Global History, New York: Jarrett Publishing; p. 224  
Lockard, Craig A: Societies, Networks, and Transitions, Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage pgs. 674-677