

Dictatorships and the Second World War



I. Authoritarian States

A. Conservative Authoritarianism

1. Traditional authoritarian governments aimed to preserve their power and the status quo using repressive measures. They did not seek to control the daily lives of their subjects.
2. After World War I this kind of authoritarian government revived.
 - a. In the eastern part of Europe all states except Czechoslovakia were more or less authoritarian by 1938.
 - b. Spain and Portugal were also authoritarian dictatorships.
 - c. Large landowners and the Church were still powerful in these areas. They were the bulwarks of authoritarian regimes.

B. Radical Totalitarian Dictatorships

1. In the Soviet Union, Germany, and to some extent in Italy a new type of regime emerged by the 1930s.
2. By the 1930s British, American, and German commentators were using the word totalitarian to describe these regimes' subordination of all institutions and classes to the state's aims.
3. Totalitarian states used modern technology to achieve complete political power. The state also attempted to control economic, social, intellectual, and cultural life.
4. Totalitarian states were a radical revolt against liberal commitment to rationality, peaceful progress, and economic freedom. They sought to use violence and total mobilization to achieve state goals regardless of individual rights.
5. There were differences between Stalin and Hitler's regimes. The Soviet regime seized all private property for the state and crushed the middle classes. Hitler did not.
6. Comparative studies of fascism across Europe have shown that fascist regimes shared extreme nationalism, antisocialism, alliances with

powerful capitalists and landowners, a dynamic and violent leader, and glorification of war and the military.

7. Although recent scholars have emphasized the unique aspects of the Soviet and Nazi regimes, the term totalitarian does serve to emphasize their total claim on the belief and behavior of their subjects.

II. Stalin's Soviet Union

A. From Lenin to Stalin

1. Following the destruction and chaos of the Russian civil war, Lenin's New Economic Policy aimed to restore the economy by ending forced requisitioning of grain and allowing small-scale private business and trade.
2. In the struggle for power following Lenin's incapacitation and death (1924), Joseph Stalin defeated Leon Trotsky because he controlled the Central Committee apparatus, and hence, the party.

B. The Five-Year Plans

1. The "First Five Year Plan" (1928-1932) was in fact a second revolution.
2. Stalin and allies hoped to stamp out NEP's incipient capitalism.
3. They wanted to raise production.
4. They wanted to industrialize and catch up to the West.
5. They aimed to make the peasants pay for this revolution by forcing them onto collective farms.
6. Collectivization became an economic and human disaster, as the regime deported and murdered millions of peasants and stood by as millions of others starved.
7. The industrialization drive was more successful. Soviet industry produced about four times as much in 1937 as in 1928.
8. Labor unions were crushed during the First Five Year Plan.

C. Life and Culture in Soviet Society

1. Living standards for ordinary Soviet subjects, including workers and peasants, declined, at least through 1940.
2. The regime did provide old-age pensions, free medical services, free education, free day care, and full employment.
3. Personal advancement through technical education was possible.
4. Women's rights broadened as divorce and abortion became easier in the 1920s. Some determined women were able to enter the professions or become skilled technical specialists.
5. Women really had to work outside the home because incomes were so low.
6. In the 1930s the party/state took complete control of culture.

D. Stalinist Terror and the Great Purges

1. Dissent within the party against collectivization and the 1934 assassination of party leader Sergei Kirov helped provoke Stalin's massive purge of the party.
2. Ordinary citizens were also caught up in the purge.
3. Millions were deported to forced labor camps and/or executed (1936-1939).

III. Mussolini and Fascism in Italy

- A. The Seizure of Power
 1. World War I discredited the liberal parliamentary government, as great sacrifices led to little gain at Versailles.
 2. The Russian Revolution inspired revolutionary socialists in Italy to begin seizing factories and land.
 3. Benito Mussolini, a veteran of World War I and former socialist, organized other veterans into a fascist political movement that used violence to intimidate socialists.
 4. The fascists created enough disorder to discredit the liberal regime, then marched on Rome, where King Victor Emmanuel asked Mussolini to form a government.
 - B. The Regime in Action
 1. Under the slogan “everything in the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state,” Mussolini abolished freedom of the press, fixed elections, ruled by decree, arrested political opponents, disbanded independent labor unions, and put fascists in control of the schools.
 2. Italy never really became totalitarian, however, because Mussolini never truly controlled big business, the Catholic Church, or the army.
- IV. Hitler and Nazism in Germany
- A. The Roots of Nazism
 1. Hitler developed his political beliefs as a young man living in Vienna. He was strongly influenced by Viennese mayor Karl Luger.
 2. Hitler hated Jews and Slavs, and explained everything by supposed machinations of Jewish conspirators. He also espoused the most extreme Social Darwinism.
 3. Service in the German (not Austrian) Army in World War I gave Hitler’s life meaning. When Germany lost he blamed Jews and Marxists.
 4. By 1921 Hitler controlled a small party known as the German Workers’ Party, which espoused “national socialism.”
 - B. Hitler’s Road to Power
 1. Imprisoned for a coup attempt against the Weimar Republic, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”).

His basic themes in this work were anti-Semitism, Germany’s need to conquer “living space,” and the necessity of a leader-dictator (Führer) with unlimited power.
 - C. The Great Depression caused many small businessmen, office workers, artisans, and peasants to vote Nazi. Hitler promised to use government programs to end the economic crisis.
 - D. The Nazi party was dominated by youth and strongly appealed to them.
 - E. After May 1930, German President Hindenburg authorized Chancellor Heinrich Brüning to rule by decree. Brüning’s cuts in government spending and in wages and prices worsened the Depression in Germany.
 - F. In January 1933 conservative and nationalist Germans supported Hindenburg’s appointment of Hitler as chancellor.

V. The Nazi State and Society

1. When fire damaged the Reichstag building in spring 1933, Hitler blamed the communists and persuaded President Hindenburg to sign dictatorial emergency decrees.
2. Hitler then convinced the Reichstag to endorse emergency powers for himself and moved to establish a one-party state.
3. The Nazis took over the German bureaucracy, professional organizations, publishing houses, and universities.
4. The Nazis persecuted Jews, driving them from their jobs and from public life, and destroying their property.

VI. Hitler's Popularity

0. Military and public works spending improved profits for business and real wages for German workers in the mid-1930s, increasing Hitler's popularity

VII. Hitler's nationalism remained popular.

VIII. Although Nazi propaganda claimed that Germany was becoming a more egalitarian society, in reality there was little change.

IX. Resistance to the Nazis first appeared among communists and socialists. Later, Protestant and Catholic churchmen sought to preserve independent religious life. Even later, there were plots against Hitler in the army.

• Nazi Expansion and the Second World War

A. Aggression and Appeasement, 1933-1939

1. Early in his rule, Hitler proclaimed his peaceful intentions but did withdraw from the League of Nations (October 1933).
2. After 1935 British appeasement prevented the formation of a united front against Hitler. When German troops entered the demilitarized Rhineland in March 1936, Britain refused to support French action against them.
3. Many British conservatives saw Hitler as a bulwark against communism.
4. In 1935 Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. Hitler supported him and formed an alliance. From 1936, the Fascists and Nazis supported Francisco Franco's fascist movement against the Spanish republic.
5. In 1938 Hitler occupied Austria and the Sudetenland, with British approval.
6. In 1939 he took all of Czechoslovakia and then demanded territory from Poland. Britain and France promised to fight should he invade Poland.
7. After concluding an alliance with the Soviet Union to divide Poland, Hitler invaded on September 1, 1939. Britain and France soon declared war.

B. Hitler's Empire, 1939-1942

1. After overrunning Poland with new "lightning warfare" that used tanks and aircraft to break enemy lines, the German army conquered Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France in the spring and summer of 1940.
2. British victory in the epic air battle known as the "Battle of Britain" prevented German invasion of the home islands (fall 1940).

3. In April 1941 Hitler conquered Greece and Yugoslavia and subjugated the entire Balkans.
4. In June the German Army attacked the U.S.S.R., in accordance with Hitler's own dream of "living space" in the East.
5. In the winter of 1941-1942 the Soviets stopped the German advance just outside Moscow.
6. In December 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the United States, bringing America into the war.
7. The Nazi empire was a brutal machine of mass murder.
 - a. All conquered areas were heavily taxed and exploited. Many had to provide forced labor to Germany.
 - b. German rule in the occupied East was most brutal. Four out of five Soviet POWs died while incarcerated. Peasants were displaced and often murdered.
 - c. The special target of Nazi murder was the Jews. The Nazis, with the help of the German war machine, attempted to kill off all the Jews of Europe. The Nazis killed about 6 million Jews.

C. The Grand Alliance

1. After the Japanese attack on the U.S. in December 1941 Britain, the U.S., and the U.S.S.R. found themselves allied. Britain and the U.S. decided to focus on defeating Germany before Japan.
2. The economic strength of this Grand Alliance was tremendous.
 - a. The U.S. had immense industrial resources and could draw on Latin American raw materials.
 - b. Britain had a strong, fully mobilized economy.
 - c. The Soviets managed to move many of their factories east to the Ural Mountains to maintain war production.
3. The Alliance also had the help of resisters to the Nazis inside Europe.

D. The Tide of Battle

1. In late 1942 the tide of war turned in the Soviet Union, North Africa, and the Pacific.
 1. The Soviets surrounded and destroyed the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad.
 2. In the Pacific the United States won a major naval victory in June 1942 (Midway) and a major land victory on the island of Guadalcanal.
 3. By the spring of 1943 the Allies had driven the Germans and Italians from North Africa.
2. In spite of huge increases in German war production between 1942 and 1944, the Allies conquered much of Italy, invaded France, and finally defeated Hitler in May 1945. Japan fell in August 1945. Massive aerial bombing of cities was part of the Allied war effort against both Germany and Japan.