

Ch. XIX: Democracy and Dictatorship

In the 1920s people saw the century as one of progress, but the 1930s turned into a search for security and self-sufficiency--through regulations, controls, plans. Some nations remained democratic but others turned to dictatorship, for a leader to act, decide--to get results, to restore a nation's pride.

101. The United States: Depression and the New Deal

pp. 805-810

- A. Hoover limited his actions in the Depression; he saw the needs as temporary, and opposed government direct relief to the jobless. He preferred assisting banks and railroads (credit) and home and farm mortgage relief. The election of FDR brought the full **New Deal**, a combination of programs for relief, recovery, and reform:
1. Relief: expansion of aid to farmers and home-owners; direct relief to the unemployed; and then relief projects (PWA and WPA). He declared a bank holiday, then reopened them under closer supervision; he devalued the dollar; the farmer received subsidies, and controls; the NRA was created to regulate prices and production. The wide range of programs was paid for by "deficit financing," as proposed by **John Maynard Keynes**--whose idea was "pump priming"--government spending in a depression to get the economy going; debts would be paid for by increased taxes during good times. The federal payroll was increased dramatically, and the national debt was doubled.
 2. Reform programs (longer range) included regulation for the stock market under the SEC; guaranteed bank deposits, through the FDIC and the later FSLIC; **TVA** to aid rural poverty and modernize rural Tennessee.
 3. After 1935 the New Deal turned to regulation and reform and away from relief; the Supreme Court found some programs unconstitutional. Many programs were passed: Social Security (1935), Fair Labor Standards Act (40 hour week, minimum wage); National Labor Relations Act, doubling the size of unions; graduated income tax, and concern for alleviating poverty.
- B. Government spending tended to restore confidence, but the recovery was very slow-- with a recession in 1937. The business community was very negative, opposed to the enlarged debt, to the increased regulation and higher taxes, and to the concessions to labor. But by 1938 the New Deal had been successfully emplaced--and war was clearly on the horizon. The role of government had been expanded: Was it an enormous, expensive bureaucracy that was wasteful and a threat to self-reliance, or was it a bold, humanitarian answer to a serious threat to democracy?

102: Trial and Adjustment of Democracy in Britain and France

pp. 810-818

A. British Politics: The 1920s and the Depression

Britain remained democratic but lost ground. There had been problems before 1914: world-wide industrializing, colonial resentments, protective tariffs. The war was a disaster, and after a brief post-war boom came depression and unemployment. The most serious problems were war losses (40% of merchant marine), tariff barriers created by the new European states, antiquated industry, and labor problems. By 1921, two million were on the "**dole**", though the distress was mitigated by the welfare state. Industry sought to pare back labor's war-time gains; the coal strike of 1926 led to a general strike with 3 million out. The government declared an emergency and the strike failed. By 1922, the **Labour Party**, committed to socialism by legal methods, became the second largest under the leadership of Ramsay MacDonald. During the Depression, Britain avoided extremism and practiced retrenchment--limited government action except to follow policies of economic nationalism and loans to industry. No recovery was achieved until shortly before the war.

B. Britain and the Commonwealth: Imperial Relations

In the Middle East, Britain controlled the Palestine mandate, with a growing trickle of European Zionists. The protectorate over Egypt was ended. In Ireland, a brief and bloody battle between the English "black and tans" and the Sinn Fein (1921-1922) resulted in the creation of the Irish Free State without Ulster in 1922, and fully independent in 1937, though it remained in the Commonwealth until 1949. The Dominions gradually split off: The Statute of Westminster of 1931 recognized Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa as equals with each other and Great Britain--though bonds of economic cooperation remained firm.

C. France: The 1920s and the Coming of the Depression

France was concerned with rebuilding and security in the 1920s, mainly under right wing parties emphasizing private enterprise and private property. The "Radical Socialists" (a moderate leftist party, in spite of its name) came to power after the Ruhr crisis. Antidemocratic parties on the left (communist) and right (monarchist) exerted noisy, militant pressure but had no power. **Poincare** was the main figure; he ordered the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923, balanced the budget by reduced spending and increased taxes. Returning to power in 1926 he stabilized the franc--

after a disastrous fall that virtually repudiated all internal debts--and managed to avoid catastrophic inflation. Prosperity followed--tourism was important, industry was strong, but labor was unhappy.

D. Depression Ferment and the Popular Front

The Depression brought a series of unstable ministries (5 in 1931); government clung to retrenchment as the answer, keeping the gold standard. Fascist-type leagues grew, attacking republicanism. Right-wing Paris riots, followed by a leftist general strike, brought on a Popular Front of Socialists and Communists, enabling the victory of **Leon Blum** in 1936--a democratic/reformist socialist.

E. The Popular Front and After

Blum legislated the 40 hour week, wage increases, and collective bargaining, bringing huge union growth. He nationalized the arms and aviation industries, reorganized the government and reformed the Bank of France, and aided French farmers. The right called this "New Deal" a revolution, and cursed the left-wing, Socialist Jew. The reforms were long overdue, but they came at the wrong time. Nazi rearming meant France had to rearm--and France could not both reform and rearm. Employers were upset; there was a flight of gold; labor became unhappy; and the Communists were angered by the failure to aid the Spanish Loyalists in the Civil War. The Popular Front came apart and Blum's government fell. The Radical Socialists under Daladier returned. Democracy had been preserved, but with cracks.

F. Western Europe and the Depression

Governments were unable to cope politically with the Depression. Old equipment, dependence on US loans, and the success of the USSR. Moreover, the birth rate bottomed out, and there was a scarcity of men in the vigorous middle years.

103: Italian Fascism

pp. 818-812

- A. Historically, dictatorship is a temporary expedient for an emergency; totalitarianism, on the other hand, is a theory of government and a theory of life--a permanent form of society that calls for total control of the individual by the state.
- B. Mussolini: He began as a pro-revolutionary, leftist socialist, employed as a radical journalist; in war he became a strong nationalist, believing in *Italia Irridenta*. Demobilized as a corporal, he organized groups called *fascio di combattimento*, fighting bands. Italy had lost 600,000 dead in the war and was disappointed by Versailles; it had gained territory, but no mandates. There was much social unrest--peasant uprisings and worker strikes, and a clear worker move towards communism. Mussolini's *fascisti*, dressed in black shirts, began brawling with communists in the streets. The government, formed by coalitions, was weak and failed to act. In elections the fascists won 35 of the 500 seats, but gained goons. The propertied were thoroughly frightened of communism, and found fascist ideas comforting. Mussolini had favored higher corporate taxes and attacked "war profiteering" by the rich. Business support brought a shift to a "law and order", anti-commie program, which also appealed to nationalists and the lower middle class. His *squadristi* attacked strikes, unions, any elected leftists. When the left-wing called for a general strike, Mussolini called for a "March on Rome," and the frightened government named Mussolini premier, with a year of full emergency powers (after a liberal cabinet had tried to get martial law to defeat Mussolini).
- C. Mussolini now declared that the largest party would get two-thirds of Parliament; using control of the electoral machinery plus his *squadristi* he won 60% of the vote in the 1924 election. A respected socialist named Matteoti exposed the violence and was murdered; indignation was wide spread, but Mussolini over-rode all opposition and created a full dictatorship: No Parliament; censored press, no labor unions or strike; only one allowed party. Democracy was called the cause of class struggle and selfishness; states required a vigorous leader, **II Duce**. He denounced capitalism and Marxism, advocating control of the economy by the syndical, or corporate state: all economic life was divided into 22 corporations; in each, representatives of labor, employers and the government set prices, wages, and industrial policies--with the government vote decisive, of course. Corporate economic chambers were merged as a parliament, with all members chosen by the government. Ownership was left in private hands, but under strict state control.
- D. The Depression still hit Italy. Mussolini reacted by a program of public works, and aimed at self-sufficiency in food. Works included reclamation of swamps, building of hydroelectric plants. He carried out no fundamental reforms--the extremes of wealth remained. He did not improve the material well-being, but stressed psychological exhilaration. Nationalism was developed through imperialistic militarism. Fascism appealed to eastern Europe, with its nationalism, dislike of democracy, and fear of communism.

104. Totalitarianism: Germany's Third Reich

pp. 822-833

A. The Rise of Adolf Hitler

1. Hitler was born in Austria of German parentage in 1889. A frustrated artist, he dropped out of school and drifted to Vienna, where he was to work until 1914. He disliked Vienna for its mix of nationalities, its Marxism, and its bourgeois liberal Jews. His early ideas were all anti: anti-Semitic, anti-aristocratic, anti-internationalist, and anti-hybridizing. His service in the Germany army in WWI was an exhilarating experience, and he was crushed by Germany's defeat.
2. He returned to Munich with an army political instruction unit, and was instructed to join a small party called the National Socialists. Hitler soon turned it into his **NSDAP**. He created a force called the "Brown Shirts" (or Storm Troopers, *Sturm Abteilung*, S.A.), using it to lead a putsch in Munich in 1923 with the Ruhr crisis as his springboard. He failed and was jailed, after turning his trial into a publicity circus. In prison he wrote his *Mein Kampf*, adding to his prominence and bringing income.
3. Germany's stability during the "Golden Years" of the Weimar Republic undercut his program, but the Depression hitting Germany in 1930 gave him his chance. His message was that the Treaty of Versailles and the Weimar Republic had ruined Germany; the true *Volk* must expel the Bolsheviks, speculators, profiteers, Jews. The NSDAP vote went from 800,000 and 12 seats in 1928 to 6.5 million and 105 in 1930 and 13 million and 230 in 1932. In the meantime his message changed from a socialist one to one more in tune with the Junker/industrialist class who despised him but saw Hitler as a useful tool. Competing politicians Von Papen and Von Schleicher both saw Hitler as their ally, and by their manipulations Hitler was made Chancellor in 1933.
4. Once in office, he appointed his henchmen to key positions in the Prussian state police; then he used the incident of the Reichstag fire to denounce Bolshevism and suspend freedom of speech and press. He then held an election, winning only 44% of the vote. But the Nazis and Nationalists had 52% and the Reichstag voted him full emergency powers by the Enabling Act.

B. The Nazi State

The Third Reich aimed at destroying all liberal/Western/Communist/Jewish ideas. The Nuremberg Laws were passed to separate Aryan from Jew. A one party state was created, with the social revolutionary wing of the party purged. The Gestapo was formed to keep order--and People's Courts dispensing Nazi justice and the infamous concentration camps soon followed. Churches were "coordinated" with Nazi concepts; the Nazi Youth was created (*Hitler Jugend*). Labor unions were "coordinated" out of existence, replaced by the National Labor Front. Employers were set up as small-scale *Führers* and given extensive control--under government supervision. Strikes or any work stoppages were *verboten*. Public works programs were begun to put all to work, and a program of rearming was initiated. German chemists were put to work to ensure German autarky, creating artificial rubber, plastics, synthetics, and many substitute (*ersatz*) products. Germany also moved to dominate eastern European trade. Thus: "The Nazi revolution had turned Germany into a huge disciplined war machine, its internal foes liquidated or silenced, its mesmerized masses roaring their approval in giant rallies "...Today Germany,' went an ominous Nazi phrase, 'tomorrow the world.'"

C. Totalitarianism: Some Origins and Consequences

1. Was Soviet totalitarianism different? In theory, the proletarian dictatorship was temporary, did not glorify the individual leader, and was not nationalistic; it had a democratic constitution and was not avowedly militaristic. But as the Soviet one-party state became permanent, the hollowness of the Soviet constitution became apparent, a cult developed around the person of Stalin; and the emphasis became more nationalistic and less international.
2. Whence did it come? The state grew from the New Monarchies of the 16th century to the absolutism of Louis XIV to the grandiose dreams of Napoleon. World War I clearly speeded the process through the immense demands of a total war. The state was not only anti-clerical; now it was avowedly anti-Christian, claiming to offer a new "total" philosophy of life.
3. Totalitarianism draws heavily on nationalism, with the idea that the individual is only a cell of the great organism, lacking independent existence outside of it. The individual must be totally subordinate to the Party and its Leader; only the Leader can fully express the fundamental Will of the people. Science, culture, and sport have no existence apart from the State. Truth is subjective and must conform to the inner nature of the people, interpreted by the Leader.
4. Totalitarian regimes must shape reality, so propaganda becomes vital; it is monopolized by the state, and demands a total faith in every detail. Censorship became positive, manipulating opinion and rewriting history. All ideas must reflect the ideology of the State. In such a society, the idea of truth evaporates. Faced by one view only, with no means of testing any official allegation, the subject people become incapable of reason.
5. Nazi racism further exaggerated and degraded nationalism, defining nations as biological entities and focusing on anti-Semitism to make people feel their racial purity more keenly and to forget deeper problems of society (scapegoating). Totalitarianism becomes an escape from the realities of class conflict; totalitarians require solidarity

in the name of “the People.” Any problems are caused by forces outside the country--by imperialism (to communists) or international Jewry (to Nazis). Dissidents obviously are conspiring with these foes.

6. Finally, totalitarian societies glorify violence and direct action. Lenin showed how a small group could seize power in chaotic conditions; Mussolini showed how the mere possibility of revolution could provide opportunity. The period between the wars provided the horror of private armies, bands of uniformed and organized ruffians, abusing and even killing law-abiding citizens with impunity. They reintroduced torture as a policy of state. Their ethics were violent and neopagan, preaching direct action as opposed to thought. Each new regime introduced youth movements appealing to juvenile idealism and stressing toughness of body. Euthanasia was adopted for the insane, proposed for the aged. And the final horror was genocide.

D. The Spread of Dictatorship

By 1938, only 10 of 27 European nations were democratic --with the USSR and 16 fascist nations. Weakness or absence of democratic traditions, low education and literacy, hostile reactionary elements, fear of Bolshevism, minority dissatisfactions, all coupled with economic strains, contributed to the collapse of the new representative institutions. Most nations came to rest on a basis of personal and military power: Poland, Hungary, Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Austria. All dictators repressed individual liberties, banned opposition parties, abolished parliamentary institutions; some banned strikes; many began anti-Semitic legislation. All saw war as ennobling, peace as a sign of decadence; all blamed foreign countries for their problems. It is not surprising that the 30s was a decade of domestic reaction and international crises.