

## *Chapter 20*

# **DEMOCRACY AND DICTATORSHIP IN THE 1930s**

### 20.97 TRIALS AND ADJUSTMENTS OF DEMOCRACY IN BRITAIN AND FRANCE

#### *Study Questions*

1. Explain the circumstances that contributed to Britain's economic difficulties in the years after the First World War. How were these difficulties reflected in the events of the 1920s?
2. Why did the Labour party emerge as one of Britain's two major parties in the years after 1922?
3. Analyze the impact of the depression on Britain. How did the Labour government of 1929 become transformed into a National government?
4. How did the National government attempt to cope with the depression? How successful was it? How would you describe British representative institutions during the crisis of the 1930s?
5. How successfully did the British cope with the problems of the empire, the Commonwealth, and the Irish question?
6. What issues preoccupied France in the 1920s? What were the economic conditions like? How did the depression affect France economically?
7. Under what circumstances did the Popular Front emerge in France?
8. What do the illustrations on pp. 813, 817, and 819 tell us about British and French politics in the 1930s?
9. What reasons can be attributed to the downfall of the Blum government?

#### *Key Discussion Sentences*

1. Britain, like the United States, remained firmly attached to representative institutions and democratic principles, even during the troubles of the depression.
2. The Great Depression aggravated and intensified Britain's older economic difficulties, which dated back to the years before 1914.
3. The Irish question remained unsettled throughout the rest of the century and beyond.
4. The Popular Front put through a program of far-reaching legislation.
5. As a result of the Popular Front, internal divisions and class hatreds grew sharper, but the Third Republic was preserved.
6. The economic destiny of Europeans in the 1930s was very much in doubt.

### *Identifications*

Dole

General strike of 1926

Trades Disputes Act of 1927

Zinoviev letter

Ramsay MacDonald

Sinn Fein party

Statute of Westminster

Radical Socialists

Raymond Poincaré

Stavisky riots

French Popular Front

Léon Blum

## 20.98 ITALIAN FASCISM

### *Study Questions*

1. What elements of dissatisfaction and unrest appeared in Italy after the First World War? How did Mussolini and the Fascists take advantage of the postwar situation?
2. What was the "March on Rome"? How did it help Mussolini establish the Fascist Party as the premier political party in Italy?
3. Describe the regime that Mussolini established. What was the purpose, in theory, of the corporative state? What was it actually like? What impression of Mussolini do you form from the illustration on p. 824?
4. What arguments were advanced to assert the superiority of fascism and the corporative state over Western democracy?

5. How would you evaluate the accomplishments and failures of the Fascist regime?

### *Key Discussion Sentences*

1. The corporative state was the Fascist answer to Western-style democracy and to Soviet proletarian dictatorship. Fascism, said Mussolini, is the “dictatorship of the state over many classes cooperating.”
2. The Fascist corporative system did not resemble the older syndicalist theories.
3. Fascism failed to provide either the economic security or the material well-being for which it had demanded the sacrifice of individual freedom.
4. In other countries fascism came to be regarded as a possible alternative to democratic or parliamentary government and a corrective for troubles whose reality no one could deny.

### *Identifications*

<i>Fascio di combattimento</i>	March on Rome	<i>Duce</i>
Blackshirts	<i>Squadristi</i>	Corporative state
Fascism	Matteotti	Chamber of Fasces and Corporations

## 20.99 TOTALITARIANISM: GERMANY’S THIRD REICH

### *Study Questions*

1. Explain the problems with which the Weimar Republic had to contend in its early years.
2. What attitudes did Hitler form in Vienna before the First World War? What role did the war play in his life? How would you describe the message of *Mein Kampf*?
3. How did the Great Depression affect Germany? How did Hitler exploit the feelings generated by the Great Depression? What use did he make of anti-Semitism?
4. Describe the circumstances under which Hitler became chancellor. Of what significance were the months from June 1932 to January 1933 and the elections of March 1933?
5. Explain the political, economic, and social changes introduced by Hitler and the Third Reich. Was the Nazi revolution truly a revolution?

6. How did Hitler and the Nazi Party go about “coordinating the German society”?
7. What do the illustrations on pp. 832 and 838 tell us about the Nazi regime and its views on race?
8. Summarize the spread of dictatorship in Europe in the 1930s.
9. In what sense was the totalitarian state an outgrowth of the past? How did it differ from political phenomena of the past?

### *Key Discussion Sentences*

1. Without the Great Depression, Adolf Hitler might have faded out of history.
2. Democracy, in Germany, could easily be attacked as an imported doctrine, a foreign system foisted upon the Germans by the victors of the late war.
3. In anti-Semitism Hitler found a lowest common denominator upon which to appeal to all parties and classes.
4. Hitler became chancellor by entirely legal means.
5. All institutions were “coordinated” under the new regime, which thwarted the development of a broad resistance.
6. Totalitarianism was an escape from the realities of class conflict.
7. The trend toward dictatorship or totalitarianism spread over Europe in the 1930s.
8. Totalitarianism must be distinguished from mere dictatorship.

### *Identifications*

Nazis	Franz von Papen	Nuremberg laws
Beer hall Putsch	Reichstag fire	Purge of 1934
Kurt von Schleicher	Third Reich	Gestapo
Paul von Hindenburg	Aryan	National Labor Front
Nationalist party	Kristallnacht	Strength Through Joy

### GENERAL ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 20

1. How did the mood of the 1930s compare with the mood of the 1920s? What developments brought about the change? What accounted for the setbacks to democracy in many parts of Europe?
2. Compare the political response to the Great Depression in (a) the United States, (b) Britain, (c) France, and (d) Germany. How successfully did each cope with the economic collapse?
3. Compare and contrast Italian Fascism and German National Socialism, examining the origins, nature, and consequences of each.
4. Define fascism and then totalitarianism. How would you contrast the Soviet regime with the Italian and German dictatorships?

## GENERAL DISCUSSION PASSAGES FOR CHAPTER 20

1. In the 1920s many people believed, or hoped, that despite the horrors of the World War, Europe was again moving toward the material and political goals summed up in the idea of progress. In the 1930s they began to fear that “progress” was a phantom, to speak the word self-consciously with mental quotation marks, and to be content if only they could prevent a relapse into positive barbarism and a new world war. (p. 811)
2. The Great Depression ushered in the nightmare of the 1930s. Where democratic institutions were strong and resilient, governments took steps to protect individuals against the ravages of unemployment and destitution and to help guard against future catastrophes. On the other hand, where democratic governments were not well established or taken for granted, which was the case in many countries after the First World War, dictatorship spread alarmingly in the 1930s with the coming of the Depression. (p. 811)
3. According to Keynes and others who criticized MacDonald’s policies, the British government should set aside old orthodoxies about deficit financing, because such policies were actually the most direct and rapid method for preventing a more general collapse of the capitalist system. (p. 814)
4. Totalitarianism, as it arose after the First World War, was not merely a theory of government but a theory of life and of human nature. (p. 821)
5. As time passed, Soviet totalitarianism or Communism became harder to distinguish from totalitarian regimes like Naziism. (p. 835)

6. The avowed philosophy of totalitarian regimes was subjective. Whether an idea was held to be true depended on whose idea it was. (p. 836)
7. The older Enlightenment concepts of universal reason, natural law, natural right, and the ultimate likeness of all mankind, or of a common path of all mankind in one course of progress, disappeared. (p. 836)
8. Anti-Semitism was inflamed by propagandists who wished people to feel their supposed racial purity more keenly or to forget the deeper problems of society, including poverty, class divisions, and economic inequities. (p. 838)
9. Racism, more characteristic of Nazi Germany than of totalitarianism in general, was a further exaggeration, or degradation, of older ideas of nationalism and national solidarity. (p. 837)
10. Totalitarianism was an escape from the realities of class conflict. It was a way of pretending that differences between rich and poor were of minor importance. (p. 838)
11. The dictatorships blamed their troubles on forces outside the country. They talked of the struggle between rich nations and poor nations, the “have” and “have not” countries and thus transformed the problem of poverty into an international struggle. They gave the signal that war might be a solution for social ills that had not yet disappeared. (p. 839)
12. War in the Nazi and Fascist ethics was a noble thing, and the love of peace a sign of decadence. The Soviet regime by its own theory regarded war with non-Soviet powers as inevitable someday, but did not preach it as a positive moral good. (p. 841)