

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The West Between the Wars, 1919–1939

Lesson 2 The Rise of Dictatorial Regimes

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What can cause economic instability? How might political change impact society?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

media channels or systems of communication

attitude a mental position regarding a fact or state

Content Vocabulary

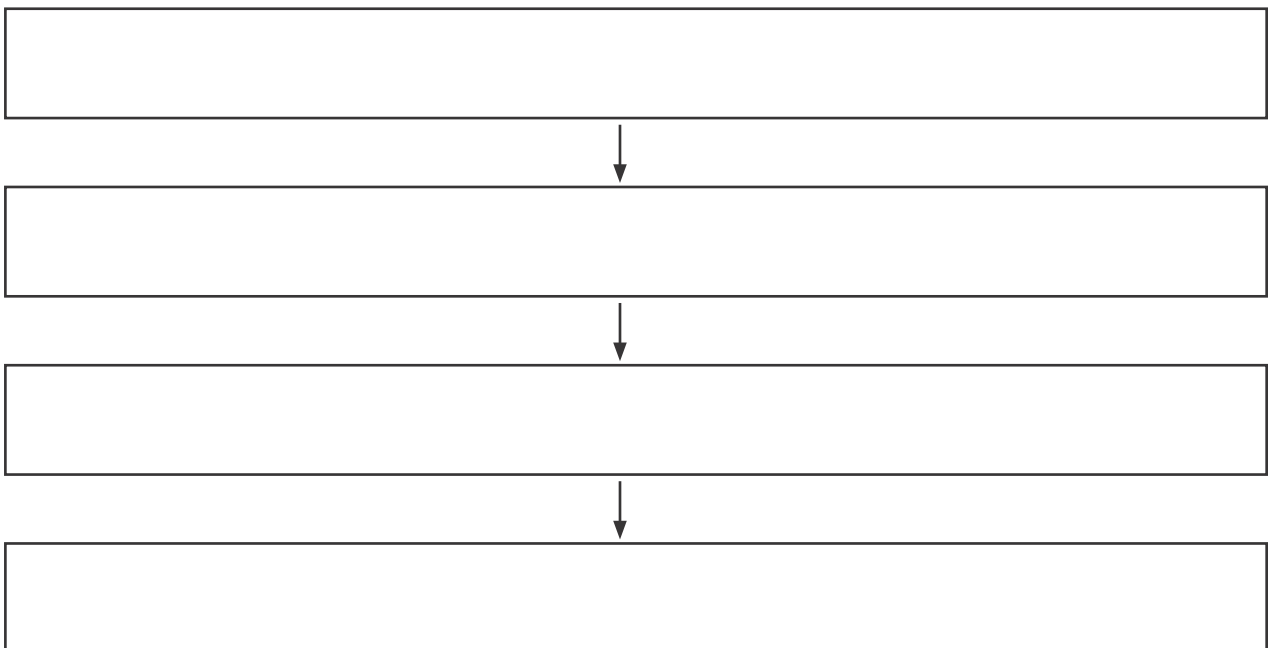
totalitarian state a government that aims to control the political, economic, social, intellectual, and cultural lives of its citizens

fascism a political philosophy that glorifies the state above the individual by emphasizing the need for a strong central government led by a dictatorial ruler

collectivization a system in which private farms are eliminated and peasants work land owned by the government

TAKING NOTES: *Sequencing*

ACTIVITY As you read, use a sequence chain like the one below to record the events leading up to Franco’s authoritarian rule of Spain.



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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

After World War I, Europe's young democracies were under threat. New kinds of dictatorships, or rule by a leader with total power, arose. Examples were fascism in Mussolini's Italy and totalitarianism in Stalin's Russia. These leaders wanted to control not just the government but also the actions and thoughts of their citizens. Other Western states such as Spain returned to the authoritarian regimes. These were based on long-existing models of rulers who held total power.

The Rise of Dictators

Guiding Question *How did Mussolini create a dictatorial state in Italy?*

Only two major European states—France and Great Britain—remained democratic by 1939. Italy, the Soviet Union, Germany, and many other European states set up dictatorial governments. These governments took both old and new forms.

A new form of dictatorship was the modern totalitarian state. A **totalitarian state** is when the government tries to control almost every part of its citizens' lives. The government is in control of citizens' political, economic, social, intellectual, and cultural lives. Totalitarian governments pushed the central state's power far beyond what it had been in the past. These regimes wanted more than citizens to obey without resistance. They wanted to win the minds and hearts of their subjects. To do so, they used mass propaganda, or information spread to large numbers of people to promote their cause. They also used modern communications.

A single leader and a single political party led the totalitarian state. They rejected the ideal of limited government and the guarantee of individual freedoms. Instead, the leader decided what was in the best interest of the masses, or the large numbers of ordinary citizens. The masses were expected to be very involved in reaching the state's goals.

Fascism in Italy

Benito Mussolini (MOO-suh-LEE-nee) started the first European fascist movement in Italy in the 1920s. Mussolini began his political career as a Socialist. In 1919, he created a new political group called the *Fascio di Combattimento*, or League of Combat. *Fascism* comes from that name.

Fascism (FA-shih-zuhm) is a political philosophy, or system of thought, that glorifies the state above the individual. A dictatorial ruler leads a strong central government. In a fascist state, the government controls the people. The government totally stops any opposition.

Mussolini's movement was growing quickly by 1922. The middle class feared socialism, communism, and disorder. This fear made fascism increasingly attractive to many people. Mussolini knew that many Italians were still angry about not receiving more land from the peace treaty that ended World War I. He also knew nationalism was a powerful force. So he demanded more land for Italy. Mussolini used nationalist appeals to convert thousands to support the Fascist Party.

In 1922 Mussolini and the Fascists threatened to march on Rome if they were not given power. Victor Emmanuel III, the king of Italy, gave in, and he made Mussolini prime minister. Mussolini used this position to create a Fascist dictatorship. He was made head of the government. He was then given the power to make laws by decree, or by his personal order. The police were given unlimited power, and they could arrest and jail anyone for either political or nonpolitical crimes. In 1926, the Fascists outlawed all other political parties in Italy. They set up a secret police, known as the OVRA. By the end of the year, Mussolini ruled Italy as *Il Duce* (eel DOO-chay), "The Leader."

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The Fascist State

Mussolini believed the state should be totalitarian. He used various means to gain complete control over the Italian people. The OVRA watched citizens' political activities and enforced government policies. The Italian Fascists also tried to control the mass **media**, including newspapers, radio, and film. The government used the media to spread propaganda. Government officials repeatedly printed and broadcast simple slogans, or short sayings, like "Mussolini Is Always Right." They tried to make Italians into a single-minded Fascist community.

The Fascists also set up organizations to promote the ideals of Fascism. By 1939, about 66 percent of the population between the ages of 8 and 18 were members of Fascist youth groups. These youth groups focused on military activities and values.

The Fascists hoped these organizations would create a nation of Italians who were fit, disciplined, and war-loving. In practice, the Fascists largely maintained traditional social **attitudes**. For example, they portrayed the family as the pillar of the state. Women were seen as the foundation of the family and, as a result, women were expected to be homemakers and mothers. Mussolini believed these roles were women's purposes in life.

Mussolini tried to achieve the degree of totalitarian control seen in Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Soviet Union. He was never successful in this goal. The Italian Fascist Party did not completely destroy the country's old power structure. Mussolini compromised, or made an agreement, with the traditional institutions of Italy. His dealings with the Catholic Church reflected this compromise. In the Lateran Accords of February 1929, his regime recognized the sovereign (self-governing) independence of Vatican City. The Church had claimed this small area of about 109 acres (about 44 ha) within Rome since Italian unification in 1870. Mussolini's regime also recognized Catholicism as the only state religion. In return, the Catholic Church urged Italians to support the Fascist regime.



Reading Progress Check

Analyzing Why did many Italian people find fascism acceptable?

From Russia to the USSR

Guiding Question *How did Stalin gain and maintain power in the USSR?*

V. I. Lenin, the Communist leader of Russia, had followed a policy of war communism during the Russian civil war. The government controlled most industries and seized grain from peasants to make sure the army had supplies. After the war ended, peasants began to sabotage, or try to destroy, the Communist program by hoarding, or saving and hiding, food. Also, drought caused a terrible shortage of food between 1920 and 1922. As many as 5 million people died as a result. This agricultural disaster occurred at the same time as an industrial collapse. Industrial production was only 20 percent of its 1913 level by 1921. Russia was exhausted. Peasants expressed their frustration with the situation by

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calling for a return to the old order. Leon Trotsky, an important political leader in Russia, admitted that the country was close to complete collapse.

Lenin's New Economic Policy

In March 1921, Lenin acted to keep Russia from collapse. He abandoned war communism, and he put his New Economic Policy (NEP) into action. The NEP was a slightly changed version of the old capitalist system. Peasants were allowed to sell their produce openly. Retail stores, as well as small industries with fewer than 20 workers, could be privately owned and operated. However, heavy industry, banking, and mines remained under government control.

The Soviet Union

In 1922 Lenin and the Communists formally created a new state called the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It was also called the Soviet Union (by its shortened form). By that time, the economy was doing better. A good harvest had ended the famine. Agricultural production climbed to 75 percent of its prewar level.

The NEP saved the Soviet Union from complete economic disaster. Even so, Lenin meant for the NEP to be temporary. His ultimate, or final, goal was communism.

Lenin died in 1924. A struggle for power began at once. The seven members of the Politburo (PAH-luht-byur-oh)—the Communist Party's main policy-making group—fought for control. The Politburo was deeply divided over the future of the Soviet Union.

Leon Trotsky led one group in the Politburo. Trotsky wanted to end the NEP and start Russia on a path of rapid industrialization. The peasants would suffer greatly under this plan. This group also wanted to spread communism abroad. It believed that the revolution in Russia would only survive with new communist states in other places.

Another group in the Politburo rejected the idea of worldwide communist revolution. Instead, it wanted to focus on building a socialist state in Russia and to continue Lenin's NEP. This group knew that rapid industrialization would harm the peasants.

Stalin and His Five-Year Plans

There was an intense personal rivalry between Leon Trotsky and Joseph Stalin, another Politburo member. By 1927 Stalin had the upper hand. By this time he had removed Trotsky from the Communist government. He also had removed many other Bolsheviks from the Communist Party and the government. Trotsky fled the country and was murdered years later in Mexico. This was most likely on Stalin's orders. With Trotsky and most of the old Bolsheviks out of the way, Stalin was free to establish a powerful dictatorship. He seized all power for himself and greatly reduced the freedom of the press. Now no one could oppose him or speak out against his policies.

Stalin made a large shift in economic policy in 1928. He ended the NEP. That year he began his First Five-Year Plan. The Five-Year Plans set economic goals for five-year periods. Their purpose was to change Russia very quickly from an agricultural into an industrial country.

The First Five-Year Plan focused on making military and capital goods (goods used to make other goods; for example, heavy machines). The plan quadrupled the production of heavy machinery and doubled oil production. During the first two Five-Year Plans (1928–1937), Russia's steel production increased from 4 to 18 million tons (3.6 to 16.3 million t) per year.

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Costs of Stalin's Programs

The social and political costs of industrialization were enormous. The number of workers increased by millions between 1932 and 1940. However, investment in housing actually declined after 1929. As a result, millions of workers and their families lived in miserable conditions. Real wages of industrial workers fell by 43 percent between 1928 and 1940.

At the same time, agriculture underwent rapid **collectivization**. In this system, private farms were eliminated. The government owned all of the land, and the peasants worked it. The peasants showed they did not like this situation. They hoarded crops and killed livestock. In response, Stalin made the program grow faster. By 1934, 26 million family farms had been collectivized into 250,000 units.

Collectivization had great costs for many people in Russia. There was widespread famine because of peasants' hoarding food and killing livestock. The Ukraine region was the center of this famine. It is estimated that 2.4 to 7.5 million Ukrainian died. This is out of the 10 million total deaths due to famine in the Soviet Union. Some scholars consider the famine a purposeful move by Stalin. This "Terror Famine" was meant to stop the movement for Ukrainian independence.

Stalin's programs had other costs as well. Stalin strengthened his control over the party to reach his goals. The government sent people who resisted into forced labor camps in Siberia. During the Great Purge of the late 1930s, Stalin expelled army officers, diplomats, union officials, intellectuals, and ordinary citizens. About 8 million people who were arrested and sent to labor camps never returned. Others were executed, or put to death.

The Stalin era also removed permissive, or less strict, social legislation from the early 1920s. Communists had made the divorce process easier because they wanted to promote equal rights for women. After Stalin came to power, the family was praised as a small collective. Parents were responsible for teaching the values of hard work, duty, and discipline to their children.



Reading Progress Check

Stating Explain how Joseph Stalin used his position in the Communist Party and other means to gain control over the USSR.

Authoritarian States in the West

Guiding Question *What was the goal of authoritarian governments in the West?*

Some Western governments were authoritarian but not totalitarian. These states adopted some totalitarian features, such as their use of police powers. However, these authoritarian governments did not want to create a new kind of mass society the way totalitarian states did. Instead, they wanted to keep the existing social order, and did not attempt to control every aspect of their citizens' lives.

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Eastern Europe

After World War I, it seemed that political democracy would become well established in Eastern Europe. The nations of Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia (known as the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes until 1929), Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary all adopted parliamentary systems. However, authoritarian regimes soon replaced democracy.

The parliamentary systems in Eastern European states failed for several reasons. To begin, the states had little tradition or experience of political democracy. Also, they were mostly rural and agrarian, or dominated by farming. Powerful landowners still controlled most of the land. Landowners, churches, and even some members of the small middle class feared land reform. They also feared communist upheaval and ethnic conflict. These groups looked to authoritarian governments to maintain the old order. Only Czechoslovakia, with its large middle class, liberal tradition, and strong industrial base, kept its political democracy.

Spain

Political democracy failed in Spain, too. General Francisco Franco led Spanish military forces in a revolt against the democratic government in 1936. A brutal and bloody civil war began.

Foreign intervention complicated the Spanish Civil War. The fascist regimes of Italy and Germany helped Franco. They supplied guns, money, and soldiers. Hitler used the Spanish Civil War to test the new weapons of his air force. German bombers destroyed the city of Guernica in April 1937. On the other side, 40,000 foreign volunteers helped the Spanish republican government. The Soviet Union sent in trucks, planes, tanks, and military advisers.

The Spanish Civil War ended when Franco's forces captured Madrid in 1939. Franco set up a dictatorship, which lasted until his death in 1975. Franco's regime was authoritarian, not totalitarian. Franco favored traditional groups and did not try to control every aspect of people's lives. He upheld the power of the Catholic Church. He supported the control of the landlords in rural Spain. Even so, his rule was harsh. He relied on special police forces to maintain his power. Opponents of the regime either left the country or were arrested and put into prison.



Reading Progress Check

Describing In what ways did Franco's government preserve the existing social order?
