

SSWH18: EXAMINE THE MAJOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS THAT SHAPED THE WORLD SOCIETIES BETWEEN WWI AND WWII



Element B: Describe the rise of fascism in Europe and Asia by comparing the policies of Benito Mussolini in Italy, Adolf Hitler in Germany, and Hirohito in Japan

Fascism: An Overview

- Fascism as a political philosophy was born in Italy in 1919 and spread to other countries in Europe and South America.
- Fascist like regimes emerged in Japan during the 1930s under the military dictatorship headed by Hideki Tojo.
 - These regimes were characterized by ultra-nationalistic antidemocratic dictatorships.
 - The leaders of these regimes argued that democracy was ineffective in solving the problems faced by a nation and that the glory and pride of a state was best maintained by a strong totalitarian leader.
- In the case of Italy, Germany and Japan these regimes emerged out of democratic states after an economic crisis.
 - In Germany and Italy, these economic crises were made worse by perceived national humiliations resulting from the peace negotiations after World War I.
 - The treatment of Germany in the Treaty of Versailles enraged many Germans and Italy's inability to gain land during the post war negotiations angered many Italians.
 - The inability of the democratic governments of Italy, Germany and Japan to solve the economic crisis and the blame that the German and Italian governments received for post war humiliation ultimately led to their downfall.



Italian Fascism

- Democracy failed in Italy first.
 - Rising inflation and unemployment in the early 1920s led to social unrest and a rise in the influence of the Socialists and Communist parties in Italy.
 - These conditions generated fear among the middle and upper classes who became impatient with the government's inability to maintain order and prosperity.
- Benito Mussolini's Fascist party began to win support from these groups when Fascist party members known as Black Shirts began to attack Communist and Socialists on the streets.
 - In 1922, with growing support from the middle and upper classes, Mussolini led a march of 30,000 Fascist party members on Rome.
 - Fearing a revolution, King Victor Emmanuel III named Mussolini Prime Minister.
- Over the next several years, Mussolini consolidated his power as Fascist took control over the Italian parliament and seceded parliamentary authority to Mussolini.
 - By 1925 Mussolini had almost complete control over government.
 - Now known as Il Duce, Mussolini built a totalitarian regime that abolished democracy, banned opposition political parties, jailed opponents, limited speech, censored the press, outlawed strikes, and utilized an intense propaganda machine to maintain the obedience of the citizenry.
 - Though his methods were harsh, Mussolini was generally respected at home and abroad.
 - Successful reforms modernized Italy with highway construction, industrial development, and literacy campaigns.



German Fascism

- ❑ The failure of democracy in Germany came with the onset of the Great Depression.
- ❑ Inspired by Mussolini, Hitler formed the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi) in 1919 and in 1923 he tried to replicate Mussolini's success in the March on Rome with a coup attempt in Munich.
 - The Beer Hall Putsch as it is now called was a failure and resulted in a prison sentence for Hitler.
- ❑ Hitler served nine months of his five-year sentence during which he authored Mein Kampf a manifesto of his political beliefs and goals.
 - In Mein Kampf Hitler reiterated Mussolini's ideas about the weakness of democracy, and communism.
 - He agreed with Mussolini's conclusion that an ultra-nationalist dictatorship by a single strong leader was the best way to maintain order and restore the pride and prosperity of the state.
- ❑ However, Hitler augmented Mussolini's Fascist Party platform with the principle of German racial superiority.





German Fascism

- ❑ Hitler argued that the German people (along with a few other northern European populations) were the members of the ancient Aryan "race" and therefore naturally superior to the rest of the world's population.
- ❑ In Mein Kampf, Hitler established the basic goals of the Nazi party.
 - Like the Fascists of Italy and the Militarists of Japan, the Nazis would end democracy, build a strong military, use government power to improve the economy, and expand their territory.
- ❑ Hitler, Mussolini, and Tojo (supported by Hirohito) all believed that their nation's success depended on the conquest of new territory.
- ❑ Hitler's rise to power was very similar to Mussolini.
 - During the 1920s Hitler built a power base that included a Nazi Party militia called the Brown Shirts.
 - Like the Black Shirts of Italy, Hitler's Brown Shirts used the threat and sometimes actual violence to win political influence.
- ❑ After the collapse of the German economy in the Great Depression the Nazis became Germany's largest political party.
 - Like in Italy, they gained support from the middle and upper classes by opposing the threat of a communist revolution.
- ❑ In 1933, President Paul von Hindenburg named Hitler chancellor (a position similar to prime minister).
 - Hitler immediately called for new elections for the Reichstag or German parliament.






German Fascism

- ❑ Hitler immediately called for new elections for the Reichstag or German parliament.
 - He hoped that his increasing popularity would lead to a Nazi majority.
- ❑ Six days before the election the Reichstag building mysteriously caught fire.
 - Nazi party leaders blamed the fire on the Communist Party and called on citizens to elect Nazis to protect the nation from the threat.
 - Nazis won a slim majority in the Reichstag and like in Italy they began to vote to secede their power to Hitler.
- ❑ In 1934, Hitler was named Führer, taking complete control of the German government.
 - Like Mussolini he built a totalitarian regime that abolished democracy, banned opposition political parties, jailed opponents, limited speech, censored the press, outlawed strikes, and utilized an intense propaganda machine and police force to maintain the obedience of the citizenry.
 - And, like Mussolini, Hitler enjoyed widespread support because of successful reforms that dramatically reduced unemployment, increased industrial output and improved infrastructure.





Japanese Fascism (Militarism)

- ❑ Unlike Italy and Germany, Japan never had a single man with total government control.
 - Instead a small group of military leaders ruled with the support of the Emperor Hirohito.
- ❑ Of these men Hideki Tojo emerged as the most powerful.
 - In the Japanese parliamentary democracy of the 1920s the civil government had no control over the military.
 - According to the constitution, the military reported directly to the Emperor.
 - Traditionally the Japanese emperors did not yield power, this meant that the military was essential independent in its authority.
- ❑ Until the Great Depression, the military generally respected the authority of the civil government over the affairs of the Japanese state but when economic hard times turned the Japanese people against the civil government in 1929, the military stepped into take control.
 - Social unrest and popular support facilitated the militaries gradual seizure of power.
 - By 1931, the military invaded Manchuria without the authority of the civil government and by 1941 Hideki Tojo, the head of the military became prime minister.



Japanese Fascism (Militarism)

- ❑ Like in Italy and Germany, militaristic nationalism supported the power of the new regime.
- ❑ In Japan this nationalism was supported by a religious movement, State Shinto.
 - State Shinto gave the Japanese regime a race based political ideology similar to the Germans.
 - As Nazism argued that the Germans were entitled to build an empire in Europe based on their perceived racial superiority, State Shinto argued that the Japanese were a master race destined to rule Asia.
- ❑ Like their counterparts in Europe, the Japanese regime commanded the obedience of the population and enjoyed widespread popularity because of their success in coping with the Great Depression.


