

Chapter

21

BETWEEN THE WARS

(1919–1939)

Getting Focused

Skim this chapter to predict what you will be learning.

- Read the lesson titles and subheadings.
- Look at the illustrations and read the captions.
- Examine the maps.
- Review the vocabulary words and terms.

A totalitarian government is one that attempts to control the politics, economy, society, and culture of a nation. People's freedoms are limited. Between 1919 and 1939, three totalitarian governments emerged in Europe: Italy, the Soviet Union, and Germany.

What freedoms would people lose under a totalitarian government? How would a government make people obey laws that take away their freedoms? Work with a partner to make a list of your ideas. As you read this chapter, check your list against what these governments actually did.



Totalitarianism in Italy

Thinking on Your Own

Make a list of the vocabulary words in your notebook. Then skim the chapter for more words that you do not know. Work with a partner to define each of the words on your list. Once you agree on a definition, write a sentence that shows the word's meaning. Then write a synonym for each of the words.

After World War I, people in Europe and the United States were tired of war. They were horrified at its costs in lives and damage. The League of Nations was created to ensure that a global war would never happen again. However, the League was doomed to fail. Its 40-member nations could not agree on policies, including how to stop aggressive nations. In addition, the United States never joined the League.

focus your reading

Explain how Mussolini gained power.

What is fascism?

How was the government set up under Mussolini?

vocabulary

depression	fascism
inflation	censor
Blackshirts	corporate state
dictator	

A major problem that nations also faced in the 1920s was a worldwide **depression**. A depression is a period of rising unemployment and low economic activity. It began in the early 1920s in Europe and spread around the world. By the early 1930s, the economy of the United States had also collapsed. The depression caused great hardship everywhere. Leaders in several countries promised to end the suffering by setting up totalitarian governments.

Time Box

- 1919
Fascist Party founded
- 1922
Mussolini named
prime minister
- 1926
Mussolini declared
himself *Il Duce*

Between the Wars, 1919–1939

The Rise of Mussolini

The first person to set up a totalitarian government was Benito Mussolini in Italy. He used the Treaty of Versailles and Italy's economic problems to gain power.

During World War I, Italy fought on the side of the Allies. At the end of the war, Italy wanted to annex land to its east along the Adriatic Sea. Instead, the Big Three—the United States, Great Britain, and France—gave the land to the new nation of Yugoslavia. This angered Italian nationalists. Mussolini appealed to them by promising to create a new Italian empire.

Like much of Europe, economic troubles began in Italy right after World War I. **Inflation** became a problem. Inflation is a rapid increase in the prices of goods. Prices rose but workers' wages did not. Workers called strikes to demand higher pay. Socialists preached an end to capitalism. Middle-class owners of businesses and large landowners feared socialism. They were worried about a Communist takeover of Italy. At that time, Communists were calling themselves Socialists.



Benito Mussolini in the early 1920s

Fascist "March on Rome," 1922



Mussolini used the fears of the middle class. In 1919, he founded the Fascist Party. In the early 1920s, groups of his supporters known as **Blackshirts** broke up strikes and attacked Socialists' meetings and offices. By 1922, Mussolini had the support of a large portion of the middle class. In that year, Mussolini and his followers marched on Rome.

Mussolini boldly demanded power from King Victor Emmanuel III. The king saw no choice and made him prime minister.

By 1925, Mussolini had set up a dictatorship. Under a dictatorship, a single person, the **dictator**, has complete

stop and think

As you read, create a cause-and-effect flowchart that illustrates how Mussolini came to power.

control of the government. Italy was still called a constitutional monarchy. Victor Emmanuel III was still king. However, Mussolini had taken control of the government for himself. He had elections fixed so that only his supporters were elected to office. He removed opponents from government jobs. By 1926, he was calling himself Il Duce, the leader. The king was only a figurehead.

Fascism

Mussolini's dictatorship was called **fascism**. The name came from his political party. Fascism is a totalitarian government that is not Communist. Fascists in the 1920s and 1930s were strong anti-Communists and anti-Socialists.

According to fascism, the state is more important than individuals. As a result, a Fascist nation has a strong central government. There is a single leader who is a dictator. The government controls the economy. Individuals and companies may own businesses and land. However, the government controls how the owners run them. Individuals have limited freedoms.

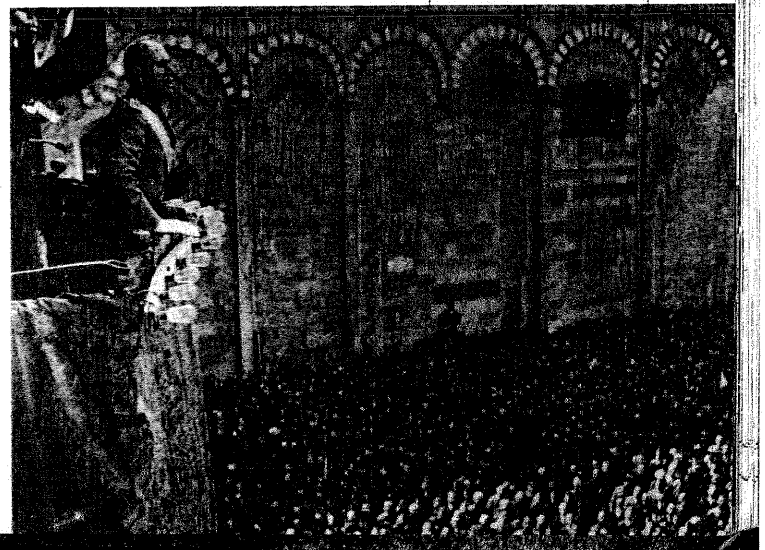
In a Fascist state, rival political parties are banned. The mass media—newspapers, radio, and movies—is **censored**. In this context, to censor means to forbid the communication of views that oppose the government. Police spies and terror are used to enforce government policies. Propaganda is another important tool in a Fascist state. It is used to brainwash people into believing what the government says. The way Mussolini governed Italy shows how a Fascist state works.

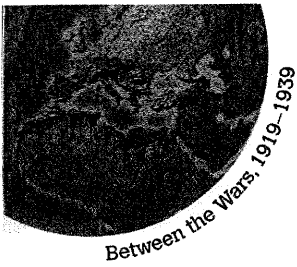
Mussolini in Power

As prime minister, Mussolini banned all political parties except the Fascist Party. The press, radio, and movies were

Between the Wars, 1919–1939

Benito Mussolini speaking to followers in 1930



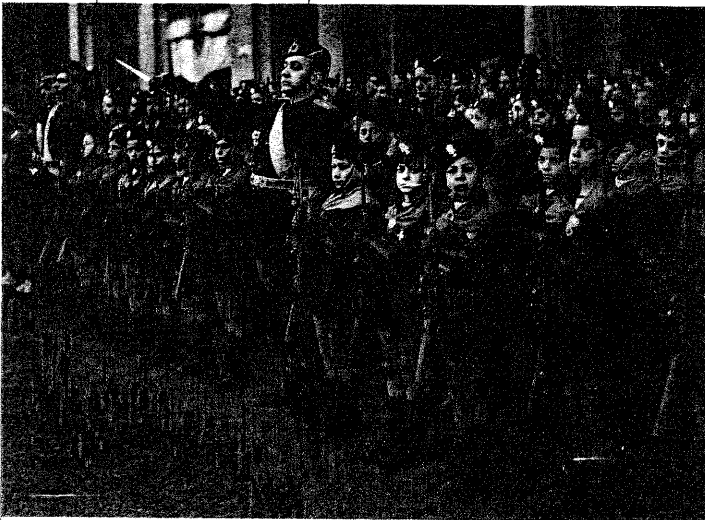


censored. Nothing could be printed or said that opposed Mussolini's rule.

Terror became a weapon of the government. In 1926, Mussolini set up a secret police force to spy on people and create fear. Opponents were arrested and tortured. Some were sent into exile and others were killed.

To gain support, Mussolini used propaganda. The message was obedience to the government and dedication to the nation. One slogan was "Believe! Obey! Fight!" Another was "Mussolini Is Always Right." Propaganda urged women to stay at home and raise children. Men were told to be ready to fight for Italy. Children were enrolled in youth groups to learn Fascist philosophy. These youth groups were based on military principles. Children practiced marching like soldiers and learned discipline and obedience to their leaders.

A Fascist youth group on parade



Under Mussolini, the government controlled Italy's economy. He set up a **corporate state** in which workers were grouped by occupations. These groups were called *corporations*, and Mussolini headed them. He did not end capitalism as a Socialist would have. Rather, he used capitalism. The corporations, along with the Fascist Party, controlled how businesses and farms were run. The economy improved, but workers lost out.

They could not strike and their wages remained low.

Mussolini was building a nation based on military discipline. He expected to use it to build a new Italian empire.

Putting It All Together

Create a T-chart. In the left column, list the characteristics of a Fascist nation. Then write examples from Mussolini's government for each characteristic. Work with a partner and compare your charts.