

# Totalitarian governments



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Totalitarian Governments Throughout the history of men and nations, there reigned different forms of governments which integrate individuals in the society. These formal organizations have direct impacts on the lives and functioning of certain geographic regions. The structure and form of government were dictated, and in turn, shape societies and economies. This paper will look at the different form of totalitarian governments which played important roles in Russia, Italy, and Germany before World War II. This report will specifically look at how these forms of government arose and their different impacts on the aforementioned nations.

Totalitarianism is an " extreme form of oppressive government with limitless power that uses ruthless force to exert absolute control over all individuals within a society (Orwell 1)." Totalitarian government comes in many forms. However, these commonly come under pretext ideologies like " internal or external enmity, national security, mass fear and common good objective (Orwell 1)."

The totalitarian government in Russia before the World War II can be characterized as a communist government which took root from Marxist Socialism. Before the formation of the Soviet Union, the region was dominated by monarchist forces. However, the dissatisfaction and discontent from monarchist government ensued to civil war. The Bolsheviks who were led by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin demanded a highly disciplined, centralized, and dedicated revolutionary elite rather than a mass party. Thus, the Bolsheviks had a long and bloody fight with the monarchist forces and became known as the Communist Party. This commenced the arrival of communism in Russia. The basic ideology behind communism was the establishment of a classless, stateless, and social organization which is based upon the common

ownership of the means of production. This new ideology governing Russia before the World War II gave rise to new policies especially economic reforms. Lenin became the ruler of the communist Russia where he instituted the New Economic Policy or NEP. In this policy, the government allowed the existence of a limited market. The government still controlled the "commanding heights" of the economy or the heavy economies such as coal, iron, metallurgical industries along with the banking and financial sectors. The agricultural surpluses for the peasants' harvests were also sold to an open market. Agriculture recovered more strongly than the heavy industries resulting to unstable price indices. Peasants, which constituted 80% of the population suffered due to the low prices of their commodities worsened by the high prices of other industries' products. The economy suffered from inflation (History of Soviet Union).

In Italy, another form of totalitarian government known as fascism ruled before the World War II. Its ruler, Benito Mussolini came into power during 1922 with his effort to transform and modernize the failing economy through fascist ideology. Fascism is a "radical totalitarian political philosophy that combines elements of corporatism, authoritarianism, extreme nationalism, militarism, anti-rationalism, anti-communism and anti-liberalism." It should be noted that before his reign, the ruins of the World War I left Italy with mass unemployment, food shortages, and strikes, together with economic problems such as massive debt, inflation, and depression. Mussolini stated two reforms which he wanted for Italy--modernize the economy and remedy the country's lack of strategic resources. The modern capitalistic sector was pushed in the service of the state which directly intervenes to create a strong collaboration between the industrialists, workers, and the

government. The state favored corporatism and worked to " reform the widely-abused tax system, dispose of inefficient state-owned industry, cut government costs, and introduce tariffs to protect the new industries."

However, these economic reforms failed to boost the economy of Italy.

Before the World War II, it should be noted that the country's economy was still underdeveloped (The Italian Economy).

In Germany, a fascist government also ruled with Adolf Hitler as the chancellor and head of state. The ideology behind the formation of Nazi Germany is the endorsement of a Greater Germany as well as the " incorporation of the Germanic people into one nation" as a premise to national success. The Nazi regime was constituted by political control of every aspect of society in a quest for racial, social and cultural purity. The government instituted the persecution and even killing of all those which are considered impure such as Jews, gypsies, Jehovah 's Witness, and homosexual. Economic policies were also installed such as the abolition of trade unions, and imposition of strict wage control. The country also expanded the level of money supply and imposed an interest rate ceiling of 4. 5%. These reforms brought the country into full employment and lower wage rate. The fascist regime also led to massive rearmament (Nazi Germany).

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