

Totalitarianism - world history



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Totalitarian rule may be defined as one which gives no space for competition in the political arena, whereby one individual uses all available means such as oppression, intimidation and denial of fundamental rights so as to maintain popularity and reduce criticism. In this context, it is observable that such governments are led by single party systems so as to make it easy to impose policies, some of which may be against popular understanding of democracy. However, it is important to point out that those who may try to oppose these policies in such an environment, despite how genuine they are, are faced with possibilities of being detained or being condemned for treason, a possible recipe for widespread murder, which in most cases is perpetrated by government machineries, selected from security forces.

Some of the popular totalitarian leaders such as Hitler of Germany and Stalin of Soviet union can be used as an example of those who used special secret police to spy on and punish those who criticized their authority. Hitler used the Gestapo to punish those who went against the Nazi ideologies (Lloyd 2011). As stated earlier, totalitarian rule does not accord any importance to basic human rights. In Germany for example, Hitler blamed the Jews for the increased unemployment rate in the country, which was untrue as such was as a result of the great depression in 1930s. Consequently, thousands of Jews were incarcerated without fair trial and others were murdered in the process. Stalin on the other hand introduced collective farming, which forced numerous peasant farmers to give up their land, a policy which was highly criticized and which led to massive killings of those who opposed it. Freedom of expression in such a rule is also hard to find as the ruling party takes control of all media, in order to ensure that reporting is done in a biased manner favorable to the government. Stalin and Hitler used the government

press to express and glorify themselves while at the same time censoring other press (Lloyd 2011). Totalitarian governments, such as the Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, also operate planned economies. In such an economy, the state controls all the sectors of the economy whereby distribution, production, marketing etc, irrespective of whether the businesses are state or privately owned, must conform to government controlled guidelines. Hitler for example used his powers to control wages, a move which was, according to him, a measure to improve the economy. He also exercised price controls on products so as to prevent exploitation of consumers (Lloyd 2011). Some critics may tend to believe that the US fits in the category of totalitarianism. The fact that the country has been on the forefront to impose foreign policies that are in some cases conflicting does not however mean that it fits as such. In any case, the US is a highly democratic country which respects human dignity. Leaders are appointed democratically and are subject to public ridicule. As a world super power, the country has a moral obligation to participate in promoting world peace even if it means using military intervention to overthrow oppressive rulers such as Saddam of Iraq or to fight terrorism but with reasonable ground to do so.

Works Cited Lloyd, Jim. Modern World History and European History: The rise of Totalitarianism. 8 April 2011. 11 April 2011