

Dictatorships in WWII

Name of dictator: Benito Mussolini

Name of dictator's country: Italy

1. How did they get into power?

Mussolini formed the Fascist Party after serving in the first world war and had the support of his fellow war veterans, who were mostly unemployed. He organized the veterans into armed squads called the "Black Shirts" and they terrorized their political opponents. Eventually, the Fascist Party was invited to join the coalition, and during political chaos in 1922 Mussolini used the opportunity to present himself as the only one capable of restoring order (much like Hitler did). He dismantled the democratic government and turned it into a totalitarian government wherein he was the dictator, calling himself "Il Duce".

2. Which ideology did they follow? What are the main concepts of this ideology?

Fascism. This ideology is characterized by intense nationalism and elitism. Fascists believe that the nation's people (those whose origin is that nation, e.g. no immigrants or "outsiders") are the most important and have a strong sense of kinship with them, believing themselves to be an elite group or race. The interests of the state are more important than individual rights. They maintain a class system and private ownership; the state does not own all institutions. Fascists also maintain national traditions and institutions; in Italy, for example, the Roman Catholic church was a very important traditional institution, so Mussolini allowed it control over traditions such as marriage and saw the importance of keeping good relations with the church.

Name of dictator: Joseph Stalin

Name of dictator's country: Russia

1. How did they get into power?

After the Russian Revolution, Vladimir Lenin became the premier and started moving Russia towards Marxist ideals of socialism. He died, however, before these ideals were realized, leaving Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky to fight for power. Stalin formed alliances against Trotsky and ran a campaign of fear and forcefulness, even though Trotsky was a great speaker with good ideals and was far more popular. When Stalin managed to get into power using his underhanded tactics, he had Trotsky exiled and later hunted down and assassinated.

2. Which ideology did they follow? What are the main concepts of this ideology?

Stalin followed Karl Marx's general theories of Communism. Communism is a form of socialism, and the main concepts of socialism are that the society become a "classless society" in terms of its political, economic, and social system. This means that everyone works towards the greater good of the nation as a whole; no one owns anything privately and currency should generally not exist, with everyone doing what they do purely because they want to help one another out. Communism is a more policed version of this ideal society to ensure that everyone is actively doing their part. The state owns and controls the means of production. Stalin's version of Communism came to be known as "Stalinism" because it was more totalitarian (government control) and militaristic, with the presence of secret police and "show trials". Stalin used fear to make everyone do what he wanted.

Name of dictator: Adolf Hitler

Name of dictator's country: Germany

1. How did they get into power?

Hitler created his own political party, the National Socialist German Workers Party or Nazi Party. He gained favour with the people because he was a strong leader with clear ideals; his policies were not a secret (he even published a manifesto of his political ideas in his book, "Mein Kampf") and they needed someone who could lead them out of their

economic and political crisis. Hitler promised to restore them to their former glory, pre-Versailles Treaty. He was elected chancellor in 1933 and a series of events lead him to become the Führer: the Reichstag fire, which he blamed on a Communist and resulted in the Communist party (his greatest competition) being kicked out of parliament; the Night of the Long Knives, the political assassinations of over 1000 S.A. members including his old friend Ernst Röhm (they were a threat to him because they had the power to control the military and to potentially challenge him); the Enabling Act, which meant he could make decisions without consulting the Reichstag and allowed him to kick all other political parties out of parliament; and finally, the death of President Hindenburg, after which Hitler combined the roles of chancellor and president into one all-powerful role: Der Führer.

2. Which ideology did they follow? What are the main concepts of this ideology?

National Socialism, which is an extremely fascist and nationalistic ideology. It is essentially the same as Italy's ideology, with a focus on the nation's people as an elite group. Hitler was more extreme about the elitism, believing the German people to be a "master race", specifically those of the Aryan race (blond-haired, blue-eyed) who were believed to be racially superior (an idea that had been around since the 19th century). He believed all Germans should have "lebensraum", or living space, in Europe and this justified their expansion into other countries. He had a violent hatred towards "outsiders", anyone who was not of the Aryan race: Jews, the handicapped, homosexuals, etc. National institutions were still accepted like in Italy, but were more controlled by Hitler (e.g. he had a difficult time making the Protestant Church follow his policies and made his own church, the Reich Church: their Bible was "Mein Kampf").

Name of dictator: Michinomiya Hirohito

Name of dictator's country: Japan

1. How did they get into power?

Emperor Hirohito was part of the imperial family in Japan, so he simply took over when his father died (he was 26 when he became Emperor). The Japanese believed that the imperial family were descendents of a sun goddess named Amaterasu, therefore the Emperor was regarded as divine.

2. Which ideology did they follow? What are the main concepts of this ideology?

The Japanese ideology is not as clear and was made up of ideas from multiple ideologies, but the most prominent was imperialistic militarism. Imperialism refers to a government ruled by an Emperor/Empress which extends its rule over foreign countries to acquire colonies, and this was especially important in Japan because of its size (small) and its population (huge). Militarism refers to the fact that the military was regarded as the supreme idea of the state and the interests of the military were more important than all others. National policy was even decided by military officials: even though Emperor Hirohito usually agreed and praised their valiant efforts, he still had little decision-making power (e.g. invasion of Manchuria). Hirohito even tried to encourage cooperation with Britain and the USA, but the military had the ultimate say.