

# European Dictatorships



European Dictatorships:  
A Comparative History of the Twentieth Century

By

Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stokłosa

**CAMBRIDGE  
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P U B L I S H I N G

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Map of Europe after 1945



# INTRODUCTION

## I.

How could it happen, that continental Europe in the twentieth century became a “Europe of the Dictatorships?” It requires some effort to understand such processes. It is insufficient to observe only the dictatorships and their mechanisms, rather one must also incorporate the seemingly harmless history leading up to that time and above all the transitions that took place. It was in 1919 that European states which had been more or less forced into democracy entered the twentieth century. However, the constitutional-democratic state did not seem to fit the political traditions and mentalities of most European peoples. The intellectual elites dismissed not only the political, but also the territorial realignments after the First World War. Dreams of being a great power, an overbearing national consciousness and the desire to regain former greatness remained most important. Along with this came a diagnosis of moral decline among the population as well as the impression of a philosophical arbitrariness and a peculiar rootlessness because of the new pluralist culture. In addition to this, after periods of recovery, difficult economic disturbances and political unrest continually occurred, with which the “weak” state and open society seemed to be unable to deal.

In isolated Russia socialist revolutionaries had taken it upon themselves to realize utopia for mankind. Soviet Russia established a regime of terror, which would finally develop into an unlimited party and leader dictatorship by the end of the 1920s. Beginning with Mussolini’s fascism, right-authoritarian dictatorships gained ground in the rest of Europe. By the beginning of the war in fall of 1939, almost all of Europe was completely fascist or national socialist. Supported by German or Italian occupying armies, analogous forces in the satellite states were able to take power and emulate their role models in Berlin and Rome. In these new states a new social reality with new ethnic coordinates in regard to belonging or not belonging to the Volksgemeinschaft, the community of the people, was applied. This also included the justification of mass murder. There were by all means ideological, structural, and practical analogies between the communist and fascist movements including mass manipulation, the cult of personality, mass terror and mass murder. Both

systems established concentration camps for political prisoners, liquidated their victims through forced labor, and eliminated entire people groups. Among the differences one can count for the Soviet Union the contents of its political philosophy, the complete nationalization of industry, and the collectivization of agriculture, internationalism, peace rhetoric and the avoidance of conflict with other great powers. Beyond this enumeration, differences and commonalities among autocratic forms of society were related to many factors; the historical development and the “multi-dimensionality” of every single country, which can be missed by using only a systematic grasp, are absolutely vital. The issue of which perspective one takes in making such comparisons also plays a decisive role. If it is true that a dictatorship cannot be described by its instruments of repression alone, but rather that mechanisms of rule can only be understood by examining everyday life and living conditions, then this must be portrayed within the context of the history of the effected countries. Moreover, every nation can claim with a certain amount of credibility that theirs is a special case.

After the Second World War, with the acquiescence of the western powers, the Soviet Union forced Central Eastern Europe and various parts of South Eastern Europe into communism. Despite its overwhelming superiority in almost all areas as well as a system of inescapable treaties, the eastern power was unable in all its forty years of rule to establish completely devoted vassal states. There were some who took other paths, such as Yugoslavia or Romania and also in other countries, where uprisings were brutally put down, such as in Poland, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia, the departure from the dictated course could not be prevented. In this examination too, despite all commonalities and possible groupings one could place countries in, the specifics of each country cannot be ignored.

Apart from West Germany, which undertook great efforts to deal with its national socialist past, most other countries followed a different path after the end of the Second World War, the end of the last two Euro-fascist states Spain and Portugal in 1975 as well as after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989/90. The people did not want to uncover old wounds; what had happened became taboo and people denied connections to the earlier regimes. These distinct strategies had varying impacts on the development of the states involved.

## II.

The book begins with a description of the historical situation after the First World War. Europe's brutalization through colonial wars and inter-European conflicts, carried out using means of mass extermination, led to fractures in civilized cultures. The triumphant powers were unable to create a lasting peaceful order in the Paris Peace Conference and through the re-division of Europe and the establishment of new constitutional-democratic states. The barely consolidated democracies transformed themselves into dictatorships in several waves. How the development occurred in detail will be explained for each country as will similarities to and differences from neighbouring states. In order to question the validity of considering these events inevitable, the historical depiction will address a broader time frame. Thus, it will become clear that, for example, in regard to the developments of the Weimar Republic, the period of hope for a constitutional-democratic state did not unavoidably have to end up with a legally legitimated "dictatorship of the president" and finally with the national socialist regime. The contingencies and weaknesses unique for every country as well as the systematic setting of a course finally led—aside from various general development trends which several states had in common—to making Europe autocratic. The epoch of fascist and national socialist regimes ended with the Second World War. However, there were also the anachronistic exceptions of Spain, Portugal, and also Greece from 1967 to 1974. The consideration that these right-authoritarian states on the periphery of Europe were behind the times is highlighted by the fact that even though they lasted until the mid-1970s, they are discussed in conjunction with regimes that generally ended in 1945.

What follows in the second section is another state by state organized design of the transition from countries that were fascist (and countries that were made fascist) into communist states established in accordance with the Soviet model. This epoch lasted from 1944 until Stalin's death in 1953. Here, there is also an exception: the formerly democratic Czechoslovakia. Despite a considerable potential to become authoritarian or fascist, the constitutional-democratic state was able to hold out until it was destroyed from the outside in 1938 by national socialist Germany. Therefore, the socio-political relations in Czechia and Slovakia through 1945 cannot be discussed in the chapter about communist, fascist, and national socialist dictatorships. Instead, they are retrospectively addressed as part of the pre-history within the frame of the communist transformations.

The third part of the book is devoted to the history of the "Eastern Bloc" states from 1953 to 2013. This section includes the depiction of the

specific national resistance to destalinization, the growing incrustation and oligarization of the great eastern power, national uprisings, and the manifold weakening of “totalitarian” structures as well as the big and small peculiar paths and acquiescence of individual people groups under the U.S.S.R.’s claim to absolute power. For some states, which have belonged to the European Union since 2004 (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia), the parliamentary and presidential elections of 2005/06 proved to be turning points in their histories. The “post-communist” phase seems to be essentially over; new themes and questions increasingly dominate public debates.

### III.

The collapse of a dictatorship—after an economic liberalization—does not automatically lead to system-change. Previous power mechanisms can survive in old structures even under new market conditions. A decisive factor for change is the inclusion in transnational federations. It was above all the European Union that took this challenge on after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Europeanization was accompanied by implementing a common European “cultural code” as well as setting strict institutional, legal, and economic accommodation requirements, which deeply encroached upon the sovereignty of these states. Similarly to what occurred during the period following the Second World War, there were also objections to, defense and (nationalist) counter-movements against these impositions. The development in Russia illustrates that the option of dictatorship can never be overcome once and for all.

Since the 1930s people in Europe as well as the United States have been comparing dictatorships. First the comparisons followed above all the domination-oriented concept of “totalitarianism” or the predominantly historical model of “political religion.” Alongside this, the socio-historical, social scientific concept of “modern dictatorship,” which was also developed much earlier, gained increasing acceptance in the 1970s. How much potential of explanation and which methodical as well as normative philosophical implications do these paradigms have? How broad can these be applied? Against the background of the dictatorships that will be discussed, we will attempt to answer these questions.

#### **IV.**

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Dresden and Sønderborg, June 2013  
Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stokłosa





## **SECTION I:**

### **FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

# CHAPTER ONE

## CONDITIONS AND PRECONDITIONS

### 1.1 The First World War and Its Consequences

The First World War was the most destructive war the world had seen up until that time. It was a war that was waged with new weapons of mass destruction and with a brutality previously unknown to mankind. It destroyed the order of an epoch that had practically lasted from 1814 to 1914. This destruction also included the moral and humanitarian ethos from which the idea to live as cultured nations sprung. Political as well as cultural liberalism was destabilised and discredited while the authoritarian, national influence grew. Citizens' rights were limited, the economy controlled. The adoption of politically organised mass propaganda and the enormous mobilization of people in connection with the war facilitated the de-individualization and collectivization of society in the sense of an anonymous "Volksgemeinschaft," or community of people. This development was accompanied by a brutalisation of political life as well as the legitimisation of violence in political discourses. As questionable as the political systems of the great empires—the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Russian Empire, the German and Ottoman Empire—were, their collapses and the collapses of their monarchies destroyed an at least fragile order. Militarism and nationalism, which had increased even before the war, were only made stronger by the war and decisively influenced the inter-war period. The splintering or "balkanization" of large parts of East Central and South East Europe strengthened old problems and led to new domestic problems, as well as international conflicts. Regions in which many ethnicities coexisted were divided by borders, declared to be titular nations and supposed to undergo an ethno-national integration process, which, set against a background of often pre-modern social structures—including illiteracy and small-town life—could hardly be expected to succeed. Under such circumstances the "parliamentary democratic system, which in the course of impassioned battles over constitutions had arrived step by step in the South Eastern European states, had no realistic opportunity for development."<sup>1</sup>

The collapse of the Russian Empire allowed the installation of a totalitarian socialism with a new model of single-party dictatorship and totalitarian control of (political) institutions. Mass murder, mass concentration camps and a personality cult of mass proportions around the dictators followed. The technique of a violent coup was used for the first time, for the first time entire groups of people were systematically liquidated. The genocide of the Armenians—of which the true purpose is heavily debated even to this day<sup>2</sup>—executed by the Ottoman Empire, tolerated by the central powers Germany and Austria-Hungary as well as by the Entente—meaning Great Britain, France, and Russia—was the first genocide, which was committed in full view of the entire world. The collapse of social and economic conditions in Central, East Central and South East Europe layed the ground for extreme solutions in the attempt to create a new national order. Unsatisfactory peace agreements perpetuated conflicts in Europe and greatly contributed to the outbreak of new local crisis centres and finally the Second World War. The Armenian Genocide was certainly not the first genocide of the twentieth century. One must also remember the war of annihilation waged by the German Empire against indigenous tribes in their colony in southwest Africa, present-day Namibia. The delayed nation-state only entered the ranks of European colonial powers in 1884. The relatively short German colonial period that lasted until the end of the First World War averted the disaster of declining colonialism between the 1940s and the 1970s that the other European colonial powers had to undergo.

The genocidal colonial war lasted from 1904 until 1908. At its end what was left were bureaucratic control, comprehensive monitoring and reeducation of the indigenous population. At the bloody battle of Waterberg on the 11th of August, 1904, some of the Herero people escaped and fled to the waterless desert in the east of the “sanctuary.” The German Supreme Commander Major General Lothar von Trotha, who had already shown particular cruelty as a participant in the expeditionary corps during the oppression of the so called “Boxer Rebellion” in 1900, ordered a contingent of soldiers to seal off the desert. Anyone who returned from the desert was to be shot. Because of this order, many people died of thirst in the desert. Exact numbers do not exist. It is estimated that the number lie around ten thousand. In the southern part of the country, the Germans fought against the Nama tribe, which, unlike the Herero, did not enter in a battle on an open field, but instead preferred guerrilla warfare. The German side reacted with a political campaign of “scorched earth” accompanied by an occupation of water sources. For Nama taken into custody concentration camps were established. The camps were located in

part in harsh climatic regions, for example on Shark Island and the bay of Lüderitz. Because the care provided in the camps was insufficient, many of those interned died. According to the military's records, on Shark Island alone 7,682 prisoners lost their lives.

German military officers also participated in the planning and implementation of the Armenian Genocide. Hundreds of German Officers served Turkey at that time. General Fritz Bronsart von Schellendorf, at the time commander of the Ottoman Army in Istanbul, observed at the beginning of 1919, "The Armenian is like a Jew, outside his home country a parasite that lives from and thus ruins the health of the country where he resides. This is where the hate comes from, which is unloaded in a medieval way against them as unwanted people and which eventually led to their murder."<sup>3</sup>

The first gas-attack in the World War from 1914 to 1918 also came from the Germans on the 22nd of April, 1915 at the Battle of Ypres. However, the Brits also did not refrain from using chemical weapons, for example, in the Second Battle of Gaza between Brits and Turks in Palestine in the year 1917. Among those, who supported such a measure, was the young Minister of the Marines Winston Churchill. Italy was the first nation that not only waged war by land and by sea, but also by air. In order to be able to incorporate the provinces Cyrenaica and Tripoli, which were under Ottoman rule at the time, Italy began the first air attack in history. On the 1st of November, 1911 they bombarded two oases near Tripoli. Twenty-four years later, during the so-called Abyssinian War, the Italian occupying army deployed chemical weapons in mid-December 1935, with the aim of halting the previously successful Ethiopian counteroffensive. Reports of eyewitnesses, which refer to "deadly rain," paint a clear picture of the measure of brutality. The Ethiopian Army was completely surprised and insecured from this attack. At this time, the Italian fascists also adopted a racist attitude. (A dark point, which demands comprehensive clarification, is the attitude of the Vatican during the Abyssinian War.) In the view of these facts, Hannah Arendt's thesis regarding the colonialist roots of totalitarianism appears quite plausible.

## 1.2 The Treaty of Versailles and Its Effects

The "Spirit of 1914" on one hand and the so-called "Dolchstoßlegende" (the stab-in-the-back-legend) of December 1919 on the other determined the political culture of Germany in the post-war period. The war was said to have remained open-ended; the "war experience" of the mythical *Volkgemeinschaft* (community of people) continued to have an influence

in peacetime. The patterns of interpretation aiming at revenge could be reinterpreted rascistically in the 1930s used later by the national socialists.

The results of the negotiations in Versailles were a heavy burden for peace. On one side, they were meant to be a symbolic act of power, on the other, a humiliation. There were no real negotiations with the Germans; rather the latter were informed of the results of the negotiations afterwards. In these the Germans were declared to be responsible for the outbreak of the war. In his opening speech in the “hall of clocks” of the Quai d’Orsay to the 21 assembled delegates of the allied and associated nations on the 18th of January 1919, French President Raymond Poincaré expressed the main accusation: “What grants you the authority to create a just peace is the fact that none of the peoples represented in this room had any part in the crime (the war), which has led to a calamity, which was unseen in human history before [. . .]. Humanity can trust you, because you do not belong to those who have infringed upon human rights. There is no demand for new information, no further investigation required as to the causes of the tragedy that shook the world. The blood-soaked truth has already come to light in the Kaiser’s archives. The deliberate character of the assault is already entirely evident.”<sup>4</sup>

The Germans were accused of crimes against humanity. It was not until the middle of May, 1919 that the German delegation received news of the verdict reached by the commission established to determine who was responsible for the war. They had no opportunity to negotiate. In the preamble of the final version of the treaty, it was written: “According to the view of the allied and associated powers, the war [. . .] is the greatest crime against humanity and against the freedom of the peoples that a nation, that calls itself civilised, has ever deliberately committed [. . .]. The behaviour of Germany is almost entirely unprecedented in the course of human history. The horrible responsibility that weighs on Germany can be summarized by the fact that at least seven million dead have been buried in Europe, while there are more than twenty million living testimonies for the fact that Germany wished to satisfy its passion for tyranny through the war, who suffer from not only physical but also emotional wounds.” Even though no German administration would have had another choice than to sign this document, people would later accuse those responsible with carrying out a policy of compliance. In any case, the allies’ attempt to carry out an international war criminal tribunal against the Germans failed; however, such processes were conducted at the German high court in Leipzig with little success and without much public resonance.

It was only in the 1960s that people reached a broader consensus about the causes of the war. According to it, August of 1914 was the end point of

a longer process of development in Europe in which a continuous increase of troubles was noticeable and one crisis followed another in ever shorter periods of time, hurling Europe towards an imminent conflict. The German Empire under Wilhelm the Second appeared to be *the* great power, which through an arms build-up and an excess of action on the world political stage, had decisively contributed to the destabilisation of Europe. Thus, according to German historian Fritz Fischer, Germany was primarily responsible for the escalation and the beginning of the war. This interpretation has been questioned in recent years. In 2002 Friedrich Kissling introduced his thesis that it was not actually tension, but rather relaxation that became the defining characteristic of international relations in the years leading up to 1914. Also Holger Afflerbach supports the argument that the example of the Triple Alliance (The German Empire, Austria-Hungary and Italy) played a meaningful role in the preservation of peace in Europe. On the other hand it should be mentioned that there always existed some rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Italy (mostly regarding the future of Trent and Trieste) and Italy never felt as though it was taken seriously as a coequal partner by the two great powers. Moreover, there always existed on the side of the German Empire and Austria-Hungary a certain mistrust in regard to Italy's fidelity to the alliance. Also the counterpart to the Triple Alliance, the Triple Entente, is viewed by Afflerbach as an "element of relaxation," because this assured the counterweight in the balance of powers. However, with this approach he can hardly explain why the situation led to war. This renewed discussion comes alarmingly close to the words of the former Prime Minister of Britain, David Lloyd George, who said that all the European powers simply "slid into" war in July of 1914. Still this version of events holds no real explanation and can only be used to exculpate Germany.

In the interwar period Europe consisted of 28 states. A total of eleven states proceeded from the collapsed empires alone. The desired annexation of the German-speaking Austria into the German Empire was, according to the Treaty of Versailles, impossible. In addition to this, eight new states emerged in the belt between the Baltic and Asia. Between 1922 and 1937 Ireland withdrew from the British Empire. In contrast, secession movements in Catalonia and in the Basque region of Spain failed. In Great Britain, Northern Europe and the Benelux States constitutional monarchies remained in power. The East Central European states opted for republican states, the southeast for monarchies. However, both would eventually develop mostly into dictatorships with constitutional, authoritarian or fascist markings.

As a result of the power politics of the “Third Reich”, the U.S.S.R. and fascist Italy, other democracies like Czechoslovakia, the Benelux States, France, Denmark and Norway but also six dictatorships including Poland, the Baltic States, Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece disappeared by 1939.

All in all, one can speak of a dramatic shrinking of the number of constitutional states. In the face of the problems such states appeared inept. In contrast to this, dictatorships appeared to be the governmental form of the future. This development is an indicator for the instability of the new order that was established in 1919.

Liberalism inexorably lost ground ideologically. Conservatism took over a portion of its democratic element while socialism questioned some of the most basic tenets of liberalism: ownership, freedom of private property and the market. Politics were now carried out on the basis of the masses mobilized in the World War, for whom traditional political discourse was too differentiated. The problem of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities and the desire for their assimilation in the interest of national homogeneity overrode the political idea of the self-determination of peoples. On the other hand, the party systems splintered in regard to religious denominations as well as ethnic, social and economic party interests and showed little inclination towards stable coalition building. More often there was a tendency towards radical modes of discourse such as mass strikes as well as attempts of revolution and takeover.

### **1.3 The Waves of the Implementation of Dictatorships in Europe: Dynamics from Constitutional to Totalitarian Dictatorship**

The parliamentary system did not endure in any of the states that lost the war. Large portions of populations did not accept the transformation from an authoritarian system to a western-style democratic constitutional state; territorial losses on one hand and the problem of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities on the other created an unstable point of departure. However, all newly established states—with the exception of Czechoslovakia—also lacked the ability to stabilise a parliamentary system. The political and economic problems in these countries led to rejection early on, especially through the forced modernization process and the missing democratic culture. The splintering of the party system (party heterogeneous coalition regimes lasting only a short time) and the principle of territorially closed and defined nation-states constituted a considerable problem. Either people wanted the minorities to (be forced to) assimilate or suffer discrimination, like the Jews in East Central

Europe, and increasingly exerted pressure on them to emigrate. For example, in Romania Jews were treated like foreigners with no voting rights. It was impossible to establish democracy based on a consensus. More often, groups fought against one another, accepted the destruction of the system (democracy of dissidence) and paved the way for a dictatorship of consensus (majority of anti-democratic influences).

In contrast, parliamentary democracies in states, that had won the war and had been established prior to 1914, proved to be stable. Within this group, systems with less than five parties showed a particular stability.

The attempt to strengthen parliamentary democracies over so-called citizen-block coalitions already in 1922 led to Mussolini's rise to power in Italy. At the end of the post-war period, around 1925, the parties hamstrunged each other; no grouping of either the middle class or the socialists was able to obtain a clear majority. Minority cabinets began to take root, which were dependent upon being tolerated.

Even though the parliamentary systems were able to fend off revolutions from the left, they could not prevent those from the right, as these groups initially operated within the system and only progressed to illegal power takeovers in a second phase.

The first step on the way to *totalitarian dictatorship* was to establish a *constitutional dictatorship* (self-described: controlled democracy). This "soft" beginning was characterised by the embracing of old elites, formally maintaining political institutions and not totally suppressing the opposition. Constitutional dictatorships camouflaged themselves as temporary emergency measures which existed in light of politically or economically catastrophic situations. They made no claim to want to alter existing relations—on the contrary, they were all about maintaining the status quo. Mass movements, elaborate concepts or ideologies for the future were, for the most part, foreign to authoritarian regimes. Their leaders appealed solely to the inner closeness of the nation and to the maintenance of the nation-state. This was accompanied by an increased national consciousness.

Developments in the direction of constitutional dictatorship happened in a first wave between 1921 and 1923 in Hungary, Spain, Italy, Greece and Albania.

In a second wave around 1926, in which Italy already reached the stage of *authoritarian dictatorship*, Poland, Portugal, Yugoslavia followed as constitutional dictatorships. In East Central Europe authoritarian regimes often took the form of *presidential dictatorships*, as they did in 1926 Poland and Lithuania, as well as 1934 Estonia and Latvia.<sup>5</sup> With few exceptions, authoritarian regimes in East Central Europe in regard to their



foreign politics pursued defensive goals, which were solely about territorial consolidation but not about conquest. In 1932 Portugal became an authoritarian dictatorship, with Poland following in 1935. In between, in 1932, during the presidential rule of Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher, also in Germany a constitutional dictatorship began. "Authoritarians want a strong but limited state. They hesitate with social welfare programs or interventions in the economy, which fascism willingly executes. They stick to the status quo, rather than proclaim a new way."<sup>6</sup>

A new wave of dictatorships began with the worldwide depression. What is striking is how rapidly, for example in Germany, constitutional, authoritarian and totalitarian dictatorships followed one another. In the "Third Reich" it only took a few weeks (the definitive end of the takeover was the so-called "Röhm-Putsch" in June 1934). The Soviet Union—even though it experienced revolutionary terror under Lenin—took especially long to develop complete despotism under Joseph Stalin in 1928/29, including an unlimited single-party dictatorship with a cult of personality.

After Hitler's takeover of power, there were two concurrent rightist dictatorship models in Europe which served as a point of orientation for the developing dictatorships—for example General Ioannis Metaxas of Greece used the German model as an orientation while Miklos Horthy of Hungary used Portugal. Presumably for the protection against the revolutionary potential of socialism, fascism and National Socialism, other dictatorships also developed, such as in Austria. Engelbert Dollfuss's dictatorship was based on ideas of the so called "Ständestaat" (class state) and Catholic ideals and was directed against not only Marxism but also National Socialism and also condemned capitalism and party rule. Its classification as a "dictatorship of defence" is widely rejected by members of the Austrian contemporary history research community.

After 1934 dictatorships were also established in South East Europe. A *monarchical dictatorship*, which drew on the constitution of 1879, was established in Bulgaria in 1935. Metaxas's dictatorship in Greece (with concentration camps and the deportation of political opposition etc.) began in 1935/1936. In 1937/1938 Horthy's rule in Hungary transitioned to a dictatorship. In Romania, a monarchical dictatorship was constructed in 1938. In 1936 General Francisco Franco established a bloody dictatorship in Spain based on the circumstances of the civil war.

The monarchical dictatorships, which were also established in Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia and Romania, were characterised mostly by the lack of a sharp break with the parliamentary constitutional monarchies from which they proceeded. Rather they sprung from a "gradual extension

of the monarchical absolutist elements”<sup>7</sup> which already existed in the system. The monarch emerged from the background onto the political stage, took over the governmental business himself and declared the previous weakly-developed formal parliamentary procedures to be null and void. His regime was not supported by a mass movement, but rather by a bureaucratic apparatus, the old political elites, a portion of the military, major landowners and entrepreneurs. The traditionalist “monarchocrat” understood himself to be the patrimonial “educator” of his nation. Similar to presidential dictatorships, in monarchical dictatorships it was about consolidation of the formation of the nation within the framework of a “closed” society.

Good preconditions for establishing dictatorial conditions were offered by fanatical nationalism and romantic visions of a great empire based on historic claims (above all in Italy and Germany, but also in Spain, Greece, Serbia and other places). Along with this went discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities as well as the curtailing of political and cultural pluralism.

In contrast to constitutional and authoritarian dictatorships, the totalitarian dictatorship demands to be new. It aims at creating a “new state” with “new men” and no longer expects only subservience, but rather absolute compliance. It sets a new course of orientation, orders a new ideological system of values and wants to fundamentally transform the living conditions of both individuals and society. A new social reality with new coordinates—for example a new sorting of those who belong as well as those who do not belong to the new “Volksgemeinschaft” (community of people)—should determine the lives of the people.<sup>8</sup> Since action follows speech and thus ideology is implemented in society, posit becomes fact. The needs for a collective belonging and for heterogeneous responsibility, as well as the need for social, emotional and material acknowledgement and appreciation are met. The private is increasingly rolled back; all activities are made subservient to a complete mobilization and the perfect control of the party and state and concurrent cultural, ideological or political dispositions is combated, synchronized or liquidated. Party and state apparatus remain formally separate; however, the party serves to defend the state apparatus and maintain its power alone. In the vanguard of this new “Volksgemeinschaft” (community of people) stands a charismatic leader, who promises to award committed loyalty with a departure to a transcendent empire.<sup>9</sup> Once the leader had used his charisma on his devotees, all that is required for the “charismatic triangle” is a special crisis, from which he is able to lead the people through by using his “superhuman potential.”<sup>10</sup> This negative legitimization—the ability

for deliverance from hardship—is supplemented by the positive of the ideology. The leader exercises his rule in the name of an ideology, which he only serves and in which all others necessarily have to believe.

Ernst Nolte, Juan Linz, Roger Griffin, Stanley Payne and others have suggested a set of criteria, featured characteristics and typologies of the European fascist movements during the interwar-period. Payne specified three characteristics: 1) anti-liberalism, anti-communism and anti-conservatism as typical fascist negations, 2) the creation of a new type of authoritarian state, corporatism, expansionism and the creation of a new, modern culture as ideological goals, and 3) the emphasis on aesthetics, mass mobilization, militarization, violence, an organic and masculine-dominated view of society, elevation of the youth and the “Fuehrer-principle” as characteristics of leadership styles of the organization.<sup>11</sup> As a “late-comer” to the political scene, fascism necessarily possessed a strong negative emphasis.<sup>12</sup> It presented itself as an option that contrasted completely with established parties, as a revolt against the perceived decadence of the middle-class democracy, of liberalism and pluralism.

After Ernst Nolte, François Furet, Ian Kershaw, and Moshé Lewin, Stanley Payne also sought to answer the question regarding the relations between fascism and communism.<sup>13</sup> Next to the obvious similarities between fascism and communism in the areas of politics, formal and structural characteristics—including mass manipulation, the creation of *fait accomplis* through direct military intervention, the cult of personality and charismatic leadership, ideological and political opportunism, the launching of systematic mass terror and mass murder, concentration camps for political prisoners, liquidation through forced labour, brutalisation of political life, mass violence, militarization of the political rhetoric, use of symbolic actions and the elimination of entire groups of people—Payne also mentions the basic differences between Soviet communism and European fascism. The Soviets insisted more on a materialistic, than a vitalistic philosophy, their program contained the entire nationalisation of industry and the collectivization of the agriculture. They openly suppressed religious practice, carried out “cleansing” among the normal civilian population, and officially propagated the teachings of the internationalist doctrine while regularly trying peace rhetorics. Ultimately, they only engaged in military action against small countries or neighbouring states and never initiated conflict with a great power. However, Payne distinguishes the relationship between the two “maximal regimes of dictatorship and violence” of the twentieth century—the Soviet Union and national socialist Germany. Both dictatorships propagated—in contrast to other fascist and communist regimes—a constant revolution.<sup>14</sup>

Payne, along with Michael Mann, also saw parallels between Stalinism and National Socialism in the unstable, often conflicting relation between revolutionary ideology, a single political party and bureaucracy. Both rejected institutional compromises not only with enemies but also allies. "They attempted to overcome discord through the head-on charge of continuing revolution."<sup>15</sup>

Communism and fascism were dialectically bound to one another; there were many similarities as well as significant reciprocal influences.

Within the totalitarian dictatorships, *polycratic structures* also became apparent on all levels: ideological and practical coordination never completely succeeded. "[. . .] No regime, not even Hitler's or Stalin's, was able take in every last bit of privacy and personal or group autonomy."<sup>16</sup> This was in part because of contradictions within the highest levels of the dictatorship itself. For example, certain religious beliefs on the part of dignitaries of the national socialist regime were not shared and in some cases were even counteracted by others. On a political level there was furthermore the "state of norms" (*Normenstaat*) on one level and on the other the "state of measures," (*Maßnahmenstaat*) in which the national socialist functionalists acted independently from the concepts of rights and norms.<sup>17</sup>

The term "totalitarian" stems originally from the Italian opposition to Mussolini's brand of fascism (Giovanni Amendola, 1923) and criticises with a negative connotation his unlimited claim to power. Typical of the "re-evaluation of values" is that Giovanni Gentile and Mussolini took over the term and gave it a positive connotation. Hitler was more careful and preferred at first to speak of an "authoritarian" state.

"In contrast to Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, the representatives of the authoritarian regimes of East Central Europe continue to enjoy remarkable prestige even to this day. Historians' critical debate over these dictatorships is often encountered by the general public with a lack of comprehension and support."<sup>18</sup> This is true today especially in Poland, where the nationalistic conservative administration under Lech Kaczyński gave a special appraisal to the Piłsudski regime. Mostly the memory of Antanas Smetona (Lithuania), Konstantin Päts (Estonia), Karlis Ulmanis (Latvia) or even Józef Piłsudski is related to the collective memory of the respective newly found or re-found states, which they have led, and the safeguarding of their outer as well as inner politically endangered existence.

While the authoritarian regimes promised security, a consolidation of traditional structures and moderate modernisation, Mussolini's Italy, Lenin and Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's "Third Reich" evoked not only in the people of their own countries, but also in the people of other countries,

a collective fascination. They were considered highly attractive and were admired for their powerful surges of modernisation and obtained extensive support. Jerzy W. Borejsza bears this in mind as he pleads not only to bring out the aspect of terror but also the aspect of enthusiasm that the totalitarian systems shared with each other and which granted them considerable respect in foreign countries.<sup>19</sup> Having said that, there is, however, an elemental difference between Soviet Russia and the “Third Reich,” which is the fact that in the U.S.S.R., in the beginning as well as later, in varying intensities, there was massive opposition as well as passive resistance to bolshevism.

## CHAPTER TWO

# AUTHORITARIANISM—COMMUNISM— FASCISM—NATIONAL SOCIALISM: DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN EACH NATION-STATE (I)

### **2.1 The Russian Revolution and its Consequences: Leninism and Stalinism**

#### **Modernisation impulses**

At the turn of the century in Tsarist Russia, cooperation existed between the governmental self-administration—the *zemstva*, established in 1864—and the traditional Tsarist administration. However, this leadership, based on compromise, suffered due to various contradictions. There existed not only a strain between the autocratic state and the “liberal” society, but also between the liberal society and “normal people.” Finally, the striking difference between the city and the countryside must also be mentioned: on the one side a rapidly advancing industrialization, on the other a farming community, which any modernisation simply passed by.

In 1861 the epochal act of the emancipation of the peasants was passed. Still, the formal law was not connected with a land reform, so that—also in the face of the growing population—scarcity of land grew increasingly worse. This led to the overuse of small tracts of land. In fact, bondage remained to exist in the form of tenancy agreements: The peasants had to perform their duties for the large landowners in order to pay for the lease of their land.

However, agriculture in the last decades of the Tsarist Empire contributed heavily to the growth of the Russian economy and nourished the population—also in international comparison—better than had been previously thought and in contrast to earlier research. Agriculture also did not hinder industrial development, as had been suggested in the past.

Nevertheless, the peasants’ unrests and the agricultural situation played a decisive role in the revolutionary agitations of 1905/06 and 1917. The peasants’ visions of a fair division of land, the dream of land and freedom,