

independence, and many were divided internally by factions and antagonistic ethnic groups. Moreover, the rise of radical political groups meant a wider spectrum of political ideologies clamoring for acceptance. The ideologies of both fascism and communism attracted more followers during the inter-war years than ever before. All of this made the task of good government difficult, if not impossible, throughout Eastern Europe. Instability and poorly operating, often-dictatorial governments were typical of these states, making them easy targets for a rearmed Germany during the late 1930s.

Germany, for its part, was crippled not only by the war, but also by the settlement of the war, in which it was scapegoated as the conflict's aggressor. The Treaty of Versailles provided for the military and economic dismemberment of the German states, along with the requirement of impossible reparations payments to Britain, France, and the other allied nations. France, having suffered the greatest destruction at the hands of the Germans during World War One, was adamant about keeping Germany weak, and demanded reparations without exception in the years following the Great War. Due in great part to these efforts, Germany suffered through starvation, mass unemployment, and rampant inflation, all made unbearable by the Great Depression. Naturally, Germans reacted bitterly toward their foreign oppressors and dreamed of a return to the glory of the German Empire. It was this dream which permitted the ascension of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party to power in Germany, promising a future of glory and European domination. Under the Nazis, Germany rearmed and began a program of European conquest, which at first was permitted by the former Allies, in hopes of avoiding a second war. However, it soon became clear that Germany's intentions were dangerous to European security, and just twenty years after the "War to End all Wars," Europe fell again into devastating conflict.

3. Important Terms, People, and Events:

Terms

Black Shirts - The black shirts were Benito Mussolini's band of thugs, who used force to intimidate all opposition to the Italian Fascist Party.

Bloc National - The Bloc National was a coalition of rightist groups in France that came together in fear of socialist opposition to run the French government during the early years of the inter-war period. The Bloc National maintained conservatism in France to a high degree, and demanded that Germany pay its reparations in full.

Cartel des Gauches - After the French government's embarrassing failure to collect German reparations even after invading the Ruhr, the Bloc National was replaced by the Cartel des Gauches, a moderate socialistic coalition elected on May 11, 1924. However, the Cartel proved inept at governing, and was dissolved in 1926.

Central Purge Commission - During the 1930s, Joseph Stalin consolidated power in the Soviet Union by eliminating his opponents. In 1933, he created the Central Purge Commission, which publicly investigated and tried members of the Communist Party for treason. In 1933 and 1934, 1,140,000 members were expelled from the party. Between 1933 and 1938, thousands were arrested and expelled, or shot.

Collectivization - Stalin's agricultural program, collectivization, forced farmers to pool their lands into government-run farms. When the upper peasant class, the kulaks, protested this program, some three million of them were killed during a reign of terror in 1929 to 1930.

Dawes Plan - Proposed by the American, Charles Dawes, the Dawes Plan lowered the annual amount of reparations to be paid by Germany to France and Britain, and loaned Germany a sizable amount of money so that it could pay on time.

Commentary

The League of Nations was at first heralded as the bastion of a new system of international relations in Europe. The so-called 'old diplomacy' is known as the Westphalian System, since it had been in place since the Treaty of Westphalia, signed at the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648 by the major European powers. Under the Westphalian system the elites of government often met in secret to determine the fate of Europe and the world. World War I shattered the old system along with the empires that had maintained it. American participation in the war was a major step toward a shift in the balance of world power, and the beginning of the end for European dominance. The brutality, and to some, apparent needlessness, of the war and the changing face of European geography led to new ideas about how international affairs should be managed. The secretive nature of the Westphalian system had led to petty resentments, the pursuit of narrow self-interest, and the division of Europe into warring camps. Many, including Woodrow Wilson, felt that a more open, all-inclusive system would be more fostering to cooperation, a concept of international justice, and peace. The League was seen as a way to institutionalize these goals and strive for peace as a collective world community.

The League of Nations was an organization wracked by contradictions and insufficiencies from the start. Membership was determined by the acceptance of the Covenant of the League, which stated the goals and philosophy upon which it was founded. The covenant, however, had been drafted by small committees behind closed doors, thus violating the spirit of "open covenants openly arrived at" expounded by the Covenant of the League itself. This contradiction foreshadowed similar crises of ideology in the future for the League. The United States' failure to join the League of Nations was a major blow to the hopes of its founders, and to Wilson's view on the character of the 'new diplomacy.' It also marked the beginning of a period of US isolationism, which kept the US effectively out of European political affairs for the majority of the inter-war period.

The founding and structure of the League of Nations was established primarily for the purpose of preventing future wars, a new concept for Europeans who traditionally believed that war was a necessary and inevitable outgrowth of international relations. However, the League could not come to a decision on how best to do this, without infringing on the sovereignty of the member countries, as would have been the case if the Treaty of Mutual Assistance or the Geneva Protocol had been passed. The failure of these two measures left the League with only the power to invoke economic sanctions against a nation determined to be the aggressor in a conflict, and greatly called into question the authority and ability of the League to mediate conflicts. The League of Nations thus exercised only limited powers, and did so clumsily. Most powerful nations preferred to manage their affairs outside of the League, only rarely deferring to the League's authority. Despite these shortcomings, the League of Nations did accomplish some of its unification and pacification goals, and perhaps most importantly, set the stage for the United Nations, which would take its place after World War II.

7. Attempts at Reconciliation and Disarmament (1921-1930):

Summary

Though the League of Nations failed to pass any broad measures to achieve a lasting peace, the former Allies and Germany were reconciled on December 1, 1925 with the signing of the Locarno Pacts. The Pacts were intended to assuage French fears of resurgent German aggression. They included guarantees on the French-German and Belgian-German borders, signed by those three nations and with Britain and Italy acting as guarantors, promising to provide military assistance to the victim of any violation of peace along those borders. The Locarno Pacts also included treaties between Germany and Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and France, providing for the settlement of potential territorial disputes. Additionally, French-Polish and French-Czechoslovakian mutual

8. Eastern Europe During the Inter-War Years (1919-1938):

Summary

The nations of Eastern Europe, which were dominated to a large extent by the major powers before World War I, found themselves in a period of unprecedented self-determination between the wars. Notable among this group were the Baltic States--Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. All of these states had formerly been dominated by Germany to the west and Russia to the east. Once freed from this domination, Finland went on to bind its fate with that of the other Scandinavian countries, and was able to maintain economic and political stability to a significant extent. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all struggled with democracy, and became ruled by dictatorships. In September 1934, the three states signed a ten-year pact to cooperate in foreign affairs.

Poland, similarly freed from domination, established a democratic government in 1922, but due to social and economic distress, Joseph Pilsudski took power as virtual dictator in 1926. In 1934, a new, conservative constitution was drawn up, granting extraordinary authority to the president. However, uncertainty about this constitution grew, culminating in May 1935, when Pilsudski died. The elite politicians in Poland consolidated power, and instituted a 'non-party' system, put in place after the 1935 elections. The Camp of National Unity (OZN) took control in 1937, a mass organization based on the principles of nationalism, social justice, and organization. All the while, Poland waged a difficult battle to balance the desires of Germany and the Soviet Union. Eventually however, the balance collapsed, and Poland fell prey to both nations in World War II.

Hungary experienced a great deal of instability during the inter-war years. Hungary had been tied to Austria since before World War One, due to the fact that the Hapsburg Emperor of Austria had also ruled as the King of Hungary. After the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire, Hungary declared itself independent, and the government came under the control of the liberal National Council, which was overthrown by communist forces in 1919, quickly followed by their ousting and the onset of chaos. In January 1920, a National Constituent Assembly was elected to determine the future of Hungarian government. It decided on monarchy, and Hungary became, in effect, a dictatorship run by the landed aristocracy. In 1932 General Gyula Gombos came to power as prime minister, an office he ruled as a dictatorship. He was not a strong enough ruler to initiate a truly fascist state, but he was quite powerful and quite conservative, as well as being openly anti-Semitic. Gombos set the tone for a string of conservative prime ministers who practiced open anti-Semitism, and eventually cooperated with Germany in its efforts at European domination. Due to general economic hardship and a large cession of land mandated by a peace treaty, Hungary floundered economically, and was unstable politically for most of the inter-war period. The chief beneficiaries of the land cession were Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia.

Czechoslovakia proved the only nation in Eastern Europe able to function reasonably well as a democracy during the inter-war period. On October 18, 1918, Czechoslovakia declared its independence from Hungary and established the National Assembly in Prague. The government attacked economic problems ferociously, undertaking reforms and land redistribution. Despite a number of rough patches, the parties within the Czechoslovakian government demonstrated marked unity, and between 1922 and 1929 proceeded in relative stability, ruled by Antonin Svehla, whose rule was broken up into several long stints. The depression hit Czechoslovakia hard, exacerbating ethnic tensions, and most notably convincing the nation's 3 million ethnic Germans, most of who lived near the German border, that they would be best off following the German Nazi Party. Despite efforts to enlist the support of France and the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia was not able to fend off German expansionism, and on September 18, 1938, under the Munich Pact, Britain and France officially recognized German Control of the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland.

Mussolini's rule as dictator fell nicely into the established totalitarian mold of an omnipotent state apparatus that controlled thought and suppressed dissent, demanding obedience and uniformity. Mussolini's ascent to power is also a perfect example of the means by which dictators during the inter-war years commonly rose to power, by literally beating the legal state apparatus down through brutality and intimidation until it had no choice but to legally accept the imposed government. Though Mussolini's means of ascension to power were by no means legal, in the end, he was granted control of the government by the king himself. This legitimization of totalitarian government was seen commonly throughout the twentieth century.

9. Britain During the Inter-War Years (1919-1938):

Summary

The British government had a great deal of difficulty in adjusting to post-war politics. David Lloyd George, the talented Liberal prime minister, was permitted to retain his office by the Conservative majority. At first he continued to run the government as he had during the war, using only his closest advisors to discuss and execute policy decisions. He often worked behind closed doors. Though he had returned from the Paris Peace Conference to general approval, things gradually began to look less rosy. Demobilization caused much difficulty in England. Overseen by the Ministry of Reconstruction, the British government called back from Europe those men deemed most necessary at home; these men were often those who had been most recently sent over the channel. Long-term military personnel grew angry, and, after a number of demonstrations, the policy of 'first in, first out' was set to appease the military.

Immediately after World War I, workers in many key industries began to strike, demanding higher wages, better working conditions, and shorter hours now that the war was ended. Workers in the mining and railway industries were especially adamant, and troops were called in on a number of occasions. However, the spirit of the labor movements did not blossom in Britain as it did elsewhere, and the socialist goal of nationalization of industry was put on hold. Factories owned by the government were sold off, and soon practically no businesses remained in government hands. During the early years after the war, Britain stayed out of foreign affairs and hoped that laissez-faire economics would jump-start the post-war economy.

However, political stability could not be maintained. In 1922, David Lloyd George resigned, and the coalition of parties under him fragmented, ushering in a period of uncertainty. The next years found the British Conservative Party struggling to prevent power from falling into the hands of the leftist Labour Party, which in fact controlled the government for a short time in 1924. After this short spurt, Conservatives again controlled the government from 1925 to 1929. In March 1926, the Samuel Commission, at the behest of the government, released a report on the coal industry advocating wage reductions, setting off strikes all over the nation in May. The Triple Alliance, made up of miners, rail workers, and other transport workers began the strike, and workers in other industries around the nation struck in sympathy. However, the spirit of Conservatism remained high and the government held out. The miners went back to work in December, forced by necessity, and the Trade Disputes Act of 1927 made sympathetic striking illegal. Amid this battle, however, the Conservative government lost direction and unity, and the Labour Party won the election of 1929. The Labour government attempted to exercise a greater deal of control over the domestic economy, but was often hesitant in its actions.

The onset of the depression in the early 1930s tore the British Parliament apart, as disagreement over recovery measures divided the nation. Labour advocated extremely leftist policies and unwise spending, while the Liberal and Conservative Parties were divided within themselves over just what to do. The election of 1931 was a marked success for the Conservatives, who emerged with a vast majority in Parliament. Despite the Party's protectionist efforts, the depression grew steadily worse.