The Interwar Period (1919-1939)
Introduction

- All hopes of 1919 failed
- Russian communist revolution led to Stalin’s regime
- 1929 crisis triggered a deep world economic recession
- Fascism (1922) and Nazism (1933) Imposed cruel dictatorships
The causes:

- Autocratic regime: the Tsar governed as an absolute monarch
- Economically backward, scarcely industrialised
- Socially backward: great gap between the wealthy few and most of the population
1905 Russian revolution

- After military defeat against Japan
- Revolution that forced the Tsar to introduce some slight changes
- Anyway, the absolute regime remained in Russia
1917 Russian revolution

February Revolution:

- Military defeats, casualties, suffering of the civil population...
- Tsar Nicholas II was deposed
- Liberal bourgeois government continued in the war and promised reforms
- Social discontent grew
1917 Russian revolution

October Revolution:

- Growing social discontent because of the war hardships and the lack of reforms
- A new revolution brought a Communist (Bolshevik) government led by Lenin

The 1920 Re-Enactment of the "Storming of the Winter Palace"
1917 Russian revolution

Communist government’s measures:

- Redistribution of land among peasants
- Control of factories by the workers
- Communist government took control of most of the economy
- Soviets (worker and peasant councils controlled by Bolsheviks) took over political power
- Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany

Lenin and the formation of the Soviets
USSR – Lenin’s government (1921-1924)

Lenin’s government:

- Civil War (1918-1921)
- White Army (zarist and anticommunist groups) vs. Red Army
- 1922 the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or Soviet Union was created
- All the power was concentrated in the Communist Party (SUCP) and its leader
- When Lenin died, a struggle among the Bolshevik leadership started
World economy – The Roaring Twenties

- After the war, a short period of economic prosperity
- USA: First economic power
- Causes:
  - Supply: Chain production
  - Demand: Advertising, credit and payment in instalments
  - Raising capital: Investment in stocks and shares

Assembly line – Chain production
Companies’ capital is divided into shares or stocks.

These shares are bought and sold at the Stock Exchange.

Usually, its price change according to supply and demand.

+ demand – supply → prices increase

- demand + supply → prices decrease

NY Stock Exchange in Wall Street
24 October 1929 (“Black Thursday”) stock prices plummeted

Why? Artificial prices of the shares

Meanwhile, overproduction (produce more than demand) plagued the American industry, shares raised and raised

Speculation (Engagement in risky business transactions on the chance of quick or considerable profit)
High price of the stocks did not correspond with its real value.

Markets were growingly aware of this situation and finally stock exchange euphoria was substituted by “stock exchange panic”.

Investors tried to sell and sell their stocks and as a consequence its price fell and fell.

Wall Street Crash triggered the 1930s economic depression.
World economy – 1930s Depression

- Many banks went bankrupt
- Industries shut down
- Agriculture prices collapsed
- Foreign trade diminished
- US crisis → Europe and the world
- Unemployment and social inequality

People line up outside the Postscheckamt in Berlin to withdraw their deposits in July 1931.
Economic and social crisis led to political crisis
Growing criticism against liberalism and free market
Communism grew among working classes
Fascism, nazism.. grew among middle and upper classes

Nazi vote surge was caused by growing unemployment.
Keynes proposed state intervention to stimulate investment, employment and consumption. American president, Roosevelt (1933-1945) implemented these ideas in his “New Deal.”
American government intervened:

- Banks lowered interest
- Subsidies to farmers
- Working hours reduced
- Minimum wage
- Unemployment benefits
- Public investment in infrastructure

Other (democratic or non democratic) countries intervened in the economy.
Authoritarian right-wing regimes spread over Europe:

- 1922 Fascism in Italy (Mussolini)
- 1933 Nazism in Germany (Hitler)
- 1936 Francoism in Spain (Franco)
- An other dictatorships in Eastern and Southern Europe
Totalitarian regimes: Fascism and Nazism

Characteristics of these totalitarian regimes:

• Authoritarian political system
• One single party (PNF, NSDAP)
• Charismatic leader (Il Duce, Führer)
• Harsh repression (Fasci, SA, SS, Gestapo)
Totalitarian regimes: Fascism and Nazism

Characteristics of these totalitarian regimes:

- Economic and social control
- Capitalism, but state intervention
- Propaganda
- Censorship
- Indoctrination of youth

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister
Totalitarian regimes: Fascism and Nazism

Characteristics of these totalitarian regimes:

• Ideology based on inequality and fanaticism
• Race, Gender, Nation... Inequality
• Irrationalism: symbols, uniforms, parades, songs, slogans...
Totalitarian regimes: Fascism and Nazism

Characteristics of these totalitarian regimes:

• Exacerbated nationalism and expansionism
• Territorial expansion (frustration of Italy, Germany’s revenge)
• Great investment in rearmament (a way out of the crisis in Germany)

After starting the war, Nazis planed German colonization
After WW1, Benito Mussolini founded the National Fascist Party.

Paramilitary violent groups “Black Shirts” that attacked left-wing parties, unions...

Supported by middle and upper classes, the Church, the Army and the King.

1922: March on Rome.

Mussolini imposed his dictatorship (1922-1943).
Italian Fascism – Benito Mussolini

- Mussolini’s dictatorship:
  - One single party (PNF), the rest banned
  - Censorship
  - Propaganda
  - Agreement with the Catholic Church
  - OVRA (political police) directed the repression against opposition

Lateran Treaty, signed in 1929
German Nazism – Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler

- Born in Austria, he fought in the German Army
- Founded the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) in 1920
- Imitating Mussolini, the Nazis created violent paramilitary groups (SA) that attacked left-wing parties, unions, Jews...
German Nazism – Adolf Hitler

The rise to power

- Over the 1929 crisis, the Nazis gained supporters
- 1932, the most voted party
- January 1933, Hitler was named Chancellor
- The Weimar Republic was destroyed and Hitler proclaimed the Third Reich
- The Führer led a one single party dictatorship
German Nazism – Adolf Hitler

The Nazi dictatorship

- The Führer led a one single party dictatorship
- The paramilitary groups (SA and SS) and the secret police (Gestapo) crashed all sort of opposition
- Very soon, concentration camps were created to jailed all type of political opponents
German Nazism – Adolf Hitler

Nazi racism

- Nazi ideology was based upon the idea of racial inequality
- Superior race: the German Aryans
- Jews, alongside Gypsies and Slavs were considered to be Untermenschen (Under men)
- Antisemitism (hatred of Jews) was a key point of nazi ideology
German Nazism – Adolf Hitler

Nazi propaganda

- Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister established a huge propaganda machine to brainwash the German population.

Joseph Goebbels, "If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth."
German Nazism – Adolf Hitler

**Nazi expansionism**
- Hitler was obsessed with the revenge against the Treaty of Versaille
- The German people, the superior race, needed living space ("lebenraum") that will be obtained by invading inferior races’ lands (Eastern Europe)
- Its aggressive expansionism caused the outbreak of WWII