KS3 History

Lesson 4 of an enquiry of 4 lessons.

Fear of Communism

Enquiry: Why did fascists gain support?

Miss Porter

The spread of communism

Between the 18th century and the First World War, ordinary people across Europe had been involved in a campaign to make their countries democratic. Despite the long campaign for democracy people began to vote for anti-democracy groups such as the fascists in the 1920s and 1930s. One large reason why the fascists gained support during this period was through fear of communism. During the Russian Revolution communists had come to power and support for communism began to grow across Europe. Communists believed that everybody should be equal. One social group who tended to support communists was the working class. This was because the communists promised to ensure a better life for working people.

Italy

In Italy, fascism gained support in response to the rapid rise of socialism in Italy. Socialism is an economic and political ideology based on public ownership of property and industry. Socialism is also often closely related to communism. During the 1920s, Socialists encouraged Italian workers to go on **strike**. By September 1920, roughly 400,000 workers were involved in the factory strikes and armed workers even took control of some factories in northern Italy. The middle classes and **industrialists** were terrified and the government did little to crush the worker occupation of factories. As a result, Italians with more **conservative** views now looked to extremist parties for support, despite their anti-democratic views.

Italy

The socialist threat also existed in the countryside and landowners complained as farm workers occupied farmers' land. In local elections in the early 1920s, Socialists gained control of 26 of the country's 69 provinces. The landowners felt they had been abandoned by the government and feared being taxed more heavily. Therefore by the early 1920s, many people had turned to the fascists for support, despite their anti-democracy stance. People also turned to the fascists to restore law and order and to protect their interests. Local Fascist squads used violence to restore order in central-Northern Italy. The violence used by the *Fasci* spread from the countryside to the cities, generating more support.

Germany

In Germany, some people were afraid that the communists would gain power. By 1932, 15% of German voters supported the Communist Party. Outside of the Soviet Union, the German Communist Party was the largest communist organisation. The middle and upper classes were particularly concerned that if the Communist Party came to power it would affect their wealth and status. As a result, these classes looked to anti-communist, extremist groups such as the fascists despite them being anti-democracy. The Nazi Party gained support as they attacked the communists, tearing down their election posters and using intimidation and violence against communist politicians. By discrediting the communists and showing their hatred towards communists, the Nazi Party gained support from the middle and upper classes who feared communism.

Spain

In Spain, during the 1930s a left-wing government was elected that was supported by communists. The communists favoured such policies as the state ownership of agriculture and industry. This angered many **nationalists** and conservatives as they feared the spread of communism. As a result, a civil war started between these two groups. The communists had received support from communists in the **Soviet Union**, whilst the fascists had been support by fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. In 1939, the fascists led by General Francisco Franco won the Civil War and Franco became the leader of Spain. Although not a typical fascist, Franco established a dictatorship in Spain. His supporters were also united by their nationalism and their anti-communist and anti-democracy beliefs.

Comprehension questions

1. Describe one reason why fascism gained support following World War One.
2. Who became the leader of Spain following the Spanish Civil War?
3. How successful were the Communist Party in Germany?
4. Why did the Nazi Party gain support from the middle classes?
5. Challenge question - Why did the socialist threat in Italy cause people to support the fascists?

Glossary

Conservative: not trusting sudden changes or new ideas

Industrialists: someone who owns or has an important position in a large industrial company

Nationalists: people who believe that their country is superior or better than other countries

Soviet Union: a former communist country, mostly comprised of Russia

Strike: to stop working for a period of time to gain something, such as better wages or working conditions

Comprehension questions

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What was the most important reason why the fascists gained support?

Sentence starters	Keywords
During the 1920s, fascist political parties gained support across Europe. The most important reason why fascists gained support was... *For example...* *This caused the fascists to gain support because..* *This was more important than _____ because...*	*World War One* *Great Depression* *Economic collapse* *Fear of communism* *Socialists* *Nationalism* *Strong leadership*