

**Social Science**

**India and the Contemporary World - I**  
**Textbook in History for Class IX**



0966



एन सी ई आर टी  
NCERT

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## Foreword

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The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognize that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavor by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

NCERT appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the Advisory Group on Social Science, Professor Hari Vasudevan and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor Neeladri Bhattacharya for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development

of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations, which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G. P. Deshpande, for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

New Delhi  
20 December 2005

*Director*  
National Council of Educational  
Research and Training

## History and a Changing World

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As we live our life in the present and read about the happenings around the world in newspapers, we do not usually pause to think about the longer history of these events. We see change before our eyes, but do not always ask, why are things changing? Very often we do not even notice that things were not the same in the past. History is about tracking these changes, understanding how and why they are taking place, how the present world in which we live has evolved.

The focus of the history books of Classes IX and X is on the emergence of the contemporary world. In earlier classes (VI – VIII) you have read about the history of India. In the next two years (Classes IX and X) you will see how the story of India's past is related to the larger history of the world. We cannot understand what was happening within India unless we see this connection. This is particularly true about a world in which economies and societies have become increasingly inter-connected. History cannot be always contained within defined territorial boundaries.

In any case there is no reason to think of national territorial boundaries as the only valid unit of our study. There are times when a focus on a small region - a locality, a village, an island, a desert tract, a forest, a mountain - helps us understand the rich variety in people's lives and histories that make up the life of the nation. We cannot talk of the nation without the people, nor the locality without the nation. Borrowing from the statement of a famous French historian, Fernand Braudel, we may also say: it is not possible to talk of the nation without the world.

The textbooks you will read in the next two years will combine these different levels of focus. We move between a close focus on particular communities and regions to the history of the nation; between the histories as they unfold in India and Europe to the developments in Africa and Indonesia. Our focus will shift according to themes.

What are these themes and how are they organised? What is the logic behind the choices of themes?

All too often in the past, the history of the modern world was associated with the history of the west. It was as if change and progress happened only in the west. As if the histories of other countries were frozen in time, they were motionless and static. People in the west were seen as enterprising, innovative, scientific, industrious, efficient and willing to change. People in the east - or in Africa and South America - were considered traditional, lazy, superstitious, and resistant to change.

For many years now these notions have been questioned by historians. We know now that every society has had its history of change. So in understanding the making of the modern world we have to look at the way different societies experienced and

fashioned these changes. We have to see how the histories of these different countries were inter-linked. Changes in one society shaped the other; developments in India and other colonies impacted on Europe. The contemporary world was not shaped by the west alone.

So the history of the contemporary world is not only about the growth of industries and trade, technology and science, railways and roads. It is equally about the forest dwellers and pastoralists, shifting cultivators and small peasants. All these social groups in diverse ways have played their part in making the contemporary world what it is. And it is this varied world which you will learn about this year.

Section I, in both books, focuses on some of the events and processes that are critical to the understanding of the modern world. This year you will read about the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and Nazism in this section. Next year you will know about nationalism and anti-colonial movements in India and elsewhere.

Section II will move from dramatic events to the routines of people's lives – their economic activities and livelihood patterns. You will see what the contemporary world has meant for forest people and pastoralists; and how they have coped with and defined the nature of these changes. Next year you will read more about the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation, capitalism and colonialism.

True, we read a lot about such issues. But what we read does not tell us about their histories. They give us no idea of how things have evolved and why they change. Once we learn to ask historical questions about all that is around us, history in fact acquires a new meaning. It allows us to see everyday things from a different angle. We realise that even seemingly ordinary things have a history that is important for us to know.

To know how the contemporary world has evolved we will therefore move from India to Africa, from Europe to Indonesia. We will read both about the big events and important ideas, as well as everyday life. In the process of these journeys you will discover how history can be exciting, how it can help us understand the world in which we live.

*Neeladri Bhattacharya*  
*Chief Advisor – History*

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Shalini Advani did several rounds of copy editing with care, and ensured that the text was accessible to children. Shyama Warner has done more than proof reading. We thank them both for meeting our impossible deadlines and being so involved with the project.

We have made every effort to acknowledge credits at the end of the book; but we apologise in advance for any omissions that may have inadvertently taken place.



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### For Extended Learning

You may access the following chapters through QR Code.

- Peasants and Farmers
- History and Sport: The Story of Cricket
- Clothing: A Social History

These Chapters were printed in the previous textbook; the same are being provided in digital mode for extended learning.

## SECTION I



### EVENTS AND PROCESSES

In Section I, you will read about the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the rise of Nazism. In different ways all these events were important in the making of the modern world.

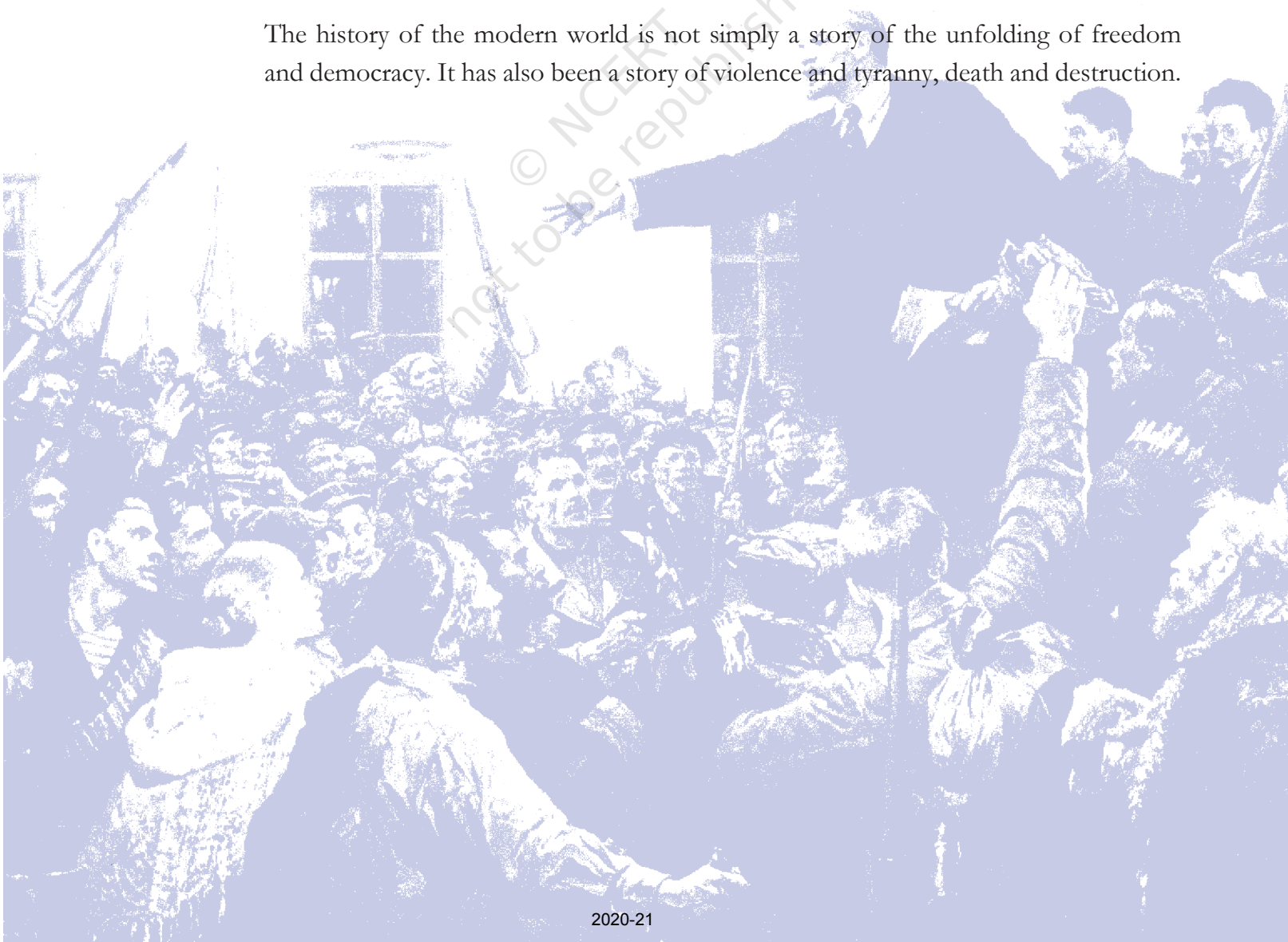
Chapter I is on the French Revolution. Today we often take the ideas of liberty, freedom and equality for granted. But we need to remind ourselves that these ideas also have a history. By looking at the French Revolution you will read a small part of that history. The French Revolution led to the end of monarchy in France. A society based on privileges gave way to a new system of governance. The Declaration of the Rights of Man during the revolution, announced the coming of a new time. The idea that all individuals had rights and could claim equality became part of a new language of politics. These notions of equality and freedom emerged as the central ideas of a new age; but in different countries they were reinterpreted and rethought in many different ways. The anti-colonial movements in India and China, Africa and South America, produced ideas that were innovative and original, but they spoke in a language that gained currency only from the late eighteenth century.

In Chapter II, you will read about the coming of socialism in Europe, and the dramatic events that forced the ruling monarch, Tsar Nicholas II, to give up power. The Russian Revolution sought to change society in a different way. It raised the question of economic equality and the well-being of workers and peasants. The chapter will tell you about the changes that were initiated by the new Soviet government, the problems it faced and the measures it undertook. While Soviet Russia pushed ahead with industrialisation and mechanisation of agriculture, it denied the rights of citizens that were essential to the working of a democratic society. The ideals of socialism,

however, became part of the anti-colonial movements in different countries. Today the Soviet Union has broken up and socialism is in crisis but through the twentieth century it has been a powerful force in the shaping of the contemporary world.

Chapter III will take you to Germany. It will discuss the rise of Hitler and the politics of Nazism. You will read about the children and women in Nazi Germany, about schools and concentration camps. You will see how Nazism denied various minorities a right to live, how it drew upon a long tradition of anti-Jewish feelings to persecute the Jews, and how it waged a relentless battle against democracy and socialism. But the story of Nazism's rise is not only about a few specific events, about massacres and killings. It is about the working of an elaborate and frightening system which operated at different levels. Some in India were impressed with the ideas of Hitler but most watched the rise of Nazism with horror.

The history of the modern world is not simply a story of the unfolding of freedom and democracy. It has also been a story of violence and tyranny, death and destruction.



# The French Revolution

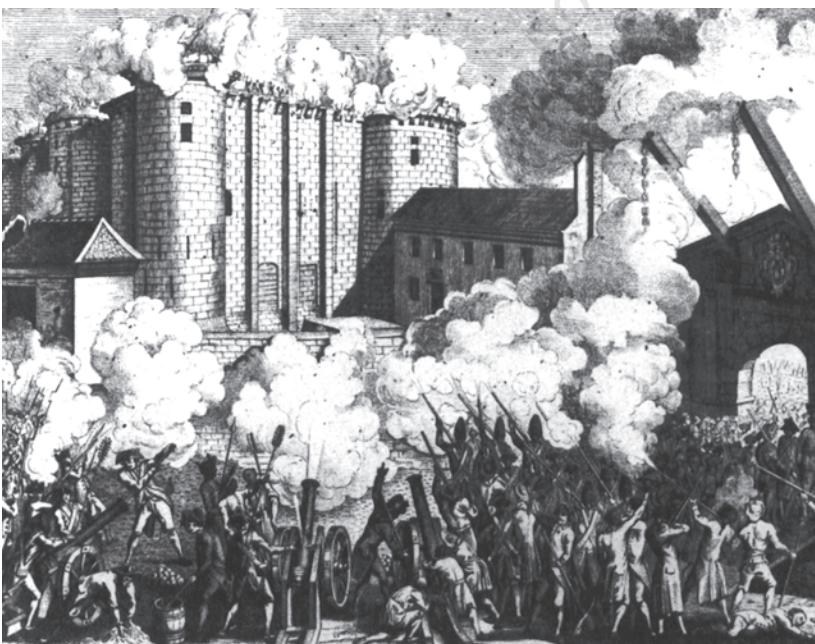


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On the morning of 14 July 1789, the city of Paris was in a state of alarm. The king had commanded troops to move into the city. Rumours spread that he would soon order the army to open fire upon the citizens. Some 7,000 men and women gathered in front of the town hall and decided to form a peoples' militia. They broke into a number of government buildings in search of arms.

Finally, a group of several hundred people marched towards the eastern part of the city and stormed the fortress-prison, the Bastille, where they hoped to find hoarded ammunition. In the armed fight that followed, the commander of the Bastille was killed and the prisoners released – though there were only seven of them. Yet the Bastille was hated by all, because it stood for the despotic power of the king. The fortress was demolished and its stone fragments were sold in the markets to all those who wished to keep a souvenir of its destruction.

The days that followed saw more rioting both in Paris and the countryside. Most people were protesting against the high price of bread. Much later, when historians looked back upon this time, they saw it as the beginning of a chain of events that ultimately led to the execution of the king in France, though most people at the time did not anticipate this outcome. How and why did this happen?



**Fig. 1 – Storming of the Bastille.**  
Soon after the demolition of the Bastille, artists made prints commemorating the event.

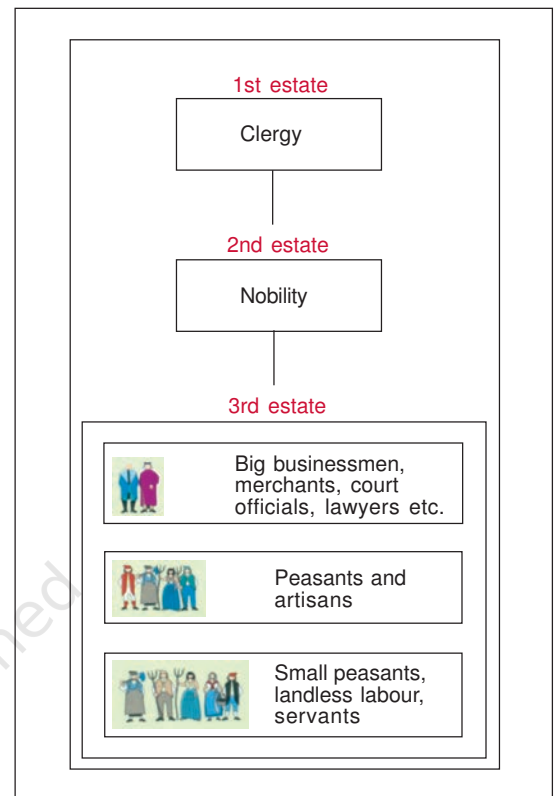
# 1 French Society During the Late Eighteenth Century

In 1774, Louis XVI of the Bourbon family of kings ascended the throne of France. He was 20 years old and married to the Austrian princess Marie Antoinette. Upon his accession the new king found an empty treasury. Long years of war had drained the financial resources of France. Added to this was the cost of maintaining an extravagant court at the immense palace of Versailles. Under Louis XVI, France helped the thirteen American colonies to gain their independence from the common enemy, Britain. The war added more than a billion *livres* to a debt that had already risen to more than 2 billion *livres*. Lenders who gave the state credit, now began to charge 10 per cent interest on loans. So the French government was obliged to spend an increasing percentage of its budget on interest payments alone. To meet its regular expenses, such as the cost of maintaining an army, the court, running government offices or universities, the state was forced to increase taxes. Yet even this measure would not have sufficed. French society in the eighteenth century was divided into three estates, and only members of the third estate paid taxes.

The society of estates was part of the feudal system that dated back to the middle ages. The term Old Regime is usually used to describe the society and institutions of France before 1789.

Fig. 2 shows how the system of estates in French society was organised. Peasants made up about 90 per cent of the population. However, only a small number of them owned the land they cultivated. About 60 per cent of the land was owned by nobles, the Church and other richer members of the third estate. The members of the first two estates, that is, the **clergy** and the nobility, enjoyed certain privileges by birth. The most important of these was exemption from paying taxes to the state. The nobles further enjoyed feudal privileges. These included feudal dues, which they extracted from the peasants. Peasants were obliged to render services to the lord – to work in his house and fields – to serve in the army or to participate in building roads.

The Church too extracted its share of taxes called **tithes** from the peasants, and finally, all members of the third estate had to pay taxes to the state. These included a direct tax, called **taille**, and a number of indirect taxes which were levied on articles of everyday consumption like salt or tobacco. The burden of financing activities of the state through taxes was borne by the third estate alone.



**Fig.2 – A Society of Estates.**  
Note that within the Third Estate some were rich and others poor.

## New words

Livre – Unit of currency in France, discontinued in 1794

Clergy – Group of persons invested with special functions in the church

Tithe – A tax levied by the church, comprising one-tenth of the agricultural produce

Taille – Tax to be paid directly to the state



'This poor fellow brings everything, grain, fruits, money, salad. The fat lord sits there, ready to accept it all. He does not even care to grace him with a look.'

## Activity

Explain why the artist has portrayed the nobleman as the spider and the peasant as the fly.

'The nobleman is the spider, the peasant the fly.'

'The more the devil has, the more he wants.'

**Fig.3 – The Spider and the Fly.**  
An anonymous etching.

### 1.1 The Struggle to Survive

The population of France rose from about 23 million in 1715 to 28 million in 1789. This led to a rapid increase in the demand for foodgrains. Production of grains could not keep pace with the demand. So the price of bread which was the staple diet of the majority rose rapidly. Most workers were employed as labourers in workshops whose owner fixed their wages. But wages did not keep pace with the rise in prices. So the gap between the poor and the rich widened. Things became worse whenever drought or hail reduced the harvest. This led to a **subsistence crisis**, something that occurred frequently in France during the Old Regime.

#### New words

Subsistence crisis – An extreme situation where the basic means of livelihood are endangered  
Anonymous – One whose name remains unknown

## 1.2 How a Subsistence Crisis Happens

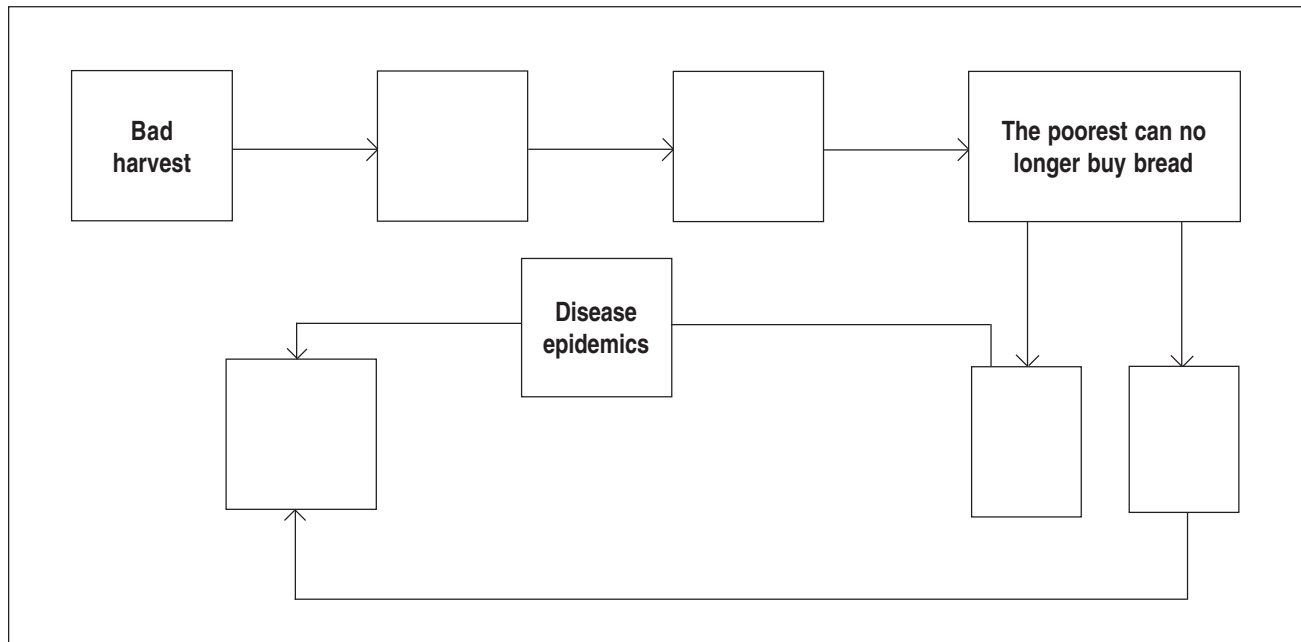


Fig.4 – The course of a subsistence crisis.

### Activity

Fill in the blank boxes in Fig. 4 with appropriate terms from among the following:

**Food riots, scarcity of grain, increased number of deaths, rising food prices, weaker bodies.**

## 1.3 A Growing Middle Class Envisages an End to Privileges

In the past, peasants and workers had participated in revolts against increasing taxes and food scarcity. But they lacked the means and programmes to carry out full-scale measures that would bring about a change in the social and economic order. This was left to those groups within the third estate who had become prosperous and had access to education and new ideas.

The eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of social groups, termed the middle class, who earned their wealth through an expanding overseas trade and from the manufacture of goods such as woollen and silk textiles that were either exported or bought by the richer members of society. In addition to merchants and manufacturers, the third estate included professions such as lawyers or administrative officials. All of these were educated and believed that no group in society should be privileged by birth. Rather, a person's social position must depend on his merit. These ideas envisaging a society based on freedom and equal laws and opportunities for all, were put forward by philosophers such as John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke sought to refute the doctrine of the divine and absolute right



of the monarch. Rousseau carried the idea forward, proposing a form of government based on a social contract between people and their representatives. In *The Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu proposed a division of power within the government between the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. This model of government was put into force in the USA, after the thirteen colonies declared their independence from Britain. The American constitution and its guarantee of individual rights was an important example for political thinkers in France.

The ideas of these philosophers were discussed intensively in salons and coffee-houses and spread among people through books and newspapers. These were frequently read aloud in groups for the benefit of those who could not read and write. The news that Louis XVI planned to impose further taxes to be able to meet the expenses of the state generated anger and protest against the system of privileges.

#### Source A

##### Accounts of lived experiences in the Old Regime

1. Georges Danton, who later became active in revolutionary politics, wrote to a friend in 1793, looking back upon the time when he had just completed his studies:

'I was educated in the residential college of Plessis. There I was in the company of important men ... Once my studies ended, I was left with nothing. I started looking for a post. It was impossible to find one at the law courts in Paris. The choice of a career in the army was not open to me as I was not a noble by birth, nor did I have a patron. The church too could not offer me a refuge. I could not buy an office as I did not possess a sou. My old friends turned their backs to me ... the system had provided us with an education without however offering a field where our talents could be utilised.'

2. An Englishman, Arthur Young, travelled through France during the years from 1787 to 1789 and wrote detailed descriptions of his journeys. He often commented on what he saw.

'He who decides to be served and waited upon by slaves, ill-treated slaves at that, must be fully aware that by doing so he is placing his property and his life in a situation which is very different from that he would be in, had he chosen the services of free and well-treated men. And he who chooses to dine to the accompaniment of his victims' groans, should not complain if during a riot his daughter gets kidnapped or his son's throat is slit.'

Source

#### Activity

What message is Young trying to convey here? Whom does he mean when he speaks of 'slaves'? Who is he criticising? What dangers does he sense in the situation of 1787?

## 2 The Outbreak of the Revolution

Louis XVI had to increase taxes for reasons you have learnt in the previous section. How do you think he could have gone about doing this? In France of the Old Regime the monarch did not have the power to impose taxes according to his will alone. Rather he had to call a meeting of the Estates General which would then pass his proposals for new taxes. The Estates General was a political body to which the three estates sent their representatives. However, the monarch alone could decide when to call a meeting of this body. The last time it was done was in 1614.

On 5 May 1789, Louis XVI called together an assembly of the Estates General to pass proposals for new taxes. A resplendent hall in Versailles was prepared to host the delegates. The first and second estates sent 300 representatives each, who were seated in rows facing each other on two sides, while the 600 members of the third estate had to stand at the back. The third estate was represented by its more prosperous and educated members. Peasants, artisans and women were denied entry to the assembly. However, their grievances and demands were listed in some 40,000 letters which the representatives had brought with them.

Voting in the Estates General in the past had been conducted according to the principle that each estate had one vote. This time too Louis XVI was determined to continue the same practice. But members of the third estate demanded that voting now be conducted by the assembly as a whole, where each member would have one vote. This was one of the democratic principles put forward by philosophers like Rousseau in his book *The Social Contract*. When the king rejected this proposal, members of the third estate walked out of the assembly in protest.

The representatives of the third estate viewed themselves as spokesmen for the whole French nation. On 20 June they assembled in the hall of an indoor tennis court in the grounds of Versailles. They declared themselves a National Assembly and swore not to disperse till they had drafted a constitution for France that would limit the powers of the monarch. They were led by Mirabeau and Abbé Sieyès. Mirabeau was born in a noble family but was convinced of the need to do away with a society of feudal privilege. He brought out a journal and delivered powerful speeches to the crowds assembled at Versailles.

### Some important dates

1774

Louis XVI becomes king of France, faces empty treasury and growing discontent within society of the Old Regime.

1789

Convocation of Estates General, Third Estate forms National Assembly, the Bastille is stormed, peasant revolts in the countryside.

1791

A constitution is framed to limit the powers of the king and to guarantee basic rights to all human beings.

1792-93

France becomes a republic, the king is beheaded.

Overthrow of the Jacobin republic, a Directory rules France.

1804

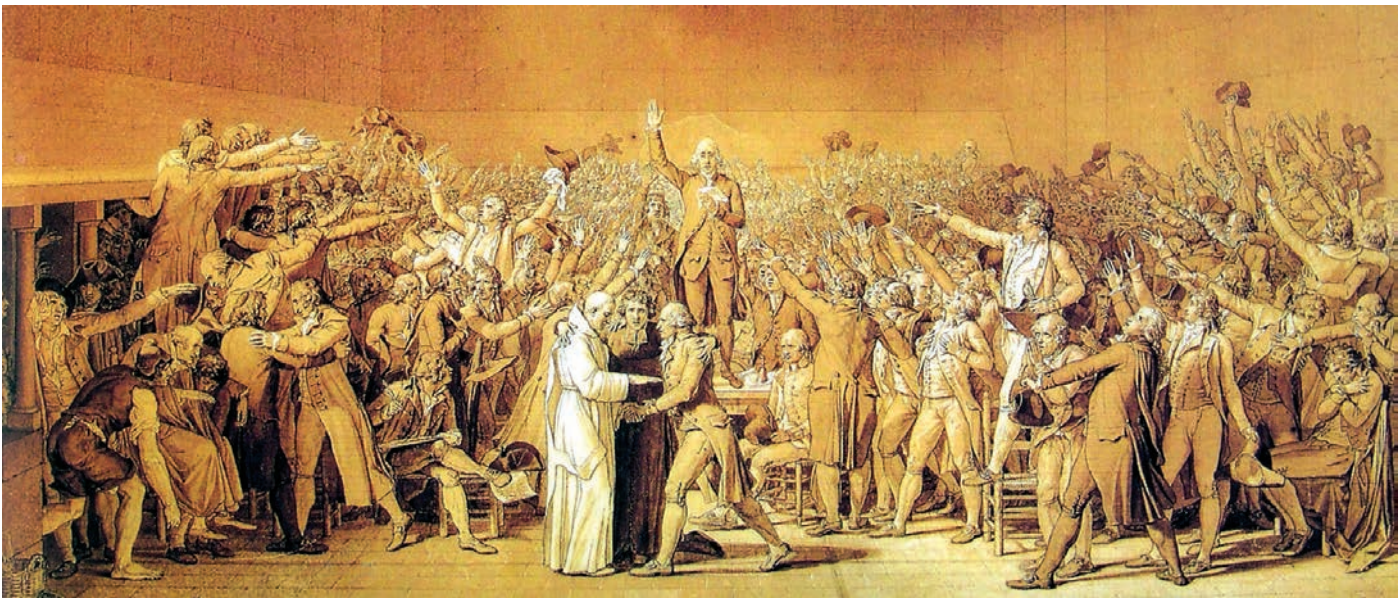
Napoleon becomes emperor of France, annexes large parts of Europe.

1815

Napoleon defeated at Waterloo.

### Activity

Representatives of the Third Estate take the oath raising their arms in the direction of Bailly, the President of the Assembly, standing on a table in the centre. Do you think that during the actual event Bailly would have stood with his back to the assembled deputies? What could have been David's intention in placing Bailly (Fig.5) the way he has done?



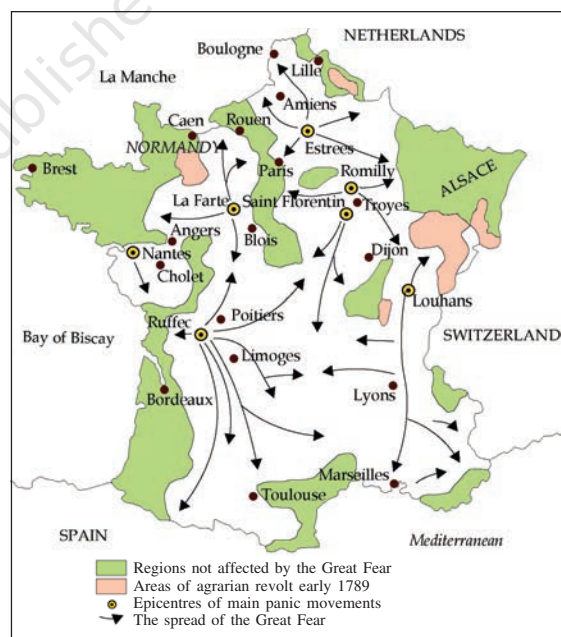
**Fig.5 – The Tennis Court Oath.**  
 Preparatory sketch for a large painting by Jacques-Louis David. The painting was intended to be hung in the National Assembly.

Abbé Sieyès, originally a priest, wrote an influential pamphlet called ‘What is the Third Estate?’

While the National Assembly was busy at Versailles drafting a constitution, the rest of France seethed with turmoil. A severe winter had meant a bad harvest; the price of bread rose, often bakers exploited the situation and hoarded supplies. After spending hours in long queues at the bakery, crowds of angry women stormed into the shops. At the same time, the king ordered troops to move into Paris. On 14 July, the agitated crowd stormed and destroyed the Bastille.

In the countryside rumours spread from village to village that the lords of the **manor** had hired bands of brigands who were on their way to destroy the ripe crops. Caught in a frenzy of fear, peasants in several districts seized hoes and pitchforks and attacked **chateaux**. They looted hoarded grain and burnt down documents containing records of manorial dues. A large number of nobles fled from their homes, many of them migrating to neighbouring countries.

Faced with the power of his revolting subjects, Louis XVI finally accorded recognition to the National Assembly and accepted the principle that his powers would from now on be checked by a constitution. On the night of 4 August 1789, the Assembly passed a decree abolishing the feudal system of obligations and taxes. Members of the clergy too were forced to give up their privileges. Tithes were abolished and lands owned by the Church were confiscated. As a result, the government acquired assets worth at least 2 billion livres.



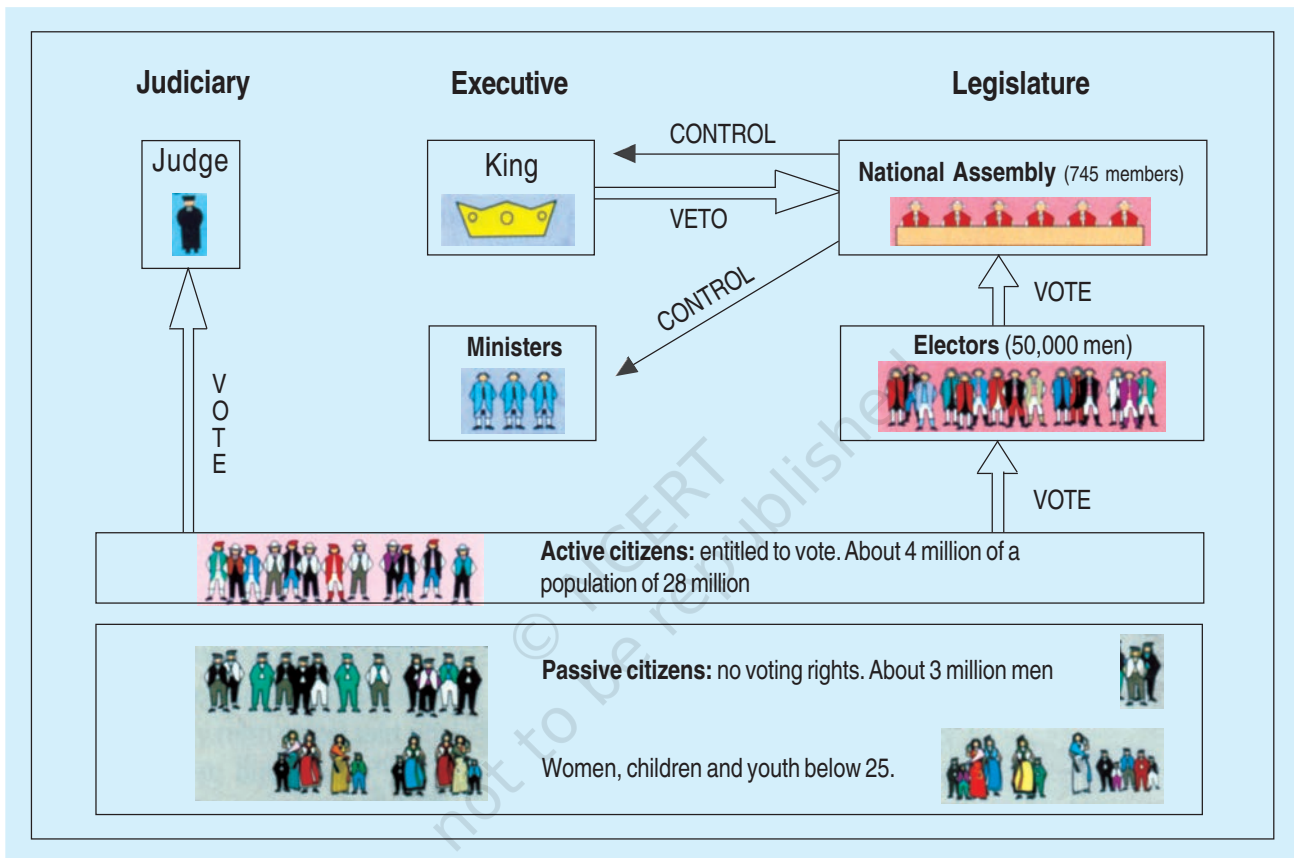
**Fig.6 – The spread of the Great Fear.**  
 The map shows how bands of peasants spread from one point to another.

### New words

Chateau (pl. chateaux) – Castle or stately residence belonging to a king or a nobleman  
 Manor – An estate consisting of the lord’s lands and his mansion

## 2.1 France Becomes a Constitutional Monarchy

The National Assembly completed the draft of the constitution in 1791. Its main object was to limit the powers of the monarch. These powers instead of being concentrated in the hands of one person, were now separated and assigned to different institutions – the legislature, executive and judiciary. This made France a constitutional monarchy. Fig. 7 explains how the new political system worked.



**Fig. 7 – The Political system under the Constitution of 1791.**

The Constitution of 1791 vested the power to make laws in the National Assembly, which was indirectly elected. That is, citizens voted for a group of electors, who in turn chose the Assembly. Not all citizens, however, had the right to vote. Only men above 25 years of age who paid taxes equal to at least 3 days of a labourer's wage were given the status of active citizens, that is, they were entitled to vote. The remaining men and all women were classed as passive citizens. To qualify as an elector and then as a member of the Assembly, a man had to belong to the highest bracket of taxpayers.



**Fig.8** – The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, painted by the artist Le Barbier in 1790. The figure on the right represents France. The figure on the left symbolises the law.

### Source C

#### The Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights.
2. The aim of every political association is the preservation of the natural and inalienable rights of man; these are liberty, property, security and resistance to oppression.
3. The source of all sovereignty resides in the nation; no group or individual may exercise authority that does not come from the people.
4. Liberty consists of the power to do whatever is not injurious to others.
5. The law has the right to forbid only actions that are injurious to society.
6. Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to participate in its formation, personally or through their representatives. All citizens are equal before it.
7. No man may be accused, arrested or detained, except in cases determined by the law.
11. Every citizen may speak, write and print freely; he must take responsibility for the abuse of such liberty in cases determined by the law.
12. For the maintenance of the public force and for the expenses of administration a common tax is indispensable; it must be assessed equally on all citizens in proportion to their means.
17. Since property is a sacred and inviolable right, no one may be deprived of it, unless a legally established public necessity requires it. In that case a just compensation must be given in advance.

The Constitution began with a Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Rights such as the right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, equality before law, were established as ‘natural and inalienable’ rights, that is, they belonged to each human being by birth and could not be taken away. It was the duty of the state to protect each citizen’s natural rights.

### Source B

The revolutionary journalist Jean-Paul Marat commented in his newspaper *L’Ami du peuple* (The friend of the people) on the Constitution drafted by the National Assembly:



‘The task of representing the people has been given to the rich ... the lot of the poor and oppressed will never be improved by peaceful means alone. Here we have absolute proof of how wealth influences the law. Yet laws will last only as long as the people agree to obey them. And when they have managed to cast off the yoke of the aristocrats, they will do the same to the other owners of wealth.’

Source: An extract from the newspaper *L’Ami du peuple*.

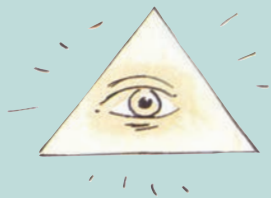
## Reading political symbols

The majority of men and women in the eighteenth century could not read or write. So images and symbols were frequently used instead of printed words to communicate important ideas. The painting by Le Barbier (Fig. 8) uses many such symbols to convey the content of the Declaration of Rights. Let us try to read these symbols.

**The broken chain:** Chains were used to fetter slaves. A broken chain stands for the act of becoming free.



**The bundle of rods or fasces:** One rod can be easily broken, but not an entire bundle. Strength lies in unity.

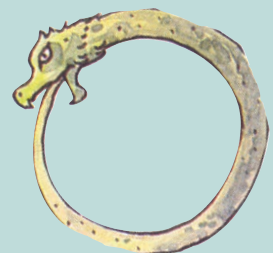


**The eye within a triangle radiating light:** The all-seeing eye stands for knowledge. The rays of the sun will drive away the clouds of ignorance.



**Sceptre:** Symbol of royal power.

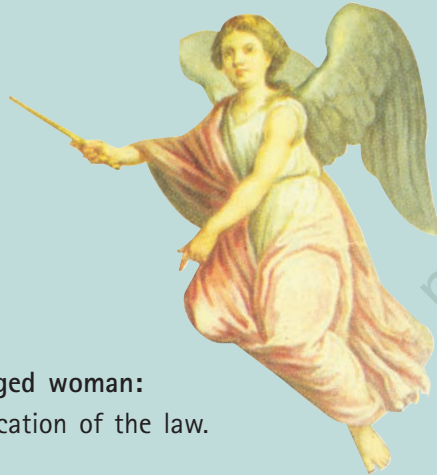
**Snake biting its tail to form a ring:** Symbol of Eternity. A ring has neither beginning nor end.



**Red Phrygian cap:** Cap worn by a slave upon becoming free.

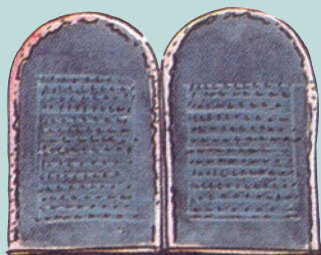


**Blue-white-red:** The national colours of France.



**The winged woman:**  
Personification of the law.

**The Law Tablet:** The law is the same for all, and all are equal before it.



## Activity

1. Identify the symbols in Box 1 which stand for liberty, equality and fraternity.
2. Explain the meaning of the painting of the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen (Fig. 8) by reading only the symbols.
3. Compare the political rights which the Constitution of 1791 gave to the citizens with Articles 1 and 6 of the Declaration (Source C). Are the two documents consistent? Do the two documents convey the same idea?
4. Which groups of French society would have gained from the Constitution of 1791? Which groups would have had reason to be dissatisfied? What developments does Marat (Source B) anticipate in the future?
5. Imagine the impact of the events in France on neighbouring countries such as Prussia, Austria-Hungary or Spain, all of which were absolute monarchies. How would the kings, traders, peasants, nobles or members of the clergy here have reacted to the news of what was happening in France?

### 3 France Abolishes Monarchy and Becomes a Republic

The situation in France continued to be tense during the following years. Although Louis XVI had signed the Constitution, he entered into secret negotiations with the King of Prussia. Rulers of other neighbouring countries too were worried by the developments in France and made plans to send troops to put down the events that had been taking place there since the summer of 1789. Before this could happen, the National Assembly voted in April 1792 to declare war against Prussia and Austria. Thousands of volunteers thronged from the provinces to join the army. They saw this as a war of the people against kings and aristocracies all over Europe. Among the patriotic songs they sang was the *Marseillaise*, composed by the poet Roget de L'Isle. It was sung for the first time by volunteers from *Marseilles* as they marched into Paris and so got its name. The *Marseillaise* is now the national anthem of France.

The revolutionary wars brought losses and economic difficulties to the people. While the men were away fighting at the front, women were left to cope with the tasks of earning a living and looking after their families. Large sections of the population were convinced that the revolution had to be carried further, as the Constitution of 1791 gave political rights only to the richer sections of society. Political clubs became an important rallying point for people who wished to discuss government policies and plan their own forms of action. The most successful of these clubs was that of the Jacobins, which got its name from the former **convent** of St Jacob in Paris. Women too, who had been active throughout this period, formed their own clubs. Section 4 of this chapter will tell you more about their activities and demands.

The members of the Jacobin club belonged mainly to the less prosperous sections of society. They included small shopkeepers, artisans such as shoemakers, pastry cooks, watch-makers, printers, as well as servants and daily-wage workers. Their leader was Maximilian Robespierre. A large group among the Jacobins decided to start wearing long striped trousers similar to those worn by dock workers. This was to set themselves apart from the fashionable sections of society, especially nobles, who wore knee breeches. It

#### New words

Convent – Building belonging to a community devoted to a religious life



Fig.9 – A sans-culottes couple.





**Fig. 10 – Nanine Vallain, Liberty.**

*This is one of the rare paintings by a woman artist. The revolutionary events made it possible for women to train with established painters and to exhibit their works in the Salon, which was an exhibition held every two years.*

*The painting is a female allegory of liberty – that is, the female form symbolises the idea of freedom.*

## Activity

Look carefully at the painting and identify the objects which are political symbols you saw in Box 1 (broken chain, red cap, fasces, Charter of the Declaration of Rights). The pyramid stands for equality, often represented by a triangle. Use the symbols to interpret the painting. Describe your impressions of the female figure of liberty.

was a way of proclaiming the end of the power wielded by the wearers of knee breeches. These Jacobins came to be known as the sans-culottes, literally meaning ‘those without knee breeches’. Sans-culottes men wore in addition the red cap that symbolised liberty. Women however were not allowed to do so.

In the summer of 1792 the Jacobins planned an insurrection of a large number of Parisians who were angered by the short supplies and high prices of food. On the morning of August 10 they stormed the Palace of the Tuileries, massacred the king’s guards and held the king himself as hostage for several hours. Later the Assembly voted to imprison the royal family. Elections were held. From now on all men of 21 years and above, regardless of wealth, got the right to vote.

The newly elected assembly was called the Convention. On 21 September 1792 it abolished the monarchy and declared France a republic. As you know, a republic is a form of government where the people elect the government including the head of the

government. There is no hereditary monarchy. You can try and find out about some other countries that are republics and investigate when and how they became so.

Louis XVI was sentenced to death by a court on the charge of **treason**. On 21 January 1793 he was executed publicly at the Place de la Concorde. The queen Marie Antoinette met with the same fate shortly after.

### 3.1 The Reign of Terror

The period from 1793 to 1794 is referred to as the Reign of Terror. Robespierre followed a policy of severe control and punishment. All those whom he saw as being ‘enemies’ of the republic – ex-nobles and clergy, members of other political parties, even members of his own party who did not agree with his methods – were arrested, imprisoned and then tried by a revolutionary tribunal. If the court found them ‘guilty’ they were guillotined. The guillotine is a device consisting of two poles and a blade with which a person is beheaded. It was named after Dr Guillotin who invented it.

Robespierre’s government issued laws placing a maximum ceiling on wages and prices. Meat and bread were rationed. Peasants were forced to transport their grain to the cities and sell it at prices fixed by the government. The use of more expensive white flour was forbidden; all citizens were required to eat the *pain d’égalité* (equality bread), a loaf made of wholewheat. Equality was also sought to be practised through forms of speech and address. Instead of the traditional Monsieur (Sir) and Madame (Madam) all French men and women were henceforth Citoyen and Citoyenne (Citizen). Churches were shut down and their buildings converted into barracks or offices.

Robespierre pursued his policies so relentlessly that even his supporters began to demand moderation. Finally, he was convicted by a court in July 1794, arrested and on the next day sent to the guillotine.

### Activity

Compare the views of Desmoulins and Robespierre. How does each one understand the use of state force? What does Robespierre mean by ‘the war of liberty against tyranny’? How does Desmoulins perceive liberty? Refer once more to Source C. What did the constitutional laws on the rights of individuals lay down? Discuss your views on the subject in class.

### New words

Treason – Betrayal of one’s country or government

### Source D

#### What is liberty? Two conflicting views:

The revolutionary journalist Camille Desmoulins wrote the following in 1793. He was executed shortly after, during the Reign of Terror.

‘Some people believe that Liberty is like a child, which needs to go through a phase of being disciplined before it attains maturity. Quite the opposite. Liberty is Happiness, Reason, Equality, Justice, it is the Declaration of Rights ... You would like to finish off all your enemies by guillotining them. Has anyone heard of something more senseless? Would it be possible to bring a single person to the scaffold without making ten more enemies among his relations and friends?’



On 7 February 1794, Robespierre made a speech at the Convention, which was then carried by the newspaper *Le Moniteur Universel*. Here is an extract from it:

‘To establish and consolidate democracy, to achieve the peaceful rule of constitutional laws, we must first finish the war of liberty against tyranny .... We must annihilate the enemies of the republic at home and abroad, or else we shall perish. In time of Revolution a democratic government may rely on terror. Terror is nothing but justice, swift, severe and inflexible; ... and is used to meet the most urgent needs of the fatherland. To curb the enemies of Liberty through terror is the right of the founder of the Republic.’



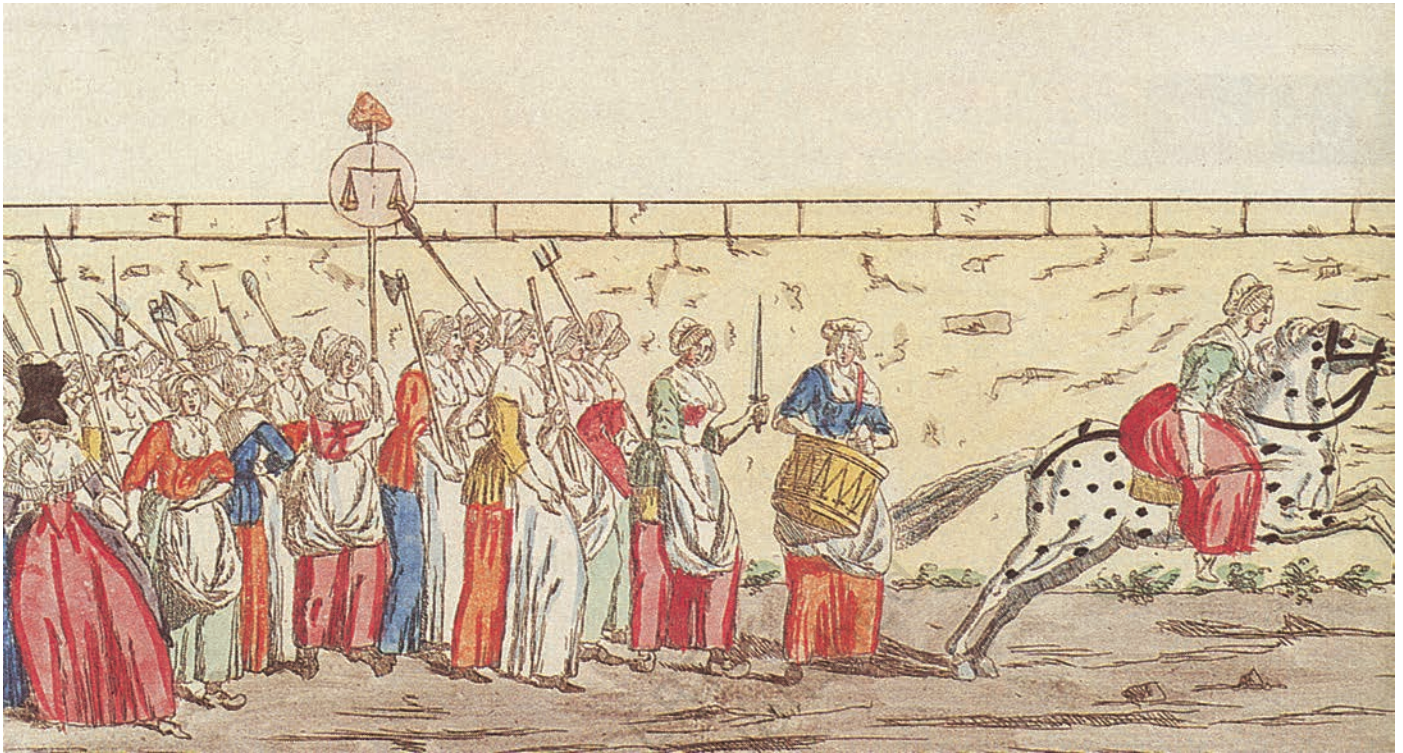
**Fig. 11** – The revolutionary government sought to mobilise the loyalty of its subjects through various means – one of them was the staging of festivals like this one. Symbols from civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome were used to convey the aura of a hallowed history. The pavilion on the raised platform in the middle carried by classical columns was made of perishable material that could be dismantled. Describe the groups of people, their clothes, their roles and actions. What impression of a revolutionary festival does this image convey?

### 3.2 A Directory Rules France

The fall of the Jacobin government allowed the wealthier middle classes to seize power. A new constitution was introduced which denied the vote to non-propertied sections of society. It provided for two elected legislative councils. These then appointed a Directory, an executive made up of five members. This was meant as a safeguard against the concentration of power in a one-man executive as under the Jacobins. However, the Directors often clashed with the legislative councils, who then sought to dismiss them. The political instability of the Directory paved the way for the rise of a military dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte.

Through all these changes in the form of government, the ideals of freedom, of equality before the law and of fraternity remained inspiring ideals that motivated political movements in France and the rest of Europe during the following century.

## 4 Did Women have a Revolution?



**Fig. 12 – Parisian women on their way to Versailles.**

*This print is one of the many pictorial representations of the events of 5 October 1789, when women marched to Versailles and brought the king back with them to Paris.*

From the very beginning women were active participants in the events which brought about so many important changes in French society. They hoped that their involvement would pressurise the revolutionary government to introduce measures to improve their lives. Most women of the third estate had to work for a living. They worked as seamstresses or laundresses, sold flowers, fruits and vegetables at the market, or were employed as domestic servants in the houses of prosperous people. Most women did not have access to education or job training. Only daughters of nobles or wealthier members of the third estate could study at a convent, after which their families arranged a marriage for them. Working women had also to care for their families, that is, cook, fetch water, queue up for bread and look after the children. Their wages were lower than those of men.

In order to discuss and voice their interests women started their own political clubs and newspapers. About sixty women's clubs came up in different French cities. The Society of Revolutionary and Republican Women was the most famous of them. One of their

### Activity

Describe the persons represented in Fig. 12 – their actions, their postures, the objects they are carrying. Look carefully to see whether all of them come from the same social group. What symbols has the artist included in the image? What do they stand for? Do the actions of the women reflect traditional ideas of how women were expected to behave in public? What do you think: does the artist sympathise with the women's activities or is he critical of them? Discuss your views in the class.

main demands was that women enjoy the same political rights as men. Women were disappointed that the Constitution of 1791 reduced them to passive citizens. They demanded the right to vote, to be elected to the Assembly and to hold political office. Only then, they felt, would their interests be represented in the new government.

In the early years, the revolutionary government did introduce laws that helped improve the lives of women. Together with the creation of state schools, schooling was made compulsory for all girls. Their fathers could no longer force them into marriage against their will. Marriage was made into a contract entered into freely and registered under civil law. Divorce was made legal, and could be applied for by both women and men. Women could now train for jobs, could become artists or run small businesses.

Women's struggle for equal political rights, however, continued. During the Reign of Terror, the new government issued laws ordering closure of women's clubs and banning their political activities. Many prominent women were arrested and a number of them executed.

Women's movements for voting rights and equal wages continued through the next two hundred years in many countries of the world. The fight for the vote was carried out through an international suffrage movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The example of the political activities of French women during the revolutionary years was kept alive as an inspiring memory. It was finally in 1946 that women in France won the right to vote.

#### Source E

### The life of a revolutionary woman – Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793)

Olympe de Gouges was one of the most important of the politically active women in revolutionary France. She protested against the Constitution and the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen as they excluded women from basic rights that each human being was entitled to. So, in 1791, she wrote a *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen*, which she addressed to the Queen and to the members of the National Assembly, demanding that they act upon it. In 1793, Olympe de Gouges criticised the Jacobin government for forcibly closing down women's clubs. She was tried by the National Convention, which charged her with treason. Soon after this she was executed.



**Source F****Some of the basic rights set forth in Olympe de Gouges' Declaration.**

1. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights.
2. The goal of all political associations is the preservation of the natural rights of woman and man: These rights are liberty, property, security, and above all resistance to oppression.
3. The source of all sovereignty resides in the nation, which is nothing but the union of woman and man.
4. The law should be the expression of the general will; all female and male citizens should have a say either personally or by their representatives in its formulation; it should be the same for all. All female and male citizens are equally entitled to all honours and public employment according to their abilities and without any other distinction than that of their talents.
5. No woman is an exception; she is accused, arrested, and detained in cases determined by law. Women, like men, obey this rigorous law.

**Activity**

Compare the manifesto drafted by Olympe de Gouges (Source F) with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (Source C).



**Fig. 13 – Women queuing up at a bakery.**

**Activity**

Imagine yourself to be one of the women in Fig. 13. Formulate a response to the arguments put forward by Chaumette (Source G).

**Source G**

In 1793, the Jacobin politician Chaumette sought to justify the closure of women's clubs on the following grounds:

'Has Nature entrusted domestic duties to men? Has she given us breasts to nurture babies?

No.

She said to Man:

Be a man. Hunting, agriculture, political duties ... that is your kingdom.

She said to Woman:

Be a woman ... the things of the household, the sweet duties of motherhood – those are your tasks.

Shameless are those women, who wish to become men. Have not duties been fairly distributed?'

## 5 The Abolition of Slavery

One of the most revolutionary social reforms of the Jacobin regime was the abolition of slavery in the French colonies. The colonies in the Caribbean – Martinique, Guadeloupe and San Domingo – were important suppliers of commodities such as tobacco, indigo, sugar and coffee. But the reluctance of Europeans to go and work in distant and unfamiliar lands meant a shortage of labour on the plantations. So this was met by a triangular slave trade between Europe, Africa and the Americas. The slave trade began in the seventeenth century. French merchants sailed from the ports of Bordeaux or Nantes to the African coast, where they bought slaves from local chieftains. Branded and shackled, the slaves were packed tightly into ships for the three-month long voyage across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. There they were sold to plantation owners. The exploitation of slave labour made it possible to meet the growing demand in European markets for sugar, coffee, and indigo. Port cities like Bordeaux and Nantes owed their economic prosperity to the flourishing slave trade.

Throughout the eighteenth century there was little criticism of slavery in France. The National Assembly held long debates about whether the rights of man should be extended to all French subjects including those in the colonies. But it did not pass any laws, fearing opposition from businessmen whose incomes depended on the slave trade. It was finally the Convention which in 1794 legislated to free all slaves in the French overseas possessions. This, however, turned out to be a short-term measure: ten years later, Napoleon reintroduced slavery. Plantation owners understood their freedom as including the right to enslave African **Negroes** in pursuit of their economic interests. Slavery was finally abolished in French colonies in 1848.



**Fig. 14 – The emancipation of slaves.** This print of 1794 describes the **emancipation** of slaves. The tricolour banner on top carries the slogan: ‘The rights of man’. The inscription below reads: ‘The freedom of the unfree’. A French woman prepares to ‘civilise’ the African and American Indian slaves by giving them European clothes to wear.

### Activity

Record your impressions of this print (Fig. 14). Describe the objects lying on the ground. What do they symbolise? What attitude does the picture express towards non-European slaves?

#### New words

**Negroes** – A term used for the indigenous people of Africa south of the Sahara. It is a derogatory term not in common use any longer

**Emancipation** – The act of freeing

## 6 The Revolution and Everyday Life

Can politics change the clothes people wear, the language they speak or the books they read? The years following 1789 in France saw many such changes in the lives of men, women and children. The revolutionary governments took it upon themselves to pass laws that would translate the ideals of liberty and equality into everyday practice.

One important law that came into effect soon after the storming of the Bastille in the summer of 1789 was the abolition of censorship. In the Old Regime all written material and cultural activities – books, newspapers, plays – could be published or performed only after they had been approved by the censors of the king. Now the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen proclaimed freedom of speech and expression to be a natural right. Newspapers, pamphlets, books and printed pictures flooded the towns of France from where they travelled rapidly into the countryside. They all described and discussed the events and changes taking place in France. Freedom of the press also meant that opposing views of events could be expressed. Each side sought to convince the others of its position through the medium of print. Plays, songs and festive processions attracted large numbers of people. This was one way they could grasp and identify with ideas such as liberty or justice that political philosophers wrote about at length in texts which only a handful of educated people could read.

### Activity

Describe the picture in your own words. What are the images that the artist has used to communicate the following ideas: greed, equality, justice, takeover by the state of the assets of the church?



**Fig. 15 – The patriotic fat-reducing press.**  
This anonymous print of 1790 seeks to make the idea of justice tangible.





**Fig. 16 - Marat addressing the people. This is a painting by Louis-Leopold Boilly.**  
 Recall what you have learnt about Marat in this chapter. Describe the scene around him. Account for his great popularity. What kinds of reactions would a painting like this produce among viewers in the Salon?

## Conclusion

In 1804, Napoleon Bonaparte crowned himself Emperor of France. He set out to conquer neighbouring European countries, dispossessing dynasties and creating kingdoms where he placed members of his family. Napoleon saw his role as a moderniser of Europe. He introduced many laws such as the protection of private property and a uniform system of weights and measures provided by the decimal system. Initially, many saw Napoleon as a liberator who would bring freedom for the people. But soon the Napoleonic armies came to be viewed everywhere as an invading force. He was finally defeated at Waterloo in 1815. Many of his measures that carried the revolutionary ideas of liberty and modern laws to other parts of Europe had an impact on people long after Napoleon had left.

The ideas of liberty and democratic rights were the most important legacy of the French Revolution. These spread from France to the rest of Europe during the nineteenth century, where feudal systems



**Fig. 17 – Napoleon crossing the Alps, painting by David.**

were abolished. Colonised peoples reworked the idea of freedom from bondage into their movements to create a sovereign nation state. Tipu Sultan and Rammohan Roy are two examples of individuals who responded to the ideas coming from revolutionary France.

### Box 2

Raja Rammohan Roy was one of those who was inspired by new ideas that were spreading through Europe at that time. The French Revolution and later, the July Revolution excited his imagination.

'He could think and talk of nothing else when he heard of the July Revolution in France in 1830. On his way to England at Cape Town he insisted on visiting frigates (warships) flying the revolutionary tri-colour flag though he had been temporarily lamed by an accident.'

Susobhan Sarkar, *Notes on the Bengal Renaissance* 1946.

## Activities

1. Find out more about any one of the revolutionary figures you have read about in this chapter. Write a short biography of this person.
2. The French Revolution saw the rise of newspapers describing the events of each day and week. Collect information and pictures on any one event and write a newspaper article. You could also conduct an imaginary interview with important personages such as Mirabeau, Olympe de Gouges or Robespierre. Work in groups of two or three. Each group could then put up their articles on a board to produce a wallpaper on the French Revolution.

Activities

## Questions

1. Describe the circumstances leading to the outbreak of revolutionary protest in France.
2. Which groups of French society benefited from the revolution? Which groups were forced to relinquish power? Which sections of society would have been disappointed with the outcome of the revolution?
3. Describe the legacy of the French Revolution for the peoples of the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
4. Draw up a list of democratic rights we enjoy today whose origins could be traced to the French Revolution.
5. Would you agree with the view that the message of universal rights was beset with contradictions? Explain.
6. How would you explain the rise of Napoleon?



# Socialism in Europe and the Russian Revolution



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## 1 The Age of Social Change

In the previous chapter you read about the powerful ideas of freedom and equality that circulated in Europe after the French Revolution. The French Revolution opened up the possibility of creating a dramatic change in the way in which society was structured. As you have read, before the eighteenth century society was broadly divided into estates and orders and it was the aristocracy and church which controlled economic and social power. Suddenly, after the revolution, it seemed possible to change this. In many parts of the world including Europe and Asia, new ideas about individual rights and who controlled social power began to be discussed. In India, Raja Rammohan Roy and Derozio talked of the significance of the French Revolution, and many others debated the ideas of post-revolutionary Europe. The developments in the colonies, in turn, reshaped these ideas of societal change.

Not everyone in Europe, however, wanted a complete transformation of society. Responses varied from those who accepted that some change was necessary but wished for a gradual shift, to those who wanted to restructure society radically. Some were 'conservatives', others were 'liberals' or 'radicals'. What did these terms really mean in the context of the time? What separated these strands of politics and what linked them together? We must remember that these terms do not mean the same thing in all contexts or at all times.

We will look briefly at some of the important political traditions of the nineteenth century, and see how they influenced change. Then we will focus on one historical event in which there was an attempt at a radical transformation of society. Through the revolution in Russia, socialism became one of the most significant and powerful ideas to shape society in the twentieth century.

### 1.1 Liberals, Radicals and Conservatives

One of the groups which looked to change society were the liberals. Liberals wanted a nation which tolerated all religions. We should remember that at this time European states usually discriminated in

favour of one religion or another (Britain favoured the Church of England, Austria and Spain favoured the Catholic Church). Liberals also opposed the uncontrolled power of dynastic rulers. They wanted to safeguard the rights of individuals against governments. They argued for a representative, elected parliamentary government, subject to laws interpreted by a well-trained judiciary that was independent of rulers and officials. However, they were not 'democrats'. They did not believe in universal adult franchise, that is, the right of every citizen to vote. They felt men of property mainly should have the vote. They also did not want the vote for women.

In contrast, radicals wanted a nation in which government was based on the majority of a country's population. Many supported women's **suffragette** movements. Unlike liberals, they opposed the privileges of great landowners and wealthy factory owners. They were not against the existence of private property but disliked concentration of property in the hands of a few.

Conservatives were opposed to radicals and liberals. After the French Revolution, however, even conservatives had opened their minds to the need for change. Earlier, in the eighteenth century, conservatives had been generally opposed to the idea of change. By the nineteenth century, they accepted that some change was inevitable but believed that the past had to be respected and change had to be brought about through a slow process.

Such differing ideas about societal change clashed during the social and political turmoil that followed the French Revolution. The various attempts at revolution and national transformation in the nineteenth century helped define both the limits and potential of these political tendencies.

## 1.2 Industrial Society and Social Change

These political trends were signs of a new time. It was a time of profound social and economic changes. It was a time when new cities came up and new industrialised regions developed, railways expanded and the Industrial Revolution occurred.

Industrialisation brought men, women and children to factories. Work hours were often long and wages were poor. Unemployment was common, particularly during times of low demand for industrial goods. Housing and sanitation were problems since towns were growing rapidly. Liberals and radicals searched for solutions to these issues.

### New words

Suffragette movement – A movement to give women the right to vote.



**Fig. 1 – The London poor in the mid-nineteenth century as seen by a contemporary.**  
From: Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1861.

Almost all industries were the property of individuals. Liberals and radicals themselves were often property owners and employers. Having made their wealth through trade or industrial ventures, they felt that such effort should be encouraged – that its benefits would be achieved if the workforce in the economy was healthy and citizens were educated. Opposed to the privileges the old aristocracy had by birth, they firmly believed in the value of individual effort, labour and enterprise. If freedom of individuals was ensured, if the poor could labour, and those with capital could operate without restraint, they believed that societies would develop. Many working men and women who wanted changes in the world rallied around liberal and radical groups and parties in the early nineteenth century.

Some nationalists, liberals and radicals wanted revolutions to put an end to the kind of governments established in Europe in 1815. In France, Italy, Germany and Russia, they became revolutionaries and worked to overthrow existing monarchs. Nationalists talked of revolutions that would create ‘nations’ where all citizens would have

equal rights. After 1815, Giuseppe Mazzini, an Italian nationalist, conspired with others to achieve this in Italy. Nationalists elsewhere – including India – read his writings.

### 1.3 The Coming of Socialism to Europe

Perhaps one of the most far-reaching visions of how society should be structured was socialism. By the mid - nineteenth century in Europe, socialism was a well-known body of ideas that attracted widespread attention.

Socialists were against private property, and saw it as the root of all social ills of the time. Why? Individuals owned the property that gave employment but the proprietors were concerned only with personal gain and not with the welfare of those who made the property productive. So if society as a whole rather than single individuals controlled property, more attention would be paid to collective social interests. Socialists wanted this change and campaigned for it.

How could a society without property operate? What would be the basis of socialist society?

Socialists had different visions of the future. Some believed in the idea of cooperatives. Robert Owen (1771-1858), a leading English manufacturer, sought to build a cooperative community called New Harmony in Indiana (USA). Other socialists felt that cooperatives could not be built on a wide scale only through individual initiative: they demanded that *governments* encourage cooperatives. In France, for instance, Louis Blanc (1813-1882) wanted the government to encourage cooperatives and replace capitalist enterprises. These cooperatives were to be associations of people who produced goods together and divided the profits according to the work done by members.

Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) added other ideas to this body of arguments. Marx argued that industrial society was 'capitalist'. Capitalists owned the capital invested in factories, and the profit of capitalists was produced by workers. The conditions of workers could not improve as long as this profit was accumulated by private capitalists. Workers had to overthrow capitalism and the rule of private property. Marx believed that to free themselves from capitalist exploitation, workers had to construct a radically socialist society where all property was socially controlled. This would be a communist society. He was convinced that workers would triumph in their conflict with capitalists. A communist society was the natural society of the future.

### Activity

List two differences between the capitalist and socialist ideas of private property.

## 1.4 Support for Socialism

By the 1870s, socialist ideas spread through Europe. To coordinate their efforts, socialists formed an international body – namely, the Second International.

Workers in England and Germany began forming associations to fight for better living and working conditions. They set up funds to help members in times of distress and demanded a reduction of working hours and the right to vote. In Germany, these associations worked closely with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and helped it win parliamentary seats. By 1905, socialists and trade unionists formed a Labour Party in Britain and a Socialist Party in France. However, till 1914, socialists never succeeded in forming a government in Europe. Represented by strong figures in parliamentary politics, their ideas did shape legislation, but governments continued to be run by conservatives, liberals and radicals.

### Activity

Imagine that a meeting has been called in your area to discuss the socialist idea of doing away with private property and introducing collective ownership. Write the speech you would make at the meeting if you are:

- a poor labourer working in the fields
- a medium-level landowner
- a house owner



**Fig.2** – This is a painting of the Paris Commune of 1871 (From Illustrated London News, 1871). It portrays a scene from the popular uprising in Paris between March and May 1871. This was a period when the town council (commune) of Paris was taken over by a ‘peoples’ government’ consisting of workers, ordinary people, professionals, political activists and others. The uprising emerged against a background of growing discontent against the policies of the French state. The ‘Paris Commune’ was ultimately crushed by government troops but it was celebrated by Socialists the world over as a prelude to a socialist revolution. The Paris Commune is also popularly remembered for two important legacies: one, for its association with the workers’ red flag – that was the flag adopted by the communards ( revolutionaries) in Paris; two, for the ‘Marseillaise’, originally written as a war song in 1792, it became a symbol of the Commune and of the struggle for liberty.

## 2 The Russian Revolution

In one of the least industrialised of European states this situation was reversed. Socialists took over the government in Russia through the October Revolution of 1917. The fall of monarchy in February 1917 and the events of October are normally called the Russian Revolution.

How did this come about? What were the social and political conditions in Russia when the revolution occurred? To answer these questions, let us look at Russia a few years before the revolution.

### 2.1 The Russian Empire in 1914

In 1914, Tsar Nicholas II ruled Russia and its empire. Besides the territory around Moscow, the Russian empire included current-day Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, parts of Poland, Ukraine and Belarus. It stretched to the Pacific and comprised today's Central Asian states, as well as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The majority religion was Russian Orthodox Christianity – which had grown out of the Greek Orthodox Church – but the empire also included Catholics, Protestants, Muslims and Buddhists.



**Fig.3 – Tsar Nicholas II in the White Hall of the Winter Palace, St Petersburg, 1900.**  
Painted by Earnest Lipgart (1847-1932)



**Fig.4 – Europe in 1914.**

The map shows the Russian empire and the European countries at war during the First World War.



## 2.2 Economy and Society

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the vast majority of Russia's people were agriculturists. About 85 per cent of the Russian empire's population earned their living from agriculture. This proportion was higher than in most European countries. For instance, in France and Germany the proportion was between 40 per cent and 50 per cent. In the empire, cultivators produced for the market as well as for their own needs and Russia was a major exporter of grain.

Industry was found in pockets. Prominent industrial areas were St Petersburg and Moscow. Craftsmen undertook much of the production, but large factories existed alongside craft workshops. Many factories were set up in the 1890s, when Russia's railway network was extended, and foreign investment in industry increased. Coal production doubled and iron and steel output quadrupled. By the 1900s, in some areas factory workers and craftsmen were almost equal in number.

Most industry was the private property of industrialists. Government supervised large factories to ensure minimum wages and limited hours of work. But factory inspectors could not prevent rules being broken. In craft units and small workshops, the working day was sometimes 15 hours, compared with 10 or 12 hours in factories. Accommodation varied from rooms to dormitories.

Workers were a divided social group. Some had strong links with the villages from which they came. Others had settled in cities permanently. Workers were divided by skill. A metalworker of St. Petersburg recalled, 'Metalworkers considered themselves aristocrats among other workers. Their occupations demanded more training and skill . . .' Women made up 31 per cent of the factory labour force by 1914, but they were paid less than men (between half and three-quarters of a man's wage). Divisions among workers showed themselves in dress and manners too. Some workers formed associations to help members in times of unemployment or financial hardship but such associations were few.

Despite divisions, workers did unite to strike work (stop work) when they disagreed with employers about dismissals or work conditions. These strikes took place frequently in the textile industry during 1896-1897, and in the metal industry during 1902.

In the countryside, peasants cultivated most of the land. But the nobility, the crown and the Orthodox Church owned large properties. Like workers, peasants too were divided. They were also



**Fig.5 – Unemployed peasants in pre-war St Petersburg.**

*Many survived by eating at charitable kitchens and living in poorhouses.*



**Fig.6 – Workers sleeping in bunkers in a dormitory in pre-revolutionary Russia.**

*They slept in shifts and could not keep their families with them.*

deeply religious. But except in a few cases they had no respect for the nobility. Nobles got their power and position through their services to the Tsar, not through local popularity. This was unlike France where, during the French Revolution in Brittany, peasants respected nobles and fought for them. In Russia, peasants wanted the land of the nobles to be given to them. Frequently, they refused to pay rent and even murdered landlords. In 1902, this occurred on a large scale in south Russia. And in 1905, such incidents took place all over Russia.

Russian peasants were different from other European peasants in another way. They pooled their land together periodically and their commune (*mir*) divided it according to the needs of individual families.

### 2.3 Socialism in Russia

All political parties were illegal in Russia before 1914. The Russian Social Democratic Workers Party was founded in 1898 by socialists who respected Marx's ideas. However, because of government policing, it had to operate as an illegal organisation. It set up a newspaper, mobilised workers and organised strikes.

Some Russian socialists felt that the Russian peasant custom of dividing land periodically made them natural socialists. So peasants, not workers, would be the main force of the revolution, and Russia could become socialist more quickly than other countries. Socialists were active in the countryside through the late nineteenth century. They formed the Socialist Revolutionary Party in 1900. This party struggled for peasants' rights and demanded that land belonging to nobles be transferred to peasants. Social Democrats disagreed with Socialist Revolutionaries about peasants. Lenin felt that peasants were not one united group. Some were poor and others rich, some worked as labourers while others were capitalists who employed workers. Given this 'differentiation' within them, they could not all be part of a socialist movement.

The party was divided over the strategy of organisation. Vladimir Lenin (who led the Bolshevik group) thought that in a repressive society like Tsarist Russia the party should be disciplined and should control the number and quality of its members. Others (Mensheviks) thought that the party should be open to all (as in Germany).

### 2.4 A Turbulent Time: The 1905 Revolution

Russia was an **autocracy**. Unlike other European rulers, even at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Tsar was not subject to

#### Source A

Alexander Shlyapnikov, a socialist worker of the time, gives us a description of how the meetings were organised:

'Propaganda was done in the plants and shops on an individual basis. There were also discussion circles ... Legal meetings took place on matters concerning [official issues], but this activity was skilfully integrated into the general struggle for the liberation of the working class. Illegal meetings were ... arranged on the spur of the moment but in an organised way during lunch, in evening break, in front of the exit, in the yard or, in establishments with several floors, on the stairs. The most alert workers would form a "plug" in the doorway, and the whole mass piled up in the exit. An agitator would get up right there on the spot. Management would contact the police on the telephone, but the speeches would have already been made and the necessary decision taken by the time they arrived ...'

Alexander Shlyapnikov, *On the Eve of 1917. Reminiscences from the Revolutionary Underground*.

parliament. Liberals in Russia campaigned to end this state of affairs. Together with the Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries, they worked with peasants and workers during the revolution of 1905 to demand a constitution. They were supported in the empire by nationalists (in Poland for instance) and in Muslim-dominated areas by **jadidists** who wanted modernised Islam to lead their societies.

The year 1904 was a particularly bad one for Russian workers. Prices of essential goods rose so quickly that **real wages** declined by 20 per cent. The membership of workers' associations rose dramatically. When four members of the Assembly of Russian Workers, which had been formed in 1904, were dismissed at the Putilov Iron Works, there was a call for industrial action. Over the next few days over 110,000 workers in St Petersburg went on strike demanding a reduction in the working day to eight hours, an increase in wages and improvement in working conditions.

When the procession of workers led by Father Gapon reached the Winter Palace it was attacked by the police and the Cossacks. Over 100 workers were killed and about 300 wounded. The incident, known as Bloody Sunday, started a series of events that became known as the 1905 Revolution. Strikes took place all over the country and universities closed down when student bodies staged walkouts, complaining about the lack of civil liberties. Lawyers, doctors, engineers and other middle-class workers established the Union of Unions and demanded a constituent assembly.

During the 1905 Revolution, the Tsar allowed the creation of an elected consultative Parliament or Duma. For a brief while during the revolution, there existed a large number of trade unions and factory committees made up of factory workers. After 1905, most committees and unions worked unofficially, since they were declared illegal. Severe restrictions were placed on political activity. The Tsar dismissed the first Duma within 75 days and the re-elected second Duma within three months. He did not want any questioning of his authority or any reduction in his power. He changed the voting laws and packed the third Duma with conservative politicians. Liberals and revolutionaries were kept out.

## 2.5 The First World War and the Russian Empire

In 1914, war broke out between two European alliances – Germany, Austria and Turkey (the Central powers) and France, Britain and Russia (later Italy and Romania). Each country had a global empire

### Activity

Why were there revolutionary disturbances in Russia in 1905? What were the demands of revolutionaries?

### New words

Jadidists – Muslim reformers within the Russian empire

Real wage – Reflects the quantities of goods which the wages will actually buy.

and the war was fought outside Europe as well as in Europe. This was the First World War.

In Russia, the war was initially popular and people rallied around Tsar Nicholas II. As the war continued, though, the Tsar refused to consult the main parties in the Duma. Support wore thin. Anti-German sentiments ran high, as can be seen in the renaming of St Petersburg – a German name – as Petrograd. The Tsarina Alexandra's German origins and poor advisers, especially a monk called Rasputin, made the autocracy unpopular.

The First World War on the 'eastern front' differed from that on the 'western front'. In the west, armies fought from trenches stretched along eastern France. In the east, armies moved a good deal and fought battles leaving large casualties. Defeats were shocking and demoralising. Russia's armies lost badly in Germany and Austria between 1914 and 1916. There were over 7 million casualties by 1917. As they retreated, the Russian army destroyed crops and buildings to prevent the enemy from being able to live off the land. The destruction of crops and buildings led to over 3 million refugees in Russia. The situation discredited the government and the Tsar. Soldiers did not wish to fight such a war.

The war also had a severe impact on industry. Russia's own industries were few in number and the country was cut off from other suppliers of industrial goods by German control of the Baltic Sea. Industrial equipment disintegrated more rapidly in Russia than elsewhere in Europe. By 1916, railway lines began to break down. Able-bodied men were called up to the war. As a result, there were labour shortages and small workshops producing essentials were shut down. Large supplies of grain were sent to feed the army. For the people in the cities, bread and flour became scarce. By the winter of 1916, riots at bread shops were common.



**Fig. 7 – Russian soldiers during the First World War.**

*The Imperial Russian army came to be known as the 'Russian steam roller'. It was the largest armed force in the world. When this army shifted its loyalty and began supporting the revolutionaries, Tsarist power collapsed.*

## Activity

The year is 1916. You are a general in the Tsar's army on the eastern front. You are writing a report for the government in Moscow. In your report suggest what you think the government should do to improve the situation.

### 3 The February Revolution in Petrograd

In the winter of 1917, conditions in the capital, Petrograd, were grim. The layout of the city seemed to emphasise the divisions among its people. The workers' quarters and factories were located on the right bank of the River Neva. On the left bank were the fashionable areas, the Winter Palace, and official buildings, including the palace where the Duma met. In February 1917, food shortages were deeply felt in the workers' quarters. The winter was very cold – there had been exceptional frost and heavy snow. Parliamentarians wishing to preserve elected government, were opposed to the Tsar's desire to dissolve the Duma.

On 22 February, a lockout took place at a factory on the right bank. The next day, workers in fifty factories called a strike in sympathy. In many factories, women led the way to strikes. This came to be called the International Women's Day. Demonstrating workers crossed from the factory quarters to the centre of the capital – the Nevskii Prospekt. At this stage, no political party was actively organising the movement. As the fashionable quarters and official buildings were surrounded by workers, the government imposed a curfew. Demonstrators dispersed by the evening, but they came back on the 24th and 25th. The government called out the cavalry and police to keep an eye on them.

On Sunday, 25 February, the government suspended the Duma. Politicians spoke out against the measure. Demonstrators returned in force to the streets of the left bank on the 26th. On the 27th, the Police Headquarters were ransacked. The streets thronged with people raising slogans about bread, wages, better hours and democracy. The government tried to control the situation and called out the cavalry once again. However, the cavalry refused to fire on the demonstrators. An officer was shot at the barracks of a regiment and three other regiments mutinied, voting to join the striking workers. By that evening, soldiers and



Fig.8 – The Petrograd Soviet meeting in the Duma, February 1917.

striking workers had gathered to form a 'soviet' or 'council' in the same building as the Duma met. This was the Petrograd Soviet.

The very next day, a delegation went to see the Tsar. Military commanders advised him to abdicate. He followed their advice and abdicated on 2 March. Soviet leaders and Duma leaders formed a Provisional Government to run the country. Russia's future would be decided by a constituent assembly, elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Petrograd had led the February Revolution that brought down the monarchy in February 1917.

### Box 1

#### Women in the February Revolution

'Women workers, often ... inspired their male co-workers ... At the Lorenz telephone factory, ... Marfa Vasileva almost single handedly called a successful strike. Already that morning, in celebration of Women's Day, women workers had presented red bows to the men ... Then Marfa Vasileva, a milling machine operator stopped work and declared an impromptu strike. The workers on the floor were ready to support her ... The foreman informed the management and sent her a loaf of bread. She took the bread but refused to go back to work. The administrator asked her again why she refused to work and she replied, "I cannot be the only one who is satiated when others are hungry". Women workers from another section of the factory gathered around Marfa in support and gradually all the other women ceased working. Soon the men downed their tools as well and the entire crowd rushed onto the street.'

From: Choi Chatterji, *Celebrating Women* (2002).

### 3.1 After February

Army officials, landowners and industrialists were influential in the Provisional Government. But the liberals as well as socialists among them worked towards an elected government. Restrictions on public meetings and associations were removed. 'Soviets', like the Petrograd Soviet, were set up everywhere, though no common system of election was followed.

In April 1917, the Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin returned to Russia from his exile. He and the Bolsheviks had opposed the war since 1914. Now he felt it was time for soviets to take over power. He declared that the war be brought to a close, land be transferred to the peasants, and banks be nationalised. These three demands were Lenin's 'April Theses'. He also argued that the Bolshevik Party rename itself the Communist Party to indicate its new radical aims. Most others in the Bolshevik Party were initially surprised by the April Theses. They thought that the time was not yet ripe for a

### Activity

Look again at Source A and Box 1.

- List five changes in the mood of the workers.
- Place yourself in the position of a woman who has seen both situations and write an account of what has changed.

socialist revolution and the Provisional Government needed to be supported. But the developments of the subsequent months changed their attitude.

Through the summer the workers' movement spread. In industrial areas, factory committees were formed which began questioning the way industrialists ran their factories. Trade unions grew in number. Soldiers' committees were formed in the army. In June, about 500 Soviets sent representatives to an All Russian Congress of Soviets. As the Provisional Government saw its power reduce and Bolshevik influence grow, it decided to take stern measures against the spreading discontent. It resisted attempts by workers to run factories and began arresting leaders. Popular demonstrations staged by the Bolsheviks in July 1917 were sternly repressed. Many Bolshevik leaders had to go into hiding or flee.

Meanwhile in the countryside, peasants and their Socialist Revolutionary leaders pressed for a redistribution of land. Land committees were formed to handle this. Encouraged by the Socialist Revolutionaries, peasants seized land between July and September 1917.



*Fig.9 – A Bolshevik image of Lenin addressing workers in April 1917.*



*Fig.10 – The July Days. A pro-Bolshevik demonstration on 17 July 1917 being fired upon by the army.*

### 3.2 The Revolution of October 1917

As the conflict between the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks grew, Lenin feared the Provisional Government would set up a dictatorship. In September, he began discussions for an uprising against the government. Bolshevik supporters in the army, soviets and factories were brought together.

On 16 October 1917, Lenin persuaded the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolshevik Party to agree to a socialist seizure of power. A Military Revolutionary Committee was appointed by the Soviet under Leon Trotskii to organise the seizure. The date of the event was kept a secret.

The uprising began on 24 October. Sensing trouble, Prime Minister Kerenskii had left the city to summon troops. At dawn, military men loyal to the government seized the buildings of two Bolshevik newspapers. Pro-government troops were sent to take over telephone and telegraph offices and protect the Winter Palace. In a swift response, the Military Revolutionary Committee ordered its supporters to seize government offices and arrest ministers. Late in the day, the ship *Aurora* shelled the Winter Palace. Other vessels sailed down the Neva and took over various military points. By nightfall, the city was under the committee's control and the ministers had surrendered. At a meeting of the All Russian Congress of Soviets in Petrograd, the majority approved the Bolshevik action. Uprisings took place in other cities. There was heavy fighting – especially in Moscow – but by December, the Bolsheviks controlled the Moscow-Petrograd area.



#### Box 2

##### Date of the Russian Revolution

Russia followed the Julian calendar until 1 February 1918. The country then changed to the Gregorian calendar, which is followed everywhere today. The Gregorian dates are 13 days ahead of the Julian dates. So by our calendar, the 'February' Revolution took place on 12th March and the 'October' Revolution took place on 7th November.

##### Some important dates

1850s -1880s

Debates over socialism in Russia.

1898

Formation of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party.

1905

The Bloody Sunday and the Revolution of 1905.

1917

2nd March - Abdication of the Tsar.  
24th October - Bolshevik uprising in Petrograd.

1918-20

The Civil War.

1919

Formation of Comintern.

1929

Beginning of Collectivisation.

**Fig. 11** – Lenin (left) and Trotskii (right) with workers at Petrograd.



## 4 What Changed after October?

The Bolsheviks were totally opposed to private property. Most industry and banks were nationalised in November 1917. This meant that the government took over ownership and management. Land was declared social property and peasants were allowed to seize the land of the nobility. In cities, Bolsheviks enforced the partition of large houses according to family requirements. They banned the use of the old titles of aristocracy. To assert the change, new uniforms were designed for the army and officials, following a clothing competition organised in 1918 – when the Soviet hat (*budeonovka*) was chosen.

The Bolshevik Party was renamed the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). In November 1917, the Bolsheviks conducted the elections to the Constituent Assembly, but they failed to gain majority support. In January 1918, the Assembly rejected Bolshevik measures and Lenin dismissed the Assembly. He thought the All Russian Congress of Soviets was more democratic than an assembly elected in uncertain conditions. In March 1918, despite opposition by their political allies, the Bolsheviks made peace with Germany at Brest Litovsk. In the years that followed, the Bolsheviks became the only party to participate in the elections to the All Russian Congress of Soviets, which became the Parliament of the country. Russia became a one-party state. Trade unions were kept under party control. The secret police (called the Cheka first, and later OGPU and NKVD) punished those who criticised the Bolsheviks. Many young writers and artists rallied to the Party because it stood for socialism and for change. After October 1917, this led to experiments in the arts and architecture. But many became disillusioned because of the censorship the Party encouraged.



**Fig. 12 – A soldier wearing the Soviet hat (budeonovka).**



**Fig. 13 – May Day demonstration in Moscow in 1918.**

**Box 3****The October Revolution and the Russian Countryside: Two Views**

'News of the revolutionary uprising of October 25, 1917, reached the village the following day and was greeted with enthusiasm; to the peasants it meant free land and an end to the war. ...The day the news arrived, the landowner's manor house was looted, his stock farms were "requisitioned" and his vast orchard was cut down and sold to the peasants for wood; all his far buildings were torn down and left in ruins while the land was distributed among the peasants who were prepared to live the new Soviet life'.

From: Fedor Belov, *The History of a Soviet Collective Farm*

A member of a landowning family wrote to a relative about what happened at the estate:

'The "coup" happened quite painlessly, quietly and peacefully. ...The first days were unbearable.. Mikhail Mikhailovich [the estate owner] was calm...The girls also...I must say the chairman behaves correctly and even politely. We were left two cows and two horses. The servants tell them all the time not to bother us. "Let them live. We vouch for their safety and property. We want them treated as humanely as possible...."

...There are rumours that several villages are trying to evict the committees and return the estate to Mikhail Mikhailovich. I don't know if this will happen, or if it's good for us. But we rejoice that there is a conscience in our people...'

From: Serge Schmemmann, *Echoes of a Native Land. Two Centuries of a Russian Village (1997)*.

**4.1 The Civil War**

When the Bolsheviks ordered land redistribution, the Russian army began to break up. Soldiers, mostly peasants, wished to go home for the redistribution and deserted. Non-Bolshevik socialists, liberals and supporters of autocracy condemned the Bolshevik uprising. Their leaders moved to south Russia and organised troops to fight the Bolsheviks (the 'reds'). During 1918 and 1919, the 'greens' (Socialist Revolutionaries) and 'whites' (pro-Tsarists) controlled most of the Russian empire. They were backed by French, American, British and Japanese troops – all those forces who were worried at the growth of socialism in Russia. As these troops and the Bolsheviks fought a civil war, looting, banditry and famine became common.

Supporters of private property among 'whites' took harsh steps with peasants who had seized land. Such actions led to the loss of popular support for the non-Bolsheviks. By January 1920, the Bolsheviks controlled most of the former Russian empire. They succeeded due

**Activity**

Read the two views on the revolution in the countryside. Imagine yourself to be a witness to the events. Write a short account from the standpoint of:

- an owner of an estate
- a small peasant
- a journalist

to cooperation with non-Russian nationalities and Muslim *jadidists*. Cooperation did not work where Russian colonists themselves turned Bolshevik. In Khiva, in Central Asia, Bolshevik colonists brutally massacred local nationalists in the name of defending socialism. In this situation, many were confused about what the Bolshevik government represented.

Partly to remedy this, most non-Russian nationalities were given political **autonomy** in the Soviet Union (USSR) – the state the Bolsheviks created from the Russian empire in December 1922. But since this was combined with unpopular policies that the Bolsheviks forced the local government to follow – like the harsh discouragement of **nomadism** – attempts to win over different nationalities were only partly successful.

### New words

Autonomy – The right to govern themselves

Nomadism – Lifestyle of those who do not live in one place but move from area to area to earn their living

## Activity

Why did people in Central Asia respond to the Russian Revolution in different ways?

### Source B

#### Central Asia of the October Revolution: Two Views

M.N.Roy was an Indian revolutionary, a founder of the Mexican Communist Party and prominent Comintern leader in India, China and Europe. He was in Central Asia at the time of the civil war in the 1920s. He wrote:

'The chieftain was a benevolent old man; his attendant ... a youth who ... spoke Russian ... He had heard of the Revolution, which had overthrown the Tsar and driven away the Generals who conquered the homeland of the Kirgiz. So, the Revolution meant that the Kirgiz were masters of their home again. "Long Live the Revolution" shouted the Kirgiz youth who seemed to be a born Bolshevik. The whole tribe joined.'

M.N.Roy, *Memoirs* (1964).

'The Kirghiz welcomed the first revolution (ie February Revolution) with joy and the second revolution with consternation and terror ... [This] first revolution freed them from the oppression of the Tsarist regime and strengthened their hope that ... autonomy would be realised. The second revolution (October Revolution) was accompanied by violence, pillage, taxes and the establishment of dictatorial power ... Once a small group of Tsarist bureaucrats oppressed the Kirghiz. Now the same group of people ... perpetuate the same regime ...'

*Kazakh leader in 1919*, quoted in Alexander Bennigsen and Chantal Quelquejay, *Les Mouvements Nationaux chez les Musulmans de Russie*, (1960).

Source

## 4.2 Making a Socialist Society

During the civil war, the Bolsheviks kept industries and banks nationalised. They permitted peasants to cultivate the land that had been socialised. Bolsheviks used confiscated land to demonstrate what collective work could be.

A process of centralised planning was introduced. Officials assessed how the economy could work and set targets for a five-year period. On this basis they made the Five Year Plans. The government fixed all prices to promote industrial growth during the first two 'Plans'

### Box 4

#### Socialist Cultivation in a Village in the Ukraine

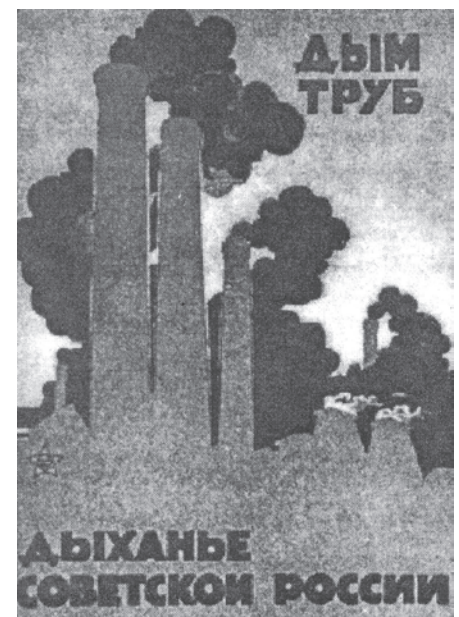
'A commune was set up using two [confiscated] farms as a base. The commune consisted of thirteen families with a total of seventy persons ... The farm tools taken from the ... farms were turned over to the commune ... The members ate in a communal dining hall and income was divided in accordance with the principles of "cooperative communism". The entire proceeds of the members' labor, as well as all dwellings and facilities belonging to the commune were shared by the commune members.'

Fedor Belov, *The History of a Soviet Collective Farm (1955)*.

(1927-1932 and 1933-1938). Centralised planning led to economic growth. Industrial production increased (between 1929 and 1933 by 100 per cent in the case of oil, coal and steel). New factory cities came into being.

However, rapid construction led to poor working conditions. In the city of Magnitogorsk, the construction of a steel plant was achieved in three years. Workers lived hard lives and the result was 550 stoppages of work in the first year alone. In living quarters, 'in the wintertime, at 40 degrees below, people had to climb down from the fourth floor and dash across the street in order to go to the toilet'.

An extended schooling system developed, and arrangements were made for factory workers and peasants to enter universities. Crèches were established in factories for the children of women workers. Cheap public health care was provided. Model living quarters were set up for workers. The effect of all this was uneven, though, since government resources were limited.



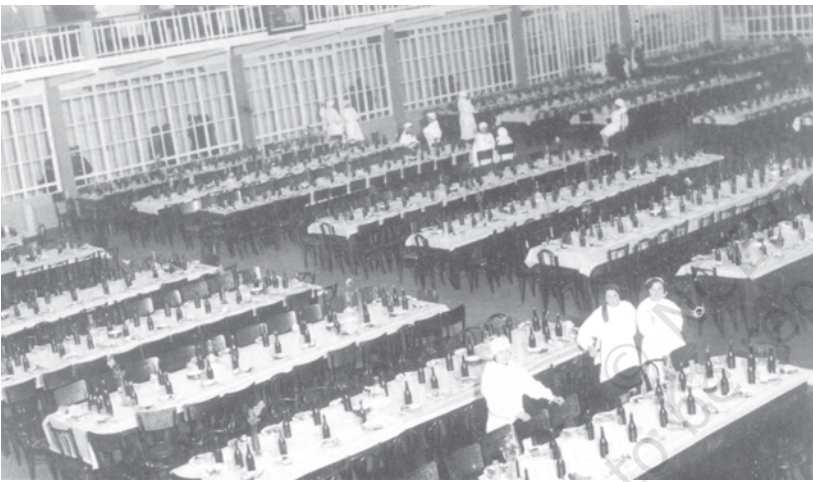
**Fig. 14 – Factories came to be seen as a symbol of socialism.**  
This poster states: 'The smoke from the chimneys is the breathing of Soviet Russia.'



**Fig. 15 – Children at school in Soviet Russia in the 1930s.**  
They are studying the Soviet economy.



**Fig. 16 – A child in Magnitogorsk during the First Five Year Plan.**  
He is working for Soviet Russia.



**Fig. 17 – Factory dining hall in the 1930s.**

**Source C**

**Dreams and Realities of a Soviet Childhood in 1933**

Dear grandfather Kalinin ...

My family is large, there are four children. We don't have a father – he died, fighting for the worker's cause, and my mother ... is ailing ... I want to study very much, but I cannot go to school. I had some old boots, but they are completely torn and no one can mend them. My mother is sick, we have no money and no bread, but I want to study very much. ...there stands before us the task of studying, studying and studying. That is what Vladimir Ilich Lenin said. But I have to stop going to school. We have no relatives and there is no one to help us, so I have to go to work in a factory, to prevent the family from starving. Dear grandfather, I am 13, I study well and have no bad reports. I am in Class 5 ...

Letter of 1933 from a 13-year-old worker to Kalinin, Soviet President

From: V. Sokolov (ed), *Obshchestvo I Vlast, v 1930-ye gody* (Moscow, 1997).

Source

### 4.3 Stalinism and Collectivisation



The period of the early Planned Economy was linked to the disasters of the collectivisation of agriculture. By 1927-1928, the towns in Soviet Russia were facing an acute problem of grain supplies. The government fixed prices at which grain must be sold, but the peasants refused to sell their grain to government buyers at these prices.

Stalin, who headed the party after the death of Lenin, introduced firm emergency measures. He believed that rich peasants and traders in the countryside were holding stocks in the hope of higher prices. Speculation had to be stopped and supplies confiscated.

In 1928, Party members toured the grain-producing areas, supervising enforced grain collections, and raiding 'kulaks' – the name for well-to-do peasants. As shortages continued, the decision was taken to collectivise farms. It was argued that grain shortages were partly due to the small size of holdings. After 1917, land had been given over to peasants. These small-sized peasant farms could not be modernised. To develop modern farms, and run them along industrial lines with machinery, it was necessary to 'eliminate kulaks', take away land from peasants, and establish state-controlled large farms.

What followed was Stalin's collectivisation programme. From 1929, the Party forced all peasants to cultivate in collective farms (*kolkhozy*). The bulk of land and implements were transferred to the ownership of collective farms. Peasants worked on the land, and the *kolkhoz* profit was shared. Enraged peasants resisted the authorities and destroyed their livestock. Between 1929 and 1931, the number of cattle fell by one-third. Those who resisted collectivisation were severely punished. Many were **deported** and **exiled**. As they resisted collectivisation, peasants argued that they were not rich and they were not against socialism. They merely did not want to work in collective farms for a variety of reasons. Stalin's government allowed some independent cultivation, but treated such cultivators unsympathetically.

In spite of collectivisation, production did not increase immediately. In fact, the bad harvests of 1930-1933 led to one of most devastating famines in Soviet history when over 4 million died.

#### New words

Deported – Forcibly removed from one's own country.

Exiled – Forced to live away from one's own country.



**Fig. 18 – A poster during collectivisation. It states: 'We shall strike at the kulak working for the decrease in cultivation.'**



**Fig. 19 – Peasant women being gathered to work in the large collective farms.**

## Source D

### Official view of the opposition to collectivisation and the government response

'From the second half of February of this year, in various regions of the Ukraine ... mass insurrections of the peasantry have taken place, caused by distortions of the Party's line by a section of the lower ranks of the Party and the Soviet apparatus in the course of the introduction of collectivisation and preparatory work for the spring harvest.

Within a short time, large scale activities from the above-mentioned regions carried over into neighbouring areas – and the most aggressive insurrections have taken place near the border.

The greater part of the peasant insurrections have been linked with outright demands for the return of collectivised stocks of grain, livestock and tools ...

Between 1st February and 15th March, 25,000 have been arrested ... 656 have been executed, 3673 have been imprisoned in labour camps and 5580 exiled ...'

Report of K.M. Karlson, President of the State Police Administration of the Ukraine to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, on 19 March 1930.

From: V. Sokolov (ed), *Obshchestvo I Vlast, v 1930-ye gody*

Source

Many within the Party criticised the confusion in industrial production under the Planned Economy and the consequences of collectivisation. Stalin and his sympathisers charged these critics with conspiracy against socialism. Accusations were made throughout the country, and by 1939, over 2 million were in prisons or labour camps. Most were innocent of the crimes, but no one spoke for them. A large number were forced to make false confessions under torture and were executed – several among them were talented professionals.

## Source E

This is a letter written by a peasant who did not want to join the collective farm.

To the newspaper *Krestianskaia Gazeta* (Peasant Newspaper)

'... I am a natural working peasant born in 1879 ... there are 6 members in my family, my wife was born in 1881, my son is 16, two daughters 19, all three go to school, my sister is 71. From 1932, heavy taxes have been levied on me that I have found impossible. From 1935, local authorities have increased the taxes on me ... and I was unable to handle them and all my property was registered: my horse, cow, calf, sheep with lambs, all my implements, furniture and my reserve of wood for repair of buildings and they sold the lot for the taxes. In 1936, they sold two of my buildings ... the kolkhoz bought them. In 1937, of two huts I had, one was sold and one was confiscated ...'

Afanasii Dedorovich Frebenev, an independent cultivator.

From: V. Sokolov (ed), *Obshchestvo I Vlast, v 1930-ye gody*.

Source

## 5 The Global Influence of the Russian Revolution and the USSR

Existing socialist parties in Europe did not wholly approve of the way the Bolsheviks took power – and kept it. However, the possibility of a workers' state fired people's imagination across the world. In many countries, communist parties were formed – like the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Bolsheviks encouraged colonial peoples to follow their experiment. Many non-Russians from outside the USSR participated in the Conference of the Peoples of the East (1920) and the Bolshevik-founded Comintern (an international union of pro-Bolshevik socialist parties). Some received education in the USSR's Communist University of the Workers of the East. By the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, the USSR had given socialism a global face and world stature.

Yet by the 1950s it was acknowledged within the country that the style of government in the USSR was not in keeping with the ideals of the Russian Revolution. In the world socialist movement too it was recognised that all was not well in the Soviet Union. A backward country had become a great power. Its industries and agriculture had developed and the poor were being fed. But it had denied the essential freedoms to its citizens and carried out its developmental projects through repressive policies. By the end of the twentieth century, the international reputation of the USSR as a socialist country had declined though it was recognised that socialist ideals still enjoyed respect among its people. But in each country the ideas of socialism were rethought in a variety of different ways.

### Box 5

#### Writing about the Russian Revolution in India

Among those the Russian Revolution inspired were many Indians. Several attended the Communist University. By the mid-1920s the Communist Party was formed in India. Its members kept in touch with the Soviet Communist Party. Important Indian political and cultural figures took an interest in the Soviet experiment and visited Russia, among them Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote about Soviet Socialism. In India, writings gave impressions of Soviet Russia. In Hindi, R.S. Avasthi wrote in 1920-21 *Russian Revolution, Lenin, His Life and His Thoughts*, and later *The Red Revolution*. S.D. Vidyalankar wrote *The Rebirth of Russia* and *The Soviet State of Russia*. There was much that was written in Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu.



**Fig. 20 – Special Issue on Lenin of the Indo-Soviet Journal.** Indian communists mobilised support for the USSR during the Second World War.



## Source F

### **An Indian arrives in Soviet Russia in 1920**

'For the first time in our lives, we were seeing Europeans mixing freely with Asians. On seeing the Russians mingling freely with the rest of the people of the country we were convinced that we had come to a land of real equality.

We saw freedom in its true light. In spite of their poverty, imposed by the counter-revolutionaries and the imperialists, the people were more jovial and satisfied than ever before. The revolution had instilled confidence and fearlessness in them. The real brotherhood of mankind would be seen here among these people of fifty different nationalities. No barriers of caste or religion hindered them from mixing freely with one another. Every soul was transformed into an orator. One could see a worker, a peasant or a soldier haranguing like a professional lecturer.'

Shaukat Usmani, *Historic Trips of a Revolutionary*.

## Source G

### **Rabindranath Tagore wrote from Russia in 1930**

'Moscow appears much less clean than the other European capitals. None of those hurrying along the streets look smart. The whole place belongs to the workers ... Here the masses have not in the least been put in the shade by the gentlemen ... those who lived in the background for ages have come forward in the open today ... I thought of the peasants and workers in my own country. It all seemed like the work of the Genii in the Arabian Nights. [here] only a decade ago they were as illiterate, helpless and hungry as our own masses ... Who could be more astonished than an unfortunate Indian like myself to see how they had removed the mountain of ignorance and helplessness in these few years'.

## Activity

Compare the passages written by Shaukat Usmani and Rabindranath Tagore. Read them in relation to Sources C, D and E.

- What did Indians find impressive about the USSR ?
- What did the writers fail to notice?

## Activities

1. Imagine that you are a striking worker in 1905 who is being tried in court for your act of rebellion. Draft the speech you would make in your defence. Act out your speech for your class.
2. Write the headline and a short news item about the uprising of 24 October 1917 for each of the following newspapers
  - a Conservative paper in France
  - a Radical newspaper in Britain
  - a Bolshevik newspaper in Russia
3. Imagine that you are a middle-level wheat farmer in Russia after collectivisation. You have decided to write a letter to Stalin explaining your objections to collectivisation. What would you write about the conditions of your life? What do you think would be Stalin's response to such a farmer?

Activities

## Questions

1. What were the social, economic and political conditions in Russia before 1905?
2. In what ways was the working population in Russia different from other countries in Europe, before 1917?
3. Why did the Tsarist autocracy collapse in 1917?
4. Make two lists: one with the main events and the effects of the February Revolution and the other with the main events and effects of the October Revolution. Write a paragraph on who was involved in each, who were the leaders and what was the impact of each on Soviet history.
5. What were the main changes brought about by the Bolsheviks immediately after the October Revolution?
6. Write a few lines to show what you know about:
  - kulaks
  - the Duma
  - women workers between 1900 and 1930
  - the Liberals
  - Stalin's collectivisation programme.



# Nazism and the Rise of Hitler



0966CH03

In the spring of 1945, a little eleven-year-old German boy called Helmuth was lying in bed when he overheard his parents discussing something in serious tones. His father, a prominent physician, deliberated with his wife whether the time had come to kill the entire family, or if he should commit suicide alone. His father spoke about his fear of revenge, saying, 'Now the **Allies** will do to us what we did to the crippled and Jews.' The next day, he took Helmuth to the woods, where they spent their last happy time together, singing old children's songs. Later, Helmuth's father shot himself in his office. Helmuth remembers that he saw his father's bloody uniform being burnt in the family fireplace. So traumatised was he by what he had overheard and what had happened, that he reacted by refusing to eat at home for the following nine years! He was afraid that his mother might poison him.

Although Helmuth may not have realised all that it meant, his father had been a Nazi and a supporter of Adolf Hitler. Many of you will know something about the Nazis and Hitler. You probably know of Hitler's determination to make Germany into a mighty power and his ambition of conquering all of Europe. You may have heard that he killed Jews. But Nazism was not one or two isolated acts. It was a system, a structure of ideas about the world and politics. Let us try and understand what Nazism was all about. Let us see why Helmuth's father killed himself and what the basis of his fear was.

In May 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies. Anticipating what was coming, Hitler, his propaganda minister Goebbels and his entire family committed suicide collectively in his Berlin bunker in April. At the end of the war, an International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg was set up to prosecute Nazi war criminals for Crimes against Peace, for War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity. Germany's conduct during the war, especially those actions which



*Fig. 1 – Hitler (centre) and Goebbels (left) leaving after an official meeting, 1932.*

## New words

**Allies** – The Allied Powers were initially led by the UK and France. In 1941 they were joined by the USSR and USA. They fought against the Axis Powers, namely Germany, Italy and Japan.

came to be called Crimes Against Humanity, raised serious moral and ethical questions and invited worldwide condemnation. What were these acts?

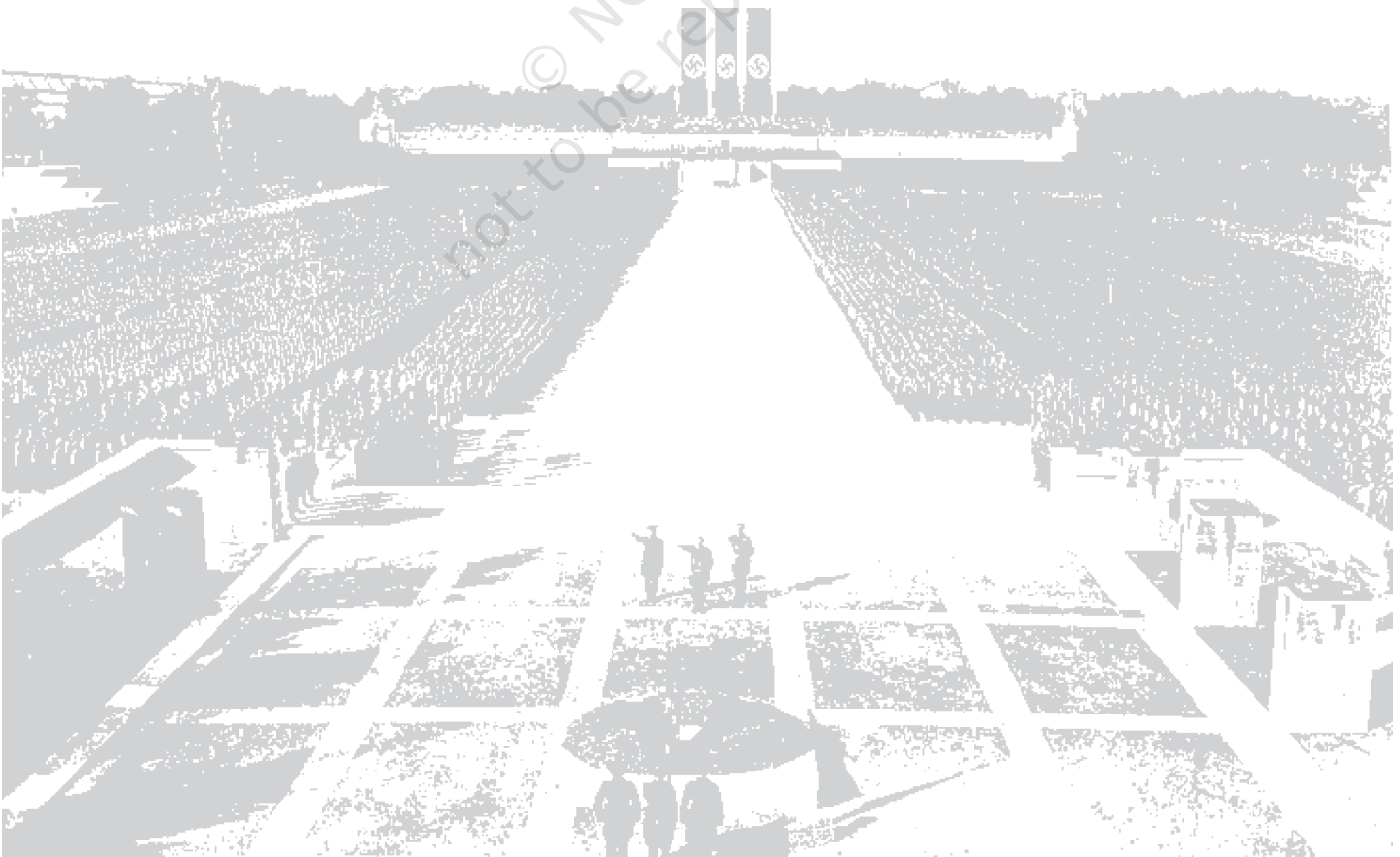
Under the shadow of the Second World War, Germany had waged a **genocidal** war, which resulted in the mass murder of selected groups of innocent civilians of Europe. The number of people killed included 6 million Jews, 200,000 Gypsies, 1 million Polish civilians, 70,000 Germans who were considered mentally and physically disabled, besides innumerable political opponents. Nazis devised an unprecedented means of killing people, that is, by gassing them in various killing centres like Auschwitz. The Nuremberg Tribunal sentenced only eleven leading Nazis to death. Many others were imprisoned for life. The retribution did come, yet the punishment of the Nazis was far short of the brutality and extent of their crimes. The Allies did not want to be as harsh on defeated Germany as they had been after the First World War.

Everyone came to feel that the rise of Nazi Germany could be partly traced back to the German experience at the end of the First World War.

What was this experience?

#### New words

Genocidal – Killing on large scale leading to destruction of large sections of people



# 1 Birth of the Weimar Republic

Germany, a powerful empire in the early years of the twentieth century, fought the First World War (1914-1918) alongside the Austrian empire and against the Allies (England, France and Russia.) All joined the war enthusiastically hoping to gain from a quick victory. Little did they realise that the war would stretch on, eventually draining Europe of all its resources. Germany made initial gains by occupying France and Belgium. However the Allies, strengthened by the US entry in 1917, won, defeating Germany and the Central Powers in November 1918.

The defeat of Imperial Germany and the abdication of the emperor gave an opportunity to parliamentary parties to recast German polity. A National Assembly met at Weimar and established a democratic constitution with a federal structure. Deputies were now elected to the German Parliament or Reichstag, on the basis of equal and universal votes cast by all adults including women.

This republic, however, was not received well by its own people largely because of the terms it was forced to accept after Germany's defeat at the end of the First World War. The peace treaty at



*Fig.2 – Germany after the Versailles Treaty. You can see in this map the parts of the territory that Germany lost after the treaty.*

Versailles with the Allies was a harsh and humiliating peace. Germany lost its overseas colonies, a tenth of its population, 13 per cent of its territories, 75 per cent of its iron and 26 per cent of its coal to France, Poland, Denmark and Lithuania. The Allied Powers demilitarised Germany to weaken its power. The War Guilt Clause held Germany responsible for the war and damages the Allied countries suffered. Germany was forced to pay compensation amounting to £6 billion. The Allied armies also occupied the resource-rich Rhineland for much of the 1920s. Many Germans held the new Weimar Republic responsible for not only the defeat in the war but the disgrace at Versailles.

### 1.1 The Effects of the War

The war had a devastating impact on the entire continent both psychologically and financially. From a continent of creditors, Europe turned into one of debtors. Unfortunately, the infant Weimar Republic was being made to pay for the sins of the old empire. The republic carried the burden of war guilt and national humiliation and was financially crippled by being forced to pay compensation. Those who supported the Weimar Republic, mainly Socialists, Catholics and Democrats, became easy targets of attack in the conservative nationalist circles. They were mockingly called the 'November criminals'. This mindset had a major impact on the political developments of the early 1930s, as we will soon see.

The First World War left a deep imprint on European society and polity. Soldiers came to be placed above civilians. Politicians and publicists laid great stress on the need for men to be aggressive, strong and masculine. The media glorified trench life. The truth, however, was that soldiers lived miserable lives in these trenches, trapped with rats feeding on corpses. They faced poisonous gas and enemy shelling, and witnessed their ranks reduce rapidly. Aggressive war propaganda and national honour occupied centre stage in the public sphere, while popular support grew for conservative dictatorships that had recently come into being. Democracy was indeed a young and fragile idea, which could not survive the instabilities of interwar Europe.

### 1.2 Political Radicalism and Economic Crises

The birth of the Weimar Republic coincided with the revolutionary uprising of the Spartacist League on the pattern of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Soviets of workers and sailors were established



**Fig.3 – This is a rally organised by the radical group known as the Spartacist League.**  
*In the winter of 1918-1919 the streets of Berlin were taken over by the people. Political demonstrations became common.*

in many cities. The political atmosphere in Berlin was charged with demands for Soviet-style governance. Those opposed to this – such as the socialists, Democrats and Catholics – met in Weimar to give shape to the democratic republic. The Weimar Republic crushed the uprising with the help of a war veterans organisation called Free Corps. The anguished Spartacists later founded the Communist Party of Germany. Communists and Socialists henceforth became irreconcilable enemies and could not make common cause against Hitler. Both revolutionaries and militant nationalists craved for radical solutions.

Political radicalisation was only heightened by the economic crisis of 1923. Germany had fought the war largely on loans and had to pay war **reparations** in gold. This **depleted** gold reserves at a time resources were scarce. In 1923 Germany refused to pay, and the French occupied its leading industrial area, Ruhr, to claim their coal. Germany retaliated with passive resistance and printed paper currency recklessly. With too much printed money in circulation, the value of the German mark fell. In April the US dollar was equal to 24,000 marks, in July 353,000 marks, in August 4,621,000 marks and at

#### New words

- Deplete – Reduce, empty out
- Reparation – Make up for a wrong done



**Fig.4 – Baskets and carts being loaded at a bank in Berlin with paper currency for wage payment, 1923.**  
*The German mark had so little value that vast amounts had to be used even for small payments.*

98,860,000 marks by December, the figure had run into trillions. As the value of the mark collapsed, prices of goods soared. The image of Germans carrying cartloads of currency notes to buy a loaf of bread was widely publicised evoking worldwide sympathy. This crisis came to be known as hyperinflation, a situation when prices rise phenomenally high.

Eventually, the Americans intervened and bailed Germany out of the crisis by introducing the Dawes Plan, which reworked the terms of reparation to ease the financial burden on Germans.

### 1.3 The Years of Depression

The years between 1924 and 1928 saw some stability. Yet this was built on sand. German investments and industrial recovery were totally dependent on short-term loans, largely from the USA. This support was withdrawn when the **Wall Street Exchange** crashed in 1929. Fearing a fall in prices, people made frantic efforts to sell their shares. On one single day, 24 October, 13 million shares were sold. This was the start of the Great Economic Depression. Over the next three years, between 1929 and 1932, the national income of the USA fell by half. Factories shut down, exports fell, farmers were badly hit and speculators withdrew their money from the market. The effects of this recession in the US economy were felt worldwide.

The German economy was the worst hit by the economic crisis. By 1932, industrial production was reduced to 40 per cent of the 1929 level. Workers lost their jobs or were paid reduced wages. The number of unemployed touched an unprecedented 6 million. On the streets of Germany you could see men with placards around their necks saying, 'Willing to do any work'. Unemployed youths played cards or simply sat at street corners, or desperately queued up at the local employment exchange. As jobs disappeared, the youth took to criminal activities and total despair became commonplace.

The economic crisis created deep anxieties and fears in people. The middle classes, especially salaried employees and pensioners, saw their savings diminish when the currency lost its value. Small businessmen, the self-employed and retailers suffered as their

#### New words

Wall Street Exchange – The name of the world's biggest stock exchange located in the USA.



*Fig.5 – Homeless men queuing up for a night's shelter, 1923.*



*Fig.6 – Sleeping on the line. During the Great Depression the unemployed could not hope for either wage or shelter. On winter nights when they wanted a shelter over their head, they had to pay to sleep like this.*



businesses got ruined. These sections of society were filled with the fear of **proletarianisation**, an anxiety of being reduced to the ranks of the working class, or worse still, the unemployed. Only organised workers could manage to keep their heads above water, but unemployment weakened their bargaining power. Big business was in crisis. The large mass of peasantry was affected by a sharp fall in agricultural prices and women, unable to fill their children's stomachs, were filled with a sense of deep despair.

Politically too the Weimar Republic was fragile. The Weimar constitution had some inherent defects, which made it unstable and vulnerable to dictatorship. One was proportional representation. This made achieving a majority by any one party a near impossible task, leading to a rule by coalitions. Another defect was Article 48, which gave the President the powers to impose emergency, suspend civil rights and rule by decree. Within its short life, the Weimar Republic saw twenty different cabinets lasting on an average 239 days, and a liberal use of Article 48. Yet the crisis could not be managed. People lost confidence in the democratic parliamentary system, which seemed to offer no solutions.

#### New words

Proletarianisation – To become impoverished to the level of working classes.



## 2 Hitler's Rise to Power

This crisis in the economy, polity and society formed the background to Hitler's rise to power. Born in 1889 in Austria, Hitler spent his youth in poverty. When the First World War broke out, he enrolled for the army, acted as a messenger in the front, became a corporal, and earned medals for bravery. The German defeat horrified him and the Versailles Treaty made him furious. In 1919, he joined a small group called the German Workers' Party. He subsequently took over the organisation and renamed it the National Socialist German Workers' Party. This party came to be known as the Nazi Party.

In 1923, Hitler planned to seize control of Bavaria, march to Berlin and capture power. He failed, was arrested, tried for treason, and later released. The Nazis could not effectively mobilise popular support till the early 1930s. It was during the Great Depression that Nazism became a mass movement. As we have seen, after 1929, banks collapsed and businesses shut down, workers lost their jobs and the middle classes were threatened with destitution. In such a situation Nazi **propaganda** stirred hopes of a better future. In 1928, the Nazi Party got no more than 2.6 per cent votes in the Reichstag – the German parliament. By 1932, it had become the largest party with 37 per cent votes.



*Fig. 7 – Hitler being greeted at the Party Congress in Nuremberg in 1938.*

### New words

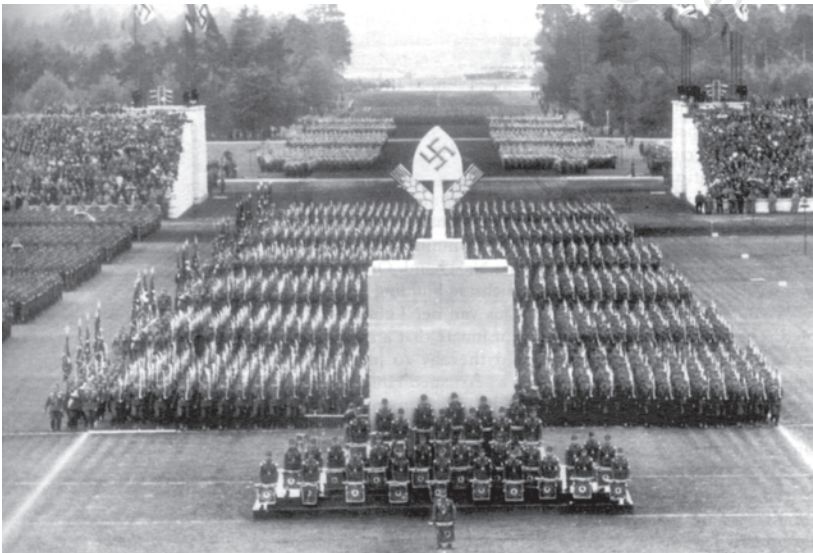
Propaganda – Specific type of message directly aimed at influencing the opinion of people (through the use of posters, films, speeches, etc.)



**Fig.8 – Nuremberg Rally, 1936.**  
*Rallies like this were held every year. An important aspect of these was the demonstration of Nazi power as various organisations paraded past Hitler, swore loyalty and listened to his speeches.*

Hitler was a powerful speaker. His passion and his words moved people. He promised to build a strong nation, undo the injustice of the Versailles Treaty and restore the dignity of the German people. He promised employment for those looking for work, and a secure future for the youth. He promised to weed out all foreign influences and resist all foreign ‘conspiracies’ against Germany.

Hitler devised a new style of politics. He understood the significance of rituals and spectacle in mass mobilisation. Nazis held massive rallies



**Fig.9 – Hitler addressing SA and SS columns.**  
*Notice the sweeping and straight columns of people. Such photographs were intended to show the grandeur and power of the Nazi movement*

and public meetings to demonstrate the support for Hitler and instil a sense of unity among the people. The Red banners with the Swastika, the Nazi salute, and the ritualised rounds of applause after the speeches were all part of this spectacle of power.

Nazi propaganda skilfully projected Hitler as a messiah, a saviour, as someone who had arrived to deliver people from their distress. It is an image that captured the imagination of a people whose sense of dignity and pride had been shattered, and who were living in a time of acute economic and political crises.

## 2.1 The Destruction of Democracy

On 30 January 1933, President Hindenburg offered the Chancellorship, the highest position in the cabinet of ministers, to Hitler. By now the Nazis had managed to rally the conservatives to their cause. Having acquired power, Hitler set out to dismantle the structures of democratic rule. A mysterious fire that broke out in the German Parliament building in February facilitated his move. The Fire Decree of 28 February 1933 indefinitely suspended civic rights like freedom of speech, press and assembly that had been guaranteed by the Weimar constitution. Then he turned on his arch-enemies, the Communists, most of whom were hurriedly packed off to the newly established **concentration camps**. The repression of the Communists was severe. Out of the surviving 6,808 arrest files of Duesseldorf, a small city of half a million population, 1,440 were those of Communists alone. They were, however, only one among the 52 types of victims persecuted by the Nazis across the country.

On 3 March 1933, the famous Enabling Act was passed. This Act established dictatorship in Germany. It gave Hitler all powers to sideline Parliament and rule by decree. All political parties and trade unions were banned except for the Nazi Party and its affiliates. The state established complete control over the economy, media, army and judiciary.

Special surveillance and security forces were created to control and order society in ways that the Nazis wanted. Apart from the already existing regular police in green uniform and the SA or the Storm Troopers, these included the Gestapo (secret state police), the SS (the protection squads), criminal police and the Security Service (SD). It was the extra-constitutional powers of these newly organised forces that gave the Nazi state its reputation as the most dreaded criminal state. People could now be detained in Gestapo torture chambers, rounded up and sent to concentration camps, deported at will or arrested without any legal procedures. The police forces acquired powers to rule with impunity.

### New words

Concentration camp – A camp where people were isolated and detained without due process of law. Typically, it was surrounded by electrified barbed wire fences.

## 2.2 Reconstruction

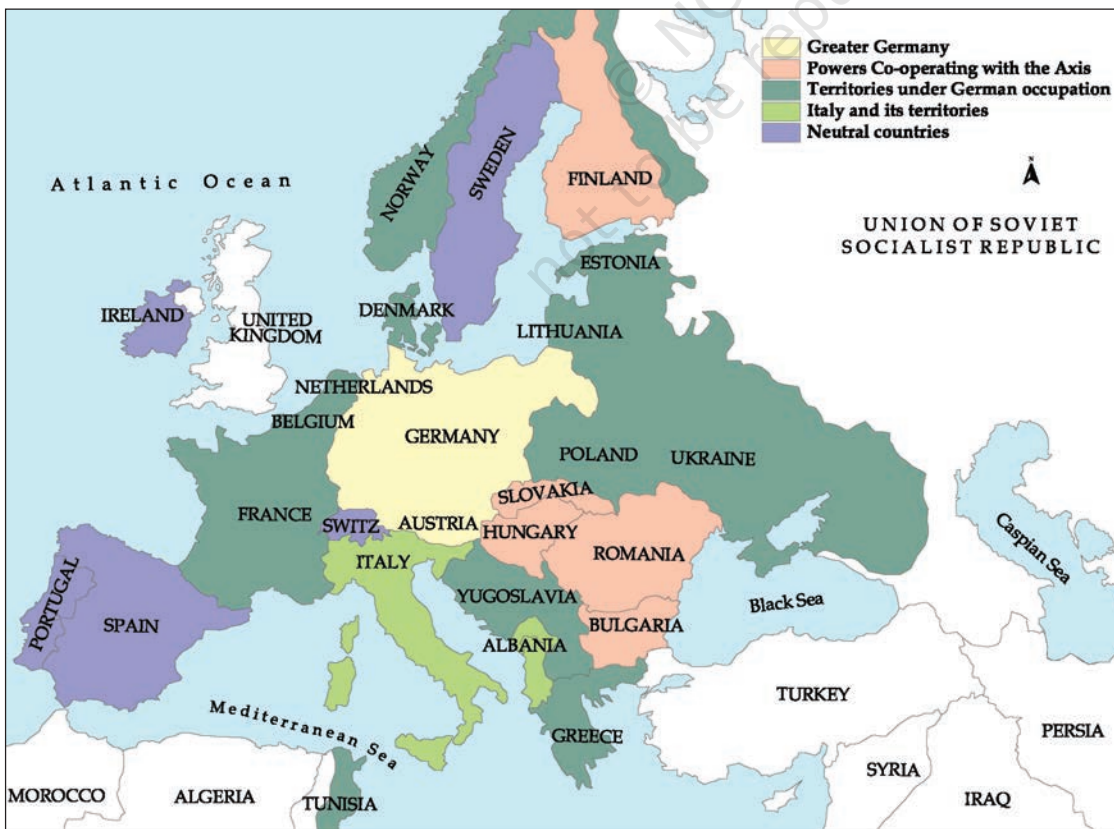
Hitler assigned the responsibility of economic recovery to the economist Hjalmar Schacht who aimed at full production and full employment through a state-funded work-creation programme. This project produced the famous German superhighways and the people's car, the Volkswagen.

In foreign policy also Hitler acquired quick successes. He pulled out of the League of Nations in 1933, reoccupied the Rhineland in 1936, and integrated Austria and Germany in 1938 under the slogan, *One people, One empire, and One leader*. He then went on to wrest German-speaking Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia, and gobbled up the entire country. In all of this he had the unspoken support of England, which had considered the Versailles verdict too harsh. These quick successes at home and abroad seemed to reverse the destiny of the country.

Hitler did not stop here. Schacht had advised Hitler against investing hugely in rearmament as the state still ran on deficit financing. Cautious people, however, had no place in Nazi Germany. Schacht had to leave. Hitler chose war as the way out of the approaching



**Fig. 10 – The poster announces: ‘Your volkswagen’.**  
Such posters suggested that owning a car was no longer just a dream for an ordinary worker.



**Fig. 11 – Expansion of Nazi power: Europe 1942.**

economic crisis. Resources were to be accumulated through expansion of territory. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. This started a war with France and England. In September 1940, a Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan, strengthening Hitler's claim to international power. Puppet regimes, supportive of Nazi Germany, were installed in a large part of Europe. By the end of 1940, Hitler was at the pinnacle of his power.

Hitler now moved to achieve his long-term aim of conquering Eastern Europe. He wanted to ensure food supplies and living space for Germans. He attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941. In this historic blunder Hitler exposed the German western front to British aerial bombing and the eastern front to the powerful Soviet armies. The Soviet Red Army inflicted a crushing and humiliating defeat on Germany at Stalingrad. After this the Soviet Red Army hounded out the retreating German soldiers until they reached the heart of Berlin, establishing Soviet hegemony over the entire Eastern Europe for half a century thereafter.

Meanwhile, the USA had resisted involvement in the war. It was unwilling to once again face all the economic problems that the First World War had caused. But it could not stay out of the war for long. Japan was expanding its power in the east. It had occupied French Indo-China and was planning attacks on US naval bases in the Pacific. When Japan extended its support to Hitler and bombed the US base at Pearl Harbor, the US entered the Second World War. The war ended in May 1945 with Hitler's defeat and the US dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima in Japan.

From this brief account of what happened in the Second World War, we now return to Helmuth and his father's story, a story of Nazi criminality during the war.

**Fig. 12 – Newspapers in India track the developments in Germany.**



### 3 The Nazi Worldview

The crimes that Nazis committed were linked to a system of belief and a set of practices.

Nazi ideology was synonymous with Hitler's worldview. According to this there was no equality between people, but only a racial hierarchy. In this view blond, blue-eyed, Nordic German Aryans were at the top, while Jews were located at the lowest rung. They came to be regarded as an anti-race, the arch-enemies of the Aryans. All other coloured people were placed in between depending upon their external features. Hitler's racism borrowed from thinkers like Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Darwin was a natural scientist who tried to explain the creation of plants and animals through the concept of evolution and natural selection. Herbert Spencer later added the idea of survival of the fittest. According to this idea, only those species survived on earth that could adapt themselves to changing climatic conditions. We should bear in mind that Darwin never advocated human intervention in what he thought was a purely natural process of selection. However, his ideas were used by racist thinkers and politicians to justify imperial rule over conquered peoples. The Nazi argument was simple: the strongest race would survive and the weak ones would perish. The Aryan race was the finest. It had to retain its purity, become stronger and dominate the world.

The other aspect of Hitler's ideology related to the geopolitical concept of *Lebensraum*, or living space. He believed that new territories had to be acquired for settlement. This would enhance the area of the mother country, while enabling the settlers on new lands to retain an intimate link with the place of their origin. It would also enhance the material resources and power of the German nation.

Hitler intended to extend German boundaries by moving eastwards, to concentrate all Germans geographically in one place. Poland became the laboratory for this experimentation.

#### 3.1 Establishment of the Racial State

Once in power, the Nazis quickly began to implement their dream of creating an exclusive racial community of pure Germans by physically eliminating all those who were seen as 'undesirable' in the

#### Source A

'For this earth is not allotted to anyone nor is it presented to anyone as a gift. It is awarded by providence to people who in their hearts have the courage to conquer it, the strength to preserve it, and the industry to put it to the plough... The primary right of this world is the right to life, so far as one possesses the strength for this. Hence on the basis of this right a vigorous nation will always find ways of adapting its territory to its population size.'

*Hitler, Secret Book, ed. Telford Taylor.*

#### Source B

'In an era when the earth is gradually being divided up among states, some of which embrace almost entire continents, we cannot speak of a world power in connection with a formation whose political mother country is limited to the absurd area of five hundred kilometers.'

*Hitler, Mein Kampf, p. 644.*

### Activity

Read Sources A and B

- What do they tell you about Hitler's imperial ambition?
- What do you think Mahatma Gandhi would have said to Hitler about these ideas?

#### New words

Nordic German Aryans – One branch of those classified as Aryans. They lived in north European countries and had German or related origin.

extended empire. Nazis wanted only a society of ‘pure and healthy Nordic Aryans’. They alone were considered ‘desirable’. Only they were seen as worthy of prospering and multiplying against all others who were classed as ‘undesirable’. This meant that even those Germans who were seen as impure or abnormal had no right to exist. Under the Euthanasia Programme, Helmuth’s father along with other Nazi officials had condemned to death many Germans who were considered mentally or physically unfit.

Jews were not the only community classified as ‘undesirable’. There were others. Many **Gypsies** and blacks living in Nazi Germany were considered as racial ‘inferiors’ who threatened the biological purity of the ‘superior Aryan’ race. They were widely **persecuted**. Even Russians and Poles were considered subhuman, and hence undeserving of any humanity. When Germany occupied Poland and parts of Russia, captured civilians were forced to work as slave labour. Many of them died simply through hard work and starvation.

Jews remained the worst sufferers in Nazi Germany. Nazi hatred of Jews had a precursor in the traditional Christian hostility towards Jews. They had been stereotyped as killers of Christ and **usurers**. Until medieval times Jews were barred from owning land. They survived mainly through trade and moneylending. They lived in separately marked areas called ghettos. They were often persecuted through periodic organised violence, and expulsion from the land. However, Hitler’s hatred of Jews was based on pseudoscientific theories of race, which held that conversion was no solution to ‘the Jewish problem’. It could be solved only through their total elimination.

From 1933 to 1938 the Nazis terrorised, **pauperised** and segregated the Jews, compelling them to leave the country. The next phase, 1939-1945, aimed at concentrating them in certain areas and eventually killing them in gas chambers in Poland.

### 3.2 The Racial Utopia

Under the shadow of war, the Nazis proceeded to realise their murderous, racial ideal. Genocide and war became two sides of the same coin. Occupied Poland was divided up. Much of north-western Poland was annexed to Germany. Poles were forced to leave their homes and properties behind to be occupied by ethnic Germans brought in from occupied Europe. Poles were then herded like



**Fig. 13** – Police escorting gypsies who are being deported to Auschwitz, 1943-1944.

#### New words

**Gypsy** – The groups that were classified as ‘gypsy’ had their own community identity. Sinti and Roma were two such communities.

Many of them traced their origin to India.

**Pauperised** – Reduce to absolute poverty

**Persecution** – Systematic, organised punishment of those belonging to a group or religion

**Usurers** – Moneylenders charging excessive interest; often used as a term of abuse

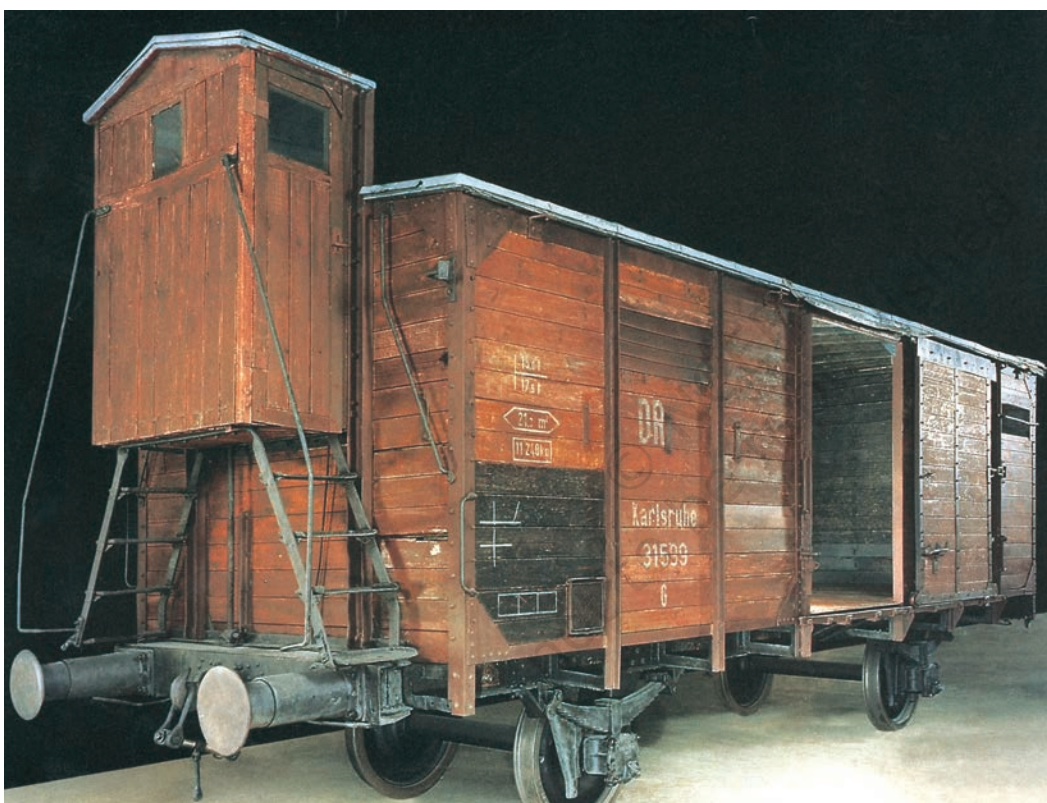


cattle in the other part called the General Government, the destination of all 'undesirables' of the empire. Members of the Polish intelligentsia were murdered in large numbers in order to keep the entire people intellectually and spiritually servile. Polish children who looked like Aryans were forcibly snatched from their mothers and examined by 'race experts'. If they passed the race tests they were raised in German families and if not, they were deposited in orphanages where most perished. With some of the largest ghettos and gas chambers, the General Government also served as the killing fields for the Jews.

## Activity

See the next two pages and write briefly:

- What does citizenship mean to you? Look at Chapters 1 and 3 and write 200 words on how the French Revolution and Nazism defined citizenship.
- What did the Nuremberg Laws mean to the 'undesirables' in Nazi Germany? What other legal measures were taken against them to make them feel unwanted?



**Fig. 14** – This is one of the freight cars used to deport Jews to the death chambers.

# STEPS TO DEATH

## Stage 1: Exclusion 1933–1939

**YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE AMONG US AS CITIZENS**

The Nuremberg Laws of citizenship of September 1935:

1. Only Persons of German or related blood would henceforth be German citizens enjoying the protection of the German empire.
2. Marriages between Jews and Germans were forbidden.
3. Extramarital relations between Jews and Germans became a crime.
4. Jews were forbidden to fly the national flag.

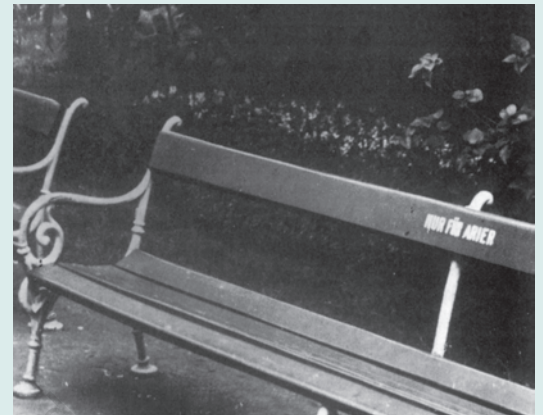
Other legal measures included:

- Boycott of Jewish businesses
- Expulsion from government services
- Forced selling and confiscation of their properties

Besides, Jewish properties were vandalised and looted, houses attacked, synagogues burnt and men arrested in a pogrom in November, 1938, remembered as 'the night of broken glass'



*Fig. 15 – The sign declares that this North Sea bathing resort is free of Jews.*



*Fig. 16 – Park bench announces: 'FOR ARYANS ONLY'*

### New words

Synagogues – Place of worship for people of Jewish faith

## Stage 2: Ghettoisation 1940 – 1944

**YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE AMONG US**

From September 1941, all Jews had to wear a yellow Star of David on their breasts. This identity mark was stamped on their passport, all legal documents and houses. They were kept in Jewish houses in Germany, and in ghettos like Lodz and Warsaw in the east. These became sites of extreme misery and poverty. Jews had to surrender all their wealth before they entered a ghetto. Soon the ghettos were brimming with hunger, starvation and disease due to deprivation and poor hygiene.



*Fig. 17 – 'This is all I have to sell'. Men and women were left with nothing to survive in the ghettos.*

### Stage 3: Annihilation 1941 onwards:

**YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO LIVE**



*Fig.18 – Killed while trying to escape. The concentration camps were enclosed with live wires.*



*Fig.19 – Piles of clothes outside the gas chamber.*

Jews from Jewish houses, concentration camps and ghettos from different parts of Europe were brought to death factories by goods trains. In Poland and elsewhere in the east, most notably Belzek, Auschwitz, Sobibor, Treblinka, Chelmno and Majdanek, they were charred in gas chambers. Mass killings took place within minutes with scientific precision.



*Fig.20 – A Concentration Camp.*



*Fig.21 – A concentration camp. A camera can make a death camp look beautiful.*



*Fig.22 – Shoes taken away from prisoners before the 'Final Solution'.*

## 4 Youth in Nazi Germany

Hitler was fanatically interested in the youth of the country. He felt that a strong Nazi society could be established only by teaching children Nazi ideology. This required a control over the child both inside and outside school.

What happened in schools under Nazism? All schools were ‘cleansed’ and ‘purified’. This meant that teachers who were Jews or seen as ‘politically unreliable’ were dismissed. Children were first segregated: Germans and Jews could not sit together or play together. Subsequently, ‘undesirable children’ – Jews, the physically handicapped, Gypsies – were thrown out of schools. And finally in the 1940s, they were taken to the gas chambers.

‘Good German’ children were subjected to a process of Nazi schooling, a prolonged period of ideological training. School textbooks were rewritten. Racial science was introduced to justify Nazi ideas of race. Stereotypes about Jews were popularised even through maths classes. Children were taught to be loyal and submissive, hate Jews, and worship Hitler. Even the function of sports was to nurture a spirit of violence and aggression among children. Hitler believed that boxing could make children iron hearted, strong and masculine.

Youth organisations were made responsible for educating German youth in the ‘the spirit of National Socialism’. Ten-year-olds had to enter **Jungvolk**. At 14, all boys had to join the Nazi youth organisation – Hitler Youth – where they learnt to worship war, glorify aggression and violence, condemn democracy, and hate Jews, communists, Gypsies and all those categorised as ‘undesirable’. After a period of rigorous ideological and physical training they joined the Labour Service, usually at the age of 18. Then they had to serve in the armed forces and enter one of the Nazi organisations.

The Youth League of the Nazis was founded in 1922. Four years later it was renamed Hitler Youth. To unify the youth movement under Nazi control, all other youth organisations were systematically dissolved and finally banned.

### New words

Jungvolk – Nazi youth groups for children below 14 years of age.



**Fig.23 – Classroom scene depicting a lesson on racial anti-Semitism.**

From *Der Giftpilz (The Poison Mushroom)* by Ernst Hiemer (Nuremberg: der Sturmer, 1938), p.7. Caption reads: ‘The Jewish nose is bent at its point. It looks like the number six.’



**Fig.24 – Jewish teacher and Jewish pupils expelled from school under the jeers of classmates.**

From *Trau keinem jud auf gruner Heid: Ein Bilderbuch fur Gross und Keom (Trust No Jew on the Green Heath: a Picture Book for Big and Little)*, By Elvira Bauer (Nuremberg: Der Sturmer, 1936).

## Activity

If you were a student sitting in one of these classes, how would you have felt towards Jews?

Have you ever thought of the stereotypes of other communities that people around you believe in? How have they acquired them?

**Source: C**

All boys between the ages of six and ten went through a preliminary training in Nazi ideology. At the end of the training they had to take the following oath of loyalty to Hitler:

'In the presence of this blood banner which represents our Fuhrer I swear to devote all my energies and my strength to the saviour of our country, Adolf Hitler. I am willing and ready to give up my life for him, so help me God.'

*From W. Shirer, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*

**Source: D**

Robert Lay, head of the German Labour Front, said:

'We start when the child is three years old. As soon as he even starts to think, he is given a little flag to wave. Then comes school, the Hitler Youth, military service. But when all this is over, we don't let go of anyone. The labour front takes hold of them, and keeps hold until they go to the grave, whether they like it or not.'



**Fig.25** – 'Desirable' children that Hitler wanted to see multiplied.



**Fig.26** – A German-blooded infant with his mother being brought from occupied Europe to Annexed Poland for settlement.



**Fig.27** – Jewish children arriving at a death factory to be gassed

**Activity**

Look at Figs. 23, 24, and 27. Imagine yourself to be a Jew or a Pole in Nazi Germany. It is September 1941, and the law forcing Jews to wear the Star of David has just been declared. Write an account of one day in your life.

**4.1 The Nazi Cult of Motherhood**

Children in Nazi Germany were repeatedly told that women were radically different from men. The fight for equal rights for men and women that had become part of democratic struggles everywhere was wrong and it would destroy society. While boys were taught to be aggressive, masculine and steel hearted, girls were told that they had to become good mothers and rear pure-blooded Aryan children. Girls had to maintain the purity of the race, distance

themselves from Jews, look after the home, and teach their children Nazi values. They had to be the bearers of the Aryan culture and race.

In 1933 Hitler said: 'In my state the mother is the most important citizen.' But in Nazi Germany all mothers were not treated equally. Women who bore racially undesirable children were punished and those who produced racially desirable children were awarded. They were given favoured treatment in hospitals and were also entitled to concessions in shops and on theatre tickets and railway fares. To encourage women to produce many children, Honour Crosses were awarded. A bronze cross was given for four children, silver for six and gold for eight or more.

All 'Aryan' women who deviated from the prescribed code of conduct were publicly condemned, and severely punished. Those who maintained contact with Jews, Poles and Russians were paraded through the town with shaved heads, blackened faces and placards hanging around their necks announcing 'I have sullied the honour of the nation'. Many received jail sentences and lost civic honour as well as their husbands and families for this 'criminal offence'.

#### 4.2. The Art of Propaganda

The Nazi regime used language and media with care, and often to great effect. The terms they coined to describe their various practices are not only deceptive. They are chilling. Nazis never used the words 'kill' or 'murder' in their official communications. Mass killings were termed *special treatment*, *final solution* (for the Jews), *ethanasia* (for the disabled), *selection* and *disinfections*. 'Evacuation' meant deporting people to gas chambers. Do you know what the gas chambers were called? They were labelled 'disinfection-areas', and looked like bathrooms equipped with fake showerheads.

Media was carefully used to win support for the regime and popularise its worldview. Nazi ideas were spread through visual images, films, radio, posters, catchy slogans and leaflets. In posters, groups identified as the 'enemies' of Germans were stereotyped, mocked, abused and described as evil. Socialists and liberals were represented as weak and degenerate. They were attacked as malicious foreign agents. Propaganda films were made to create hatred for Jews. The most infamous film was *The Eternal Jew*. Orthodox Jews were stereotyped and marked. They were shown

#### Source E

In an address to women at the Nuremberg Party Rally, 8 September 1934, Hitler said:

We do not consider it correct for the woman to interfere in the world of the man, in his main sphere. We consider it natural that these two worlds remain distinct...What the man gives in courage on the battlefield, the woman gives in eternal self-sacrifice, in eternal pain and suffering. Every child that women bring to the world is a battle, a battle waged for the existence of her people.

## Source F

Hitler at the Nuremberg Party Rally, 8 September 1934, also said:

'The woman is the most stable element in the preservation of a folk...she has the most unerring sense of everything that is important to not let a race disappear because it is her children who would be affected by all this suffering in the first place...That is why we have integrated the woman in the struggle of the racial community just as nature and providence have determined so.'

with flowing beards wearing kaftans, whereas in reality it was difficult to distinguish German Jews by their outward appearance because they were a highly assimilated community. They were referred to as vermin, rats and pests. Their movements were compared to those of rodents. Nazism worked on the minds of the people, tapped their emotions, and turned their hatred and anger at those marked as 'undesirable'.

The Nazis made equal efforts to appeal to all the different sections of the population. They sought to win their support by suggesting that Nazis alone could solve all their problems.

## Activity

How would you have reacted to Hitler's ideas if you were:

- A Jewish woman
- A non-Jewish German woman



**Fig. 28 – A Nazi poster attacking Jews.**

Caption above reads: 'Money is the God of Jews. In order to earn money he commits the greatest crimes. He does not rest, until he can sit on a big sack of money, until he has become the king of money.'

## Activity

What do you think this poster is trying to depict?

**GERMAN FARMER  
YOU BELONG TO HITLER!**

**WHY?**

The German farmer stands in between two great dangers today:

The one danger American economic system –  
Big Capitalism!

The other is the Marxist economic system of Bolshevism.

Big Capitalism and Bolshevism work hand in hand:  
they are born of Jewish thought  
and serve the master plan of world Jewery.

Who alone can rescue the farmer from these dangers?

**NATIONAL SOCIALISM.**

From: *a Nazi leaflet, 1932.*

**Fig. 29 – The leaflet shows how the Nazis appealed to the peasants.**



**Fig. 30 – A Nazi party poster of the 1920s. It asks workers to vote for Hitler, the frontline soldier.**

## Activity

Look at Figs. 29 and 30 and answer the following:

What do they tell us about Nazi propaganda? How are the Nazis trying to mobilise different sections of the population?

### Some important dates

- August 1, 1914  
First World War begins.
- November 9, 1918  
Germany capitulates, ending the war.
- November 9, 1918  
Proclamation of the Weimar Republic.
- June 28, 1919  
Treaty of Versailles.
- January 30, 1933  
Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.
- September 1, 1939  
Germany invades Poland. Beginning of the Second World War.
- June 22, 1941  
Germany invades the USSR.
- June 23, 1941  
Mass murder of the Jews begins.
- December 8, 1941  
The United States joins Second World War.
- January 27, 1945  
Soviet troops liberate Auschwitz.
- May 8, 1945  
Allied victory in Europe.



## 5 Ordinary People and the Crimes Against Humanity

How did the common people react to Nazism?

Many saw the world through Nazi eyes, and spoke their mind in Nazi language. They felt hatred and anger surge inside them when they saw someone who looked like a Jew. They marked the houses of Jews and reported suspicious neighbours. They genuinely believed Nazism would bring prosperity and improve general well-being.

But not every German was a Nazi. Many organised active resistance to Nazism, braving police repression and death. The large majority of Germans, however, were passive onlookers and apathetic witnesses. They were too scared to act, to differ, to protest. They preferred to look away. Pastor Niemoeller, a resistance fighter, observed an absence of protest, an uncanny silence, amongst ordinary Germans in the face of brutal and organised crimes committed against people in the Nazi empire. He wrote movingly about this silence:

'First they came for the Communists,  
Well, I was not a Communist –  
So I said nothing.  
Then they came for the Social Democrats,  
Well, I was not a Social Democrat  
So I did nothing,  
Then they came for the trade unionists,  
But I was not a trade unionist.  
And then they came for the Jews,  
But I was not a Jew – so I did little.  
Then when they came for me,  
There was no one left who could stand up for me.'

### Activity

Why does Erna Kranz say, 'I could only say for myself'? How do you view her opinion?

#### Box 1

Was the lack of concern for Nazi victims only because of the Terror? No, says Lawrence Rees who interviewed people from diverse backgrounds for his recent documentary, 'The Nazis: A Warning from History'.

Erna Kranz, an ordinary German teenager in the 1930s and a grandmother now, said to Rees:

'1930s offered a glimmer of hope, not just for the unemployed but for everybody for we all felt downtrodden. From my own experience I could say salaries increased and Germany seemed to have regained its sense of purpose. I could only say for myself, I thought it was a good time. I liked it.'

What Jews felt in Nazi Germany is a different story altogether. Charlotte Beradt secretly recorded people's dreams in her diary and later published them in a highly disconcerting book called the *Third Reich of Dreams*. She describes how Jews themselves began believing in the Nazi stereotypes about them. They dreamt of their hooked noses, black hair and eyes, Jewish looks and body movements. The stereotypical images publicised in the Nazi press haunted the Jews. They troubled them even in their dreams. Jews died many deaths even before they reached the gas chamber.

### 5.1 Knowledge about the Holocaust

Information about Nazi practices had trickled out of Germany during the last years of the regime. But it was only after the war ended and Germany was defeated that the world came to realise the horrors of what had happened. While the Germans were preoccupied with their own plight as a defeated nation emerging out of the rubble, the Jews wanted the world to remember the atrocities and sufferings they had endured during the Nazi killing operations – also called the *Holocaust*. At its height, a ghetto inhabitant had said to another that he wanted to outlive the war just for half an hour. Presumably he meant that he wanted to be able to tell the world about what had happened in Nazi Germany. This indomitable spirit to bear witness and to preserve the documents can be seen in many ghetto and camp inhabitants who wrote diaries, kept notebooks, and created archives. On the other hand when the war seemed lost, the Nazi leadership distributed petrol to its functionaries to destroy all incriminating evidence available in offices.

Yet the history and the memory of the Holocaust live on in memoirs, fiction, documentaries, poetry, memorials and museums in many parts of the world today. These are a tribute to those who resisted it, an embarrassing reminder to those who collaborated, and a warning to those who watched in silence.



**Fig.31** – Inhabitants of the Warsaw ghetto collected documents and placed them in three milk cans along with other containers. As destruction seemed imminent, these containers were buried in the cellars of buildings in 1943. This can was discovered in 1950.



**Fig.32** – Denmark secretly rescued their Jews from Germany. This is one of the boats used for the purpose.

## Mahatma Gandhi writes to Hitler

LETTER TO ADOLF HITLER  
AS AT WARDHA, C. P., INDIA,  
July 23, 1939

HERR HITLER  
BERLIN  
GERMANY

DEAR FRIEND,  
Friends have been urging me to write to you for the sake of humanity. But I have resisted their request, because of the feeling that any letter from me would be an impertinence. Something tells me that I must not calculate and that I must make my appeal for whatever it may be worth.  
It is quite clear that you are today the one person in the world who can prevent a war which may reduce humanity to the savage state.  
Must you pay that price for an object however worthy it may appear to you to be? Will you listen to the appeal of one who has deliberately shunned the method of war not without considerable success?  
Anyway  
I anticipate your forgiveness, if I have erred in writing to you.

*I remain,*  
*Your sincere friend,*  
M. K. GANDHI

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI  
VOL. 76.

LETTER TO ADOLF HITLER  
WARDHA,  
December 24, 1940

We have found in non-violence a force which, if organised, can without doubt match itself against a combination of all the most violent forces in the world. In non-violent technique, as I have said, there is no such thing as defeat. It is all 'do or die' without killing or hurting. It can be used practically without money and obviously without the aid of science of destruction which you have brought to such perfection. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that it is nobody's monopoly. If not the British, some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. You are leaving no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deed, however skilfully planned. I, therefore, appeal to you in the name of humanity to stop the war....

*I am,*  
*Your sincere friend,*  
M. K. GANDHI

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF MAHATMA GANDHI  
VOL. 79.

## Activities

1. Write a one page history of Germany
  - as a schoolchild in Nazi Germany
  - as a Jewish survivor of a concentration camp
  - as a political opponent of the Nazi regime
2. Imagine that you are Helmuth. You have had many Jewish friends in school and do not believe that Jews are bad. Write a paragraph on what you would say to your father.

Activities

## Questions

1. Describe the problems faced by the Weimar Republic.
2. Discuss why Nazism became popular in Germany by 1930.
3. What are the peculiar features of Nazi thinking?
4. Explain why Nazi propaganda was effective in creating a hatred for Jews.
5. Explain what role women had in Nazi society. Return to Chapter 1 on the French Revolution. Write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the role of women in the two periods.
6. In what ways did the Nazi state seek to establish total control over its people ?



## SECTION II

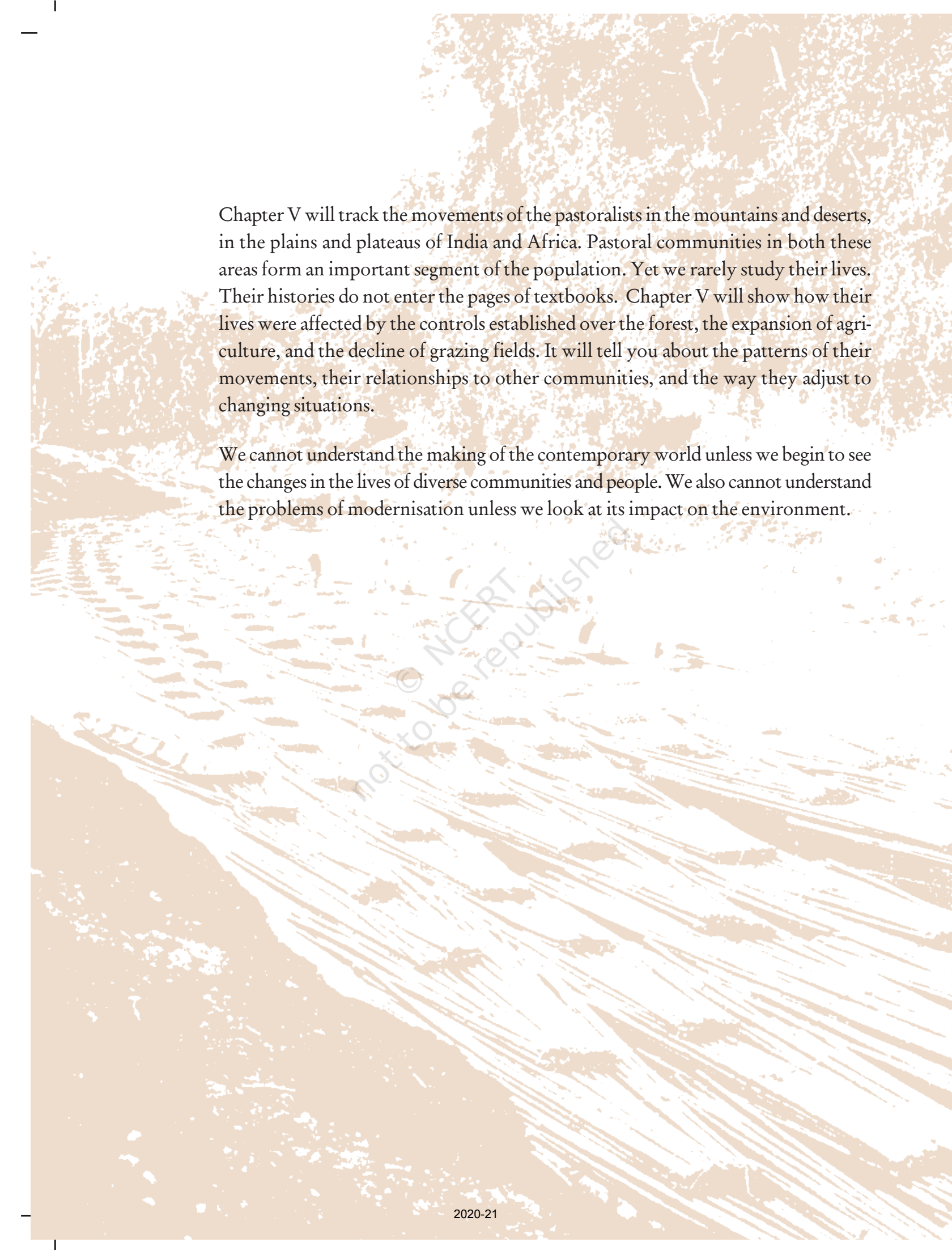


### LIVELIHOODS, ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES

In Section II we will shift our focus to the study of livelihoods and economies. We will look at how the lives of forest dwellers and pastoralists changed in the modern world and how they played a part in shaping these changes.

All too often in looking at the emergence of the modern world, we only focus on factories and cities, on the industrial and agricultural sectors which supply the market. But we forget that there are other economies outside these sectors, other people too who matter to the nation. To modern eyes, the lives of pastoralists and forest dwellers, the shifting cultivators and food gatherers often seem to be stuck in the past. It is as if their lives are not important when we study the emergence of the contemporary world. The chapters in Section II will suggest that we need to know about their lives, see how they organise their world and operate their economies. These communities are very much part of the modern world we live in today. They are not simply survivors from a bygone era.

Chapter IV will take you into the forest and tell you about the variety of ways the forests were used by communities living within them. It will show how in the nineteenth century the growth of industries and urban centres, ships and railways, created a new demand on the forests for timber and other forest products. New demands led to new rules of forest use, new ways of organising the forest. You will see how colonial control was established over the forests, how forest areas were mapped, trees were classified, and plantations were developed. All these developments affected the lives of those local communities who used forest resources. They were forced to operate within new systems and reorganise their lives. But they also rebelled against the rules and persuaded the state to change its policies. The chapter will give you an idea of the history of such developments in India and Indonesia.



Chapter V will track the movements of the pastoralists in the mountains and deserts, in the plains and plateaus of India and Africa. Pastoral communities in both these areas form an important segment of the population. Yet we rarely study their lives. Their histories do not enter the pages of textbooks. Chapter V will show how their lives were affected by the controls established over the forest, the expansion of agriculture, and the decline of grazing fields. It will tell you about the patterns of their movements, their relationships to other communities, and the way they adjust to changing situations.

We cannot understand the making of the contemporary world unless we begin to see the changes in the lives of diverse communities and people. We also cannot understand the problems of modernisation unless we look at its impact on the environment.

# Forest Society and Colonialism



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Take a quick look around your school and home and identify all the things that come from forests: the paper in the book you are reading, desks and tables, doors and windows, the dyes that colour your clothes, spices in your food, the cellophane wrapper of your toffee, *tendu* leaf in *bidis*, gum, honey, coffee, tea and rubber. Do not miss out the oil in chocolates, which comes from *sal* seeds, the tannin used to convert skins and hides into leather, or the herbs and roots used for medicinal purposes. Forests also provide bamboo, wood for fuel, grass, charcoal, packaging, fruits, flowers, animals, birds and many other things. In the Amazon forests or in the Western Ghats, it is possible to find as many as 500 different plant species in one forest patch.

A lot of this diversity is fast disappearing. Between 1700 and 1995, the period of industrialisation, 13.9 million sq km of forest or 9.3 per cent of the world's total area was cleared for industrial uses, cultivation, pastures and fuelwood.



**Fig. 1 – A sal forest in Chhattisgarh.**

Look at the different heights of the trees and plants in this picture, and the variety of species. This is a dense forest, so very little sunlight falls on the forest floor.

# 1 Why Deforestation?

The disappearance of forests is referred to as deforestation. Deforestation is not a recent problem. The process began many centuries ago; but under colonial rule it became more systematic and extensive. Let us look at some of the causes of deforestation in India.

## 1.1 Land to be Improved

In 1600, approximately one-sixth of India's landmass was under cultivation. Now that figure has gone up to about half. As population increased over the centuries and the demand for food went up, peasants extended the boundaries of cultivation, clearing forests and breaking new land. In the colonial period, cultivation expanded rapidly for a variety of reasons. First, the British directly encouraged



**Fig.2 – When the valleys were full.** Painting by John Dawson.

Native Americans like the Lakota tribe who lived in the Great North American Plains had a diversified economy. They cultivated maize, foraged for wild plants and hunted bison. Keeping vast areas open for the bison to range in was seen by the English settlers as wasteful. After the 1860s the bison were killed in large numbers.



the production of commercial crops like jute, sugar, wheat and cotton. The demand for these crops increased in nineteenth-century Europe where foodgrains were needed to feed the growing urban population and raw materials were required for industrial

### Box 1

The absence of cultivation in a place does not mean the land was uninhabited. In Australia, when the white settlers landed, they claimed that the continent was empty or *terra nullius*. In fact, they were guided through the landscape by aboriginal tracks, and led by aboriginal guides. The different aboriginal communities in Australia had clearly demarcated territories. The Ngarrindjeri people of Australia plotted their land along the symbolic body of the first ancestor, Ngurunderi. This land included five different environments: salt water, riverine tracts, lakes, bush and desert plains, which satisfied different socio-economic needs.

production. Second, in the early nineteenth century, the colonial state thought that forests were unproductive. They were considered to be wilderness that had to be brought under cultivation so that the land could yield agricultural products and revenue, and enhance the income of the state. So between 1880 and 1920, cultivated area rose by 6.7 million hectares.

We always see the expansion of cultivation as a sign of progress. But we should not forget that for land to be brought under the plough, forests have to be cleared.

### Source A

The idea that uncultivated land had to be taken over and improved was popular with colonisers everywhere in the world. It was an argument that justified conquest.

In 1896 the American writer, Richard Harding, wrote on the Honduras in Central America:

'There is no more interesting question of the present day than that of what is to be done with the world's land which is lying unimproved; whether it shall go to the great power that is willing to turn it to account, or remain with its original owner, who fails to understand its value. The Central Americans are like a gang of semi-barbarians in a beautifully furnished house, of which they can understand neither its possibilities of comfort nor its use.'

Three years later the American-owned United Fruit Company was founded, and grew bananas on an industrial scale in Central America. The company acquired such power over the governments of these countries that they came to be known as Banana Republics.

Quoted in David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire*, (1993).

## 1.2 Sleepers on the Tracks



**Fig.3 – Converting sal logs into sleepers in the Singhbhum forests, Chhotanagpur, May 1897.** Adivasis were hired by the forest department to cut trees, and make smooth planks which would serve as sleepers for the railways. At the same time, they were not allowed to cut these trees to build their own houses.

### New words

Sleepers – Wooden planks laid across railway tracks; they hold the tracks in position

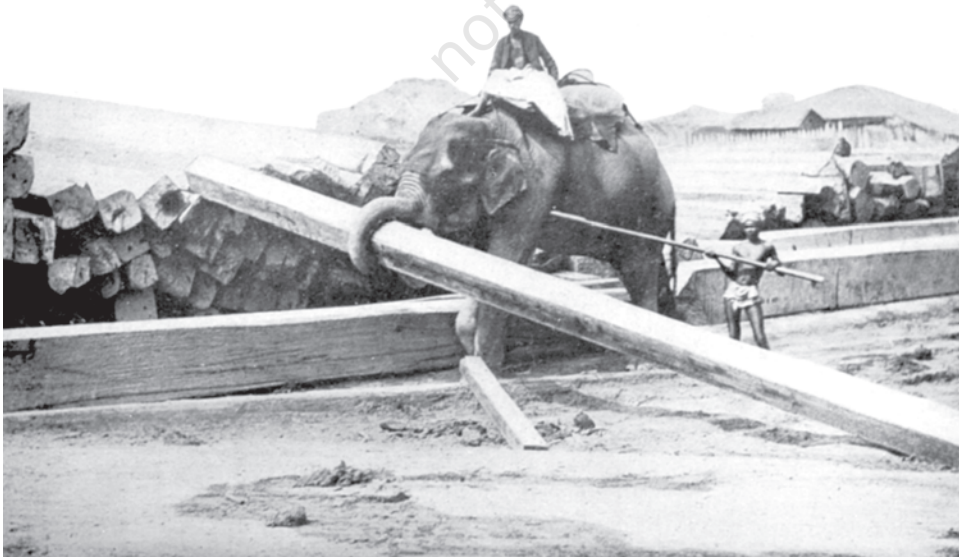
By the early nineteenth century, oak forests in England were disappearing. This created a problem of timber supply for the Royal Navy. How could English ships be built without a regular supply of strong and durable timber? How could imperial power be protected and maintained without ships? By the 1820s, search parties were sent to explore the forest resources of India. Within a decade, trees were being felled on a massive scale and vast quantities of timber were being exported from India.

The spread of railways from the 1850s created a new demand. Railways were essential for colonial trade and for the movement of imperial troops. To run locomotives, wood was needed as fuel, and to lay railway lines sleepers were essential to hold the tracks together. Each mile of railway track required between 1,760 and 2,000 sleepers.

From the 1860s, the railway network expanded rapidly. By 1890, about 25,500 km of track had been laid. In 1946, the length of the tracks had increased to over 765,000 km. As the railway tracks spread through India, a larger and larger number of trees were felled. As early as the 1850s, in the Madras Presidency alone, 35,000 trees were being cut annually for sleepers. The government gave out contracts to individuals to supply the required quantities. These contractors began cutting trees indiscriminately. Forests around the railway tracks fast started disappearing.



**Fig.4 – Bamboo rafts being floated down the Kassalong river, Chittagong Hill Tracts.**



**Fig.5 – Elephants piling squares of timber at a timber yard in Rangoon.**  
In the colonial period elephants were frequently used to lift heavy timber both in the forests and at the timber yards.

Source B

'The new line to be constructed was the Indus Valley Railway between Multan and Sukkur, a distance of nearly 300 miles. At the rate of 2000 sleepers per mile this would require 600,000 sleepers 10 feet by 10 inches by 5 inches (or 3.5 cubic feet apiece), being upwards of 2,000,000 cubic feet. The locomotives would use wood fuel. At the rate of one train daily either way and at one maund per train-mile an annual supply of 219,000 maunds would be demanded. In addition a large supply of fuel for brick-burning would be required. The sleepers would have to come mainly from the Sind Forests. The fuel from the tamarisk and Jhand forests of Sind and the Punjab. The other new line was the Northern State Railway from Lahore to Multan. It was estimated that 2,200,000 sleepers would be required for its construction.'

E.P. Stebbing, *The Forests of India*, Vol. II (1923).

## Activity

Each mile of railway track required between 1,760 and 2,000 sleepers. If one average-sized tree yields 3 to 5 sleepers for a 3 metre wide broad gauge track, calculate approximately how many trees would have to be cut to lay one mile of track.



**Fig.6 - Women returning home after collecting fuelwood.**

**Fig.7 - Truck carrying logs**

When the forest department decided to take up an area for logging, one of the first things it did was to build wide roads so that trucks could enter. Compare this to the forest tracks along which people walk to collect fuelwood and other minor forest produce. Many such trucks of wood go from forest areas to big cities.

### 1.3 Plantations

Large areas of natural forests were also cleared to make way for tea, coffee and rubber plantations to meet Europe's growing need for these commodities. The colonial government took over the forests, and gave vast areas to European planters at cheap rates. These areas were enclosed and cleared of forests, and planted with tea or coffee.



*Fig.8 – Pleasure Brand Tea.*



## 2 The Rise of Commercial Forestry

In the previous section we have seen that the British needed forests in order to build ships and railways. The British were worried that the use of forests by local people and the reckless felling of trees by traders would destroy forests. So they decided to invite a German expert, Dietrich Brandis, for advice, and made him the first Inspector General of Forests in India.

Brandis realised that a proper system had to be introduced to manage the forests and people had to be trained in the science of conservation. This system would need legal sanction. Rules about the use of forest resources had to be framed. Felling of trees and grazing had to be restricted so that forests could be preserved for timber production. Anybody who cut trees without following the system had to be



2020-21

### Activity

If you were the Government of India in 1862 and responsible for supplying the railways with sleepers and fuel on such a large scale, what were the steps you would have taken?

**Fig.9 – One aisle of a managed poplar forest in Tuscany, Italy.**

*Poplar forests are good mainly for timber. They are not used for leaves, fruit or other products. Look at the straight lines of trees, all of a uniform height. This is the model that 'scientific' forestry has promoted.*



**Fig. 10 – A deodar plantation in Kangra, 1933.**  
From *Indian Forest Records*, Vol. XV.

punished. So Brandis set up the Indian Forest Service in 1864 and helped formulate the Indian Forest Act of 1865. The Imperial Forest Research Institute was set up at Dehradun in 1906. The system they taught here was called ‘**scientific forestry**’. Many people now, including ecologists, feel that this system is not scientific at all.

In scientific forestry, natural forests which had lots of different types of trees were cut down. In their place, one type of tree was planted in straight rows. This is called a plantation. Forest officials surveyed the forests, estimated the area under different types of trees, and made working plans for forest management. They planned how much of the plantation area to cut every year. The area cut was then to be replanted so that it was ready to be cut again in some years.

After the Forest Act was enacted in 1865, it was amended twice, once in 1878 and then in 1927. The 1878 Act divided forests into three categories: reserved, protected and village forests. The best forests were called ‘reserved forests’. Villagers could not take anything from these forests, even for their own use. For house building or fuel, they could take wood from protected or village forests.

## 2.1 How were the Lives of People Affected?

Foresters and villagers had very different ideas of what a good forest should look like. Villagers wanted forests with a mixture of species to satisfy different needs – fuel, fodder, leaves. The forest department on the other hand wanted trees which were suitable for building



**Fig. 11 – The Imperial Forest School, Dehra Dun, India.**  
*The first forestry school to be inaugurated in the British Empire.*  
From: *Indian Forester*, Vol. XXXI

### New words

Scientific forestry – A system of cutting trees controlled by the forest department, in which old trees are cut and new ones planted



**Fig. 12 – Collecting mahua ( *Madhuca indica*) from the forests.**  
 Villagers wake up before dawn and go to the forest to collect the mahua flowers which have fallen on the forest floor. Mahua trees are precious. Mahua flowers can be eaten or used to make alcohol. The seeds can be used to make oil.

ships or railways. They needed trees that could provide hard wood, and were tall and straight. So particular species like teak and *sal* were promoted and others were cut.

In forest areas, people use forest products – roots, leaves, fruits, and tubers – for many things. Fruits and tubers are nutritious to eat, especially during the monsoons before the harvest has come in. Herbs are used for medicine, wood for agricultural implements like yokes and ploughs, bamboo makes excellent fences and is also used to make baskets and umbrellas. A dried scooped-out gourd can be used as a portable water bottle. Almost everything is available in the forest – leaves can be stitched together to make disposable plates and cups, the *siadi* (*Bauhinia vahlii*) creeper can be used to make ropes, and the thorny bark of the *semur* (silk-cotton) tree is used to grate vegetables. Oil for cooking and to light lamps can be pressed from the fruit of the *mahua* tree.

The Forest Act meant severe hardship for villagers across the country. After the Act, all their everyday practices – cutting wood for their



**Fig. 13 – Drying tendu leaves.**  
 The sale of tendu leaves is a major source of income for many people living in forests. Each bundle contains approximately 50 leaves, and if a person works very hard they can perhaps collect as many as 100 bundles in a day. Women, children and old men are the main collectors.



**Fig. 14 – Bringing grain from the threshing grounds to the field.**

The men are carrying grain in baskets from the threshing fields. Men carry the baskets slung on a pole across their shoulders, while women carry the baskets on their heads.

houses, grazing their cattle, collecting fruits and roots, hunting and fishing – became illegal. People were now forced to steal wood from the forests, and if they were caught, they were at the mercy of the forest guards who would take bribes from them. Women who collected fuelwood were especially worried. It was also common for police constables and forest guards to harass people by demanding free food from them.

## 2.2 How did Forest Rules Affect Cultivation?

One of the major impacts of European colonialism was on the practice of shifting cultivation or swidden agriculture. This is a traditional agricultural practice in many parts of Asia, Africa and South America. It has many local names such as *lading* in Southeast Asia, *milpa* in Central America, *chitemene* or *tavy* in Africa, and *chena* in Sri Lanka. In India, *dhya*, *penda*, *bewar*, *nevad*, *jhum*, *podu*, *kbandad* and *kumri* are some of the local terms for swidden agriculture.

In shifting cultivation, parts of the forest are cut and burnt in rotation. Seeds are sown in the ashes after the first monsoon rains, and the crop is harvested by October-November. Such plots are cultivated for a couple of years and then left fallow for 12 to 18 years for the forest to grow back. A mixture of crops is grown on these plots. In central India and Africa it could be millets, in Brazil manioc, and in other parts of Latin America maize and beans.

European foresters regarded this practice as harmful for the forests. They felt that land which was used for cultivation every few years could not grow trees for railway timber. When a forest was burnt, there was the added danger of the flames spreading and burning valuable timber.

## Activity

Children living around forest areas can often identify hundreds of species of trees and plants. How many species of trees can you name?



**Fig. 15 – Taungya cultivation was a system in which local farmers were allowed to cultivate temporarily within a plantation. In this photo taken in Tharrawaddy division in Burma in 1921 the cultivators are sowing paddy. The men make holes in the soil using long bamboo poles with iron tips. The women sow paddy in each hole.**





**Fig. 16 – Burning the forest penda or podu plot.**

*In shifting cultivation, a clearing is made in the forest, usually on the slopes of hills. After the trees have been cut, they are burnt to provide ashes. The seeds are then scattered in the area, and left to be irrigated by the rain.*

Shifting cultivation also made it harder for the government to calculate taxes. Therefore, the government decided to ban shifting cultivation. As a result, many communities were forcibly displaced from their homes in the forests. Some had to change occupations, while some resisted through large and small rebellions.

### 2.3 Who could Hunt?

The new forest laws changed the lives of forest dwellers in yet another way. Before the forest laws, many people who lived in or near forests had survived by hunting deer, partridges and a variety of small animals. This customary practice was prohibited by the forest laws. Those who were caught hunting were now punished for poaching.

While the forest laws deprived people of their customary rights to hunt, hunting of big game became a sport. In India, hunting of tigers and other animals had been part of the culture of the court and nobility for centuries. Many Mughal paintings show princes and emperors enjoying a hunt. But under colonial rule the scale of hunting increased to such an extent that various species became almost extinct. The British saw large animals as signs of a wild, primitive and savage society. They believed that by killing dangerous animals the British



**Fig. 17 – The little fisherman.**

*Children accompany their parents to the forest and learn early how to fish, collect forest produce and cultivate. The bamboo trap which the boy is holding in his right hand is kept at the mouth of a stream – the fish flow into it.*



**Fig. 18 – Lord Reading hunting in Nepal.**

Count the dead tigers in the photo. When British colonial officials and Rajas went hunting they were accompanied by a whole retinue of servants. Usually, the tracking was done by skilled village hunters, and the Sahib simply fired the shot.

would civilise India. They gave rewards for the killing of tigers, wolves and other large animals on the grounds that they posed a threat to cultivators. Over 80,000 tigers, 150,000 leopards and 200,000 wolves were killed for reward in the period 1875-1925. Gradually, the tiger came to be seen as a sporting trophy. The Maharaja of Sarguja alone shot 1,157 tigers and 2,000 leopards up to 1957. A British administrator, George Yule, killed 400 tigers. Initially certain areas of forests were reserved for hunting. Only much later did environmentalists and conservators begin to argue that all these species of animals needed to be protected, and not killed.

#### 2.4 New Trades, New Employments and New Services

While people lost out in many ways after the forest department took control of the forests, some people benefited from the new opportunities that had opened up in trade. Many communities left their traditional occupations and started trading in forest products. This happened not only in India but across the world. For example,

#### Source C

Baigas are a forest community of Central India. In 1892, after their shifting cultivation was stopped, they petitioned to the government:

'We daily starve, having had no foodgrain in our possession. The only wealth we possess is our axe. We have no clothes to cover our body with, but we pass cold nights by the fireside. We are now dying for want of food. We cannot go elsewhere. What fault have we done that the government does not take care of us? Prisoners are supplied with ample food in jail. A cultivator of the grass is not deprived of his holding, but the government does not give us our right who have lived here for generations past.'

Verrier Elwin (1939), cited in Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*.

with the growing demand for rubber in the mid-nineteenth century, the Mundurucu peoples of the Brazilian Amazon who lived in villages on high ground and cultivated manioc, began to collect latex from wild rubber trees for supplying to traders. Gradually, they descended to live in trading posts and became completely dependent on traders.

In India, the trade in forest products was not new. From the medieval period onwards, we have records of adivasi communities trading elephants and other goods like hides, horns, silk cocoons, ivory, bamboo, spices, fibres, grasses, gums and resins through nomadic communities like the Banjaras.

With the coming of the British, however, trade was completely regulated by the government. The British government gave many large European trading firms the sole right to trade in the forest products of particular areas. Grazing and hunting by local people were restricted. In the process, many pastoralist and nomadic communities like the Korava, Karacha and Yerukula of the Madras Presidency lost their livelihoods. Some of them began to be called 'criminal tribes', and were forced to work instead in factories, mines and plantations, under government supervision.

New opportunities of work did not always mean improved well-being for the people. In Assam, both men and women from forest communities like Santhals and Oraons from Jharkhand, and Gonds from Chhattisgarh were recruited to work on tea plantations. Their wages were low and conditions of work were very bad. They could not return easily to their home villages from where they had been recruited.

#### Source D

##### Rubber extraction in the Putumayo

'Everywhere in the world, conditions of work in plantations were horrific.

The extraction of rubber in the Putumayo region of the Amazon, by the Peruvian Rubber Company (with British and Peruvian interests) was dependent on the forced labour of the local Indians, called Huitotos. From 1900-1912, the Putumayo output of 4000 tons of rubber was associated with a decrease of some 30,000 among the Indian population due to torture, disease and flight. A letter by an employee of a rubber company describes how the rubber was collected. The manager summoned hundreds of Indians to the station:

He grasped his carbine and machete and began the slaughter of these defenceless Indians, leaving the ground covered with 150 corpses, among them, men, women and children. Bathed in blood and appealing for mercy, the survivors were heaped with the dead and burned to death, while the manager shouted, "I want to exterminate all the Indians who do not obey my orders about the rubber that I require them to bring in." '

Michael Taussig, 'Culture of Terror-Space of Death', in Nicholas Dirks, ed. *Colonialism and Culture*, 1992.

Source



the earth by making some offerings at each agricultural festival. In addition to the Earth, they show respect to the spirits of the river, the forest and the mountain. Since each village knows where its boundaries lie, the local people look after all the natural resources within that boundary. If people from a village want to take some wood from the forests of another village, they pay a small fee called *devsari*, *dand* or *man* in exchange. Some villages also protect their forests by engaging watchmen and each household contributes some grain to pay them. Every year there is one big hunt where the headmen of villages in a *pargana* (cluster of villages) meet and discuss issues of concern, including forests.

### 3.2 The Fears of the People

When the colonial government proposed to reserve two-thirds of the forest in 1905, and stop shifting cultivation, hunting and collection of forest produce, the people of Bastar were very worried. Some villages were allowed to stay on in the reserved forests on the condition that they worked free for the forest department in cutting and transporting trees, and protecting the forest from fires. Subsequently, these came to be known as 'forest villages'. People of other villages were displaced without any notice or compensation. For long, villagers had been suffering from increased land rents and frequent demands for free labour and goods by colonial officials. Then came the terrible famines, in 1899-1900 and again in 1907-1908. Reservations proved to be the last straw.

People began to gather and discuss these issues in their village councils, in bazaars and at festivals or wherever the headmen and priests of several villages were assembled. The initiative was taken by the Dhurwas of the Kanger forest, where reservation first took place. Although there was no single leader, many people speak of Gunda Dhur, from village Nethanar, as an important figure in the movement. In 1910, mango boughs, a lump of earth, chillies and arrows, began circulating between villages. These were actually messages inviting villagers to rebel against the British. Every village contributed something to the rebellion expenses. Bazaars were looted, the houses of officials and traders, schools and police stations were burnt and robbed, and grain redistributed. Most of those who were attacked were in some way associated with the colonial state and its oppressive laws. William Ward, a missionary who observed the events, wrote: 'From all directions came streaming into Jagdalpur, police, merchants, forest peons, schoolmasters and immigrants.'

#### Source E

'Bhondia collected 400 men, sacrificed a number of goats and started off to intercept the Dewan who was expected to return from the direction of Bijapur. This mob started on the 10th February, burnt the Marenga school, the police post, lines and pound at Keslur and the school at Tokapal (Rajur), detached a contingent to burn Karanji school and captured a head constable and four constables of the State reserve police who had been sent out to escort the Dewan and bring him in. The mob did not maltreat the guard seriously but eased them of their weapons and let them go. One party of rebels under Bhondia Majhi went off to the Koer river to block the passage there in case the Dewan left the main road. The rest went on to Dilmilli to stop the main road from Bijapur. Buddhu Majhi and Harchand Naik led the main body.'

Letter from DeBrett, Political Agent, Chhattisgarh Feudatory States to Commissioner, Chhattisgarh Division, 23 June 1910.

**Source F**

Elders living in Bastar recounted the story of this battle they had heard from their parents:

Podiyami Ganga of Kankapal was told by his father Podiyami Tokeli that:

'The British came and started taking land. The Raja didn't pay attention to things happening around him, so seeing that land was being taken, his supporters gathered people. War started. His staunch supporters died and the rest were whipped. My father, Podiyami Tokeli suffered many strokes, but he escaped and survived. It was a movement to get rid of the British. The British used to tie them to horses and pull them. From every village two or three people went to Jagdalpur: Gargideva and Michkola of Chidpal, Dole and Adrabundi of Markamiras, Vadapandu of Baleras, Unga of Palem and many others.'

Similarly, Chendru, an elder from village Nandrasa, said:

'On the people's side, were the big elders – Mille Mudaal of Palem, Soyekal Dhurwa of Nandrasa, and Pandwa Majhi. People from every pargana camped in Alnar tarai. The paltan (force) surrounded the people in a flash. Gunda Dhur had flying powers and flew away. But what could those with bows and arrows do? The battle took place at night. The people hid in shrubs and crawled away. The army paltan also ran away. All those who remained alive (of the people), somehow found their way home to their villages.'

The British sent troops to suppress the rebellion. The adivasi leaders tried to negotiate, but the British surrounded their camps and fired upon them. After that they marched through the villages flogging and punishing those who had taken part in the rebellion. Most villages were deserted as people fled into the jungles. It took three months (February - May) for the British to regain control. However, they never managed to capture Gunda Dhur. In a major victory for the rebels, work on reservation was temporarily suspended, and the area to be reserved was reduced to roughly half of that planned before 1910.

The story of the forests and people of Bastar does not end there. After Independence, the same practice of keeping people out of the forests and reserving them for industrial use continued. In the 1970s, the World Bank proposed that 4,600 hectares of natural *sal* forest should be replaced by tropical pine to provide pulp for the paper industry. It was only after protests by local environmentalists that the project was stopped.

Let us now go to another part of Asia, Indonesia, and see what was happening there over the same period.

## 4 Forest Transformations in Java

Java is now famous as a rice-producing island in Indonesia. But once upon a time it was covered mostly with forests. The colonial power in Indonesia were the Dutch, and as we will see, there were many similarities in the laws for forest control in Indonesia and India. Java in Indonesia is where the Dutch started forest management. Like the British, they wanted timber from Java to build ships. In 1600, the population of Java was an estimated 3.4 million. There were many villages in the fertile plains, but there were also many communities living in the mountains and practising shifting cultivation.

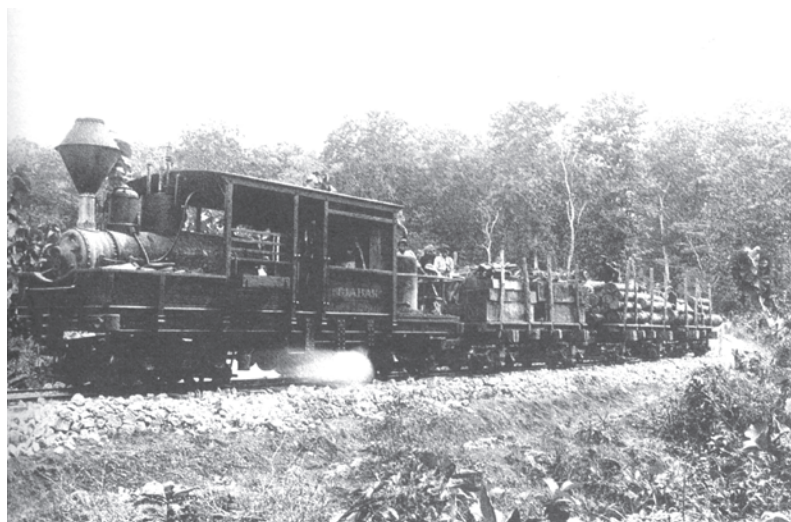
### 4.1 The Woodcutters of Java

The Kalangs of Java were a community of skilled forest cutters and shifting cultivators. They were so valuable that in 1755 when the Mataram kingdom of Java split, the 6,000 Kalang families were equally divided between the two kingdoms. Without their expertise, it would have been difficult to harvest teak and for the kings to build their palaces. When the Dutch began to gain control over the forests in the eighteenth century, they tried to make the Kalangs work under them. In 1770, the Kalangs resisted by attacking a Dutch fort at Joana, but the uprising was suppressed.

### 4.2 Dutch Scientific Forestry

In the nineteenth century, when it became important to control territory and not just people, the Dutch enacted forest laws in Java, restricting villagers' access to forests. Now wood could only be cut for specified purposes like making river boats or constructing houses, and only from specific forests under close supervision. Villagers were punished for grazing cattle in young stands, transporting wood without a permit, or travelling on forest roads with horse carts or cattle.

As in India, the need to manage forests for shipbuilding and railways led to the



**Fig.21 – Train transporting teak out of the forest – late colonial period.**

introduction of a forest service. In 1882, 280,000 sleepers were exported from Java alone. However, all this required labour to cut the trees, transport the logs and prepare the sleepers. The Dutch first imposed rents on land being cultivated in the forest and then exempted some villages from these rents if they worked collectively to provide free labour and buffaloes for cutting and transporting timber. This was known as the *blandongdiensten* system. Later, instead of rent exemption, forest villagers were given small wages, but their right to cultivate forest land was restricted.

### 4.3 Samin's Challenge

Around 1890, Surontiko Samin of Randublatung village, a teak forest village, began questioning state ownership of the forest. He argued that the state had not created the wind, water, earth and wood, so it could not own it. Soon a widespread movement developed. Amongst those who helped organise it were Samin's sons-in-law. By 1907, 3,000 families were following his ideas. Some of the Saminists protested by lying down on their land when the Dutch came to survey it, while others refused to pay taxes or fines or perform labour.

#### Source G

Dirk van Hogendorp, an official of the United East India Company in colonial Java said:

'Batavians! Be amazed! Hear with wonder what I have to communicate. Our fleets are destroyed, our trade languishes, our navigation is going to ruin - we purchase with immense treasures, timber and other materials for ship-building from the northern powers, and on Java we leave warlike and mercantile squadrons with their roots in the ground. Yes, the forests of Java have timber enough to build a respectable navy in a short time, besides as many merchant ships as we require ... In spite of all (the cutting) the forests of Java grow as fast as they are cut, and would be inexhaustible under good care and management.'

Dirk van Hogendorp, cited in Peluso, *Rich Forests, Poor People*, 1992.



**Fig. 22** – Most of Indonesia's forests are located in islands like Sumatra, Kalimantan and West Irian. However, Java is where the Dutch began their 'scientific forestry'. The island, which is now famous for rice production, was once richly covered with teak.



#### 4.4 War and Deforestation

The First World War and the Second World War had a major impact on forests. In India, working plans were abandoned at this time, and the forest department cut trees freely to meet British war needs. In Java, just before the Japanese occupied the region, the Dutch followed ‘a scorched earth’ policy, destroying sawmills, and burning huge piles of giant teak logs so that they would not fall into Japanese hands. The Japanese then exploited the forests recklessly for their own war industries, forcing forest villagers to cut down forests. Many villagers used this opportunity to expand cultivation in the forest. After the war, it was difficult for the Indonesian forest service to get this land back. As in India, people’s need for agricultural land has brought them into conflict with the forest department’s desire to control the land and exclude people from it.

#### 4.5 New Developments in Forestry

Since the 1980s, governments across Asia and Africa have begun to see that scientific forestry and the policy of keeping forest communities away from forests has resulted in many conflicts. Conservation of forests rather than collecting timber has become a more important goal. The government has recognised that in order to meet this goal, the people who live near the forests must be involved. In many cases, across India, from Mizoram to Kerala, dense forests have survived only because villages protected them in sacred groves known as *sarnas*, *devarakudu*, *kan*, *rai*, etc. Some villages have been patrolling their own forests, with each household taking it in turns, instead of leaving it to the forest guards. Local forest communities and environmentalists today are thinking of different forms of forest management.



**Fig.23 – Indian Munitions Board, War Timber Sleepers piled at Soolay pagoda ready for shipment, 1917.**

*The Allies would not have been as successful in the First World War and the Second World War if they had not been able to exploit the resources and people of their colonies. Both the world wars had a devastating effect on the forests of India, Indonesia and elsewhere. The forest department cut freely to satisfy war needs.*

**Fig.24 – Log yard in Rembang under Dutch colonial rule.**

## Activities

1. Have there been changes in forest areas where you live? Find out what these changes are and why they have happened.
2. Write a dialogue between a colonial forester and an adivasi discussing the issue of hunting in the forest.

Activities

## Questions

1. Discuss how the changes in forest management in the colonial period affected the following groups of people:
  - Shifting cultivators
  - Nomadic and pastoralist communities
  - Firms trading in timber/forest produce
  - Plantation owners
  - Kings/British officials engaged in shikar (hunting)
2. What are the similarities between colonial management of the forests in Bastar and in Java?
3. Between 1880 and 1920, forest cover in the Indian subcontinent declined by 9.7 million hectares, from 108.6 million hectares to 98.9 million hectares. Discuss the role of the following factors in this decline:
  - Railways
  - Shipbuilding
  - Agricultural expansion
  - Commercial farming
  - Tea/Coffee plantations
  - Adivasis and other peasant users
4. Why are forests affected by wars?



# Pastoralists in the Modern World



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**Fig. 1 – Sheep grazing on the Bugyals of eastern Garhwal.**

Bugyals are vast natural pastures on the high mountains, above 12,000 feet. They are under snow in the winter and come to life after April. At this time the entire mountainside is covered with a variety of grasses, roots and herbs. By monsoon, these pastures are thick with vegetation and carpeted with wild flowers.

In this chapter you will read about nomadic pastoralists. Nomads are people who do not live in one place but move from one area to another to earn their living. In many parts of India we can see nomadic pastoralists on the move with their herds of goats and sheep, or camels and cattle. Have you ever wondered where they are coming from and where they are headed? Do you know how they live and earn? What their past has been?

Pastoralists rarely enter the pages of history textbooks. When you read about the economy – whether in your classes of history or economics – you learn about agriculture and industry. Sometimes you read about artisans; but rarely about pastoralists. As if their lives do not matter. As if they are figures from the past who have no place in modern society.

In this chapter you will see how pastoralism has been important in societies like India and Africa. You will read about the way colonialism impacted their lives, and how they have coped with the pressures of modern society. The chapter will first focus on India and then Africa.

# 1 Pastoral Nomads and their Movements

## 1.1 In the Mountains

Even today the Gujjar Bakarwals of Jammu and Kashmir are great herders of goat and sheep. Many of them migrated to this region in the nineteenth century in search of pastures for their animals. Gradually, over the decades, they established themselves in the area, and moved annually between their summer and winter grazing grounds. In winter, when the high mountains were covered with snow, they lived with their herds in the low hills of the Siwalik range. The dry scrub forests here provided pasture for their herds. By the end of April they began their northern march for their summer grazing grounds. Several households came together for this journey, forming what is known as a *kafila*. They crossed the Pir Panjal passes and entered the valley of Kashmir. With the onset of summer, the snow melted and the mountainsides were lush green. The variety of grasses that sprouted provided rich nutritious forage for the animal herds. By end September the Bakarwals were on the move again, this time on their downward journey, back to their winter base. When the high mountains were covered with snow, the herds were grazed in the low hills.

In a different area of the mountains, the Gaddi shepherds of Himachal Pradesh had a similar cycle of seasonal movement. They too spent their winter in the low hills of Siwalik range, grazing their flocks in scrub forests. By April they moved north and spent the summer in Lahul and Spiti. When the snow melted and the high passes were clear, many of them moved on to higher mountain

### Source A

Writing in the 1850s, G.C. Barnes gave the following description of the Gujjars of Kangra:

'In the hills the Gujjars are exclusively a pastoral tribe – they cultivate scarcely at all. The Gaddis keep flocks of sheep and goats and the Gujjars, wealth consists of buffaloes. These people live in the skirts of the forests, and maintain their existence exclusively by the sale of the milk, ghee, and other produce of their herds. The men graze the cattle, and frequently lie out for weeks in the woods tending their herds. The women repair to the markets every morning with baskets on their heads, with little earthen pots filled with milk, butter-milk and ghee, each of these pots containing the proportion required for a day's meal. During the hot weather the Gujjars usually drive their herds to the upper range, where the buffaloes rejoice in the rich grass which the rains bring forth and at the same time attain condition from the temperate climate and the immunity from venomous flies that torment their existence in the plains.'

From: G.C. Barnes, *Settlement Report of Kangra, 1850-55.*



**Fig.2 – A Gujjar Mandap on the high mountains in central Garhwal.**

The Gujjar cattle herders live in these mandaps made of ringal – a hill bamboo – and grass from the Bugyal. A mandap was also a work place. Here the Gujjar used to make ghee which they took down for sale. In recent years they have begun to transport the milk directly in buses and trucks. These mandaps are at about 10,000 to 11,000 feet. Buffaloes cannot climb any higher.



**Fig.3 – Gaddis waiting for shearing to begin. Uhl valley near Palampur in Himachal Pradesh.**

meadows. By September they began their return movement. On the way they stopped once again in the villages of Lahul and Spiti, reaping their summer harvest and sowing their winter crop. Then they descended with their flock to their winter grazing ground on the Siwalik hills. Next April, once again, they began their march with their goats and sheep, to the summer meadows.

Further to the east, in Garhwal and Kumaon, the Gujjar cattle herders came down to the dry forests of the **bhabar** in the winter, and went up to the high meadows – the **bugyals** – in summer. Many of them were originally from Jammu and came to the UP hills in the nineteenth century in search of good pastures.

This pattern of cyclical movement between summer and winter pastures was typical of many pastoral communities of the Himalayas, including the Bhotiyas, Sherpas and Kinnauris. All of them had to adjust to seasonal changes and make effective use of available pastures in different places. When the pasture was exhausted or unusable in one place they moved their herds and flock to new areas. This continuous movement also allowed the pastures to recover; it prevented their overuse.

#### New words

Bhabar – A dry forested area below the foothills of Garhwal and Kumaon

Bugyal – Vast meadows in the high mountains



**Fig.4 – Gaddi sheep being sheared.**

*By September the Gaddi shepherds come down from the high meadows (Dhars). On the way down they halt for a while to have their sheep sheared. The sheep are bathed and cleaned before the wool is cut.*

## 1.2 On the Plateaus, Plains and Deserts

Not all pastoralists operated in the mountains. They were also to be found in the plateaus, plains and deserts of India.

Dhangars were an important pastoral community of Maharashtra. In the early twentieth century their population in this region was estimated to be 467,000. Most of them were shepherds, some were blanket weavers, and still others were buffalo herders. The Dhangar shepherds stayed in the central plateau of Maharashtra during the monsoon. This was a semi-arid region with low rainfall and poor soil. It was covered with thorny scrub. Nothing but dry crops like *bajra* could be sown here. In the monsoon this tract became a vast grazing ground for the Dhangar flocks. By October the Dhangars harvested their *bajra* and started on their move west. After a march of about a month they reached the Konkan. This was a flourishing agricultural tract with high rainfall and rich soil. Here the shepherds



**Fig.5 – Raika camels grazing on the Thar desert in western Rajasthan.**  
Only camels can survive on the dry and thorny bushes that can be found here; but to get enough feed they have to graze over a very extensive area.

were welcomed by Konkani peasants. After the *kharif* harvest was cut at this time, the fields had to be fertilised and made ready for the *rabi* harvest. Dhangar flocks manured the fields and fed on the **stubble**. The Konkani peasants also gave supplies of rice which the shepherds took back to the plateau where grain was scarce. With the onset of the monsoon the Dhangars left the Konkan and the coastal areas with their flocks and returned to their settlements on the dry plateau. The sheep could not tolerate the wet monsoon conditions.

### New words

*Kharif* – The autumn crop, usually harvested between September and October

*Rabi* – The spring crop, usually harvested after March

Stubble – Lower ends of grain stalks left in the ground after harvesting

In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, again, the dry central plateau was covered with stone and grass, inhabited by cattle, goat and sheep herders. The Gollas herded cattle. The Kurumas and Kurubas reared sheep and goats and sold woven blankets. They lived near the woods, cultivated small patches of land, engaged in a variety of petty trades and took care of their herds. Unlike the mountain pastoralists, it was not the cold and the snow that defined the seasonal rhythms of their movement: rather it was the alternation of the monsoon and dry season. In the dry season they moved to the coastal tracts, and left when the rains came. Only buffaloes liked the swampy, wet conditions of the coastal areas during the monsoon months. Other herds had to be shifted to the dry plateau at this time.

Banjaras were yet another well-known group of graziers. They were to be found in the villages of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. In search of good pastureland for their cattle, they moved over long distances, selling plough cattle and other goods to villagers in exchange for grain and fodder.

**Source B**

The accounts of many travellers tell us about the life of pastoral groups. In the early nineteenth century, Buchanan visited the Gollas during his travel through Mysore. He wrote:

‘Their families live in small villages near the skirt of the woods, where they cultivate a little ground, and keep some of their cattle, selling in the towns the produce of the dairy. Their families are very numerous, seven to eight young men in each being common. Two or three of these attend the flocks in the woods, while the remainder cultivate their fields, and supply the towns with firewood, and with straw for thatch.’

From: Francis Hamilton Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar* (London, 1807).

**Activity**

Read Sources A and B.

- Write briefly about what they tell you about the nature of the work undertaken by men and women in pastoral households.
- Why do you think pastoral groups often live on the edges of forests?

In the deserts of Rajasthan lived the Raikas. The rainfall in the region was meagre and uncertain. On cultivated land, harvests fluctuated every year. Over vast stretches no crop could be grown. So the Raikas combined cultivation with pastoralism. During the monsoons, the Raikas of Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur and Bikaner stayed in their home villages, where pasture was available. By October, when these grazing grounds were dry and exhausted, they moved out in search of other pasture and water, and returned again during the next monsoon. One group of Raikas – known as the Maru (desert) Raikas – herded camels and another group reared sheep and goat.



**Fig. 6 – A camel herder in his settlement.**  
This is on the Thar desert near Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. The camel herders of the region are Maru (desert) Raikas, and their settlement is called a dhandi.



**Fig.7 – A camel fair at Balotra in western Rajasthan.** Camel herders come to the fair to sell and buy camels. The Maru Raikas also display their expertise in training their camels. Horses from Gujarat are also brought for sale at this fair.

So we see that the life of these pastoral groups was sustained by a careful consideration of a host of factors. They had to judge how long the herds could stay in one area, and know where they could find water and pasture. They needed to calculate the timing of their movements, and ensure that they could move through different territories. They had to set up a relationship with farmers on the way, so that the herds could graze in harvested fields and manure the soil. They combined a range of different activities – cultivation, trade, and herding – to make their living.

How did the life of pastoralists change under colonial rule?



**Fig.8 – A camel fair at Pushkar.**





**Fig.9 – A Maru Raika genealogist with a group of Raikas.**

*The genealogist recounts the history of the community. Such oral traditions give pastoral groups their own sense of identity. These oral traditions can tell us about how a group looks at its own past.*



**Fig.10 – Maldhari herders moving in search of pastures. Their villages are in the Rann of Kutch.**

## 2 Colonial Rule and Pastoral Life

Under colonial rule, the life of pastoralists changed dramatically. Their grazing grounds shrank, their movements were regulated, and the revenue they had to pay increased. Their agricultural stock declined and their trades and crafts were adversely affected. How?

First, the colonial state wanted to transform all grazing lands into cultivated farms. Land revenue was one of the main sources of its finance. By expanding cultivation it could increase its revenue collection. It could at the same time produce more jute, cotton, wheat and other agricultural produce that were required in England. To colonial officials all uncultivated land appeared to be unproductive: it produced neither revenue nor agricultural produce. It was seen as 'waste land' that needed to be brought under cultivation. From the mid-nineteenth century, Waste Land Rules were enacted in various parts of the country. By these Rules uncultivated lands were taken over and given to select individuals. These individuals were granted various concessions and encouraged to settle these lands. Some of them were made headmen of villages in the newly cleared areas. In most areas the lands taken over were actually grazing tracts used regularly by pastoralists. So expansion of cultivation inevitably meant the decline of pastures and a problem for pastoralists.

Second, by the mid-nineteenth century, various Forest Acts were also being enacted in the different provinces. Through these Acts some forests which produced commercially valuable timber like *deodar* or *sal* were declared 'Reserved'. No pastoralist was allowed access to these forests. Other forests were classified as 'Protected'. In these, some **customary** grazing rights of pastoralists were granted but their movements were severely restricted. The colonial officials believed that grazing destroyed the saplings and young shoots of trees that germinated on the forest floor. The herds trampled over the saplings and munched away the shoots. This prevented new trees from growing.

These Forest Acts changed the lives of pastoralists. They were now prevented from entering many forests that had earlier provided valuable forage for their cattle. Even in the areas they were allowed entry, their movements were regulated. They needed a permit for entry. The timing of their entry and departure was

### Source C

H.S. Gibson, the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Darjeeling, wrote in 1913:

'... forest which is used for grazing cannot be used for any other purpose and is unable to yield timber and fuel, which are the main legitimate forest produce ...'

### Activity

Write a comment on the closure of the forests to grazing from the standpoint of:

- a forester
- a pastoralist

### New words

Customary rights – Rights that people are used to by custom and tradition

specified, and the number of days they could spend in the forest was limited. Pastoralists could no longer remain in an area even if forage was available, the grass was succulent and the undergrowth in the forest was ample. They had to move because the Forest Department permits that had been issued to them now ruled their lives. The permit specified the periods in which they could be legally within a forest. If they overstayed they were liable to fines.

Third, British officials were suspicious of nomadic people. They distrusted mobile craftsmen and traders who hawked their goods in villages, and pastoralists who changed their places of residence every season, moving in search of good pastures for their herds. The colonial government wanted to rule over a settled population. They wanted the rural people to live in villages, in fixed places with fixed rights on particular fields. Such a population was easy to identify and control. Those who were settled were seen as peaceable and law abiding; those who were nomadic were considered to be criminal. In 1871, the colonial government in India passed the Criminal Tribes Act. By this Act many communities of craftsmen, traders and pastoralists were classified as Criminal Tribes. They were stated to be criminal by nature and birth. Once this Act came into force, these communities were expected to live only in notified village settlements. They were not allowed to move out without a permit. The village police kept a continuous watch on them.

Fourth, to expand its revenue income, the colonial government looked for every possible source of taxation. So tax was imposed on land, on canal water, on salt, on trade goods, and even on animals. Pastoralists had to pay tax on every animal they grazed on the pastures. In most pastoral tracts of India, grazing tax was introduced in the mid-nineteenth century. The tax per head of cattle went up rapidly and the system of collection was made increasingly efficient. In the decades between the 1850s and 1880s the right to collect the tax was auctioned out to contractors. These contractors tried to extract as high a tax as they could to recover the money they had paid to the state and earn as much profit as they could within the year. By the 1880s the government began collecting taxes directly from the pastoralists. Each of them was given a pass. To enter a grazing tract, a cattle herder had to show the pass and pay the tax. The number of cattle heads he had and the amount of tax he paid was entered on the pass.

### Source D

In the 1920s, a Royal Commission on Agriculture reported:

'The extent of the area available for grazing has gone down tremendously with the extension of area under cultivation because of increasing population, extension of irrigation facilities, acquiring the pastures for Government purposes, for example, defence, industries and agricultural experimental farms. [Now] breeders find it difficult to raise large herds. Thus their earnings have gone down. The quality of their livestock has deteriorated, dietary standards have fallen and indebtedness has increased.'

*The Report of the Royal Commission of Agriculture in India, 1928.*

## Activity

Imagine you are living in the 1890s.

You belong to a community of nomadic pastoralists and craftsmen. You learn that the Government has declared your community as a Criminal Tribe.

- Describe briefly what you would have felt and done.
- Write a petition to the local collector explaining why the Act is unjust and how it will affect your life.

## 2.1 How Did these Changes Affect the Lives of Pastoralists? ■

These measures led to a serious shortage of pastures. When grazing lands were taken over and turned into cultivated fields, the available area of pastureland declined. Similarly, the reservation of forests meant that shepherds and cattle herders could no longer freely pasture their cattle in the forests.

As pasturelands disappeared under the plough, the existing animal stock had to feed on whatever grazing land remained. This led to continuous intensive grazing of these pastures. Usually nomadic pastoralists grazed their animals in one area and moved to another area. These pastoral movements allowed time for the natural restoration of vegetation growth. When restrictions were imposed on pastoral movements, grazing lands came to be continuously used and the quality of pastures declined. This in turn created a further shortage of forage for animals and the deterioration of animal stock. Underfed cattle died in large numbers during scarcities and famines.



**Fig. 11 – Pastoralists in India.**  
This map indicates the location of only those pastoral communities mentioned in the chapter. There are many others living in various parts of India.

## 2.2 How Did the Pastoralists Cope with these Changes?

Pastoralists reacted to these changes in a variety of ways. Some reduced the number of cattle in their herds, since there was not enough pasture to feed large numbers. Others discovered new pastures when movement to old grazing grounds became difficult. After 1947, the camel and sheep herding Raikas, for instance, could no longer move into Sindh and graze their camels on the banks of the Indus, as they had done earlier. The new political boundaries between India and Pakistan stopped their movement. So they had to find new places to go. In recent years they have been migrating to Haryana where sheep can graze on agricultural fields after the harvests are cut. This is the time that the fields need manure that the animals provide.

Over the years, some richer pastoralists began buying land and settling down, giving up their nomadic life. Some became settled peasants cultivating land, others took to more extensive trading. Many poor pastoralists, on the other hand, borrowed money from moneylenders to survive. At times they lost their cattle and sheep and became labourers, working on fields or in small towns.

Yet, pastoralists not only continue to survive, in many regions their numbers have expanded over recent decades. When pasturelands in one place was closed to them, they changed the direction of their movement, reduced the size of the herd, combined pastoral activity with other forms of income and adapted to the changes in the modern world. Many ecologists believe that in dry regions and in the mountains, pastoralism is still ecologically the most viable form of life.

Such changes were not experienced only by pastoral communities in India. In many other parts of the world, new laws and settlement patterns forced pastoral communities to alter their lives. How did pastoral communities elsewhere cope with these changes in the modern world?

### 3 Pastoralism in Africa

Let us move to Africa where over half the world's pastoral population lives. Even today, over 22 million Africans depend on some form of pastoral activity for their livelihood. They include communities like Bedouins, Berbers, Maasai, Somali, Boran and Turkana. Most of them now live in the semi-arid grasslands or arid deserts where rainfed agriculture is difficult. They raise cattle, camels, goats, sheep and donkeys; and they sell milk, meat, animal skin and wool. Some also earn through trade and transport, others combine pastoral activity with agriculture; still others do a variety of odd jobs to supplement their meagre and uncertain earnings from pastoralism.

Like pastoralists in India, the lives of African pastoralists have changed dramatically over the colonial and post-colonial periods. What have these changes been?



**Fig. 12 – A view of Maasai land with Kilimanjaro in the background.**

*Forced by changing conditions, the Maasai have grown dependent on food produced in other areas such as maize meal, rice, potatoes, cabbage. Traditionally the Maasai frowned upon this. Maasai believed that tilling the land for crop farming is a crime against nature. Once you cultivate the land, it is no longer suitable for grazing. Courtesy: The Maasai Association.*



**Fig. 13 – Pastoral communities in Africa.**  
*The inset shows the location of the Maasais in Kenya and Tanzania.*

We will discuss some of these changes by looking at one pastoral community – the Maasai – in some detail. The Maasai cattle herders live primarily in east Africa: 300,000 in southern Kenya and another 150,000 in Tanzania. We will see how new laws and regulations took away their land and restricted their movement. This affected their lives in times of drought and even reshaped their social relationships.

### 3.1 Where have the Grazing Lands Gone?

One of the problems the Maasais have faced is the continuous loss of their grazing lands. Before colonial times, Maasailand stretched over a vast area from north Kenya to the steppes of northern Tanzania. In the late nineteenth century, European imperial powers scrambled for territorial possessions in Africa, slicing up the region into different colonies. In 1885, Maasailand was cut into half with an international boundary between British Kenya and German Tanganyika. Subsequently, the best grazing lands were gradually taken over for white settlement and the Maasai were pushed into a small area in

**On Tanganyika**  
 Britain conquered what had been German East Africa during the First World War. In 1919 Tanganyika came under British control. It attained independence in 1961 and united with Zanzibar to form Tanzania in 1964.

south Kenya and north Tanzania. The Maasai lost about 60 per cent of their pre-colonial lands. They were confined to an arid zone with uncertain rainfall and poor pastures.

From the late nineteenth century, the British colonial government in east Africa also encouraged local peasant communities to expand cultivation. As cultivation expanded, pasturelands were turned into cultivated fields. In pre-colonial times, the Maasai pastoralists had dominated their agricultural neighbours both economically and politically. By the end of colonial rule the situation had reversed.

Large areas of grazing land were also turned into game reserves like the Maasai Mara and Samburu National Park in Kenya and Serengeti Park in Tanzania. Pastoralists were not allowed to enter these reserves; they could neither hunt animals nor graze their herds in these areas. Very often these reserves were in areas that had traditionally been regular grazing grounds for Maasai herds. The Serengeti National Park, for instance, was created over 14,760 km. of Maasai grazing land.



**Fig. 14** – Without grass, livestock (cattle, goats and sheep) are malnourished, which means less food available for families and their children. The areas hardest hit by drought and food shortage are in the vicinity of Amboseli National Park, which last year generated approximately 240 million Kenyan Shillings (estimated \$3.5 million US) from tourism. In addition, the Kilimanjaro Water Project cuts through the communities of this area but the villagers are barred from using the water for irrigation or for livestock. Courtesy: The Maasai Association.





**Fig. 15** – The title Maasai derives from the word Maa. Maa-sai means 'My People'. The Maasai are traditionally nomadic and pastoral people who depend on milk and meat for subsistence. High temperatures combine with low rainfall to create conditions which are dry, dusty, and extremely hot. Drought conditions are common in this semi-arid land of equatorial heat. During such times pastoral animals die in large numbers. Courtesy: The Maasai Association.

### Source E

Pastoral communities elsewhere in Africa faced similar problems. In Namibia, in south-west Africa, the Kaokoland herders traditionally moved between Kaokoland and nearby Ovamboland, and they sold skin, meat and other trade products in neighbouring markets. All this was stopped with the new system of territorial boundaries that restricted movements between regions.

The nomadic cattle herders of Kaokoland in Namibia complained:

'We have difficulty. We cry. We are imprisoned. We do not know why we are locked up. We are in jail. We have no place to live ... We cannot get meat from the south ... Our sleeping skins cannot be sent out ... Ovamboland is closed for us. We lived in Ovamboland for a long time. We want to take our cattle there, also our sheep and goats. The borders are closed. The borders press us heavily. We cannot live.'

Statement of Kaokoland herders, Namibia, 1949.

Quoted in Michael Bollig, 'The colonial encapsulation of the north western Namibian pastoral economy', *Africa* 68 (4), 1998.

**Source F**

In most places in colonial Africa, the police were given instructions to keep a watch on the movements of pastoralists, and prevent them from entering white areas. The following is one such instruction given by a magistrate to the police, in south-west Africa, restricting the movements of the pastoralists of Kaokoland in Namibia:

'Passes to enter the Territory should not be given to these Natives unless exceptional circumstances necessitate their entering ... The object of the above proclamation is to restrict the number of natives entering the Territory and to keep a check on them, and ordinary visiting passes should therefore never be issued to them.'

'Kaokoveld permits to enter', Magistrate to Police Station Commanders of Outjo and Kamanjab, 24 November, 1937.

Source

The loss of the finest grazing lands and water resources created pressure on the small area of land that the Maasai were confined within. Continuous grazing within a small area inevitably meant a deterioration of the quality of pastures. Fodder was always in short supply. Feeding the cattle became a persistent problem.

### 3.2 The Borders are Closed

In the nineteenth century, African pastoralists could move over vast areas in search of pastures. When the pastures were exhausted in one place they moved to a different area to graze their cattle. From the late nineteenth century, the colonial government began imposing various restrictions on their mobility.

Like the Maasai, other pastoral groups were also forced to live within the confines of special reserves. The boundaries of these reserves became the limits within which they could now move. They were not allowed to move out with their stock without special permits. And it was difficult to get permits without trouble and harassment. Those found guilty of disobeying the rules were severely punished.

Pastoralists were also not allowed to enter the markets in white areas. In many regions, they were prohibited from participating in any form of trade. White settlers and European colonists saw pastoralists as dangerous and savage – people with whom all contact had to be minimised. Cutting off all links was, however, never really possible, because white colonists had to depend on black labour to bore mines and, build roads and towns.

The new territorial boundaries and restrictions imposed on them suddenly changed the lives of pastoralists. This adversely affected

both their pastoral and trading activities. Earlier, pastoralists not only looked after animal herds but traded in various products. The restrictions under colonial rule did not entirely stop their trading activities but they were now subject to various restrictions.

### 3.3 When Pastures Dry

Drought affects the life of pastoralists everywhere. When rains fail and pastures are dry, cattle are likely to starve unless they can be moved to areas where forage is available. That is why, traditionally, pastoralists are nomadic; they move from place to place. This nomadism allows them to survive bad times and avoid crises.

But from the colonial period, the Maasai were bound down to a fixed area, confined within a reserve, and prohibited from moving in search of pastures. They were cut off from the best grazing lands and forced to live within a semi-arid tract prone to frequent droughts. Since they could not shift their cattle to places where pastures were available, large numbers of Maasai cattle died of starvation and disease in these years of drought. An enquiry in 1930 showed that the Maasai in Kenya possessed 720,000 cattle, 820,000 sheep and 171,000 donkeys. In just two years of severe drought, 1933 and 1934, over half the cattle in the Maasai Reserve died.

As the area of grazing lands shrank, the adverse effect of the droughts increased in intensity. The frequent bad years led to a steady decline of the animal stock of the pastoralists.

### 3.4 Not All were Equally Affected

In Maasailand, as elsewhere in Africa, not all pastoralists were equally affected by the changes in the colonial period. In pre-colonial times Maasai society was divided into two social categories – elders and warriors. The elders formed the ruling group and met in periodic councils to decide on the affairs of the community and settle disputes. The warriors consisted of younger people, mainly responsible for the protection of the tribe. They defended the community and organised cattle raids. Raiding was important in a society where cattle was wealth. It is through raids that the power of different pastoral groups was asserted. Young men came to be recognised as members of the warrior class when they proved their manliness by raiding the cattle of other pastoral groups and participating in wars. They, however, were subject to the authority of the elders.



**Fig. 16** – Note how the warriors wear traditional deep red shukas, brightly beaded Maasai jewelry and carry five-foot, steel tipped spears. Their long pleats of intricately plaited hair are tinted red with ochre. As per tradition they face East to honour the rising sun. Warriors are in charge of society's security while boys are responsible for herding livestock. During the drought season, both warriors and boys assume responsibility for herding livestock. Courtesy: The Maasai Association.



*Fig. 17 - Even today, young men go through an elaborate ritual before they become warriors, although actually it is no longer common. They must travel throughout the section's region for about four months, ending with an event where they run to the homestead and enter with an attitude of a raider. During the ceremony, boys dress in loose clothing and dance non-stop throughout the day. This ceremony is the transition into a new age. Girls are not required to go through such a ritual. Courtesy: The Maasai Association.*

To administer the affairs of the Maasai, the British introduced a series of measures that had important implications. They appointed chiefs of different sub-groups of Maasai, who were made responsible for the affairs of the tribe. The British imposed various restrictions on raiding and warfare. Consequently, the traditional authority of both elders and warriors was adversely affected.

The chiefs appointed by the colonial government often accumulated wealth over time. They had a regular income with which they could buy animals, goods and land. They lent money to poor neighbours who needed cash to pay taxes. Many of them began living in towns, and became involved in trade. Their wives and children stayed back in the villages to look after the animals. These chiefs managed to survive the devastations of war and drought. They had both pastoral and non-pastoral income, and could buy animals when their stock was depleted.

But the life history of the poor pastoralists who depended only on their livestock was different. Most often, they did not have the resources to tide over bad times. In times of war and famine, they lost nearly everything. They had to go looking for work in the towns. Some eked out a living as charcoal burners, others did odd jobs. The lucky could get more regular work in road or building construction.

The social changes in Maasai society occurred at two levels. First, the traditional difference based on age, between the elders

and warriors, was disturbed, though it did not break down entirely. Second, a new distinction between the wealthy and poor pastoralists developed.

## Conclusion

So we see that pastoral communities in different parts of the world are affected in a variety of different ways by changes in the modern world. New laws and new borders affect the patterns of their movement. With increasing restrictions on their mobility, pastoralists find it difficult to move in search of pastures. As pasture lands disappear grazing becomes a problem, while pastures that remain deteriorate through continuous over grazing. Times of drought become times of crises, when cattle die in large numbers.

Yet, pastoralists do adapt to new times. They change the paths of their annual movement, reduce their cattle numbers, press for rights to enter new areas, exert political pressure on the government for relief, subsidy and other forms of support and demand a right in the management of forests and water resources. Pastoralists are not relics of the past. They are not people who have no place in the modern world. Environmentalists and economists have increasingly come to recognise that pastoral nomadism is a form of life that is perfectly suited to many hilly and dry regions of the world.



**Fig. 18 – A Raika shepherd on Jaipur highway.**  
*Heavy traffic on highways has made migration of shepherds a new experience.*

## Activities

1. Imagine that it is 1950 and you are a 60-year-old Raika herder living in post-Independence India. You are telling your grand-daughter about the changes which have taken place in your lifestyle after Independence. What would you say?
2. Imagine that you have been asked by a famous magazine to write an article about the life and customs of the Maasai in pre-colonial Africa. Write the article, giving it an interesting title.
3. Find out more about some of the pastoral communities marked in Figs. 11 and 13.

Activities

## Questions

1. Explain why nomadic tribes need to move from one place to another. What are the advantages to the environment of this continuous movement?
2. Discuss why the colonial government in India brought in the following laws. In each case, explain how the law changed the lives of pastoralists:
  - Waste Land rules
  - Forest Acts
  - Criminal Tribes Act
  - Grazing Tax
3. Give reasons to explain why the Maasai community lost their grazing lands.
4. There are many similarities in the way in which the modern world forced changes in the lives of pastoral communities in India and East Africa. Write about any two examples of changes which were similar for Indian pastoralists and the Maasai herders.



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Some chapters or sections draw substantially from: Peluso, Nancy, *Rich Forests, Poor People*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992 (IV: Section 4)

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# Notes

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