

Chapter- 3

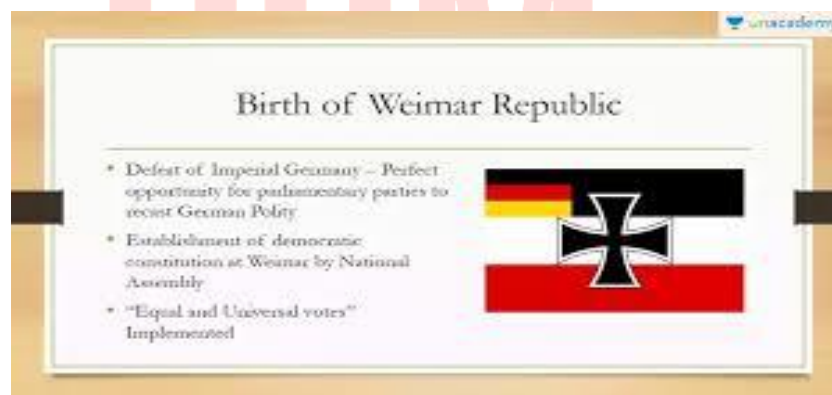
NAZISM AND RISE OF HITLER

STUDY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- Nazism was a political ideology which flourished in Germany and influenced world politics.
- In 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies. Hitler, his propaganda minister Goebbels and his entire family committed suicide.
- An International military Tribunal at Nuremberg was set up to prosecute Nazi war criminals for crimes against peace, for War crimes against Humanity.
- When genocidal war started in Germany under the shadow of the Second World War, it caused killings of millions of people in different ways.

BIRTH OF WEIMAR REPUBLIC



- Germany was a powerful empire in the early years of the 20th century. It fought the first world war (1914-1918) alongside the Austrian empire and against the allies.
- Germany made initial gains in the war by occupying France and Belgium. The Allies were, were strengthened by the US entry in 1917. They defeated Germany and the Central powers in Nov.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 was met at Weimar. Deputies were elected to the German Parliament or Reichstag.

PEACE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

The peace treaty at Versailles with the Allies was a harsh and humiliating peace.

- (i) Germany lost its overseas colonies, one tenth of its population and 13% of its territories.
- (ii) 75% Of its iron and 26% of its coal to France, Poland, Denmark and Lithuania.
- (iii) Germany forced to pay compensation amounting 6 billion dollars.

(iv) The armies also occupied the resource rich land to allied control.

THE EFFECTS OF WAR

- The First World War, both psychologically and financially affected Europe. Europe became a continent of debtors from creditors.
- The Weimar Republic carried the burden of war guilt and national humiliation. It was forced to pay a huge compensation.
- November Criminals: - Socialists, Catholics and Democrats who supported the Weimar Republic were criticized by the conservative nationalists.
- After the 1st world war, soldiers were placed above civilians and the media glorified their trench life.
- Aggressive war propaganda, national honors and support grew for conservative dictatorship.

The impact of the Treaty on Germany

- Germany fell behind on its reparation payments in 1922
- The Ruhr region was occupied by France and Belgium weakening German's economy even more.
- To pay the workers the German government printed more money which caused and hyperinflation (money became worthless)
- Germans blamed the Treaty for their problems.



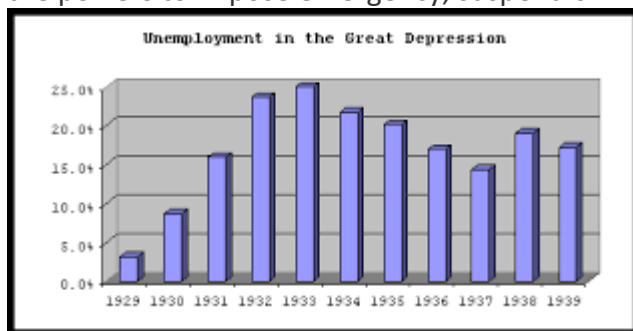
POLITICAL RADICALISM AND ECONOMIC CRISES

- The Weimar Republic birth coincided with the revolutionary uprising of the Spartacist League on the pattern of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia.
- They crushed the uprising with the help of a war veterans organisation called Free Corps. Communists and Socialists became enemies. Political radicalisation heightened by the economic crisis of 1923.
- Germany refused to pay, and the French occupied its leading industrial area, Ruhr, to claim their coal.
- 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.

THE YEAR OF DEPRESSION

- Depression started and over the next three years, between 1929 and 1932, the national income of the USA fell by half.

- The economy of Germany was the worst hit. Workers became jobless and went on streets with placards saying, 'Willing to do any work'. Youth indulged themselves in criminal activities.
- The middle class and small businessmen were filled with the fear of proletarianization, anxiety of being reduced to the ranks of the working
- The years between 1924 and 1928 saw some stability.
- The support of short-term loans was withdrawn when the Wall Street Exchange crashed in 1929. Great Economic class or unemployment. Politically also the Weimar Republic was fragile.
- The Weimar constitution due to some inherent defects made it unstable and vulnerable to dictatorship. One inherent defect was proportional representation. Another defect was Article 48, which gave the President
- the powers to impose emergency, suspend civil rights and rule by decree.



HITLER'S RISE TO POWER

- Hitler was born in Austria in 1889. He earned many medals for bravery in the First World War. The German defeat horrified him.
- The Treaty of Versailles made him furious. He joined the German Workers Party and renamed it National Socialist German Workers' Party.
- This later came to be known as the Nazi Party. Nazism became a mass movement only during the Great Depression. The Nazi propaganda stirred hopes of a better future.
- Hitler was a powerful and effective speaker. He promised the people a strong nation where all would get employment. His politics included the significant rituals and spectacle in mass mobilization. Nazi propaganda skilfully projected Hitler as a messiah, a saviour.



THE DESTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY

- Hitler achieved the highest position in the cabinet of ministries on 30 January 1933.
- Hitler now set out to dismantle the structures of democratic rule. The Fire Decree of 28 February 1933 suspended civic rights like freedom of speech, press and assembly.
- Communists were hurriedly packed off to new established concentration camps. All political parties were banned. Special surveillance and security forces were created to control the people and rule with impunity.

RECONSTRUCTION

- Economist Hjalmar Schacht was given the responsibility of economic recovery. He aimed at full production and full employment through a state funded work creation programme.
- Hitler 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, One leader.
- Hitler ignored the Schacht's advice of not to invest hugely in rearmament. He then took Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia. Hitler had the unspoken support of England. Hitler did not stop here. He chose war as a way out of the Economic Crisis.
- Resources were to be accumulated through expansion of territory. In September 1940 Germany invaded Poland.
- This started a war with France and England. USA resisted involvement in the war.
- But when Japan extended its support to Hitler and bombarded Pearl Harbour, the USA entered the war. The war ended in 1945 with Hitler's defeat and the US bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.

THE NAZI WORLD VIEW

- According to Nazi ideology there was no equality between people, but only racial hierarchy.

- The Nazis quickly began to implement their dream of creating an exclusive racial community of pure Germans by physically eliminating all those who were considered undesirable.
- They wanted a society of pure and healthy Nordic Aryans. Jews, Gypsies, blacks, Russians, Poles, even certain Germans and abnormal were considered undesirable.
- The other aspect of Hitler's ideology related to the geopolitical concept of Lebensraum, or living space. Jews were the worst sufferers in Nazi Germany.
- Hitler believed in pseudo-scientific theories of race which said that conversion was no solution to the Jewish problem. It had to be solved through their total elimination.
- From **1933–1938** — the Nazis terrorized, pauperised and segregated the Jews, compelling them to leave the country.
- The next phase, **1939–1945**, aimed at concentrating them in certain areas and then killing them in gas chambers in Poland.

THE RACIAL UTOPIA

Genocide and war became two sides of the same coin. Occupied Poland was divided. Poles were forced to leave their homes and properties behind to be occupied by ethnic Germans brought in from occupied Europe.

YOUTH IN NAZI GERMANY

Hitler felt that a strong Nazi society could be established by teaching Nazi ideology to children.

All schools were given German teachers. Children were divided into two groups — desirable and undesirable. Textbooks were rewritten, functions of sports in schools were to nurture the spirit of violence and aggression. Ten-year-olds had to enter Jungvolk. At 14, all boys joined 'Hitler Youth', they joined the Labour Service at 18.

THE NAZI CULT OF MOTHERHOOD

Women were told to be good mothers and rear pure blooded Aryan children. They were encouraged to produce many children. They had to be the bearers of the Aryan culture and race.

THE ART OF PROPAGANDA

The Nazi regime used language and media with care and often to great effect. They used films, pictures, radio, posters, etc. to spread hatred for Jews. Nazism worked on the minds of the people, tapped their emotions, and turned their hatred and anger at those marked as 'undesirable'.

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

People saw the world through Nazi eyes and spoke the Nazi language. At times even the Jews began to believe in the Nazi stereotypes about them.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

It was only after the war ended that people came to know about what had happened. The Jews wanted the world to know about the atrocities and sufferings they had endured during the Nazi killing operations. They just wanted to live, even if it was for a few hours, to tell the world about the Holocaust.

