

03. Nazism and the Rise of Hitler

01. Who was Helmuth?

Helmuth was an 11-year-old German boy who overheard his parents' discussion that whether the time had come to kill the entire family or his father should alone commit suicide.

02. What was the ambition of Hitler?

Hitler's determination was to make Germany into a mighty power and his ambition was to conquer all of Europe.

03. What is Nazism?

Nazism was not one or two isolated acts. It was a system, a structure of ideas about the world and politics.

04. Why the International Military Tribunal formed or set-up after the Second World War?

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 came to be called Crimes Against Humanity, raised serious moral and ethical questions and invited worldwide condemnation.

05. What is Genocidal War?

Killing on large scale leading to destruction of large sections of people.

06. How did the Nazi kill the innocent people?

Nazis devised an unprecedented means of killing people, that is, by gassing them in various killing centres like Auschwitz.

07. What was the attitude of the Allied powers at the Nuremberg Tribunal?

OR

Why the Allies avoid harsh punishment to Germany?

- 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 avoided harsh punishment to Germany because they did not want it to repeat the mistake done after the First World War by being harsh to Germany that gave rise to the ideology of Nazism under Hitler. They were conscious about another destructive word that could erase humanity.

Session 1-

01. What was the German parliament called?

Reichstag.

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02. Why was the Weimar government not received well by its own people?

The Weimar Republic 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 adversaries with the Allies was a harsh and humiliating peace.

03. Name the peace treaty signed by Germany with allies at the end of the First World War.

The peace treaty at Versailles.

04. The Treaty of Versailles was humiliating on Germans. Give three examples.

OR

What was the guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles?

OR

Why the Germans held the new Weimar Republic responsible for the defeat and disgrace after the First World War?

- Germany lost its overseas colonies, a tenth of its population, 13% of its territory, 75% of its iron and 26% of its coal to France Poland Denmark and Lithuania.
- The Allied powers demilitarized 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 the compensation amounting to £6 billion.
- The Allied armies also occupied the Rhineland for much of 1920s. Many Germans held the new Weimar Republic responsible for not only the defeat in the war but this disgrace Versailles.

05. Who was the emperor of Germany during the First World War?

King Wilhelm 2. He fled to Holland after getting defeated in the First World War.

06. Who were termed as November criminals?

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".

07. What was the impact or effect of the First World War on Europe?

- 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.
- 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.

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- Democracy was indeed a young and fragile idea, which could not survive the instabilities of Interwar Europe.

08. What was the economic crisis of 1923 and how it affects Germany?

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 in July 353,000, in August 4,621,000 marks and at 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.

09. What did France do when Germany had refused to pay its gold reserves in 1923?

In 1923, Germany refused to pay and the French occupied its leading industrial area Ruhr to claim their coal.

10. What is hyperinflation?

Hyperinflation is a situation when prices increase phenomenally high.

11. Why did USA introduce the Dawes Plan?

Germany did not pay war reparation to France, which then occupied Ruhr. Germany resisted and printed paper currency. The value of German mark gradually fell. The America intervened and introduced the Dawes Plan, which reworked the term of reparation payment to ease the financial burden of Germany.

12. What was the Wall Street Exchange?

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

13. How did the depression affect the US economy?

- 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.

14. How did the depression affect the German economy?

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- 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.
- The number of unemployed touched an unprecedented 6 million.
- 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 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.
- 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.

15. The Weimar Constitution had some inherent defects. Explain.

- 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.

16. What is Proletarianisation?

To become impoverished to the level of working classes.

Session 2-

01. Explain how was the Nazi Party formed?

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

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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.

02. How did Nazi become a mass movement?

During the Great Depression, 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.

03. How was Hitler projected by the Nazi propaganda?

Nazi propaganda skilfully projected Hitler as a messiah, a saviour, as someone who had arrived to deliver people from their distress.

04. Highlight the five events of 1933 that led to the destruction of democracy in Germany?

OR

How democracy was destroyed in Germany?

- On 30 January 1933, President Hindenburg offered the Chancellorship, the highest position in the cabinet of ministers, to Hitler.
- 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 archenemies, the Communists, most of whom were hurriedly packed off to the newly established concentration camps.
- 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.

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07. State the ways in which Nazi State established total control over its people.

Three ways in which Nazi State established total control over its people were as follows:

- All political parties and trade unions were banned except for the Nazi party and its affiliated.
- 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.

08. Name the country occupied by Germany under the slogan “One People, One Empire, One Leader”.

Austria and Czechoslovakia.

09. What was Hitler’s aim in conquering Eastern Europe? What was its result?

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.

10. Name the place where Soviet Red Army inflicted a crushing defeat on Germany?

Stalingrad

11. Why did USA enter the Second World War and how it ends?

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.

Session 3-

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01. The Nazi established a racial state once they came to power. Justify the statement.

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 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.

02. Who were called as “Desirables” and “Undesirables” in Nazi Germany?

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Undesirables - 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.

Session 4-

01. What happened to schools in Nazi Germany?

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.

02. What was the condition of women in Nazi Germany?

- Children in Nazi Germany were repeatedly told that women were radically different from men.
- 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.

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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 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'.

03. What was mass killing? For whom were the words 'Final Solution' used?

Nazis never used the words 'kill' or 'murder' in their official communications. Mass killings were termed special treatment, final solution (for the Jews), euthanasia (for the disabled), selection and disinfections. 'Evacuation' meant deporting people to gas chambers. The gas chambers were called? They were labelled 'disinfection-areas', and looked like bathrooms equipped with fake showerheads.

04. Name the most infamous movie about the Jews.

The Eternal Jew.

Session 5-

01. How did the common people react to Nazism?

The common people reacted to Nazism in the following ways:

- 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.

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- 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.

02.What was the Holocaust?

The Holocaust was the genocide of European Jews during Second World War.

Between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews across German occupied Europe, around two thirds of European Jewish population was killed.

- The End -

Sources: NCERT Textbook – India and the Contemporary World – I (Class 9)

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