

3. Nazism and the Rise of Hitler

NCERT Text book questions:

1. Describe the problems faced by the Weimar Republic.

- § A National Assembly met at Weimar and established a democratic constitution with a federal structure at the end of First World War in Germany.
- § The Weimar Republic faced many problems since its inception. Many Germans held the new Weimar Republic responsible for not only the defeat in the war but the disgrace at Versailles.
- § The Weimar Republic inherited a nation which was just defeated in war and financially crippled. It was forced to accept the treaty of Versailles with harsh and humiliating terms. Germany was forced to pay compensation and damages to allied nations in many ways.
- § The Weimar Republic's economic reforms like printing of enormous paper currency in 1923 led to unimaginable inflation with consequent disastrous consequences. The Great Economic Depression of 1929-1932 worsened the situation as aid from USA had stopped.
- § The Weimar constitution had some inherent defects, which made it unstable and vulnerable to dictatorship.

2. Discuss why Nazism became popular in Germany by 1930.

- § Nazism became popular in Germany by 1930
- § Nazis capitalised on the humiliation which many Germans felt at the end of First World War and unjust provisions of treaty of Versailles.
- § Economically, the First World War ruined Germany and Great Depression worsened the situation leading to unemployment and inflation. The propaganda of Nazis played in the mind of people who thought that Nazis are the ones who can improve their situation.
- § The treaty of Versailles and consequent loss of German colonies, temporary loss of mineral rich Rhine land, payment of damages fuelled sense of anger, bitterness and revenge amongst Germans. Nazis not only promised better future but also to restore lost glory.
- § The inherent weakness of Weimar Republic made it susceptible for intrigues and conspirational activities of Nazis.
- § Threat of communism was a contributory factor in the rise of popularity of Nazis.

- § Failure of Socialists and communists to put up a united front against Nazis also contributed to the growth of Nazis.
- § Hitler's personality and his good oratory skills mesmerised Germans who believed that he can make Germany great again.

3. What are the peculiar features of Nazi thinking?

The peculiar thinking of Nazis were:

- § The people exist for the state rather than state for the people.
- § There was no equality between people, but only a racial hierarchy. The Aryans were at the top, while Jews were located at the lowest rung.
- § Jews, Gypsies and blacks living in Germany considered as inferior who threatened the purity of Aryans. Jews were terrorised, pauperised, segregated and compelled to live a life of extreme misery. Later they were sent concentration camps and even killed in gas chambers.
- § They believed in extreme nationalism and glorified war. They aimed at uniting all Germans and conquering territories for creating more living space for Germans.
- § Young children were indoctrinated with Nazi ideology. They were taught to be loyal, submissive, hate Jews and worship Hitler.
- § Women were regarded as radically different from men. Women 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.

4. Explain why Nazi propaganda was effective in creating a hatred for Jews?

Nazi propaganda was effective in creating a hatred for Jews because:

- § 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.
- § Many Germans blamed Jews for defeat in World War-I and miseries of German people.
- § World War-I and Great Depression brought untold miseries, inflation and unemployment to the people. Jews were mainly engaged in trade and commerce and considered as affluent section of society. Nazis projected Jews as pests and rodents living off society. This struck a chord with deprived and unemployed sections of society.
- § Propaganda films were made to create hatred for Jews. The most infamous film was The Eternal Jew. Orthodox Jews were stereotyped

and marked.

- § Jews lived separately in marked areas called Ghettos. They became easy targets.
- § Nazism worked on the minds of the people, tapped their emotions, and turned their hatred and anger at those marked as 'undesirable'.

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?

Role of Women in Nazi Society:

- § Girls had to maintain the purity of the race, look after the home, and teach their children Nazi values.
- § They had to be the bearers of the Aryan culture and race.
- § Women were told that they had to become good mothers and rear pure-blooded Aryan children.
- § Women who bore racially undesirable children were punished and those who produced racially desirable children were awarded. To encourage women to produce many children, Honour Crosses were awarded.
- § 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.

Role of Women during French Revolution	Role of women in Nazi society
(i) Women formed the deprived and unprivileged sections of society both during the time of French revolution and 20 th century Germany. They have no political rights. (ii) Women of lower classes were employed in small jobs with lower wages than men. They had no access to education and their role limited to house, family and bearing children. There was no equality of gender.	
French women played proactive role in French revolution. They had their own political clubs and organisations to voice their opinions. Main demand of French women was right to vote, political representation and equality of gender.	Nazi women had no freedom of speech, expression and association. Men and women are not treated as equal and equality of gender was treated as detrimental to society. Women role limited to house, family and bearing children.

Women role during French revolution was progressive and proactive	Nazi women role was of passive onlookers.
French women were free to choose their partners.	There was a code of conduct for women. They were not free to mix with Jews and other races.

6. In what ways did the Nazi state seek to establish total control over its people ?

Nazi state seek to establish total control over its people by:

- § Dismantling democratic institutions and establishing a totalitarian regime. Projecting democracy, socialism and communism as great enemies of nation.
- § Through the Fire Decree of 1933, Nazis indefinitely suspended civic rights like freedom of speech, press and assembly that had been guaranteed by the Weimar constitution.
- § In 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.
- § Full employment provided through a state-funded work-creation programme.
- § Glorifying war as a means of way out of economic crisis and creating living space for all Germans.
- § Blaming Jews for defeat in World War-I and targeting them for as their cause of misery of the people and undertaking systematic genocide against them.
- § Children were subjected to a process of Nazi schooling, a prolonged period of ideological training both inside and outside school.
- § Careful and deceptive use of propaganda machinery to control the minds and emotions of the people.

Some other important questions:

1. Treaty of Versailles was harsh and humiliating for Germany. Discuss?

- § The Treaty of Versailles was signed between the victorious powers or the Allies and Germany after World War-I.
- § The War Guilt Clause held Germany responsible for the war and damages the Allied countries suffered.
- § Germany was dispossessed of their colonies and were distributed among Allies.
- § The Allied Powers demilitarised Germany to weaken its power.
- § Germany was forced to pay compensation amounting to £6 billion
- § The Allied armies also occupied the resource-rich Rhineland for much of the 1920s.
- § 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.

2. How did Treaty of Versailles contributed to the rise of Nazism?

- § The Treaty of Versailles was a dictated peace. The Weimar Republic was forced to sign the treaty.
- § The war guild clause, loss of German Territories and colonies were harsh and humiliating.
- § The treaty demilitarised Germany to weaken its power.
- § The ceding of coal mines and return of Alsace-Lorraine and occupation of resource rich Rhine land aimed at weakening and de-industrialising Germany.
- § The clause of payment of war compensation further weakened the already crippled German economy.
- § The Treaty of Versailles was harsh and humiliating for Germans. This laid seeds of discontentment which was later exploited by Nazis.

3. How did the Great Economic Depression of 1929-1934 affected Germany?

- § 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.
- § 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.
- § 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.
- § It was during this period the Nazis, who were small group managed to get attention of the people to become a mass movement.

4. Write a brief note on 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.
- § Children were subjected to a process of Nazi schooling, a prolonged period of ideological training.
- § 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.
- § 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.

5. Nazis/Hitler sought to create pure German State. Justify giving examples?

Nazis/Hitler sought to create pure German State by:

- § Nazis physically eliminated Jews, Gypsies and blacks whom they considered undesirables. They had also eliminated Germans those were considered mentally and physically unfit and those regarded as impure.
- § Aryan women were not allowed to mingle with Jews, Poles and Russians. Those who maintained contact with Jews, Poles and Russians were paraded through the town with shaved heads and blackened faces.
- § 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.
- § Under the shadow of the Second World War, Germany had waged a genocide war. From 1941 onwards Jews from various Ghettos and concentration camps were brought to gas chambers and killed.