

Social Science

(Chapter – 3) (Nazism and the Rise of Hitler) (India and the Contemporary World-I)

Question 1:

Describe the problems faced by the Weimer Republic.

Answer 1:

After the defeat of the imperial Germany at the end of the First World War, King Kaiser William II fled to Holland to save his life. Taking this opportunity, the Parliamentary Parties met at Weimer and established a Republic on November 1918 popularly known as Weimer Republic. This Republic was not received well by the Germans mainly because of the terms which the Republic was forced to accept by the Allied Forces after German's defeat in the First World War. The Republic had to face many problems, some of which are given below:

- The Republic was forced to sign a peace treaty at Versailles in June 1919. The terms and conditions of this peace treaty were too harsh and humiliating. According to this treaty Germany lost its overseas colonies, 13 percent of its territories, 75 percent of its iron and 26 percent of its coal reserves. Also the Allied Powers demilitarized Germany to weaken its powers. So, this Republic was defamed and became unpopular among its own people from the very beginning.
- Germany had to agree to pay huge war compensation to 6 billion pounds to the Allied Countries. With all its resources, the Republic could never pay such a huge amount and so, many Germans held the new Weimer Republic responsible for agreeing to these conditions.
- Because of its weak position, those who supported the republic like - Socialists, Catholics, Democrats became easy targets of attack in the Conservative Nationalist Circles.
- Because of the opposition of the Allied Powers, Germans could not become a member of the League of Nations till 1925. Such a thing created most resentment in Germany and particularly for the Weimer Republic.
- Germany had fought the war largely on loans and had to pay war reparations in gold. With the depleted gold reserves, scarce resources and crippled economic conditions the Republic was no more able to pay war compensations. Under this situation the new Republic had to face a tough opposition from the neighbouring countries as they occupied its leading industrial area, Ruhr to claim the coal reserves.
- All in all there was devastation, starvation, unemployment, total despair among the youth and humiliation everywhere. The country was passing through a situation of hyperinflation and the Republic failed to solve the economic problems of the people. Last but not the least; the German economy was the worst hit by the world-wide economic crisis of 1929 - 1933.

So, the Weimer Republic had to face too many difficulties since its inception. Indeed the Republic was too young and vulnerable to survive so many problems within and outside the country and ultimately, it failed when Hitler sealed its fate in 1933.

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Question 2:

Discuss why Nazism became popular in Germany in 1930.

Answer 2:

The story of the Rise of Nazism in Germany is not limited to a few specific events or causes. It is the result of the working of an elaborate and frightening system which operated at different levels. Nevertheless, some of the main causes of the Rise and Popularity of Nazism in Germany can be mentioned as follows:

Treaty of Versailles: Germany was forced to sign a peace treaty at Versailles after her defeat in the First World War. This treaty was so harsh and humiliating for the Germans which they could not accept by heart and ultimately led to the rise of Hitler's Nazism in Germany. Because of the various terms of this treaty Germany had to sacrifice much of its territories, colonies, natural resources, military power and also had to pay huge war compensation. This created a feeling of sheer dissatisfaction among the people of Germany who visualized Hitler of the Nazi Party as the symbol of revival of the lost glories of Germany.

Economic Crises: The Nazis did not have much popularity until the early 1930s. The German economy was the worst hit by the by the world-wide economic crisis of 1929 - 1933. The country was passing through a situation of hyperinflation. It was during this period of Great Depression when Nazism became a mass movement.

Political Turmoil: There were many political parties in Germany such as Nationalists, Royalists, Communists, Social Democrats etc. although none of them was enjoying majority in the democratic government. The Party strife was at its peak. This along with various other crises within the country continuously weakened the Republic government and ultimately giving an opportunity to the Nazis to capture the power.

Germany had no faith in Democracy: After the defeat of Germany at the end of the First World War, 'Democracy' was totally new for the Germans. They had no faith in Parliamentary institutions. Democracy was indeed a young and fragile idea, which could not survive the various problems which were prevailing in Germany at that time. People preferred prestige and glory to liberty and freedom. They supported Hitler whole-heartedly as he got the ability to fulfill their dreams.

Failure of Weimar Republic: After the defeat in the First World War and Versailles Treaty there was devastation, starvation, unemployment, total despair among the youth and complete confusion everywhere in Germany. Weimar Republic failed to solve the economic crises of the country. This provided a golden opportunity for the Nazis to launch a campaign in its favour.

Hitler's Personality: Hitler was a powerful speaker, an able organizer, resourceful person and a man of actions. He could mobilize the mass in his favour by his passionate words. He promised to build a strong nation, undo the injustice of the Versailles Treaty and restore the dignity of the German people. In fact, his personality and actions contributed maximum to the popularity of Nazism in Germany.

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Question 3:

What are the peculiarities of Nazi thinking?

Answer 3:

After the defeat in the First World War Germany had to sign a harsh and humiliating treaty with the Allies. The treaty multiplied the problems an already defeated Germany many times and also a political uncertainty in the country. As a result, Hitler rose to the power. He set up the Nazi party and succeeded in capturing the power and establishing the dictatorship of the Nazi party in Germany. The dictatorial rule of the Nazi party under the leadership of Hitler is termed as Nazism. Nazi ideology was synonymous with Hitler's worldview. The chief features of Nazi thinking were as under:

- The state is above all. All powers should be vested in the State. People exist for the State, not the State for the people.
- It was in favour of ending all types of parliamentary institutions and glorified the rule of a great leader.
- It was in favour of crushing all types of party formations and opposition.
- It was in favour of rooting out liberalism, socialism and communism.
- It preached hatred for the Jews whom they thought, were responsible for the economic misery of the Germans.
- The Nazi party considered Germany superior to all other nations and wanted to have her influence all over the world.
- It wanted to mobilize the private and State efforts for her development of agriculture and industries etc.
- It wanted to denounce the disgracing Treaty of Versailles.
- It extolled war and glorified the use of force.
- It aimed at increasing the German Empire and acquiring all the colonies snatched away from her.
- It dreamt of creating a Racial State of 'Pure Germans' or 'Nordic Aryans' by eliminating all others who were undesirable to them.

Question 4:

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

Answer 4:

Soon after assuming power in Germany in 1933 Hitler launched a vicious propaganda against the Jews which proved quite successful in creating hatred for the Jews. Some of the reasons for the success of the propaganda against the Jews were the following:

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- a) Hitler had already created a niche for himself in the minds of German people who began to consider him as their Messiah. They used to believe Hitler just by his words. Thus, the personality cult created by Hitler did all the wonder and the Nazi propaganda against the Jews proved successful.
- b) The traditional Christian hatred for the Jews, because they were accused to have killed Christ, was fully exploited by the Nazis in order to make the Germans pre-judicial against Jews.
- c) The Nazis used the language and media effectively with great care. The racial theory put forward by the Nazis that the Jews belonged to a lower race and as such were undesirable.
- d) The Nazis injected hatred against the Jews even in the minds of the children from the very beginning during the days of their schooling. The teachers who were Jews were dismissed and Jews children were thrown out of the schools. Such methods and new ideological training to the new generation of children went a long way in making the Nazi's propaganda quite effective in creating hatred for the Jews.
- e) Propaganda films were made to create hatred for the Jews. Orthodox Jews were stereotyped and marked. For example, one such film was '*The Eternal Jew*'.

Question 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.

Answer 5:

In Nazi Germany women were considered to be different from men. The Nazis did not believe in equal rights for men and women. They felt that equal rights would destroy the society. Young women were told to become good mothers, look after the home and rear pure — blooded Aryan children. Women who deviated from the prescribed code of conduct were severely punished. In direct contrast to the women in Nazi Germany, women in France asserted themselves during the French revolution. Numerous women's clubs were formed. Women demanded equal rights as men. The government introduced laws to improve the lives of women. Education was made compulsory for girls. Unlike Nazi women who were confined to their homes, the French women were given freedom to work and run businesses. The French women also won the right to vote which was denied to their Nazi counterparts.

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Question 6:

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

Answer 6:

Adolph Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany in 1933. He passed many laws to gain total control over his people. The Fire Decree was passed on 28th February, 1933.

- The Decree abolished freedom of speech, press and assembly
- Concentration Camps were set up and the Communist were sent there. The Enabling Act was passed on 3rd March, 1933
- All other political parties were banned.
- Nazi Party took complete control the economy, media, army and judiciary.
- Hitler became a Dictator

Special Surveillance and Security forces were formed to control the people. The Police, the Storm Troopers, the Gestapo, the SS, and the Security Service were given extraordinary powers to control and order the society in ways the Nazis wanted. The police forces acquired powers to rule with impunity and soon the Nazi State established total control over its people.