

SOCIAL SCIENCE (HISTORY)

CHAPTER 03: NAZISM AND THE RISE OF HITLER

(Notes)

Important Years and Events

1914	First World War begins
1918	Weimer Republic is established
1919	Treaty of Versailles was signed by Germany. Hitler joins the 'National Socialist Germany Workers Party'
1929	The Economic Depression occurs in U.S.A.
1933	a) President Roosevelt introduces the New Deal to deal with the Economic Depression. b) Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.
1934	Hitler becomes President of Germany
1935	a) Italy attacks Ethiopia b) Anglo-German Naval Agreement signed between Britain and Germany
1936	a) A new constitution is introduced by Stalin b) Hitler occupies the Rhineland. c) Civil War starts in Spain

Glossary

Dictatorship	It is a form of government in which a person or a group of persons possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations.
Nazism	A political system introduced by Hitler in Germany. Akin to dictatorship and fascism, it also propagated extreme hatred against the Jews
Nazi	The short form of Nationalist Socialist German Workers Party. Formed by Hitler in 1921, it propagated Nazism.
Axis Powers	Italy, Germany and Japan formed the axis powers
Allied Powers	Britain, France, Russia and U.S.A. were the allied powers
Second World War	The global war which took place from September 1939 to May 1945 in which over 50 million people were killed and many cities were reduced to rubble
The great Depression	A worldwide economic slump lasting from 1929 to 1935. During these years, trade between nations dropped and around 25 million people lost their jobs
Pearl Harbor	Situated on the Hawaiian island of Honolulu, it was the main base of the US pacific fleet. Japanese planes launched from aircraft carriers attacked the base on 7th December 1941. They destroyed 120 aircraft and killed 2,400 people
Gestapo	Short for Geheime Staatspolizei, the secret state police in Nazi Germany. It had the power to arrest people without trial and torture and kill them. As a result, they were the most hated and feared organisation in Nazi-occupied Europe
Holocaust	It comes from the Greek word holos and kautos which literally means 'completely burnt'. It is used to describe the persecution and mass murder of Jews by German Nazis between 1933 and 1945
Semite	Usually someone who belongs to any of the peoples of South-west Asia, especially Jews and Arabs. In Nazi Germany the word was used to describe only Jewish people
Reichstag	The name given to the German Parliament
Reparation	Making up for a wrong done

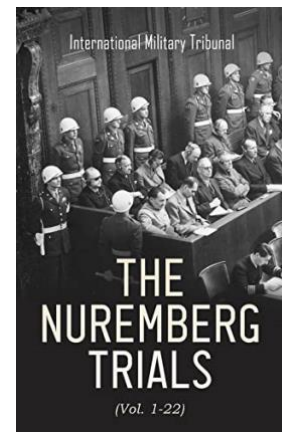
Wall Street Exchange	The name of the world's biggest stock exchange located in the U.S.A.
Propaganda	Specific type of message directly aimed at influencing the opinion of people through the use of posters, films and speeches
Concentration camp	A camp where people were isolated and detained without the due process of law
Persecution	Systematic, organized punishment of those belonging to a group or religion
Jung volk	Nazi youth groups for children below 14 years of age

Genocidal war

- The killing of a selected racial group by the other. Under the shadow of the Second World War, Germany had waged a genocidal war against Jews.
- 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.

What was the International Military Tribunal?

- After the Second World War, the allied powers formed an international military court (Tribunal) at Nuremberg to punish Nazi war criminals.
- The Nuremberg Tribunal sentenced only eleven leading Nazis to death. Many others were imprisoned for life.



GERMANY IN THE WORLD WAR I

- Germany, a powerful empire fought the First World War (1914-1918) alongside the Austrian empire and Turkey and against the Allies (England, France and Russia.)
- All joined the war enthusiastically hoping to gain from a quick victory.
- Germany made initial gains by occupying France and Belgium.
- But USA's entry changed the course of the war.
- However, the Allies won the War by defeating Germany and the Central Powers in November 1918.



BIRTH OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC AND ITS FAILURE

- 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.

- The Weimar constitution had some inherent defects, which made it unstable and vulnerable to dictatorship. One defect was proportional representation. This made achieving a majority by any one party a near impossible task, which led 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 (governments) lasting on an average of 239 days, and a liberal use of Article 48. People lost confidence in the democratic parliamentary system, which seemed to offer no solutions except Hitler.

The Weimar Constitution: Article 48

The Reich President may, if the public safety and order in the German Reich are considerably disturbed or endangered, take such measures as are necessary to restore public safety and order. If necessary, he may intervene with the help of the armed forces. For this purpose he may suspend, either partially or wholly, the Fundamental Rights (personal freedom from arrest, sanctity of home, secrecy of telephone and postal communications, free speech and free press, freedom of assembly and association, and protection of private property)...On demand of the Reichstag these measures shall be repealed.

TREATY OF VERSAILLES, 1919

(A Peace treaty signed between allied powers and Germany)

- Germany lost its overseas colonies, a tenth of its population and 13 per cent of its territories.
- 75 per cent of its iron mines and 26 per cent of its coal mines were given to France, Poland, Denmark and Lithuania.
- The Allied Powers demilitarised Germany to (not to possess more than one lakh soldiers) weaken its power.
- Germany was made responsible for the I World 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.



Advocates denounced the German government leaders who signed the Armistice on November 11, 1918, as the "November Criminals" (German: Novemberversbrecher).

November criminals

Many Germans held the new Weimar Republic responsible for not only the defeat in the war but the disgrace at Versailles. 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 as the November criminals.

THE EFFECTS OF THE WORLD WAR I IN GERMANY

(i) Psychological Effect (social effect)

- The First World War left a deep imprint on European society. Soldiers were placed above civilians.
- Politicians and media laid great stress on the need for men to be aggressive, strong and masculine.
- Aggressive war propaganda and national honour led to popular support for conservative dictatorships

(ii) Political Radicalism(Political effect)

- The birth of the Weimar Republic coincided with the revolutionary uprising of the Spartacist League on the pattern of the Revolution in Russia.
- The political atmosphere in Berlin was charged with demands for the Soviet-style government. But the uprising was suppressed with the help of a war veterans organisation called Free Corps.



(iii) Economic crisis (Hyperinflation)

- Germany had fought the war largely on loans and had to pay war reparations in gold. This depleted gold reserves.
- In 1923 Germany refused to pay so the French occupied its leading industrial area, Ruhr.
- Germany 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 August 4,621,000 marks and in December 98,860,000 marks.
- This crisis came to be known as hyperinflation, a situation when prices rise phenomenally high.

(iv) Economic Depression and its impact on Germany

- The years between 1924 and 1928 USA gave short-term loans to Germany. This support was withdrawn when the Wall Street Exchange crashed in 1929 in the USA.
- 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 in the USA.
- The German economy was the worst hit by the economic crisis. By 1932, industrial production was reduced to 40 per cent,



Workers lost their jobs, and a number of unemployed touched an unprecedented 6 million.

- Germans hung placards around their necks saying, willing to do any work.
- Unemployed youths took to criminal activities and total despair became commonplace. The middle classes, especially salaried employees and pensioners, saw their savings diminish when the currency lost its value.

(v) Proletarianisation (Fear of becoming poor)

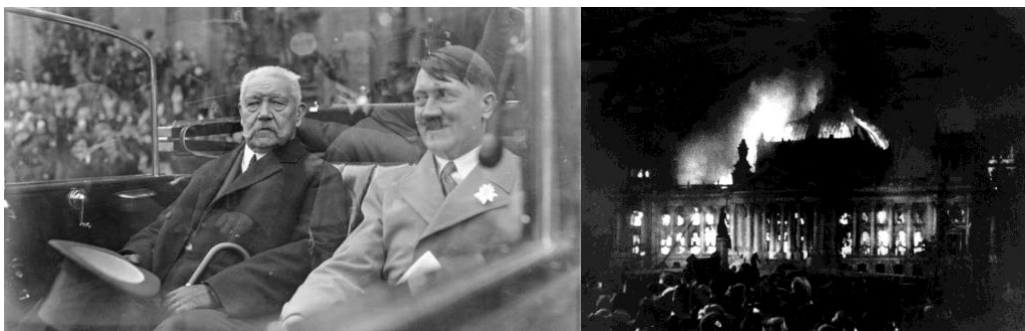
- The rich, small businessmen, middle class and self-employed persons developed a fear that at any time they would become poor and come to the street in poverty.
- This group began to support Hitler and his ideas.

Hitler's Promises

- Hitler promised to build Germany into a strong nation.
- Hitler promised to undo the injustice of the Versailles Treaty and restore the dignity of the German people.
- He promised employment for those looking for work.
- He promised to secure the future of the youth.
- He promised to weed out all foreign influences and resist all foreign conspiracies against Germany.

HITLER'S DESTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY

- On 30 January 1933, President Hindenburg offered the Chancellorship to Hitler. Having acquired power, Hitler set out to dismantle the structures of democratic rule.
- A mysterious fire that broke out in the German Parliament building and the Fire Decree of 28 February 1933 was passed which indefinitely suspended civic rights like freedom of speech, press and assembly.



- 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. The socialists, Democrats and Catholics also were arrested and killed.
- On 3 March 1933, the famous Enabling Act was passed. This Act established the dictatorship in Germany. It gave Hitler all powers to 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,

the Gestapo (secret state police), the SS (the protection squads), criminal police and the Security Service (SD). The police forces arrested, tortured and killed the undesirables.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE GERMAN ECONOMY BY HITLER

- Hitler assigned the responsibility of economic recovery to the economist Hjalmar Schacht who provided 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 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 and France.
- These quick successes at home and abroad seemed to reverse the destiny of the country. Hitler invested hugely in rearmament as the state still ran on deficit financing.
- Hitler chose war as the way out of the approaching economic crisis which led to II World War.



GERMANY IN THE WORLD WAR II

- In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. This started a war with France and England. In September 1940, a Tripartite act was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan, strengthening Hitler's claim to international power.
- Hitler 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.
- 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 Harbour, 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 and Nagasaki in Japan.

HITLER'S WORLDVIEW/ NAZI IDEOLOGY/ NAZI WORLDVIEW

(Peculiar features of Nazi world view)

- According to Nazi ideology, 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.
- The other ideology of Hitler's was *Lebensraum* or living space. He believed that new territories had to be acquired for settlement. This would enhance the area of the mother country, and the material resources to be used for Germany.
- 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.
- Under the Euthanasia Programme, Helmut's father along with other Nazi officials had killed many Germans who were considered mentally or physically unfit.
- Many Gypsies and blacks living in Nazi Germany were considered as racial inferiors. They were widely persecuted. Even Russians and Poles were considered subhuman and killed.
- Jews remained the worst sufferers in Nazi Germany. They had been stereotyped as killers of Christ and usurers. They lived in separately marked areas called ghettos. They were often persecuted through periodic organised violence and expulsion from the land.

THE RACIAL UTOPIA AND KILLING OF POLISH CIVILIANS

- Genocide and war became two sides of the same coin in Germany. 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
- 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.

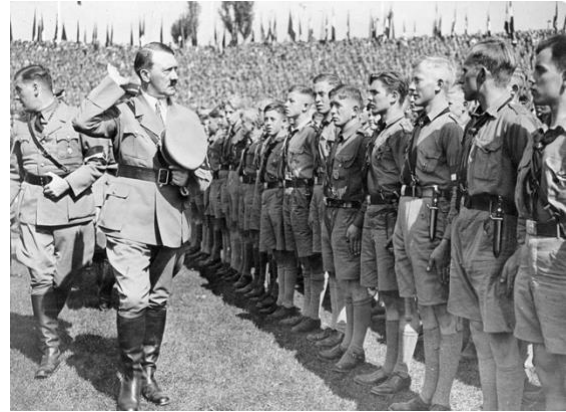
YOUTH IN NAZI GERMANY / WHAT HAPPENED IN SCHOOLS UNDER NAZISM?

- 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.
- 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 in 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 organizations were made responsible for educating German youth in the spirit of National Socialism.

- 10-year-olds had to enter **Jungvolk**.
- At 14, all boys had to join the Nazi youth organization called **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.



THE NAZI CULT OF MOTHERHOOD

- 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.
- 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 concessions in shops, 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 and blackened faces.



THE ART OF PROPAGANDA

(why was Nazi propaganda effective in creating a hatred for Jews)

- The Nazi regime used language and media with care, and often to great effect. Nazis never used the words kill or murder in their official communications. Mass killings were termed *special treatment, final solution, euthanasia, selection and disinfection*.
- 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.
- Orthodox Jews were shown with flowing beards wearing kaftans. They were referred to as vermin, rats and pests. Their movements were compared to those of rodents.

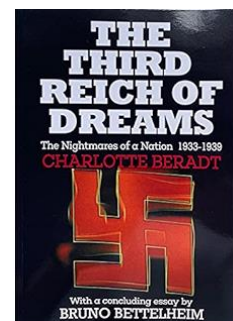
How did the common people react to Nazism?

- Many people 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 believed that 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.



What did Jews feel in Nazi Germany?

- Charlotte Beradt secretly recorded Jew'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 them even in their dreams. Jews died many deaths even before they reached the gas chamber.



HOLOCAUST

(The prosecution and mass murder of Jews by German Nazis between 1933-45)

- Jews wanted the world to remember the atrocities and sufferings they had endured during the Nazi killing operations. They collected and preserved documents 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.
- The history and the memory of the Holocaust live on in memoirs, fiction, documentaries, poetry, memorials and



Topic: Nazism and the Rise of Hitler

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museums in many parts of the world today. These are a tribute to those who resisted Nazism and a warning to those who watched the Nazi crimes in silence.