

READING MATERIAL

- In May 1945, German surrendered to the Allies.
- (Allies - the allied powers were initially led by the UK and France. In 1941 they were joined by the USSR and USA. They fought against the axis powers, namely Germany, Italy and Japan.)
- Propaganda minister of Hitler Goebbels and his entire family committed suicide in his Berlin bunker, in April. At the end of the war, an international military tribunal at Nuremberg was setup to prosecute Nazi war criminals for crimes against peace, for war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Under the shadow of 2nd world war, Germany waged a genocidal war, which resulted in mass murder of selected groups of innocent civilians of Europe, including 6million Jews, 2lakh gypsies, 1million polish civilians, 70,000 Germans etc.
 - (Genocidal - killing on large scale leading to destruction of large sections of people)

Birth of Weimar Republic

- Germany fought the First World War (1914-1918) against the Austrian empire and against the allies (England, France and Russian). {Eventually, Europe drained all its resources and Germany made initial gains by occupying France and Belgium}. However, the allies strengthened by US entry in 1917 and won, defeating Germany and the Central powers in November 1918.
- A national assembly met at Weimar and established a democratic constitution with a federal structure. Deputies were elected to German parliament on the basis of equal and universal votes by all adults (including women).
- The Peace treaty at Versailles with the allies was a harsh and humiliating peace. Germany lost its colonies 1/10 of population, 13% territories 7.5% iron, 26% of coal to France, Poland, Denmark & Lithuania.
- Germany demilitarized by allied powers and responsible for the user and damages it was forced to pay 6 billion Euros as compensation.

Effects of war

- The war affected the entire continent both psychologically & financially. Weimar republic was forced to pay compensation. Those who supported them mainly socialists, Catholics & democrats become easy target of attack in the conservatives nationalist circles called the NOVEMBER CRIMINALS.
- After First World War soldiers were placed above civilians all over Europe. Politicians and media glorified the lives of soldiers.
- Aggressive war propaganda & national honour became centre stage for republic.

Political radicalism and economic crises:

- The birth of Weimar republic coincided with the revolutionary uprising of Spartacist league on the pattern of Bolshevik revolution in Russia.
- Socialists, Democrats & Catholics opposed the demands for soviet style governance and met in Weimar for democratic republic. The uprising of the spartacist was crushed with the help of war veteran organization called free corps
- Spartacists founded communist party of Germany. Political radicalization increased in Germany. The French occupied industrial area Ruhr of Germany when it refused to pay gold as war reparations.
- Hyper inflation occurred as Germany printed paper currency recklessly price rise was phenomenal. Finally America decided to bail out Germany & introduced the Dawes plan which reworked to ease the financial burden on Germany.

The Years of Depression

- The Years between 1924-1928 was stable. Germany was dependent on short term loans, largely from USA. But this support was withdrawn with the crash in 1929 of the Wall Street exchange. Germans economy hit badly and great economic depression started.
- By 1932, industrial production reduced to 40% due to which workers lost their jobs, hence no. of unemployed workers increased to 6 million. Economic crisis created deep anxieties and fears in people. Middle classes, salaried employees, pensioners, businessmen, retailers etc saw their earning got ruined. These sections were filled with fear of proletarianisation (to become impoverished to the level of working classes).
- Another defect was article 48, which gave the President the powers to impose emergency, suspended civil rights and rule by decree. Within its short life, the Weimar republic saw 20 different cabinets lasting on about 239 days and a liberal use of article 48.
- Still, the crisis could not be managed and people lost confidence in democratic parliamentary system.

Hitler's Rise to Power

- Adolf Hitler born in 1889 Austria, during 1st world war he enrolled for the army, acted as a messenger, becomes a Corporal. In 1919, he joined a small group called the German workers party. He took an organization and renamed it as national socialist German workers; came to know as Nazi party.
- Hitler planned to seize control of Bavaria, marched to Berlin and capture power in 1923 but failed. After 1929, banks collapsed and businesses shut down, lost their jobs and middle classes got threatened.
- In 1929, Nazi party got no more than 2.6% of votes in Reichstag German parliament but by 1932, it becomes largest party with 37% votes.

The Destruction of Democracy

- In 1933, President Hindenburg offered the chancellorship, (the highest position in cabinet of ministers) to Hitler. He set out to dismantle the structures of democratic rule.
- The first decree of 1933 suspended civic rights like freedom of speech, press and assembly that was guaranteed by Weimar constitution. Later in 1933, the famous enabling act was passed which established dictatorship in Germany.
- Hitler got powers to sideline parliament and rule by decree. All political parties and trade unions were banned except for Nazi party. The state established complete control over economy, media, army and judiciary.

Reconstruction

- Hitler assigned the responsibility of economic recovery to the economist Hjalmar Schacht who aimed at full production and full employment through state funded work-creation programme.
- He pulled out of the League of Nations in 1933, reoccupied in Rhineland in 1936 and integrated Austria and Germany in 1938 under the slogan **“one people one empire and one leader”**.
- Later, Hitler chose war as a way out of the economic crisis. Resources were to be accumulated through expansion of territory. In 1939, Germany invaded Poland and started a war with France and England. A tripartite pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan in 1940. He attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 meanwhile; USA had resisted involvement in the war.
- When Japan extended its support to Hitler and bombed US base at Pearl Harbor, US entered 2nd world war. It ended in May 1945 with Hitler's defeat and the US dropped atom bomb on Hiroshima in Japan.

The Nazi World View

- According to Nazi ideology, there was no equality between people but only a racial hierarchy. Hitler's racism borrowed from Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer according to which Nordic German Aryans were at the top, all other colored people in middle and Jews at the bottom.
- The other aspect of Hitler's ideology was related to geopolitical concept of Lebensraum, or living space. He believed in acquiring vast territories to spread the race of the Nordic German Aryans.

Establishment of Racial state

- Nazis began to implement their dream of creating a community of pure Germans by eliminating the “undesirable” ones in extended empire.
- The Jews, the Russians and the Poles, all of them are persecuted. Germany occupied Poland and parts of Russia, captured civilians worked as slave labour.
- Jews were stereotyped as killers of Christ and usurers. They were barred from owning land and persecuted through violence and expulsion from land.

- From 1933-1938, Jews were compelled to leave the country through different means of terror and segregation.

The Racial Utopia

- Nazis realized their murderous, racial ideal. Genocide and war became 2 sides of same coin. Occupied Poland was divided.
- General Government became the destination for all undesirables of the empire. It also served as killing fields for the Jews.

Youth in Nazi Germany

- Hitler felt that Strong Nazi society can only be established by teaching children Nazi ideology. Schools were cleansed and purified means teachers who were Jews were dismissed.
- Undesirable children like Jews, physically handicapped & gypsies were thrown out of schools and finally in 1940, they were taken to gas chambers.
- Racial Science was introduced to justify Nazi ideas of race in schools. Children were taught to hate Jews and worship Hitler.
- Ten-year olds had to enter Jungvolk. At 14 yrs of age, all boys had to join Nazi Youth Organization. After training, they had to join labour science and then to serve in armed forces.

The Nazi cult of motherhood

- Children were told that women were different from men and hence the fight for equal right was wrong and would destroy society.
- Boys were taught to be aggressive, masculine and steel-hearted while girls were told to become good mother and rear pure –blooded Aryan children.
- In 1933, women who bore undesirable children were punished and those who bore desirable ones were awarded and given other facilities.
- All Aryan women who deviated from the code of conduct were condemned and punished.

Art of Propaganda

- Nazi never used the words “kill” or “murder” in their official communication. Mass killings were termed special treatment, final solution (for Jews), euthanasia (for the disabled), selection and disinfections. Evacuation means deporting population to gas chambers.
- Nazi ideology began to spread everywhere through various means. People believed that Nazism would bring prosperity but many others were opposing Nazism, braving police repression and death.

Knowledge about the Holocaust

- After the war ended, Nazi practices trickled out Germany which was defeated. World came to know about horrors suffered by Jews and other undesirables.
- Jews wanted the world to remember the sufferings they had endured during Nazi killing operations also called Holocaust.

- When the war seemed lost, the Nazi leadership distributed petrol to its functionaries to destroy all incriminating evidences available in offices.