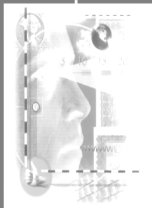


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The Destruction of Democracy: On 30th January, 1933, President Hindenburg offered the Chancellorship, the highest position in the cabinet ministers, to Hitler. The Nazis had managed to rally the conservatives to their cause. Having acquired power, Hitler set out to dismantle the structures of democratic rule.

Suspension of Civic Rights: A mysterious fire that broke out in the German Parliament building in February facilitated his move in removing the democratic structures in Germany. Hitler indefinitely suspended civic rights like freedom of speech press and assembly by the Fire Decree of 28th February, 1933.

Elimination of Communists: The communists were the arch-enemies of Hitler. After suspension of civic rights, Hitler turned on the Communists. Most of them were sent to the newly established concentration camps. The repression of the Communists was severe. However, they were only one among the 52 types of victims persecuted by the Nazis across the country.

The Enabling Act: On 3rd March, 1933, the famous Enabling Act was passed which gave Hitler all powers to sideline Parliament and rule by decree. This act established dictatorship in Germany. All political parties and trade unions (except the Nazi Party and its affiliates) were banned. The state established complete control over the economy, media, army and judiciary. The Nazis created special surveillance and security forces to control German society. Apart from the already existing regular police in green uniform and the SA or the Storm Troopers, the Nazi government introduced Gestapo (the secret state police), the SS (protection squads), criminal police and the Security Service (SD).

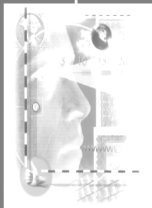
Extra-Constitutional Powers of Nazi Government: The extra-constitutional power of the newly organised forces gave the Nazi state its reputation as the most dreaded criminal state. People were detained in Gestapo torture chambers, rounded up and sent to concentration camps, deported at will or arrested without any legal procedures. The police forces acquired powers to rule with exemption from punishment.

Reconstruction: Hitler gave the responsibility of economic recovery to the economist- Hjalmar Schacht. He wanted full production and full employment through a state-funded work-creation programme. As a result, the famous German superhighways and the people's car, the volkswagen, were made.

Success in Foreign Policies: In foreign policy, Hitler acquired quick successes. Hitler pulled out of the League of Nations in 1933 and reoccupied the Rhineland in 1936. In 1938, under the slogan, One people, One empire and One leader, Austria and Germany were integrated by Hitler. In 1938, Hitler seized the German-speaking Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia and then took over the whole country. In all this, Hitler had the unspoken support of England which had considered the Versailles verdict too harsh. Schacht had advised Hitler against investing hugely in rearmament, as the state still ran on deficit financing. Cautious people had no place in Nazi Germany, so Schacht had to leave.

War as a Way out of Economic Crisis: Hitler chose war as the way out of the approaching economic crisis. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland and this started a war with France and England. In September 1940, a Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan. Hitler attacked the Soviet in June 1941. It was a historic mistake made by Hitler. The Soviet Red Army defeated Germany at Stalingrad. In the beginning, the US remained neutral in the Second

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World war. When Japan extended its support to Hitler and bombed the US base at Pearl Harbour, the US entered the Second World War. The Second World War ended in May 1945 with Hitler's defeat. Japan surrendered in August 1945, after the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

THE NAZI WORLDVIEW: The crimes committed by the Nazis were the result of a system of belief and a set of practices. Nazi ideology was synonymous with Hitler's worldview. According to this, 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 rank. The Jews were regarded as the arch-enemies of the Aryans. All other coloured people were placed in between depending upon their external features. Hitler's regime is considered as the most barbaric regime in world history.

Ideas Behind Hitler's Racism: Hitler's racism was borrowed from the ideas of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Darwin tried to explain the creation of plants and animals through the concept of evolution and natural selection. Herbert Spencer added the idea of 'Survival of the Fittest'. According to this idea, only those species survived on Earth that could adapt themselves to changing climatic conditions. These ideas were used by the racist thinkers and politicians to justify imperial rule over conquered people.

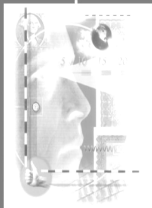
The Nazi argument was simple: the strongest race would survive and weak ones would perish. The Aryan race was the finest. It had to retain its purity, become stronger and dominate the world.

Geopolitical Concept: The other aspect of Hitler's ideology is related to the geopolitical concept of Lebensraum, or living space. He believed that new territories had to be acquired for settlement and to increase the area of the mother country. This will enable the settlers in new lands to retain an intimate link with their place of origin. It will also extend resources and power of the Germany. Hitler intended to extend German boundaries by moving Eastwards, to concentrate all Germans geographically in one place. Poland became the laboratory for this experimentation.

Establishment of the Racial State: Nazis wanted only a society of pure and healthy Nordic Aryans. They alone were considered as 'desirable', while other communities were classified as 'undesirable'. Even those Germans who were seen as, impure or abnormal had no right to exist. Jews, Gypsies and Blacks living in Nazi Germany were considered as racial inferiors who threatened the biological purity of the 'superior Aryan' race. Even Russians and Poles people of Poland were considered subhuman and thus, undeserving of any humanity. Germany occupied Poland and parts of Russia. The captured civilians were being forced to work as slave labour. In Nazi Germany, Jews were the worst sufferers, Jews had been stereotyped as killers of Christ and usurers. Until medieval times, they had been barred from owning land. Their main occupations were trade and moneylending. Jews lived in separately marked areas called ghettos.

Hitler's hatred of Jews was based on pseudoscientific theories of race, which could be satisfied only through their total elimination. From 1933 to 1938, the Nazis terrorised, pauperised and segregated the Jews. From 1939-1945, they aimed to kill them in gas chambers of Poland.

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The Racial Utopia: The Nazis tried to realise their racial ideal through genocide. They divided the occupied Poland. The most of North–Western Poland was made part of Germany. Poles were forced to leave their homes and properties, which were then occupied by Germans. Poles were herded like cattle in the other part of Poland called the General Government. It was the destination of all ‘undesirables’ of the empire. 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. The General Government with large ghettos and gas chambers worked as the killing fields for the Jews. They were murdered in large number to keep people intellectually and spiritually servile.

YOUTH IN NAZI GERMANY: Hitler believed that a strong Nazi society could be established by teaching children Nazi ideology. All schools in Germany were cleansed and purified; teachers who were Jews or politically unreliable were dismissed. Children were also segregated. ‘Undesirable children’ – Jews, the physically handicapped and Gypsies were thrown out of schools. The school text books were rewritten. Germans and Jews could not sit and play together. Racial science was introduced to justify Nazi ideas of race. Stereotypes about Jews were popularised even through maths classes. Children were taught to be loyal, submissive, hate Jews and worship Hitler. Even sports like boxing were introduced to nurture a spirit of violence and aggression among children. Hitler thought that boxing could make children iron-hearted, strong and masculine.

Formation of Youth Organisations and Youth League: Youth organisations were made responsible for educating. German Youth in the ‘Spirit of National Socialism.’ Ten-year-old children had to join Jungvolk. At 14, all boys had to join the Nazi youth organisation ‘Hitler Youth’. After a period of rigorous ideological and physical training, they joined the Labour Service at the age of 18. Then they had to serve in the armed forces and enter one of the Nazi organisations.

In 1922, the Youth League of the Nazis was founded. After four years, it was renamed as Hitler Youth. To control the youth, all other youth organisations were banned.

The Nazi Cult Of Motherhood: In Nazi Germany, young people and even children, were repeatedly told that women were radically different from men. According to the Nazi ideology, the fight for equal rights for men and women, was quite wrong and it would destroy society. Till that time, it had become part of democratic struggles. While boys were taught to be aggressive, masculine and hardworking, girls were told to become good mothers and bring up pure-blooded Aryan children. In 1933, Hitler said, ‘In my state the mother is the most important citizen’ but in Nazi Germany all mothers were not treated equally. Women had to maintain the purity of the race, look after the home and teach their children Nazi ideology. Those mothers who produced racially desirable children were awarded, given favoured treatment in hospitals, concessions in shops, theatres and even in the railways. Honours of bronze cross for four children, a silver for six and a gold for eight or more was given to eligible women.

Women who maintained contacts with Jews, Poles or Russians were paraded through the town with shaved heads, blackened faces and posters hanging from

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their necks saying, 'I have sullied the honour of the nation'. Many were imprisoned and lost civic honour and families.

The Art of Propaganda: The Nazi regime used language and the media effectively to describe their activities. They never used the words 'kill' or 'murder' in their official communications but used euphemisms. Mass killings were called special treatment, final solution for the Jews, euthanasia (for the disabled), selection and disinfection. 'Evacuation' meant deporting people to gas chambers for killing them. The chambers were called 'disinfection-areas' and looked like bathrooms equipped with fake showerheads.

Role of Media in Propaganda: 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 (like the Jews) 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. Propaganda films were made to create hatred for Jews. The most infamous film was The Eternal Jew. Orthodox Jews were shown with flowing beards wearing kaftans (long belted tunics).

But actually, it was difficult to distinguish German Jews by their outward appearance because they were a highly assimilated community. Jews were referred to as vermin, rats and pests. Their movements were compared to those of rodents. The Nazis wanted to win the support of German people by suggesting that the Nazis alone could solve all their problems.

Ordinary people and the crimes against humanity: Many ordinary people felt hatred and anger when they saw someone who looked like a Jew. They marked the houses of Jews and often reported about suspicious neighbours.

They genuinely believed Nazism would bring prosperity and improve general well-being. However, other Germans organised active resistance to Nazism, suffering police repression and even death. But most Germans were passive onlookers and apathetic witnesses, as they were too scared to act, to differ or to protest.

But for the Jews, life was altogether different. Charlotte Beradt, an author, secretly recorded people's dreams in her diary and later published them in a book called the Third Reich of Dreams. She said that Jews themselves began believing in the Nazi stereotypes about them. The stereotypical images publicised in the Nazi press haunted the Jews and they troubled even in their dreams. They died many deaths before they reached the gas chambers.

Knowledge About the Holocaust: Some of the horrible practices followed by Nazis had trickled out of Germany during the war, but its full extent was known only when the war ended. The atrocities and sufferings that Jews had experienced during the Nazi killing operations are called the Holocaust.

The indomitable spirit to bear witness and to preserve documents can be seen in many ghetto and camp inhabitants who wrote diaries, kept notebooks and created archives. In contrast, the Nazi leadership distributed petrol to its followers to destroy all incriminating evidence when they started losing the war. These memoirs by the victims are a tribute to those who resisted the persecution, a reminder to those who collaborated and a warning to those who watched in silence.

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Year Date	Important Events
20th April, 1889	Adolf Hitler born in Austria
1st August, 1914	First World War starts
9th Nov, 1918	Germany and the Central Powers defeated in First World War; Weimar Republic established
1919	Hitler joins the German Workers' Party, later on growing into the Nazi Party
28th June, 1919	Treaty of Versailles
1922	Nazi Youth League founded (later renamed as Hitler Youth)
1923	Germany goes through economic crisis and hyperinflation; France occupies the Ruhr, Germany's coal mines area Wall Street Exchange in USA crashes
24th Oct, 1929	Nazi Party becomes the largest party in the Reichstag
1932	Great Depression, National income of USA fell by half
1929-1932	Hitler became Chancellor of Germany
30th Jan, 1933	Fire Decree declared
28th Feb, 1933	Enabling Act passed, establishing Hitler's dictatorship
3rd March, 1933	Germany pulls out of the League of Nations
1933	Nazis terrorise, pauperise and segregate the Jews
1933-38	Germany reoccupies the Rhineland
1936	Germany and Austria integrated
1938	Germany invades Poland; Second World War starts.
1st Sep, 1939	Tripartite Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan signed
Sep, 1940	Germany attacks the USSR
22nd June, 1941	Mass murder of Jews begins
23rd June, 1941	Japan bombs Pearl Harbour; USA enters the war next day
7th Dec, 1941	Ghettoisation of Jews and their killing in gas chambers
1940-44	Troops of USSR liberate Auschwitz
27th Jan, 1945	Germany surrenders to the Allies
8th May, 1945	