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* Birth of the Weimar Republic.

1) * Peace treaty at Versailles (Harsh and humiliating ^{treaty} peace)

- Germany lost its overseas colonies, a tenth of its population, 13 percent of its territories, 75% of its iron and 26 percent of its coal to France, Poland, Denmark and Lithuania.
- Allied powers demilitarised Germany to weaken its power.
- Germany was forced to pay compensation amounting to £6 billion (6 billion pounds).
- The Allied armies also occupied the resource-rich Rhineland.
- Many Germans held a new Weimar Republic responsible for not only the defeat in the war but the disgrace at Versailles.

* The Effects of the War

- Those who supported the Weimar Republic, mainly socialists, Catholics and Democrats were mockingly called 'November criminals.'
- Politicians and publicists laid great stress on the need for men to be aggressive, strong and masculine.
- The media glorified trench life. The truth, however, was that soldiers lived miserable lives in the trenches, trapped with rats feeding on corpses.
- They faced poisonous gas and enemy shelling, and witnessed their ranks reduced rapidly.

- Aggressive war propaganda and national honour occupied centre stage in the public sphere, while popular support grew for conservative dictatorships that had recently come into being. Democracy was indeed a young and fragile idea, which could not survive the instabilities of interwar Europe.

* Political Radicalism and Economic crisis.

- The political atmosphere in Berlin was charged with demands for Soviet-style governance. Those who opposed to this - such as the Socialists, Democrats and Catholics - met in Weimar to give shape to the democratic republic.
- The Weimar republic crushed the uprising with the help of a war veterans organisation called Free Corps. The anguished Spartacists later founded the Communist Party of Germany.
- Political radicalisation was only heightened by the economic crisis of 1923.
- In 1923 Germany refused to pay, and the France occupied its leading industrial area, Ruhr, to claim their coal.
- The Americans intervened and bailed the Germany out of the crisis by introducing the Dawes plan, reworked the terms of reparation to ease the financial burden on Germany.

* The Years of Depression

- The years between 1924 and 1928 saw some stability.
- The Great Economic Depression started in 1929 because of the Wall Street Exchange crash.
- Factories shut down, exports fell, farmers were badly hit and speculators withdrew their money from the market.
- By 1932, industrial production was reduced to 40% of the 1929 level. Workers lost their jobs or were paid reduced wages. The no. of unemployed touched an unprecedented 6 million.
- As jobs disappeared, the youth took to criminal activities and total despair became commonplace.
- 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 lasting on an average 239 days, and a liberal use of Article 48. Yet the crisis could not be managed. People lost confidence in the democratic parliamentary system, which seemed to offer no solutions.

* Hitler's rise to power

- Born in 1889 in Austria, Hitler spent his youth in 'poverty'.
- He enrolled for the army and acted as a messenger.
- German defeat ~~was~~ horrified him and the Versailles Treaty made him furious.
- In 1919, he joined a small group called the German Worker's Party which he renamed as National Socialist German Workers' Party. This party came to be known as the Nazi Party.
- In 1928, the Nazi Party got no more than 2.6% votes in Reichstag - the German Parliament.
- By 1932, it had become the largest party with 37% votes.
- Hitler was a powerful speaker.
- He promised to build a strong nation, undo the injustice of the Versailles Treaty and restore dignity of German people. He promised employment for those looking for work, and a secure future for the youth. He promised to weed out all foreign influences & resist all foreign 'conspiracies' against Germany.
- Hitler devised a new style of politics. Nazis held massive rallies & public meetings to demonstrate the support for Hitler and instil a sense of unity among people.
- The Red banners with the Swastika, the Nazi salute, & the ritualised rounds of applause after speeches were all part of the spectacle of power.

* The Destruction of Democracy

- On 30 January 1933, President Hindenburg offered the Chancellorship, the highest position in the cabinet of ministers, to Hitler.
- Hitler set out to dismantle structures of democratic rule.
- The Fire Decree of 28 Feb 1933 indefinitely suspended civic rights like freedom of speech, press and assembly that had been guaranteed by the Weimar constitution.
- On 3 March 1933, the famous Enabling Act was passed. This Act established dictatorship in Germany. Gave Hitler all powers to sideline Parliament & rule by decree.
- Special surveillance and security forces were created to control and order society in ways that Nazis wanted. These included the Gestapo (secret state police), the SS (Protection squads), criminal police & the Security Service (SD).

* Reconstruction.

- Hitler ~~assigned~~ assigned the responsibility of economic recovery to the economist Hjalmar Schacht who aimed at full production and full employment through a state-funded work-creation programme.
- Hitler pulled out of the League of Nations in 1933, reoccupied the Rhineland in 1936, and integrated Austria and Germany in 1938 under the slogan, One people, One empire, and One leader.
- In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. This started a war with France and England.
- In September 1940, a Tripartite Pact was signed between Germany, Italy and Japan, strengthening Hitler's claim to international powers.

- Puppet regimes, supportive of Nazi Germany, were installed in a large part of the Europe.
- By the end of 1940, Hitler was at the pinnacle of his power.
- Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941.
- The Soviet Red Army inflicted a crushing and humiliating defeat on Germany at Stalingrad.
- The USA had resisted involvement in the war.
- When Japan extended its support to Hitler's defeat and the ~~US~~ and bombed the US base at Pearl Harbor, 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 in Japan.

* The Nazi Worldview

- Nazi ideology was synonymous with Hitler's worldview. According to this there was no equality between people, but only racial hierarchy. In this view, blond, blue-eyed, Nordic German Aryans were at the top, while Jews were located at the lowest rung.
- 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.
- The other aspect of Hitler's ideology related to the geopolitical concept of Lebensraum, or living space. He believed that new territories had to be acquired for settlement.

* Establishment of the Racial State

- 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 ~~again~~ against all others who were classed as 'undesirable'.
- 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.
- From 1933 to 1938 the Nazis terrorised, pauperised and segregated the Jews, compelling them to leave the country.
- The next phase, 1939-1945, aimed at concentrating them in certain areas and eventually killed them in Poland.

* The Racial Utopia

- Occupied Poland was divided-up. Poles were forced to leave their homes and properties behind to be occupied by ethnic Germans brought in from occupied Europe. Poles were then herded like cattle in the other part called the General Government, 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.

* Youth in Nazi Germany

- Hitler was fanatically interested in youth of the country. He felt that a strong Nazi society could be established only by teaching children Nazi ideology.
- Ten-year-olds had to enter Jungvolk, a Nazi youth groups for children below age of 14.
- 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.
- 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.

* 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 ~~members~~ mothers and rear pure-blooded Aryan children.
- 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.
- All 'Aryan' women who deviated from the prescribed code of conduct were publicly condemned, and ~~see~~ severely punished.

* The Art of Propaganda

- Nazis never used the words 'kill' or 'murder' in their official communications.
- Mass killings were termed special treatment, final solution (for the Jews), euthanasia (for the disabled), selection and disinfections.
- 'Evacuation' meant deporting people to gas chambers. Gas chambers were labeled as 'disinfection-areas'.
- 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.
- Propaganda films were made to create hatred for Jews. The most infamous film was The Eternal Jew.
- Nazism worked on the minds of the people, tapped their emotions, and turned their hatred and anger at those marked as 'undesirable'.

* Ordinary People and the Crimes Against Humanity.

- Many 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 genuinely believed 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 stereotypical images publicised in the Nazi press haunted the Jews. They troubled them even in the dreams. Jews died many deaths even before they reached the gas chamber.

* Knowledge about the Holocaust

- While the Germans were preoccupied with their own plight as a defeated nation emerging out of the rubble, the Jews wanted the world to remember the atrocities and sufferings they had endured during the Nazi killing operations - also called the Holocaust.