



## The Formation of the National Assembly

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### The Election

After the suppression of the extreme socialist insurrections, the elections for the National Assembly were held on January 19, 1919. The Social Democrats gained the largest number of votes—38% of the total. The Catholic Centre Party and the Democratic Party followed closely behind. The right-wing Nationalist Party, People's Party and the left-wing Independent Socialist Party gained about 20% of the votes. The Spartacists boycotted the election and regrouped themselves as the German Communist Party.

Under the system of proportional representation, Friedrich Ebert formed a coalition government with the Catholic Centre Party and the Democratic Party. Before they had the time to draft the Constitution on June 28, they were forced to accept the humiliating Treaty of Versailles. Thus to most of the Germans, the Republic came to be associated with German defeat in the First World War and a humiliating peace as well.

### The Constitution of the Republic

On July 31, 1919, a democratic constitution was adopted by the National Assembly of the Weimar Republic. It bore the democratic features of the British, American, and French constitutions, but the autocratic traits of the German political tradition were also preserved.

#### The Structure of the Constitution

(a) For the expression of popular civil rights, the Constitution guaranteed to all Germans such fundamental rights as equality before the law, freedom of speech and association, and freedom of belief. It was the first time in German history that the Germans had genuine democracy.

(b) For the expression of popular political rights, the Constitution provided for a truly democratic political system for the Germans.

The head of the state was the President. He was to be elected by direct vote of the people for a term of seven years, after which he was eligible for re-election. In ordinary circumstances, he did not take up administrative duties (but in times of emergency he was given special emergency powers to suspend the Constitution, to dissolve the Reichstag and to issue decrees). Actual executive power was vested in a ministry headed by a Chancellor, appointed by the President and responsible to the Reichstag. The ministry could not hold office without majority support in the Reichstag.

The Parliament was to consist of two houses but all legislative power was vested in the Reichstag (the Lower House). It was elected by all Germans over twenty years of age on a system of proportional representation. (The number of seats given to a political party would be proportional to the number of votes it gained). It had the power to initiate bills. The Reichsrat (the Upper House), representing the states, could only discuss all laws passed by the Reichstag and exercise the power of veto on them, but any laws which had a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag could not be held up in the Reichsrat.

#### The Defects of the Constitution

(a) Under the system of proportional representation, each party was given one seat in the Reichstag for every sixty thousand votes it received. Thus a number of parties, ranging from the Communists to the right-wing Nationalists, were represented in the Reichstag. This made a steady government extremely difficult to achieve because the leading party had to depend on the continuing support of too many political parties. Between February 1919 and January 1933, Germany had twelve Chancellors and twenty-one governments. This led to political instability and inefficient government.

(b) In times of emergency, the German President had too much power. He could suspend the Constitution and use the armed forces to suppress his political opponents. In the 1930's when Hitler became President, he made use of these presidential powers to destroy the Republic.

The government moved from Weimar to the capital, Berlin, in 1920. As the constitution of the Republic was made in Weimar, it was called the Weimar Republic since then.

## The Suppression of the Kapp Putsch (1920)

There were many [die-hard reactionaries \(#die-hard\)](#) in Germany. They loved Right-wing military glory and supported the rule of the Kaiser. No sooner had the new constitution been established than they made an attempt to overthrow it. In March 1920, five thousand members of the marine brigades under the leadership of Dr. Wolfgang Kapp and General Ludendorff seized Berlin; but their coup was defeated by a general strike of the Communist workers.

Thus the Weimar Republic had a precarious existence because it had enemies to the Left and the Right. As has been mentioned earlier, whenever the extreme socialists and the die-hard reactionaries made an attempt to overthrow the Republic, it could only survive by making use of the mutual hostility between the extreme Right and the extreme Left to suppress the insurrections by the other.

### Die-hard Reactionaries

The die-hard reactionaries believed that Germany was defeated in the First World War not through any lack of military strength but because the Socialists, Catholics, Jews had 'stabbed Germany in the back' by their revolution in 1918. Thus they were condemned as November criminals. There were many reactionaries in the Nationalist Party and People's Party.

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## The Insuperable Difficulties of the Weimar Republic

Throughout these years (1920-1929), the Weimar Republic had to deal with many problems arising from the imposition of the Treaty of Versailles upon Germany. The first big problem was the payment of reparations. The second was the restoration of big-power status for Germany.

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### Burden of Reparations

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### The Ruhr Occupation and Inflation

In May 1921, the Reparations Commission fixed Germany's total indemnity at £600 million. After paying the reparations by instalments for about a year, the German government requested a moratorium from the Allied Powers on the ground that Germany was already in great financial distress and was unable to pay. At that time, France was under the rule of the French Premier, Poincare. He had strong anti-German sentiment. He wanted to control the Ruhr which contained 80% of Germany's coal, iron and steel industries so as to weaken Germany permanently. When he heard of the German request for a moratorium, he ordered the French troops, with the help of the Belgian troops, to occupy the Ruhr.

The result of the occupation was a disaster of far-reaching consequences to the Republic. Indignant at this occupation, the German mine-owners and workers went on strike. Their government encouraged this 'passive resistance' to the French. To feed the German workers on strike, the government had to print paper money in great quantities with no gold backing. The mark became worthless. In 1914, it took 4 marks to purchase an American dollar. In November 1923, it took 4,200,000,000 marks for a dollar. Members of the lower bourgeoisie and the working classes who earned their living from salaries or from fixed income were impoverished. In October 1923, the Communists made an uprising in Hamburg. In the following month the Nazis made a coup in Munich. Both these insurrections failed, but it showed the general discontent with the Weimar government.

### Stresemann and the Dawes Plan 1924

At this critical moment, a new Chancellor, Gustav Stresemann, rose to power. He was a member of the German People's Party, but he was not a die-hard reactionary nor a rabid nationalist. He thought that the Ruhr occupation had caused a severe strain on German economy and led to great political instability. His first acts in assuming office were to call off the strikes in the Ruhr and issue a new Rentenmark in order to stabilize the German currency. (Rentenmark was guaranteed by a mortgage on all real property in Germany.) Then he negotiated with the Reparations Commission about the payment of reparations. In April 1924, a committee under the chairmanship of the American banker, Charles G. **Dawes**, formulated a new plan for reparations payment. It left undecided the total sum to be paid but gave important concessions to Germany

in regards to reparations. First, it allowed Germany a two years' moratorium. Secondly, it laid down the principle of graded instalments, which would increase as Germany's capacity to pay increased. Thirdly, international loans would be advanced to speed up German recovery and make possible speedy resumption of payment. The French government was satisfied with the Dawes Plan and ordered its troops to withdraw.

### **The Young Plan 1929**

In 1929, the Germans complained that the reparations were too excessive. An international commission, led by Owen D. **Young**, an American banker, reduced the German reparations to 1,850 million pounds, which was to be paid within fifty-nine years. Many Germans were discontented with the Young Plan. They pointed out that the Germans were still required to pay an annual sum of 30,000,000 pounds to the Allies up to 1988. The Nazis launched a violent campaign against the Young Plan.

Before the Young Plan could be carried out, the world-wide economic depression set in and Germany was again unable to pay.

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### **Restoration of Diplomatic Status**

In 1925, Dr. Stresemann improved German relations with the western powers by signing the **Locarno Agreements**. This treaty gained the goodwill of the western powers. In 1926, Germany was admitted into the League of Nations with a permanent seat in the Council. In 1928, Germany signed the Pact of Paris (**Briand-Kellogg Pact**) by which the world's major nations renounced war as an instrument of national policy. In 1930, the Allied troops withdrew from the Rhineland.

Many Germans were not satisfied with these diplomatic gains. The right-wing nationalists had never abandoned their militaristic and nationalistic outlook. They could not forget that the Treaty of Versailles had deprived Germany of many territories:

(ii) more than 3 million Germans still lived in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria,

(iii) Austria was still forbidden to unite with Germany. Their hatred of the Versailles Treaty persisted throughout the inter-war years.

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### **Signs of Weakness for the Republic**

Besides the problems arising from the Treaty of Versailles, the Weimar Republic had to face many problems at home.

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### **The Election of a New President**

After the death of Ebert in 1925, new presidential elections were held. The Nationalists put forward Field Marshal Von Hindenburg as their candidate. Hindenburg won more votes (800,000 votes) than the candidate of the Republican coalition (Social Democrats, Democrats and the Catholic Centrists) and became President. Hindenburg was actually unsuited for the presidential post, for he was a right-wing politician, and had little respect for a democratic government. In 1933 he appointed Hitler to be the Chancellor. His victory in the election of 1925 meant that many Germans wanted a war-time hero to revive the national glory of Germany. The Social Democrats, the Democrats and the Catholic Centrists, the main supporters of the Republic, were little loved and trusted by the people.

### **Hidden Dangers in Her Economic Prosperity**

From 1924 to 1929, under the rule of Stresemann, Germany enjoyed rapid economic progress. By 1929 production was well over the pre-war level. But there were three hidden dangers in her economy: (i) Foreign loans, mostly from the United States, provided most of the working capital. They might be withdrawn at any moment. (ii) Her economic prosperity depended upon export trade and not on an expansion of the home market. Any contraction of the overseas market might lead to industrial slump in Germany. (iii) Unemployment in Germany never fell below a million. Thus German economic prosperity rested on flimsy foundations. It collapsed as soon as the Great Depression set in.

## **The Growth of the Communist Party**

The Spartacists regrouped themselves as the Communist Party in 1920. They continued their opposition to the government. They denounced the Weimar Republic as 'bourgeois' and 'capitalistic'. From 1920 to 1923, they made a series of revolts. After 1923, even though German economic prosperity continued, the wages of German workers remained very low. The Communists were able to recruit many members. From 1923 to 1929, the Communists always obtained about ten per cent of the seats in the Reichstag.

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## **The Development of the Nazi (National Socialist) Party**

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## **The Formation of the Nazi Party**

A greater threat to the existence of the Weimar Republic came from the Nazi Party.

The Nazi Party was one of the many right-wing parties formed by the die-hard reactionaries who supported the Kaiser's rule but hated the democratic Republic. Many of these right-wing parties collapsed in the 1920's but the Nazi Party was an exception. Under the brilliant leadership of Adolf Hitler, it grew as an important political party.

The self-willed child, Hitler, was born in 1899 in the family of a petty Austrian customs official. Hitler's mother spoiled him very much. At school, Hitler was an undistinguished boy. After unsuccessful attempts to become a student of art in the Vienna College of Fine Art, he had tried many jobs. Working all the time as a manual labourer, Hitler was deeply dissatisfied. The Jews were very prominent in the cultivated society of Vienna. Hitler hated the Jews for occupying the high positions in German society. In the meantime, he became a convert to Nordicism, doting on the qualities of the proud German nation.

During the First World War, Hitler served in the German army. He fought bravely and became a corporal until he was wounded and was temporarily blind. He was awarded an Iron Cross for his bravery. While he was staying in hospital recovering from his wounds, he heard of the German defeat. He believed that German defeat was due to the betrayal of socialists who had made the November Revolution. So he hated the socialist-dominated Republic.

When he was discharged from the hospital, he found himself, like so many of his comrades, unemployed. Like them, he joined one of the semi-military, semi-political organizations - the German Workers' Party.

By 1920, the German Workers' Party changed its name to the National Socialist German Workingmen's Party (abbreviated as Nazi). The Party had its headquarters at Munich. By his skill as an orator and organiser, Hitler became the Führer (leader) of the Party in 1921. The Party adopted an emblem, the swastika, a salute and greeting as its distinctive characteristics. It had a newspaper through which Hitler fiercely denounced the Treaty of Versailles and the socialists who had, he believed, delivered a 'stab in the back' to Germany by making strikes in 1918. Hitler also organized the Stormtroopers (S.A. or the Brown Shirts) to protect the Nazi meetings and disrupt the meetings of other parties, for example, the Communist Party.

During the French occupation of the Ruhr, the Nazis gained new and increased strength by denouncing the Versailles Treaty. In November 1923, Hitler and his S.A., joined by Ludendorff (former Chief of Staff) and other militant reactionaries, tried to overthrow the Weimar Republic. They carried out a coup d'etat in Munich. The Bavarian government suppressed them. In April 1924, Hitler was put on trial and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment at Landsberg. But he was released nine months later. This was typical of the leniency the Weimar Republic showed to the right-wing people.

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## **Nazi Philosophy**

While in prison, Hitler laid down the basic ideas behind the Nazi movement in his book, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle).

Hitler divided mankind into two groups: the Aryans (the master-race) and the non-Aryans (the slave races). The Germans, he asserted, were Aryans, and destined to rule the world. But Germany was defeated in the First World War. So Hitler had to find a scapegoat - the Jews. He said that the Jews were the most vicious of the slave races. They caused the German defeat by encouraging the socialists to make the November Revolution in 1918.

Hitler suggested if Germans wanted their nation to be strong again, they had to believe in the Führer (Hitler himself). The Führer would exterminate or expel the Jews from Germany so that they would not pollute the German blood by intermarriage. Then he would replace the parliamentary government by Nazi rule - the rule of an elite who accepted orders from Hitler alone. The Nazis would nationalize the big business, provide employment for all workers, implement land reforms for peasants and destroy the chains of department stores controlled by the Jewish capitalists. They would also try to make Germany economically self-sufficient. But German economic self-sufficiency could only be obtained by conquest abroad .

The Nazi government aimed to abolish the Treaty of Versailles, bring about the union of all Germans in a single German state (the Grossdeutschland) and, in order to provide for additional living space for the nourishment of the future generations ('Lebensraum'), Hitler proposed to conquer eastern Europe.

### **Growth of the Nazi Party**

With a party programme which appealed to all Germans, the Nazis took part in the national elections. In times of economic prosperity in the twenties, Nazis could make little headway. In the election of May 1924, only 32 Nazis were elected to the Reichstag. In December 1924, the number dropped to 14. Despite the poor election results, the Nazi Party still showed a sturdy growth in these years. In 1929, the total party membership was 178,000 — quite a considerable increase over the 1925 figure which stood at 27,000. In the meantime, the Nazis began to have financial support from the big industrialists like Thyssen and Stinnes as they saw that the Nazis were anti-socialist and anti-communist. Hitler also strengthened his control of the party by forming his personal body-guard, the Black Shirts (the SS or the Protection Squads).

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## **The Great Depression and the Rise of the Nazis**

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### **The Great Depression 1929**

In October 1929, the New York Stock Market suddenly collapsed. The American investors recalled their short-term loans from Germany. In early 1931, one of Germany's three largest joint-stock banks collapsed. The German economy depended on American loans. Without American loans, production dropped and her export trade also declined. The number of unemployed rose from two millions in 1929 to more than three millions in 1930, to 5.6 millions in 1931 and to 6 millions (one fourth of the working population) in the early months of 1932. The German governments from 1929 to 1933 failed to solve any of the grave economic problems of the day: mass unemployment, inflation and industrial slump.

### **Hitler's Rise to Power**

Faced with economic hardship, the Germans lost any faith they might have in the democratic Republic. The middle classes and the working classes were the most discontented groups because they had been ruined by two economic collapses within six years. It was not surprising that they turned to the two extreme parties for desperate remedies: the Nazis and the Communists. In the general election of September 1930, the Nazis won 6.5 million votes, took 107 seats in the Reichstag and became the second largest party in the country. The Communists obtained 4.5 million votes and 77 seats. Although the Social Democrats remained the largest party, it had lost much popularity and support.



Since the Republican coalition (the Social Democrats, Catholic Centrists, Democrats) could not command a majority in the Reichstag. Dr. Brüning (a member of the Catholic Centre Party), the Chancellor from 1930 to 1932, could only rule by issuing emergency decrees. His unconstitutional and undemocratic rule made his government increasingly

unpopular. The unpopularity of the government was shown in the presidential election of April 1932. The Republican coalition put forward Hindenburg. He was re-elected with nineteen million votes. But Hitler, who also entered himself for election, won thirteen and a half million votes. So it may not be far from truth by saying that at least 40% of the German people were more willing to support Hitler than the Republican government.

Hindenburg blamed the unpopularity of the government on Dr. Brüning. In June 1932, Von Papen was appointed to be the new

Chancellor. In the next six months, Papen tried to get a Reichstag majority for the government by holding two elections. The first took place in July. In that election, he failed to get any important support. Instead the votes for the Nazis more than doubled. The Nazis won 230 Reichstag seats and became the largest single party in the Reichstag. Papen was disappointed by the results of the election. In November, he held a new election. In this election, the Communists made tremendous gains and won 100 seats in the Reichstag. The Nazis also obtained 196 seats and 33% of the total number of votes. But in comparison with the results in the July election, the Nazis had lost about two million votes and 34 seats in the Reichstag, while the Communists had gained 11 seats. Many influential businessmen and landlords became alarmed at the spectre of a Bolshevik Revolution in Germany. The conservative Nationalists decided that their cause could be served by supporting Hitler.

Von Papen, who had just joined the Nationalist Party, wanted to utilize the strength of the Nazis to rid Germany of the Communist threat. He made a political bargain with Hitler. According to the bargain, Hitler would be made Chancellor and Von Papen be made Vice-Chancellor. Hindenburg, despite his contempt for Hitler, readily agreed to the bargain because the Nazis appeared to be the only well-supported right-wing party which could protect Germany from the onslaught of the Communist Revolution. On January 28, 1933, Hindenburg invited Hitler to be the Chancellor.

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### **Reasons for the Nazi Success**

There were a number of reasons which might explain the rapid democratic rise of the Nazis to power:

(i) There was a lack of democratic tradition in Germany; like the Italian government, the Weimar Republic was not respected nor trusted by the German people.

(ii) Ever since the founding of the Weimar Republic, it failed in both domestic and foreign affairs. (From the beginning of its rule, the Republic was forced to make a humiliating peace with the Allies by signing the Treaty of Versailles. This Treaty had 440 Articles. Article 231 suggested that Germany alone had brought about the First World War. The Germans thought that this was a big insult. They hated the Republic for signing the Treaty.) On the one hand, the fulfillment policy of Stresemann failed to remove the burden of reparations and recover the lost territories for the affairs Germans. On the other hand, there was little political stability at home due to the attempted coups by both the extreme Right and extreme Left. Moreover, the German Constitution encouraged the formation of too many political parties and thus led to weak and unstable government.

(iii) The onset of the Great Depression led to mass unemployment. Unemployed workers turned to the Communists for salvation. As the Communists grew in strength, the landowners, industrialists, the middle class people and the conservative right-wing politicians all turned to support the Nazis.

(iv) Hitler was an able leader. He was able to convince the Germans that he was a man of action and of ideals. The Nazi programme promised everything to everybody. To the landowner and the industrialists, Hitler promised to be a bulwark against Communism. To the middle classes, he promised to abolish the Treaty of Versailles and relieve them of the burden of reparations payment. To the workers, he promised economic and social reforms - including nationalization of the trusts. To the army, he promised military glory. To most of the Germans, Hitler seemed to be a Messiah who could deliver them from fear and starvation. Hitler was also a gifted orator. His speeches, though containing little truth in them, could always make successful appeals to the masses. Moreover, the Nazi Party, with its huge mass meetings, parades and formation of S.A. and S.S. troops were attractive to the younger generation. As a result, many middle class young men were recruited into the S.S. and S.A.

(v) Like the Italian government, the German government lacked the confidence to government rule the country in times of crisis. President Hindenburg quickly agreed to Papen's political bargain and gave political power to Hitler.

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## **Nazification of Germany**

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## Political Dictatorship

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### Control of the Reichstag

Although there were only three National Socialist members in the first cabinet when Hitler became the Chancellor in January 1933, it took Hitler only eighteen months to concentrate all power into his own hands.

The first thing he did was to arrange for an election so as to secure a pro-Nazi majority in the Reichstag. To prepare for Nazi success in the election, Hitler appointed Goering, a Nazi, as Minister of Interior of Prussia and ordered the S.A. and S.S. to launch assaults on the anti-Nazi political parties. On 27 February, the Reichstag building was burned down and the Communists were falsely accused of using the fire as a signal for Communist insurrection. In the guise of defending the country from an alleged Communist Revolution, Hitler asked for emergency power from President Hindenburg.

In a wave of hysteria over the 'Red Peril', President Hindenburg signed a decree suspending the civil liberties guaranteed under the Weimar Constitution. Henceforth, the German citizens had no personal liberty, no freedom of speech, of assembly, and of expression. They were subject to house searches and arrest and to be tried by the special People's Courts. Hitler made use of this presidential emergency power to arrest five thousand Communist official.

In the Reichstag election that followed, the Nazis banned the Communist and Socialist newspapers. The Nazis also made use of the radio stations to broadcast Nazi propaganda. The Nazi stormtroopers marched along the streets to influence the election. It was surprising that in these conditions less than one half of the electorate (43.9%) voted for Hitler, so that only with the aid of the Nationalists (8%) was Hitler able to obtain a bare majority in the Reichstag.

### Elections of March 1933

The elections of March 1933 gave the following results: National Socialists 43.9%, Nationalists 8%, Centre Party 11.7%, Social Democrats 18.3%, Communists 12.3%, all others 5.8% of the votes. They received their seats in proportion to their votes: National Socialists 288, Nationalists 52, Centre 74, Social Democrats 120, Communists 81, others 32.

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### The Suspension of the Weimar Constitution

Poor electoral result could not deter Hitler from 'destroying' the Weimar Constitution. Hitler wanted to transfer all legislative power of the Reichstag to himself, but any change in the Constitution required a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag before they could become effective. Thus Hitler arrested or excluded 81 Communist deputies, and bribed the Nationalist Party and the Centre Party. As a result, in March, the Nazis outvoted the Social Democrats by 444 to 94 over the Enabling Bill which gave Hitler unlimited power. From now on, Hitler could draft and pass any laws without the Reichstag. The German Constitution was destroyed.

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### Consolidation of Hitler's dictatorship

Hitler lost no time to consolidate his position. The Law of Reconstruction of the Reich (January 1934) abolished the state legislatures and subordinated them to the central government at Berlin. The Trade Union offices were raided by the S.A. and S.S. troops. Thus the Communist base of support was destroyed. On July 14, 1933, all political parties except the Nazi Party were declared illegal.

### Elimination of Internal Rivals

Soon after the non-Nazi political parties were suppressed, Hitler dealt with his political rivals in the party. Roehm, the Chief of Staff of the S.A., was Hitler's chief political rival. Roehm differed from Hitler on three important issues:



(a) Roehm thought that the S.A. had helped to bring the Nazi party to power, so Hitler should reward the S.A. with government jobs.

(b) Roehm wanted the S.A. and the army to be merged into one National-Socialist People's Army.

(c) Roehm was interested in the socialist aspect of the party's programme which Hitler advocated in his rise to power. He wanted Hitler to confiscate the property of the wealthy people of Germany.

Roehm had at his command 2 million Storm-troopers (S.A.). This constituted a great threat to the political position of Hitler. Thus Hitler decided to get rid of the S.A.

On June 30, 1934, many S.A. leaders were killed as well as many others whom Hitler regarded as his political enemies such as

Gregor Strasser and General Von Schleicher. Probably about two hundred died in all. Hitler had achieved party solidarity.

### **Hitler became the President**

President Von Hindenburg died in August 1934. Hitler announced that he would combine in himself the offices of President and Chancellor. He used a combined title, Führer and Reichskangler (Leader and Reich Chancellor and Supreme Commander-in-Chief). Army officers took the oath of allegiance to Hitler personally. Hitler's personal dictatorship was now complete. The Third Reich was officially proclaimed.

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### **Totalitarian Society in Germany**

Hitler wanted to control the social life of the German people.

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### **Persecution of the Christians**

Hitler was an atheist. He wanted to bring both the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church under his control.

(a) In July 1933, Hitler signed a Concordat with the Vatican in which the Catholic Church recognized the new regime and renounced all activity except that of a purely religious kind in Germany. In return, Hitler guaranteed the Catholic Church many of its historic rights, including the right to conduct local schools. Very soon, Hitler broke his promise.

In 1937, resenting the Nazi interference with the Catholic control of education and the youth movement, the Pope issued the encyclical known as "With Burning Sorrow" condemning the Nazi doctrine of state and racial superiority. From 1937 onwards, the Catholics offered serious resistance to the Nazi persecution of the Catholic Church.

(b) In dealing with the Protestant Church, the Nazis found one willing supporter in Pastor Ludwig Muller. He was appointed by the Nazis to be the Evangelical Bishop of the German Reich in 1933. Soon after his appointment, Muller amended Christian teachings in line with Nazi ideas. Many thousands of Protestants who did not follow the new Christian teaching were sent to the concentration camps.

### **Persecution of the Jews**

Hitler had strong anti-semitic sentiment. From April 1933, the Jews were dismissed from the public service, the universities and other professions.

In September 1935, the famous Nuremberg Laws were issued. The Laws in effect deprived Jews of German citizenship and forbade them to marry 'Aryans'. Jews were excluded from participation in the German political and cultural life. Severe hardships were inflicted on Jews in their daily life (e.g. the need to sit in a separate part of the bus).

As time went on, the conditions of the Jews became worse and worse. They had their property confiscated, personal liberty deprived and personal safety endangered. It was estimated that 6 million Jews perished under Nazi rule during the Second World War.

### **Nazi Social Control**

(a) Control of mass media. All the means of communication were monopolized by the government. The press and the cinema had to show pictures glorifying the Nazi movements. The Ministry of Propaganda, in the hands of Dr. Goebbels, worked to build up the popularity of the Fuhrer.

(b) Control of education. Education, from kindergarten to university, was a toll for indoctrinating the young. Boys (10-18 years old) were sent to the Hitler Youth, girls (10-18 years old) to the Hitler Maidens. School textbooks were re-written along Nazi lines (e.g. race study was emphasized). University professors were required to wear swastika and take an oath of allegiance to Hitler.

(c) Crushing of discontent. Hitler also made use of the S. S. (Hitler's elite body-guard) to execute many of his political opponents and put them into the concentration camps.

### **Economic Re-organization**

An economic re-organization of Germany was also undertaken.

#### **(i) The Labour Policy:**

(a) All labour unions were abolished by a decree of July 14, 1933. The Labour Front was set up instead. Both employers and employees joined it. According to the National Labour Law of January 20, 1934, the state would exert direct influence and control over all business employing more than twenty persons. In other words, both employers and employees were put under the control of the government.

(b) The employees were forbidden to strike. In future, if they had any dispute with their employers concerning wages and conditions, they had to refer them to the Labour Trustees.

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#### **(ii) Nazi Economic Policy:**

The goal of the re-organization of the economy was to achieve German self-sufficiency (Autarky). In September 1936, a Four-Year Plan was launched. It was intended to make Germany self-sufficient in coal, iron, steel and other basic raw materials and improve the economy by initiating public works and financial aid to industry and agriculture. After 1935, Hitler also implemented a massive rearmament programme.

Hitler's economic policy did solve the problem of unemployment. Unemployment dropped from 6 millions in 1932 to less than 1 million in 1936. The reasons were that:

(a) Many Germans were conscripted into the army.

(b) Many Germans found jobs in the huge public work projects, Hitler Youth, concentration camps and the Nazi party.

(c) Jews and married women were forced out of public service as far as possible, and so created many vacancies.

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## **Conclusion**

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### **A COMPARISON BETWEEN FASCISM AND NAZISM**

German Nazism to a large extent resembled Italian Fascism. Both were evolved by ambitious leaders of strong national outlook in the difficult years of the post-war period. Once these ambitious leaders gained power, they quickly extended government control over the political, economic and social systems of their own country until it became a totalitarian state. In foreign affairs, both the Fascists and Nazis advocated an expansionist policy.

But there were four outstanding differences. Firstly, Italian Fascism never had a racial basis. Nazism advocated anti-Semitism and racial superiority of the Aryan race (the German). Secondly, Nazism had a high regard for the peasants who were considered to embody the purest German blood. Fascism did not have such a high regard for peasants. Thirdly, Fascism in Italy led to the creation of the corporate State but German Nazism only led to sweeping government control over economic life. Fourthly, Italian Fascism was an opportunistic ideology. It never offered much in a vision of the future. Nazism offered new hopes to the Germans. The Nazis regarded themselves as the elite who were sure to dominate the world.

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